

Chapter III

Identity Crisis

Identity crisis has always enjoyed a defining role in the thematic frame work of the Indian English fiction. In the modern world with the increase of hybrid culture and cultural diversities, this identity crisis has become intense and has become the common man's problem also. Identity crisis has become a major issue in literature but also in the whole area of life. The identity crisis has been occurred because of the colonial impact. It has been one of the major problems of mankind in every society. Identity is a social construct and is determined by the relationship between self and the other. It is through the sense of identity that one identifies himself in the society and it also provides to humanity a sense of belongingness. However, nationalism and national identity began to lose their significance in the contemporary society because the nation has become international after the period of decolonization. The modern man undergoes identity crisis in these circumstances.

Chatterjee's novels *English, August: An Indian Story*, *The Last Burden*, *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*, *Weight Loss* and *Way to Go* question the nation and nationalism that shape identities through colonial and anticolonial nationalism. The protagonists of these novels Agastya, Jamun and Bhola are like exiles, those are away from their family and their own place as they undergo the problem of dislocation.

The protagonists of Upamanyu Chatterjee are invariably presented as cultural travelers moving freely in a frontierless world. They have to forge their identities against the background of this new consciousness, coming to terms with the sheer expanse – geographical, cultural, intellectual and psychological – which constitute the complex contemporary reality. The effect of

this concern is seen after the eighties from its predecessors. The themes of East-West encounter or the spiritual quest which were in the forefront in earlier depictions now appear obsolete.

Nowadays, the world in which the protagonists live have to realize their identities in dynamic, constantly in motion, unlike the static world of the past. The problem of identity crisis is considered in a different aspect where the solution in the new novels is in terms of looking ahead or moving forward rather than withdrawal or retreat. The protagonists in the earlier novels increasingly disassociated themselves from the world around them. Erik H. Erikson in his book *Identity: Youth and Crisis* writes: “Today when the term identity refers, more than not, to something noisily demonstrative, to a more or less desperate ‘quest’, or to an almost deliberately confused ‘Search’ . . .” (19) and he also adds that:

Adolescence, then, is a stage in which the individual is much closer to the historical day than he is at earlier stages of childhood development. While the infantile antecedents of identity are more unconscious and change very slowly, if at all, the identity problem itself changes with the historical period: this, in fact, is its job. To discuss the identity problem, and to describe its dimensions at the very time when we clinicians are listened to, means to play into cultural history, or, perhaps, to become its tool. (27)

In *English, August: An Indian Story* and *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*, Madna, a provincial town is seen as the background to Agastya’s identity crisis. Agastya Sen, the protagonist of the novels is a megapolitan youth and leads a westernized life. But when he reports in Madna as an IAS trainee in the first novel, he does not like the place. His culture totally differs from the life there. Right from the first day in Madna, he suffers from rootlessness. He is the representative of contemporary youth. In Madna, he feels like a foreigner in his own

country because of the cultural shock and chaos of the real India about which he has read only in news papers. According to Reka and Rama Naga Hanuman Alapati in their article “Existential Dilemma: A Study of Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *English, August: An Indian story*” Agastya, “could not relate himself with the town. He stands no coherence between his past and present life or even between the three spheres – the official, the unofficial and the private of his Madna life” (365).

Agastya does not enjoy working in Madna and he is not happy working with the other officers in Madna. He cannot adjust with the place or find a solution for the problems he faces in Madna. As a result he feels dislocated and alienated and that leads to the problem of identity crisis in. The crisis he undergoes in Madna is a common problem seen among the contemporary youth. Erik H. Erikson rightly points out in his book *Identity: Youth and Crisis*;

The process ‘begins’ somewhere in the first true ‘meeting’ of mother and baby as two persons who can touch and recognize each other, and it does not ‘end’ until a man’s power of mutual affirmation wanes. As pointed out, however, the process has its normative crisis in adolescence, and is in many ways determined by what went before and determines much that follows. And finally, in discussing identity, as we now see, we cannot separate personal growth and communal change, nor can we separate . . . the identity crisis in individual life and contemporary crises in historical development because the two help to define each other and truly relative to each other. (23)

In the introduction book *Identity*, edited by Giselle Walker and Elisabeth Leedha-Green, identity is defined as:

Identity may seem a hard and fast concept: either this is your fingerprint, your DNA or it is someone else's: either this is the glove you mislaid yesterday or, at best, or it is just one very like it. On waking in the morning you have a brief 'who am I' . . .

Simple identity reaches its physical extreme in immunology: the biology recognizing self and non-self. (1)

Chatterjee explores the inner world of Agastya who suffers from anchorlessness dislocation and loneliness. C.Sengupta in his article "Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August: Metaphor of Contemporary Youth's Quest for Self- realization*" brings out that "Agastya's is in a state of 'dislocation' in an environment offering him legitimate roots. He starts looking for 'roots' when he is physically dislocated in Madna" (111).

Agastya enjoys any special interest in his life; he wants to lead his life in a megapolitan city which he considers will be suitable for him; moreover life is luxurious in the cities. But in Madna, nothing seems to attract or make happy. This boring life he lives in Madna makes him frustrated. Shivani Verma in the article "Existentialism in Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August*" opines,

Upamanyu Chatterjee has excelled as a novelist interpreting the real life lived by the human beings, the life which is governed, regulated and controlled by the everyday existence of human beings. He has used the backdrop of Indian administrative system to show human life in its most basic form, striped of all essence. He depicts the life of Indians as surrounded by and regulated by the absurdities of Indian administration. (135)

Mohammad Akram in his article “The Portrayal of Lost Generation in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *English, August*” states that it “is a saga of frustrated wayward damned souls” (45).

The disparity between two worlds, the city and Madna creates a strong sense of dislocation in Agastya. He is unable to relate himself either to his job or to the place Madna. He feels as if he lost his life in Madna. The first day’s experience in Madna makes him so desperate and feels worried:

He went up to the mirror on the dressing table, bent forward till his nose pressed against the mirror and asked himself silently what was happening to him. Not even twenty four hours over and he felt unhinged, without the compensations of insight or wisdom. He lay down and looked at the wooden ceiling. He could masturbate, but without enjoyment. When is it? He asked himself again. It is because it is a new job? Yes. The job is both bewildering and boring. (EA 27)

For a year, Agastya had to move from one room in the rest house to another room in some other house. This leads to his developing a sense of homelessness leading to his restlessness. Everyday official work also seems to him very boring and he feels that, “I’d much rather act in a porn film than be a bureaucrat. But I suppose one has to live” (EA 3). Being an IAS officer, he can enjoy power but he is frustrated and undergoes identity crisis in Madna.

Raymond Tallis in “Identity and the Mind” in the book *Identity* says, “. . . personal identity is not to be found either in the mind or the body alone: it is in the human body’s awakening to itself *as itself*, in the Existential Institution “That I am this”” (206).

Identity, which is largely marked by a social contract, addresses issues of language, religion and culture. Agastya, the protagonist of the two novels *English, August: An Indian Story*

and *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*, undergoes inner conflicts because of his identity crisis in Madna. Kobena Mercer in “Welcome to the Jungle: Identity and Diversity in Postmodern Politics” in the book *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* says, “One thing at least is clear – identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed. Coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty” (4). He is in a dilemma whether to continue his stay in Madna or leave the place and go back to his normal life. In Madna, he has lost his identity as an individual. This starts with the problem of his accommodation and with the food in rest house which is cooked by Vasant. For Agastya on the very first day “Dinner was unbelievable, the dal tasted like lukewarm chilled shampoo” (6).

Agastya never feels at ease with himself, with the society and with the bureaucracy. He is always in the state of confusion. He suffers from loneliness and feels alienated from everything. The main cause for his alienation lies within and he is estranged not only from his fellowmen but also from his own self. It creates identity crisis. Convent education, westernization, cultural conflict and longing for metropolitan life are the other reasons for this identity crisis. Erikson in *Identity: Youth and Crisis* aptly says “Trained minds of genius, of course, have a special identity and special identity problems often leading to a protracted crisis at the onset of their careers” (21). There is no real involvement seen in him either in his social or official life. Earlier he felt that he was alone affected by this strange kind of problem. Later he finds through his interaction with Bhatia that he is not the only person afflicted with this problem of identity but there are many other who are in search of their identity. There is no real involvement seen in Agastya either in social or official life. As Sanjay Kumar rightly says in his article “The Nowhere Man: The Exiled Self in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *English August: An Indian Story*” Chatterjee offers a complex view of the post-colonial society:

He soon discovers that feelings of dislocation, rootlessness and alienation are not his problems alone but of the whole generation which, to use his father's words, does not oil its hair. Dhruvo, who has been to Yale for his Ph.D. and now has a job with the Citybank, feels that he has been living an unreal life and is tired of it . . . Renu, Dhruvo's girlfriend who is now in Illionis, suffers from a sense of dislocation and wonders why she ever left India. Madan feels deeply ashamed of his sister who is going to Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship and has acquired phony accents and manners. (106)

Everything around him seems to be unreal. The contrast between his life in Madna and that in Delhi leaves him in his precarious condition. Robert Gnanamony in the article "Dialogics of Post humanism in/and Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August*" in the book *Literary Polyrhythms: New Voices in New Writings in English* says about Agastya that he, "hates not only his present assignment of an IAS officer, but also himself. He drinks an enormous quantity of whisky, smokes ganja, and masturbates . . . well, that is his life style. The humanistic values like abstinence from drinks, drugs and sex (before marriage) are pooh-poohed in the novel" (123).

Vladimir B. Skorikov and Fred W. Vondracek in "Occupational Identity" in the book *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* defines:

Occupational identity, also alluded to as vocational, work, professional, or career identity, refers to the conscious awareness of oneself as a worker. On the one hand, occupational identity represents perception of conceptual interests, abilities, goals, and values (Kielhofner, 2007). On the other hand, occupational identity represents a complex structure of meanings in which the individual links his or

her motivation and competencies with acceptable career roles (Meijers, 1998).
(693-94)

Nayantara Sahgal in her article. "Some Thoughts on the Puzzle of Identity" in the book *Critical Spectrum: Essays in Literary Culture in Honour of Professor C.D.Narasimhaiah* says about the influence of western culture in India as, "The West's still the dominant and domineering culture. The world is still seen through its cultural lenses, analyzed through its modes of thought and prescribed the remedies Europe thinks best" (29-30). Being a Western oriented man, he fails to grapple with the realities of Madna. His world crumbles as he cannot compromise with the bureaucratic life and the real life in Madna. Agastya suffers from identity crisis and does not find any purpose in life. He is so confused about his life and his identity in Madna. He is a representative of the highly intellectual people of the contemporary society with good education. He is not interested in the routine things, and he feels unhappy and lost.

Towards the end of the novel, Agastya evolves himself as a better and sensible human being after his visit to Chipanthi. Chatterjee portrays an Indian youth who is affected by frustration, restlessness and existential dilemma even though he is well educated and has a highly respected occupation. The important reason behind this kind of suffering is his English education and the impact of western culture and English language. Being affected by modernity, there is a deterioration of the traditional values in the Indian society. All these lead to a state frustration at workplace and he is not able to participate actively participating in any of the activities in Indian bureaucracy. His life is untouched by the warmth of relationship. When he is not able to lead his life the way he wants, he feels frustrated and this leads to his identity crisis.

All protagonists of Upamanyu Chatterjee suffer from sense of identity crisis. They are caught between psychological problems such as dislocation, exile, rootlessness frustration and cultural conflict. Duncan Kelley defines identity in the article “Multicultural Citizenship: Limitation of Liberal Democracy” as “self-reflective and self-conscious projection of shared and remembered symbols, myths, traditions, religion, history, language, food, clothing and such other factors. It is also an affirmation of difference because when I know who I am, I also know who I am not or how I am different from other” (32). R.S.Pathak in his book, *Quest for Identity in Indian English Writing* defines identity as “the process of creative self-realization” (20).

The problem of identity crisis makes the protagonist suffer and it leads them to act accordingly. Agastya, as an IAS Officer in *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* undergoes the same kind of problem as he underwent in *English, August: An Indian Story*. For him, dislocation is the main problem. He feels exiled in his own country and feels alienated. One cannot find a contradiction in Agastya in this novel. He is unchanged and is not ready to work. His prime aim is to lead a luxurious, modern life. Dennis H Wrong in his article “Identity: Problem and Catch World” in *The Voices of Revelation* says that “. . . identity and identity crisis have become the semantic beacons of our time, for these ‘Verbal Emblems’ express our discontent with modern life and modern society and the term identity has become a value charged, almost charismatic term, with its secure achievement regarded as equivalent to personal salvation” (23).

The protagonist Agastya suffers from identity crisis because his life is not a fruitful one. From the first day in Madna, he faces problems and he grows restless. Though a native, he tries to act or become a foreigner. The loss of the connection between

Indianness and the individual is seen in this novel. He is alienated from the Indian ethos of value and wisdom.

The Mammaries of the Welfare State portrays Agastya assaulted by the absurdities of the bureaucratic life around him. He still is a man of western thought and he is disillusioned by his life in the city and he finds it very difficult to live in a small town. The problem begins with him while looking for a house. He expresses his feelings:

‘I don’t *want* to stay in this slum, I did not *choose* to live surrounded by several varieties of excrement, used sanitary napkins, to rotting refuse tossed out every day by a thousand neighbourhood eating-houses, soiled bandages, broken syringes and bottles chucked out by clinics, dispensaries and hospitals, the rubbish of a thousand and one shops, cottage industries backyard factories, workshops – and rats, stray dogs and vultures – I didn’t select them as neighbours of course, I had no choice; in any other city, with my salary, I would have been staying in a two room flat in a lower-middle class area with trees, a play ground and perhaps even a municipal school – but I work in this city, and I am one of the millions that make the city work.

(TMWS 13)

Agastya is a displaced individual who faces identity crisis. He is alienated not only from his society, but also from his own self. His ancestral identity is not his identity and the displacement and cultural identity leads to his identity crisis. He represents the colonial legacy by adopting western life and their standards. Mohammad Akram in the article “A Short Summary: The idea of the Welfare State in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s Fiction” says about the predicament,

Here also Agastya finds no respite as in ‘English August’. His restlessness looms large in the periphery of the novel [*The Mammaries of the Welfare State*]. He becomes a tiny-tot in the brands of fate or to say, in the chain of norms, rules and regulations. The entire novel, indeed, is a commentary and a saga of the dismantled predicament and condition of the administrative reforms in India. Through a particular instance, the novelist tries to find out or focus on the general scenario of the nation. (no. pag.)

The individual’s life is affected by the contemporary cultural change and crisis.

Erikson says,

. . . we cannot separate personal growth and communal change, nor can we separate . . . the identity crisis in individual life and contemporary crises in historical development because the two help to define each other and are truly relative to each other. In fact, the whole interplay between the psychological and the social, the developmental and the historical, for which identity formation is of prototypal significance, could be conceptualized only as a kind of *psychosocial relativity*. A weighty matter then: certainly mere ‘roles’ played interchangeably, mere self-conscious ‘appearances’ or more strenuous: ‘postures’ cannot possibly be the real thing, although they may be dominant aspects of what today is called the ‘search for identity. (23)

The novel exposes the identity crisis of a common man who is caught in the shifting paradigm of the socio-cultural and socio-political changes in the present day life. Nidhi Nema in her article “Upamanyu Chatterjee Deconstructed” says that Chatterjee “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 arising out of modern Indian situation” (84).

A close reading of this novel reveals that the cause of alienation and identity crisis in modern life is modernity itself with the influence of western culture. Agastya’s dislocation and displacement make him feel unhappy and alienated. He is torn between city life and the remote place Madna. He is unable to hold communion with anything around him in the society in which he lives which ultimately leaves him to the problem of identity crisis.

Agastya Sen faces identity crisis because of his western culture and his English education. An individual faces such problem when there is change in the postcolonial, sociopolitical and psychological factors. It is also found that he is cut off from religious system also which causes his cultural estrangement. P.V.Jayaraj in his article “Madna: A Destructed Malgudi” points out that “Madna’s protagonist is an alien harboring a queer postmodern skepticism to everything in an unfamiliar clime which consequently looks absurd” and also he adds that “The looseness of association explicit in *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*. In a limited sense, Agastya suffers from paranoid anxieties while being caught in vicious circle of the bureaucracy” (127).

English, August: An Indian Story and *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* reveal the meaninglessness and rootlessness of the characters leading to their loss of identity. In the Welfare State nobody seems dutiful or even purposeful. He “could find an example of lunacy whenever he looked in the Welfare State, but no one else seemed to bother, most found it funny or pleasantly incomprehensible. He was compelled to believe that everyone recognized the madness but accepted it as law . . .” (TMWS 164-65).

Agastya feels bad in the bureaucracy because, he understands that nothing is done for the people. Government and officers are the servants of the common men of India. But they fail to do their duty because the politicians and bureaucrats enjoy the freedom and power without caring for the people of India. Agastya thinks about the Welfare State.

In his years in the Civil Service, time and time again, usually when he'd been plumb in the middle something, Agastya had stepped outside himself, observed for a while whatever he'd been doing and then asked himself whether it – his activity of that moment – would in any way, directly or indirectly, immediately or eventually, actually help the absolutely poor, the real have-nots, the truly unprivileged, the utterly godforsaken – in brief, the supposed primary beneficiaries of the welfare state. His answer had always been no.

For one thing, development, to be successful, had to be achieved by stealth. No one must know. If the word spread, everybody would move in and walk all over one. (TMWS 178)

Agastya suffers from despair personally as well as officially. Erikson brings out this situation in his book *Identity: Youth and Crisis* as:

. . . the lack or loss of this accrued ego integration is signified by *disgust* and by *despair*: fate is not accepted as the frame of life, death not as its finite boundary. Despair expresses the feeling that time is short, too short for the attempt to start another life and to try out alternative roads to integrity. Such a despair is often hidden behind a show of disgust, a misanthropy, or a chronic contemptuous displeasure with a particular institutions and

particular people – a disgust and a displeasure which, where not allied with the vision of a superior life, only signify the individual's contempt of himself. (140)

The Last Burden and *Way to Go* give the portrait of an urban Indian household where the three generations are presented. Indu Saraiya in her review of *The Last Burden* says that Upamanyu Chatterjee “etches the ebb and flow of changing relationships between the family members of three generations” (34). The entire house looks unhappy because there is no love and affection found among the family members. Jamun, Burfi, Shyamanand and Urmila all seem to suffer identity crisis. The father Shyamanand always shouts at his wife Urmila without any reason. They have not established a good relationship in the family. Jamun and Burfi's attitude to their parents is the same. Even though they live under one roof, all are living their ‘own life’ having been affected by identity crisis. Altogether *The Last Burden* is a tragic family drama wounded by the relationship between the parents, the two sons and the elder son's Anglicized wife.

Modernity has affected the tradition and values and created conflicts which threaten the very existence of the institution of the family. No one has a good relationship with the others in the family. There is a clash between western and Indian culture. Rumina Sethi in the review of *The Last Burden* “All Dressed up and Nowhere to Go” states,

Chaterjee's indigestible burden and the novel's focus appears to be a contemporary Indian family with unusually gastronomic names like Jamun, Burfi, Pista and Chhanna. Jamun's family history is dominated by crisis: his mother's illness, his father's laboured expenses at his wife's treatment and Jamun's own guilt and uneasiness in the household. (127)

Jamun, the protagonist of the novel belongs to a family of lovelessness. The novel opens with Jamun preparing unwillingly to go home because his mother Urmila has had a heart attack. With this reluctance one can understand his detachment from his family. Chatterjee says that the illness has not affected Jamun: “Spoke to Burfi at last, it’s only the heart attack, thank God – I mean, not rectal cancer. She’s still in Intensive Care. My father said I need not come if I find it difficult to get away” (TLB 5).

Jamun has a desire for the city life and he is highly influenced by modernity. The desire makes him choose his life alone. M.S.Hema in the article “Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *The Last Burden*” says that Jamun “is in an urban space that is physically clean and orderly but socially and spiritually dead”(50). Nilufer E.Bharucha in “The Floodgates are Open: Recent Fiction from the Indian Subcontinent” acclaims that the novel “is a powerful and mature exploration of the changing face of the Indian family and notions of filial responsibilities” (72).

Education should teach the moral values, truth and good qualities. But in his novel, the English education is the cause of Jamun’s westernized way of life. It neglects the inner self of human beings. Jamun and Burfi have been alienated from their cultural roots and this alienation makes them to undergo identity crisis. Richard Schacht in “ALIENATION as Self-alienation: Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and the Future of Self-Alienation” in his book *The Future of Alienation* states “The original home of self- alienation is in the tradition of modern thought that has taken as its fundamental theme the quality of human life”(143).

The common problem that binds all the five novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee is that all his protagonists Agastya, Jamun and Bhola have been culturally alienated and alienated from their own family which constitutes the identity crisis. Shyamanand often

complains that Urmila has not brought up their sons well. He feels that they should have been taught the traditional values and cultural values. Shyamanand shouts at Urmila “You’ve goofed everything. You’ve not fostered your children rightly. They’ve discounted their traditions, culture, parents – because of you. As a mother, as a mortal, you’re a disaster”(TLB 74).

Jamun leads the absurd life having no hope in his life. He feels depressed and bored. Eric Fromm in his book *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* states “In studying depressions and boredom one can find rich material to show that the sense of being condemned to ineffectiveness – i.e., to complete vital impotence . . . is one of the most painful and almost intolerable experiences” (266). Jamun leads his life without any interest. The world he wants to live is “western.” This desire makes him to be rootless and restless. Chaterjee presents a new city-oriented youth accompanied by a new culture through the character Jamun.

In this novel conflict between two generations is seen. Burfi’s wife and his parents seldom communicate with each other.

He routinely has to vindicate his parents and his wife, one to the other, his parents seldom communicate straight forwardly. This aids the son, when vital, while bickering with wife or parent, to fudge his own disagreeable views as those of the absent individual.

‘Abort’ Why? You’re married, aren’t you carps Shymanand, and to Urmila, apart, hyperbolically, ‘We’ve hatched a killer.’ She compliantly remonstrates with Burfi, ‘you’ll regret this abortion.’ Next both parents, mordantly, ‘Can’t

you dictate your own hankering even once to your wife? Isn't the foetus yours too?' (TLB 102)

V.Sangeetha and Selvapriya in their article "Revelation of Familiar Relationship in Upamanyu Chaterjee's *The Last Burden*" say about the novel: "Family disorganization is a condition of a family characterized by the breakdown of the harmonious relations and co-operation among the members or break down of social control, or unity and discipline. A state of disorganization in the family also exists when there is role of conflict among the set of members . . . (58). For Jamun, his life is full of 'loneliness.' This loneliness leads him to undergo existential struggle. As a modern man, he doesn't find happiness or a single person in the family having a good relationship. The family bond is totally missing. This situation puts Jamun in a dilemma and undergo crisis.

Urmila and Shyamanand also feel lonely and it leads them to suffer from identity crisis. There is no bondage of love between husband and wife. Urmila, a working woman has spent her entire life for the family. She does the role of a wife and a mother. She fulfills all her family duties apart from being bread winner of the family. But Shyamanand does not even try to understand her. She suffers from physical illness. Working women are not regarded as supporting the family in the same way as does a man. There are women for whom going for a job represents only a matter of added fatigue. For man, woman is an amusement, a company and a sexual slave. But for woman, man is the meaning and her life. She is a slave even if she has economic freedom. Urmila is such a person who earns money, who runs the family but she is not considered equal or an important person in the family. When the family does not show any concern for her, she is depressed and frustrated. This leads to identity crisis.

Even though Urmila does all her duties, Shyamanand doesn't feel satisfied. When he finds her not having any work, he starts complaining. She pours her feelings to Jamun:

Burfi not at home for hours on end, another wellspring of misgivings – who are these friends that he doesn't bring home, are they lost souls or what? . . . But now the day is breaking up, and my corns are spiking me. What to ram into these greedy-guts? Who will help me to state them? By and by, one of Aya's fan club will saunter to the market. From his bed your father will cavil – I never check accounts, so how am I convinced that he's not swindling us? Of course I'm not convinced! But why doesn't your father oversee the house himself? Oh, he's shameless, hopeless. Make the beds, tidy the rooms. By the time dinner comes around . . . So I eat by myself, skull on pillow, sleep evasive, waiting for Burfi . . . (EA 32)

This sadness makes us to understand the role of mother in an Indian family and how she is treated by her family members. She sacrifices everything for the family but no one realizes her importance and treats her very badly. In this circumstance, Urmila feels lonely and sad and the question of identity arises. After the death of Urmila, nobody feels sorry for her. They start talking about the will and the medical expense.

Erikson views identity in his book *Identity: Youth and Crisis* as “For indeed, in the social jungle of human existence there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity”(130).

Shyamanand also undergoes the problem of identity crisis. Before the death of Urmila, he used to dominate Urmila and his sons. He does not have a good relationship not only with wife but also with his sons. He used to suppress them. And he himself leads

a lonely life in the family. After the death of Urmila, everything is changed. He is reduced to the position being dependent. It is an unexpected sudden change for him and at that time he is no one to anybody. During this change, he finds it hard to live and also feels identity crisis. The disharmony in the family makes the members emotionless. The younger generation which is far away from the cultural and traditional values influenced by modernity and family ties has become nothing to them.

In *Way to Go*, Shyamanand faces the problem of identity crisis. After the death of Urmila, Shyamanand becomes a 'burden' to his sons Burfi and Jamun. Finally Jamun takes the burden of taking care of his father. In *Way to Go*, the relationship between father and son is portrayed when Shyamanand is has come to the end of his life. Even though they lived together in the same house, there is no love for Shyamanand. Jamun reflects on the disappearance of Shyamand:

'Exactly what I said, He's disappeared. I was sure he was dead and when I awoke, my first thought was that you'd taken the body away to be cremated, quietly, to save us the bother. Or maybe he went out for a walk at three in the morning and hasn't returned yet. It's been –' Jamun actually calculated, 'thirty-two hours. A thirty-two-hours walk at the age or eighty five. When you're half paralyzed in one leg to boot.' (WTG 45)

The father and son spend time together and watch television, have tea and dinner together, but there is no single moment filled with love, affection or care for each other. In his old age, for Shyamanand, there is no positive attitude in his life. This state of mind makes him to understand his lonely life which naturally affects his identity. Jamun also feels identity crisis. He is living is own life without people who really care for him; it

makes him feel alienated and he struggles hard to overcome this identity crisis. His quest for his identity becomes so intense; that he tries to have good relationship with his brother Burfi at the end of the novel.

Veturisarma in his review of *Way to Go*, states “This book is for those people who get depressed by life and in the end realize that it is not the best way to spend a life” (n. pag.). The father and son relationship is not cordial and they face problems while living together; however the underlying need for each other’s company is also stressed. Both Shyamanand and Jamun struggle with the problem of identity crisis throughout the novel.

Erikson talks about Identity formation:

Which . . . is dependent on the process by which a society (often through subsocieties) identifies the young individual, recognizing him as somebody who had to become the way he is and who, being the way he is, is taken for granted. The community, often not without some initial mistrust, gives such recognition with a display a surprise and pleasure in making the acquaintance of a newly emerging individual. (159)

Upamanyu Chatterjee’s characters Agastya, Jamun and Bhola lack their individual identity. They all undergo the problem of identity crisis and they do not try to go on to the next stage of identity formation. The protagonist of the novel *Weight Loss*, Bhola represents the Indian modern youth whose life becomes a failure because of his thirst for sex. Nidhi Nema in her article “Exploration of Latent Irony in Explicit Grotesquery of Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *Weight Loss*” says,

Weight Loss pans out the life of unconventional, morally crippled, part fantasist part confused and total deviant protagonist Bhola, who shares in common the

qualities with previous Upamanyu Chatterjee's heroes, who are all the products of hybridized and compromised culture of metros of India. Bhola is intelligent, slightly obese, well-versed in literature and language, sensitive to his surroundings, and as ambivalent and reluctant as his predecessors in Chatterjee's fictional world. The thing that makes him stand apart is his sexual propensity that is far more intense, so much so that it becomes the focal point of his life as the novel. (39-40)

Upamanyu Chatterjee has depicted the highly immoral character of Bhola, who lives his life only to fulfill his sexual desires. Bhola even at the age of eleven has discussed about sex with his seniors at school and he also reveals that he does not have any interest in women:

He was scared and ashamed of himself for not being aroused by women. With his friends, he snickered and joked about breasts and cunt but he –they all – had the vaguest notions about the second; about the naked female from divine he was curious without feeling for it any desire. He had noted, for instance, that his stepmother's breasts were large but nothing within him had stirred at visualizing them. (WL 9)

Bhola's childhood reveals that he was much attracted towards sex and lust. He was very mischievous in his school days and he got his punishment also. Even in his young age, Bhola deceived his parents and his attitude towards his teachers was totally 'lustrous.' This attitude is followed till his graduation. No one would have imagined such type of a boy in the society. One cannot blame Bhola alone for his failure. The family and society also have influence over every child. Throughout his life he does not care for anybody and he does not worry about the society also. Mohammad Shafeer in his article "Upamanyu Chatterjee's *Weight loss*: A Sojourn Search in

Search of Sexual Satisfaction” says that “ the lack of values and morals in Bhola’s life is the result of misconduct of the parents” (n. pag.). His drive and search is only for sex. During that period he doesn’t think about anything. There is no one in his life except the sexual partners.

Both Dr. Borkar and Bhola both enjoyed sex with Moti and his wife Titli. They are ready to do anything to have Titli. The social status and cultural norms did nothing to change the attitude of these two persons. Bhola always liked to live alone as a bisexual bachelor. Bhola does’t have any guilty feeling or inner struggle to survive in the world with all that he does. After his marriage with Kamala, there is a slight change in him. He is concerned about his wife and he wants to have a child. But this is no way mitigate his desire for Moti;he is often taunted by the remembrance of Moti. He is not able to control his longingness for Moti. He faces existential dilemma and he does not have peace of mind.

When Kamala leaves Bhola his identity crisis starts. Till his marriage, he has not thought about anything or anybody. He has been the master of his own life. Again his separation from Kamala changes him. He tries to reunite with Kamala but in vain. Life has become nothing to him without his wife and daughter. However, again immoral pursuits lead him to put an end to his life. Thus the writer as a realist wants to show how Indians are leading bereft of values – which become a threat to Indian culture. The picture what Chatterjee is depicting is a shocking one. The novelist does not have any hesitation to portray such a character with contemporary shame in the society. His attempt to show as a realist the realities of how Indians behave with the foreign influence and the consequences in the culture of India are noteworthy in the annals of Indian literature.