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THE PERSPECTIVES OF CULTURAL IDENTITY CRISIS IN SOCIETY: MOBILITY AND MIGRATION IN AMIT CHAUDHURI'S NOVELS

Gagan Sarawat¹, Bharati Chandrayan^{1*}, Shalini Sharma¹

¹*Department of Language, Culture and Society,
SRM Institute of Science and Technology,
Delhi-NCR Campus, Ghaziabad (U.P), India, 201204
(gs8793@srmist.edu.in), (bharatim@srmist.edu.in), (Shalinip@srmist.edu.in)*

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Corresponding Author: Bharati Chandrayan
(bharatim@srmist.edu.in)

ABSTRACT

All diasporic novels belong to a literary genre that examines several aspects of human existence, encompassing cultural identity, ethics, values, and self-awareness, which are inherently connected to each person's material and spiritual dimensions. Cultural values hinder the impartial reporting of societal occurrences; nonetheless, they are associated with inner peace. Writers of Indian Diasporic literature show the subtle effects of moving to a new country, changing cultures, and finding their own identity. Chaudhuri has made a name for himself as a novelist and essayist who loves and writes about the deep meaning of his cultural identity. In his works, cultural values manifest through mobility, hybridity, and migration. Chaudhuri examines migration through his cultural lens and depicts the multicultural aspects of existence in his literary works, which are exceptional classics in the English language. The main goal of our article is to look at migration, change, and identity crises through mobility in Amit Chaudhuri's novels, all of which take place in a setting of cultural hybridity.

KEYWORDS: Mobility, Cultural Values, Migration, Cultural Identity, Rootlessness, India.

INTRODUCTION

Amit Chaudhuri is a well-known Indian writer who is known for writing about migration, mobility, and cultural issues in his work. He has a unique talent for using the right words in social situations. He writes about childhood and adulthood in a normal and logical way that makes the reader's gut feel connected. He embodies the lifestyle of an ordinary person so well that it's amazing how he did it so well. He also writes on migrating, feeling disconnected from his languages, feeling like he belongs to his home country, and feeling out of place in a new culture (Almond). Chaudhuri's books include a lot of examples of traits that move from one work to another. He is widely regarded as a major pioneer in the contemporary field of Diasporic English literature, and he also clarified (Borgohain and Ammari) the concept of resilience in relation to cultural identity. He has shown the true problems that people from other countries face. People think they are stuck between a lot of cultures and can't live their life as well as they could back home. Their lives have changed in ways that are hard to pin down. He also talked about how the country's different religions caused cultural disparities within the country itself. When the Babri Mosque was torn down, there was a lot of pandemonium in both Calcutta and Bangladesh. This event makes the gap between Hindus and Muslims in India bigger (Patil, n.d.). A comprehensive examination of the literature will elucidate the issue of diasporic mobility. Many other literary works by diasporic writers also express the same nostalgic feelings, highlighting how migration is a common issue (Devi & Nagalakshmi, 2021). He used these terms to suggest that he was in a mental or in-between space. In his interview, he said that he is Indian but also belongs to England (Yadav, 2012). He talked about the rich Bengali literature and children's themes that were published in New York in *Beyond Translation* (Almond, 2010). His family has been spread out all over the world because of the partition of India.

METHODOLOGY

Our research is predicated on the examination of the flaneur, Bildungsroman, Tradition of Otium and its significance to Amit Chaudhuri's novels. The present study examines the influence of the flaneur look in Amit Chaudhuri's literary works. The qualitative research methodology was employed, utilising primary data sourced from Amit Chaudhuri's novel *Sojourn*. It is a perfect example of how to slowly explore a character's path. What does

the study of the flaneur come from? Frequent wandering and being connected to modern society. Flaneur has been linked to Amit Chaudhuri's earlier works, and it let us discover new limits of variety. Sovan Chakraborty and Nagendra Kumar studied *A New World* before. In this paper, he describes the new world of the flaneur as "an unwilling detective." We have attempted to utilise the Primary Sources authored by Mr Chaudhuri for *Sojourn*, and a comprehensive examination was undertaken for the research. We have also read a lot of study papers and other studies done on Amit Chaudhuri. After that, we use analytical research methods to look at the existing data and see what we get in the form of a qualitative process. The fundamental principle of our research process is grounded in the inductive approach. We endeavour to discern the peripatetic nature of urban existence using an inductive methodology. Mr Chaudhuri has illustrated the disparity between metropolitan modernism and cultural assimilation via the narrative journey of the characters in *Sojourn*. This paper proposes the examination of post-modern literature via the lens of the flâneur, utilising a qualitative research methodology to explore the flâneur as a 'product of modernity'.

DIASPORIC AND THE CONCEPT OF BILDUNGSROMAN

'Bildungsroman' pertains to the development of character from youth to maturity via societal difficulties and artistic challenges. The study paper's context pertains to the loss of identity and survival difficulties arising from the journey, classified as a coming-of-age novel. Our research piece evaluated the four fundamental components of Bildungsroman: loss, journey, conflict, and maturity. Diasporic literature is a broad term that describes authors who live outside of their native country and write on the disparities in cultural, political, and social contexts (Mishra, 2007). The Indian diaspora began to develop when the British transported Indians to other regions to fill job openings in their colonised countries. From 1830 to 1920, millions of Indians lived in many different nations, from east to west (Mishra, 1996). Diasporic identities pertain to individuals emerging from the amalgamation of two or more cultural identities (Hall, 2020). The application of diaspora theory encompasses a variety of perspectives and frameworks utilised to comprehend the experiences and identities of populations that have been dispersed in pursuit of new opportunities (Bauböck & Faist, 2010a). The movement of large groups of people directly affects

the growth of cultural and diasporic variety. The construction of identity in diasporic culture is prevalent, characterised by the promotion of hybridity, fluidity, and the negotiation process (Bhattacharjee & Karmakar, 2022). Every person in the diaspora faces the difficulties of different cultural, language, and social influences. Diasporic communities maintain their connections to their nation of origin through cultural practices, rituals, customs, and shared recollections of historical events. These tactics help people feel included and consistent even when they are in different places or have different ages. Social power and representation are key elements in the diaspora context (Hall, 2007), significantly influencing the sentiments of diasporic populations. Transnationalism pertains to the diaspora process, in which individuals and communities establish and maintain connections to many geographies across national boundaries (Chaudhuri, 2008). It constitutes a fundamental aspect of contemporary society through diasporic experiences. Rogers Brubaker's deconstruction of diaspora shows the symbolic and ethnic values of society (Brubaker, 2005). We lose our sense of who we are when we reside in a strange nation. People in America call us Indian, and people in India call us American. So, we don't belong anywhere. This makes the problem of identification in life more complicated and fake.

THEORY OF DIASPORA AND AMIT CHAUDHURI

The idea of the social constructivist approach in diaspora provides a conceptual framework for understanding the intricate dynamics and mobility associated with migration, identity formation, and the sense of belonging within a globally interconnected society (Mishra, 2007). Since 1970, diaspora has undergone numerous adjustments and adaptations in its application. It is contingent upon various notions, the foremost being the dispersion of individuals globally and their inclination towards their hometown (Brubaker, 2005). We are now using our idea about how social, political, and cultural things come together when two or more traditions come together. This gives rise to the novel idea of transnationalism. People don't understand what diaspora and transnationalism mean (Bauböck & Faist, 2010b). It looks like they are all the same. The changes we notice in our modern world are new ways of doing things and new tools. To undertake our study, we need to get our hands on new research instruments and methods so that we may fully and properly apply our idea. Diaspora has been quite

popular, but transnationalism has not been accepted by the people. Language is also an important part of cultural values. In 2009, Wittgenstein talked about how language works in society compared to how it works in the abstract (Bauböck & Faist, 2010b). He discussed the interconnectedness of the world, thought, and language through metaphysics, asserting belief in facts rather than worldly phenomena. The Greek word "diaspeirein" is where the word "diaspora" comes from. It comes from two words: "dias," which means "across," and "speirein," which means "to scatter." The term "diaspora" refers to certain groups within a community that have relocated from their original location or culture due to circumstances such as conflict, natural disasters, or the pursuit of improved prospects (Brubaker, 2017). Dan Jacobson aided him because he liked Amit Chaudhuri's academic work. Amit Chaudhuri used to assume that writing was all about enchantment and suspense. Later, he learned that it can also be nostalgic and full of emotional drama. Karl Miller, the dean of the department, helped him have his poetry published after it was verified by other faculty members (Zecchini et al., 2017).

CONCEPTUAL PRACTICES OF CULTURAL HYBRIDITY AND OTIUM

Otium denotes leisure time, free from daily responsibilities, conducive to contemplation. It also provides us with intellect and spiritual vitality. It has been a subordinate concept since antiquity; Cicero and Seneca examined it for personal development. They described life as 'living unnoticed,' reinterpreting it as the doctrine of otium (Masi and Francesco, n.d.). Moreover, Horace and Virgil allocated time for otium to cultivate creativity and serenity. St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas have embraced otium to achieve a balance between creativity and contemplation in life. Petrarch and Erasmus have emphasised the significance of intellect and artistic pursuits in literature. In contemporary literature, the concept of Otium pertains to self-enhancement and work ethics. Matthew Arnold and Virginia Woolf have examined the necessity of leisure in contemporary society. Matthew Arnold discussed 'moderate tasks and moderate leisure' in his poem "The Second Best." The poem conveyed the concept of leisure within the context of nature and enjoyment. Virginia Woolf thought that leisure is essential for preserving one's existence; she warns Logan, "if you are losing your leisure, beware, you may be losing your soul" ('Virgi Wool', no date) William Henry James authored a work on leisure, asserting the significance of free

time to 'stand and stare' at one's surroundings (Leisure, by W. H. Davies, no date). Leisure exerts a profound influence on literature and its components. Amit Chaudhuri has been optimistic on the utilisation of leisure. Chaudhuri has been an astute observer of life-space and its abundant social leisure. To connect with nature, we require leisure time for inquiry into its essence. Mr. Chaudhuri is a skilled contemporary writer, renowned for his exploration of culture and identity crises in his books, particularly through themes of migration and the ongoing quest for self-identification. In this study piece, we assess Amit Chaudhuri's books via the framework of otium and dream imagery: phantasmagoria and leisure. Free time or leisure encompasses numerous connotations. Leisure is occasionally linked to free time or inactivity. Leisure was initially regarded as a virtue in the seventeenth century. A detailed examination of certain Indian literary works reveals valuable interpretations of phantasmagoria and idleness, or *Muße*, a German term akin to the Latin word *Otium*. *Otium* is ultimately connected to the Greek phrase 'σχολή'. The Greek phrase 'σχολή' can be linked to philosophical inquiry 'θεωρία'. *Otium* was originally associated with certain social groupings inside historical courts. The legacy of *otiositas* is predominantly rooted in the imitation of South Asian monarchs and expatriate colonisers. Both males and girls would utilise their leisure time for clubs and card games (Fludernik, 2019). The characters in Amit Chaudhuri's works are immersed in unproductive leisure as a means of self-realisation and exploring new facets of existence (Sarawat et al.). Each character embarks on an individual journey of ongoing self-discovery and social integration. They experience a significant exchange of surreal visuals during unproductive leisure. The approach of hybridity, employed in cultural studies and postcolonial theory, examines the integration, blending, and unification of many cultures, identities, and behaviours. The idea of cultural mobility says that culture is always changing because it mixes with various cultures (Douglas, 2002). In 1994, Bhabha came up with the idea of "dissemination" (Bauböck & Faist, 2010b), which was about the interaction between the coloniser and the colonised. When two or more cultures come together, they develop hybridity (Dwi et al., 2003), which leads to mimicry. This is because the colonised people tend to copy the colonisers to show that they have adapted to a new culture. Culture is becoming a sign of the higher class in society. Antony Easthope (1998) says that hybridity includes three parts: biology, ethnicity,

and culture. The concept of hybridity provides a framework for understanding the implications of cultural exchange and identity formation in multicultural and globalised societies. It honours the diversity, creativity, and adaptability in response to historical and contemporary occurrences of colonisation, migration, and globalisation (Kraidy, 2002). There are a number of examples that relate to the main idea of the current research work. We shall find and look at the themes in his linked novels for this paper because we are talking about four of his best novels of all time. He began writing a long time ago, before he got his PhD. The first three books are about how to write a Bildungsroman (Galván, 1999).

CULTURAL SUFFERING IN A STRANGE AND SUBLIME ADDRESS

Chaudhuri's novel takes place in Calcutta (now called Kolkata) and tells the story of Sandeep, a little boy who starts his summer vacation with his family (Sivakumar, 2018). The story is about how Sandeep feels out of place. The story goes into detail about how Sandeep's experiences in England are different from those in India. It shows how cultural identity may be confusing and how it can feel like you're stuck between two worlds. At its core, *A Strange and Sublime Address* is about love, loss, and the passage of time. This piece illustrates the interplay between familial and platonic relationships, the intricacies of maturation, and the pursuit of meaning in a rapidly evolving social landscape (CHAUDHURI, 2003). The book uses a mix of poetic language and vivid descriptions to get readers interested in the intricate and interesting parts of Calcutta (Athithan, 2023). At the same time, it makes readers think about their own experiences with ideas of home, memory, and belonging. *A Strange and Sublime Address* is a timeless look at human pain. It shows the tragic journey of a young kid to maturity. One thing that all of these pieces have in common is that the writer is always focused on showing reality (Sivakumar, n.d.). Thoreau praised the idea of the "sauntering eye," which can see beyond the dust that most people see in the universe. The main narrator uses a sophisticated, partly satirical voice and sometimes looks back on how Calcutta has changed or explains cultural things (Chakraborty & Kumar, 2020). Nonetheless, although Chaudhuri seemingly endorses the efficacy of naive vision in fostering a profound sense of belonging, the phenomenon of instantaneous perception manifesting as revelatory discoveries is constrained. But the child's view of the familiar as "unfamiliar and extraordinary" just makes the incomprehensible nature of reality stronger,

showing us the parts of the familiar that we still don't grasp. In a good way, this helps us set the limits that keep our world and our connection to it strong in our daily lives. It is based on the lives of Chaudhuri. Amit Chaudhuri's novel, *A Strange and Sublime Address*, provides a vivid portrayal of the urban landscape in Calcutta, India, through the eyes of a young protagonist named Sandeep (Chaudhuri, 2015). Bengalis have learned how to make food in its most basic form and make it taste excellent. He thinks that India's rich and traditional culture is going away (Yadav, 2012). Amit Chaudhuri writes in a serious way about things that aren't very essential, like the colours of things, the tears in his eyes when he eats chillies, and the voids in life. He also looked to have a perfect reputation by comparing India under Nehru and India under Gandhi. Things seemed weird, ambiguous, and full of beauty, which helps us learn about the strangeness of culture and is full of beauty. Following up leaves things open-ended. So, he named it "A Strange and Sublime Address."

ENUNCIATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY IN AFTERNOON RAAG

Amit Chaudhuri's semi-autobiographical novel tells the story of Ravi, a Bengali musician who moves to England to follow his dream of being a musician. The book shows how cultural sentiments affect people. Chaudhuri writes about a lot of different things, such as cultural assimilation, missing home, moving to a new country, and the difficulties of keeping cultural customs while living in a new country. The current work examines themes of arrivals, departures, new beginnings, nostalgia, migration to a new world, and recollection of the old home. (Chaudhuri, 2022). This text tells the story of a young Indian student who is studying English Literature at the famous University of Oxford. The anonymous main character becomes caught up in a complicated love triangle between Mandira and Shehnaz. The author of *Afternoon Raag* uses language not just to tell a story, but also to create emotions, atmospheres, and mental states. The narrator paints a vivid picture of how Oxford Town changed into a wartime town during the summer. This change happens when the young people who used to whistle, converse on the pavement, breathe in beer, and elbow each other in the back suddenly leave. As a result, the long-standing traditions of an old way of life are lost. The story changes in time and space. He painted a picture of Mandira's chamber. The chair, study table, cabinet, and bookshelves were all rather ancient. People heard Mandira say, "I want to go to my room," which shows how empty her life

is. They felt empty within. Life has become Greek and Latin to them. They felt alone and out of place in a foreign country, which made them more likely to deny themselves (Yadav, 2012).

MOLLUSC AND ABYSS FLÂNEUR OF DOING NOT BEING IN FREEDOM SONG

Freedom Song (1998) depicts the passive and active flâneur—Mollusc and Abyss. The main characters in the story are Khuku and her husband Shib, who are both older and married. They live in Calcutta and are retired. The book is about how middle-class families get along and how big the age gaps are between young and old people. The story portrayed the detached observer. River of smoke and thrill of evoking in Calcutta could not provide shelter for Khuku and Shib. The narration starts with the cry of Allah-hu-akbar, and she can hear the azaan getting louder and louder from a mile away. Khuku woke up in the morning to the sound of Azaan after sleeping late at night. Khuku and Shib live together, and the whole family is on the edge of happiness and misery. This book also talks about tearing down the Babri Mosque. The events made Hindus and Muslims more tense with each other (Balamurugan & Baskaran, 2023). The story tries to show the differences in how the older and younger generations see things. He used to say that the difference between the generations was "too far" (Reviewed et al., 2017). Bhaskar's dream of becoming an activist is shattered, leaving him with an unfulfilled desire and a crisis of identity. He always talks about the everyday things that happen, such as honking horns, the sounds of Rickshaw-wallahs, the way these men look when they chew tobacco, their faces covered with clothes, and the mess on Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar Road. Through the novel that we read every day, Uma, Nando, and Jochna, he sent a message of togetherness and harmony among all communities. Shib and Khuku's relationship was like a marriage of childhood recollections (Balamurugan & Baskaran, 2023).

DECULTURATION, DISLOCATION AND SILENT ALIENATION IN A NEW WORLD

This book by Chaudhuri looks into the lives of a common Indian family living in America. It reveals the suppression of memory associated with the awareness of cultural identity. By incorporating the viewpoints of diasporic writing, he provides valuable insights into issues such as cultural tensions, ancestral aspirations, and the need for a familiar place that recalls a sense of home. In Amit Chaudhuri's book *A New World*, the author talks

about cultural amnesia (Yadav, 2012) and the social problems an Indian guy has when he comes back from living in another country and tries to feel at home again. In the novel, the main character, Dr Jayojit Chatterjee, marries Amala, a Bengali woman (Aruna et al., n.d.). Dr Jayojit Chatterjee said that his only wish was to spend the summer with his parents. This led him to take his son Vikram to Calcutta, India. When Dr Jayojit Chatterjee arrived in Calcutta, he felt uneasy in his home. Admiral Chatterjee and Ruby, his mother, said they disagreed with and rejected their son's choice. They wanted to go to America to see their granddaughter. It was really emotional and quite chaotic. Indian parents believe that love marriages often end in divorce since they are largely based on attractiveness and not real love (Yadav, 2012). We observed that migration would result in issues of self-consciousness under the guise of mobility in contemporary society. Amit Chaudhuri's book *A New World* is about cultural migration. It looks at the real-life experiences of people who move between different cultures and how they deal with issues of identity, belonging, and cultural exchange in a globalised world. This book is about the life of Jayojit Chatterjee, an Indian professor who lives in both Massachusetts, USA, and Kolkata, which is now in Bangladesh. He has discovered a new world since he went to Bangladesh from America and then came back after experiencing the new world. He discovered the genuine substance of the new world, since he is now a stranger in his homeland, in accordance with the paper's thesis. He juxtaposed the culture of folk tales in India with the fact that his child didn't have access to folk tales in America.

MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT THROUGH MOBILITY

Cultural identity is a set of rules that people follow throughout their lives. We have seen problems in society and a decline in culture, either because of differences between older and younger generations or because the characters in novels have empty lives. Amit Chaudhuri's many writings show how hard it is to follow Indian traditions. He misses the sounds of crying babies, old ladies talking, folk tales, and the atmosphere of festivals and delicacies. A communication with Roy was made public. Chaudhuri and Roy (2009) discussed various topics, including culture and identity. He was particularly worried about how periodicals treated other Indian languages because they were all headed by English or German speakers who only wanted to make money. They only think of Rushdie as a famous writer, but in actuality, they overlook ten more

writers, even if these writers didn't have a chance to catch up in England. (Galván, 1999).

CONCLUSION

In Amit Chaudhuri's works, social migration through the flaneur gaze has been a critical point. His character's journey is a Bildungsroman concept, which is adopted in the tradition of otium, utilising free time in the city and urban life. Due to multiculturalism and diaspora, cultural mobility projected new issues. Moving away from home will change everything. Culture hybridity changes how we live, feel, and want in our solitude time. Our home orientation, traditions, and values follow us wherever we live. Migration is a psychological as well as physical process. It always appears when we are depressed, disappointed, or alienated at work. Chaudhuri illuminates the complexities of diasporic life and how people cope with cultural and identity difficulties. Although separation is common in Europe, it is especially painful in India, since our lives revolve around our loved ones. Amit Chaudhuri described a transnationalism-induced diasporic cultural catastrophe. The hybridity of culture creates a self-identity vacuum. The forbidden presence of culture can make identity migration disavow our roots. Amit Chaudhuri embodies Bengali culture, food, religion, and folk tale nostalgia. Because his novel's characters have different personalities, he portrays himself as an outsider in his country. Migration from his culture cost him his identity. The loss of identity in the New World is evident in Jayojit Chatterjee's four novels. He lost his family and son due to cultural differences. In *Freedom Song*, *Kuku* and *Shib* highlighted cultural struggle and alienation in society. In the *Afternoon Raag*, we hear nostalgic music while talking or doing daily tasks, which is missing in all forms. Psychologically moving from Oxford to Bombay and Calcutta, Amit Chaudhuri affirmed the travel between worlds (Austin, 2011). *Afternoon Raag* discusses love and Shehnaz-Mandira complications. In *A Strange and Sublime Address*, young guy Sandip struggles to go from petty concerns like cuisine and festivals to Mumbai and Bengali culture, which traumatises him. Food habits are widespread, yet they shape culture. All his novels address migration, mobility, and cultural change. Many characters lost their culture and community. They showed life's struggles and were surrounded by cultures. This is inevitable; deep-seated emotions and sensations are human predicaments. No one could have saved the situation. Amit Chaudhuri has illuminated extremely sorrowful components in his stories and transformed characters.

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