

Poetics of Conflict in Amit Chaudhuri's A New World

Dr. A. Selvaraj* & M.V. Sivakumar**

*Research Advisor, Asso. Prof., Deptt. of English, Annamalai University, T.N.

**Ph.D., Research Scholar Cum, Asso. Prof., Deptt. of English, Annamalai University, T.N.

Abstract

The present paper deals with the conflicts of change and transition in relation to the family, the middle-classes, and economic changes affecting employment and lifestyle, which are the hallmarks of the Indian society and culture. The novel A New World is all about the bond between children and parents. The plot of the novel is simple - A third-world cosmopolitan, surviving in America, returns to India with his young son and spends his vacation with his parents who live humbly in retirement in Calcutta and again return back to America. The story element in the novel is thin; it can be called one, of Jayojit who comes to Calcutta in April with his son to stay with his parents in order to recover from the pain of his divorce from his wife, Amala. That he likes the city is far from truth. It is possible only through an analysis of the worldliness of this novel, and through connection to other novels in terms of style and themes to probe how the family and the home are significant in representing middle-class values. As a whole during times of uncertainty and change, the form and the textual feedback of the novel exhibits the indecision of the 'old' middle-class who seem to see themselves as sombre and serious, and yet are critical of the 'new' middle-class who are perceived as self-made people.

Keywords: Culture, Conflicts, Middle-Classes, Transition, Middle-Class Values, Economic Changes, Worldliness

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Dr. A. Selvaraj* & M.V. Sivakumar,**

Poetics of Conflict in Amit Chaudhuri's A New World,

Notions 2017, Vol. VIII,
No.4, pp. 16-21
Article No. 3 (N622)

Online available at :
[http://anubooks.com/
?page_id=34](http://anubooks.com/?page_id=34)

Amit Chaudhuri is remarkably radiant in describing the day-to-day life of middle-class Indians specifically Bengalis in his fiction. As an admirer of Indian culture and classical music he never misses an opportunity to laud them in his novels. One can notice the bond of modernity and tradition, modern and classical music, realm of adults and children in his works. As he speaks about the day-to-day matters, each and every individual account comes alive and for which he adopts English shrewdly to provoke the impression of getting-into the situation and milieu.

The intellectual style of Amit Chaudhuri is Western and emotional style is Indian but he makes a sincere effort to draw the separating line under deletion and to explore and recreate the alternative culture. In his works one can observe the bond of modernity and tradition. He rarely gives room from multiculturalism, linguistic experimentations, subalternism, feminism and nation as narrative. He has nothing to do with parody, pastiche, textuality, self-conscious hybridity and self-reflexivity. Therefore he is not much concerned either for post-modernity or post-coloniality.

The chief gripe against postmodernism of Amit Chaudhuri is that it always puts wholeness under deletion and is toxic about the influence of language to revamp the readers' point of view. Emotions and aesthetic are important for him and he cannot be where they are not. Amit Chaudhuri names himself a modernist. Modernism is a critical term because it cannot be plainly differentiated from postmodernism. As far as the style of the narrative in Amit Chaudhuri is concerned, it is in several manners postmodernist and radical.

The conflict in any form of art may mostly mean the elemental thematic structure on which human feelings are placed and perceived. It creates the narrative as well as the argumentative structures of the works of art. The emotions called forth by the conflict spectacles are not in fact permanently removed but are muted for the time so that the system can recede on its normal course. The stage, indeed, gives painless and delightful outlets for inclinations which claim contentment and can be nourished more vigorously than in real life. Conflicts are mostly a complicated network of interrelating political, social, religious, economical, cultural and linguistic factors. It is essential for the artists to show them as conflicts of their writings and to overpower the conflicts by giving categorical solutions. The conflict can be fixed by admitting, overpowering, repressing and contradicting the detrimental situations portrayed as conflicts of the works.

Amit Chaudhuri's most influential novel, *A New World*, is perfect to the restrained style that the author has created to chalks out a narrative of Indian exile who returns to India after his divorce from his wife in order to recover from the

pains caused by the divorce. Amit Chaudhuri focuses rather on the ordinary, the unexciting and the banal. His language can be profuse and delightful now and then, as when he illustrates how the hero's retired father; the Admiral controls the family with inconsequential despotism. Basically without action *A New World* proposes a micro-focus covering of a small span of time in the life of the hero.

The hero of *A New World*, Jayojit Chatterjee with his son Vikram has come to Kolkata from Claremont to stay his parents for two-months in the stuffy pre-monsoon time. Jayojit is an outstanding economist, writer and professor who have recently wrapped up a divorce between himself and Vikram's mother. The divorce is annoying but Jayojit and his ex-wife are able to make a justifiable agreement regarding the joint custody of their son, Vikram. The grandparents though bothered about the situations of Jayojit and Vikram, still there is no tear shedding and rooted sentiments found in them. They receive Jayojit and Vikram with love and care, respect them as their most-wanted guest and send them back to America without too many sentiments. A simple 'bye-bye' does everything to them to leave. This postmodern responsiveness is brought out by Amit Chaudhuri simply with a few words in the novel. The novel's title is explainable in numerous ways and is an indicator leading the readers towards what Amit Chaudhuri is on about.

With the disorderliness of divorce behind him, Jayojit can get on with the rest of his life, even though his time in Kolkata is one of distrustful apathy. He has been writing projects to complete but never appears to get anything done. He languishes in the heat, and his son suffers cough and fever. Their time in Kolkata moves slowly yet Jayojit evidently views his stay there as the beginning of a new step in his life. But 'new worlds' are taking place elsewhere as well. What is new in *A New World* is Amit Chaudhuri's poetic rendering of humanity, locality, and temporality both simultaneously and alternately and blurring the frontier-lines between them. *A New World* may seem to be similar to other novels of Amit Chaudhuri but in style and mood it is importantly different from them and distinguishes it from them by a new maturity and self-assurance in dealing with language, life, and literariness.

Amit Chaudhuri in his *A New World* made his protagonist, Jayojit to come to Kolkata to forget the pains of his divorce from his wife, Amala and that forms the conflict of the novel. Jayojit though a professor of economics working in a university in Claremont, America never exhibits any professional supremacy in his speech or behaviour as he has lost interest in life after his divorce. His parents Chatterjees and his son Bonny somehow attempt to comfort his heart through their loving attitude. The novelist puts the conflict of the novel by making his hero as a divorcee and a diaspora.

The human relationship is doubted by Amit Chaudhuri through different events and incidents and that form the conflict of the novel. Jayojit has returned back to Kolkata with his son Bonny to spend his holidays. He is grief-stricken after his divorce from his wife. His times with his parents and son rather than brushing aside the pain of separation add oil on his already wounded heart. Bonny's various doubts or his calm attitude fail to provide Jayojit the necessary relief to his psyche. His mother's cooking of different food items and serving them to him does not refresh his spirit. Even the home town, Kolkata fails to give relief to his sagged heart. Rather the heat and dust of the town increase the pain in him. His crush for Arundhati, or his admiration of girls in the bank does not surge up his injured spirit. Jayojit cannot find anything new either in India or in Claremont after his divorce from Amala.

In *A New World*, Amit Chaudhuri depicts excellently a little snobbish Bengali economist, Jayojit, settled in America, who has visited his parents in Kolkata in the summer vacation. The title, *A New World* is rather alluring and may be something of a misnomer. Kolkata appears to be the new world where Jayojit parents have settled down after retirement and where Jayojit married Amala almost eleven-years ago before moving to America. Kolkata is a new world to Bonny, but he too is not much excited of the town.

Amit Chaudhuri in *A New World* forms the conflict as well as gives solution even in the title of the novel itself. Jayojit after his divorce from his wife has returned to India during his vacation in order to heal his pains caused by the divorce. India, specifically his parents' town, Kolkata rather than soothing his pain augments it whenever and wherever he goes or whomever he speaks. He is haunted by the memories of his wife. Sarcastically the place 'home' becomes a kind of hell to him and that aggravates his pain. Even for young Bonny nothing appears 'new' in Kolkata. Therefore Amit Chaudhuri establishes at the point conflict with the arrival of Jayojit and Bonny to Kolkata and resolves it by making them to depart for America with a little sentiment of 'farewell.' Bill Brown in his article "Living Ghosts in Miniature" fairly makes a perception about *A New World* and says:

But what most distinguish *A New World* is not its narrative contours, but its repose. It is a gentle book of tremendous patience and sensibility. Amit Chaudhuri calls this more prosaically "a silence which explains more than action could" As a motif *A New World* repeatedly paints such silence in miniature – thus the two cushion covers and two small brass birds, Jayojit purchases later in the book seem like tiny icons, as if were... A few pages away Jayojit says to his parents: "in the end what do we Bengalis have expected for a few first-class university degrees – and a good

command of English?" After reading *A New World* we can mull this protest with a wry smile. (22)

Jayojit, an Indian diaspora who has least concern in life treats both the 'home' and the 'host' alike. It is only the mind that views the diasporic pain. This psychological perspective is established by Amit Chaudhuri by offering solution to the conflict formed in the name of diaspora. And if Jayojit no longer feels at home in India, he also is estranged from his flexible America. When he thinks of his life there, what comes to his mind is wandering the aisles of a chill supermarket hoping to bump into an acquaintance. The ties that once bound him to an identity are broken or frayed and the novel outlines his progress in attempting to re-establish a feasible sense of himself.

As Amit Chaudhuri's conflict falls chiefly in the matters of making a choice between modernity and tradition, presenting the world of children and grown-ups, preferring English and Bengali, enjoying the Hindustani music and Western music, opting India and the West, selecting the city and village, stating the pros and cons of globalization, presenting cosmopolitanism and philosophy, preferring inside and outside, selecting morning and afternoon, he resolves his conflicts by fixing all the paradoxical elements which are juxtaposed in the conflict part of the novels. He has made his novels without any beginning or middle or end. All his novels are open-ended and that gives more room for the readers. The quotidian lifestyle is narrated from outsider's view. Hence, the novelist effortlessly has overcome his conflict by making the local into global. The glocalization of different events and incidents give the readers a sense of peeping into the next door without any emotional explosion.

Amit Chaudhuri establishes the conflict parts of his novels by introducing the ordinary life of ordinary people and attempts to resolve them in his own style by making his characters either to accept the core reality of life or to countermand it. His characters never retaliate for anything that occurs around them and Amit Chaudhuri also never attempts to bring them from one side to another. In *A New World*, there is no space for either love or hatred. For Jayojit home and host nations are one and the same as they do not offer him the solace that he needs. As a NRI of twenty-first century Jayojit goes back to his adapted land without any sentiments.

Thus Amit Chaudhuri maintains a balanced strand while dealing with the conflict parts of the novels and offers an open-ended close to all of them. He never attempts to negate or subjugate the world order, instead accepts it wholeheartedly.

References

Bell, Bill Brown. “*Signs Taken for Wonders: An Anecdote Taken from History.*” **New York Literary History** 43 (2012): 309-329. **Print.**

Chaudhuri, Amit. *A New World*. New York: Vintage International, 2002. **Print.**

Gerein, James and Regina Saskatchewan. “*Rev. of A New World.*” *World Literature Today* 75.2 (Spring 2001): 316-317. **Print.**

Roy, Subroto. “*Analyzing Amit Chaudhuri’s A New World.*” **The Literary Criterion** 36.1-2 (2001): 3-14. **Print.**

Shukla Anu and Sheobhushan Skuhla. eds. *The Novels of Amit Chaudhuri: An Exploration in the Alternative Tradition*. Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2003. **Print.**