

A Sense of Place: Exploring Local Colour through Amit Chaudhuri's *A Strange and Sublime Address* and *A New World*.

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Abstract: A Sense of place refers to perceptions of a neighbourhood or city, but can also describe feelings about a larger region, state, or country. Local colour is a style of writing which focuses on the presentation of the features and peculiarities of a particular locality and its inhabitants. The local colour novel is a form of regional novel that depicts rustic or small town life in a markedly far-flung or isolated locale of a country. Rather than giving an impartial representation, the local colour novel exploits the quaintness of the region depicted. The local colourist intentionally attempts to attract readers to the odd details of the characteristically different region he describes. Almost subordinate to their peculiarity, people become caricatures. Chaudhuri is among the Contemporary writers who write for India and especially an Indian city, Calcutta. His intellectual make up is western and emotional make up is Indian but he makes a critical attempt to set the separating line in order to discover and re-invent the alternative tradition and culture in the Indian novel written in English. Chaudhuri himself belongs to the influential upper class but he aligns himself with the middle class of India and this is the quality which makes him unique as a novelist as his focus is on local culture.

Keywords: Sense of Place, Local Colour, Traditions, Culture, etc.

Local colour is a style of writing which focuses on the presentation of the features and peculiarities of a particular locality and its inhabitants. The name is given especially to a kind of American literature that in its most characteristics form made its appearance just after the Civil War and for nearly three decades was the single most popular form of American Literature. Though still considered minor by critics, local colour literature was a major literary movement in the nineteenth century western world, finding expression in Ireland, and then migrating to Scotland and from there to Germany, Switzerland, various provinces of the Astro- Hungarian Empire, France, and the U.S. eventually nearly every western country including Spain, Italy, Russia, Norway, Sweden, Canada, and several in Latin America participated. After the civil war local-colour fiction gained widespread popularity in America. It is an offshoot of Romanticism, which was mainly limited to poetry, and mainly focused on short stories and a few novels. It took hold in the United States in the late nineteenth century and remained popular until the early twentieth century. It got famous by its realistic spotlight on a specific geographical locale, highlighting its traditions, setting, and language. Donna Campbell in her essay "Realism in Regionalism" has tried to encode the relation between two terms, i.e. Realism and Regionalism as follows:

An emphasis on the local, an interest in the exotic or unusual features of the region, detailed descriptions of setting, the use of dialect, and the use of a shorter form for the fiction - usually sketches or stories as opposed to novels and distinguish local color or regional fiction from the mainstream realism. (93)

Local colourists concerned themselves with presenting and interpreting the local characters of their regions. They tended to idealize and glorify their region but they never forget to keep an eye on the truthful colour of local life. The dialect spoken, the customs observed, the dress code prevalent, and the way of living all can be peculiar to a particular region. This sort of setting is called a local colour of the area or

region. The setting plays a major role in the prose of local fiction. The social and intellectual climate of the country provides a stimulating milieu for the growth of local colour fiction.

Hamlin Garland explaining about local colour in his essay "New Fields" writes, "It is a settled conviction with me that each locality must produce its own literary record, each special phase of life utter its own voice. There is no other way for a true local expression to embody itself" (22). According to him, the plan of local colourist is to produce a native little world with qualities that make it apart from the world outside. Local Color as defined by Garland, "It means that the writer spontaneously reflects the life which goes on around him. It is natural and unsustained art" (68). One of Garland's memorable and often cited definitions about local colour from "Local Color in Art", an essay in *Crumbling Idols* mentions, "Local Color in a novel means that it has such quality of texture and background that it could not have been written in any other place or by anyone else than a native" (64). He believed that artists should present art that represents their own surroundings, local and distinct. He believed it to be very important for artists to express truth in their art by presenting people, cultures and lands that they are most familiar with. It is the differences between separate lands that create interest, uniqueness, and truth in literature. Garland's texture here refers to the basic essentials such as speech, customs that are more peculiar to one particular place and background that covers the unique qualities of setting which conditions human reflection and deeds. According to *Oxford Companion to American Literature*:

Local Color, a term applied to fiction or verse which emphasizes its setting, being concerned with the character of a district or of an era, as marked by its customs, dialect, costumes, landscapes, or other peculiarities that have escaped standardizing cultural influences. The earliest American writing reflects its locale, as all literature must, but the local-color movement came into particular prominence in the U.S. after the Civil War, perhaps as an attempt to recapture the glamour of a past era, or to portray the sections of the reunited county one to the other. (Hart 382)

Local colour or Regional literature is mainly fiction and poetry that focuses on the characters of a particular region, concentrating especially upon the peculiarities of dialect, manners, folklore, and landscape that distinguish the area. Influenced by South Western and Down East humours, between the civil war and the end of the nineteenth century, this mode of writing became dominant in American literature. Although the terms "Regionalism" and "Local Colour" are sometimes used interchangeably, regionalism generally has broader connotations. Although most fiction is regional in that it makes use of a specific setting, for regionalist writers the setting was not incidental but central, and the "local color" details that established that setting gave a name to the movement. Whereas local colour is often applied to a specific literary mode that flourished in the late nineteenth century, regionalism implies recognition from the colonial period to the present of differences among specific areas of the country. Additionally, regionalism refers to an intellectual movement encompassing regional consciousness beginning in the 1930s. The cause which sets Regionalism apart from Local Colour is local colour's inclusion of nostalgia or sentimentality and the exploitation and arrogance towards its subjects. Local colour fiction stresses isolation and otherness. But also makes, however uneasily a case for the nation's ability to reconcile divergent identities. Local colour writers might be seen as promoting a separatist view of region through their attention to difference and unique detail, but they might also be seen as arguing an early brand of diversity by depicting attractive communities that could access cross-regional agreements about values that defused troubling surface differences. Although local colour is a branch of Realism but still has a difference. Local colour and Realism, this opposition was formalised in "Notes on Local Color and Its Relation to Realism" by Donald A. Dike, which acknowledges the semantic complexity and contradiction of local colour, to further defines it through a set of common features and differences with realism:

Both the local colorist and the realist insist on the accurate observation of details and are likely to contend for honest, undistorted expressions of genuine social experience. Both believe that literature should contribute to American social history. Both are concerned with the individual as a member of his community, and both ignore the exceptional for the sake of ordinary man. But the ways in which local color differs from realism, approximately equal in number, are more important than the resemblances. (81-88)

The local colour novel is a form of regional novel that depicts rustic or small town life in a markedly far-flung or isolated locale of a country. Rather than giving an impartial representation, the local colour novel exploits the quaintness of the region depicted. The local colourist intentionally attempts to attract readers to the odd details of the characteristically different region he describes. Almost subordinate to their peculiarity, people become caricatures. According to Garland, "Local Color in fiction is demonstrably the life of fiction. It is the native element, the differentiating element" (57). Important local colourists include Nathaniel Hawthorne, Sarah Orne Jewett, Bret Harte, Kate Chopin, George W. Cable, Joel Chandler Harris, Hamlin Garland, Mark Twain, etc. Bret Harte's *The Luck of Roaring Camp* is usually considered as the first local colour story. The most distinguish writing engendered by the movement was in the form of the short story. To give more clearance to the subject there are the examples of renowned writers. Such beauty of local colour is painted by Thomas Hardy in his novels called "Wessex" and Rudyard Kipling's India also shares the same local colour. R. K. Narayan has beautifully portrayed the imaginary village of "Malgudi" which is set somewhere in South India in his novels. The representation of the local shade or colour continues emerging in the writings of several writers. It is the powerful representation of the local colour in the novels, the Wessex in Hardy's novels, and the Malgudi in R. K. Narayan's novels have become immortals in the history of literature. As Hardy, the great Victorian novelist keeps the spirit of Wessex alive in the minds of people through his novels as well Narayan's Malgudi is alive, in the same way Amit Chaudhuri has achieved greatness by working on his regions in his own way. Chaudhuri is among the Contemporary writers who write for India and especially an Indian city, Calcutta. He makes his practice as a creative writer quite clear in the following statement in an interview by Fernando Galvan *Wasafiri* in "On Belonging and not Belonging: A Conversation with Amit Chaudhuri":

Now the kind of India I write about is a lower middle class or middle-class India, because I write about Calcutta in particular and Bengal, a post- independence Bengal reality, lyricising the experiences of the middle class and the spaces in which they live, I am not writing about a fantastic India. (48)

Chaudhuri states that he feels very uncomfortable "with the idea of the nation." Instead, he sees the dispersal of the nation into a variety of local spaces and local customs. He writes mostly about Calcutta and this kind of aesthetic logo is the by product of Chaudhuri's great creative interest in locality. He has a high regard for those writers who locate in specific localities without troubling the particularity of the country. Like him Garland himself believed and has written in his *Crumbling Idols*, "I assert, it is the most natural thing in the world for a man to love his native land and his native intimate surroundings" (64). Chaudhuri has an unusual liking for Bengali middle class, so it is useless to condemn him for confining himself to certain local spaces in Calcutta and dwelling on the particularities of their local culture. He is actually forming micro worlds. He talks of India, Bengal and Calcutta in the similar breath as if they are the same. Similarly he is hesitant to any Indian culture, he talks of the culture of Calcutta and by implication suggests the culture of Bengal and India. He himself confesses, "I grew up with Bengali and Bombay culture, which was a mishmash of western culture and the local culture" (Galvan, 220). Chaudhuri believes in the essence of realism and portrays his locality or regions, Garland also believed the same and has written in his essay "The Question of Success", "Write of those things of which you know most, and for which you care most. By so doing you will be true to yourself, true to your locality, and true to your time" (35).

There are several well known writers, who write about Calcutta, Amitav Ghosh is a well known writer who straddles between both the Eastern and Western worlds regularly and often takes recourse to his Bengali roots. The city, Calcutta is present in his novel *The Calcutta Chromosome* where he carefully and realistically sketches out the background with local colour of the place. Bharati Mukherjee, a well known American writer, brought up in an upper-middle class Bengali family, wrote her first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter* using the autobiographical elements, has her roots and her city, Calcutta in it. The sense of Bengaliness is also very frequent in the writings of Jhumpa Lahiri. Though she lives in the United States but her work is filled with Bengali culture and sensibilities. She has set some of the stories of *Interpreter of Maladies* in Calcutta. The other name that comes to one's mind is Amit Chaudhuri, whose almost all the works are set in Calcutta. Sheobhushan Shukla and Anu Shukla in their article "The Novels of Amit Chaudhuri" writes:

One of the things for which they can be profoundly enjoyed is the rendering of the physicality of space in his novels. Calcutta happens to be a more intimate space for him than Bombay, Oxford and Claremont. Wherever Chaudhuri might be in the world and for whatever period, Calcutta is ever present before his mind's eye. In fact, Calcutta is the protagonist of all his novels. (9)

As a novelist who published his first novel, *A Strange and Sublime Address* in 1991, Chaudhuri unmistakably has a place in the fiction writers who are born-in-India. He is clearly different from the majority of his generation in that his fiction deals with issues neither connected to the fortune of nations, nor with matters of the heart and caste, but with the daily minor details of middle class Bengali life, of maach-bhaat (fish and rice), doi mishti (sweets and yoghurt), etc. Connected with Chaudhuri's fascination with local culture is his fascination with the details of things. He has an eye for everything that is related to the life of middle class, and in particular to Bengali middle class. His artistic focus falls on customs, traditions, superstitions, the way people, talk, take bath, drape themselves, meet, worship and indulge in singing and music, etc. The ordinary daily life of people, happenings, the routine changes in weather and season, are the stuff that makes the writings of Chaudhuri. His efficiency is based on these local features. Dr. Arun Kumar Yadav observing Chaudhuri's novels in "Socio-Cultural Aspects of Life: A Study of Amit Chaudhuri's Novels" writes:

It is not surprising that much of Amit Chaudhuri's novels are a celebration of local cultures and subjectivities. His uniqueness as a writer, however, rests largely on the fact that his most sensitive evocation of locality are done through an exclusive focus on the ordinary and the quotidian in fragmented, episodic form, never woven into holistic narrative, much less one about the development of the modern India. Locality and commonplace, in fact, construct themselves as mutual preconditions in his novels. (Web)

Among the city novels written by the Indian novelist on different themes relate directly or indirectly to the city of Calcutta, Chaudhuri's novels do have a special focus on some of the leading aspects of the present day city of Calcutta. The novel, *A Strange and Sublime Address*, is an impressionistic account of Bombay-bred Bengali boy, Sandeep's visit to Calcutta during a vacation. Sandeep after reaching at his Chhotomama's house in Calcutta got busy with his cousins but was keenly observing the old house of Chhotomama. Chaudhuri has compared the house of Sandeep in Bombay and that of Chhotomama in Calcutta. Chhotomama's house was an old house and the walls of the house were pale in colour and there were spider webs in the corner of the house. There were portraits of grandparents on the walls, the fan hung on the ceiling swung from here and there in its own unique way. It was different from his quiet and perfected apartment in Bombay still he liked everything at his Chhotomama's house in Calcutta. Chaudhuri's focus is always on his region, Calcutta and the novel is all about the visit of a boy to his maternal uncle's home. As he confessed to Galvan, a critic and says, "I wasn't consciously interested in Sandeep as a character. Sandeep was just there, but to me the city of Calcutta, and Chhotomama, and that house, those were what interested me" (221). Sandeep, on his visit to his uncle's house in Calcutta, finds the following wordings on the first page of his cousin's book:

Abhijit Das,
17 Vivekananda Road,
Calcutta (South),
West Bengal,
India
Earth
India
The Solar System
The Universe (72)

The word "local" is present in the novels in its plural dimensions, as references to different things like sights, smells, sounds, flavours and collective customs makes it clear. Sandeep perceives his immediate surroundings, the house of his uncle and the streets of Calcutta, as possessing an air of novelty,

enchantment, or even magic. The novel is a collection of the memories of Calcutta which makes Sandeep to think of this city as strange and sublime. He is the only child of a successful businessman from Bombay who has come to Calcutta to spend his holidays with his cousins, Abhi and Babla, maternal uncle and aunt. His journey with his mother is a journey from the silence of his parents' modern flat in Bombay to the traditional household of his Chhotomama in Calcutta. He has deep intimacy for the city, Calcutta as he was born here in the city. Moreover, he is curious about everything he comes across. He wants to know everything and always in thought of grabbing all the new things and information about his homeland. He experiences complete happiness when he is with his cousins, Abhi and Babla.

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would be too caught in jotting down the irrelevances and digressions that make up lives, and the life of a city, rather than a good story – till the reader would shout 'Come to the point' – and there would be no point, except the girl memorizing the rules of grammar, the old man in the easy-chair fanning himself. And the house with the small, empty porch that was crowded, paradoxically, with many memories and possibilities. The 'real' story, with its beginning, middle and conclusion, would never be told, because it did not exist. (48-49)

Chaudhuri has very beautifully described the cuisine of Calcutta and also described how the quality and taste of the food is enhanced after the use of spices during the preparation of food. Bengali cuisine is appreciated for its fabulous use of "panchphoron," a term used to refer to the five essential spices, namely mustard, fenugreek seed, cumin seed, aniseed, and black cumin seed. The specialty of Bengali food lies in the perfect blend of sweet and spicy flavours. For Bengalis, food is one of the most essential aspects of their day to day lives. Chaudhuri has tried to produce the aroma of his region and explores various kinds of food and food preparations of his region. The staple food of the people in Bengal is rice and fish. A typical Bengali has fish in every meal. A Bengali meal has portion of dal, vegetable, fish, meat, chutney, and dessert. In the centre of the platter there should be a small mound of piping hot rice flanked by vegetable fritters, wedges of lime, whole green chillies and perhaps a bit of pickle. In the novel Chaudhuri explains the patterns of eating:

Pieces of boal fish, cooked in turmeric, red chilli paste, onions and garlic, lay in a red, fiery sauce in a flat pan; rice, packed into an oven-white cake, had a spade-like spoon embedded in it; slices of fried aubergine were arranged on a white dish; dal was served from another pan with a drooping ladle; long, complex filaments of banana flower, exotic, botanical, lay in yet another pan in a dark sauce; each plate had a heap of salt on one side, a green chilli, and a slice of sweet-smelling lemon. The grown-ups snapped the chillies (each made a sound terse as a satirical retort) and scattered the tiny, deadly seeds in their food. (9)

Chaudhuri has described his region Calcutta not only as an attractive city but also views it as "a city of dust." There is construction going everywhere, roads are not in good condition, etc. The city of Calcutta is covered under dust and there is dust everywhere, in the houses, offices, etc. Chaudhuri reflects in his text how the dirty granular particles of dust which are present in the air of the city gradually engulf the whole of

the metropolis. He further writes that the power of dust has slowly transformed the city. There is a strange poetry in the movement of the dust as Chaudhuri himself waxes eloquent when he speaks about the city:

Calcutta is a city of dust. If one walks down the street, one sees mounds of dust like sand – dunes on the pavements, on which children and dogs sit doing nothing, . . . The roads are always being dug up, partly to construct the new underground railway system, or perhaps for some other obscure reason, such as replacing a pipe that doesn't work with another pipe that doesn't work. At such times, Calcutta is like a work of modern art that neither makes sense nor has utility, but exists for some esoteric aesthetic reason. (11)

With skilful ease Chaudhuri recreates on his pages the simple pleasures of childhood and of adult life and catches the comfortable rhythm of the everyday routine at 17, Vivekananda Road, Sandeep's Uncle's residence. Occasionally, this unoppressive routine receives a nudge, usually on Monday mornings, when Chhotomama leaves for work in a cascade of noise and confusion. Sandeep does not forget to describe the old-fashioned ambassador car of his Chhotomama and problem caused by it time and again. With the deft touches of a magician Chaudhuri conjures up several ways of spending a Sunday evening and says, "There were several ways of spending a Sunday evening. You could drive to Outram Ghat, and then stroll with your family by the river Hoogly, watching floating volitionlessly in the air, the steamers in the water, the smoky outline of the Howrah Bridge, like an altar on the horizon" (12-13).

Various places in Calcutta as Park Street Dhakuri, Gol Park, Gariahat Market, Rashbehari Avenue, River Hoogly, Chowringhee, Castlewood, and a sport shop are described with minute impressions on them. Along with these places, the neighbouring houses and the people residing in them are described with a great curiosity. In *A Strange and Sublime Address*, Chaudhuri takes the opportunity to present Calcutta which is not yet influenced by television and computers. He describes that it is a city which believes in its atmosphere and in that ambience describes the friendly meetings. Amitav Ghosh in his *The Shadow Lines* also presents the same picture of Calcutta:

At that time, in the early sixties there were so few cars around there that we thought nothing of playing football on the streets around the roundabout- making way occasionally for the number 9, or any other bus that happened to come snorting along. There were only raw scattered shacks on Gariahaat road then... (8)

While in Calcutta, Sandeep would remember Bombay sometimes. He would be unhappy without knowing the reason. Alone in the big apartment on the twenty third floor, he was like Adam in charge of paradise, given dominion over the birds and fishes. He could sense that loneliness he has to face in his parents flat. But in Chhotomama's house he had the liberty to do whatever he likes and even his cousins were there to make him happy. During these alternating bouts of happiness and unhappiness, when Sandeep felt his equilibrium disturbed, his thoughts would run something like this: "I wish it were the first day of the holidays and I had just come back from school, and I had just entered my room, and I had just heard we were going to Calcutta" (27). Chaudhuri's omniscient narration and single point of view is eminently suited to reveal Sandeep's viewpoint. Ironic contrast is another essential tool in the hands of the novelist. This contrast has settled in the very heart of the novel and comes out forcibly in a passage like this and the contrast is between the life of Bombay and Calcutta:

A YEAR AND A HALF passed before Sandeep came to Calcutta again. In Bombay, his father had been promoted to an even higher position in his company. One and a half years after the last holidays, Sandeep and his parents visited Calcutta in the winter. Sandeep felt what a statue in a museum would feel if he suddenly came to life and walked out into a shimmering crowd of people. (82)

During Sandeep's next vacations his father had also accompanied him. His presence gave the holidays a mood of hopefulness and potential. His father's presence also meant that this time they would be staying at the Grand Hotel on Chowringhee instead of Chhotomama's old house. At such times, Sandeep deserted his parents shamelessly and spent days and nights at the old house with his cousins. The novel ends with a final affirmation of life as it passes by in the fleeting glimpse of the Kokil, a bird which "gave an

overall impression of shapeliness and stateliness” (109). As it disappeared from the material world it seemed to draw a veil over the children’s eyes.

Chaudhuri’s fourth novel, *A New World* deals with the life of an American based Indian professor who visited Calcutta with his son after his divorce. Jayojit, the protagonist of the novel had come to Calcutta from United States of America. He was here just after the case of the custody of his son as the custody had gone to the mother, Amala. Jayojit’s son, Vikram had also accompanied his father and had come to spend his summer vacation at his grandparents’ house. Vikram called his parents as ‘ma’ and ‘baba’, the typical Bengali appellations for mother and father he had learnt this from his parents and Jayojit learnt these meanings from his parents. They arrived in Calcutta from the airport by a taxi. Vikram was staring out of the window, as if the taxi was the most natural place to be in. Although the taxi was not in good condition but still Vikram was very cheerful and enjoyed the drive in a taxi. Bonny, Vikram’s pet name, was tired of the journey and wanted some rest and asked his father whether they had reached or not and Jayojit replied:

‘Yes, Bonny, we’re here,’ he proclaimed cheerfully to his son; Bonny was his pet name, given him by Jayojit’s mother, a strange Western affection from the old days, to call children names like these - though his mother was not westernized. The boy, his pale face red with the heat, with one or two darker streaks - evidence of the journey, of plane seats, uncomfortable positions, attempts to sleep - on his cheeks, was looking quietly at the gates. (4)

Jayojit and Vikram reached the flat and their flat was on the fourth floor and the number of the flat was fourteen. There was a name plate on the door on which the name was written, ‘Ananda Chatterjee’. He was Jayojit’s father, Jayojit’s mother opened the door for them and she got too excited and she said, “You’ve come, Joy!” (6). Jayojit replied happily and bent his big body to touch his mother’s feet, in one of the awkward but an old-fashioned gestures that defined family’s values and traditions. Then her attention diverted to Vikram and she smiled and said, “Esho shone,” and then, remembering he might want her to speak in English, “Come to thamma.” (6). Subroto Roy’s remarks on the content of the novel is revealing in *The Literary Criterion*:

The bulk of this book is, however, not about adultery or America’s Indian immigrants or economics, as the author and publisher have projected it to be. The bulk has to do with the author speaking as he has done before, sometimes in excruciatingly tedious detail, about his own life as he has lived it in Calcutta’s upper middle class Sunny Park Apartments, half way between the traditional Bengali area of Gariahat market and the Muslim/Anglo Indian area of park cirus and park street. (10)

Jayojit’s mother was setting pieces of rui fish afloat in burning oil in the kitchen. She was not the best cook. It was not a big issue for Jayojit and even for his father as Jayojit was not very fond of food and his father was also not that fond of food. Admiral was health conscious and according to him food should be healthy and prepared in less oil. Traditionally made fish uses lots of oil for the preparation of any fish dish. Many commercially prepared foods are high in fat, salt, and sugar. When food is prepared at home one knows exactly which ingredients and how much of each is going into the food. According to the Admiral:

Home food was safe and insipid, and had a tranquillity about it; today there was a watery lentil daal in a chinaware bowl, fried rui, a dalna which was a combination of sweet gourd and cabbage leaves among other things, and a preparation of pabda fish in mustard. It was an honest, even joyful, effort by his mother, though it had not quite worked; but it was not wholly tasteless either. (14)

S. Shyamala in her paper on “Old Snapshots in New World: Realism in Amit Chaudhuri’s *A New World*” has said about author and the novel, “He attempts to map out the nation, its changing cultural configurations and economic preferences through the story of a globalised Bengali middle-class family of Calcutta” (152).

Jayojit’s mother forced Bonny for luchis but Jayojit stopped her as he was not used to oily meals and that too in mornings. He wanted to free her mother from cooking and from the kitchen. She was always in

the kitchen cooking one thing or the other. Jayojit was worried about his health as he did not want any sort of health problems. So he ate less and his mother got worried and said, “O ma - what’s this!’ she said in surprise. ‘But you don’t even eat much lunch! You must at least have one proper meal a day. Ma, I’ve been eating better than I have for months -- and he meant it” (46). One afternoon Jayojit went out for a walk and saw few school children on his way. He remembered his own days of school and remembered his friends as he studied in a school in Ooty. He came to the main road and confronted a tram and he started getting irritated by all these things still he thought:

This city irritated him; it was like an obstacle; yet he’d decided that it would give him the space for recoupment that he thought was necessary now. Nothing had changed from a year ago; only the pavement here seemed more dusty than he’d remembered and was like a path that ran parallel to the road. He walked on, until he saw three familiar shops in the distance, on the left, on the other side; a provisions store, a fast-food outlet, and a drugstore. He felt not so much a sense of déjà vu as one of ironic, qualified continuity. (51)

Jayojit’s brother, Ranajit had married a girl, Anita of his choice. Their love affair flourished in Delhi and that time Jayojit was in America for his studies on a scholarship. His marriage was an arranged one and he often thought what made him marry Amala. He met her in their new house at Jodhpur Park:

Hi, I’m Amala. Every word pronounced carefully, her lips becoming a small ‘o’ at the middle syllable of her name There had been some confusion about the details; West Bengalis, carried the bride around the fire; in East Bengal - and he’d thought this was true of Bengal in general - she walked round it. Moreover, before the meeting of the eyes, the ‘shubho drishti’, in West Bengal, a large betel leaf was held in front of the bride’s face; this was news to him. (145)

Jayojit had gone to reconfirm the Bangladesh Biman tickets and on the way home he got two mirror cushion covers, a bed cover for himself, and two small brass birds for his neighbour, a cardiac surgeon. He also got a sari for his mother as a gift. He also showed her mother the other things he had got for himself and his friends in America. This proves:

A taste for regional handicrafts had developed in him since he’d begun to live abroad, and one day he’d begun to look at one table cloth, one cushion cover and another with new eyes, comparing, evaluating. His mother liked the bed-spread in her quiet way, and was attempting to picture, in her mind’s eye, what it would look like in her son’s bedroom. ‘It’ll look very bright over *there*,’ she said at last. (167)

Jayojit had to leave Calcutta and go back to United States. Jayojit left some bakshish with his mother for Maya, the maid servant. His mother had bought *Sandesh* (sweets) for him but Jayojit left them due to the security reasons at airport. Then they moved towards the airport in a taxi, where they came to the barrier where visitors were not allowed forward. Jayojit turned quickly and touched his parents’ feet and then Jayojit’s mother bent forward to hug Bonny and eavesdropped on every word as she said to him: ‘Bye bye, shone. Bhalo theko. You will write to thamma, no?’ ‘Ok,’ he said, nodding dolefully. He lifted his face to be kissed, reluctantly. (194)

Jayojit also experienced a slight feeling of dislocation when he realized that although they had left Calcutta at half past seven, it was still seven thirty in Bangladesh. He saw there a European woman who was in Salwar Kameez talking to Bonny. She asked about Jayojit and told about herself that she was Mary and was in Calcutta for some work. Then Jayojit asked her:

‘What did you really think of Calcutta?’ Jayojit asked. ‘Was it too much for you?’ ‘I liked it!’ she smiled, as if surprised herself. She had light brown eyes and the bridge of her nose had reddened with the sun. ‘It’s certainly like no other place I’ve been to! Next time I come I’m going to try and learn the language.’(198)

At last they boarded the flight for America from Dhaka. Jayojit then unzipped his bag and took out the *Asian Age* to read it.

Chaudhuri has depicted the small, ordinary details of everyday life of an individual. He focuses on the presentation and peculiarities of Calcutta and its inhabitants. He believes it to be important for the writer to express realistically in their writings people, culture and land of their region. He has tried to bring out the essence of his region, Calcutta using different aspects. He has talked about the routine, commonplace activities and by doing so he brings out the local colour of his region, Calcutta.

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