



FIRST SPACE – THE PERCEIVED AND THE LIVED PLACE AND IT'S IMPACT IN AMIT CHAUDHURI'S *A STRANGE AND SUBLIME ADDRESS*

Dr. S. Poongodi, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Sri Vasavi College,
Erode-638 316, Tamil Nadu.

Abstract:

Postmodern literature is closely linked to the concept of place. Geographical analysis can be greatly inspired by postcolonial narratives. By combining a place and imagined space into a real world, literary authors try to provide new interpretations. Transnational location provides a comprehensive approach to examine how place is depicted in literary works in the context of globalization, migration, and colonization. Major literary studies focused on place and spatiality have brought forth a relationship between people and their place of residence. The understanding of a particular location as experienced by humans is known as perceived place. In order to comprehend how migrations impact the writer's place-making processes, this study attempts to track how transnational fluxes reconfigure location, surroundings and places. The study aims to investigate the extent to which the Firstspace, the perceived location, influences the characters' everyday activities and interactions, creating a strong sense of belonging, and binds their identities to certain rural and urban settings in the book *A Strange and Sublime Address* by Amit Chaudhuri.

Keywords: Postmodern literature, Transnationalism, Firstspace, Place and spatiality, Identity formation.

Many authors and writers in English literature use the physical layout of the setting to interact with the characters. Firstspace, or the perceived place, is a concept that aids in the analysis and design of the actual setting in which the story is situated. Location plays an important and critical function. This idea of a physical location contributes to either a feeling of belonging or alienation. The characters' identities, cultures, feelings, and behaviours will all be impacted by their association with a certain location.

In the past, location was not as important as other aspects of fictional studies like subject matter, tale, language, or personality. Every kind of art has a connection to place. Literary writings preserve the deep emotional connection that people have to locations. As a result, the characters' identities are strongly linked to the locations in which they live. When the characters migrate and have international ties to different nations, this gets more complicated. "Transnationality is a geographical term, centrally concerned with reconfiguration in relation with place, landscape and place" (Crang 4). Writers use the physical environment—towns, cities, and architecture—as well as the natural environment—seas, forests, rivers, and mountains—to reflect or symbolize the characters' internal conflicts and their quest for self-discovery.

The concept of place refers to the actual location where a story or event takes place. The manifested spatial form is the Firstspace, the actual location. It is a tangible form that focuses on actual places and things. The physical locations of homes, workplaces, and apartments are the first focus of this study. Geocriticism has been the source of Firstspace, a novel and multidisciplinary idea in literary and cultural studies, for over thirty years. Investigating both real and imagined geographies is the aim of geocriticism, according to Robert T. Tally.

Firstspace is a human-made area that represents how people interact with their surroundings. According to space theorist Edward Soja, this Firstspace is socially produced, which means that social interactions and cultural influences shape it. The concrete application of spatial activities is represented by perceived place. The actual, viewable location, including built and plotted structures, is indicated by the perceived place. Any little or large region, including homes, public spaces, countries, and states, is frequently related with the concept of place. Firstspace is essentially where people reside. The Lingua-topo analysis-by Moslund brings about the connection between a place and language.

Moslund reads literature as geography (as from the original Greek, meaning “earth-writing”), looking at the langscaping of the novel or reading the novel’s language to signal the integral connection in literature between land, earth, place, and language. Langscaping the novel discloses how places and landscapes are presented in literature—that is, how they are brought before our senses so that we may actually experience the spatial setting of a novel.... would supplement geocriticism by focussing on the embodied character of textuality and place. (Tally 4)

The protagonist of the book *A Strange and Sublime Address* (ASSA) is pleased and content in his new location. Sandeep, the main character, travels from his homeland of Bombay to Calcutta in West Bengal. His move is due to his desire to spend his summer vacation in Calcutta at his maternal uncle Chhotomama’s house. The purpose of the Firstspace is to highlight the oddities and intricacies of everyday existence. He was raised in an opulent flat in Bombay and was not given the chance to explore the outside world. Every day, he was startled and surprised by the Firstspace in his uncle’s house.

Chhotomama’s house, which was thought to be Sandeep’s home, turned into a sanctuary of comfort and amusement. Firstspace is defined by Soja as “Firstspace perspective and epistemology, fixed mainly on the concrete materiality of spatial forms, on things that can be empirically mapped” (TS 10). The house was not flawless, but it satisfied Sandeep’s everyday expectations.

Sandeep, doing something or the other with his cousins, gradually adjusted his senses to Chhotomama’s house, to the pale walls, the spider-webs in the corners, ... the fans that swung drunkenly from side to side—all so different from the quiet and perfected apartment he lived in Bombay (ASSA 6 - 7).

According to the excerpt above, Sandeep began to recognize the importance and beauty of the traditional features in Chhotomama’s home as his senses adjusted to the environment. These components contrast with his Bombay apartment’s polished and streamlined characteristics. This shift in perspective serves as an example of how a location in literature can transcend its physical characteristics. It strengthens cultural ties and a change in how people perceive their surroundings, becoming a sign of personal development. In the end, Chaudhuri emphasizes how a character’s experience and growth within a story can be greatly impacted by the Firstspace.

Sandeep was revered and exalted everywhere in the migrated area. The home’s bathroom seemed to reverberate with a peculiar, odd rhythm. Everyone begins and ends their day in the restroom. The family members used the bathroom window to observe pigeons and listen to the lovely sounds of shaliks and mynahs outside. The way Chaudhuri depicts the outside world through the window makes this location—the bathroom in particular—particularly intriguing from a literary standpoint. Pigeons are seen sitting outside with a serene, leisurely manner. Every now and then, they cast a curious but uninterested glance inside the window. The depiction of the pigeons gives the Firstspace more complexity by implying that the toilet serves as both a physical location and a viewpoint for taking in the outside world. The location provided Sandeep with the sensory experiences and interactions with the outside world that he had missed in his hometown. As a result, the author includes not just the location’s physical description but also the

sensory experiences, interactions, and distinct viewpoint that a character has when viewing and interacting with it.

Chhotomama's maid, Saraswati, would wash clothes under the running tap, creating an odd echo in the bathroom. Some people get their best ideas there when taking a shower or bath. A restroom is a terrific location to hide and a place to be alone. Taking a bath in a shower is an emotionally calming way to temporarily detach oneself from the outer world. Every item in the house affected Sandeep. A box that resembled an old radio and with dials and antiquated knobs was given to the family as a wedding present. It caused him to think strangely and bizarrely. When Sandeep was younger, he believed that those tunes were performed by small, gifted homunculi inside the radio box. In his vision, those songs were being performed by tiny people inside the radio. Sandeep's unique way of thinking is sparked and triggered by the ancient radio. Sandeep's imagination transforms the radio into a tiny world inhabited by microscopic creatures who are in charge of producing the melodies or music heard on the radio, rather than viewing it as a straightforward technological equipment. According to Soja, "Firstspace epistemologies become fixated on the material form of things in space: with human spatiality seen primarily as outcome or product" (TS 76).

The ability of imagination to give commonplace objects exceptional properties is highlighted by this interpretation. In this Firstspace, Chaudhuri has turned the radio into a fanciful gadget, giving Sandeep's impression of the tiny item a creative touch. According to Tally, Geocriticism is

Geocriticism is a predominantly literary-critical methodological "framework that focuses on the spatial representations within [literary] texts" while also explor[ing] the overlapping territories of actual, physical geography ... their shared interest in examining the relationship between the dimensions of the real and the imagined, between the referent and the representation. (Tally 54)

It is said that Calcutta is a dusty city. This was specific to the vicinity of Chhotomama's residence. Heaps and piles of dust resembling sand dunes can be seen in the streets. Children and dogs congregate on the dusty pavements. Roads are constantly being excavated. Chaudhuri offers his unique viewpoint and analysis of Calcutta, the city where he was born. An impression of the city is created by this description. Sand dunes on the pavements are associated with dust, suggesting a harsh, arid, and possibly barren environment. Essentially, Chaudhuri does more than just depict Calcutta as a geographical place. "Calcutta is a city of dust. If one walks down the street, one sees mounds of dust like sand-dunes on the pavements, ..." (ASSA 13). Sandeep encounters the household values of a middle-class family even in such a setting. After relocating to his maternal uncle's home, Sandeep quickly became comfortable there in a matter of days. Along with his friends Abhi and Babla and the other residents of the residence, he was ecstatic. He gained a solid understanding of what life and a family is from the house. Even though the house was filled with antiquated items and was not primarily modern, it managed to convey Sandeep's satisfaction. Every time Sandeep returns to the Bengali family's home and Calcutta as a whole, he is overcome with amazement.

When Chhaya arrived to use the jhadu, a short, tiny broom, to clean the floor, Sandeep saw the small house as spanning acres and acres of land. When the treasure was found after the sweeping was finished, the location was transformed into an incredible one. Sandeep was shocked by everything that had accumulated, including a dead spider, a beautiful pigeon feather, a book sheet, and the long, black, and delicate loops of Mamima's and Sandeep's mother's hair that had entered the house with or without the residents' consent. "With a short broom known as the jhadu, she would sweep the floor—endless expanses, acres and acres of floor" (ASSA 14).

The physical and social aspects of Bombay, as well as money, did not provide him with the emotional fulfillment that he found in Calcutta. Sandeep claims that Bombay is a place of postmodernity, modernity, and globalization. His large room in Bombay sadly lacked the passion that even the tiny window in Calcutta gave him. Abhi and Sandeep would approach the window as one shutter is opened to let the least amount of light into the space, both of them critique the people walking along the street and then instantly disappear as the shutter is closed. Both of them erupted into a sea of hiccups and boisterous celebration as a result.

Sandeep and Abhi are able to temporarily escape the limitations of the outer world because of the Firstspace, which serves as a private and protected area, as well as the feeling of young mischief. The happiness they get from this little act of mischief in that short space is indicated by their following laughs. They enjoy the feeling of upsetting the outside world and then disappearing from view during this shared happy moment. They experience a sense of freedom and joy as a result of feeling invisible and having the ability to influence their environment.

The amenities, size, or design of a physical space might not always be sufficient to ensure the residents' emotional satisfaction. The degree to which a place resonates with an individual's particular experiences and emotions often has an impact on happiness. In *A Strange and Sublime Address*, Sandeep's migration to Calcutta introduced him to the real world and made him feel attached to it. From Sandeep's point of view, the city becomes a symbol of a simpler, more grounded existence where memories and location come together to create a sense of belonging. The author Amit Chaudhuri did a good job of picturing this. A careful examination of Amit Chaudhuri's writings demonstrates how he uses a common human connection to space to link different locations. Amit Chaudhuri's writings demonstrates how he uses a common human bond with space to link different locations. His works offer a deep, multicultural viewpoint while deftly and subtly examining a wide range of subjects.

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