

## Diasporic Consciousness in Amit Chaudhuri's "A New World"

<sup>1</sup> M Kokila, <sup>2</sup> S Selva Meenal

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor in English, Nadar Saraswathi College of Arts and Science, Theni, Tamil Nadu, India

<sup>2</sup> Nadar Saraswathi College of Arts and Science, Theni, Tamil Nadu, India

### Abstract

Diaspora is a displacement of a community or individual from one geographical region to another geographical region. Indian English Fiction is replete with several occurrences of diasporic issues where the artist makes an effective endeavour to present India's rich varied culture, tradition, and heritage while living in abroad. Amit Chaudhuri is writing in the great Bengali tradition. Chaudhuri differ in almost everything realities being depicted to their academic mooring, narrative apprehension and use of language. Amit Chaudhuri's fourth novel "A New World" under the perspective of diasporic issues such as rootlessness, individuality disaster, homesickness, disagreement between tradition, and modernity etc., The central character Jayojit Chatterjee, who, his young son Vikram has come to Calcutta from the United States to visit Jayojit's parents for two months.

**Keywords:** diaspora, tradition, homesickness

### Introduction

Diaspora is a disarticulation of a community or an individual from one geographical region to another geographical region. Either intentional or forced such spatial movements from one's native land to the foreign land are very common during post-colonial and postmodern globalized period. Diaspora as an area of study got reputation and transmission during the post 1990, prior to 1990 there was very little academic interest in the term and very few publications were associated with diasporic issues. V.S. Naipaul, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Chandra, Firdaus Kanga, Rohinton Mistry, and Amit Chaudhuri have focalized on diasporic concerns and issues. Amit Chaudhuri's *A New World* under the perspective of diasporic issues such as rootlessness, identity crisis, homesickness, conflict between tradition and modernity etc.,

Amit Chaudhuri is the greater stylist. His writes a careful novel in finely regulated language. He does everything that one would expect him to do and leaves one wishing that he would either do more or try less. Chaudhuri uses to describe a number of people and gestures in his novel. It is a word that can be applied to his novel, which seems to be just a bit. Chaudhuri's eye for the details of middle class life and the slight observations that he offers on the global through class-specific miniatures.

Amit Chaudhuri "*A New World*" was published in 2000 <sup>[1]</sup>. His novel deal about modest purpose and South Asian diasporic. In that sense Chaudhuri is not a diaspora writer. Even though the filter of another culture, the point of view, the texture and emotions. The global elite's opportunity from Third World writers of reading about a world in which ethnicity marked as non-white is both evoked and registered. Such marking and evocation of difference in much South Asian diasporic fiction, more often than not, take experimental, magical, seductive, extravagant, even unattractive forms.

In reality, the homelands produce the diaspora, it is the space the diasporan belongs to, and identifies him/her completely

with it. Amit Chaudhuri's writing, too, is part of the diasporic public sphere in the west. What sets Chaudhuri apart, however, is the utterly minimalist quality of his writing, its total lack of Rushdian pretension and over-spending, its absence of radical narrative experimentation, its thoroughly realist mode, and the lives of his very average Bengali characters.

The novel is in a nutshell. When one reads this, one is tempted to imagine that this would be the story of the diasporic Indian torn between two time and cultures, attempting to find his roots and a sense of belonging. Writers of the diaspora bring along with their characters their personal sense of rootlessness, their attempts at 'straddling two cultures', their efforts to belong, of acculturation, their need to merge and not to stand out, their homesickness for the life and place they left behind and yet a unwillingness to go back, etc. In this novel, Chaudhuri does not bring in any of these in his portrayal of his diasporic Jayojit. On a vacation from the US, with a recent divorce lurking in the background, his visit to India seems to be more out of sense of affection. From the moment he takes a taxi from the airport, Jayojit (the protagonist) seems to be living an ordinary, unexciting life filled with the mundane, the commonplace experiences of the urban Indian today. One recalls with a sense of homesickness the novels of R.K. Narayan, which had nothing spectacular happening but yet could hold the attention of the readers. The ordinary, everyday events of any urban household where the aged parents live on their own go on and on all through the novel. From not bargain with the taxi driver, because of his security and pride in earning in dollars, Jayojit fells and proves again and again the fact of being an outside.

"He pressed the doorbell, which was really a buzzer with a prolonged droning sound which he associated with immemorial middle-class contractedness." (Amit Chaudhuri 2000, P.No.6) <sup>[1]</sup>.

To Jayojit, as to most Indians who come visiting India, the dissimilarity between lives in the two places is frequently unbreakable. In small matters as well as the really important

ones, this comes to the fore, "She (his mother) could not know of his secret life in that continent, of driving down the motorway, going to the supermarket, filling up the trolley with things, his orphan hood and distance from his country and parents, and that of other people like him, wandering around the aisles of the supermarket, in shorts, with wives, or perhaps alone.... His mother could not even imagine it.... (Amit Chaudhuri 2000, P.No.24) [1]"

A poetic rendering of the ordinary is also a feature of Chaudhuri's "*A New World*". Most events of dramatic significance in the life of its diasporic protagonist, Jayojit-the elopement of his wife with her gynaecologist, their uncivil divorce in America, the discordant custody battle over their only child (where Jayojit has to take recourse as an NRI to Indian legal system when the America one fails him) –take place offstage as it were.

In short dose of classic understandment they merely mix together, either as reportage of imagistically, the very matter-of-fact narrative of a rather uneventful annual visit of the expatriate son and his child to his ageing parents in Calcutta. About Jayojit's marriage breakup we are merely told:

"They had been divorced at the end of the year before last in a bright, clean Midwestern summer. It hadn't been at easy or even a civilised event" (Amit Chaudhuri 2000, P.No.89) [1].

The possible impact of a nasty custody battle in the child id figured in the image of Bonny's – Jayojit's eight-year-old son-photographs that rest within frames on a table in the living room of his parent's home in Calcutta:

"The pictures of Bonny were sans parents, as if he'd been conceived in a future when parents were not only no longer necessary, but were no more possible." (Amit Chaudhuri 2000, P.No.48) [1].

The pace of the novel has a languor about it that is in tune with that of Jayojit's rather quiet and lazy two-month holiday in Calcutta where he does little but eat, sleep, take his son for walks or for a game of table tennis, chat with his parents or with their neighbours, confirm his ticket for his flight back and see that his foreign exchange is in order. He teaches economics at an American university and is rated highly as an academic, but his talent and labour at sustaining his position as a top-rate academic in a highly competitive environment, are merely reported.

Chaudhuri as novelist and participate in the imagining of a Bengali 'local' within the diasporic public spheres that inhabit in the First World, theorisation of the new local and on Chakrabarty's post-colonial critique of historicist modes of thinking. To invoke a Bengali way of dwelling in a global context the diasporic 'local' one could call it that is both performative and many layered. Chaudhuri's homesickness incantation of Calcutta and Bengal (through the metonyms of *ilish* and *parshe maach*, *Nazrulgiti* and *Rabindrasangeet*, *ramshackle homes* and *black and yellow Ambassador taxis*, *Ganashaki* and *Ganatantra*, *loving elderly relatives* and *surlly domestic maidservants*, and so many more), as not just a narrative of times and places *left behind*, but as something that creates possibilities for *living in the diasporic present*.

It is kind of fiction, that while being very much part of the diasporic public speciality in the West, wears its difference lightly. It is also attempted to insert of such fiction into current debates of what constitutes the 'local' in this era of late capitalism. Such a gesture allows, as a diasporic Indian

Chaudhuri's novels, to situate an authenticity-compulsion (the tendency to evaluate such writing purely in terms of an imagined 'true' demonstration of India, or in Chaudhuri's case, Bengal, restricted by national or regional boundaries) and to see such fictions as contributing to new ways of imagining the local non-ghettoised, polychromatic, composition in an increasingly globalised world.

Various Diasporas have changed and continue to change the world in various ways. The new worlds emerging from such phenomena go beyond the personal, for the country they left behind is changed as well as the one to which they go. The Indian diaspora contains a high number of professionals, making for a global emigrant community with a strong measure of influence and clout. Chaudhuri's novel is a gently told, convincing glimpse into the life of one ordinary non-resident Indian, stated in dishonestly simple, stylishly rendered.

## References

1. Chaudhuri Amit. *A New World*. Picador, 2000.
2. Ganguly Dabjani. Of Unremarkable, Un-Rushdie-like Lives: the Diasporic 'Local' in the Latest Fiction of Amit Chaudhuri. *Crnle Journal*. 2000, 84-95.
3. Gokhale Namita. *The Business of Living*. Rev. of *A New World*. *The Book Review* 24.8, 2000, 35.
4. Gerenin James. Rev. of *A New World*. *World Literature Today* 75.2. 2001, 316-317.
5. Khair Tabish. Rev. of *A New World*. *Wasafiri* 32. 2000, 62-64.
6. <http://books.google.co.in/books isbn=339658061>.
7. <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/diasporic-consciousness-sanjeeda-bono/>
8. <http://storke.kobobooks.com/en-ca/ebook/diasporic-consciousness-a>
9. <http://www.amazon.in/Diasporic-Consciousness-Study-Chaudhuris>