

**STYLE AND LANGUAGE: A STUDY OF AMIT CHAUDHURI'S NOVELS**

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Style in literature is the literary factor that explains the ways that the author uses to include the author's word choice, sentence structure, figurative language, and sentence arrangement which work together to establish mood, images, and meaning in the text. Style is writer's verbal identity which one creates by choosing various words, putting those words together in particular ways, and employing specifically selected figures of speech. A writer's style is what sets one's writing apart and makes it distinctive from others. It is the way in which writing is dressed to fit the specific context, purpose, or audience. Another aspect is the language which is basically a system of communication where sound or signs convey objects, actions and ideas. Language is necessary for a man to be a rational creature. In language, pronunciation does not follow the written form but the written form in fact follows pronunciation. Language has many uses to which it has been put by man and many purposes which it may serve. These uses have natural basis, the properties and effects of language and its meaning is determined by habit and convention. This paper will discuss the style and language used by Chaudhuri in the novels undertaken, *A Strange and Sublime Address*, *Afternoon Raag*, *Freedom Song*, *A New World*, and *The Immortals*. He writes simple novels and his style of writing is descriptive. He describes his place and characters in detail. The style and language used by him is very realistic.

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Style in literature is the literary factor that explains the ways that the author uses to include the author's word choice, sentence structure, figurative language, and sentence arrangement which work together to establish mood, images, and meaning in the text. Style is writer's verbal identity which one creates by choosing various words, putting those words together in particular ways, and employing specifically selected figures of speech. Style is the manner of putting thoughts into words. It is the characteristics mode of construction and expression in writing and speaking. It is the characteristics of a literary selection that concern form of expression rather than the thought conveyed. The word style is derived from a Latin word, 'stilus' meaning 'writing instrument', cannot be satisfactorily defined, but hundreds of experts have tried. Lord Chesterfield defined style as 'the dress of thought'. Alfred North Whitehead, a philosopher and mathematician, said that style is the ultimate morality of mind. Cardinal Newman wrote that style is thinking out into language. Jonathan Swift suggested that proper words in proper places make the true definition of style. Buffon, an eighteenth-century French writer and naturalist, said that the style is the man himself.

A writer's style is what sets one's writing apart and makes it distinctive from others. It is the way in which writing is dressed to fit the specific context, purpose, or audience. It is usually considered to be the province of literary writers. Novelists such as Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner and poets such as Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman are well known for their distinctive literary styles. Journalists, scientists, historians, and mathematicians also have distinctive styles, and they should know how to differ their styles to fit different audiences. For example, the first-person narrative style of a popular magazine like *National Geographic* is quite different from the objective, third-person expository style of a research journal like *Scientific American*, even though both are written for informational purposes. There are generally four types of style of writing by which a piece of art is written and they are:

1. **Expository:** It is a subject oriented writing style and author's focus is only on a given

topic and does not speak about his personal opinions.

2. **Descriptive:** The main purpose of this style is to describe like describing a character, an event, or a place in great detail.
3. **Persuasive:** The main function of this style is to convince and it has the opinion of the author. In order to convince and to keep the point of view before the others, the author's writing contains justification and reasons.
4. **Narrative:** The main purpose of this writing is to tell a story. In it the author creates different characters and the story revolves around them.

Another aspect is the language which is basically a system of communication where sound or signs convey objects, actions and ideas. The history of language dates back many years but the ultimate origin or age of human language is unknown. Language is the key to human lives and the author can get rid of misunderstanding by using it as an instrument to convey his message among people. Malinowski suggests language is, "the necessary means of communion; it is the one indispensable instrument for creating the ties of the moment without which unified social action is impossible" (12, Diamond). In fact, Aristotle says that a man is a rational animal and what sets him apart, what raises him above the animals, is that he has the ability to reason, and it is very clear that he cannot reason without language. Richard Mc Keon, an American philosopher writes, "Aristotle was convinced, however, that meaning was no less an integral part of language than the sounds which bear the meaning and that language depends no less on the rational powers of man by which meanings are constructed than on the physiological organs by which sounds are formed" (194). Language is an unusual gift of God and it is a part of what makes man fully an individual. Language is necessary for a man to be a rational creature. In language, pronunciation does not follow the written form but the written form in fact follows pronunciation. Language has many uses to which it has been put by man and many purposes which it may serve. These uses have natural basis, the properties and effects of language and its meaning is determined by habit and convention. Radhey Varshney, in his book *An Introductory Text Book of Linguistics and Phonetics* defines language as:

Language is the 'species-specific' and 'species-uniform' possession of man. It is God's special gift to



mankind. Language is ubiquitous. It is present everywhere - in thoughts and dreams, prayers and meditations, relation and communications, and sanskars and rituals. Besides being a means of communication and store-house of knowledge, it is an instrument of thinking as well as a source of delight (e.g. singing). Language dissipates superfluous nervous energy, directs motion in others, both men and animals, sets matter in motion as in charms and incantations, transfers knowledge from one person to another and from one generation to another. Language is also the maker or unmaker of human relationships. It is the use of language that makes a life bitter or sweet. Language is an 'organised noise' used in actual social situations. It has also been defined 'contextualised systematic sounds. (12)

This paper will discuss the style and language used by Chaudhuri in the novels, *A Strange and Sublime Address*, *Afternoon Raag*, *Freedom Song*, *A New World*, and *The Immortals*. He writes simple novels and his style of writing is descriptive. He describes his place and characters in detail. The style and language used by him is very realistic. Realists built their plots and characters around people's ordinary, everyday lives. Additionally, their works contain regional dialects and extensive dialogue which connects well with the public. The setting of almost all his novels is regional where he explores the local colour in them. He has beautifully portrayed the culture, music, food, and language of his region. Chaudhuri's work needs to be read in context of the politics of language operational in Bengali to locate his linguistic subversive acts which create a place for the impolite within his semantic discourse. Though the language of his novels is English but he has used the Bengali words in the works. He works within a tradition of a Bengali literature rather than any other literature of Indian writing in English.

Chaudhuri's writing talks about everything like toilets, defecation, copulation, etc. He said in an interview, "My writing is essentially eventless. I concentrate more on the language and its nuances while I write. It is for my readers to say if my language appeals even to those who do not have their roots in India" (Web). Chaudhuri opts for a narrative where the folk, mythic, realism and symbolism form a seamless whole. The sights and sounds of Calcutta, its gastronomic delights and the interactions of characters are real, not realistic. Every detail in the novel has its proper place and is deeply linked with the child's world-view juxtaposed against choices and attitudes. The detail at once arouses feeling for the whole narrative, not really one of nostalgia but a sense of loss, a sense of dislocation. Life has a significant role in Chaudhuri's writings. Bangla language and Calcutta are the most regular and frequent aspects of his work. Every text has two meanings and the interaction between dictionary meaning and contextual meaning may have difference. Here are the ways by which a text can be analysed in terms of language and style.

BENGALI WORDS

Chaudhuri's attitude to English is ambivalent. Though at one time he thought English to be a foreign language, he now considers it to be Indian and not Indian as well. He confessed to Fernando Galvan, a critic in "On Belonging": "Yes, . . . it's an Indian language to me for all kinds of purposes, and yet it's not obviously an Indian language in the way Bengali or Sanskrit are Indian languages" (48). Chaudhuri grew up in Bombay and has lived in England since his undergraduate days. Perhaps the lyrical yearning comes from a fine feeling for lost roots, for a lost place, Calcutta. As a child growing up in Bombay, he too visited relatives in Calcutta, and Sandeep in *A Strange and Sublime Address*, despite the affection that envelops him his conscious of being different from his cousins and explains, "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-orphan of modern India" (67). Much focus has been given to the region and the language.



In *A Strange and Sublime Address*, here are the examples of Bengali words:

1. The names of the characters in the novel are Bengali and even the words by which they call each other are Bengali: Chhotomama, Mamima, Chhordimoni, Sandeep's Mother, Chandrima. Dadamoni: elder Brother; Didimoni: elder Sister; Chhotomama: younger maternal uncle; Shonamama: elder maternal uncle; Chhordimoni: grand aunt; Chhordamoni: grand uncle; Mamima: maternal aunt; Boudi: sister-in-law.
2. Sandeep was one of the innumerable language orphans of modern India and was as illiterate in his language as Chhaya and Sarswati, the maid servants but he liked opening the classic books lying on chhotomama's shelves. The shelves were full of books with writers like Sarat Chandra, Bibhuti Bhushan, Tarashankar, Rabindranath Tagore, etc. He liked looking into the books and especially at the letters:
He saw the letters as characters, 'characters' in both senses of the word: **ব** a fat man standing straight with his belly sticking out, **ক** was the fat man scratching his back, **গ** was an adolescent, lately grown tall and awkward, his head bent forward shyly, **ঘ** was a dancer, his right leg forever lifted in a self-consciously statuesque pose. The letters were intimate, quirky, ancient, graceful, comic, just as he imagined the people of Bengal to be. (67-68)
3. "Mishti" and "roshogolla" the two delicacies of Bengal have special place in Chaudhuri's novels.
4. The uses of local language and local words have been ofently used like 'Aah', 'Boudi' (30).
5. Chaudhuri's writing has very often the two worlds meet and mingle bringing with it a whiff of bitter - sweet nostalgia. This happens when Sandeep knocks on the

bathroom door, as his uncle sings, "*Godhuli Chhaya pathe/Je gelo chini go tare*" (45). Knocking on the bathroom door, Sandeep made a pest of himself by asking 'what does *godhuli* mean?'(45). As it is roughly translated, "In the hour of cow dust, on the shadowy path, / Who passed by me? I felt I know her" (45). Lost in the general well being of cleansing himself, his uncle replied patiently and his voice emerging from behind the steady sound of water: "The word *go* means cow, and the word *dhuli* means dust. In the villages, evening's the time the cowherds bring the cattle home. The herd returns, raising clouds of dust from the road. *Godhuli* is that hour of cow dust. So it means dusk or evening" (45). While Chhotomama explained the meaning of his song, Sandeep started thinking over as if he was watching a movie. He could see slow moving cows and the village and huts in that village. Quite unexpectedly, Chhotomama now began a song by Tagore: "*Bahe nirantar ananta anandadhara./ Baaje ashima nabhamajhe anaadiraba*" (46). In an unsatisfactory translation, this meant, "Endless and unbroken flows the stream of joy./Its timeless sound resonates beneath the great sky" (46).

6. The old couple who lived on the southern tip of old Calcutta had a new born baby of their son and daughter-in-law. On being asked by the guests about the name of the baby, they said. The baby name is *Annapurna* which means:
'Anna' means 'rice' or 'food', and 'purna' means 'full' or 'complete'; joined together, the two halves give birth (just as the two parents had given birth to the child) to the word 'Annapurna' - Annapurna, which means Provider of Food or Sustenance, and is one of the many names of the mother goddess, Durga. (56)
7. Mamima was telling about her marriage to Sandeep and also explained that



Chhotomama had a “topor” which means headgear worn by grooms on his head (35).

8. **সন্দেশ** (100). This stylish Bengali letter which means *Sandesh*, a famous Bengali sweet dish.

In *Freedom Song*, here are some of the Bengali words that have been used by Chaudhuri:

1. The novelist uses Bengali words wherever they are required and sometimes even translates them e.g. *torpa* (314) which means your legs.
2. *Bipad Nashini* (327) means the Destroyer of Distress.
3. *lagna* (427) means the auspicious moment.
4. Words as *jhata*, *dhur*, *bhads*, *sari's anchal*, *dhuti* and *kurta*, *dholak* and so on are self explaining because of the context.
5. For human relationships bangla words, very similar to Hindi ones, such as *mashima*, *Boudi*, *mama*, *borda*, *Mohitda*, *Bhaskarda*, *Didimoni*, *Bhaskaramama*, have been used. The words like “Bas!” has been used frequently which means “to stop.”
6. A children’s Bengali song was heard on the radio in the next house: “Sajalpurer kaajal meye naite nemechhe” (286).
7. “Pithha?” Have a pithha, I made them yesterday” (287). Pithha is a type of cake, bread from the eastern regions of the Indian subcontinent and common in Bangladesh and India. Pithhas are typically made of rice flour, although there are some types of pithha made of wheat flour.
8. “Roshogolla” is another common sweet dish of Bengalis as they love sweets.
9. Elder ones are called by adding a suffix “da” with their names in Bengal like Mohitda and Bhaskarda.
10. In the yellow-green letter-box by the gate to Bhaskar’s house there came a wedding card with “Shubho Bibaho” (307) inscribed on the envelope. “Shubho Bibaho” means happy wedding.
11. Khuku was a singer and used to sing Bengali song in front of her husband: “Aami ki shukhe lo grihe rabo?/ Aamar Shyam Jodi

ogo jogi holo shokhi/ Aamio jogini hobo” (317).

12. “Ilish is the king of fishes!” (324). Ilish is the famous Bengali fish.

In *A New World*, some of the Bengali words and phrases used by Chaudhuri:

1. Jayojit handed over the money to the driver and said, “E lo” (5).
2. Jayojit’s mother called her grandson as: “Shona” (9) means dear and lovely.
3. “Kato?” which is a Bengali word for “How much” (56).
4. “Dui taka” which means two rupees (56).
5. “Tero taka” which means thirteen rupees (96).
6. “Can I have some daal, tamma?” (75) Bonny asked his grandmother.
7. “Aar Kichhu?” which means anything else (98).
8. There is a saying in Bengali, “Ku daak deko na” (122) which warns against invoking unwanted things.
9. Even the names in the novel are Bengali like Ranajit and Jayojit are the names of the characters in the novel. The meaning of the name Vikram has been explained: “it means strong, powerful, heroic” (34). Jayojit means: “The one who is victorious over victory itself” (120).
10. Bonny used to call his grandparents as “dadu” and “tamma”, dadu means grandfather and tamma means grandmother.
11. Food like luchis (pooris), payesh (sweet dish), sandesh, pabda fish, ilish fish, gur (jaggery), etc have been used in the novel frequently.
12. Jayojit wanted to take his son with him for an outing and the weather was very hot. His mother said referring to her grandson: “But you must not take out the little boy - *bachcha chhele*” (41).
13. In another incident Bonny was lost and Jayojit got worried and found that Bonny was standing before a shop and he said, “Ei khokababu, ei khokababu” which means “Don’t disappear like that,” (97).



14. Words like “Chhoto na bado” (98) which means “small or large” are often used in the novel.
15. When Bonny was born his maternal grandmother said: “Ki bonny baby eta!” Yes, Bonny had been pink (‘a little white mouse’, his mother had called him), with a hint of black hair which Amala repeatedly admired (101).
16. “Tumi ki bolecho oke?” (106)
17. Vikram’s grandmother liked talking to him and would say: “Thhammar kachhe esho” which means “Come here and let me see” (113).
18. In Bengal elder brother is called as “dada” and Ranajit used to call Jayojit as “Joyda” (142).
19. “Out visiting someone?” he said this in Bengali: “Kaarur baadi giye-chhilen?” (151).
20. Vikram caught cold and his grandfather got up and grunted: “Ektu aram hoyechhe,” (161) acknowledging, in a low tone, that the heat had ebbed.
21. “Nischoi, nischoi!” means of course (174).
22. Jayojit’s mother wished them see off and said: “Bye bye, shona. Bhalo theko. You will write to thamma, no?” (194).

In *The Immortals*, here are few examples of Bengali words used by Chaudhuri

1. Mallika Sengupta is a good singer but she has the pronunciation problem as she had the Bengali accent: “The words still sound like Bengali by Mrs Sengupta, she pronounces “barsat” as “borsat” (26).
2. “Nirmalya”: “an offering to the gods” (51).

PRONUNCIATION AND LANGUAGE

It is the way a word or a language is spoken, or the manner in which someone speaks a word. A word can be spoken in different ways by different individuals, which can be seen in Chaudhuri’s novels also. There are many incidences where people have wrongly used or pronounced the words. He has used various languages according to his own comfort. He has used Bengali, Hindi in the novels which are in English.

In *A Strange and Sublime Address*, here are the examples in which different language is used or pronounced differently:

1. Chhaya another maid servant was like a part of the family and sometimes she would come in and say excitedly, “They’re showing a seenema in the field!” ‘Seenema! What seenema?’ Mamima would ask (13). Chhaya would then explain them about the cinema and would say that they are street singers or would take the names of some films made some forty years ago.
2. “Aaaah,” (sense of relief) (26) said Sandeep and Shonamama at the same time.
3. The tutor who use to teach Abhi also taught him English but the pronunciation of the teacher was very hilarious and would pronounce “is” as “ees” and “milk” as “meelk”:
When the English lessons began, the voice became stentorian and English sentences and words exploded like bombs in the air.
 - What ees thee name of thee boy?
 - Thee name of thee boy ees John.
 - Whut deed Jon habhfor deenar?
 - John had meelk and bredfor deenar.
 - Why deed John habh meelk and bredfor deenar?
 The question was not to be answered, because Saraswati came in with a cup of tea and a plate of dark sweetmeats. ‘Aaah!’ said the tutor, lapsing back into his mother-tongue. (85)
4. “Ooooh” (56), “Oog” (57), these words were used to interact with the babies. The baby would be lifted by the elders and they produced these sounds to interact with the little baby. The thunder made the noise of “guruguruguru” (60) sound as if there is music in air. “Ku-wu,/ Ku-wu,/ Ku-wu” (108), koel’s musical echoes.



In *Afternoon Raag*, here are the examples which shows words pronounced incorrectly:

1. Sharma had a strong pure North Indian accent and that could be seen when he spoke English, he would pronounce "joy" like French "joie," and "toilet" like "twilit" (187).
2. After the retirement narrator's father moved to a new place which was a Christian colony. The names on the name plates were very typical: "Portuguese names - Pedro, D'Silva and Gonslaves - twang in the air like plucked silvery guitar - strings" (194). The Christian were mostly Roman Catholic and when asked they would pronounce themselves as 'Katlick', a word that sounds both childishly mischievous and appropriately rude.
3. At each stop, Sharma greeted kindly old ladies in a hearty English manner, "Hullo, dear! It's lovely day, innit?" (207).
4. The protagonist's mother's accent was like Bengalis, she would pronounce "hurt" as "heart" and "ship" as "sheep," for she belongs to a culture with a more spacious concept of time, which deliberately allows one to naively and clearly expand the vowels; and yet her speech is dotted with English proverbs, un-Indian constructions like, 'It's a nice day, isn't it?' where most Indians would say, straightforwardly, 'It's a nice day, no?' (223). Many of her sentences are plain translations from Bengali, and have a lovable homely melody, while a few retain their English inflections, and are sweet and foreign as the sound of whistling.
5. Guru used various musical terms like *Sa*, or *Shajda*, *juwari*, *nikhad* (204).
6. *Jhadu* (214) is a Hindi word for broom and ofently used as jhadu only in the novel.

In *Freedom Song*, here are the examples of words pronounced differently:

1. Bhaskar and his family would call chowmein as "Chow mein! Chow mein!" (312) when hungry.
2. Khuku would call Hindu and Muslim as "Hindoo", "Musholmaans" (328).
3. In an incident there is tooth paste in Piyu's mouth and Colgate foam forming at her

mouth and she replied: "Dash oh do yoo ayi goo" (285).

4. In the lawn, "a mali in khaki shorts" (293). Mali is a Hindi word for gardener.
5. "Eh Ram!" (313) could be heard from Sameer in the background.
6. "Ei - ei, Bhaskar," (318) said Arun Nashkar.
7. "He bipad Nashini, he bipad nashini" (327).
8. "The words like: "Allah-hu-akbar" (344), "lailallah rasulallah" (354) have been used.
9. "Ei, look at him," (429) cried her cousins.

In *A New World*, here are the examples in which different language is used or pronounced differently and Hindi language is also used:

1. Vikram called his parents as "ma" and "baba" as his parents decided to retain the Bengali appellations for mother and father as *ma* and *baba* as far as Vikram is concerned.
2. Jayojit said to the taxi driver, "Stop Here," and asked, "Kitna hua?" (3) It is a Hindi word which means how much.
3. Jayojit asked his son: "Pranam karo, Bonny" (7).
4. "Wooo!" said the boy as it rained on him (12). There are many incomplete words are used by the different characters in the novel in order to express themselves.
5. "Uh-huh," (13) said the boy. "Baba, I don't have any clothes," he added, the towel covering his head like hood.
6. "Let him have the daal, ma," said Jayojit (15).
7. "Aah," Jayojit said, wiping his mouth after having a glass of water (26).
8. "Ha ha . . . No, ma - there's a limit to the luchis you can digest," said Jayojit to his mother (27).
9. "Jaldi jaldi" means hurry up (58).
10. "Heh, heh" (82).
11. "Hu - hu," said the doctor, (58).
12. A little hesistantly, "Uh-Vikram, isn't it? Or is it Benoy?" (58).
13. A watchman said: "Kahaa jate ho, baba?" (92).
14. The driver turned to look at him: "Kahaa?" (93).
15. It was raining outside and Jayojit sang a song: "Da da dad a nai chini go she ki/ Turu tut u turu turu" (111) "Di did i nai chini go she ki/ ... Jani ne, jani ne" (112).



16. "Hey, Ajit," said a girl, eleven or twelve years old, stepping towards the table." "Kya hai, bhai?" said the larger boy, his movements lazy after the last point (127).
17. "Baap re, it's hotter here than Cal!" (146).
18. "Kitna din lgega khatam hone ko?" "Saal lag jayega, saab," the watchman said. (150).
19. "Saala!" whispered the driver (158).
20. On packing for America, Jayojit asked his son whether he had packed his things: "Uh-huh" (185) "Your cars? What about your books?" (185)

In *The Immortals*, Chaudhuri has made use of language and its pronunciation in his own way. Here are some examples:

1. "Arrey, dekho," said Motilalji, "I have two rupees change in my pocket" (10).
2. Laxmi Ratan Shukla heard a song of Mallika Sengupta and said: "The words still sound like Bengali. See - "barsat" is sounding like "borsat" (26).
3. "Gao beti," (28) said Jairam.
4. "Theek hai bhaiyya?" said Pyarelal at last. "All right?" "Bas," said Shyamji (35).
5. "Chanda re ja re ja re." "O go quickly, moon, take this message to my beloved," sang young Lata (39).
6. From the beginning, Shyamji used call Nirmalya "baba," consigning him, albeit affectionately, to the "babalog", the eternal children of the rich. (64)
7. "Listen to this song, didi! You will like it," (64) Shyamji said to Mallika with equal candour. He began to sing: "Hai aank wo jo Ram ka darshan kiya kre" (64). It is translated as : "Those eyes are truly eyes that have seen the Lord" (64).
8. "Ma, what does balidaan mean?" asked Nirmalya. She said, "Sacrifice" (65).
9. One day Jumna complained to Mrs Sengupta about the food served to her by Arthur. She said: "Do you know what he gave us to eat today?" "Flowers. Phool. I can't eat them" (97).
10. "Mata pita se toont gya jo dhaga": Meera's words in the bhajan which means: "Thread that tied me to Mother and Father has snapped" (119).

11. "Usko bhi mangta hai, were his words" (146).
12. "Come here ullo!" (154) said Trilok to the figure standing a few feet away.
13. Sunder's father had said to Shyamji, "Bhhaiyya, you must give your damaad half an hour at least" (164).
14. It has a wonderful title: "Naya Rasta Nayi Asha" which means "A new road, new hope" (173).
15. "Aiye, aiye, didi," (204) said Sumati. "Oh, I'm so glad baba came too. *Vel-come,*' she said to him in English. "Kyun, did I say it right?" (205) and laughed loudly.
16. "Ajust ho jayega," (225) said Shyamji.
17. "Bewkoof hai," said Shyamji. (241)
18. "Baap re," said Jumna (297).
19. "Namaste, memsahib," the girl said to Mrs Sengupta (299).
20. "Kya karti hai?" Mrs Sengupta said (300).
21. "Bahut achha," Nirmalya said wryly (303).
22. "Aashun, aashun," cried the older brother. "Aiye didi, aiye baba," he said (319).

Chaudhuri's style is realistic and language is simple. By doing so, the style he creates is unique and different from other writers.

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