

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Human beings are the tangled constituents of the society. The inner 'self' is the key factor of determining the external role of all the humans of the world. The building of the conscious 'self' consumes the volumes of experiences from the world. The psyche of the individual is the influential feature of any family that becomes the cause of prominent attribute of any society for that matter. The twentieth century novelists started looking at the problem of an individual, his attitude towards life, his relationship with the family members and the outside world in the search of the individual 'self'. The post independence novels have the psychological probing into the changes of the individual due to the historical and sociological changes. Most of the novels of this genre are based on the themes of loneliness, rootlessness, alienation, identity crisis, boredom and existential struggles of the modern man.

Existential problems like absurdity, loneliness, anchorlessness, exile, anxiety and despair have lead the individuals to alienation. The contemporary men tend to feel alienated for the lack of faith in himself, his fellow beings and in God. Thus he lives with the detached entanglement in his relationship with his family and the society which diverts him from participating in the national growth. The very thought of this subject indulges the writers of India to divulge deep into the concept of alienation. The feel of one's 'self' that is lost in the process of adaptation and the sense of the 'self' that is far remote from the affinity of their own self distract the person from the mode of togetherness. The main rationale of this research is to analyze the concept of alienation and the circumstances that force the individual from the thought of individuality and the thought of being alienated.

The study is divided into six chapters including Introduction and Conclusion with appropriate documentation. The introductory chapter protrudes into the themes of Indian English novelists and their novels. The analysis attempts to overview the philosophy of existentialism and highlights the effects of existential portrayals in the annals of Upamanyu Chatterjee's novels. The chapter touches upon the thresholds of Upamanyu Chatterjee's life and his novels with the reviews of literature.

The second chapter deals with the prevalent socio-cultural problems of India. With the influence of the attraction towards westernized ways of life, the protagonists, Agastya, Jamun and Bhola yield to cultural hybridity and mimicry. The term 'hybridity' suggests the blend of the East and the West cultures. The effects of these cultural collisions turn away the minds of the Upamanyu Chatterjee's educated youths. The cause of this cultural diversity endorses rootlessness. It also indicates the perceptions of heterogeneity and multiculturalism. Hybridity appears in cultural, political and linguistic form. This notion of cultural dominance or influence cherishes the idea of mimicry or imitation. This attitude enforces the imitation of other's culture than theirs'. The study perpetuates the idea of westernization and the comfortable adaptation of the modern man without knowing the impacts of the consequences.

The rampant culture of corruption and power are shown in the vivid descriptions of Indian bureaucracy by Chatterjee. The loyal and moral ethics are replaced with the self-centered exploitation of humanity. The common man of India is emotionally crushed by the disloyal officials of all sectors. The struggles of inner self become non communicated self and the ancient culture of valuable relationship in India is shattered by these cultures. All these effects have lead to the erosion of values in the Indian society.

The middle class men are withered their values which was once the custodian of values in the society but they have now grown to be the predator of human assets and altruism.

Gender discrimination is yet another social evil in the modern society. Chatterjee depicts gender disparity which is prevalent in the Indian middle class society. Simone De Beauvoir in her *The Second Sex* clearly points out that “A man is socially an independent and complete individual; he is regarded first of all a producer whose existence is justified by the work he does for the group: we have seen why it is the reproductive and domestic role to which woman is confined has not guaranteed her an equal dignity” (416). Such a life is experienced by Urmila of *The Last Burden* where she is portrayed as the character who sacrifices her entire life for the family. A study of Upamanyu Chatterjee’s novels reveals the effect of post colonialism, corruption and the loss of human values among the modern men.

The third chapter presents the crisis of self identity. The cultural exploitation and the modernity catastrophe of the characters are exposed through the impacts of western culture and the language of the protagonists of all the novels. The search of their western mask has thrown them completely out of their native sense and they remain always in the fantasizing future. Their fantasy throws them into the world of alienation which eventually destroys their ethos of Indian values. The false notion of them deploys them from the native sense and they stand as aliens among the western multitude. Their frustration from their workplace and the suffering from their aspired country enlarge their sensation of alienation. Eric H. Erikson in his prologue in his *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, aptly points out “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 carriers” (21). When an individual fits himself in a fortunate position to satisfy his needs and to be a

responsible person in the family, he should be encouraged them to play the consistent roles in the society. However, when he negates these factors, he is forced to face crisis of self identity. These emotions are heightened in the novels as the protagonists' lives are untouched by the warmth of relationships.

The fourth chapter attempts to study the prominent characters as antiheroes and the moral degeneration in the contemporary society. Archetypal hero is seen as a saviour; he is a symbol of power and knowledge which make him conquer evil and bring deliverance to his people whereas an antihero is a principal character who does not possess noble and good qualities or other characteristics that would make him a hero. M.H. Abrams states that the antihero is a person who “Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power, or heroism , . . . the antihero is petty, ignominious, passive, ineffectual or dishonest” (11).

The antiheroes, the protagonists of Upamanyu Chatterjee, are the representatives of the modern society. They are the victims of alienation and their cultural and spiritual sterility seek solace and refuge in drugs, alcohol and other means. They have frailty and flaws; they are more “real”; they do not think about what is the right or moral thing to do; instead they think about what is right to them; they are violent, untruthful, and immoral and are obsessed with sex and reject traditional and moral values.

The fifth chapter penetrates into the existential loneliness of the major characters. Chatterjee's characters struggle to adjust with others. Alienation from the biological environment should have helped them to have personal and social relationships with ‘other’ (spouse) and ‘others’ (society) respectively. The protagonists fail to develop such relationships. Man-woman relationship is not based on love, compassion, equality, understanding, adjustment and spirit of sacrifice. The quality of love which was thought

to be a means of harmonious life has lost its meaning in the present world. Life is measured according to its practical values and all life generating values. Those values are ignored or misused in the contemporary society.

Existentialist thinkers embark upon the relationship of man with the society and emphasize on qualities like love, faith, friendship, sacrifice, broad-mindedness, mutual respect and regard for one another. The protagonists of Upamanyu Chatterjee lack these qualities and embody the spirits of alienation as if they are away from the existing society. The portrayal of this suffering is seen in Agastya, Jamun and Bhola. For these protagonists, the relationship with the society and their own selves are distanced and thus they are lead to the feeling of alienation. The failure of their affinity with the fellow participants of the society makes them stand alone and apart from the society in which they are born and brought up. Man's estrangement from society and his solitude compel him to think about the meaning of life. Frederick Patka says in his *Existentialist Thinkers and Thought* that existentialism "is the philosophy of human unrest and life insofar as it involves the process of transcendence from the state of self-estrangement and self-deception to the experience of authentic life which stands for the revelation of the ultimate meaning of existing" (33). Thus the chapter is concluded by the finding that man's loneliness constructs an acute sense of alienation around the way he lives.

The final chapter, Conclusion analyses the realization of self by the prominent characters of the novels of study. The willing withdrawal from the society is the path of man's quest for self identity. The enforced circumstances from the society and the motive of their personal experiences prevent the characters from understanding their society and they are entangled with the feeling of aloneness and insignificance. Instead, these situations help them to improve their will power and ponder over the realization of 'self'.

Their search for identity or the quest for their native sense motivates the spirit of self-improvement gradually but their realization is the choice of their freedom, action and responsibility of their roles. Rollo May in his book *Man's Search for Himself* clearly brings out the state of man and his consciousness. He says,

. . . man's consciousness of himself is the source of his highest qualities. It underlies his ability to distinguish between 'I' and the world. It gives him the capacity to keep time, which is simply the ability to stand outside the present and to imagine oneself back in yesterday or ahead in the day after tomorrow. Thus human beings can learn from the past and plan for the future. (58-59)

Self-realization is not the fruit of their external experiences but the taste of their inner struggles and conflicts. The adaptation of their roles after their inner divergences as son, father and husband prove to be the process of making them responsible individuals of the society. This process can be the ethical awareness of their selves. "It is the ongoing, progressive realization of those potentials that gives purpose and meaning to life and that is the true end to be sought with respect to quality of life"(361) says Alan S. Waterman in *Identity Theory: Identity as Self-discovery*. Furthermore, Richard Schacht in *The Future of Alienation* aptly points out the self of an alienated individual: "in that event one's plight would be a sorry one indeed; for then the indispensable social conditions of the possibility of one's attainment of genuine humanity would be lacking, one's self-realization would be precluded, and one's self-alienation would be inescapable, at least until the requisite social conditions could be established" (138).

The drive of the individuals' loneliness demonstrates the adaptation of these difficult situations and their ability to learn from the psychological conflicts. Moreover,

these conflicts confirm their potential of responsibility and heroic nature. Though they are often disturbed internally their constant strives lead them to realize their self and perform the heroic altercations in the society. Upamanyu Chatterjee's protagonists, Agastya, Jamun and Bhola experience and expose such conflicts and confrontations.

The process of becoming is more important than being for an individual who is in quest of self-realization. After man's alienation from his society and his own self, freedom, choice, action and responsibility play an important role in the process of man's self-realization. Chatterjee's novels can be read as a journey from rootlessness to maturity. Agastya, Jamun and Bhola undergo existential inner conflicts and problems and finally realize their responsibility and accept their life as it is. Upamanyu Chatterjee's first novel *English, August: An Indian Story* is identified by C.Sengupta as "subtle metaphor of contemporary youth's quest for self-realization" (110). He also states that "the novel describes a journey – sometimes pathetic, sometimes humorous, even ridiculous – a journey from "rootlessness" to maturity, a struggle to come to terms with oneself" (110).

This novel is the portrayal of the administrative services in India. It displays the corruption in high places, inefficiency of the officers, and the class-consciousness among the bureaucrats and jealousies among the officers. Even though Indian Administrative services are considered as a prestigious one, no officer seems loyal to their profession.

The profound analysis of the novel exposes the predicaments of the modern youths. Agastya becomes the victim of dislocation and suffers of dislocation when he reaches Madna. The experiences have enriched him with the experiences of adaptability and also his lost identity stimulates his intention of thriving in the new world where he has landed up for livelihood. This feeling of alienation and

meaninglessness pulls him to the path of self identity. Madna serves as the background to Agastya's quest. Dan P. MacAdams in his "Narrative Identity" in the *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* has clearly stated that "The developmentally individualized person transacts with environment in a purposeful way and takes advantage of social possibilities or his identity on the way to self-realization" (105).

As a dweller of Calcutta and Delhi, Agastya dislikes the way that is experienced in Madna. According to T. Vijaykumar, "Agastya feels totally lost in the provincial setting of Madna and amidst self-made people" (171). His background and his education are considered as the reasons for his alienation. The sense of disparity distracts Agastya from the way of life in Madna. His homesickness towards the urban and westernized life thwarts him from adapting to the new environment of Madna. The strong sense of dislocation creates restlessness and he develops an uninterested feeling with the meetings and the people around the Collector's office. His house where he is allocated also increases the sense of homesickness and he longs for being away from the crowd. This is the reflection of his feel of dislocation among the bureaucratic. Chatterjee clearly portrays the state of Agastya Sen in the novel :

Suddenly he was laughing loudly in that silent, closed room. God, he was fucked – weak, feverish, aching, in a claustrophobic room, being ravaged by mosquitoes, with no electricity, with no sleep, in a place he disliked, totally alone, with a job that didn't interest him, in murderous weather, and now feeling sexually aroused. His stomach contracted with his laughter. (EA 92)

Agastya's uncomfortable environment with the bureaucratic ambience splits the world of him into three where he enjoys being an official, nonofficial to be comfortable with his friends, Shanker and Sathe and his inner self, the secret one. For him, "Each world was to prove educative, and the world beyond Madna was continually to interrupt and disturb him, through letters and the radio, and through ungovernable memories. When he was leading one Madna-life, the other two seemed completely unsubstantial" (EA 49). This sagacity of loneliness in the alienated land worsens the feeling of dislocation. This also composes the impact as if he is the only sufferer of the world. His interaction with Bhatia helps him to understand the experience of others. He expresses his inner thoughts to his father through letters. This longing for hometown dispels him from his worldly affairs. Everything seems unreal in the place of displacement, Madna because of the bureaucratic set-up. The only solace is his reading of books. The same way another character, Shankar, an executive engineer, too longs for his native with the feeling of dislocation. The same novel has a district judge who is also suffering with the feel of alienation for which he finds the way for salvation only through his retirement. Only after the meeting with the Judge, Agastya gets the positive hope towards his future. He thinks that "the Judge's face from close and sensed that age in no way connected with the intensity of a sense of dislocation" (EA 89). He also imagines that, "One way out was to turn like Shankar to the extra-terrestrial, to Jagadamba, and like Vasant to believe in that special providence, even in the arrival of a frog; another was to slink away from having to think, to wish to be that pair of ragged claws that had so tantalized him in his college years, scuttling over the floor of silent seas" (EA 114).

The external forces tend towards the pursuit of his salvation through another character, Govind Sathe, a cartoonist, who is known as the 'Joker of Madna' who gives a

rare concept towards the view of life. He gives a copy of *The Bhagavad Gita* and asks him to read passages which discuss the problem of restless mind. He realizes that the constant practice and freedom from passions can train the mind in truth. While reading, through Marcus Aurelius, he contemplates the solutions to his problems. His reading of *The Bhagavad Gita* entrusts him with the solutions and makes him aware of the reality. This is where he learns the art of looking into the solutions instead of thinking about the problems, the way of his self-realization. Even then, the sense of dislocation fills him with dissatisfaction.

Agastya was enraged at himself, for agreeing to the afternoon, for being in Madna, for a job that compelled him to be polite to Srivastav and his wife, for being in the job he was, for not having planned his life with intelligence, for having dared to believe that he was adaptable enough to any job and circumstance, for not knowing how to change either, for wasting a life. He watched the chairs being arranged in rows and tables being hidden by bed sheets and couldn't believe his future. (EA 112)

Agastya's view of Srivastav and Kumar as the masters of their own fate, which Agastya thinks, is quite impossible for him. He thinks that, "Most men, like him, chose in ignorance, and fretted in an uncongenial world, and learnt to accept and compromise, with or without grace, or slipped into despair" (EA 113-14). From then on Agastya starts questioning himself and determines to be the master of time to act on his own. The realization of his inability to accommodate himself with the precincts of the new land with the sense of belongingness to his native land is visible in all the expressions of him in the migrated land. His letters to his father reflect his inability to find his own space in the alienated world. The thought of him is not merely his expectations of his urbanity but

his expectations of peaceful atmosphere. Hence he decides to resume to Delhi expecting peace rather than the changes, challenges and responsibility. This trip proves to be a the significant one for realizing his happiness and his friend's, Dhruvo's, unhappiness over the corporate world and his idea of joining in the Indian Administrative Service.

Agastya's friendship with Sathe, the cartoonist, discloses the myth of Fisher King:

Some obscure tribal chieftain had a bastard child. He disowned both the woman and the son. She committed suicide in this pool and the waters turned red. . . . She abandoned the child on one of these stones. . . .

Somehow the child survived in this 1000 square yard oasis. . . . But the waters remained red, and they wouldn't turn normal until the chieftain said he was sorry. Then there was a great drought. . . . Everyone went to the King and said, Help. He came here and was hit on the head by lots of guilt. He renounced his kingdom to his legitimate children and came here to stay. So father and the son stayed together, the father turned holy and taught the son about the wicked world, meaning himself. The waters turned clear and thousands of fish bobbed up in this pool. (EA 282-83)

This story compiles the reality of life whereby Agastya realizes the meaning of his own life. His point of homesickness or longingness is the root of his discovery of his realization of his innate feeling of his motherland and the nativity. While he plans for a holiday he could think only his hometown visit but not any other destinations of enjoyment. He ruminates that, "I don't think I'm going to Kolkata. I'm going to go home and think. I need to think" (EA 284).

Agastya's interaction with Sathe makes him realize the real purpose of life. When Sathe memories his father, he says that "He had wealth, but no dignity" (EA 284). He says that money will never bother him. He does not like the way the father lived. He says, "If I chose differently, it wasn't a *fault*, it was a different choice" (EA 285). This makes Agastya to contemplate his life. Sathe tells him, "Madna is home for me, August, in Bombay I felt lost. My best years, my past, is here, bittersweet because it is gone. Whatever you choose to do, you will regret everything, or regret nothing. Remember' and Sathe laughed softly, 'you're not James Bond, you only live once' (EA 285). Agastya realizes after scrutinizing the lives of his friends that restlessness or the rootlessness can be caused anywhere in the world and the sense of belongingness varies from person to person. Sathe's restlessness even in Bombay and his friends in Delhi feel the restlessness even in the urbanized background. He also realizes Madna alone is not the reason for his disturbances but the illusion of being thrown to face failure of his life. Anyplace of the world can give the happiness to individuals with success but even the native country cannot become the source of happiness when one meets failure. In the *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, it is clearly stated : "It is generally accepted preposition that psychological problems arising early in life make it unlikely to find meaning and purpose in life or function on the basis of self-realization / self - actualization"(371).

When Agastya returns to Madna, he looks for positive things around him. This feeling is stirred by John Avery, an English man who is travelling to pay respects at his grandfather's grave in a remote place. He is moved by Baba Ramanna's labour of love and his rehabilitation for lepers. The lepers, "thought him a miracle, and called him the Baba, the Father" (EA 237). He is much influenced by Baba Ramanna's service to the people. He becomes jealous and asks, ". . . when he had been merely Shankaran Karanth,

how to master his future” (EA 237). He is also moved by the Naxalites fiery determination to create social awareness and to put an end to the exploitation of the tribals. He is also influenced by Dr. Darshan Multani’s sense of satisfaction and happiness in his profession. These incidents prove the positive aspects of the realization of self. Social alienation and self-alienation serve as the sources of self-realization and they have beneficial outcomes. These strategies help the existentialists to respond to the situation. Agastya’s commitment towards the responsibilities as the Block Development Officer in Jompanna confirms the positive shape of his existentialist’s conformation with the society. His responsibility paves a way for understanding the fellow human beings. Chipanthi brings out the reality of life as, “the tribals were compelled to live like this, risking the lives of their children for half-buckets of mud” (EA 259). He renders the support to the tribals by implementing a solution to their troubles of fetching water. As a result of his deed, he is appreciated for his timely action. From this event, the notion of escaping from his responsibilities has completely left him.

In the *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, it is said that “The developmentally individualized person transacts with environment in a purposeful way and takes advantage of social possibilities or his identity on the way to self-realization” (105). Agastya understands the reality and thinks that the Roman who had looked for happiness in living more than one life had failed. The author ends the novel by saying, “He watched the passing hinterland and looked forward to meeting his father” (EA 288). The novel ends with hope. The fulfillment of the quest for self-realization for him is definitely not too far away. Rollo May in his book *Man’s Search for Himself* clearly brings out the state of man and his consciousness. He says that:

. . . man is the historical mammal in that he can stand outside and look at his history; and thereby he can influence the march of history in his nation and society as a whole . . .

This capacity for consciousness of ourselves gives us the ability to see ourselves as others see us and to have empathy with others. It underlies our remarkable capacity to transport ourselves into someone else's parlor where we will be in reality next week, and then in imagination to think and plan how we will act. And it enables us to imagine ourselves in someone else's place, and to ask how we would feel and what we would do if we were this other person. No matter how poorly we use or fail to use or even abuse these capacities, they are the rudiments of our ability to begin to love our neighbor, to have ethical sensitivity, to see truth, to create beauty, to devote ourselves to ideals, and to die for them if need be. (59)

Chatterjee's second novel *The Last Burden*, according to C.Sengupta "can again be read as journey from rootlessness to maturity, but the emphasis this time seems to be on the 'burden' of family ties" (29). The writer has portrayed the destructive relationship of the middle class Indian family. As Sohail Ahmed points out, "*The Last Burden* shows parent's disgust and disappointment at their sons failing to live up to their expectations and to meet their emotional demands. The troubles and afflictions which parents suffer are hardly realized by children, who crave for their own golden world" (23).

This novel showcases a view of family system in India and how the joint-family system gets gradually demolished. Almost all the members of the family, one way or the other, are alienated. The relationship with each other in the same family is shattered with

all unnecessary constraints. Urmila, the mother and Shyamanand, the father, have failed to understand each other and their relationship ends up with many complications. Indian family system gives priority to the family values and the system of respecting the elders and the parents are the main concern as if giving patronage to the ancestors. This study implicates the strange relationship of the parents and sons through the portrayals of Burfi and Jamun, because they do not care about their parents. Their main concern is to adopt the westernized culture and freedom; hence they give secondary importance to love and affection. For Jamun, “Each atom of the stuff of existence around him is transmuted, steeled and fissioned, is a deflector of crystalline light. He feels wobbly” (TLB 24). When Urmila is admitted in the hospital he shows his concern and for her.

Jamun’s contentious relationship with Garam Gandu instigates the unpleasantness in his relationship with his mother. Jamun realizes that, “how much his mother had distressed herself over the affair of Garam Gandu, whether and how often she remembers the matter, and how marvellous, she is to tend to her son’s secrets, for certainly she couldn’t’ve divulged his proclivity to any soul” (TLB 27). Jamun supports his mother from her early age for her untiring toil in the house and in the office. When there was no appreciation from anybody in the house for her work and toil. She would grumble how she is suffering from the morning till she goes to bed in the house and in the office (EA 29-32). He also regrets for his behavior and feels that he should have been more affectionate towards his mother when she is admitted in the hospital. That is where his ‘self’-realization corroborates with his sense of human being. He is also much disturbed by the way Burfi is playing cricket with his children even after his arrival and the way Shyamanand is seated in the verandah without any expressions.

The poorly irrigated lawn is symbolic representation of the inner chaos in the mind of the characters. In the absence of Jamun, nothing in the house is given importance or care. He represents the young generation which leans towards westernization and in the name of freedom shows no concern to people around them; even their mothers are not exempted from this in spite of all the attention they receive from him. All of them lack energy and enthusiasm. He feels that, “The sight of the dead plants and dusty soil dispirit Jamun, naturally” and also he adds that, “His parents and he, overly worried about themselves, seem never to have succeeded in giving life to anything” (TLB 39-40). The quarrel between Shyamanand and Burfi regarding the payment of the medical bill of Urmila instils a strong hatred and anger in Jamun and he behaves inhumane. The gap between the father and son widens and only later Jamun understands that harmony, the core of Indian family concept, is not to be found in his family.

The Last Burden reflects parents’ disgust and disappointment at their sons failing to live up to their expectations. The troubles which are faced by the parents are hardly noticed by their sons. For example, once Jamun imagines himself to be alone in a cinema hall; when the screen displays a man’s face, he recognizes him to be a celebrated cinema villain of a previous age. He speaks to him,

‘Jamun, sweetie, you understand that your dear mother and father are being indecently tortured even now in this chamber. . . . We could halt if you divulge to me which of your parents you hate more. We would then fix just that one. All mortals hate one parent less than the other. Raise your right hand for your mother, left for your father. If you cannot decide because you are squeamish, then we shall have to kill both. (TLB 60)

Upamanyu Chatterjee through this novel brings out the peculiar character of a man who wants to abandon his parents starving for something new and fashionable. Shyamanand and Urmila represent the whole generation of parents who are deployed by their own children. Jamun receives a letter from Satyavan Hegiste with a call to reach Calcutta. He informs him of Kasibai's return and Jamun decides to get back to Calcutta.

Education has a role in the decision of the youngsters. For Jamun their house is "gloomy, joyless" (TLB 135) and hence his affairs and pursuits. He never denies his affection to Kasturi even after her wedding. He, when Jamun and Urmila find the motionless Shyamanand on his bed, Jamun feels, "for the millionth time in his life, he suddenly, in a panic that time's running out, wants to expiate himself before his parents for the wrongs that he must've done them, yearns to convince them that he, despite his vulnerabilities, is truly grateful to them for the gift of life" (TLB 193). As Rollo May in his work *Man's Search for Himself* avers, "... like freedom and other aspects of man's consciousness of self, ethical awareness is gained only at the price of inner conflict and anxiety" (134). This realization and the gratefulness he feels towards his parents make him ashamed of his behaviour and also nurtures in him the devotion and care he has denied to his parents. He knows very well that his father has been the driving force and moral support in all his growth. For instance, his father has hired a second hand bike just to ride along with Jamun. He feels at last that,

... isn't evidence enough for the debt that I owe my begetters, then nothing in this existence is meaningful. But we're all feeble, he assents to himself, and heedless, gluttoned with vanity, and languish only after trumpery; and in a flash there remains no time to articulate. One's love to

those to whom one owes love. He presses his forehead against the glass of the desk, but no comfort there. (TLB 194)

Jamun's affection towards his parents is realized at one point of time whereas Burfi never shows any of his concern towards his parents. When his mother is admitted in the intensive care, he becomes tired of the happenings there. But his warmth towards them is aroused, "Jamun is chastened by his extreme exhaustion. Nothing else appears to wriggle into his skull. This is the real life. . . . We can never express the true sentiments – love, devotion, kindness – we can never act humanely, while those whom we cherish are healthy and alive" (TLB 225-26).

The death of Urmila has brought about a change in Jamun:

. . . with his sentiment that a mother's demise somehow behoved him to acquit himself better, more humanely, with all living beings, that he now felt, and keenly hoped that he'd continue to feel, towards all, a passionless and ascetic dutifulness?. For passion was vexation and sorrow, and he'd now to set about to accomplish a stolidness even towards that sorrow.

Truely, a death made one brood, didn't it." (TLB 255)

Shyamanand's feeling of abandonment by his own sons is reflected when Jamun disperses from the members of his family to take up a journey. He realizes the importance of his wife only after her death because the departure of his sons worsens his sense of loneliness. Jamun consoles his father by recollecting his mother's memories and also asserts his safety with the monetary savings. Controversially, Jamun's consolation hurts him because he leaves him alone and sets away with his brother. He suffers stating that "you are leaving me with Burfi. That bonehead's marriage appears to be on the rocks –

so he'll have no time for me . . . Write as soon as you reach, or shall I telephone your neighbour tomorrow, the man with the queer name . . .” (TLB 280). He shows his affection by enquiring whether he went for a walk and if Aya or Joyce remembers him after dinner milk. Shyamanand expresses his loneliness in his letters to Jamun and his son too reciprocates to that:

Jamun *is* unhappy that Shyamanand is unhappy, but he's also vexed by his own guilt, and by the selfish, emotional demands that his family members make on one another even in absence. He is sad, too . . . he detests both his parents, one dead, one dying, for continually coercing him to choose between them; always in their weaning of their sons away from each other . . . both . . . mindfully. . . hidden from them bits of the truth. (TLB 298)

Burfi's attempt to transfer his responsibility to Jamun proves to be the replica of the thoughts of his generation. The description of Jamun while welcoming his father to live along with him is the best retardation of his sense of Indian family concern. He states his idea of sharing his bed room and TV. He instructs Vaman to sleep on the floor for a few days and to help his father bathe. He also insists that they should all welcome him at the station for making him happy. As soon as Jamun sees his father, he is stunned at his father's physical appearance. He has gone down and he appears a couple of inches shorter than he was. Jamun is happy to receive his father. Charterjee ends the novel with hope: “well, not a bad beginning, reflects Jamun” (TLB 303).

Indu Saraiya in her review of *The Last Burden*, brings out the very essence of the novel:

The Last Burden is an infuriating book at the start, but finally quite compelling in its honest appraisal of the harsh realities and erosions facing Indian middle-class/life today. And surely it ends with hope! From the humdrum remnants of a family breaking up under stress, from a welter of undramatic commonplace events, Jamun finally picks up the pieces from his last burden, and sees the light at the end of the tunnel. (35)

Man has lost his reason and leads an aimless, absurd and meaningless life. Men lose peace and only their sense of fear predominates. Upamanyu Chatterjee's of the urges within them. Chatterjee is concerned with the predicament of modern man. These protagonists of his novels appear to be outsiders and strangers. This awareness fictional world is an artistic portrayal of man's rootlessness and the consequential quest for a meaningful self is the key note of Upamanyu Chatterjee's novels. His third novel, *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* pictures the struggle of a modern man to accommodate himself in the society and how he fulfills his responsibility. The change of culture after his education is not incorporated in Agastya. He thinks that his boss, Dr. Bhatnagar, is intolerable. He sends a telegram stating that his 'mother serious' to him even though his mother is dead a long ago. Consequently, he sends a letter of resignation from the civil service.

According to Agastya, nothing has changed in Madna or in the civil service. Agastya is self-obsessed to mingle freely in the mainstream of the life of the society where he is forced to live. He is not worried about his inability to learn anything from civil service or his reluctance to conjoin his restless self with the imperfection of the outside world in which he finds himself. He is bored with the official life which is absolutely corrupted. He also visualizes how bribery has become a common factor for all

the officers. Chatterjee tries to portray the bureaucrats through the character of Agastya. Early in his career, when he finds a pen in the official pen tray, he considers it an ear-cleaning pen:

Steely - grey in colour, it was made of some aluminium-like metal. Its nib, about an inch long and made from the same material as the body of the pen, was like the end of a ball-point refill, only more rounded, considerate, more moulded to the intricate inner spaces of the ear. When he'd realized what it was for, Agastya had been touched by the wisdom and the courtesy of the Welfare State. Instinctively, in each new office, he'd looked for it first thing on his desk and had never been disappointed. Tickling one's earwax with it was a wonderful way to unwind when the tensions of office became unsupportable. (TMWS 305)

Agastya and Daya's relationship also seems to be unhappy. Their letters to each other reveal their sadness and confusion. Throughout this novel, Agastya is still unable to participate actively in his official works. He has taken his job only to pass the time. He does not want to know what it is and how it is. Finally his relationship with Dr. Chakki and Rajani Suroor makes him realize who he is. The attack on Suroor creates a great impact on his life. Till then he is not much worried about anything. Dr. Chakki's scripts make him to think of the role of a bureaucrat. The change in Agastya is clearly revealed when he is with Rajani Suroor "You look as though you need it, friend." He heard Rajani Suroor's groan and it means "To Agastya, it sounded dreadfully like a long-drawn-out Pa-yn-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" (TMWS 437). Finally Agastya attains a perfect balance between cynicism and promise.

Existentialism is a way or philosophy of life which enables every human being to lead an authentic mode of life. In fact, it is ethic for human action and involvement for self-realization. In Mary Warnock's opinion, ". . . the appeal of Existentialism has been largely practical, and that people have been fascinated by it because they actually want to put its principles of individual freedom into practice in society" (132). The process of 'becoming' is more important and essential than 'being' to an individual who quests for self hood.

Weight Loss, is about the main character Bhola who is ruled by his sexual obsession for men as well as women. He constructs his entire life around his obsession for Titli, a vegetable vendor and her husband Moti. G.J.V. Prasad in his review "About Obsessions" comments :

This is a novel about India. A nation obsessed with purification and rituals is also a nation that needs them desperately to keep it truth at bay. Not only is repression a sign of our contemporary times, we have always had a fundamental schisms in our attitude to sex and sexuality. This ambiguity or difference in our ancient philosophical approaches to sexuality is that sex is to be celebrated and is a path to liberation, while it is at the same time to be controlled and sublimated because it ties us down to the material world. Bhola's other obsessions, with weight loss and living the day according to disciplinary rules that he has set up including his daily jogging, mirror this dichotomy. His need to discipline the body is the other side of the coin from his need to indulge his bodily appetites. (95)

Bhola does not want to commit emotionally with all his partners and he wants to be the dominant partner in his association. Bhola's affinity proves to be untrue to others

including his wife. Nandini Lal calls it a ‘satyr’s satire.’ Upamanyu Chatterjee in his conversation with Sunil Sethi says, “*Weight Loss* is meant in all its senses - as metaphor for a kind of fear of emotional commitment. He is unable to take on baggage that he feels he cannot handle – weight both physical and mental, I guess”(36). Bhola loves Kamala and both of them have nice time talking about music class, Guruji and Francesca. He wants to have a child and he shares his wish to his wife and observes hers :

“ . . . [he] sensed more than saw the happy smile that illumined her face.
‘Okay,’ she replied equably before disappearing into the drawing room, as though he had asked her whether she wanted butter on her toast. He could hear her humming her way to the kitchen.

He felt glad, at peace, at having blurted out his wish for progeny.
He had felt like honouring and fostering a rare, noble impulse within himself. (WL 255)

Kamala became pregnant but Bhola’s and her conjugal life continues to be the same. There is no improvement in the intervening months. As the days passed, he starts liking her more and more as an individual. At the same time he feels that he is responsible for Titli’s future and also he feels guilty because she is also important to him. He is happy to do his domestic responsibilities of assisting Kamala in all possible ways. He fixed appointments for Kamala with the gynecologist. He also made the lists of what to ask the doctor and rearranges the flat for the new comer. He also reads the past issues of *Reader’s Digest* to know about parenthood. He comes to know that they would need a servant for the baby. In the mean time he thinks of calling Anin to know about Titli. But he does not make a call, and then “He realized that he did not really want to know where Titli was and what she was up to as long as she didn’t turn up at his door” (WL 259).

When Kamala is admitted in the hospital, he receives a call from Moti after thirteen years seeking a meeting with him urgently. He felt:

To think of going for a run and to fix a meeting with a male lover from his past, to dawdle over a pot of tea at home while his wife was in hospital expecting a baby at any moment – were sinful and irresponsible acts, all of them. You are having my baby. The song – but he simple couldn't recall the singer's name just his thyroid- deficient eyes and never ending forehead – then slipped into his skull and wouldn't go away. What the fuck did Moti want, he had asked himself irritably without pause in bed, . . . (WL 260-61)

When he sees Moti, his mind is occupied with the memories of the past. He takes him to his house and feels happy to have a reunion with him. But the entire situation changes and Moti becomes very angry with him:

'You are very dirty.' He glared at Bhola, not liking the expression of awed, near-amused disbelief on his face. 'First my wife, then me, sometimes on the same day with the same lips.

However could the poor sod not have known? Bhola suddenly laughed. He didn't mean to, he certainly didn't find the situation comic, but he felt abruptly and explosively happy to find, so unexpectedly, innocence at the heart of things. Startled, Moti fired. Bhola felt in his chest the thud of the bullet and the most searing, unimaginable pain that he had ever experienced in his life. (WL 277)

Bhola asserts that, "If I get out of this above, I will be good and straight hereafter (WL 285). After this incident the bond between Bhola and Kamala becomes stronger. She does not want to know what happened but is happy that he is alive. To Bhola, the first few months with his daughter's are the best of his own life. They appoint a maid to look after their child. Titli came as the fourth maid. Bhola starts worrying and he thought that he would fall from the state of grace that he had attained in the preceding nine months. He even thinks that "Maybe Kamala herself would somehow die in the hospital and he would never have to exit from the spider clasp of Titli's limbs" (WL 346).

Bhola is not able to bear the heat bubbles on the baby's skin. He constantly enquires about the bites on her forearm. Titli manages saying "'Heat Boils, probably.' They've been there for a couple of days" (WL 348). Then he wants to continue his physical relationship with Titli. In the mean time he finds a hypodermic syringe, a flask and a red plastic tube in the room. He unscrewed the flask's top and finds a cupful of blood. When Titli is inside the bathroom, he bolts the door from outside. He looks at his child and she is delighted to see her father. He feels the bond and becomes ashamed. He holds her tight against his chest and begins to weep silently: "He wanted to die, to atone, to have his semen drained out of him by an enormous syringe, to give up his body and his life for her"(WL 350).

After this incident, he is abandoned by Kamala. Only after this incident he starts realizing his self. His entire life is changed and his lifestyle helps him to define God. But his life as an abandoned bachelor is full of unhappiness. He writes letters to Kamala and wants to know about her daughter but does not receive any reply. He often thinks about his past life with his wife and daughter. The separation from his family changes

him a lot. For him, “The flat felt empty, chilly and so depressing that he actually thought that he would die, that he couldn’t possibly out live the night” (WL 361).

In those four years he has lived a disciplined life. His mind, his memories and his dead life have helped him to lose his weight. He finds that he could lose weight when he lives alone. One day he receives a call from Titli to inform him that Dosto is dead. He goes to Anin’s house. There after seeing Titli, he rejuvenates his relationship closeness with her. He happens to see Moti and takes pity on him. After this meeting, “Bhola felt tired and extremely sleepy. He wanted to go home and back in time and try and win back his old life with his wife and daughter” (WL 410).

The birth of his child and a near death experience have changed Bhola into a sentimental man. His life changes again as he is suspected of having molested his own child. The child seems to give a second life to him and he is keen to celebrate his life after his lucky escape. But he is finally left with no alternative but to take his life. He attains the ultimate act in his weight loss programme by giving up the body. Man’s life is inter-related to his society and his own inner self. If he works in harmony with himself and society and makes the right choice and works accordingly, then he may attain selfhood. Otherwise, disunited with these respective spheres, he will ruin himself and become a victim of the circumstances.

Way to Go portrays death, disappearance and disintegration. Chatterjee explores the Indian family and Indian life. As the novel proceeds, he continues his exploration and execution of the orifices of Indian society. The world, Jamun and Burfi belong to is a world of despair, violence and spectacular dysfunction. He exposes the most unpleasant facts of life: suicides, corpses, uncongenial sadness, autopsies, garbage, sewerage and assorted stenches.

Post independent Indian society with its almost institutionalized consumption, growth of scientific technologies, moral decline, spiritual degeneration and confused values play a vital role in the predicament of the contemporary men. The result is frustration and inability to communicate with the society and with the members of the family. There is no plan, no peace. Nothing keeps him within the pattern of everyday living.

Jamun often finds his own existence as a burden. He lives in his own world, thinking his own thoughts, speaking to his own self, disappointed and depressed. He is neither communicating with the world nor distracting himself with the surroundings. He is relentlessly in search of a way to face, with dignity an ugly life, inescapably painful and always unsatisfying. The relationship between Jamun and Shyamanand is not a happy one. He says, “We lived together quietly and unhappily. I mean, If someone had to leave the house, it should’ve been me” (WTG 11). Jamun is desperate and looks depressed. Their staying together in the same house does not help.

Their sojourn together on the whole had been horrible; staying with his father alone thereafter became quieter, more tender and companionable and markedly more depressing. Jamun’s day dreams of suicide dated from approximately that phase of his life. In fifteen years, he just hadn’t been able to decide which reason for it was to be judged paramount. (WTG 8)

At first when he comes to his house to take care of his father, he feels noble, “as though he had willingly undertaken some penance so as to do right by his father” (WTG 17). His life is quiet and dreadful with his father. He is not able to have a good relationship with the neighbours. There are familiar houses and he even knows their inmates. But he could not discuss his predicament. He leads a lonely life in his bedroom.

Chatterjee calls it as, “A room of one’s own – it made him happily feel like Dr.Jekyll” (30).

Shyamanand and Jamun are leading their life with the same attitude. Nothing seems important and valuable to them. Death is a topic that bound father and son together. It seems that both of them are waiting for death. Shyamanand feels insecure and uncertain about his future. He was not happy during the five years that he stays with Jamun. Jamun informs Burfi about Shyamanand’s disappearance. He feels good: “Talking to his brother had both eased and exhausted him, as though he had confessed after years of bone-gnawing concealment, to some dark secret, some terrible crime” (WTG 66). Because he has been leading a life without values, he cannot be happy. He uses other people for his own pleasures. “When Kasibai left his house and Jamun tried to speak with her and finally succeeded after several days. Kasibai blamed him for what he had done to her and to her son. She shouts at him and calls him as ‘miserly male prostitute’” (WTG 71).

When he listens to her, he is quite shocked. He starts realizing his own self.

He had felt within himself – just behind his sternum – an engulfing emptiness, an expanding air pocket – and acknowledged it as yet one more handiwork of time; it had peeled away all illusion to reveal the void behind the bone. The sentiment had returned to him five years later when he had stood, on the rocks by the sea, over the twisted by tranquil corpse of Dr. Mukherjee – Pale, peaceful, blood in the salt- and-pepper hair, cracked spectacles four feet away – yes, that should be me, that *is* me, calm and being drained of fluid and – by the time curiosity of these onlookers has been sated – dry and ready for flight. (WTG 72)

Burfi returns home after the disappearance of his father. Burfi wants to reconstruct the house: “Get rid of the house, Burfi felt, cut loose, start anew, wondering all the time whether it would at all be possible” (WTG 277). Burfi also undergoes the same kind of problem like Jamun. He is in solitude and he learns that he loves neither his father nor his sons and he realizes that he does not love himself at all. He hates himself. For Jamun, living is more stressful than dying. The death of Naina Kapur and Dr. Mutherjee affected both of them badly. One could find fear in Burfi’s eyes. After finishing the rituals, Burfi gets ready to go back to his regular life. But he feels sickened and scared. “Burfi was more than a hundred metres away, wading, swimming on his back with his bundle on his chest, careful not to knock into people, not to attract attention, hoping that he was headed in the direction of the boat – his boat – that awaited him, and away, away from the dead” (WTG 337).

Chatterjee says that the dead are everywhere. There are people like Burfi who by nature live more on the living. There are also people like Jamun and his father who exist in love, with regret and with sorrow and are doubtful of the value of their own presence in the present. Jamun feels lonely in the presence of Shyamanand and it makes him realize that only death is a living companion to his own warm body. The empty rooms make him think of himself.

Jamun is comfortable being with Shyamanand’s things and he thinks of the days which he has spent with his father. It has changed his state of mind regarding life and death. While observing the ceremony with his brother and Madhumati he becomes hopeful. Chatterjee says that, “Jamun came to wonder, to speculate, about – not its actual significance but its larger import, what it could be imbued with by a viewer who for years had had only death on his mind” (WTG 354). Burfi realizes the reality of his life. For

him, he and his brother standing amongst the dead and dying, have reached the end of the world. His married life is over and his children also have grown out of reach. Chatterjee ends the novel with hope: “They had walked and walked and walked and there with their flesh seeming to fall off at the touch of the air like acid, Burfi too wanted – not to sink down into the ashes of sleep – but the food of life” (WTG 359).

Chatterjee in his conversation with Sunil Sethi talks about his novel *Way to Go*. The quotation given is extensive to enable a better reading and understanding of Chatterjee and the novel:

Satire is not primarily the intention of the book. It is a book that is played out in the head. It is not a book about India going to the dogs, no, not at all and, therefore, not a book about decay. I see characters like Monga and Kasturi as part of urban life anywhere in India; they are dreadful even when you encounter them in your daily lives. But they are not the book’s target. It is just that you need them for the atmosphere. *Way to Go* is not even ironic. If you die, if you leave behind this emptiness that your sons try to fill up, that is the way to go. It is Shyamanand’s way of saying good bye. In *Way to Go* the two brothers finally find each other. It is one of the reasons why I thought *The Last Burden* was incomplete. Even though I shouldn’t be saying it, I like the way two brothers, at the end of the book, finally reconcile to both the loss of their father and to finding an added value to their relationship. (38)

According to existentialist thinkers man does not inherit any values and his existence precedes essence. Man first exists and then only works towards a future. At first he is nothing, it is only afterwards that he achieves everything by his solidarity. Man has

to be conscious, heroic, hard-working and responsible for the purpose of self-realization in the purposeless universe. There is nobody to guide or help him; he has to attain whatever he needs by his own choice, action and responsibility. Chatterjee's heroes who are alienated from the biological environment and material world, become reconciled with the world around them with the hope of finding a better relationship for co-existence. They try to compromise with the biological world and society. This helps them to overcome their solitary confinement, dread and a feeling of nothingness and finally it leads them to understand their responsibility and their duty in the family and society. This type of self-realization makes him understand his role as a son, husband and father and as a responsible human being in the world. Richard Schacht in "ALIENATION as Self-Alienation: Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and the Future of Self-Alienation" in his book *The Future of Alienation* points out that self-realization plays an important role and provides the quality of life:

The question I would like to consider is whether these notions have a future, and can still play useful roles in philosophy and critical/ normative political, educational, cultural, social and 'quality of life' theory, *even if* we no longer prepared to embrace the idea of some sort of timeless, Platonic 'human essence' as a blueprint somehow fixed beyond all nature and history that would determine in advance what truly human selfhood and life would be. I believe they do and can. (141-42)

The study is concluded as Richard Schacht insists that the questions must be answered 'where we are to go from here' and the other famous question 'what is to be done?'; he says that it the answers are to be decided than discovered. This question is intimately related to the question of where people are destined from here and to

understand this one must think about what is humanly possible and what is not humanly possible. What is humanly possible for some people will not be possible for others who are around at that time and it has to be understood that different answers will be accepted by different segments of humanity and they will orient themselves to the realization of different combinations that would identify generally as human possibilities. So it is upto the human beings to use their freedom in the right way so that their choice and the follow up action will be purposeful and meaningful. Once man is able to realize his own self with his strengths and weaknesses, his existence or his life becomes fruitful. A man who understands himself will lead others also to lead a fruitful life and make his love fruitful in service.

The researcher hopes that this study would be a remarkable finding among the existing theories of existentialism and to give an insinuation to the future studies on existentialism. Further research can be done on the following areas like

- A comparative study of Upamanyu Chatterjee and other writers who have dealt with similar issues such as existentialism, alienation, loneliness, identity crisis, moral degeneration and socio – cultural problems;
- Upamanyu Chatterjee's portrayal of human relationships and man-woman relationship.
- Portrayal of the modern man and the contemporary society and
- The contemporary relevance of Upamanyu Chatterjee's novels.