

## LITERARY TECHNIQUES OF AMIT CHAUDHURI

**M. Subitha**

Research Scholar,  
Department of English,  
A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College,  
Poondi, Thanjavur, Tamilnadu, India

**Dr. J. Uma Samundeeswari**

Assistant Professor,  
Department of English,  
A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College,  
Poondi, Thanjavur, Tamilnadu, India

### Abstract

A successful piece of art is formed only through the combination of good content and good form. As achieved content is the criterion of successful art, a thought of technique becomes essential in a study. It is significant to study Chaudhuri's artistic achievement by analyzing his use of some major literary techniques- characterization, point of view, intermixing of genres, imagery, multilingual language, flashback and the style and symbols. Though a socially committed writer, Amit Chaudhuri is essentially an artist in the true sense of the word.

**Key Words:** Characterization, point of view, intermixing genres, imagery, multilingual, flashback

Writers use various narrative techniques/devices to formulate powerful stories, just as an artist makes use of special paints and brushes to make visual images. Narrative strategies serve many purposes, including supporting in character development, building up plot and conveying the story's world to existence for readers. Narrative techniques present a deeper sense for the reader and facilitate the reader to employ imagination to visualize situations. There are various techniques employed by the novelist to explain, explore and objectify their themes or ideology. It includes First-person narration, Second-person narration, Third-person narration, Flashback, Foreshadowing, Back story, Frame story, stream of consciousness, Magical realism, etc.

Use of literary technique is an important weapon for the writers to write his work of art successfully. The writer using the right technique is able to convey his ideas to his readers. It produces some impact in the novel. It acts as a mediator through which the writer can interpret or

transform the reality. Amit Chaudhuri in his novels depicts the Bengali culture and its people. His novel throws light on themes like relationship, culture, music, food, etc. His own region Calcutta plays an important role in the development of the narrative and characterization.

Chaudhuri's characterization is truthful presentation of the middle class in the Indian society. Almost all character belongs to this class and his novels deal with their hopes and frustrations. Chaudhuri presents his characters with combination of detached and good humoured acceptance of life in which evil exists along with good.

In the novel, *Freedom Song* Bhaskar's mother Abha being a typical mother, she cares for her children, she expresses her concern about her eldest son's future and career, but she understands her son and he has concern for the people. "Sometimes when Bhaskar's mother heard them rehearsing, she thought about Bhaskar worrying for the poor people in the world and she thought just how difficult a place to live in and understand the world was. Look after your own, was her own view" (Chaudhuri, *Freedom* 93).

Chaudhuri gives some typical aspects and details of the marriage life but they reveal as much as possible. He gives another vision of the married couples when their children grow up and leave their parents in India and go to abroad. When Khuku's son, Bablu had gone to America, to complete his doctorate in Economics, she felt lonely when her husband was in office. Shib being a dedicated manager he never worried of Khuku, she wished she could be with her husband, but her wish came true during the days of the curfew.

During the curfew...ten days of nothing happening ...She'd had her wish come true and Shib at home with her for twenty - four hours of the day. It had been a mixed blessing, this enforced, artificial reunion. It was as if a train they'd been on had halted somewhere unexpectedly and they'd been forced to take a holiday. (Chaudhuri, *Freedom* 135)

During the curfew, Shib was not comfortable at home as he had some kind of abnormality, this made Khuku worried, "Neglecting to shave, even; a grey stubble appearing on his cheeks. The truth is, he was not used to being at home. And with Bablu away they were less like a couple than a pair of lodgers" (Chaudhuri, *Freedom* 136).

His realism is also seen in his use of language. His language is simple, direct and free from ornamentation. He uses Regional terms and idioms. He uses many expressions which are purely "Indian" in all his novels. This gives his novel a local flavor. He makes his characters voice their joys and hopes by using expressions in Hindi, Bengali and English.

Chaudhuri's language is an expression of Indian sensibility, Indian tone and Indian color. Indianness is seen in some narrations and dialogues of his novels. Bangala language and Calcutta are the most frequent aspects of his works. In *A Strange and Sublime Address*, Sandeep is referred as language orphans of modern India, "Sandeep could hardly read Bengali. He could hardly write it. Brought up in Bombay, away from his own province, Bengal, he was one of the innumerable language-orphans of modern India".

The names of the characters are in Bengali: Chhotamama (younger maternal uncle), Mamima(maternal aunt), Chordimoni(grand uncle), Dadamoni(elder brother), Shonamama(elder maternal uncle), Boudi(sister-in -law), Didimoni(elder sister)

Intermixing of genres, poetry and fiction has been the greatest contribution of him to the Indian novel written in English. He uses a long line of poetic narratives in English. For example: He was taught by his guru that tanpura containing four strings can provide only two notes. The first note is called mother note and the second, the father note:

The four strings provide only two notes as a background to the song; *sa*, or *shadja*, the first, the mother-note, from which all other notes come, with which one's relationship is permanent and unambiguous, and the second note, depending on the raag, the father-note, circumstantial but constructive. (Chaudhuri, Afternoon 44)

A narrative technique used by Amit Chaudhuri for the progression of his story is stream of consciousness technique.

Stream of consciousness is a flow of thoughts which is inwardly expressed. It was first used in Nineteenth Century by the American philosopher William James. In narrative fiction this technique was used by James Joyce in his works *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Amit Chaudhuri also adopted this technique in his novels. For example, in the opening portion of *Freedom Song*,

It was a solitary voice, saying Allah-hu-akbar and other familiar but incomprehensible syllables. Though it was coming from quite far away, for the nearest mosque was a mile northward, she could hear it clearly, as if it were being recited in this very lane, and its presence filled the grey area between her sleep and waking. (Chaudhuri, Freedom 3)

Here Chaudhuri captures the consciousness of Khuku. The language is also used as a technique in his novels which often gives the novel a poetic feel. He has used the standard English words in his novels, but sometimes he uses Bengali words and Hindi words wherever it is required. His characters most of the time talk in Bengali. For example, *torpa* (your legs), *Bipad Nashini* (Destroyer of Distress), *lagna* (the auspicious moment), *dholak*, *dhuti*, *kurta*, and so on.

In every novel 'Point of View' is very important. It describes the narrator's position in relation to the story being told. Point of view can be classified into two classes, internal and the external. A story seen internally is narrated in the first person by one of its participants; a story seen externally is narrated in the third person.

In a first person narrative the story is presented by a narrator who is the character in the story. The narrator reveals the plot by referring as 'I' or 'We'. In this point of view the narrator's story revolves around him and he openly conveys his inner thoughts to the audience/readers. Chaudhuri's novel *Afternoon Raag* is in first person narrative: "I remember the tentative shyness with which I touched it" (Chaudhuri, Afternoon 44).

The third person narrative is commonly used in classic novels, especially by Jane Austen, Leo Tolstoy, Charles Dickens and George Eliot. In third person narration the characters are referred by the narrator as 'He', 'She', 'It' or 'They'.

Chaudhuri's *A Strange and Sublime Address* is in third person narrative. The narrator is Omniscient. Here the narrator knows everything and has the privilege to perceive the action, feelings, thoughts of the characters.

They [the children] lived in their own world which was half illusion, because it was founded so much on fantasy and half real, palpably real, because its tissue was wholly made of sensations. When they would grow up, and their lives and the lives of the grown-ups would be retold, they would seem like fairy tales and legends....They roamed in a silent, self-created web of sounds, smells and colors. (Chaudhuri, Strange 121)

*Freedom Song* is in third person narrative. “Bhaskar oversaw what everyone else was doing; checked if any fresh orders had come through; dialed several phone numbers for fresh orders” (Chaudhuri, *Freedom* 166).

He makes use of the flashback techniques in some of his novels to bring to light past events or happenings in the lives of his characters. Flashback is a narrative technique that takes the narrative back in time. It is used to recall the events that happened in past. It is usually presented as the character’s memories or as back stories. In *Afternoon Raag* when the narrator is in Oxford, he gets the news that his guru is dead and he is no more; he feels lonely and he feels that hereafter he will not get any opportunity to sing in a public gathering. When he remembers his guru, who is no more alive, he feels that he saw him in a dream. He says:

When one remembers a scene from the past in which one is with a loved one who is now dead, it is not like a memory at all, but like a dream one is having before his death, a premonition....When we recall the dead, the past becomes a dream we are dreaming foretelling death, though in our waking moments we cannot properly interpret it or give it significance. My memory of the day I bought the tanpura with my guru is like such a dream. (Chaudhuri, *Afternoon* 46)

Chaudhuri, here gives nothing pathetic or heartrending descriptions about his guru’s death, the narrator expresses this in a quiet way. He accepts the reality and he knows that the past cannot replace the present reality. He thinks that the days he lived with his guru is not a memory to him but it is like a dream.

In all his novels the flavour and fragrance of Bengali food, rituals and visits to relatives’ house are portrayed with a touch of humour that amuses the readers from the beginning to end. *Maach-bhaat* (fish and rice) and *doi-mishti* (sweets and yogurt) are the examples.

The style that Chaudhuri adopted for all these three novels is epigrammatic, detached, comic and often mildly ironic. In *A Strange and Sublime Address* the title itself, sets the tone of the whole novel for the way in which Abhi elaborates his home address to include India with the solar system and the universe. This is downright absurd and comic. It is a child’s way of having fun with the world.

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

Here the narrator remarks, “It was a strange and sublime address” (Chaudhuri, *Strange* 101).

The use of symbols is another stylistic device employed by Chaudhuri. For instance, in *Freedom Song*, the house stands as a symbol of unity and differences among the members of the family. It indicates the feeling of stability and brings an emotional attachment. Bhaskar’s mother remembers those days when her children were in school and compares that with the present day of house they live in “now the house was silent, lives took shape, things changed, the widened, unused spaces wandered about the house” (Chaudhuri, *Freedom* 46).

The use of imagery is also used as a technique in his novels. In *A Strange and Sublime Address* Chaudhuri criticizes the conditions of Calcutta: “the old houses, with their reposeful walls, are crumbling to slow dust, their once- gleaming gates are rusting. Dust flakes off the ceiling in offices; the buildings are becoming dust, the roads are becoming dust”.

The tone is more secluded and sedentary and less noisy. Even in the homely details, there is the kind of slow rhythm and a meditative quietness that strike the readers. This is perhaps because the novel is made up of past memories and present musings and blends the personal with the impersonal. The readers are impressed by the range and diversity that this novelist seems to have at his command. Thus, the way he narrates his stories are unique and different from his contemporary writers.

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