Chapter Two

Upamanyu Chatterjee: A Critique of his works

Indian fiction in English during the 1980s witnessed a new generation of writers who, equipped with a new idiom, strove to assert themselves and strained to express in their writings their observations summative of human situation in the Indian subcontinent. They unfettered the Indian fiction in English from the complexes which plagued the predecessors and changed its tone, tenor and content. One among these new voices was Upamanyu Chatterjee.

Upamanyu Chatterjee was born in 1959. He joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1983. His published works include short stories and the novels including The Assassination of Indira Gandhi, English, August: An Indian Story (1988), The Last Burden’ (1993), The Mammaries of the Welfare State (2000), which is a sequel to English, August: An Indian Story which won the Sahitya Academy Award, Weight Loss (2006) and Way To Go (2010). The novel Way to Go is a sequel to The Last Burden. In 2008, he was awarded the order of Officer des Arts et des letters by the French Government for his contribution to literature. The investigator has selected four of Upamanyu Chatterjee’s novels for study: English, August: An Indian Story, The Last Burden, Way To Go and Weight Loss.

Upamanyu Chatterjee through his stories brings about the post-colonial bureaucracy, development, politics and characters in the drama of an Indian institution. The novelists’ position on the contemporary issues is voiced through many characters. His views are scattered throughout the novel. Writer and critic Geeta Doctor, in Literature Alive, appreciates the novel of Upamanyu Chatterjee for “the accumulation of details that produce a powerful image of Madna and the oppression of a way of functioning that passes for life in an IAS” (Literature Alive, 9). Further she gives a valid
remark that “obviously Chatterjee does not feel at ease with women characters as well. He still seems to see them as August does. Purely as objects of lust”. (*Literature Alive*, 9)

Another encouraging aspect of his novels is its language, which is free from all inhibitions and flows with self-confidence in an innovative idiom allowing no room for the colonial complexes that affiliated to most of his counterparts. The flexibility of his idiom and microscopic minute observation are matched by the freshness of his symbols, similes and images so frequently used throughout the novel.

Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *English, August: An Indian Story* is narrated in the third person, which lends greater objectivity to the narrative and allows various characters to participate in it. The novelist shuffles from direct to indirect narration at his will and adds his comments on the reported remark of a character in the first person. Chatterjee’s narrative strategy is sophisticated in its ironical, colonial and farcical comedy. Thus, the novel outrightly rejects all the myths about India.

In addition to this the casual, informal abrupt and open-ended termination of Chatterjee’s *English, August: An Indian Story* and its various calls upon the reader to step in and shape the remaining story according to his own design and dreams. It is to be made rather than retold. Thus in many ways Chatterjee’s *English, August: An Indian Story* excels among different works of fiction of the 1980s. Indu Saraiya’s critical acclaim on Upmanyu’s Chatterjee’s novels is that “He brings to the Indian novel a style and feel, a conviction and maturity all its own” (Indu Saraiya’s *The Last Burden by Upamanyu Chatterjee*, 5).

The dialogue in Chatterjee’s novel seems to be used and stilted. The free flow of the dialogues gets impeded by the inclusion of difficult words. Everything in the book is unreal, the stilted family ties and stilted language, and one is enforced to shut the book with a sense of bitterness—it leaves a taste of gall and wormwood in the mouth. The book
deals for the most part with wasted aimless lives and it becomes a metaphor, of a monstrous ugliness.

In the novel *The Last Burden* Jamun’s relationship with Kasibai and her son seems to confirm it. And moreover the characters and a burden of human failure subsume the novel. The only redeeming feature in the book is a slight trace of maturity depicted by the Jamun character while all the rest is unreal. Tarum Tejpal is of the view that “the book is a powerful affirmation of the ties that bind parents and children”. (Literary Babu, *India Today*, 124-25). The characteristic quality of a superficial reading of the novel, for the book negates any affectionate ties that binds parents and children and harps on the destructive aspects of such relationships. The burden is undoubtedly too heavy not only for the characters but also for the author.

Upamanyu Chatterjee’s second book *The Last Burden* is a work of far greater substance and originality (“A Burden Well Carried”, *Indian Express Sunday Magazine*, p.4). As compared to his first book *English, August: An Indian Story* Chatterjee graphs “Structure of emotions” (*The Uncertain Self*, 147) in his latest novel *The Last Burden*. The book is “challenging and complex: it deserves to be read in detail in order to be savoured properly”. (*A Burden Well Carried*, 4). “He explores the dark side of kinship and family ties because his thesis is one that is naked only with one’s family”. (“The Literary Babu”, *India Today*, 124-25). The writer probes into the mysterious working of the human mind and delineates the complex problems of the complex age in the contemporary Indian society. As a sensitive writer, his concerns are disintegration of the family, discontinuity of the tradition, conflict between the generations and several other issues which result in loneliness and isolation of an individual. There are high and low tides in the lives of men which affect the characters emotionally.
Flittering back and forth in time and space, Chatterjee has employed the technique of flash back. This flash back gives interesting clues to inner consciousness of Chatterjee’s characters. The writer thereby manipulates narrative in such a way that “the last temporal sequence comes first and the narrative sequence follows its hard ruthless logic” (Theoretical Viability of Flash Back Method as a Technique of Fiction, 29).

Chatterjee in an interview is of the view: “My new novel, The Last Burden, is concerned not with growing up but with family ties. It takes a close look at an Indian family, the complexity of relationships and how these changes as a cataclysmic event occur”. (‘Magic Realism isn’t My Kinds of Stuff’, The Illustrated Weekly of India, 28-29). And it is so because Chatterjee feels that the writer’s work is done in projecting what the relations are and not as they ought to be and what emotions are not on as they ought to be.

In the novel English, August: An Indian Story Upamanyu Chatterjee problematises Agastya Sen’s alienation by making him an alienated hero. Agastya Sen considers himself as misfit and wasting his life on the whole, he remains forced by the unalterable realities of life and forces himself to stay in Madna. He hardly compromises but rather regrets and is never content on any matter concerning his stay, job, place, people, food and among them considers himself a dot in the hinterland. It is, therefore intended to explore and explicate Agastya’s psychograph in order to find out the causes of his sense of alienation. The concept of Alienation according to The New Encyclopaedia Britannica includes “Cultural estrangement, social isolation and self estrangement” (574).

On speculating over Agastya’s role as an IAS officer, the question is what kind of officer he would be in future. However, more than ten years on, Agastya Sen returns as the collector of the plague-hit Madna District in Chatterjee’s recent novel. The Mammaries of the Welfare State (2000) in which he is delineated as a misplaced person.
Chatterjee has offered a disgusting picture of Indian bureaucracy in both the novels. Chatterjee himself told Indu Sariyu in an interview. “The whole structure of the civil service is its administration, but it is part of something larger, and it has nothing to offer. We are just a bunch of completely ordinary English speaking Indians. When I say that, it sounds pompous; what I mean is, no one is interested in your generations’ angst” (*Oysters and Equipage Literature Alive*, 1989:4). But this is not the whole truth of Indian bureaucracy. It is a distorted view of Indian reality.

Sanjay Kumar rightly comments that Upamanyu Chatterjee succeeds in depicting a complex view of the post colonial society in which “exile and alienation seem to be an inseparable human condition”. (*The Exiled Self* in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s, *English, August: An Indian Story* in *Post-Colonial Indian English Writing*, 1997). The freelance writer and critic Geeta Doctor in her review of the novel says that Chatterjee succeeds “in making both August” without being alienating or oppressive himself. It has such a feeling of truth that one cannot help but wonder, whether *English, August: An Indian Story* is not thinly disguised autobiography after all. (*Literature alive*, 14)

The maker of the character Agastya, an active bureaucrat himself, is quite unlike his protagonist. However, the Maharashtrian novelist and bureaucrat, Vishwas Patil observes in *Life Before Arundhati* that today’s Indian English writers are alienated from society. He says, “Their language may be good but their plots are minor they write about a superficial, five-star culture. They don’t have the sensibilities of Mulk Raj Anand or K.A. Abbas or V.S. Naipaul. They are alien to the rural masses. (*Life Before Arundhati, The Indian Express*, 2000:5). It is a befitting remark to Chatterjee’s *English, August: An Indian Story* which has been described by Mini Kapoor as “a J.D. Salingeresque take on an urbanite young civil servant’s acclimatisation year in hot, dusty and depressing Madna” (*Life Before Arundhati, The Indian Express*, 2000:30).
In short, Upamanyu Chatterjee narrates an Indian story of the education of a young bureaucrat who is alienated from his self, society and culture. The main cause of his alienation lies within, in his outlook, and not without cut off from the common man and his problems, the protagonist Agastya is estranged not only from his fellowmen but also from his innermost nature. Agastya does not fare better than any stranger. The romantic and dreamy life that Agastya has been leading all along renders him incapable of facing the harsh realities of life in Madna. Westernisation, urbanisation, convent education, cultural estrangement, prime motives for metropolitan life and worldly pleasures are the other reasons of his alienation. As his desires, inclinations and ideals are not in agreement with the prevailing social system, the protagonist suffers from self-alienation, social alienation and cultural alienation. The devastating effects of alienation are despair, boredom, disenchantment, generation gap, stunting of personal development and a sense of meaninglessness of life. So it could be concluded that Agastya is a misplaced person who prefers the quest of personal happiness to social happiness as it has been the general tendency of his generation. Agastya’s sense of alienation is a product of his own consciousness which in part is linked to the process of his growing up, to his several weakness, hypocrisies and in part, to his way of leading life on a superficial scale.

There is no self-conscious Indianness any more and the confinement of the Indian soul by an alien tongue. Chatterjee deliberately blurs time and space moving back and forth in a freewheeling fashion between past and present changing places. It is nothing but the minutiae of the processes of the mind, in the exploration of middle-class morality in his novel *The Last Burden*. As at same time it is tempting to dismiss Chatterjee’s novel as the progeny of a spoilt section of India’s elite and at its worst his book is a damaging but one-sided indictment of Indian elite.
The novel *Way to Go* is featured on the search of the nursing father Shymananda who is eighty-five years old, half paralysed and had disappeared. At this instant, his long time solitary friend, Dr. Mukherjee has committed suicide and Jamun is trying very hard to tackle the situation. Jamun’s brother Burfi, who had long severed ties with his father, is only interested in investing money by the sale of his father’s property. Jamun is entangled under the obsession of sexual relationship with the prostitute, Kasibai who serves as a servant for him for many years. Jamun, is also the biological father of Kasturi’s child, who had been his former lover. The novel focuses predominantly on the relationship between a father and son. It also deals with perils of old age, agonies, despairs, inevitability of degeneration and death. The most highlighting part of the novel rests on his sentence ‘Far not having loved one’s dead father enough, could one make amends by loving one’s child more?’ (*Way To Go*, 3). This line further puts a great impact of the essence of life bound by Indian culture and ends with a feel of repentance.

*Weight Loss* is pictured on the life of Bhola, his youth and adulthood. This obsession of sexual relation starts on account of his physical education teacher, Anthony Sir, who often calls him womanish. His absurd exaggeration is transgressive. In *The Last Burden*, it is marked with constant compliant of Shyamanand, the father of the protagonist, Jamun. Urmila, the mother of the children had not been concerned that her sons were brought up with traditional values and norms. Shyamanand is also ready to entrust the blame on his wife and his scorn on this point blazes forth thus: “You’ve goofed up everything. You have not fostered your children rightly. They have discounted their traditions, culture parents – because of you. As a Mother, as a mortal, you are a disaster” (74 – 75).

Further, Shyamanand reflects on that his sons Burfi and Jamun:
They seem brand new and alien, in jeans and T-shirts of dubious shades, and articulates a puzzling species of English, whereas Urmila and he had ripened in an earlier illusorily genial world… where in, markish that he is, he reckons that the bonds of family had been sturdier and parents were revered. (108)

*The Last Burden*, is a tale of rancour and bitterness in one family. The decultured protagonists form the vital part of the vicious and tragic family drama, wound by the relationship between the parents, the two sons, and the elder son’s Anglicised wife.

Therefore, Jamun, the protagonist of ‘*The Last Burden*’ is frustrated in his attempts to relate with any woman in a fulfilling way, and its reason is his helplessness to break from his emotional bondage to his mother. Thus, Upamanyu Chatterjee in his illustration of the protagonist reveals the central idea of the Indian urban educated personality, gone astray into the ditch of suffering and emotional chaos. Love starts from his adolescent age of his school days towards his teacher Miss. Jeremiah followed by the servant Gopal, then towards the servant couple Moti and Titli, who becomes his lover at different stages. Bhola’s sexual art is in the presence of lower class lower and lower caste people. His marriage is doomed and remains unaroused by his wife. According to the author, Bhola is fully aware that he is wasting his life but does not make any step to come out of his condition. Everyday realities form a part of some aspects of the tale. According to the novelist, it does not make moral judgment but rather project questions pertaining to class, status, wealth and sexuality.

The novel *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* is a mirror in which the multi-departmental decay and depravity of the Indian state gets reflected in their bitter details which are horrifying. Through the textual message, it is found that even the new developmental state in India has steadily amassed functions and vastly extended financial
powers often in the name of the poor; its commitment to delivery of just dispensation has been replaced by an inclination towards loot and plunder. This is due to the rising immorality and a growing belief, widely shared among the political and bureaucratic elite, that the state is an arena where public offices are to be used for private ends. The bureaucracy is wooden and corrupt, disinterested in public welfare.

The novel depicts the betrayal of hopes and promises nurtured. The repeated rhetoric of the welfare state is the focal concern of the novel, and it is a bold attempt of the politico-bureaucratic actualities. *The Mammary of the Welfare State* reflects collapse of the socio-cultural institutions in addition to the politico-bureaucratic proneness to larceny and rapacity.

The protagonists of Upamanyu Chatterjee suffer from identity crisis because they live lives, untouched by the warmth of relationships. Identity subsumes a sense of continuity of meaningful existence and coherence of memory, an alignment with the larger structure of recognisable life. In psychological terms, when an individual finds himself in a fortunate position to satisfy his needs and is able to play consistent roles in society, his identity is thought to be unbruised. Identity crisis results from negation of the following factors. The facilitating condition for the development of a mature psycho-social identity in a community of people, whose reverence of values of the particular community becomes significant to the growing person and in turn his or her growth assumes relevance for them. An unbruised sense of identity determines one’s mental set up and attitude to life and its vital issues like social responsibilities, human relationships and spiritual destiny. When it dawns upon one’s mind, one feels, at a deep and intense level of one’s being, active and alive.

Identity formation in India is not a change that occurs within the individual after passing through inexorable stages, as is the case in the West, but something that is
bestowed on the person from outside. Therefore, for the Indians, the identity crisis is all
the none traumatic because Indian identity is not the sovereign identity of the western
man, but is derived endogenously from other belonging to the same clan, tribe or caste. It
is a tradition, directed identity, so the unhinging of the urban alienates from their native
tradition sabotages them deeply at the inner level.

The most significant aspect of the colonial encounter was the decision of the
Indian elite to go in with the enthusiasm for the English education. The purpose of the
study of Upamanyu Chatterjee’s protagonists, is quite relevant to assess what the elite of
the colonial moment did to transform itself from being native to becoming foreign. The
relevance of such an assessment grows stronger when it is put in the perspective of its
effect on the psychic structure of the people who eagerly join the coveted club of the
English educated class. That eagerness and its aftermath account for the anti-heroic
predicament, marked by alienation and anguish, of the modern progeny of the then elite.

The main focus of Upamanyu Chatterjee is on the multiple alienation which the
protagonist denizens of his fictional universe suffer. It must be taken into consideration
that Chatterjee creates a fictional world which always seems beyond factual. It is rooted
in the time of creation and this time, in turn, is rooted in its former moment. So therefore
the main thing to be noted is that the disagreements refer to the textual positions of the
impugned texts, not to the actualities that lay beyond the texts. This framework was the
binary opposition between the West and the East. The white man’s burden had to be
carried! Providence had chosen them to civilise the uncivilised, and to civilise them.
Hence it was necessary to represent them. The British-Indian encounter had the
distinctive style of what is known as the city and cantonment structure. The loss of
connection between the English-educated Indian urban youth and the large Indian masses
is a recurring theme in Upamanyu Chatterjee. While Chatterjee’s protagonists are doomed
to remain anti-heroes primarily because of their inability to connect with the refreshing stream of the cultural sustenances provided by the general Indian ethos, their personalities are split. In moments of agony, they pine for connection, but their English background inhibits and restricts them. They have been weaned away from their maternal source of living, and so their bridges lie burnt down.

The fictional world of Upamanyu Chatterjee is marked by the presence of several major and minor characters who are anti-heroes of different shades. They are all characterised by alienation at multiple levels of their existence. It becomes very essential to deal with the post-modern condition of the Indian society from which Chatterjee draws his imaginative impetus to create a fictional universe which refuses not to seem factual.

Contextually, the fictional world of Upamanyu Chatterjee is a post modern world marked by the viable symptoms like collapse of the grand narratives of Indian values and an emphasis on consumerist style of living. In fact, the absence of characters noble in intent, or action is the result of the post modern decline of the Indian value system of social life and cultural advancement. It is quite notable that Chatterjee’s protagonists are, without any exception, all city-dwellers. They are the products of English education imbued with the spirit of the ideas contained in the notions of western oriented intellectualism and progress. They are alienated from the Indian ethos of value and wisdom. The poor and largely illiterate masses of the Indian hinterland are not portrayed as anti-heroic denizens of his fictional world. Rather they do not have any significant presence in the novels. The debut novel and its sequel have the unwashed mass of Indian humanity as the background, against which the alienation and unhappy life-drama of the English educated, highly placed antiheroes are enacted.

The novel *English, August: An Indian Story* of Upamanyu Chatterjee conveys a dismal picture of the westernised oriental gentleman who has turned his back on his
colonial legacy but cannot find suitable alternatives to fill the void. This void leads to existential angst. The unmistakable message from the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee is that the protagonists like Agastya Sen, Jamun and their lesser varieties are bound to appear in the Indian society, bound as it is with the global cultural dynamics. The alien influences have got multiplied in their strength bringing more and more sections and areas of this society under their gap. On the whole, Upamanyu Chatterjee reflects the cultural actualities of the present as well as the future Indian society.

The emergence of this new elite, powerful and assertive, is invariably accompanied by a new cultural style, which suits its taste but irks the traditional bound persons. In the Indian context, the growing industrialisation and urbanisation over the last century, more so in the decades after independence, has irretrievably altered the culture and people. It has inevitably led to a shift towards an individualistic urban bent of mind devoted to a careeristic urge to go up at the cost of those unfortunate ones left behind in the race. It has come in the wake of the dismemberment of the traditional cohesion based on fellow-feeling and sympathy with the entire society.

Thus, it could be concluded that alienation has a triple aspect: it is a process of estrangement from natural socio-cultural context, it is a condition arising as a result of such an estrangement, and it is the subjective experience of being in such a condition. This triple aspect translates into an existential condition in which powerlessness, meaninglessness, social isolation, formlessness and self-estrangement become the distinguishing marks of the alienated individuals. These characteristics are very well depicted in the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee.

Upamanyu Chatterjee is the most representative writer of the urban novel. Most of his works reveal anxiety about the modern Indian identity. There is also concern for rediscovering one’s cultural roots and past and to come to terms with the post-colonial
status. Chatterjee’s command of the English language is a remarkable part of his achievement. Upamanyu Chatterjee is perhaps the only contemporary Indian writer in English who belongs firmly to the school of Jonathan Swift and Rabelias.

The central focus of Upamanyu Chatterjee’s novels is on the hazardous pitfalls that come on the way of individualistic happiness. The novelist has chosen two worlds. One is the world of Indian bureaucrats and the other is that of family relationships, to explore the prevailing condition of the Indian urban society. In his creative exploration, the realistic focus is on the outward as well as on the inward as he is concerned with the condition of the mind. An attempt has also been made to analyse its alienated hallmarks and put them in the perspective of influences thrown by the socio-cultural condition.

It is difficult in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s case to define because he is neither an immigrant nor an emigrant. But, his fiction is inevitably linked with terms like quest for identity, alienation and identity crisis. It is quite frequent to find quest for identity as the central theme in his works. If identity is what differentiates individuals, a displaced person is an individual who for some reason lives in a country or society other than his or her own.

In modern fiction we come across the theme of quest and identity. In the category of alienation, our exile-heroes are not alienated from men and society. They very much exist in the world of human beings. They want to live life fully. They are alienated beings; they in fact seek to conquer their selves. Returning to and going away from one’s own culture or alien culture are of equal significance, though both are inconsequential in terms of a conscious realisation of the self. Still, both are necessary.

Foucault in his essay “The subject and power” notes the dual aspect of individualism. On one hand, individualism is the right to be different, including everything that makes individuals truly individuals, and on the other hand, the individual
is anchored in a community life and breaking this link, forces the individual back to himself, tying him to his own identity in a constraining way (*The Subject and power*, 211-12). Thus, identity is constructed on an individual basis, but within a given social structure, alienation could lead to a corresponding alienation of identity.

The protagonists in the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee live in a dilemma between two cultures, hence they can be termed as diasporic characters. Alienation in diasporic realities is mostly the artefact of conflicting personalities. Since the personalities are shaped by socio-cultural values and the immediate milieu, conflict of values, overt or covert, might be regarded as the roots of alienation. In the contemporary global society, everything is tested on the anvil of production and reproduction. It is the productive and reproductive aspect of an object or entity that determines its values and utility. Such paradigm of globalised world coupled with de-centered, de-rooted, and displaced realities of Diasporas accounts for incomprehensible and abysmal alienation of diasporic existence.

According to Upamanyu Chatterjee, his writings rest on a pessimistic view which locks the displaced individual in a void, from which there is no escape. The more the individual exercises his or her right to be an individual in an alien universe, the more the individual becomes subject to an alienation or dislocation of identity. To be a stranger thus becomes synonymous not with being strange, but with becoming estranged. Thus, Upamanyu Chatterjee’s novels deal with the themes of cultural conflicts.

Upamanyu Chatterjee is of the view that the communities, under the oppression of the coloniser, suffered from inferiority because of their vacant cultural identity, since their ancestral identities were not theirs any more. The displacement and cultural denigration led them into a condition of crisis of identity. However, their decision to leave their
ancestral identity in the past and their willingness to face the future and to undergo consequent changes gave them the way to build their own identity, that is hybridity.

The new generation among the societies of migrants is interesting especially because of its representation as a part of post-colonialist’s view of the different kinds of colonised societies. The fifth world is represented by this new generation of a society of migrants who have their own hybridised identity. The hybridity interestingly shows their identity which is not the ancestral cultural identity, nor the colonisers. Further the coloniser’s hegemony should not be avoided to rebuild cultural identity and to recover the pain or the stigma as the colonized.

The process of striving in order to survive under the domination of the colonist through the action of reconstruction gradually made them undergo changes in comparison with the first generation of migrants. There are many changes that may be considered as tokens that this generation has culturally left the traditions of their ancestor. The new generation is a transformed society that underwent a significant phase, especially the resistance against the ancestral identity. From the view of reconstruction, this deed is an attempt to free the generation from past history which bought stigma to the indentured workers under the coloniser. In the border, this attempt is actually one of the characteristics of migrant societies in pushing against the superiority of the colonial identity. It is also an attempt to solve the problems of multiculturalism due to the many societies of migrants coming from many different countries. The successful passing of this phase is an important starting point for changes that should be made and accepted as the consequences of the new society. Perhaps, instead of thinking identity as an already accomplished fact, it is better to consider it as a production which is never complete. It is always in process and always constituted within and not outside.
In expressing the new paradigm in post colonialism, the idea of banishing the colonised society’s inferiority as set against the cultural domination of the coloniser is viewed as the attempt to reconstruct a new society with new identity. The story begins with description of these cultural changes which are natural for displaced people due to their new environment. The representation of the hybridity of identity is examined through changes happening in the new society. Those are viewed as the attempts at reconstruction. It is the reality of change. It is reconstruction for the new generation and new society in the New World.

The paradigm of reconstruction, therefore, is to uncover the shield that the paradigm of resistance tightly puts on, and to undergo continual changes in order to gain an appropriate cultural identity.

A crisis of identity may be said as the only motivation for societies of migrants to make attempts at reconstruction, and the target is surely to rebuild the new society and to sojourn in the New World. In A Way in the World, societies of migrants are from different parts of the world. The concept of new is very significant for the society because it shows that hybridity for the many societies of migrants is an independent identity.

Paul White in his view on ‘A Way in the World’ stated that discussion on migrant societies also involved the problem of the shifting identity (A Way in the World, 7). However, the naturalness becomes special and interesting when the changing and shifting identity is to prove the attempts of the migrant society at self reconstruction. The changing and shifting identity is clearly delineated by the fictional characters of Upamanyu Chatterjee.

The society could appear in the form of different representations. The process of finding a fixed form of different representation was going on. Due to the background of each society, it is understood that there were many cultural traditions among them and
cultural conflict could be also one of the many problems they had to face. Therefore, the coloniser applied the colonial cultural identity in order to repress the cultural conflicts and in addition, the coloniser had the power to control them.

The first problem that had to be solved was the reality that representatives of the society came from many places having their own cultural traditions. The main concern of them is to banish the old characteristics and they would like to represent the new identity by cutting the direct line from the ancestor’s main lands and cultures.

The process of awareness gradually stimulated a kind of movement in order to reject the coloniser’s superiority. It means the appearance of the new generation has banished the identity of the past, to function as a weapon and to overcome their inferiority in relation to the coloniser. Beyond this condition, this awareness may be said to be the first step towards building oneness out of the many kinds of their origin and based on the differences they themselves have. Atleast this kind of New Society is also proof that there is a society having a fixed identity which is not ambiguous.

According to the critic Stuart Hall, it could be said that, “cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. It is not an essence but a positioning” (Nationalism and Globalism, 9).

Diaspora has been much discussed and written. Almost every facet of it being explored there remains least to query on its validity in the literary arena. In fact, no contemporary post-colonial literature can shy away, from its ambiguity. However, what matters to the seminal mind is the fact that how far diasporic existence can be feasible in the context of globalisation. While diaspora inherits in itself an act of scattering, the globalisation takes up the task of gathering the scattered, the presence of these two contrasting phenomena problematises the contemporary human values particularly in a
multicultural context: multiculturalism and its concern being the centre of both diaspora and globalisation.

Diaspora as a social form links the diasporic existence with the agony of displacement and exile. Though originally referred to the Jewish movement, displacement and exile from its root to another soil comes under the purview of diaspora. Recently, diasporic existence has been considered as a mode of cultural production which is often linked with globalisation. Globalisation is defined as the world-wide flow of cultural objects, images and meanings resulting in variegated process of creolisation, back and forth references, mutual influences, new contestations, nations and constant transformations. In this way, diaspora is described as involving the production and reproduction of transnational, social and cultural phenomena. As such, diasporic existence involved fluidity of identity, without fixity of any pattern. It is a constant process, or rather flux, in which the consciousness and behavioural pattern keep on shifting as per the need and surrounding.

It is the fluid nature of diasporic existence that is accountable for the unfathomed sense of alienation traceable in the life of a typical diaspora. However, there are different stages of diasporic alienation: physical, social and psychological. The most apparent is the physical alienation caused by the loss of root on homeland. The memory of home hinders the process of acclimatisation in the host land leading to a fissure between cultural values. Being not able to forget the past, and adopt the present, the present which presents a new set of values and living, the diasporic existence is some how accrued with an unfathomed sense of isolation which enters their psyche in the long run. The ultimate psycho-social alienation of the diasporas transfers them into a spatio-temporal solitude whereby creating a metaphysical sense of alienation, which is more prevalent in the diasporic characters of Upamanyu Chatterjee’s novels.
The stories of Upamanyu Chatterjee revolve around the difficulties of relationships, communication and loss of identity for those in diaspora. No matter where the story takes place, the characters struggle with the same feeling of exile and the struggle between the two worlds by which they are torn. The stories deal with the ever shifting lines between genders, sexuality, and social status within a diaspora whether the character be a homeless man or woman, all the characters display the effects of displacement in a diaspora.

Several writers in today generally deal with themes and sexual violence or of gendered identities explained as colonial / postcolonial experiences, expectations and encounter, and cultural conflicts due to east-west encounters. Upamanyu Chatterjee makes his stories immensely readable and he loads them with a virtue of a different kind. Moreover, in today’s world when newspapers are flooded with stories of intolerance and violent gruesome murders in culturally dissimilar settings, it appears extremely urgent that themes of accommodation, mutual appreciation and equality of cultures be emphasised. Upamanyu Chatterjee’s pre-eminent appeal seems to be stemming from this very growing realisation in the intellectual. The world today needs love and such approach in our social life creates space for it. When art and visual media are changed with complicity in the spread of an anti-culture of violence all over the world, it may only be a ray of hope that writers like Upamanyu Chatterjee deal with themes of socially responsible art that consistently works to kindle virtues to give humanity a fresh breather to enter into cultural spaces with pride, dignity and confidence. Upamanyu Chatterjee through the portrayal of variegated female characters and dramatisation of life conflicting situations, marital tension and domestic trauma undertakes to point out the identity quest and the social conventions are at roads.
The literature of the world is replete with exiles. Literary exile means those men who leave their native lands and exist in the alien culture. A literary exile goes to an alien country with a capital in the form of his language and culture. He has to draw on this inset to sustain him. He has to put up with new labels, such as a foreigner or an outsider. The conference of various cultural and social values under the aegis of globalisation, unfortunately, transfers man to the level where individual materialistic concern matters more than anything else.

Most Indian English writers either had a part of their education abroad, or have spent a part of their life in a foreign country. In this list includes Raja Rao who has himself observed that, “He felt lost and alienated and wandered around for many years before retracing his roots and identity, to the help of his guru, Sri Atmananda” (*Glimpses of Women in India*, 30). Kamala Markandaya has spent half of her life in India and half in the West; even then she continued to write under western influence, and she can be compared with Santha Rama Rau, who also writes under her maiden name Santha Bowers. Their adherence to maiden names is a clear affirmation of their loyalty to and recognition of the country of their origin. The exiles variably look back longingly to their cultural roots. Some of the other writers are Romen Basir, Bharati Mukherjee, Saros Cowasjee, Timeri Murari, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Arun Joshi, Anita Desai, Chaman Nahal etc.

The colonialists’ design and discourse, was a reflection of the confidence which a belief in the idea of reason-driven progress bestowed upon the people. Colonialism itself was a politico-territorial extension of the thinking which prided itself upon the conviction that Providence had chosen the European civilisation to enlighten the large part of humanity. This remained according to the western measurement, an assessment of human progress. As was pointed out by the thinkers like Michael Foucault, ‘it was an illustration of how power relations in society are formed and maintained and transformed, how the
dominant class imposes its idea of right, truth on those without power. The colonised society became the site where the vengeance of the sovereign was applied, the anchoring point for a manifestation of power, an opportunity of affirming the dissymmetry of forces’ (Discipline and Punish, The Birth of the Prison, 5). But, the historical irony is that the colonised elite took the colonialist projection an unfoucaultian way.

It is, therefore, evident that Indian English writers are the product of two cultures. Both East and West have gone into their making and they imbibe the two value systems. A writer is a highly sensitive being and reacts to his cultural duality intensely.

Meenakshi Mukherjee observes in her ‘The Twice Born Fiction’:

The intercultural nature of his own being becomes for such a writer a theme of profound interest. Therefore, the search for one’s identity is found to be a common and recurrent theme in Indo Anglian fiction. (‘The Twice Born Fiction’ 66)

Some critics have argued that Indian English novelists’ major concern with the East-West theme is because of their self assigned mission to interpret and define the East to their western audience. However, when an Indian English writer comes in contact with the alien culture, he becomes aware of his rottenness, and there by the inadequency of his mission. He feels that he is a foreigner, an outsider, and an exile. Confrontation with the west leads him to a discovery of his country, and of his own self. Invariably, he has a desire, working in some niche of his heart, to return home, to belong and readjust himself in the country of his origin. Subscribing to this view, S.N. Sharma points out in his Recent Revelation of Indian Fiction in English:

When an individual goes abroad and stays there for quite a few years quite possibly there is a silvering and disbranching. He gets alienated from his roots in native soil. He is no longer Yeats’ chestnut, the great
rooted blossomed. When he gets back home with the accretions of a foreign culture, he finds himself in distress acclimatising himself. His is the case of neither nor, of rootlessness, of loyalty, of identity. He is, after all, no unfortunate intruder of Stephen Spender. This agonising awareness of difference and sameness is the plight of the isolated individual trying to forge precariously a ‘delicate balance’. (207)

The visitor becomes exile. “It is virtually a return of the native in which the simultaneous awareness of two civilizations shows a full exposure to other cultures and intensifies the individual’s concern with his identity, his selfhood” (Recent Revelation of Indian Fiction in English, 209).

There is a marked trend of voicing personal experiences, making novel writing more autobiographical. Replying to an observation made by some Indian critics about the autobiographical element in his English, August: An Indian Story (1986) Upamanyu Chatterjee has said, “All fiction is autobiographical. It’s what you have heard, seen and felt”. (Recent Revelation of Indian fiction in English, 30). If this trend towards autobiographical fiction gains momentum, Indo-Anglian novel writing will acquire a new inhibited dimension of self-expression, which has remained confined to depiction of love and sex scenes so far been portrayed with depth in Indo-Anglian fiction. If it is portrayed, it has always been done showing people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Love between two individuals, experiencing the emotion as an intense coming together of two sensibilities, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual is almost negligible. The physical aspect seems to gain predominance.

Upamanyu Chatterjee is a social realist for whom creative endeavour, the overarching theme of identity and its plight in a hostile world, forms what may be called the bed-rock. The common thread that binds all the novels is the exile image of the
protagonists, struggle for identity and the impact of western culture. The genre of fiction in general being a verbalised form of social reality, the relationship between this genre and the realistic portrayal of the human condition makes a novelist naturally inclined to the foibles of men and women of the created fictional universe. The fiction of Upamanyu Chatterjee is realistic fiction par excellence. His fictional world is marked by anti-heroic symptoms like moral ennui, alienation, angst and absence of everything that may be called noble. It is an unheroic world but a world which refuses not to seem factual.

The novels of Chatterjee are central to the colonial disruption of the urban Indian educated personality in terms of multiple splits. Here are splits between man and his traditional moorings, between man and his inner being. The implication of this split at multiple levels of human existence is noteworthy in their various manifestations. But, the broad single reason behind this split is the rupture that occurred in the psyche of the English educated Indian urban ambitious youth.

According to G.V. Desani in his *Fiction: Alienation in Contemporary Indian English Novels*, Chatterjee’s writings rests on the alienation gift of the colonial encounter that India underwent. This encounter gave birth to a personality whom some critics call “Babu—an urban, westernized, English educated person” (9). The condition of babu- hood implied a violent wrenching of the westernised English educated urban Indian from the sustaining source of his traditional native moorings.

On the one hand, it devaluated, in the perception of the new westernised Indian, the grandeur of nativity, and on the other, did not provide a salutary substitute for the devalued old structure of values. Infact, the borrowed epistemology of thinking and judgment, brought into existence by the internalisation of alien values, was not capable of providing anything like a sustaining pillar. Its tragedy was that it itself was mired in the quagmire of challenges and failures.
According to Akash Kapur, in his ‘It’s a Classic’ – The New York Times Book Review,

“His (Upamanyu Chatterjee’s) books display a world rarely seen in modern Indian Writing, revealing a detailed knowledge of the heartland that can result only from personal experience. English, August: An Indian Story wears the crown of authenticity uneasily partly because the book is so charmingly unassuming, so natural and assured that it would be uncomfortable with any crown at all. English, August: An Indian Story has worn remarkably well. Agastya’s story is convincing, entertaining, moving and timeless. It merits an accolade that is far harder to earn than authentic” (‘It’s a Classic’. – The New York Times Book Review, www.complete review.com).

A close study of the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee shows that the alienated protagonist like Agastya Sen in English, August: An Indian Story, Jamun in The Last Burden, and in Way to go and others are the victims of the process of being uprooted from their cultural roots. If we link this uprootedness to the historical process, it appears that what happened was that like any set of durable ideas, orientalist notions influenced the people who were called Orientals, as well as those called ‘occidental’, European or Western (Orientalism, 42). The process which is to be noted is the person what he /she comes into encounter with a culture other than his or her own. In the context of the colonial influence over the colonised, it was quite visible that the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised was a power frame-work in which the ideas of modernity constructed the path of communication between the two.

The success of the process of internalisation of the alien cultural message leads to a situation where, in the concept of identity crisis of Upamanyu Chatterjee, the alienated
individual grows up with the native conviction that there is no native intellectual and cultural history. The protagonist becomes the resonant, the person who renounces his own culture and strives towards the foreign. “It breeds a pathetic philistinism which has been memorably captured by V.S. Naipaul as a blending of the vulgarity of East and West” (The Writer and the World, 6). A certain glamour attaches to the philistinism, as glamour attaches to those Indians who, after two or three years in a foreign country, proclaim that they are neither of the East nor of the West.

This condition renders the protagonists deprived of the native resources of warmth and emotional sustenance. They become lonely at their innermost level which renders them incapable of any noble action. Life becomes a long tale of suffering for them; solitude brings frustration and despair. They seek resource to moral action which is barely possible. They struggle constantly to retain values which they feel inadequate as moral paralytics. Being incapable of any meaningful action, they indulge in false pretensions and hypocrisies and try to self-introspect. But even the occasional self-realisation paralyses their will. The protagonists suffer fighting out the cobwebs of their own moral guilt. They seek future peace and tranquility but get involved in the miseries of life. Suffering and torture drive them to despair. They are the products of an age of chaos and confusion arising out of the decline and collapse of moral values. Consequently their lives are despairing glimpse of those individuals who live without commitment and faith. They are the protagonists who lack the attributes that make heroic figures. The nobility of mind and purpose, life or attitude marked by action of purpose and the like always eludes them. The notably negative qualities became fashionable in the post war years as a reaction against the idealised heroes of fiction. The protagonists are deliberately cast in unheroic mould of moral passivity, selfishness and moral cowardice. But they are impressive in their own ways because of their self deprecatory and sardonic wit. They are part of the
‘anti’ theme that has surfaced in other branches of literature as well. They are also a development of the authenticity of the interface, and the actualities of life and literature.

Upamanyu Chatterjee has written novels of European excellence, but their appeal is confined to tower. More apparently they do not have a sense of commitment and belonging to the larger life of the country. Chatterjee’s novel, by contrast, unfolds predominantly in contemporary time. The novel, *English, August: An Indian Story* is also a cry of exasperation, wasting procedures and obduracy of official doom, which may at bottom be at least partly explained by the ungovernable complexity of Indian Society. At the same time it is good-humoured and witty. On the whole Chatterjee’s writing, for all its indulgences, seems designed to lead Indian readers to a re-appraisal of their social responsibilities. However, distancing and reversal of perspective may compound the state of uncertainty that Chatterjee portrays. It is a preliminary foray into a vast and daunting area, and probably attempts to do too much. Nevertheless, for readers from outside Indian society, it offers a detailed and colourful sense of Indian life and of the complex currents that influence the Indian psyche.

India’s cultural autonomy demands that all change must define itself in relation to tradition. So, Indian post-modernism, if any, will have to be seen not in relation to modernism as in the West but with respect to how it grapples with tradition. Though the new Indian novel might reveal strains such as its open-endedness, lack of closure, non-linear movement, reader participation in the text, concern with storytelling that might lend it to post modernist labeling, these qualities are inherent in pre-novel narrative tradition of India.

In the postmodern situation, it is not only common, but also saddening to see the citified, ragged, lifeless man, out of sheer helplessness, allows his life to be drifted on the wrong track and thus, has fallen so low giving way to machines like computers. Though
giving a semblance of living together, modern man has no sense of oneness. Accordingly, the present moment in our culture is one of intense debate: family values, man-woman relationship, marital stability, the function of governments, corruption / bribery in bureaucracy, sexual choices, the authenticity of god, men, clergy, the implications of economic differences on the masses are hotly debated. Upamanyu’s writings also map in some detail the cultural crises that the educated, citified modern youth finds him in the name like web of human autonomy through his writing. An attempt is also made to highlight how Chatterjee produces a kind of interior visibility of his characters caught in cultural dilemmas and thus shows how modern youth’s mind is covered with carnal thickness, booze and witlessness. Though external contours of the Indian youth may look different, in reality, whether he likes it or not he finds himself all of a sudden in a global locality. His strategy may be refreshingly different, but the deified historical mission of art in the progress of humanity is certainly upheld, discreetly of course, by the artist in the novel. This, he achieves through the hegemony of the authentic artistic dimension.

In the current cultural scenario, the image of man is not a happy one. It may be borne in mind that “Culture is the element we inhabit as subjects” (Post Humanism, ix). In the 1960, philosophers like Maurice Friedman classified man into two categories- “the Modern Promethean” and “the Modern Job” (English, August: An Indian Story, 13). He (Friedman) felt that the commonality of experience between these two types was to enter into a “dialogue with the absurd” (English, August: An Indian Story, 13). However, in the beginning of the third millennium, both the types merge into one type-the will-less, face-less, lifeless man. Another image we get of him is his fragmentation into umpteen fragments, like petty traders, actors, loafers, teachers, workers and office-goers. The oneness is lost. The time-tested values, which give a distinctive identity to a culture, are no longer there. It is a known factor that “cultures are not homogeneous; they are not
even necessarily coherent” (*Post-Humanism*, ix). At the present moment, in the societies of the advanced countries and advancing countries, a lot of discussion is going on as to the direction towards which our culture is heading and drifting. It is by and large agreed that reason makes men different from animals and rational thought makes humans human. As long as humanism reigned, man occupied the centre-stage; but the moment humanism’s demise was announced, quite naturally, the next contender post humanism stepped in the space. The present is no doubt post humanism and “the future would begin with the end of Man” (*Post Humanism*, 7). In other words, at the demise of humanism, post humanism was born.

Thus, in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s novels, the protagonists’ quest for identity and social conventions are readily focused. The problems they face, the conflicts, frustrations and the inner stage in their married lives are some of the aspects through which the nature of the individuals and their stable identity are discussed. The concept of cultural ambivalence is depicted by different characters in the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee, and the roots of such consequence is found to be the product of western education, adverse condition of parental relationship and different attitude towards sex and lack of social consciousness.

Chatterjee’s command of the English language is a remarkable part of his achievement. Indeed it is that which distinguishes his writings with much recent Indian Writing in English. The facility with which he uses the language, the ease with which he is able to change registers are commendable features of his writings.