

## **A SENSE OF DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS IN AMIT CHAUDHURI SELECT**

### **NOVELS**

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### **Abstract**

*Double consciousness is a state of internal conflict which is experienced by almost every people in diaphora. It was first introduced by the American sociologist and historian William Edward Burghardt Du Bois in his auto ethnographic work The Souls of Black Folk. It actually refers to the psychological challenge faced by the Afro American black people. They keep on moving backward and forward between the two cultural spaces- one is superior white culture and latter is their own black culture. In this sense migrated people keep on oscillating between the two geographical territories- One is their own mother land in which they find their belongings which are missing in foreign land and other is alien foreign land through their psychological consciousness. But their swaying psychological dolna lands ultimately nowhere. This present paper looks at select samples from the collection mentions above and correlates them with the psychology of the migrated people.*

Keywords: Auto ethnographic, Psychological, Territories, Alien, Migrated

Amit Chaudhuri, along with Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Shashi Tharoor, Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh may be categorized as one of the representatives of the new generation of Indian English novelists. He is much acclaimed for his depiction of empirical view of modern society, especially Calcutta. He is different from most of his contemporaries in that his fiction deals with issues neither related to the destiny of nations, nor with matters of the heart and caste, but with the quotidian minutiae of middle-class Bengali life. Besides his love for Calcutta, he depicts its other cloudy side such as a city of dust, a city of traffic-jams, a city of frequent power-cuts, drooping conditions of the telephones, problem of

generation gap, communal riots etc. This kind of attitude to culture and self gives his novels the quality of Ambivalence. So in his writings, the elements of exile, self, and ambivalence are prominent and these qualities along with style, mood, feeling, and evocation distinguish him from a great many other contemporary novelists belonging to India. In this context let discuss how Amit Chaudhuri throws light on double consciousness through his characters.

In recent decades, there has been growing academic interest in the notion of multiculturalism, dislocation, identity crisis and the exile from home culture as well as one's own self. Some of the prominent writers and their contributions to this field are V.S.Naipaul's '*A House of Mr Biswas*,' Salman Rushdi's '*Satanic Verses*' and '*Midnight's Children*', Vikram Seth's '*A Suitable Boy*' Rohinton Mistry's '*Such a Long Journey*' and so on.

A number of novels stand out in this field by women writers, among the noteworthy novelists are Kamala Markandaya's '*The Nowhere Man*,' Anita Desai's '*Journey to Ithaca*,' Jhumpa Lahiri's '*The Namesake*' Kiran Desai's '*The Inheritance of Loss*,' Chitra Banerjee Divakurni's '*The Mistress of Spices*', Kavita Daswani's '*Everything Happens for a Reason*' and so on.

There are two kinds of exiles that characterize in the novels of Amit Chaudhuri— one is exile from culture and another is exile from own self. This stretches memories belonging to home, family, culture and identity. In this context Chaudhuri's own experience shakes his psychological consciousness:

I discovered A Strange and Sublime Address by accident. This was about 18 years ago, six years after its publication. It was a late winter afternoon in a deserted provincial university library in a sub-Himalayan small town, where the procurement and availability of books continue to be a matter of chance. I'd exhausted the day's quota of two books that were issued to postgraduate students. There was something magical about this book that did not allow me to set it aside for another day. What if I didn't find it again? I stood near a

window that the feeble winter light was still coming through. I read it greedily, breathlessly.

W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of 'Double Consciousness' is a comprehensive one to portray the dilemma of immigrants across the globe. In his first novel '*A Strange and Sublime Address*', Sandeep, the main character of the novel, seems to be a portrayal of Chaudhuri's own childhood, who celebrates the simple joys of childhood-bathing, eating, sleeping and exploring the city. Through the eyes of the ten-year-old, a vast, kaleidoscopic backdrop emerges, and even such a simple act as bathing takes on the overtones of a ritual and a keen sense of nostalgia assails us.

The two hours of golden stillness has ended. The cars and crowded buses were on the roads again; Abhi and Babla [the two cousin brothers of Sandeep] would come back home from school [for their school bus might have been halted in the traffic jam]; pigeons flapped their wings and rose above rooftops, a clean universe of rooftops and terraces" (Chaudhuri 81)

In '*Afternoon Raag*', the narrator, when physically situated in Oxford, often returns in his thoughts to his family home in Bombay and, later, to Calcutta. He straddles the two worlds literally—on his trips back and forth—and more importantly, imaginatively. Living between two geographical territories, struggling between two identities which shakes his psychological spaces and gives him unhomely feeling that at times seem to be mutually exclusive, are also ways in which immigrants describe how they feel about their experiences and their different personal and social identities. In this context he has no pure identity and continuously oscillating between the two geographical spaces- 'home,' a space of comfort, happiness and security and 'unhomeliness,' a space of alienation, unhappiness and insecurity.

The notion of double consciousness is peculiar. Because the colonized and migrated people always look themselves through the eyes of colonizers. They have imitated them because they have been indoctrinated that colonizers are superior. Due to this they have started following and ignored their own cultures and traditions and for this they are middle of nowhere. The similar thing occurs with diaphora people. In '*Freedom Song*' Chaudhuri depicts the decline and eventual destruction of the family business and the loss of the extended family's houses. This loss of house and the decline of the family business, in this novel, is a metaphor for the decline of 'old' middle class values in modern India, which shows that Chaudhuri has great concern for Indian values coated in Bengali sensibility. His fourth novel, '*A New World*' tells the story of Jayojit Chatterjee, a divorced writer living in America, who returns to his parents' home in Calcutta with his son Vikram (Bonny) for summer break. The remembrance of small activities of everyday happening refer to the narrator's internal conflict of double consciousness.

If one walks down street, one sees mounds of dusts like sanddunes on the pavements, on which children and dogs sit doing

nothing, while sweating labourers dig into the macadam with

Spades and drills"[Chaudhuri 11]

The study will take a close look at the select novels and use interpretation and compare and contrast. The study will include various literary and non-literary works which are of relevance to the study. Biographical and historical elements will be used in order to understand the social and cultural atmosphere in which the writer lives and writes. It will also make a close look at the emerging of new migration and its other diverse and evolving forms. It will also explore Cultural Materialism, New Historicism and post colonial theory as a framework to improve the research.

After the above discussion it is quite well noted that though Amit Chaudhuri has been considered as an emerging well-known Indian English writer, however, till date he has not been explored properly to do justice to his work. It calls for the attention of a full length research to bring out the nuances of the texts and highlight the issue of double consciousness he has dealt with in his works show Chaudhuri as a minute observer of the psychology of the characters in his narratives. It also further shows Chaudhuri's own internal conflict in which he frequently keeps on swaying between the two geographical territories. Here lies the success of the theme of double consciousness in migrated people's perspective.

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