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**NEW
LITERARY HORIZONS**

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**Search for Identity in Upamanyu Chatterjee's
*The Mammaries of the Welfare State***

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... in psychological terms, identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them: while he judges their way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him. This process is, luckily, and necessarily, for the most part unconscious except where inner conditions and outer circumstances combine to aggravate a painful or elated, "identity consciousness". (Erik H. Erikson 22-23)

The modern Indo English novelists become reflectors on the history of modern India as a mode of existence in the modern world. The search for one's identity is found to be an important theme in their writings. Upamanyu Chatterjee's *The Mammaries of the Welfare state* is a sequel to his first novel *English August : An Indian Story*. He portrays the contemporary youth's search for identity. The novel can be read at two levels. On the surface level, it brings out the realities like corruption and inefficiency prevailing in the administrative services of India. But at the deeper level, Chatterjee portrays the predicament of the modern educated westernized youth in Indian Administrative Services.

In this novel, the protagonist Agastya Sen who has undergone his IAS training at Madna, comes back to the same place as a civil servant. He still remains a lonely and confused man. He is sex-starved and he finds a partner in Daya, an advertising executive whom he meets during a bus journey. Uma Mahadevan Dasgupta brings out the characteristic features of Agastya in the novel:

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 Upamanyu 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 essential babu quality – to bore. As we follow August on his metamorphosis (though not Katkaesque, 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)

Agastya struggles to come to terms with himself against the complex realities in the contemporary society. There is a sense of dislocation, anchorlessness and meaninglessness. The essence of Agastya's search lies in striking a balance between his megapolitan sensibilities and the realities of life in a small town of his country, and it turns out to be a journey from rootlessness to maturity.

At the beginning of the novel Upamanyu Chatterjee spells out Agastya's predicament : “Agastya is so enervated by his life in the city that ever so often, when he was alone, he found himself leaning back in his desk chair or resting his head against the armrest of the lumpy sofa in his office that served as his bed, shutting his eyes and weeping silently”(3).

Agastya faces housing problem at the beginning of the novel. He is not ready to adjust with the roommates and he complains to the superiors about the housing problem. He is not happy to live in a such a place and feels frustrated. He has tried to write his resignation letter at the very beginning of the novel. Agastya's state of mind is reflected as : “ Every now and then in his career, once a week on the average, Shri Sen regrets his decision to join the topmost Civil service of the country. On the other days, when he reflects, life outside the government appears tense-making, obsequious and fake”(117). Agastya lives the life of absurdity and he finds boredom and dullness in Madna.

Agastya continues to complain about the pointlessness in his work: “I'm sick of the work I do and the ridiculous salary I get for it”(12). His suffering of loneliness and boredom are seen throughout the novel. Chatterjee presents the Indian Administrative Services and the state of Agastya in that society:

I feel weird. I ask myself all the time : how do you survive on your ridiculous salary? And *why* do you survive on your ridiculous salary? At the same time, I feel grossly overpaid for the work I do. Not the quantity, which on certain days can be alarming, but the quality. In my eight years of service, I haven't come across a

single case in which everybody concerned didn't try to milk dry the boobs of the Welfare State'. (23)

Agastya often regrets his decision to join in the Indian bureaucracy. The novel is more pessimistic in the bureaucratic life. He tries to escape from the work and he is not able to accommodate himself in this job. Thus, anchorlessness and alienation have taken a deep root in Agastya's psyche. He hates the Welfare State "for having dislocated him" and also feels, "foolish and naked, empty handed as though he'd wronged both his family and future" (200).

Agastya's relationship with Daya is not a happy one as both of them are self-centred and unhappy. Throughout the novel, Agastya is not able to participate actively in his official works. According to him, the job is only to pass the time. He fails to rest his convictions in a meaningful context. For Agastya, anchorlessness was his life in Madna. Agastya is not a person who looks forward to challenges and responsibilities like archetypal heroes. Chatterjee reveals his state :

He prepared for war by threshing in his head letters all night in Bed No. 2, drafting in his letters of resignation from the Civil Service. It had been one of his favourite pastimes in the last eight years. 'I'm sick of the pointlessness of the work I do and the ridiculous salary I get for it, you fuckfaces,' was what he, by three a.m., finally settled on; he repeated the line dawn like a litany just check the rhythm, it's fall. (12)

Agastya who is lonely, escapes into a secret world that is built up by drugs, liquor, sex and music that enhance the level of his fantasies. These secret lives are much more actual and exciting than the outside world for Agastya. It is worthwhile to note what Erikson says about such conditions:

A state of acute identity confusion usually becomes manifest at a time when the young individual finds himself exposed to a combination of experiences which demand his simultaneous commitment to physical intimacy (not by any means always overtly sexual) to decisive occupational choice, to energetic competition and to psychosocial self- decision. (166)

He also adds that "the adolescent, during the final state of his identity formation, is apt to suffer more deeply than he ever did before or ever will again from a confusion of roles" (163).

Agastya does not lead a purposeful and meaningful life because he wants to lead his life according to his own wishes without considering anything else. It leads him to be 'alienated' and 'isolated'. He represents the anguish of the present time as he symbolizes the universal condition. In his years in civil service, Agastya knows very well that whatever he does would reach the poor and the underprivileged people. But his answer has always been a 'no'.

His relationship with Dr. Srinivas Chakki and Rajani Suroor had made Agastya realize what he is and how he should be. Rajani Suroor is a busy man and he has his own theatre group 'Vyatha'. His plays promote healthcare programmes for the people by the government. The actors successfully concentrate on spreading the message of the Welfare State. Suroor travels with 'Vyatha' and the "street plays helped him to unwind and rejuvenate himself" (359).

Dr. Srinivas Chakki always likes and delights to be present in the hour of need. He is a man who can make others believe that being responsible is the prime duty for a civil servant. The attack on Suroor creates a great impact in Agastya's life. Till then he is not bothered about anything happening around him. Dr. Chakki's scripts and Suroor's concern for the people make him realize the role of a bureaucrat. Agastya understands the character of Rajani Suroor and says:

'He has the right cv for a messiah; he's perfect for the figurehead. He knows the people, he can act, he's performed before them on the streets, he's famous, his resting-place's become a shrine. When he wakes up, it'll be as though Rip Van Winkle'd decided to contest for parliament. Moreover, Suroor was – is – was – a sort of civil servant, a skilled survivor, he knows – knew – the ins and outs of the nuts and bolts. (427)

A change takes place in Agastya and he says, "I think of him as a dormant dragon who needs to be roused into breathing some fire into his fellow countrymen" (427). This change is seen when he is with Rajani Suroor at the hospital. "You look as though you need it, friend" (437). To Agastya, "it sounded dreadfully like a long – drown out pa –yu – cho – om. They were a set of syllables appropriate for the occasion, he felt, a couple to bid adieu to the dead and with the balance, to greet the world of living"(437).

With all the changes around him the fulfillment of the quest for the identity is definitely not too far. Agastya is invariably presented as cultural traveller moving freely in a frontierless world. He has to forge his identity against the background of this new consciousness of geographical, cultural and psychological elements which constitute the complex realities of the contemporary society. Jonathan Rutherford explains the self and the other for identity formation: "Our struggles for identity and a sense of personal coherence and intelligibility are

centred on this threshold between interior and exterior, between self and other” (24)

The novel ends with hope. Madna has the important role in contributing to the moulding of Agastya's character. Agastya realizes that disassociation from his job and others cannot provide him peace of mind. It can only be found through positive action and interaction with others. The search of identity in the protagonist Agastya is linked with a discovery of compassion within himself and others.

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Reflections of Buddhist Philosophy in Rabindranath Tagore's Literature

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Buddha and his philosophy played an important role in Tagore's spiritual outlook. He was greatly influenced by it in the most literal sense. It had been his second source of inspiration after Upanishads in his life. He holds Lord Buddha in his heart as the greatest of men ever born on this earth. The Buddha's teachings were earth-bound, rational, and pragmatic. Buddha's humanistic philosophy gave universal respect for all humanity in all the countries.

In this paper, an attempt will be made to analyse, how under the influence of Buddhist philosophy, Tagore executed Buddhist *Jatak Kathas*, ethical themes in his poems, Plays, Essays, travelogues, ballads, novels, short stories, and lectures and how the everlasting message of Buddhism is reflected through his whole literature. To accomplish this goal, I have organized my paper into six main sections, three of which have sub-sections. In the first section I present biographical information about Rabindranath Tagore. In the second section, I have attempted to brief about Buddha and his Teachings, it has sub-section, which highlights Buddhist Philosophy in Nutshell.

In the third section, I focus on the influence of Buddha's philosophy on Tagore; in its sub-section I provide the principal sources of Buddhist Philosophy for Tagore. In fourth Section, in detail I talk about the reflections of Buddhist Philosophy in Tagore' literature; it has three sub sections i.e. Poems, Novels and Plays. In fifth section, I discuss Tagore's view about Buddha and Buddhism; it has two sub-sections i.e. Shantiniketan and Buddhist holy sites: In India and abroad. In the last i.e. sixth section, I come to the conclusion, which offers over all findings of this paper.

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore:

Rabindranath Tagore (7th May, 1861 - 7th August, 1941) was an Indian poet, a litterateur par excellence, a philosopher, religious thinker and intellectual leader, songwriter, musician, artist, educational reformer, a great exponent of humanity with a firm footing in his own cultural environment, one of the finest flowers of Indian Renaissance and India's herald of Peace and harmony to the world; he was the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for his anthology, *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings) (1912), translated by him from Bengali into English. There was hardly any literary form that he did not touch upon