

Chapter II

Socio-cultural Problems

Modern man has been compelled to decree from the Indian values and ethos because of the dominance of the western culture. The five novels of Chatterjee reveal the erosion of values and the resultant socio-cultural problems of the contemporary society. The humane concern gets no place for love and respect for others. Due to westernization, the rich tradition, cultural values and joint family system have lost their significance in India. Modern man neither gives importance to human relationships; nor he concern about the country becoming corrupted.

Ron Shepherd in his article “Suffering in Indo-English Fiction” in the book *Explorations in Modern Indo-English Fiction* says:

Indo-English fiction has been called “the twice-born fiction” since it derives from two parent traditions, one Indian and the other British. The hybrid off spring is of such a varied nature that it cannot be described easily in any single set of terms. Styles and shaping philosophies range from those which are traditionally or characteristically Indian to these which are more clearly western. (51)

All the five novels of Chatterjee are imaginative assaults on the vulgarities, absurdities and corruptions which have become the recognizable reality of today. A close reading of his novels shows that he has portrayed the present socio - cultural problems through the major characters who are morally corrupted and westernized. They are all well-educated and are from high class society. Their way of life and the society where they live bring out the socio-cultural problems of our nation. *English, August: An Indian Story* and *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* project the corrupted Indian bureaucracy and the effects of post colonialism on the modern educated men. *The Last Burden* and *Way to Go* bring out the family relationship in the

contemporary society which is decayed. *Weight Loss* projects how people are obsessed with sex and its effect on their life. Through these novels, Chatterjee wants to project how the protagonists are anchorless, alienated and struggle to live their life. Holding responsibility and living up to that is a heroic quality; but this quality becomes a burden when one wants to shirk his responsibility. Sarika Goyal in her article “Homoeroticism in Indian Fiction in English” in the book *Divergent Trends in Indian Fiction in English* aptly says about the writers and their expressions into that fold of writers Upamanyu Chatterjee does fit in.

Fiction relies on imagination, which is moulded in the frames of reality and vice-versa. A writer is known for picking up things from the socio-cultural milieu. The small unnoticeable matters are thought upon, elaborated and presented in a new light with the free play of imagination. Almost all the writers, native or west, feel an urge to voice various realities prevalent in the society. In a fast changing modern world, the ancient norms are no longer observed and many new trends are emerging which are hitherto silenced. These silenced voices have been expressed in the works of modern fiction by some Indian authors also . . . (25)

The novelists depict the cultural change and its problems under the impact of westernization and globalization. They are not only political but also related to one’s personal feelings and experiences, existential struggles, issues related to community living and ethnicity and new challenges faced within the country. As a novelist, Upamanyu Chatterjee records his observations of the society and presents them before his readers with an aim to create awareness about the evils and the problems in the society so that they could understand the problems and take remedial measures.

Human beings are cultural beings and they are culturally rooted in the sense that their lives are culturally structured and well organized. But in the post colonial India the Indian culture and literature are influenced by English culture and literature. Chatterjee's novels contribute to current discussions relating to the problems of East and West and the internal conflict of an individual. He portrays his protagonists as people who are caught between two cultures because they are mostly westernized in 'thoughts' and 'actions' and they had English education. As Ram Sharma in his preface to *New Horizons in Post-Colonial World Literature* says "Post colonialism is a vast umbrella which covers architecture, economics, political philosophy, psychological states, education system and colonial mind etc" (v).

Stephen Morton in his book *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* says that "Spivak repeatedly emphasizes that the production and reception of nineteenth century English literature was bound up with the history of imperialism" (111). Even though the English left our country, the influence of the English still remains in the Indian society. The contemporary youths want to be "English" in all aspects, be it education or culture. They want to show themselves as 'westernized youths.' Hans Berten in "Postcolonial Criticism and Theory" in the book *Literary Theory: the Basics* clearly states that postcolonial theory:

. . . studies the process and the effects of cultural displacement and the ways in which the displaced have culturally defended themselves. Postcolonial theory, in particular sees such displacements, and the ambivalences and hybrid cultural forms to which they lead, and vantage points that allow us to explore the internal doubts and the instances of resistance that the west suppressed in its steamrolling globalizing course and deconstruct the seamless facade that the combination of imperialism and capitalizing has traditionally striven to present. (200)

Post-colonialism refers to the juncture where the colonizers de-colonized the colonized and left the colonized people free to rule where the colonial rule expires or is forced to expire symbolically yielding place to independence to the colonized society. But in Indian English literature it is a pluralistic outlook given to the effects and after effects of colonialism. It does not show the country free from colonialism, but it suggests continuity and change.

Padmini Mongia, in her introduction to *Contemporary Post Colonial Theory: A Reader* points out that the term post colonial “itself operates in at least two different registers at once: it is a historical marker referring to the period after official decolonization as well as a term signifying changes in intellectual approaches, particularly those which have been influenced by post-structuralism and deconstruction” (2).

For the past two decades, the two terms mostly discussed in post colonial discourse have been hybridity and mimicry. The major aspect of post-colonial studies is to highlight the way the English have represented the colonies to themselves and to the world, and also the manner it has represented itself to its colonies and the rest of the world as well.

Hybridity, the major theme in post colonial studies is found in Chatterjee’s novels. The protagonists Agastya, Jamun and Bhola are caught between of the East and the West ; it becomes clearly evident that the West dominates them more. The term suggests heterogeneity and multiculturalism. In “Commitment to Theory” in his book *The Location of Culture* Bhabha defines hybridity as something “ new, neither the one nor the other...” (37). It may appear in cultural, political and linguistic form. Jasbir Jain in the article “Problematizing Hybridity: the Diasporic Versus the Stay-at-home Writer” in the book *Critical Spectrum: Essays in Literary Culture in Honour of professor C. D. Narasimhaiah* says, “For Bhabha, hybridity is a process, not a position” (37). Though the colonized were de-colonized, they could not be free from the

cultural hangover of the West because cultural colonization is so deep in India. Pramod K. Nayar in “Hybridity, Diaspora, Cosmopolitanism” in his book *Post colonial literature : An Introduction* says that the “colonial rule in Asian / African / South American regions transplanted European forms of thinking, European languages and culture, and everything from food to sport into a native ‘context’” (186) .

Hybridity shows the connection between the past and contemporary cultural discourse. Andrew Smith in “Migrancy, Hybridity, and Post colonial Literary studies” in the book *Post-colonial Literary Studies* says that “‘hybridity’ implies the mingling of once separate and discrete ways of living” (251).

Chatterjee’s protagonists Agastya, Jamun and Bhola are well educated but ‘westernized’ in thoughts. Though the English people left India, their influence is felt by the people of India. Chatterjee offers a complex view of the post-colonial society where the modern man is caught in a cultural conflict. The colonial legacy makes the modern man to suffer from an inexorable sense of alienation and exile as they are not able to live in the place where they feel culturally different from others.

Agastya in *English, August: An Indian story* is a megapolitan youth, educated in the best public schools of Darjeeling whose life is totally changed when he reports in Madna as an IAS trainee officer. The world of Madna is totally different from his own world and it has a different culture also. He has seen this kind of place only in the newspapers. Modernity and cultural change come through the colonial rule and western education. So hybridization “can neither be ignored nor willed away” (94) as Meena Belliappa says in “Urban consciousness and Indian Fiction in English.” Agastya’s mind is rooted in this reality of contemporary India tossed between opposed worlds. Agastya represents this reality through perceptions made possible by a

deepening urban consciousness. Agastya is totally out of place with his mixed parentage and his English education and the habits of the public school type. Chatterjee's depiction of the state of Agastya's mind as the train takes him from Delhi to Madna:

Outside the Indian hinterland rushed by Hundreds of kilometers of a familiar yet unknown landscape, seen countless times through train windows, but never experienced – his life till then had been profoundly urban. Shabby stations of small towns where the train didn't stop, the towns that looked nice from a train window, incurious patient eyes and weather beaten bicycles at a level crossing, muddy children and buffalo at a water hole. To him, these places had been, at best, names out of newspapers, where floods and caste wars occurred, and entire Harijan families were murdered, where some prime minister took his helicopter just after a calamity, or just before the elections. Now he looked out at this remote world and felt a little unsure, he was going to spend months in a dot in this hinterland. (EA 4-5).

Chatterjee gives a realistic picture of the Indian villages through the portrayal of Madna.

To Agastya,

The town looked so ugly that he wanted to laugh. He realized that if he liked Madna at all it was because of its horrifying unpretentiousness, its greetings-from-a-cesspool-we're-all-in-it feeling. The adults defecating modestly behind bushes, the children, lords of innocence, waving to the jeep while shitting beside the road, cows and stray dogs, even, inexplicably, a camel and people, people, burgeoning like a joyous cancer . . . (EA 197)

Madna is symptomatic of Urban India's inadequate involvement and perfunctory participation in 'tradition' as well as modernity. There are obvious difference of class, status, age, character and situation. The constrictive surrounding drives Agastya to seek refuge in the world of imaginations and his 'secret life' of marijuana, music and Marcus Aurelius. The secret life is his defense he has in Madna. The representation of this world through the medium of English makes the comment on the post-colonial world more pointed.

What Edward Said points out in *Culture and Imperialism* is worth considering here: "nativism is not the only alternative. There is the possibility of a more generous and pluralistic vision of the world, in which imperialism courses on, as it were belatedly in different forms. . . , and the relationship of domination continues . . ." (277). It is the colonizing the mind, not the body, hypnotizing the people with the tool of globalization and modernization. Sudhir K. Arora beautifully explains in *Post-colonialism: Theory, Issues and Applications*,

The colonial discourse is about the colonizer Satan who in the guise of a serpent enters the eastern garden where innocent inhabitants are leading a blissful life, but with its intelligence mixed with shrewdness, it tempts them either forcibly or coercively to eat the fruit of knowledge so that they may be ashamed of their primitiveness and rebel against the very God of culture and tradition. (35)

The twentieth century witnessed the historic event of decolonization of the colonized countries. Though the colonized were decolonized, they could not be free from the colonial hangover. It is a pity that cultural colonization is so deep in India. Agastya is caught between two cultures and he feels rootless. Cultural imperialism appeals to the mind of the natives by the display of the modern costume 'globalization' which is found in Agastya.

Upamanyu Chatterjee's novels reveal anxiety about modern Indian cultural identity and have concern for rediscovering one's cultural roots. *English August: An Indian story* and *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* give an account of genealogy of modern Indian sensibility: its roots in modern domesticity and proliferation via bureaucracy. These novels directly confront modernity and rationalism in the contemporary Indian context on a public plane. Having been burdened by a colonial past, these novels are unable to extricate the 'seeking self' from issues of cultural conflict and modernity.

Agastya, the satirical hero does not belong to the Gandhian era or the Nehruvian era. These names do not signify anything to him. His initial vision of India is of:

Scores of people, sitting on their haunches, smoking, wandering, gazing at anything moving or at other people. Most were in white dhoti, kurta and Gandhi cap (or was it Nehru cap? wondered Agastya. No, Gandhi cap and Nehru jacket. Or Gandhi jacket or Nehru cap? And Patel vest? And Mountbatten lungi and Rajaji shawl and Tagore dhoti?), some had towels over their heads. (EA11)

He is caught between two cultures; in Madna he feels lost and wasting his time there. The main problem of Agastya is he could not live his life which was opposite to his life practices in Delhi as a westernized youth. He finds it very hard to adjust himself to the place as well as the job. He is from the world of 'English', a desperate world of 'Time-Life' and coco-cola and Calvin Klen jeans and T-Shirts. This realization takes place in Agastya and even his father admits that by saying, "that you have led so far, in Calcutta and Delhi, a comfortable big-city life, wherein your friends and lifestyle have been largely Westernized" (EA 149). He is restless in the world of Madna because his is the world of megapolitan world of Delhi and Calcutta.

He finds himself burdened by more than one past, the colonial which makes him want to be Anglo and the traditional Indian which turns him again and again to the traditional philosophy of *The Bhagavad Gita*. He is not able to achieve the untroubled synthesis of nationalism and modernity that his father, governor of Calcutta, clad in Silk-Kurta Dhoti, eating corned beef and encouraging English education has reached. His uncle Manik is also progressive, wanting his daughter to have an English education so that she can have an edge over the rest of Indians. Pultukaku uses his obscure American treatise on third-world journalism.

Chatterjee's heroes are too self-obsessed to mingle freely in the mainstream of the life of the society where they are forced to live. As members of the postcolonial India they carry the liabilities of a mixed culture wherever they go. In *English, August* and *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* Madna, a small town is viewed from different standpoints. The heterogeneity brought about mixing of the cultures in a post colonial setup, is satirized by Govind Sathe, when he remarks to Agastya that "I presume you know at least three Indian languages, English, Hindi and Bengali, yet you find it difficult to communicate here" (EA 174).

Chatterjee's hero Agastya fails to rest his convictions in a meaningful context and have peace of mind, for the real self is always elusive. For him, anchorlessness is to be one of his chaotic concerns during his life in the unfamiliar Madna. His inability to relate himself to his job and the place is to be considered in a larger framework. He is content with the simple pleasures of the present:

'I'm not very happy in Madna. I can't settle down to the job – 'He smiled shamefully . . . 'Of course, nothing is fixed. I'm in a sort of state of flux, restless.' He shuffled in his chair. 'I don't want challenges or responsibility or anything, all I want is to be happy –' He stopped, embarrassed . . . He wanted to

say much, but didn't know where to begin, or how to express himself. He wanted to say, look, I don't want heaven, or any of the other ephemerals, the power or the glory, I just want this, this moment, this sunlight . . . (EA 148)

The western world is presented by almost all the contemporary Indian writers. Agastya who is attracted towards western culture finds it difficult to survive in Madna. *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* reflects the collapse of the socio-cultural institutions. Agastya is trapped between two cultures. Chatterjee writes about his detachment: "Every time he drafted a letter of resignation, a pay commission had been setup to hike his salary up by a millionth of a fraction. A raise, as Jesus said, is a raise. One can't leave one's mother's lap. The outside world is much less funny and wicked. Out there, all of them would trip head over heels over the lowest efficiency bar" (MTWS 108). He is trapped in an absurd situation unable to extricate himself. In the very first paragraph of the novel, Chatterjee tells that so often Agastya rests his head on his armrest and weeps silently.

Chatterjee's modern urban educated youth has lost his moorings because of snapping of his ties with his tradition. He is incapable of establishing worthwhile relationship with anyone. In the first novel, Agastya feels proud of being called August by his friends. It reflects his extreme likings for things and ideas which are English in origin. It also emphasizes the social evolution having the western society as the model. Western culture has become a part of India. Agastya represents the modern man who is trapped by the new culture of global cosmopolitanism. It has emerged as a desirable society that emerged directly out of the European enlightenment.

European enlightenment is inculcated in the Indian minds as the ideals of the west are considered superior. In these two novels, Agastya does not grow as a good human being, because he likes to lead a comfortable and pleasure filled life. Through him, Chatterjee portrays the

predicament of the modern educated westernized youth. Uma Mahadevan Dasgupta in the review “The Return of August” observes:

It’s December, and August is back. More than a decade after his dramatic entry into Indian writing in English, using four letter words like loose change, the Anglocentric babu created by Upamanyau Chatterjee seems to have remained in his grass-induced haze. He is still single, sex-starved, more cynical than ever before, and, fortunately for us, he can be trenchantly witty. But with time and age, he seems to have picked up another babu quality – to bore. As we follow August on his metamorphosis (though not Kafkaesque, sadly) into Shri Sen – Collector of where else but Madna – he meanders from dusty Department to mundane Ministry, tying random knots in the maze of official red tape as he floats along the higher echelons of the civil services. (27)

In Madna, Agastya feels that he is wasting his time without leading a purposeful life because of his westernized ways. Agastya, physically is an Indian who lives in India, but mentally he is English.

The Last Burden and *Way To* go present the Indian middle class family and their familial relationship. Chatterjee portrays the slow erosion of Indian family values at the hands of the westernized, urbanized people. Urmila and Shyamanand, Jamun and Burfi’s parents were married in the year of 1950 – the year India became a republic with its own constitution. They are the representatives of first – generation post-independence Indians who believe in the values of the west as modernity. They give their children English education and encourage them to cultivate western friends. They are thoroughly urban and Shyamanand’s job requires them to change cities frequently.

The characters of Chatterjee live in a dark world devoid of traditions and culture. Urmila and Shyamanand are worried about their sons' future because of their alien culture built on western ideology and practices. Shyamanand feels that their family degenerated on account of "the dishonourable anglicization of his own sons" (TLB 107). Nilufer E. Bharucha states in the article "The Floodgates are open: Recent Fiction from the Indian Subcontinent" that the novel, "*The Last Burden* is a powerful and mature exploration of changing face of the Indian family and notions of filial responsibilities" (72).

Jamun lives in an urban space which is considered physically clean but socially and spiritually dead. As a modernist he desires for the city life and live openly. Jamun is leading a city bred bureaucrats' life of boredom in an unnamed small town in Maharashtra. Throughout the novel, westernized middle class aspirations are mentioned. Amit Chaudhuri in his review of *The Last Burden* "Hollering in the Dark" says,

The peculiar American – English in which this book is written signifies the drifting, deracinated world of the Indian urban middle class, to which the central character, Jamun, belongs: people in India who have grown up listening to rock music and reading comic books have recourse to no other language. Yet the true subject-matter of this is the tension between this particular language and the things which, with his imminent death, Jamun gradually rediscovers – the world of kinship, of immemorial family ties, of childhood memories, of the passing away of these, of religiosity. The two worlds play off against, and enrich each other, like official language and forgotten vernacular. In Jamun, Chatterjee has created the unexceptional, flippant representative of English-speaking Indian

middle class, surprising in himself a hunger for a lost of closeness, a rootedness.

(18)

Indu Saraiya in her review of *The Last Burden* says: “Collision between East and West is causing orthodoxies to flounder, leaving the present westernized generation feeling somewhat at sea” (35). Upamanyu Chatterjee presents a complex view of the post-colonial society and also emphasizes on the need for alternative values to live by, which will provide stable identities. All the works of Indian literature are cross cultural products now, bearing the marks of traces of colonization. There is a loss of connection between the English educated Indian urban youth and the large Indian masses. The protagonists of Chatterjee are unable to connect with the refreshing stream of the cultural sustenances provided by the general Indian ethos. Their English background has become a barrier to connect with Indian culture by restricting them.

The fictional world of Chatterjee is marked by the change of culture in different aspects dealing with the postmodern condition of the Indian society. The characters depict the decline of the Indian value system of social life and cultural advancement. They are the products of English education having Western oriented intellectualism and progress.

Chatterjee has chosen hybrid language over correct usage to express the multifaceted experiences of times. His writings have a mixture of two kinds of syntax and many kinds of vocabulary. He was also affected by the emergency in India and these qualities converged to make him a talented young man – clever, knowledgeable and comfortable with his hybrid culture and language but above all concerned about his society and its problems. This kind of socio-cultural environment moulded Upamanyu Chatterjee and his thinking. Nidhi Nema in her article “Upamanyu Chatterjee Deconstructed” comments,

Chatterjee's literature leads to exposing the general predicament arising out of contemporary conditions. This includes the dilemma of a de-centered youth caught in the mesh of metro and micro India; of society trying to cope with changing times and the changing nations of familial bonds; it is the dilemma of the largest democracy, the bureaucracy of which has not yet delivered and is still to prove the importance of its existence. Above all, it exposes the dilemma of a common man caught in the shifting paradigm of the social - political and socio - cultural matrix of present day life. He places the so - called modernity or westernization and Indian tradition and culture on the same plane for our examination. He then seems to be asking whether this attitude of modernity embodied in western outlook on life has proved to be useful in solving the problems arising out of modern Indian situation. (84)

The gloomy Indian socio-political conditions make every sensible person to think about modern youth like Agastya, Jamun and Bhola who are perpetually caught in the predicament – to be or not to be. Chatterjee is concerned with the socio-cultural condition in which the urban educated Indians find themselves.

Hybridization takes place in the society in one way or the other. In the course of history, social and cultural practices of one country are adopted by others producing cross cultural symbiosis and synthesis. The modernized situation portrayed by Chatterjee makes the novel *Way to Go* relevant to many of the readers. It brings out unexpected breaks with the traditional ways of viewing the world through a series of cultural shocks.

Shyamanand goes to live with Jamun after Burfi's departure to Noida. But he is not able to lead his life peacefully away from his house. There arises a conflict between tradition and

modernity as they belong to different generations. Chatterjee portrays the urban educated man Jamun who is given to sensual pleasure. In this changing modern world, the members of the same family are not able to unite together; but ironically, unhappy moments do bring them together. When Jamun and Burfi were together, they never shared happiness with each other. After Shyamanand's disappearance, Jamun really wants to share his problems with others but he finds nobody around him. In the modern, contemporary world, nobody can relate to the other as they fail to establish meaningful relationships.

Burfi does not care for the traditional values and language and he does not want his children to imbibe with such values because of his western ideas and western thoughts. His younger son was reluctant to learn Bengali. When Shyamanand spoke to Burfi's young children in Bengali, they replied in English. Burfi also complains about Shyamanand's behaviour saying: "Please don't insist that they speak to you in Bengali; it's enough, really, that they speak to you" (WTG 268). Burfi is satisfied as long as they are in talking terms. He does not care to see that a meaningful and loving relationship is developed between his father and his children.

Nisha in her article "*Way to Go: A Critical Study of Tradition Modernity Conflict*" says that *Way to Go* "focuses on human extremities in their behavior, attitudes and idiosyncrasies" (13). The novel puts great impact of the essence of life bound by Indian culture and ends with a feel of repentance. The fictional world of Upamanyu Chatterjee is marked by the visible symptoms of the collapse of Indian values and consumerist style of living. The noble characteristic features are absent in the major characters which is the result of the post modern decline of the Indian value system of social life and cultural advancement. Chatterjee's protagonists are all city-dwellers and they are the products of English education imbued with the spirit of the ideas contained in the western oriented intellectual thoughts. Upamanyu Chatterjee

brings out the cultural actualities of the contemporary Indian Society. Stuart Hall talks about the influence of other culture in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”:

It is *something* - not a mere trick of the imagination. It has its histories – and histories have their real, material and symbolic effects. The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual, ‘past’, since our relation to it, like the child’s relation to the mother, is always ‘after the break’. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. (113)

The special interest of the urban in Chatterjee’s novels is its natural extension into the cosmopolitan. The city acts as a catalyst in creating opportunities for change and growth and it also offers avenues of exploration not imaginable in a small town like Madna. There is a perception about the city that it is a threat of a shabby existence to those who fail. But in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s novels, the protagonist of city born and brought up fail to survive in the small towns. Nidhi Nema in the article “Upamanyu Chatterjee Deconstructed” says about Chatterjee’s portrayal of the society:

Chatterjee subverts established norms; he is an interesting mix of intellectual and weird, instructive and pathetic, shocking and amusing, harshly critical but with a flash of sympathy. His novels exemplify his approach to the ideas of his time, and that happens to be extremely cynical. They try to capture the beat of sensitized generation and a nation struggling to reorient itself in the early days of what is now called globalization. They project the horrifying reality of disintegrating middle class family values in modern times and at the same time also demonstrate how the biggest impediment in the path of nations development happens to the ‘welfare state’ itself. (81)

Chatterjee's novels present the general predicament of the modern man arising out of contemporary conditions. He exposes the dilemma of a de-centered youth caught in the mesh of metro and micro India and projects the dilemma of a common man caught in the shifting paradigm of the socio-cultural matrix of present day life. Through his portrayal, he seems to be asking whether this attitude of modernity embodied in western outlook of life has proved to be useful in solving the problems arising out of modern Indian situations.

Postcolonization represents the effects and after effects of colonialism. It focuses on the direct effects of colonialism and it does not introduce the world that is free from the ills of colonialism but its continuity and change. When one tries to imitate the other he will be in an ambivalent situation as he will never succeed in doing it. "In this comic turn" as Homi Bhabha says "from the high ideals of the colonial imagination to its low mimetic literary effects mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (122). He also adds,

Mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers. (122-23)

In "Hybridity, Diaspora and Cosmopolitanism" in the work *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction* Pramod K. Nayar says that "the colonial rule transplanted European forms of

thinking, European languages and culture and everything from food to sport into a native ‘context’(186).

Chatterjee shows how the Indian roots have been erased and new ideas and ideologies are planted in the contemporary educated youth. Joseph Dorairaj in his book *Interventions: Essays in Philosophy and Literary Theory* says,

Mimicry is characterized by simultaneous attraction as well as repulsion, and complicity coupled with resistance between the colonizer and the colonized. In other words, the colonizer wants the subject to mimic him but the end result is that the other can never faithfully mimic and ape him for he is caught in an ambivalent situation where he can neither copy his master’s behavior or culture nor reject it summarily.(150)

Meenakshi Raykar in the article “The Intellectual in a State of ‘Anomy’: *No Longer at Ease* and *English, August: An Indian Story*” says that “the problem of the intellectuals in India is their ‘colonial mentality’”(92). Chatterjee tells his stories about the postcolonial bureaucracy, development, education, language and family set up through various characters in his novels. All his characters try to mimic the English and want to be English. A.K.Singh in his article, “*English, August: A Critical Appraisal*” points out:

The very title of Upamanyu chatterjee’s novel *English August: An Indian Story* lays great emphasis on the story part of it at the outset. And it is ‘Indian’. This is a story about an Indian by an Indian, which might have otherwise been “Indian Agastya: An English story”. The ironic connotations of the title suggest that though the English have left, yet English still enjoys its Augustan day in India, as the story may be India but it is English. Moreover, the raj syndrome still haunts

the Indians – Particularly the young generation who find August to be more convenient than Agastya. (88)

Agastya is the only son of a Governor and a product of the best public schools of Darjeeling and Delhi. His ardent wish is to be an Anglo-Indian and to speak English with their accent. He tries to mimic English people and their culture, being in a metropolitan city. When he is posted at Madna, he longs for the city life and this is seen throughout the novel. P.S.Rai in his book *Modern English Fiction: History, Politics and Individual in the Novels of Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Upamanyu Chatterjee* says, “His elitist education and the frivolous luxuries afforded by cities like Calcutta and Delhi have obviously conditioned his mind to just one way of life”(123).

Agastya is called ‘August’ by his friends. When his uncle comes to know about this, he becomes angry and shouts at Agastya’s friend Madan “The greatest praise you mimics long for is to be called European junkies. And who is August? In my presence, call him Ogu”(EA 29).

Monu Bhujel in his article, “The Protagonist as subjectificatory Legacy in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s Novel *English, August: An Indian Story*” says:

The progenitor of the character Upamanyu Chatterjee, explores the subjectivity of this irresistible protagonist through multiple angles and enables his readers to accept the fact that he is not merely a protagonist of amusement at the surface level but a potent representation of postcolonial subjectificatory legacy. He is the offshoot of colonial domination in India and a perfect interpellation of colonizer’s ideological subjectification.(1)

The novel clearly presents India which is influenced by the culture of the colonizers. The novel brings out the fact that the colonizers’ institutions and practices are still continued in the

contemporary India. Upamanyu Chatterjee says: “District administration in India is largely a British creation, like the railways and the English language, another complex and unwidely behest of the Raj” (EA10).

Chatterjee presents the reality of Indian culture and society throughout the novel that has affected the generation by making the colonizer’s culture as ‘Indianised’. Agastya reflects the subjectivity of the present generation of postcolonial India. The loss of connection between the English-educated Indian urban youth and the large Indian society is a recurring theme in Chatterjee’s novels. Their English background restricts them from connecting themselves to ‘Indianness.’ The alien influence has got multiplied with its strong influence on the educated youth making them to mimic them.

K. Rekha and Rama Nagar Hanuman Alpati in their article “Existential Dilemma: A Study of Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *English August: An Indian Story*” bring out the colonial impact in the following manner:

Colonial syndrome is seen in the novel where the protagonist and his friends are internally colonized by westernization in their dressing, habits and not ready to accept the conventional Indian life and society which seemed to be meaningless to them. The impact of colonialism is so strong on these young men that the protagonist wants to be called August instead of Agastya, and his friend Mahendra Bhaba wants to be called Mandy. Further Mandy wants to wear only Jeans and loves to get AIDS as it is raging in America. (364)

This internal colonization makes them to mimic the west and feel ‘alienated’ and ‘exiled.’ The very title of the novel *English , August: An Indian Story* lays emphasis on the story part of it

at the outset and it also suggests that though the English have left, yet the English influence on the young, educated youth, is still strongly felt as the story is Indian but written in English.

English has been associated with the colonial culture of the rulers. The Indian young generation wants to be 'English type.' The people of India are fascinated by English. It becomes evident that the young generation mimics the English. The question ultimately arises from Dhruvo: "But why're the instructions in English? The language of the bloodsucking imperialists, they made our hearts weep, and crippled us from appreciating our glorious heritage" (EA159).

Kumar asks Agastya, "Hahn, you look the English type –"

'The English type?'

'Any Indian who speaks English more fluently than he speaks any Indian language I call the English type, good, no?'" (EA 23).

Agastya does not belong to the Gandhian or the Nehruvian era and he belongs to the twentieth century 'Yuppi,' clad in Jeans and boggy shirts since the colonial legacy which means moderating and change becomes very difficult to embrace totally. The attitude towards modernity and the Western outlook on life are seen in the modern cultural situation. In *Mammaries of the Welfare State*, nothing has changed in Madna or the Civil Service or the Character of Madna. Chatterjee projects him as a man who is not ready to accept the life in Madna. Nidhi Nema in her article "Upamanyu Chatterjee Deconstructed" says about Chatterjee's writing:

Chatterjee's literature leads to exposing the general predicament arising out of contemporary conditions. This includes the dilemma of a de-centered youth caught in the mesh of metro and micro India; of society trying to cope with changing times and the changing notions of familial bonds; it is the dilemma of the largest democracy, the bureaucracy of which has not yet delivered and is still

to prove the importance of its existence. Above all, it exposes the dilemma of a common man caught in the shifting paradigm of the socio-political and social-cultural matrix of present day life. He places the so-called modernity or Westernization and Indian tradition and culture on the same plane for our examination. He then seems to be asking whether this attitude of modernity as embodied in western outlook on life has proved to be useful in solving the problems. (84)

Markapudi David Raju in his article “Dysfunctional Democratic Behemoths: Politician Mandarin Nexus in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *Weight Loss*” says that Agastya, “is now no more ‘English’ or ‘August,’ but simply ‘Agastya,’ a true son of the soil, who put on eight years of service in the ‘Steel Frame’ of the society and was made to be a real Indian ‘Babu’” (162). But still Agastya is not happy to be in Madna. He feels disoriented and unhappy and feels sick of his life there. Agastya the English-speaking man and tries to mimic the West in his life. Apart from this, this novel concentrates on the bureaucracy and corruption.

Jamun, having the background of English education tries to mimic the western culture in both the novels *The Last Burden* and *Way to Go*. These two novels focus on the Indian family set up and how they have got distorted because of modernity. Dr. Shivani Verma in the article “Lack of Communication in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s Novel *The Last Burden*” states that the novel, “is a moderate and mournful novel. In this novel the life of Indian family is described” (1348).

Indian culture and tradition have undergone many changes with the fast changing value system and the effect of Western culture. Jamun and Burfi do not want to take up the responsibility of taking care of their parents, nor they show any respect to them. Chatterjee says, “Between the brothers, whoever stayed with the father usually felt that the other had dumped him

to it, had won and escaped” (WTG 61). The novel is a strong comment on the changing values of the younger generation for whom parents have become a burden. Jamun satisfies his sexual needs with Kasturi who continues her relationship with him even after her marriage and with Kasibai, his maid servant when he is away from his home. Jamun, at the end takes care of Shyamanand even though he feels that his father will be a disturbance to his privacy however he tries to do his duties as a son. Reena Kothari in the article “(Modern?) Me : A Comparative Note on Upamanyu Chatterjee's *Last Burden* and Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*” says, “On the whole, Jaman is a modern man who has respect for his parents but doesn't want any kind of interference in his ‘free’ life style” (39).

Way to Go reflects the failures of man. Chatterjee presents the failure of middle class life and of relationships. This happens because of the distance that comes due to cultural differences; man's attitude towards his life changes as he gives more importance to himself. The difference between them comes out when the name boards were replaced. Jamun does not appreciate the taste of his father.

Jamun had been caught so off guard by the unexpectedness and shameful lower-middle-class-ness of the display that he had exploded with a hysterical intensity that he hadn't shown for over a decade; in his turn Shymanand , after having waited or a week to hear his son express his appreciation of joy in his fathers labour of love, and then having had to listen instead to Jamun's outburst Shymanand had truly felt that the time had come for him to die, to limp off into the dark. (WTG 59)

The entire novel talks about the relationships. In this modern world old people are considered as ‘burden.’ Shyamanand's two sons Burfi and Jamun are not willing to take care of

their father. He is reduced to a lifeless product. It is clearly evident that the old man is not living his life but only counting his days and passing them.

The novel projects a clash between tradition and modernity and between young and old generations. Nisha in her article “*Way to Go: A Critical Study of Tradition Modernity Conflict*” says that “Shyamanand could not help himself returning to his roots, Jamun is going back only to fulfill his duty towards his father. He is inclined to his actual belonging because he is a product of modern society” (8). *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* defines that “the ‘mimic man’ who occupies the impossible space between culture . . . is the ‘effect of flawed colonial mimesis in which to be Anglicized, is emphatically not to be English.’ Occupying also the precarious ‘area between mimicry and mockery,’ the mimic man is therefore iconic both of the enforcement of colonial authority and its ‘strategic failure’ (227).

English language in India has become a model for other languages for their development since it has a multilingual system. Naval Kishore Singh in his article “Nativization of English” in the book *Modern Literary Criticism and Theories* evinces: “A problem with this role is the superior position it gives to English and the notion that language development means catching up with English and becoming like English. Until the native languages reach that kind of development, there will not be reallocation of functions to them in the multilingual network and English will remain supreme” (52).

The dominance of English language is seen in the case of higher education, higher administration, higher business and in many other fields all the novels of Chatterjee. The protagonists are well educated city dwellers. They follow the westernized way of life even though their parents are rooted in the old traditional ideals. It is considered as powerful unlike other regional languages. But English language is always associated with modernity and the

English people, where the native language with the ideology of tradition and culture. The West's presence has affected the Indians. Chatterjee's protagonists Agastya, Jamun and Bhola are well educated and attracted towards western style of living. English has affected the younger generation totally.

Mohammad Akram in his article "A Short Summary – The Idea of the Welfare State in Upamanyu Chatterjee's Fiction" states that "Chatterjee's *Weight Loss* . . . focuses on the discrepancies of the society. It is also searing passage through bureaucratic India laughter and disgust, grotesquery and astonishment looms large in the novel" (n.pag.).

Weight Loss portrays sexuality relating the socio-political situations of postcolonial Indian Society. The story of this novel hovers between the public and personal life of the character Bhola through his sexual affairs promoting the negative side of his illicit relationships. Bhola practices both homo and heterosexuality and he is the realistic picture of the degenerated modern youth.

The influence of colonizer's is seen in all walks of life. It not only affected the individuals but also the nation. This is clearly evident in *English, August: An Indian Story* and *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*. These novels satirize Indian Administrative Service. Chatterjee says that the, "District administration in India is largely a British creation, like the railways and the English language, another complex and unwieldy bequest of the Raj" (EA 10)

The world of bureaucracy depicted in these novels make an attempt to reveal the crippled issues of colonial culture steeped in artificiality, snobbery, inefficiency and corruption. According to A.K.Singh, "*English, August: A critical Appraisal*" "Chatterjees protagonist does not relish this state of corruption, exploitation, indifference and snobbery, which aggravates his problems in Madna and makes him develop a strong aversion for this much coveted job" (96).

Agastya in both the novels finds it difficult to adjust himself for the post in the small town. In Madna, people are allowed to starve and die of thirst. The government officials exploit them physically and financially. The forest contractor indulges in “bribing the Forest officials, underpaying the tribals, beating others like him to a timber contract” (EA 284). The politicians are also equally responsible for the poor state of under developed places of the country like Madna and Jompanna. Chatterjee says that “for a politician, the mind and stomach, they’re more or less the same” (EA 191). Bureaucrats are supposed to be the servants of the people. But in both the novels they enjoy power.

English education and system of education are other issues that have been dealt by Chatterjee. He sees the rottenness of Indian education. He points out the selection procedure for the post of teacher: the candidates who could not answer, what is twenty per cent of eighty? and who is called the father of the Nation? are finally selected. In higher education also, there is no difference and it is proved by the appointment of Mrs.Srivastava as lecturer in the local college, which is not due to her academic excellence over others but because she is the wife of the collector.

Celebration of the birthdays of freedom fighters is common in postcolonial society. Often, the top bureaucrats are invited to grace the occasion. They often organize meetings and Agastya feels that it is a waste of time. As the collector of Madna, Srivastav informs the IAS probationer Agastya Sen, that the committee meets once a month for the Hindu and Muslim goodas to " get together and eat and waste time” (EA 20).

Misuse of power is brought out by Chatterjee when peons are used as domestic helps in the Collector’s bungalow:

Many peons, officially government servants, did the domestic chores of successive collectors. Many coveted the job, preferring to clean the shit of the progeny of a collector than to shuttle files in an office. Their priorities made sense, for in the office the collector was a million rungs away, but at home while they were bringing him his shoes or taking away his slippers, they were close enough to grovel for their desires, for a little land, for the expedition of a government loan, for a peon's post in some office for their sons. Their fathers and grand fathers had done much the same, but the skins of those collectors had been red, and the accent of their English alien. Of course they shirked at home as much as they would have shirked at office ; if any Madam Collector was unreasonably tough, they worked even less while waiting to be shifted back to the office.

(EA 57)

In the Indian bureaucracy the wives of officers enjoy all kinds of benefits and freedom. They get degrees and jobs because their husbands are in the Civil Service.

Mrs. Srivastav was one kind of wife to a Collector; their further 'studies' depended entirely on where their husbands were posted. While the husband worked, the wife gathered degrees from the sad colleges of the small towns. It was not easy to refuse admission or a degree to the wife of a Collector or a District Development Officer, or a Superintendent of Police, even if their previous degrees were from places that the Principal of the College was not sure existed. . . . But these wives used their degrees as well, for brandishing them with pride . . . they returned to these colleges to teach the rubbish they had learnt. It was even

more difficult to prevent them from teaching, because that would mean depriving the Collector's family of a good monthly sum. (EA 60-61)

English, August: An Indian Story is a novel about corruption and the misuse of power.

People like Srivastav and other officials enjoy freedom and power. But Agastya does not seem to be part of this group of people. In the bureaucracy everyone spends time without having any purpose and 'duty conscious' and they believe that they are superior to others. But Agastya feels that he is wasting the time. Chatterjee brings out the truth that the government officials are not serving the government and it is revealed through Srivastav's conversation with Agastya: "Office starts at ten thirty, I reach at eleven sharp. He made it sound like a virtue. 'But no going home for lunch. Now, our SP followed quite another pattern earlier, but I fixed that. He reached his office at ten thirty but would go home for lunch at one and would sleep till four! and then come back to office at five'" (EA 25). Some of the government officers illegally earn money. It is said that Shanker, Deputy Engineer in Minor Immigration makes about 30,000 rupees in a year (EA 30) and Agastya says that all engineers are corrupt. They make money, but not me'. . ." (EA32).

Chatterjee portrays the Indian bureaucracy in *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* as he portrayed in *English, August: An Indian Story*. Here also, Agastya finds a lot of problems starting from his accommodation. Chatterjee says about the Welfare State through Menon's PA :

We're all here in Bhayankar, me-laard, we clerks, taxi-drivers, autorickshaw-walas, bus-conductors, peons, postmen, delivery boys, shop assistants, waiters, porters, cleaners, dhobis, telephone linesmen, electricians, plumbers, painters, cobblers, tailors . . . If the Welfare State is the driving force, of thousands of us stays - each one of hundreds of thousands of us stays - each with seven-to-ten members of his family - in a ten-by-ten tin-and-jute box; we all

troop out and crap every morning amongst the vultures and dogs. Our women queue up at the water taps by four a.m. we shell out five rupees a bucket to whichever hoodlum's taken over the taps.

‘I’ve been in Bhayankar now, me-laard, for twenty-two years, in which time the Welfare State’s done nothing for me for free - which is as it should be. I’m not a free loader, and I’m not complaining. I’ve paid in bribes for my ration card, my photo pass and my electricity metre. I’ve been bribed in return for my vote - but that’s all fine, it’s the proper procedure. (TMWS 13-14)

Welfare State is meant for business. Milking and stealing were made easy and made the officers rich – Agastya’s friend Dhruvo said in his qualifying interview that within the civil service one is likely to have a Personal Assistant, a Peon and an Ambassador Car. Even Agastya also reflected the same by saying that within the civil service one knows somebody who knows a cop. Every government officer’s aim is to milk the boobs of the Welfare State dry to their own advantage. These people are always enjoying free government accommodation, state sponsored foreign trips, hikes in salary and celebrations. Chatterjee seems mocking the follies and failures of the Welfare State. The Welfare State is not reachable for needy people of the below poverty line. Markapudi David Raju in his article “Dysfunctional Democratic Behemoths: Politician Mandarin Nexus in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*” points out,

Corruption has almost been officialized, all pervasive and nobody seems concerned about it. Chatterjee sharpens his sarcasm and wit to blow out the misappropriation of the sources, power, energy, wealth of the nation and ridicules the failure of the system. He is successful in stripping the system stark naked in

the form of hilarious satire, he focuses light on the wrong doings of the administrative and political system. (162)

In all the selected five novels of none of the characters is able to develop or maintain a good relationship with others either in the family or in the society. Agastya in *English, August: An Indian Story* and *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* does not have any good relationship with of the officers positive attitude is seen only with his friend. He spends time with few other officers but his inner world remains uncommunicated.

In *The Last Burden* and *Way to Go*, the failure of family relationship is portrayed it is a threat to our nation because traditionally Indians are strong in their family relationships. But there is no good relationship between husband and wife, parents and children and even between brothers. Each member in the family stands aloof from the others and lives his own life. There is no respect for each others in the family. Even though Urmila sacrifices her entire life for her family, she is not considered as a human being by her husband. Nobody understands her sacrifice and she does not find happiness in her life. Even her sons do not show their affection to her. Only at the end, when she is in her deathbed, does Jamun show some concern for her. *The Last Burden* not only projects the failure of family ties but also the failure of Indian tradition and cultural values.

In *Way to Go*, Jamun considers his father Shyamanand a burden. They spend time together because there is no other way in their life. Shyamanand being aged feels lonely. Though the father and son are together living in the same house, they are alienated from each other. After the disappearance of Shyamanand only, Jamun thinks about him and feels for him. His elder son Burfi who does not want to take the responsibility of his father feels for him only after his disappearance.

In *Weight Loss*, Bhola, as a young man commits so many mistakes and it is clearly seen that there is nobody to take care of him. His life is totally changed because of his lust. He made so many partners and went behind all of them especially the vegetable vendors Moti and Titli. He fails to make use of the opportunity given to him through marriage to set his life right. After his marriage, he tries to have a good relationship with his wife Kamala but that also becomes a failure. Bhola becomes happy when his child Karuna is born; but that happiness also does not long last and Kamala leaves him alone.

The inner world of all these characters remains uncommunicated and they are unable to have cordial relationship with other human beings. Erosion of values in the Indian middle class is yet another concern of Chatterjee. The class which was once the custodian of values and culture in the society has now become the predator of human assets of honesty and altruism. *The Last Burden* gives a picture of an Indian middleclass family at the end of the twentieth century. In this novel, Chatterjee portrays the Indian middle class family and the burden of family ties.

Sambuddha Sen in the review of the novel tells about the predicament of the modern Indian society:

Jamun's family, which is the central subject of the novel, is not protected from, but shown to be constituted by the terrible tensions of the society of which it a part. In it the exploitation and meanness of the world outside become entangled with the demands and resentments of domestic life to produce relationships that not but have breath. Urmila and her husband share little in common but they continue to live together stewing in mutual resentment and competing bitterly for the son's allegiance. (55)

Man woman relationship is celebrated by the literature of all the countries and it assumes a significant role in family life. But in this novel, it is found that it is based on woman's oppression by man. It is apparent in India where a woman performs all her duties, submits to the demands of her husband and becomes a child bearing machine. Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* says “ Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society. It is still true that most are married, or have been, or plan to be, or suffer from not being. The celibate woman is to be explained and defined with reference to marriage, whether she is frustrated rebellious, or even indifferent in regard to that institution” (415).

Urmila suffers subordination despite being a working woman. Chatterjee makes a point about the Indian middle class married life: “all family narratives are despicable, hideous – if they’re faithful to the essential life – aimless rancor for one another, the most guileless event milks from us our watchful malice – living together merely to thrill in unkindness, marrying, mounting and spawning because we’re all afraid of corporeally alone” (TLB 55).

The novel portrays the inner friction of a middle class family where every individual seems to be thinking about his or her own self and the bond of love and care is totally missing. Simone de Beauvoir talks about marriage in *The Second Sex*:

Marriage has always been a very different thing for man and woman. The two sexes are necessary to each other, but this necessity has never brought out a condition of reciprocity between them; women as we have seen, have never constituted a caste making exchanges and contracts with the male caste upon a footing of equality. A man is socially an independent and complete individual; he is regarded first of all as a producer whose existence is justified by the work he

does for the group; we have seen why it is that the reproductive and domestic role to which woman is confined has not guaranteed her an equal dignity. (415-416)

In India women are always seen as subordinate and inferior to men and woman's individual self has got very little recognition in her normal way of life. After the post independence, India saw a change in the state of women because of women's education. However, their economical freedom does not make change in the condition of women in India. Even now educated working woman undergoes a great struggle in her life. The novel gives a picture of women's role as a wife and sexual slave. Even her husband Shyamanand does not like her when she is in a comfortable state. Urmila is a ever suffering woman and Jamun is the only person who has a little concern for her.

Urmila completely satisfies her role as a mother and a wife but no one seems to understand her and even in her difficult situations no one comes forward to be with her. She has to lead her own lonely life. Simone De Beauvoir presents the state of a married woman in *The Second Sex*:

In the early years of marriage the wife often lulls herself with illusions; she tries to admire her husband whole heartedly, to love him unreservedly, to feel herself indispensable to him and the children. And then her true sentiments become clear; she sees that her husband could get along very well without her, that her children are bound to get away from her and to be always more or less ungrateful. The home no longer saves her from empty liberty; she finds her alone, forlorn a subject, and she finds nothing to do with herself. (461)

Even the sons Burfi and Jamun also do not have any bondage with his parents or with each other. Shyamanand, as a father expects everything from his sons even though he fails to fulfil the role of a father.

In *Way to Go*, Chatterjee projects the same decaying nature of family relationships as in *The Last Burden*. This is shown only among Shyamanand, Burfi and Jamun and they are detached from each other. Shyamanand is not able to stay with Jamun for a long time and he disappears. The sons considered him as a ‘burden.’ Apart from these two novels, the other novels have not given much importance to family and the relationship in the family.

Weight Loss gives a picture of morally degenerated Bholu and his marriage with Kamala and his relationships with others because he is not able to achieve anything or lead a meaningful life, he takes his own life in the end. Chatterjee’s characters live their lives as individuals without boring about others or about their family as individuals. Thus all of them seem to be detached from each other and fail to do their role in the family. This is how Chatterjee portrays the erosion of family values and cultural values in India. This study reveals the writer’s concern over the spoiled culture due to the impact of westernization in the modern man’s life.