



## A Vivacious Assessment in Contrasted Cohort on Amit Chaudhuri's "A New World"

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### ABSTRACT

In contrast to the world created in his two earlier novels, the family were anchored deep with its members tied by bonds of love, in this novel the security and assurance of care were absent. Things were falling apart and everyone was drifting. In this novel has taken a miniaturist concept called family had subtly dealt with it and sharply compared the two generations in the institution of family. The older couple who was the admiral and his wives represents loyalty to the institution of family. On the other hand, the younger couple, the admiral's younger son Jayojit and his wife Amala got divorce after eleven years of their marriage. After a year of divorce, Jayojit, a semi-successful writer and economist, finally retrieved his son Bonny for his summer holidays. They leave their home in the American Midwest and went back to Calcutta, to Bonny's grandparents, the Admiral and his wife.

**KEYWORDS:** *Generations, gradual liberalization, culture, Economic Liberalization*

### A Vivacious Assessment in Contrasted

The central character Jayojit Chatterjee with his young son Vikram comes to Calcutta from the United States to visit his parents for two months in the sweltering pre-monsoon season.

*"He had come back in April, the aftermath of the lawsuit and Court proceedings in two countries still fresh, the voices echoing behind him. But he felt robust."* NW (P.3)

The father-and-son sojourn back to the city in which Jayojit grew up can be seen as a pause of recovery and reflection for Jayojit before he resumes his busy life in the United States. The divorce was stressful, but Jayojit and his ex-wife were able to reach a reasonable agreement concerning the joint custody of their son Jayojit's father could not reconcile himself to the datum that the boy had to ticket along part of the year with Jayojit, and then went back to his mother, who was lived away on the vast American map, with someone else.

The narrative was confined to Calcutta and to Jayojit's flashback to the American Midwest, where he teaches and to returns in due course. As they were the severe hot months of the year, Jayojit and Bonny had to adapt themselves to these changed climatic conditions. Jayojit though returns to his home land, he refuses to immerse himself in his native city's more corporeal pleasures, and was too careful about the change in his food habits. He keeps himself brand-name clean by went into a chemist to order his Colgate toothpaste and his Dove soap and his ponds talc. The closest he got to real interaction with Calcutta, the little trips he makes to the bank where he quietly imagines amours with the tellers. Otherwise the city's crowded voices were like the sound of televisions from neighboring flats a 'form of public dreaming'.

Jayojit had been much influenced by his teachers at school and his father during his creative years. When Jayojit's parents were at Cochin, he used to come to vacation, settle himself in air conditioner room as it

was sweltering in Cochin. Jayojit almost topped the list at Stephen's and had been selected to scholarship interview.

He found himself in America, with some of his friends, one an assistant editor of a national daily Rajen Mehra, another lecturer of the JNU. Jayojit was one of the fifteen million "Non-Resident Indians," whom the servers in his father club regard as once people might compel been regarded holy men. As part of the Indian Diaspora, Jayojit participates in a new world which takes on many faces. Although a Brahmin by inheritance, Jayojit knows no Sanskrit but had read the Upanishad in English translation.

He finds the simple act of negotiating a taxi ride in Calcutta difficult, for he had lost the knack of speech to these people and it often made him rude. While Jayojit had lost touch with his own people and culture to such a degree that it was hard to retrieve for his American born son, Indian culture was terra incognita. Vikram, strangely nick named Bonny, spends his play time with *Jurassic Park* toy dinosaurs, but had no idea who the popular Hindu god Hanuman was when he saw a picture of the monkey god pasted to the windshield of taxi.

*"A small cut-out of Hanuman, Pasted to the bottom of the windshield, Had caught his eye. Hanuman, above the two motionless wipers, was in Mid-flight, holding a mountain above him: the Gandhamadan parbat. That's Hanuman, the monkey god"...* NW (P.188)

If Jayojit had no longer feels at home in India, he was also estranged from his adoptive America. When he thought of his life there, and comes to his mind that was wandering the aisles of a chill supermarket hoping to bump into an acquaintance. The ties that once bound him to an identity were broken or frayed and the novel charts his minute progress in trying to re-establish a workable sense of himself.

*"Jayojit's mother could not know of his secret life in that continent, of driving down the motor way, going to the supermarket, filling up a trolley with things, his orphan hood and distance ... even imagine it".* NW (P.24)

It was the perceptions differ especially between people of different generations. For example, the Admiral was opposed to buying a washing machine but Jayojit was very much eager to purchase it, the

Admiral was just against that thought. It was all to lessen the burden to his mother. Traditional and modern thoughts were juxtaposed in a very subtle conversation.

His father had an old Fiat Car which had been spoilt with all their tinkering. Though he worked for some time as a consultant in a Marwari Company, he gave it up as he had been fed up going to the office daily for just a petty salary. When he was in service, things were fine and colorful with all his rank in the navy. But, soon after the retirement, the business of keeping oneself alive had become so expensive that most of his savings was being drained towards hospitalization costs despite the government's contribution to it. The Admiral worries and fumes cursing the bank employees for not being loyal to their service.

Later, in the conversation between father and son, the former accepts his un-awareness of the share market, and that all his savings were confined to government bonds. Further, the idea of seeking advice from Haru Kaku, a cousin of his father, who was a chartered accountant, had been rejected by the Admiral. During the time of the Rajiv Gandhi government, once Jayojit had been appointed as one of the advisors, he suggested "gradual liberalization", at the beginning of India's new economic order with a belief that -

*"It could change India from a country living on borrowings from The west into a productive and competitive one".* NW (P.30)

But, his father's hesitation and lack of confidence about investing in shares even these days dismayed him. The Admiral shares certain things of his past. He never thought of owning a house. But it all happened on the advice of his friend, Dutta. Came to the political aspects, earlier when Jayojit was in Claremont, he used to up-date his knowledge with all the happenings in India but, somehow he was no more interested. As the Admiral's thoughts moved on, he thought of Bijon, his occasional drinking partner and then enquiries his son about his remembrance of Bijon who had gone to Dubai. When both were just discussed the events of the past. Jayojit's mother was all the time busy with her daily responsibilities, round the clock.

*"She's become a household machine', thought Jayojit, a little unfairly, as her shadow passed by him, 'maybe she's happy this way".* NW (P.63)



In the morning, the Admiral and his wife woke up early and went for a walk in the lane to breathe some fresh air. Still, the people were asleep, slowly set out to work, as very soon the cool atmosphere transforms into a hot one, just in two hours. In their walk, the Admiral remembers the mild paralysis stroke that struck him seven years ago; made him approach two doctors, one in the army hospital and another one Dr. Sen in the apartments, who advised him to take regular walk for being fit.

*"You can walk your way into health, sir' the army doctor had said".* NW (P.67)

When Dr. Sen visits his house, Jayojit appeals to him to take time to visit his parents as he was much worried about his father's health.

*"hat it'll be all right as long as he takes care of himself - and God knows I have other things to worry about!" 'the Admiral's health is all right, don't worry"* NW (P.174)

He even remembered Mrs. Gupta's husband who lived in flat, died last February because of paralysis attack. The chain of thoughts shifts from himself to his sons - Ranjit and Jayojit; Ranjit marries Anita and might be expecting issues. He even wishes his younger son Jayojit to get remarried but keeps silent as the wound was still fresh. Jayojit studied an editorial in a damp newspaper, about the country's requirement of the implementation of "Economic Liberalization". This concept and its necessity to the context of India were supported by some, at the same time criticized by others.

As they went out they could hear voices came from some of the other flats, where housewives were watching videos as their children slept. The noise of fights and increases took Jayojit aback at first. Jayojit and Bonny went down the flat as a part of observing the apartment and its surroundings. Instead of taking a lift, they went down the stairs as Bonny likes it most. The stairs end opened into a hall; there were a row of wooden post-boxes with numbers painted on them.

The author's keen and subtle observation and detailed description of the flats, the trees, both flowering and shade ones that surrounded the apartment, the congenial atmosphere to play, the care taken by the gardener, the cute curious looks of the watchman, the

interest of the dwellers of the flat in brought up pet animals, all were figuratively described.

Later in the flat, Jayojit half-heartedly manages with the 'lu-chis' prepared by his mother; also receives instructions from his mother that it was too hot to take Bonny out in the afternoon. As Jayojit cannot sleep the first few nights, he just re-studied the newspaper called *statesman* till he went to sleep and silently slips into sleep after switching off the lamp. And next day, he watched to the one side of the corridor, outside the flat, there were their neighbor's flat; and to the other side they could see part of a cricket field that belonged to a well-known club. These days their relations with the neighbors had been very much confined and lessened.

For, since the divorce, the Admiral and his wife had withdrawn into themselves and gone into a sort of mourning; their flat had become a shell and the neighbor's flat in their imagination, had moved further away. And yet, during that great leveler the durga puja, Jayojit's mother apparently met Mr. and Mrs. Ghost downstairs at the festivities, became part of a crowd where all disparity and private, secluding grief were temporarily suspended, and were even delighted to bump into each other and exchange meaningless small talk during the three-day-long ceremonies. Each year it provided a passing but vivid delusion of life beginning again, to which everyone submitted.

For two weeks he had done little but read newspapers, and desired in secret to finish a book, until he sat before his laptop in the afternoon, with the chicks in the terrace more than three-quarters of the way unhappy to keep out the heat. The chicks moved lightly, as if someone had just lacking them. The screen lighted up; he glanced slowly through old files, his mind away. Every time he had tried to return to, during the last two months, the project he was supposed to be worked on, he found himself trying to escape it like a boy in a laboratory drained to look out of an opened during a lesson.

Before him, on the wall, there were a batik print of Ganesh that served the dual, not incompatible, purpose of being a decoration and bringing good fortune to the house. Beneath it, there was a table covered with a Rajasthan cloth with mirrorwork upon it. Each sphere of glass revealed some bit of the room, no longer familiar, self-governing and it was

represented. These things had been bought on a desire long ago- but the print was honestly fresh- and had not so much to do with serious thought or decision as trespassing into emporia and feeling heart- less about leaving empty- handed. Then there was a kasha- miry shikara, slightly removed from its place, and Maya sometimes left things after she had dusted them.

On the table there were photographs: one of Jayojit at the age of nineteen, become thin and tall wearing thick black- framed spectacles, which were fashionable in those days; he was then at the Hindu college. Another of Jayojit and his brother Ranjit when they were thirteen and ten respectively, taken on a holiday in Madhya Pradesh, both the boys, in their long pants and kids, looking like colonizers on that ancient terrain; a wedding photo, bright with colour, of Ranjit and his wife. There were other smaller photographs, of cousins and relatives, and a series of pictures, in a large frame, of bonny at different stages of his life; as a baby, as a child of two, when his hair, mysteriously had been curlier than it was a boy of four in trouser with braces. The bridal portraits had disappeared, or become strangely unsuitable. The pictures of bonny were sans parents as if he had been conceived in a future when parents were not only no longer necessary, but were no more possible.

While going through the family album, Jayojit came across most of his childhood photographs consisting of his parents and his grandparents among them a photograph that consists of Jayojit and his brother Ranjit when they were thirteen and ten respectively. It had also a wedding photo bright with colour of Ranjit and his wife. Ranjit fell in love with a girl called Anita. Added to this there were some other photographs of cousins and relatives.

For a moment Jayojit recollects that they had a baby, there was a gap in their relation. From memories, Jayojit very soon came out of the past and walks back. Jayojit and Amala had married eleven years ago and seven months precisely. That was evening pleasantness had set in, the month of Hemant on the Bengali calendar. They had been divorced at the end of the year before last in a bright, clean Midwest summer. It had not been an easy or even a civilized event; the court had ruled that Amala, who had taken the child with her full custody. His first reaction was that all was lost. Then he had decided he must fight not just his studied determined but his natural belligerence had guided him. The admiral quickly

grasped the legal niceties. Examining the loopholes and details helped to lift him from the depression that he felt at almost all times during that period. He had asked over the telephone at well past midnight meaning moving the case to the Indian courts. It was at the time, the admiral remembered, that the question of it was to be an Indian had to be addressed. It was not something that both Jayojit or admiral Chatterjee had bothered about except during moments of political crisis or significance like a border conflict or elections or some moment of mass celebration, and it seemed all right to mock endianness if only to differentiate oneself from a throng of people; but this was a legal matter. His father, the Admiral has been proposing him last evening the idea of a second marriage. He does this with reference to the meetings he had with Arundhati seven months ago.

In the evenings, Jayojit and Bonny observed the clatter that came from the surrounding flats. The other big house opposite to theirs was The Jhunjhunwala house. The Admiral said that they were big-shots owning an automobile industry.

Bonny was only eaten daal this mild gruel with one green chili afloat in it had become the most desired sometimes the only, component of his everyday diet. It seemed to demand less of him alone; and, instinctively realizing this, both his father and grandmother pretended not to care about the unvarying nature of his food. Fish- bones he had trouble with; he only accepted bhetki, and that did not always come from the market.

He finished before the rest were done, and got up and went to the far side of the sitting room and dabbling with the remote control turned to MTV; unconcerned that the volume was low, he sat on the carpet before it. The sound of the Shania mixed with this other sound a succession of images, quicker than a train of association, hurried through the screen. For the admiral and Mrs. Chatterjee, the television was always on in the evening until a year ago; it did not matter if they were watching it or not; the colors of one of the five channels, a rainbow of the chatter and information of the new India, kept changing in one corner of the room. Then last year, during the second prolonged custody battle they had neglected a couple of episode of a soap, forgot as if they had inadvertently swallowed a pill that erased recent memory, the hersh was sleeping with Richard had finally deserted Anastasia; they had found they could

no longer immerse themselves or even find a center, temporary, in a proxy existence. Mrs. Chatterjee was sitting absently before the TV with the remote control in her hand. She saw a face and heard a voice that was dimly familiar. The fair-haired strong- chatted woman was someone she had met before it was Anastasia. She was filled with longing for a bygone simplicity.

Jayojit went to the Grindlays Bank in the south, there he had an account. And he came to know about ANZ Ready money through ads in bank. As an NRI, he wishes to enter into the scheme, for the sake of easy foreign exchange. He was busy settled all his transactions, meetings and so on that he were supposed to do in India. He went to Bangladesh Biman's office to check their travelled dates.

As a part of his preparation to his return journey, he records all his accounts and maintains foreign exchange currency. The rate of it differs from magazine to magazine, time and again. He even had to re confirm the Bangladesh Biman tickets. Later, he had some shopping in order to take certain presentations to some of his acquaintances.

*"He had wanted to buy a few things before he left - to give away as presents to some of those he knew in Claremont. And a few things for his own home".*  
NW (P.165)

They were supposed to leave in July. And at any rate, Bonny would return to his mother in August. Mrs. Chatterjee wishes them to stay till September, and it was highly impossible. During that month, the three day pujas had been conducted collectively by all the dwellers in the apartment with great pomp. But Jayojit missed it regularly.

In the evening Jayo and Bonny spend their time playing table-tennis on one side of the hall and later took a small walk. While back, Jayo regularly checks

the post box. He remembers the three months after their marriage, his wife Amala wrote a letter addressing her mother-in-law from Arlington.

When he was approaching the lift, he came across Mrs. Gupta. She enquired casually of his well-being and wonders he had spent one and half months in India. She even suggests to him to back to America, because of the severe hot climatic conditions here. She tells him about her niece staying at Cambridge in Massachusetts.

Jayojit very rarely visited his brother's house. This time his brother's families were expected to go to America. Jayojit and Amala also at first had been in Arlington, later shifted to Claremont because of the severe hot temperature of the former. Even in the west certain places were hot and at the most like Calcutta. Jayojit and Bonny for some time converse with a European woman wearer a Salwar Kameez in the airport lounge.

#### **Conclusion:**

Finally they settle themselves in a three seater with a computer and shoulder bag on the seat. During their conversation she mentions her name as Mary and says that she too claims her interest in 'Calcutta'. Various migrations had changed and continued to change the world in various ways. The new worlds emerging from such phenomena went beyond the personal, for the country they left behind and changed as well as the one to which they went.

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