

Exploring Cultural Sensibility in The Novels of Amit Chaudhuri : With Special Reference to His Bengal Visit

Jyoti Kiran

Research Scholar, Department of English, M.B Govt.PG College, Kumaun University

Abstract:- Amit Chaudhuri has been placed first among the glorifiers of Indian writings of last decade in twentieth-century. He is a versatile writer of contemporary Indian English Literature. As a poet, novelist, essayist, literary critic and a good singer, he has maintained his glory as a successful and an influential thinker in the world of literature. His writings reflect the values of Indian land; representing the cultural spaces of middle class, the sensibility of local culture in Bengal, the rituals, the issues and problems faced on migration and Diaspora and the simplicity of his folks.

Amit Chaudhuri has widely explored the liveliness of Indian culture through his novels and adorned his writings with creative innovations. Chaudhuri's novels have provided a new perspective on portraying the grounded reality of regionalism. This research paper thus highlights the cultural essence and values in the works of Amit Chaudhuri.

Keywords: Culture, Values, Sensibility, Rituals, Local culture.

Amit Chaudhuri is a versatile and internationally acclaimed English writer and novelist. He has worked in several genres like – Fiction, poetry, essays, memoir, stories, and literary criticism. He has written seven novels: *A Strange and Sublime Address* (1991), *Afternoon Raag* (1993), *Freedom Song* (1998), *A New World* (2000), *The Immortal* (2009), *Odysseus Abroad* (2014) and *Friend of My Youth* (2017). Among his non-fiction writings are a critical study of D.H. Lawrence's poetry, *D.H. Lawrence and Difference* (2003), a book of critical essays, *clearing a Space* (2008) and *Calcutta: Two Years in the City* (2013). His writings have also appeared in *The Guardian* and the *London Review of Books*. He has been influenced by his tutors Dan Jacobson and Karl Miller at University College, London, and Bishnu Prasad Chakraborty, "Mastermohai" of "Portrait of an Artist" and a number of writers in English and didactic people in India who helped him explore and involve into the regional values of his motherland, 'Bengal'.

Culture is the mode of generating meaning and ideas. Chaudhuri's novels represent the cultural values largely inhabited by the local people of Bengal. Culture is not limited to a sophisticated meaning but it has a broader connotation. It includes custom, knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, religion, and notion of time with advance technologies which is acquired by a group of people. Amit Chaudhuri has made crisp reference to such values of Bengali culture that represent the authenticity and pious energy of simplicity and innocence. Therefore, he may also be referred to as a regional novelist particularly while reading his Bengal-centric novels.

The study of cultural sensibility in the novels of Amit Chaudhuri subsumes the relation between the characters and their habitat; their thoughts, feelings, language and the articulation of the cultural ethos of their lives. The interaction of the characters in his novel links them to a specific tradition and culture of local land in which they lead their lives. This local land can be identified through the descriptive portrayal

of the local values, customs, dressing style, taboos, food habits, festival and language of the characters in the novels of Amit Chaudhuri. He has occupied himself into exploring and mapping the lives of middle class Bengalis, famously known as 'Bhadra Lok' and representing them in his novels and poetry.

His one of the excellent and entertaining novel was published in 2009, "The Immortal" which is an appropriate example of a story serving as scrutiny of relationships between ambition, talent, business and failure, and sublimates the life of those who belong to the bourgeois family unveiling the magic of old fashion, and values. This novel is circumambient to classical Indian music and Chaudhuri has exceptionally defined the proximity between 'the old' and 'the new' and how the life style of characters change even after having cultural differences. This story highlight two families: one enjoying the luxuries in a new world of corporate affluence and the other enjoying their old world of musical tradition. Chaudhuri has stepped into the world of making us experience the love for old classical music encouraging Indian tradition and values through his description of characters in this novel. And the introduction of streets, dressings, songs or practice, blending of languages, Bengali essence, families, and musical flavor in this novel has completed the novel efficiently.

One of the best works of Amit Chaudhuri that reflect the cultural sensibility is 'A Strange and Sublime Address' (1991) which is his first book also. This novel features a Bengali boy, 'Sandeep' who visits his uncle's place to spend his school vacations in Calcutta. Chaudhuri creates a universal nostalgic sensibility and contentment in his narrations. His writings reflect Indianness, as the characters are portrayed along with their Bengali titles (names) viz. Chhotamama (younger maternal uncle), Mamima (maternal aunt) and so on. Chaudhuri's style is within the ambience of Bengali literature tradition narrated in English language.

His novel Freedom Song (1998) is one of the esteemed possessions that narrate a long history of religious violence. It also describes the political tensions between Hindu and Muslim communities and focuses upon the domestic sphere of human lives. His metaphorical addition in the story begins with his portrayal of the ultimate decline of a family business one family in the city of Bengal. This tells us the declination of old middle class values with the emergence of modern India. Chaudhuri has focused upon the Bengali sensibility through the use of local names such as 'Chhotomama', in this novel and has also highlighted its cultural transformations from an old valued town to a modern sophisticated city. In this novel he tells about the communal tensions, liberalization, and globalization that has all played a huge role in the extension of families but only through the scattering of family members. He explores the usual lifestyle that is carried out in a normal middle class family in every house. From birth, nurture, development in society to the norms and ethos of society you are born to. Institution of marriage, the bridegroom hunts, choices of marriage and partner thereafter a married life, the political tensions arousing in the city and its effects on life.

A New World being the fourth novel of Amit Chaudhuri is a fiction story of an outsider experiencing his familiar land. In this story the narrator enters into the nostalgic sense of memories of his land that he had once left. Amit Chaudhuri mentioning the ancestral thoughts on marriage such as 'Marriages were decided in heaven and husband and wife were meant to be together till seven births' and that 'marriage for

procreation not for recreation' clearly reflects the depth of Chaudhuri's interest in the cultural background and to make it as fit as fiddle in his novel. His linguistic game such as his characters speaking dialogues such as "Paranam karo" and Bengali words such as 'Tumi ki bolochho oke?' apparently reflect a cultural sensibility in the novels of Amit Chaudhuri.

Culture plays a pivotal role in the novels of Amit Chaudhuri. Interest in culture has always been a part of his curiosity which he has reflected through his Bengal-centric writings. He belongs to the category of writers who depict Bengali Culture and its people in his novels. He represents both a synthesis of his love for Bengal and cultural values and cultural sensibility. His writings serve as a wonderful key to understand the specific traditional ethos of local culture and languages. His works reflect the Indian values coated in Bengali sensibility.

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