Between Worlds: Alienation and Belonging in Amit Chaudhuri's *A New World*

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Abstract
This paper reads Amit Chaudhuri's novel A New World through the lenses of diaspora and alienation, feeling at home in a strange place. The paper puts Jayojit Chatterjee's emotional and psychological life in focus and argues that it is the comanchya of family relationships and memory and everydayness rather than exile or forced migration which leads to diasporic identity. The study employs close reading and the theoretical work of diaspora thinkers such as Stuart Hall, Vijay Mishra, and James Clifford to claim that Chaudhuri portrays diaspora as a silent interior event in which he experiences detachment from the subcontinent and to his adopted nation. Both homely and mundane as well as intergenerational, the essay presents new insights into alienation in diaspora literature. Subsequent research might extend this approach to Chaudhuri's other novels or Indian diasporic writing more broadly.

Keywords: Diaspora, Dislocation, Alienation, Identity, Indian Tradition, Family, Calcutta, Postcolonial Fiction

Introduction

The lyricism of Amit Chaudhuri's Sahitya Akademi Award-winning novel *A New World* does not seek the hallmarks of diasporic literature but rather focuses on the nuances of displacement in symbols and silence. The story revolves around a Bengali economist, Jayojit Chatterjee working in the US who visited Calcutta with his young son Bonny during a summer vacation. In Jayojit's fleeting comeback, Chaudhuri takes a meditative exploration of alienation, not just from space but also from family ties, social conventions, and the passage of time. *A New World*: The title conjures images of utopian efforts like Thomas More's Utopia, Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and allude to visions of discovery and transformation. However, strangeness is dulled as the narrative unfolds. Jayojit sees a "new world" but it is not a world of radical change or an epic voyage into the future; rather, it is an incremental world of changing perceptions, emotional adaptations, and cultural compromises.

Although homecoming is often loaded with emotion, Jayojit's return to Calcutta does not fit the typical notion of homecoming. The city in which he was born and where he grew up now feels alien and almost foreign to him. The apartment in Sunny Park, where his retired parents live, symbolises a kind of stability that radically contrasts with his own life, which is marked by divorce, child custody disputes, and emotional isolation. This sense of dislocation was apparent in his daily interaction.

Admittedly, Jayojit goes through acts of belonging that seem both authentic and staged, be it when he is arguing over a taxi fare or going through a ritual of touching his father's feet in respect. His insistence that his son Bonny also perform this gesture (Pranam karo, Bonny) reflects his desire to observe culturally rooted practices despite personal and geographical disarray. The reflection of tradition, filled with such instances, is replicated throughout this novel. However, Jayojit is an Indian to the core, at least on this front, and has not left behind the Indian practice of respecting elders, even in the United States. This action becomes a potent metaphor for the way in which a diaspora is not only a geographical or physical state but also an emotional and cultural state.

People talk a lot about diasporic literature, but Amit Chaudhuri's A New World is usually overlooked—especially when it comes to how he handles the emotional side of living in the diaspora. Most people focus on the big stuff: migration, nostalgia, and clashes between cultures. Chaudhuri, however, pays more attention to small, everyday moments, the quiet tension inside families, and a kind of loneliness that is not always loud or obvious. This article digs into that feeling of alienation—what it means emotionally, how family and relationships across generations shape who you become in a new place, and how the idea of diaspora is more than just being physically far from home. It is also about what happens inside.

Chaudhuri writes in a style that combines minimalism and lyricism. He shuns the grand epic or sweeping narratives typical of diasporic literature—mass migrations, identity crises, cultural conflict–and instead attends to the details of everyday life: a walk to the market, eating pabda fish, or a conversation about washing machines. Emotionally loaded, these small seeming moments This book moves at a slow pace and deliberately, so it is an invitation to recognise that the sense of time standing still experienced by folks in the diaspora often goes unremarked at home. Jayojit's summer in Calcutta serves as a pause in the relentless pace of modern life. This fragile stillness of time offers a space for reflection and memory, which Chaudhuri grants readers. Jayojit is neither in a rush to settle nor to escape; he takes the time to observe and experience. Chaudhuri's portrayal of Bonny further complicates the narrative's tranquillity. Bonny is often free, conscious, and an innocent soul who embodies this innocence and vulnerability that both echoes his father's hesitance to explore his past. They share an affectionate bond characterised by gentle care rather than overt affection, reflecting the novel's subtle emotional tones.

The intergenerational divide in the Chatterjee family mirrors the cultural conflict between tradition and modernity in contemporary India. Admiral Anand Chatterjee, Jayojit's father, comes from a service background: a retired naval officer representing the principles of discipline, restraint, and frugality. Even in his former senior status and high-ranking position, he opted for public transportation and avoided cars, reflecting his belief in an older system in which humility and order override ease or showiness. He is driven by a sense of duty, a life structure that has his wife, Ruby Chatterjee, reflected in her quiet home presence that creates the 'ideal,' nurturing Indian woman who is self-effacing. Ruby does not express her love in the usual emotional outbursts but through food, which plays a pivotal role in Bengali culture. She makes typical Bengali food such as luchi, pabda fish curry, and other dishes that Jayojit remembers well and Amit Chaudhuri recalls so evocatively. Infused with cultural symbolic meaning, such meals serve as emotional bridges across generations and between native lands and diasporas.

However, as traditional as the home, it cannot escape the modern milieu where it is placed. Jayojit's plan to purchase his mother a washing machine is not just about bringing her some luxury; it is about trying to modernise the house and reduce his mother's burden. Admiral Chatterjee's refusal reflects the tension between older and younger generations over the definition of what is truly required versus what can be considered luxury. Gender perspectives on housekeeping came into play here, where Admiral considered the offer to be "unnecessary." His response does not simply concern technology but also control; he pushed back against a modern worldview encroaching on old ways of life. In fact, in Chatterjee's household, emotional expression is

formal and understood. When Jayojit's parents want him to stay longer, they do not express this desire aloud. Instead, they provide vague suggestions, following emotional etiquette based on modesty and self-control. These delicate dynamics capture a society in transition where emotional ties are deeply entrenched, but the manifestation of those attachments is reshaped by global exposure, materialism, consumer culture, and personal freedom. Amit Chaudhuri skillfully examines these tensions without dramatisation. By using an ordinary common occurrence, everyday events such as a dialogue over buying household items, a shared meal, or a seemingly innocent comment on food trends, Chaudhuri breathes life into them. This quiet narrative strategy enables the novel to render personal and domestic worlds in which cultural traditions and modern values collide and mutually reconstitute the conflict between cultural tradition and modernity.

In contrast to typical diasporic stories *A New World* offers an almost meditative view of displacement. While the tropes of exile, trauma, and longing for a lost homeland have saturated typical diasporic stories, this novel contrasts the grand themes of rupture and cultural dislocation. Amit Chaudhuri moves away from grand themes in his exploration of diasporic consciousness, which is quiet and internal. Jayojit, the protagonist, is neither a refugee nor a political exile, so he does not flee the United States out of forced expatriation or a desire to go back. Instead, he returns to India with a soft feeling of being at odds with himself emotionally and psychologically. As much as he literally returns to his homeland, Jayojit is alienated not by borders but by personal history, failed relationships, and the tension between cultural ideals and real life.

Chaudhuri challenges the dominant diasporic discourse, in which displacement and geographic movement are linked to a loss of normative identities. Transnational experience neither undermines nor reconstructs Jayojit's identity; indeed, retains itself while being slowly agitated by this continuous flow of memories, modernity, and family conflict. He returns to Calcutta not as a homecoming but as a plunge into a familiar but uncharted space. It does not idealise the city as a wellspring of roots or demonise it as oppressive. Rather, it is the setting for Jayojit's tacit negotiation with himself and his search for meaning, coherence, and emotional clarity in the wake of divorce and amidst fatherhood.

Jayojit exists in a liminal space, negotiating between the binaries of Calcutta and America, tradition and modernity, detachment, and intimacy. Rather, he is a diasporic individual whose alienation stems not just from cultural otherness but from a larger emotional dislocation. He remains an outsider even in his own family, balancing the rigour of his father's restrained affection and beautiful distance with his mother's unspoken expectations. The most fleeting but cherished moments are his interactions with his son, Bonny, where a certain tenderness exists, but it is also a painful reminder of what he has lost, struggling to reinvent himself as a father in the wake of the collapse of the marriage. This idea aligns with Stuart Hall's belief that identity is not set in stone; it shifts over time. This depiction extends the horizon of diasporic literature beyond fixation on the homeland and exile. Jayojit has no illusion of nostalgic homecoming to reclaim a bygone past; rather, this journey meditates on the complicated and epistemic way that identity anchors itself in in-betweenness. Chaudhuri echoes the quiet transition of Jayojit's internal world through delicate, observational, and minimalist language. Focusing on the contours of the diaspora instead of its geopolitical markers, *A New World* continually reimagines displacement as a journey within. It offers the notion that diaspora is not always about geography or loss, but the quiet transformations of self that take shape in the interstitial space between belonging and un-belonging.

In *A New World*, memory acts as a soft but potent narrative force, shaping Jayojit's homecoming as a meditative return rather than a dramatic one. His visit is an opportunity for him to look back, reminisce about his childhood, his failed marriage, and balance the shifting nature of his emotional state. Jayojit finally realises that memories are not grand historical events; they present themselves in quite mundane details, the distinct taste of pabda fish, the smell from his parents' apartment, and train announcements at a crowded station. Through these sensory details, a conduit of memory and

belonging, Chaudhuri established embedded cultural continuity. Chaudhuri's unique narrative style plays an essential role. The ordinary details of protagonist Jayojit's everyday routines elevate the narrative's emotional depth. What he describes is not a society on fire, but rather one in slow-motion metamorphosis, where tradition persists daily and in family memory.

Jayojit and his son Bonny are the geopolitical axes on which this cultural transmission occurs. Bonny plays the part of a curious little boy, but his questions about fish, the silent mimicry of that grandfather, and the willingness to kneel out of respect and touch those feet show that some aspects of culture are not taught but rather assimilated through observation and repetition. These are certainly not the epic gestures of resistance or acts of reclamation that the novel depicts, but rather the slow, organic evolution of diasporic identity. Thus, *A New World* represents continuity not as nostalgic attachment but as embodied where quotidian life, with all its mundanity, itself constitutes the foundation on which tradition persists and identity develops.

Conclusion

A New World reinterprets the concept of diaspora and points out that it is not loud, brazen rupture, but a quiet, internal displacement. Jayojit's emotional void, internal straddling of dual cultures, and sensation of being frozen in time reflect the sensibility of the diaspora, a gentle state of being displaced from both his motherland and the land of his abode. The languorous prose, poetic diction, and focus on banal elements of life reveal a new style of diasporic writing from Chaudhuri. Smoother than the prose that comprises its subtitles, *A New World* presents a contemplative view of identity as an ongoing journey rather than a fixed endpoint. Once again, the novel offers poignant reminders of the ways in which the fabric of life–traditions, relationships, country, language, memory, and sensory cues–remains an unmooring yet persistent means of generating meaning and connection amid alienation and dislocation.

This article looks at diaspora in A New World as something quiet and deeply emotional, not just a dramatic story about moving from one place to another. This shows how Jayojit feels alienated, not because he is far from home, but because of emotional distance, complicated family ties, and the challenge of fitting into a new culture. The writer zooms in on daily routines, memories, and the small details of home life, which brings out Amit Chaudhuri's unique approach to writing about the diaspora. In conclusion, this study reminds us that alienation does not always come from being physically uprooted; it can settle in even when one is surrounded by the familiar.

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