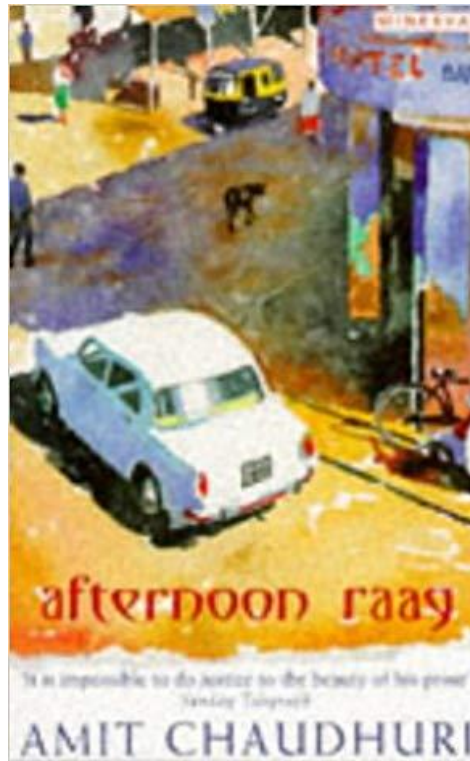


## **The Portrait of Cultural Identity and Sensibility in Amit Chaudhuri's Fiction**

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Courtesy: <https://www.amazon.com/Afternoon-Raag-Amit-Chaudhuri/dp/0749399708>

### **Abstract**

Amit Chaudhuri is a multi-talented writer of contemporary Indian writings in English. He is a literary critic, essayist, novelist, poet and also a great singer. He is celebrated as an important star of contemporary Indian writers in English. His writings are discernible, observable which strikes and vibrate the heart and mind of the readers. He has given a noted importance for the Indian values in his writings. His works reflect the Indian values coated in Bengali sensibility. Chaudhuri works rebound the Bengali culture, ethnicity and regional sensibility of Calcutta. Amit Chaudhuri has also explored the vitality of Indian culture through his novels and embellished the tradition of Indian English novels with his creative innovations. Chaudhuri's novels have provided a new perspective on the theoretical models of the Indian domesticity. The

domestic settings of his novels illustrate the material history of the Indian home, associated with religious, social and cultural practices, he also exhibits how these are adopted and reworked by the protagonists. His artistic perception and innovative vision assist him to change the conventional concepts of Indian English fiction. The region is a mere setting or background of his works. It plays an important role in the development of the story and characterization.

The main objective of this paper is a trial to streak the cultural sensibility about tradition, rituals, family, class and identities in the novels of Amit Chaudhuri.

**Keywords:** Amit Chaudhuri, Culture, Ethnicity, sensibility, Indian tradition, Domesticity, Rituals.

### **Culture and Cultural Identity**

Cultural identity is based on a group that is normally based on similar traits, such as a common language, common heritage, and cultural similarities within the group. Other variables that play a role in cultural identity are the geographical connection to a particular place, common foods and diets, and perhaps a common faith.

Culture is an essential part of human life that has a great influence on the personality of individuals and gives a proper shape to it. So, it has been stimulating the native and non-native writers to evocate their writings with its different theories and existence. Culture is viewed as powerful as life and death sometimes it triumphs over death. Indo-English novels have represented a glimpse of colorful and graceful shades of customs of our country. Literature coming from bilingual culture demonstrates how tensions existing in different cultures, languages and systems can be utilized for narrative purpose.

Culture can be portrayed as the behavior and beliefs, distinctive of an individual social age group while sensibility is defined as conscious of one's moral, emotions, existence, sensations, aesthetic notions and standards. So cultural identity and sensibility suggests awareness towards one's culture while still being able to comprehend other cultures and variations that exists between them. The ability to acknowledge our own selves and others is stepping stone in cultural sensibility.

### **Amit Chaudhuri's Works**

Amit Chaudhuri's works expounds the influence of a particular space on the characters and events of his novels. He has distinguished the hills, the forests, the roads, the buildings, the architecture, the towns and the countryside of his region which gives maximum exposure to them. It has been used as a foreground of his works. The region is much more than a mere setting or background of his works. It plays an important role in the progress of the story and characterization. The region participates in the works of Chaudhuri with all its aspects: nature, culture, legends, customs, conventions, superstitions, topography, and environment.

Amit Chaudhuri's novels acclaim the celebration of local cultures and Individuality. He is an exclusive writer, his writing rests largely on the fact of most sensitive invocation of locality,

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it exhibits the episodic form and holistic narrative. The Locality and Commonplace also developed as similar preconditions in his novels. This paper is an attempt to trace the elements of cultural identity and sensitivity of life in Chaudhuri's novels.

### **Amit Chaudhuri's Artistic Perceptions – Western and Indian Domesticity**

Amit Chaudhuri has stepped into the literary world of Indian English Literature in 21<sup>st</sup> century. He is very vigorous to achieve something differently. He is a multifaceted genius who has depicts his talent in both literature and arts. He is also a musician. He has focused day-to-day living experiences of everyday lives like getting up in the morning, reading newspaper, taking bath, having meals, visiting relations and so on. He has sketches out the real India especially Bengali culture in his novels.

His artistic perception and creative vision assist him to relocate the conventional concepts of Indian English Fiction. Chaudhuri's novels provide new perspectives on the ideology of the Western and the Indian domesticity.

### **Focus of This Paper**

My aim is to explore that how Chaudhuri's novels depicts the importance of the construction of cultural sensibility about class, caste, family and identities. Chaudhuri has picked out the life's every detail with all his perfections of daily existence with depth and compassion in an outstanding manner. Amit Chaudhuri is one of them who also have been narrated in his novels the cultural sensibility through the representation of the lived experience of home in *A Strange and Sublime Address*, *Afternoon Raag*, *Freedom Song* and *A New World*.

### **Middle-Class Calcutta - A Memory of Traditions and Ideals**

Chaudhuri captures life's every detail with all his perfections of daily existence with depth and compassion in an outstanding manner. Chaudhuri's first novel, *A strange and Sublime Address* captures middle class Kolkata, a city of industrial and economic stagnation but with the unique cultural flavor, seen through the eyes of the twelve-year old protagonist, Sandeep, who comes to the city from Mumbai to spend his summer vacation in the household of his maternal uncle.

It has a combination of young and the old, the growing up and the grownups. Chaudhuri thematized the socio-cultural identity in his novels. He adjusts with the colonial reality and has realized that he cannot excuse from it. However, his aim is acknowledging at native culture by projecting it positively. It is known fact that a work of art carries the trace of the social and cultural practices of the community in its evolutionary history and play an obvious social role by servicing as a memory of traditions and ideals.

### **Afternoon Raag- Coming to Terms with Loneliness, Nostalgia and Alienation**

Chaudhuri's second novel *Afternoon Raag* is a series of sketches about the life of an Indian graduate student in England, moving back and forth between Oxford, where he studies and Mumbai, where his parents live. The novel focused with the experiences and impressions of a young Indian student of English Literature at the University of Oxford. Chaudhuri recreates the

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state of mind of a young man coming to terms with loneliness, nostalgia and alienation. A raag is a piece of classical Indian music which plays around a set of specific intervals to create a particular mood. Here the mood recreated is one of being adrift in a unique situation, enjoying a very special phase of life between childhood and adult life, expounds significant relationships and the ancient pursuits.

### ***Freedom Song***

Amit Chaudhuri's third novel, *Freedom Song*, is set in Calcutta during the winter of 1992-93 against a backdrop of growing political tension between Hindu and Muslim. Accordance to the child Calcutta is still present but has been changed by two decades of communist rule and political violence across the country. Song and raag are much more than lyrical titles of his books. They are an integral part of the writer's life as he is an accomplished Hindustani musician who has given concerts in major Indian metros. Here the title *Freedom Song* does not imply the struggle of liberation, rather it explicit the absence of freedom in a society in terms of individual, economic and political.

### ***A New World***

His fourth novel, *A New World*, won Sahitya Akademi Award in 2003. This story is however not just about Jayojit, but is also about the marriage of his parents, and about Bengali life in hot, busy Calcutta. Chaudhuri sets within the four walls of a small flat a contrasting image of marriage: a failed modern-day marriage, and an apparently successful, if extremely traditional marriage where the positions of roles are enquired and accepted by both husband and wife. Chaudhuri writes with great ease about Calcutta, his city of birth. His description of daily life is vivid, and his treatment of the story is filled with a subtle tenderness. This novel has also traced the existence of diasporic consciousness through the frame of cultural sensibility.

### ***The Immortals***

Amit Chaudhuri's novel *The Immortals* utilizes music, foods, and clothes as a metaphor to show how trans- valuation of values is taking place in the matter- driven modern society. He builds the narrative around the ragas of music to show the difficulty of those artists who are struggling to find their right place in the fashion of popular art culture. While lesser writers obsess over the heat and dust, Chaudhuri charts the by-ways of the Indian soul, and thus marks in the pantheon of contemporary writers. Music plays an essential role in culture by expounding a unique place. Music is also a form of communication using abstract symbols to transfer meaning. Music is generally accepted for constructing realities about life and culture. It plays a vital role in constructing realities.

### **Bengali Ethos and Indian Values**

Bengali ethos and Indian values are primary concern in the writings of Amit Chaudhuri who has a great concern for Indian values and Bengali sensibility. He initiated his literary career with poems and wrote five novels. He seems to have maintained in his writings Indian values, Bengali culture and tradition. Amit Chaudhuri's works explores an influence of a particular space on the characters and events of his novels. He describes the hills, the forests, the roads, the

buildings, the architecture, the towns and the countryside of his region and gives maximum exposure to them. It has been used as a background of his works.

Amit Chaudhuri belongs to the category of writers and depicts Bengali Culture and its people in his novels. Amit Chaudhuri represents both a synthesis of a tension between his Bengali culture and postmodern sensibility. His writings serve as a wonderful key to understanding the vitality and specificity of Indian modernity and of modern transformation of Indian civilization. His works reflect the Indian values coated in Bengali sensibility.

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