

Status of Indian Music in Amit Chaudhuri's *The Immortals*

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Amit Chaudhuri is a stand out amongst the most observed Indian novelist in English. He belongs to a new wave of writers with roots in post emergency India. His works are partly set in India and England. There are no cataclysmic occasions in his works. He manages quotidian city life, portraying collaboration with family workers, Indian culture, sustenance, and music. At the more profound level, he investigates the subjects of displacement and belonging through his characters that are not at home. However, they are in their well known home areas. Chaudhuri has written numerous novels, short stories, poems, and critical essays in English. However, his novels have won several major awards and he has received international critical acclaim. His most recent novel, *The Immortals*, is a novel about music in the present day world. In this novel, Chaudhuri has presented similarly in Indian established music and Western pop and rock. Nevertheless, he is forcefully against the disordered combination music culture which is irritating the immaculateness of feel. As it is apparent from the title of his late music collection "This is Not a Fusion." Chaudhuri is not against the Western custom of music rather his wrath is against the dissonant melodic cover. He detests the commercialization and promoting of music which has turned into the method for the world today and which is breaking down the entire masterful domain of the world

In the age of commercialization and worldwide design, prominent music and hip-jump culture are debilitating the presence of established music. *The Immortals* go about as an abstract and stylish protection for the immaculateness of traditional music which has a perfect

embodiment. He sets his account in Bombay of the 1980s and endeavours to find the universe of thoughts through the strings of Tanpura and ragas. He trusts that the Indian established music is 'a perfect, mystical sense' and in this manner, through the touchstone of traditional notes, he investigates the goals, desire and force of the two Indian families: the Lals and the Senguptas. *The Immortals* offer a profitable investigation of social class and a shrewd verbal confrontation on custom versus advancement and profound versus extravagance. It points of interest the unexceptional of common Bengali lives with a characteristic managing the hugeness of art in the contemporary age. Against the system of Indian Classical music, the author fastidiously discusses the social change in India.

The policy of progression and globalization, which was presented in India amid 1980s, absolutely acquired some positive changes our nation, however it additionally influenced the Indian art and social custom unfavourably. Markets increased colossal significance and "Saleability" turned into a central element of assessment in the time of globalization. This Saleability has been indicated strolling as an inseparable unit with music in the novel *The Immortals*. Thinking about the contention amongst stylish and business values in globalized India, Chaudhuri has attempted to comprehend the association between human life and the need to bargain. Chaudhuri's remark about the novel is worth quoting:

In *The Immortals*, the traditional guru, oddly enough, seems to be able to cope with these facts better, and to take to the situation much more naturally, than the more romantic, educated, bourgeois boy. The so-called "traditional" in India has embraced capitalism, wonderfully, in a way in which *bhadralok* [middle-class] India has not. But with the music teacher it has tragic resonances as well, because he can't quite go that far—and he fails. It has ironical, comic resonances for the boy because in the end he doesn't lose anything. He does survive, even though he's physically flawed. But he's fine: in spite of all his affectations of poverty, he's not poor. So the book is about the survival of the rich, which is an unsurprising story. The rich do survive. (*oxonianreview.org*)

Chaudhuri has often been said to follow Salman Rushdie in his use of music in fiction, but a close examination of their narratives clearly demonstrates that music in Rushdie's anecdotal world is formed by the overall declaration through in Chaudhuri music is just a spoke in the wheel of plot. In the event that Rushdie uses music as a hallowed key in the novel *Ground Beneath Her Feet*, for Chaudhuri "music remains just a pleasurable sensation, through an exquisite pleasure" (Kundu74). Besides, Rushdie associate music to myth with new echoes in the cutting edge setting while for Chaudhuri, it is a gadget to investigate that art and society which is under continuous transformation.

As per Shukla, Chaudhuri considers music dialect to eloquent, his sentiments and thoughts. So he "brings out the underlying music and poetry of our life and enables us to cope with the ever-repeating and ever-teasing sameness, commonness and earthiness of our diurnal discourse" (51-52). He pays high respect for music by regarding it as a way to accomplish sublimity and everlasting status: "there are some singers whose voices are so melodious that... their music brings to this world the message of that other one, to which they'll eventually return (guardian.co.uk). Music secures incredible noteworthiness in the life and writing of Chaudhuri. He asserts this in an interview to Suman Ghosh:

Music is an important constituent of the culture or family I grew up in....However, I discovered classical music for myself....I've become interested in music, art and the marketplace. But I have to say that I'm not conscious of the analogies between my narration technique and Indian Classical music. (176-77)

Chaudhuri himself as a composer and performer, exceeds expectations in the sections committed to music, "the supernatural occurrence of melody and its pleasure." The scenes of characters rehearsing in private are quietly exciting; and there are additionally more broad contentions about the part of music in east and west, in the commercial centre and in the public eye. At a certain point, Shyamji comments on the expanding popularity in India of the

effortlessly domesticable western guitar, as opposed to the customary four-stringed Tanbura which is portrayed along these lines:

its sound shocked you every time you heard it - like a god humming to itself, its vibrations difficult to describe or report on, the solipsism of the heavens; at another point, when Nirmalya is playing the same instrument, it is described with marvellous compression simply as "aloof sentinel.(I 32)

Chaudhuri's *The Immortals* concentrate on his other focal energy: making music. Thus, it is not astounding that the novel that took after being a mix of his two loves. Music includes noticeably in his characters' lives, be it the wealthiest family in which the Bengali housewife, Mallika Sengupta, lives, close by her corporate official's spouse, supporting longs for the "Lata Mangeshkar" acclaim that escapes her, or Shyam Lal's less distinguished presence as her destined music teacher who is tenacious by the forceful shadow of his dad, the 'magnificent artist' Ram Lal. The novel recounts the narrative of three Indian artists: mother, her child, and their master, who is a traditional music teacher. Set in Bombay amid the 1980s, it follows two families isolated by status and situation, yet inseparably associated through the bond of music. The main focus is primarily around Mallika, nascent expert vocalist, wedded to Apurva Sengupta, Chief Executive of a vast enterprise, and their delicate child Nirmalya. The other post of the story concerns Shyamji, performer and guide who teaches Mallika and after that Nirmalya in the complexities of Indian traditional music. Other people who wing their way all through the text incorporate the Neogis, old companions of the Senguptas, a domestic entourage of cooks and cleaners, and others from Shyamji's more distant family, who also dabble in music.

The Immortals recounts the story of two families in eighties Bombay joined by their "common everyday quest for music." There is Shyam Lal, the son of a renowned singer, now a teacher supporting a broadened set of relatives. He turns into the master of Mallika Sengupta, a lady with a delightful voice who "knew she could have been popular," but less interestingly "selected the life of a managing Director's wife." Her son Nirmalya is keen on adolescent philosophizing and playing the harmonium. But then, it may, then, very little

existing apart from everything else happens: Shyam gets sick, Mrs.Sengupta gets old, Mr Sengupta gets pushed out of the organization, Nirmalya gets the opportunity to study philosophy in England. The novel turns into an ordered classification of their unremarkable presence, the words on the page like the "agglomeration of notes" on a music sheet.

The music teacher Shyam Lal fails to fulfil the genuine melodic thirst of his student Nirmalya but his prefer teaching pupils, for example, "Sikh businessman's daughter, a minister's son; the wife of an Air India Official" and "corporate wives; devout traders and tax defaulters whose anxieties were oddly consoled by music" (I 107,49). Remarking on the writer's delineation of domineering nature of money mind over music in the present society, Ian Almond befittingly writes:

The lengths that Chaudhuri goes to in his representation of a mercantile bourgeoisie-one which, in its worst instants, sees "culture" exclusively as something which reflects, and facilitates, the circulation of capital-inevitably courts moments of collusion and complexity in the very object of critique. This is primarily because Chaudhuri's stories are dominated by two kinds of characters: those who seek recognition, and those who seek oblivion. (167)

The novel opens in the midst of the ragas of *Bhimpalasi*, *Yaman*, *Raga Malkauns*, *Miya ki Malhar*, *Hansdhwani*, *Jaijaiwanti*, *Des*, *Puriya Dhanashree* and *Bhairav* against the foundation of Tanpura and Harmonium, yet the developing arbitrate of money and world notoriety soon replace them with Western guitar. The author ridicules at the unusual improvements in the field of music when composes:

The tape recorder made the process of teaching and learning less messy, more compressed and expeditious, for both the time-passed guru and his undecided disciple, shackled to the modern life that had formed him, eager to learn, but within the secret, exploratory rhythms of his day. (I 178)

Chaudhuri attracts our attention to the changing human and social values: "A man who could play a western instrument would have a business in this day and age," while "the *Tanpura*, with its four strings, has not lost its magic, but it becomes more and more difficult to make time for it" (I 242)). It is a musical novel with both mournful and comic components

about the effective undercurrent of social and familial convention in a society heading quickly towards the future. Set in the 1980s of Bombay, the novel considers significantly the relationship between the two extensively particular yet complicatedly related groups of Lals and Senguptas and their inclinations between the old and the new custom.

The novel is additionally a story of Shyam Lal, who is a well known voice teacher, trained in the classical pattern, but euphorically takes part in teaching the more prominent film tunes and graces of those rich ladies whose cutting edge lifestyle he pines for. He pursues money and ubiquity by offering the spirit of an artist. Then again, we have Nirmalya Sengupta, who is a kid of 16 years and an impractically defiant offspring of a princely family. He is the son of a rich CEO of a multinational organization Apurva Sengupta and Mallika Sengupta who are the colossal admirers of music master Shyam Lal. On being pushed by his mother (Mallika Sengupta), Nirmalya too joins the training school of Shyamji with an extreme yearning to learn just the Indian Classical Music but feels bamboozled to think about his master's longing to wind up distinctly a sound composer in some Hindi film. He guiltlessly asks: "“Shyamji, why don't you sing classical more often? Why don't you sing fewer ghazals and sing more at classical concert?” (I 192). But, he feels stunned to hear the reply of Shyamji that "“I can devote myself completely to art. You can't sing classical on an empty stomach” (I 192).

Ananya Jahangir Kabir acknowledges the interest of the Indian music in a critical way and says that its: “effect stems not from narrative or descriptive logic, but “structures of feeling” that transmit the semantics of memory and belonging across generations” (183). In any case, Shyamji's comments attract our consideration straightforwardly to the slow cheapening of classical art in the present day market culture where: “No one wanted to learn classical music from him; in fact he had no disciple in classical music” (I 105). Shyam Lal realizes that "there's money in music arrangement” (I 105) and, in this way grasps these "lighter" form of music that would not just “pay the rent, and for his son's and daughter's weddings, but because they opened an avenue into the sort of life he wanted....These mildly touching songs were a form of currency; classical music- *Shastriya Sangeet*- a responsibility” (I 105-106).

The novel *The Immortals* brings out being a constant reflection on the relationship of art with trade. It depicts productively the age in which we do not see raga any longer, in light of the fact that for the artists today the “raga has not to be played *correctly* or *well*; it has to be courted and pursued” (I 186). Shyamji is an adept portrayal of the declining specialists of the contemporary culture who depend on commoditization: “...you must first satisfy your physical needs, of food, shelter, clothing, before you can satisfy your psychological ones- like culture” (I 192). Music, in this manner, is being commoditized by the artists like Shyamji who deal in “the melodic coin of the day” (I 174). The other side of coin is severe materialistic age which tends to compel genuine artists to incline towards well known music for their livelihood. Chaudhuri amusingly portrays the gaudy identity of the music teacher Shyamji along these lines: “Here was a man in a loose white kurta and pyajamas; a man who seemed to have no idea of, or time for, inspiration. A man who undertook his teaching, his singing, almost as- a job” (I 99).

As the novel changes its concentration from mother to child, the narrative of raga gets supplanted by a story spiced with sex, drugs and a shake “n” roll. The novel is a snide remark on such artists and musicians for whom music is not a saadhana, but rather a mechanical art to satisfy the baser audience. Absurdly, they neglect to exceed expectations both in the field of Eastern and the Western art: “Shyamji fitted neither the model of the Eastern artist, nor that of the Western musician. The Eastern artist was part of religious figure, the Western part rebel; Shyamji seemed to be neither” (I 99).

Chaudhuri expresses at the basic wonders of a young person finding the universe of thoughts. Nirmalya, with his adoration for unadulterated music and blurred Kurtas, might be viewed as a rebel against the corporate life grasped by his parents and music teacher. He has been all around appeared differently in relation to the moderately aged Shyam Lal, who comprehends the questionable way of an artist's life. Where Nirmalya considers ragas giving him a perfect feel of India, Shyamji considers music to be a vehicle for social climbing. In this manner, the pupil Nirmalya neglects to connect with the standards of his teacher Shyamji whom he infrequently calls “guruji,” in light of the fact that he shows his prosperous disciple the “songs with which a middle class of faithful, hardworking husbands and vivacious housewives expressed its dreams” (I 174). The boy looks for a supernatural and self-

acknowledging interest of the Indian traditional music in Shyamji's singing however he neglects to accomplish this. He wants for the music respected by maestros like Kishori Amonkar on the grounds that "it was music that had brought about the change...without warning to the status of an equal, the phase of discovery" (I 101).

The hero Nirmalya is engrossed with music and the subject of how art ought to coordinate with the contemporary world. Since he stays uncured of his otherworldly turn of brain by Shyamji's training, he affirms "the mandatory pretence at being musical" (I 100). When he sees that "music is going out of the Ustads," he swings himself to the theories of Kant, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche (I 242). Nirmalya rejects both rock music and Rimbaud, and leaves India for England in the quest for philosophical learning. Really, he is a tension ridden youth who has faith in the virtue of art however it is unexpected to see that Nirmalya who was profoundly condemning of her mother's and teacher's mechanical attitude towards music, survives well in England with no feeling of regret.

In *The Immortals*, both Shyamji's acknowledgment of famous music by abandoning his father's legacy of the Indian Classical music and Nirmalya's shelter to England is a parody on the common craftsmanship convention that difficulties the presence and sustenance of both the classical art and its actual aficionados. The writer additionally remarks on mushroom-like development of the artist who blossom with shoddy notoriety and attempt:

....not only to satisfy the middle class urge for music, but the relentless, child-like longing to become the musician (how simply the metamorphosis could be achieved); to move to centre-stage; at least for fifteen minutes, where the traditional musician previously was. (I 164)

The narrative is a delightful embroidered artwork of little occasions and wonderfully watched points of interest which portray the universe of the Bombay bourgeoisie with the realness of the enthusiastic scene. Curiously, the city of Bombay likewise figures in the novel as a character and contentions about the part of music in East and West, in the commercial centre and in the public eye. Written in the style of Comedy of Manners, the novel's style echoes its subject.

The novel *The Immortals* uses music as a metaphor to concentrate the metropolitan sensibility of the modern Indians. The novelist pays respect to music in his books in an amazingly vivid manner. He effectively expresses his idea through the dichotomic directions of affection for music versus metropolitan identity and a mission for virtue versus a response to the family's wild. This demonstrates the strain in his books emerges to a great extent because of such polarities which arise as an after effect of infringing average values that have eclipsed art and specialists. Hence, *The Immortals* is an unmistakable "agglomeration of notes on a music sheet" (TI 186). It is an appropriate to say here that Chaudhuri cites the expressions of Heraclitus that "The mortals get to be immortals and; the immortals get to be mortals" before he starts the novel *The Immortals*. Music serves diverse targets in this novel as an impulse, a business, a grown-up toy, a claim, a desire, a legacy, a lifestyle and a way to live. Being a maintained consideration on the vexed relationship amongst art and business; regular and mechanical way of life, the account adequately shields our Indian Classical music against the scares of corporate greed and consumerism in advanced age.

Conclusion

However, Chaudhuri's portrayal of Indian music and culture are reflects through the characters who are involved to prove the Indian tradition culture. *The Immortal* presents certain aspects of Indian Classical music such as the timings and special settings of different *ragas*, their instrumental accompaniment, and other nuances with acute precision in this novel. He exquisitely blends music with realistic narration and thereby achieves a 'musical realism'. He utilizes music for the miracle of song and its pleasure on the one hand, and the value of music in the society and its marketplace on the other. Thus, we can say music is in his blood and vein. Of course his love for music can be seen in his writing, which is a cultural metaphor for understanding society and culture. ..

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