Alienated Youth in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s Novel *English, August: An Indian Story*

All things counter, original, spa’re,

Whatever is fickle, freckle´d (who knows how?),

With swift, slo´w; sweet, so´ur;

Ada´zzle, dim.

(From *Pied Beauty*: G. M. Hopkins)

The colourful world of Upamanyu Chatterjee in *English, August: An Indian Story* (1988) is not at all different than the beautiful world of Hopkins for which he had so awful appreciation of God. Hopkins emotions are bounded up at uniqueness of every object to a remarkable degree that his head spontaneously bend down before the almighty. Similarly, the world of Chatterjee, another powerful novelist of postcolonial India, also paints colourful world of post-independent youth in realistic pan. His novels are basically realist in its approach and bear the testimony of an Indian novelist’s sheer power to hold its readers in its grip. There is not much publicity hype though his writings are pure world of entertainment. The novels express their lively journey through simple, lucid but powerful language. Chatterjee is capable to harness a new wave of amusing his readers. His writings are not found in heaps yet just a handful of writings ensure his firm footings in the field of writing Indian fiction in English. He does not amass the farfetched protagonist of foreign origin; rather he creates his characters born of this land itself. However, he very much evidently let his protagonist pitted against the backwater of colonial regime. They are reflected as negotiating the past historical events in new environment thus representing the disdainful youth, adolescence and successive growth. His protagonist Agastya Sen in *English, August* is one of the most important representations and memorable portraits of all times at least in Indian English Literature.

*English, August* penned from an author who is himself a bureaucrat in Indian Administrative Service narrates the saga of a newly recruited young IAS officer of
merely 24 years age. Notably, the entire plot of the novel revolves around the postcolonial temporal conditions where there is consistency of inferences to various issues so pervasive in all spheres. Whether it is apolitical or political, social or individual, spiritual or psychological almost all the spheres are subjected to percolate around the condition of late adolescents and emerging generation of youth of modern India. The entire plot very vividly represents the socio-economic conditions of Indian citizen in some backwater hinterland. There are stark realities of India and the Indians, the typical life-styles, of tribes, backward classes, politicians, businessmen, bureaucrats, working class people, and work culture in different work spaces. Hence, a quote from Punch in the Faber and Faber paper back edition of 2002 back cover rightly reprints: “Beautifully written … English, August is a marvelously intelligent and entertaining novel and especially fascinating for anyone curious about modern India.” The novel is undoubtedly a rediscovery of Indian society, culture and typical Indian psyche.

As the novel opens, the protagonist Agastya Sen and his friend Dhrubo are found in the streets of New Delhi at one in the morning (better to be called midnight!). The beginning apprises the readers with different perspective on the typical Indian urban educated youth. First of all, it presents the generation of youth deviated from the disciplined life style, secondly, the educated youth under the whims of intoxication of abusive drugs, thirdly, the youth under an interterrestrial stage at the emergence of cultural clash between Oriental and Occidental waves, fourthly, about the lethargic lifestyle of youth on the issue of vocational choice. From the very first paragraph, there is reference to stray dogs which recurrently appears throughout the novel. The extremity of tendency towards soft drugs such as marijuana and cigarettes is clearly indicative of the succeeding consequences something disastrous to the characters in the novel.

The character of Agastya is the reflection of psychological rampage on the generation born and brought up in a society which is previously enslaved by the colonial power. His attitude on every casual and serious occasion is a commentary on the postcolonial discourse as nurtured throughout the Third World and the Fourth World Literature. The novel is delightfully narrates the typical Indian psyche and ideological issues as evident in the society. It is humorous, gleeful, and lightweight raillery on the
Indian social ethos, social institutions, and politics. But there is ever a tone of deeper concerns that must be addressed to give due recognition based on the genuine issues. This often remains untouched in the discussion. There is not much hype on the literary discussion with regard to this novel by Chatterjee. However, the single character of the novel itself is more than enough to provoke on the disastrous psychological consequences in the colonial aftermath polyphonic society of India.

Agastya is merely a prototype of large number of youth in urban society. He represents the mass of youth who belong to urban educated society: a society which has undergone transmutation under the impact of more than two centuries domination of the British Raj. The stretch of time is more than enough to bring about radical transmutation of culture, religious beliefs, politics, social ethos, individuals and social psyche, outlook, mode of education, rationalism, spiritualism and naturalism. The opening of the novel where we find Agastya and his friend Dhruba in the midnight street of Delhi is in reality a mirror to the corroding effect of temporality that has determined the course of their youthful existence on a disastrous plane. Although they are well educated and also belong to well to do family backgrounds, their condition in the midnight street of Delhi is self-deceptive. They are badly intoxicated and have already completed forty-third joints of marijuana and still preparing for the next. The stray dog is symbolic of their equivalence in inner beings. The conversation between them reflects their indecent behavioural deficiency. The language rather ‘lingo’ as they refer to is nowhere at no point admissible in the society and Indian cultural imaginings. The first paragraph containing four sentences posits four questions: ‘time’, ‘stray dog’, ‘marijuana’ and ‘acute lethargy’ (my italics). All the four questions may be provocative – what is the time of their entertainment? What does the stray dog symbolize? What is the connection between well educated youth and the marijuana? Does the epithet acute lethargy seemingly in conformity with youth? All the questions obviously negate the healthy positioning of Indian youth though they are otherwise educated, hail to good family background and better schooling environment. These are all indicative of negative and disappointing markers against the generation of youth. The tone of their conversation focus on three things: the depressive mood, an escape from the normal social cohabitation or practices, and displeasure on their choice of vocations.
The conversation between Agastya Sen and Dhrubo is a kind of chutnification of language. There is fine admixture, twist and taste of Indian flavour with the anglicized version. The language that they use is rather informal, full of free license. The use of slangs in American style is very common and runs through normal gulley in the novel. They laugh at their own victory for ascribing some twist to it. The use of slangs in Indian English literature was a very bold step at that point of time. It was not in practice in the hands of Indian writers. But there is abundance of them in English, August and even the pronunciation of Agastya Sen at various occasions is something unique and extraordinary.

Upamanyu Chatterjee indeed wants to establish his points of view on the condition of Indian youth and adolescents. In western psychological study and also in their literature, it has been established that the use of slangs among the adolescents and youth is very common. As the novelist in English, August puts its protagonist and other youthful characters at the crossroad of clamouring plane between two divergent cultural matrices, his characters’ orientations are bound to reflect the tinge of its influences. Hence, Dhrubo, the closest friend of Agastya Sen says, “I’ve a feeling August, you’re going to get hazaar fucked in Madna” (1). To which Agastya Sen comments, “Amazing mix, the English we speak. Hazaar fucked. Urdu and American; ‘a thousand fucked, really fucked. I’m sure nowhere else could languages be mixed and spoken with such ease.’ Both Agastya and Dhrubo are, of course, conscious at all times about the unique admixture when they spoke the language. They are critical as well as jovial at the victory for using the language capably according to their comfortable twists. So, Agastya explores the language further and adds:

“You look hazaar fucked, Marmaduke dear.” “Yes Dorothea, I’m afraid, I do feel hazaar fucked”— see, don’t work. And our accents are Indian but we prefer August to Agastya. When I say our accents, I, of course, exclude yours, which is unique in its fucked mongrelness - you even say “Have a nice day” to those horny women at your telephones when you pass by with your briefcase, and when you agree with your horrendous boss, which is all the time, you say “yeah, great” and “uh-uh”. (1)
These words of Agastya significantly elaborate on the fate of generation of youth in the Indian society. They have ceased to be discrete piece of indigenous cultural product. Their preferences are subdued under the impact of western mode of education and cultural imperialism. The colonial power was withdrawn already decades back, but a new process of neo-colonialism has been stirring up in the form of its education and excessive popularization of western cultural values. The generation of youth in the early eighties and nineties in India, was still under the grip of this neocolonialism and perhaps continues to be alarmingly setting its roots much deeper than had been during the Raj. There is free license of corrupting language, culture, lifestyle and general outlook. This conditioning neither produces the native subjects as discretely Indian nor ends up being appropriately a western legacy. Agastya, his friend Dhrubo or other youthful characters are repeatedly represented as mish-mashes to Indian ideological imagination. It is the consequence of a large number of elements that have been operating throughout the growth of Agastya or his other companions. As has been referred above, the question of ‘time’ had obviously played a crucial role in making up the complete subjectivity of the protagonist Agastya or his companion. There is ever a palpable existence of ‘other’ as in phantom-like caricature at the background. It has been operating consistently throughout their childhood, their legacy upbringing and beyond. It is the ‘time’ of British Raj and its pervasive impact that continues to stir up though in a shadowy form. It keeps on haunting in different forms and shapes. The political and economic collision seems to have come to a standstill position but in reality it continues to feed on the psychic level whose manifestations are reflected through the generation of ‘time’. Figuratively the political power is withdrawn but its all pervasive power is irresistible, invincible and certain. As a result, the soft mind and spirit are unfathomably kindled up at various levels.

The growth of Agastya, Dhrubo, Prashant or Neera are dependent on the entire Ideological State Apparatuses which includes child-rearing, schooling, socio-linguistic environment at particular point, make-beliefs, religious practices, social behaviour, family relations, peer companion and politics on the larger part. Agastya belongs to a very good family lineage. He is the son of respectable Chandrashekhar Sen, the Governor of West Bengal. His father bears a distinguished position in Indian administrative Service. He had succeeded to the position creating good imprint in his work field where
and when he was assigned to. However, he is the progeny of a mixed blood, culture and religious practice because both his father and mother belonged to different caste, society, religion and upbringing. His father belonged to a Hindu-Bengali family background whereas his mother was a Christian-Goanese. Similarly his father Chandrasekhar was purely an indigenous Bengali whereas his mother was an Anglo-Indian Goanese. Thus, he is unique in terms of birth due to the absence of discrete identity through family lineage. It is very important to observe that he neither received the motherly nursing and care nor his father’s minute concerns because he had lost his mother at an early stage and his entire childhood upbringing was dependent on his aunts in Kolkata and his uncle in Delhi later. At the same time, most of his time had ended up in different educational centres; Kolkata, Darjeeling and Delhi. Hence, there was ever an absence of true parental care. His mother could not take care of him due to her premature death in Meningitis but his father also could not devote sufficient time which perhaps he deserved because his father kept on shifting locations according to his administrative assignments. His mother’s memory is very feeble in his mind but he felt utter deprivation from motherly care. The novelist refers his childhood upbringing in the following way: “He did wonder at times what his mother would have been like, but more out of curiosity than deprivation. The aunts of Calcutta had substituted sufficiently well. In her photographs his mother looked plain, but happy and somehow irresponsible, ready for oddities, for marrying a Bengali Hindu, for dying of meningitis” (40). The character of Agastya is similar to Lacanian subject for he could not establish the difference between his mother and the aunts who brought him up in mother’s absence. When he started to perceive the symbolic object in others it had remained misrecognition never to pacify his desire. So, the sense of ‘lack’ is a permanent impression that he carries along, and in due course, it starts to compare with some incongruous and deformed object that he really doesn’t want to internalize. Later on, he tries to establish a kind of mismatch in the relationship between his parents. The feelings of reverence that usually emerges by looking at one’s deceased mother is absent somewhere in his observation. He rather sought something irresponsible on her face. Anyway, Agastya’s childhood remained deprived of parental care. His aunts had to governess him well but the natural and divinely bondage between a
child and its biological mother or a child and its biological father was denied though under extreme circumstances.

Nevertheless, the growth of Agastya is largely dependent in the hands of his aunts at the stage of infancy followed by boarding school life in Darjeeling. He was sent away from Kolkata, his native city to a boarding school in Darjeeling which was once a hotspot for famous private boarding schools especially for bureaucrats, politicians, business tycoons and other elite groups. He started his early adolescence in this school and continued through his middle adolescence period. Agastya had the opportunity to come across a multicultural environment and better English education in Darjeeling. His peer included Bengalis, North-Indians, Tibetans, Anglo-Indians and Nepalese in the school campus. The multicultural environment and the English education system in Darjeeling had been a strong influence in moulding the subjectivity of Agastya and his companions. They had developed their ideas on sex, sports, social behaviour and language. It is mentioned in the novel “some of the Anglo-Indian boys who spoke and behaved differently” indicating the mutual influences to each and every character. (2)

The adolescence period in Darjeeling had never groomed him into a multifaceted personality. Though the environment had been multicultural, he could not immerse himself into that pool. He was distinctively confined to a handful of his friend circle. But there was always a longing for those things which he could not access at his will. He and his friend Prashant were envious of the colour of those “Anglo and Tib thighs” because it was “not like theirs” (2). Sometime his envy reached paramount height and wished if he could have ‘been Anglo-Indian, that he had Keith or Alan for a name, that he spoke English with their accent . . .” (2). Since he was black complexioned “thin and kinky” he wished to be the “White” (3). His desire to become “White” and adopt the “Christianity” perhaps, receded somewhere in his inner psyche. There is reference to this effect while looking at a man with half his face altered by leukoderma in ‘Dakshin Bar and Restaurant’ in Madna. He felt himself embarrassed because he was not fair complexioned though his “mother was fair and Christian” (81). The accent of the Anglos used in Darjeeling such as – “pass it here, men! . . . “This way men! . . . you can’t shoot your foot’s made of turd or what men!” had been ever in his imagination as a piece of
beneath the allurement (2). There is no any concrete source to understand how he had developed the desire to become English. It might be the pain of not going abroad either as a scholar or as a professional. However, there is a reference to his effect in the novel in the following way: “He had never passionately wanted to go out of India … and he visualized Europe and America as madly expensive, strange, a series of minor misunderstandings with different kinds of people, a passage through clean beautiful places with faces looking through him” (93). Considering such thoughts of Agastya and the pain of not experiencing the ever beckoning Europe and America obviously fermented a notion that everything out there is better and fascinating. And if he could become one among them, he would have been much happier.

Agastya gradually develops the desire to be an Englishman. His friends on the other hand wanted to tease with surnames like “last Englishman” or just “hey English” but did not gather courage to say even “hey Anglo” (2). His friends in school even called him ‘hello mother tongue’ although it was a subversive epithet to Agastya’s desire. The cultural and ideological transmutation accordingly goes on creating its course in future. He developed tendency towards soft drugs in his school days itself. This fact is disclosed before his uncle Pultukaku in Delhi when he was in the first year of his college in Delhi and had been smoking on the roof with his friend Madan on a winter Sunday. Both of them were caught red-handed by Pultukaku and when he had become furious discovering the fact, his friend Madan defends their addiction: “But everyone in India smokes, in villages at sunset and so on . . . My servant brings lots back from his village every year. And August has been smoking since school, so he told” (29). It was utter disbelief for Pultukaku which was bound to give birth to his extreme rage. But there was a tone of displeasure and as if he was compelled to submit the fact. Hence, his frustrations are expressed through his words of scolding: “The greatest praise you mimics long for is to be called European junkies. And who is August? In my presence, call him Ogu” (29). Pultukaku’s dissidence over the discovery is transmitted through his strong oppose to the mispronounced name ‘August’. It had glided since his school days. Agastya was gradually replaced by August “with the passage of time and place” (2). For Pultukaku ‘Ogu’ is preferable to ‘Agastya’ or ‘August’ as a nickname. He had been conscious about
the changing perspective of adolescence and youth in India for he considered the new generation as “Cola Generation” (47).

Anyway, both Dhrubo and Agastya are well-educated and had at least gained ability to talk their opinion on the education system in India and had been partially conscious about the choice of their vocations. Dhrubo’s opinion on educational system is Eurocentric but Agastya has his bit different stand. For Dhrubo: “In Yale a Ph. D. wasn’t a joke. It meant something. It was significant. Students thought before they enrolled” (3). Based on his experience in Yale, he expresses his opinion in which he underrates the educational standards in India. So, he says: “But here in Delhi, all over India . . . education is biding time, a meaningless accumulations of degrees, BA, MA, then an M. Phil” (3).

There is a self-satisfactory pride in Dhrubo’s tone for earning a highest academic degree Ph.D. from Yale. But he has forgotten the past when he earned previous requisite qualification from India itself. So, Agastya shows a mild sarcastic note in his response to what Dhrubo has said, “Yet you returned from Yale” (3). But Dhrubo considers his condition as “not typical Indian story” “that ends with the Indian living somewhere in the First World, comfortably or uncomfortably. Or perhaps coming back to join the Indian Administrative Service if lucky” (3). Dhrubo’s opinion on the First World hypnosis is divided between likeness and dislike-ness. He has high esteem for the First World education system while he prefers livelihood and lifestyle in India. Agastya’s opinion in response to Dhrubo’s is one of the most important utterances of the text in order to estimate Agastya’s complete being. His standpoint does not comply with his best friend Dhrubo: “You’re wrong about education, though. Most must be like me, with no special aptitude for anything, not even wondering how to manage, not even really thinking. Try your luck with everything, something hopefully will click. There aren’t unlimited opportunities in the world” (3).

Agastya has at least some respect for the Indian society but his opinion on the individuality is no way the birth from a healthy mind with positive thinking. Yet he calls upon others pressingly to be like him. For him life is not meant for something meaningful, grave and eclectic actions. It is merely a fickle existence which can be given
direction without having “special aptitude for anything” (3). For him, there is not even space for “really thinking” (3). It is free flowing river and there should not be any specific obligations, preferences, likes or dislikes. But arbitrarily, he is conscious at the same time about the limitations of “opportunities in the world” (3). His thoughts are perceptible throughout the pages of this fiction through his actions, feelings, experiences, soliloquies that finally establish him as shattered creature in multiple situations.

Agastya, the son of a Governor of West Bengal, has turned twenty four of late, and has been newly posted as an IAS officer trainee in some backwater hinterland called Madna. It was “the hottest place in India last year” located between a distances of 1400 km, almost eighteen hours away from Delhi by the fastest train and more than a thousand kilometers from Calcutta (3). It is one of the most lucrative jobs in India and every educated youth in India feels the job worth die for. But in Agastya’s case, it is completely different. There is no excitement, no curiosity or enthusiasm to experience this challenging administrative job. There is perennial disinterestedness and lack of desperate spirit to take on to Madna. Instead, he feels himself as if being pushed ahead under the circumstantial compulsion. As Dhrubo had said that he was going to get ‘hazaar fucked’ he too accepts the condition and feels that he is really going to be doomed in a dot. The terms are derogatory, but both of them try to visualize the condition in Madna that would not be different than being genuinely doomed. Despite this, Agastya feels that one is bound to accept the destiny in order to secure one’s subsistence.

It is very common among adolescents and youth to be worried for the choice of better options in vocational opportunities in life. Agastya had the best of opportunity to work satisfactorily and enjoy the challenging task in Madna. But he is not keen about his administrative job. For him, the job is completely mismatched to his thoughts, feelings and personality. Since Dhrubo is his best friend, he could understand his condition, so he rightly says:

Out there in Madna quite a few people are going to ask you what you’re doing in the administrative service. Because you don’t look the role. You look like a porn film actor, thin and kinky, the kind who wears a bra. and a bureaucrat ought to be
soft and clean shaven, bespectacled, and if a Tamil Brahmin, given to rapid quoting of rules, I really think you’re going to get hazzar fucked. (3)

From no angle Agastya seems to be a suitable bureaucrat; neither his look nor his personality. Besides, he is extremely addicted to marijuana which is obviously against the ethics of such responsible job. Agastya’s personality ranging from his dress code to behaviour nothing can be aligned with bureaucracy. Instead, he resembles “a porn film actor. Thin and kinky, the kind who wears a bra” (3). Agastya himself accepts this mismatch and concedes to what Dhrubo says: “I’d much rather act in a porn film than be a bureaucrat. But I suppose one has to live” (3). Agastya’s submission to the disinterested vocation is thus an option less choice.

On his first train journey from Delhi to Madna, Agastya’s mind is filled with strange feelings. He locks himself in the toilet and “smoked some more marijuana” (4) He hates some to introduce himself to a stranger because he disliked categorizing his name. During this journey, an engineer happens to be co-traveler who asks his name. As soon as Agastya tells his name, the engineer irritably asks: “Agastya? What kind of a name is Agastya?” (4). A stranger on his first introduction always feels trickled to hear his name. So, Agastya very often tries to explain playfully some extraordinary meaning associated with his name. Here too, he explains the stranger, “He’s a saint of the forest in the Ramayana, very ascetic. He gives Rama a bow and arrow. He’s there in the Mahabharata, too. He crosses the Vindhyas and stops them from growing” (4). Whoever is curious to know about the meaning of ‘Agastya’ his response is quite humorous and strange every time. If he does not reply something very strange, he at least thinks within very awkwardly but avoids articulation. His first encounter with the collector of Madna, Mr. Ravi Srivastav is such an instance. Srivastav, the collector of Madna asks: “So? Agastya, what kind of name is Agastya, bhai?” on his first introduction (15). As soon as he hears the same repetition seeking his explanation of his name, his response is not prompt and straight. On the other hand, the collector does not wait much in the course of staccato conversation. However, Agastya's mind immediately weaves up a very awkward explanation within mental scrape – “When you were in your mother’s lap, you ignoramus, he said silently, drooling and piddling, didn’t she make your head spin into
sleep with the verses of some vulnerable Hindu epic? ‘Agastya’ is Sanskrit; he wanted to say, for one who shits only one turd every morning” (15).

His first meeting with pompous and corrupt police superintendent Kumar in Integration gathering at the Gandhi Hall emphasizes more on his nature. The SP Kumar asks him: “Hahn, Agastya, a very Bungaali name yaar” (22). Here he simply admits to what Kumar has said but Kumar does not forget to comment, “Bungaalis choose such difficult names for themselves, why, yaar?” (22). Similarly, when he meets Shankar, the Deputy Engineer in Minor Irrigation, the reaction of Shankar on hearing his name Agastya, is very amusing. He is a drunkard who lives in his own world of imagination and fancy. Instead of demanding an explanation with Agastya regarding his name, he himself gives one: “Agastya a good name. Quite rare, means born of a jar. The jar is the womb, and thereby the mother goddess, but the jar could just as easily have contained Vedic whisky. Soma-type, good quality scotch, bottled for twelve years” (28). Shankar’s condition is as if he has drunk a cup of Hemlock and out of his fantastical flight, he finds very strange, funny and irrational comparison that he seems to have explained with the best philosophical meaning.

The first day in collector’s residence, Mrs. Srivastav asks him the full name. Agastya replies correctly but he is almost “ready to answer the next question” that he fabricates within no time. He would have almost said, “It’s Sanskrit for one who turns the flush just before he starts pissing, and then tries to finish pissing before the water disappears” (54). But he declines articulation and strangulates the words within. Mrs. Srivastav by the time comments: “That’s even worse. Most Bengalis have such difficult names . . . I’m sure your parents or friends don’t call you that. What do they say?” (54). He replies that he is called as “Ogu and August” (54). On hearing this, Mrs. Srivastav appreciates with a laugh but Srivastav is little taken aback. He abandones his children for the moment and Agastya has the opportunity to weave up a fast statement silently: “Perhaps you would prefer another month?” (54).

Agastya has to define the meaning of his name very obscurely or sometimes he wants to explain the name with some very obscene type of things silently within. For some people, it sounds very ethnic and for some it is matter of philosophical associations
as it happened with all time boozing fellow Shankar. When Dr. Multani’s father hears the name Agastya for the first time in his own residence, his reactions are quite interesting. He tries to explain it with maturity according to his age but ends up being quite remote to its true significance. Multani’s father says:

Agastya a good name, an unusual name of course, you have no idea what it means …‘Agam is mountain. Agastya could be agam plus asyati, one who pushes a mountain. Or agam plus styayati, one who stops a mountain. We often have this ambiguity, an uncertainty about our names, their origins. It should also be linked to the Latin augeus, which means to advance. This is appropriate since the sage Agastya was also the wanderer, who pined for Benares. A good name, and for some of us names, still matter, but for how long? Don’t know. (227)

The old man’s definition consists of multiple associations. But the fact is that the name ‘Agastya’ is a riddle for any stranger. Similarly, Dr. Ghoshal, who is also present at Multani’s residence, can’t help but comments on his name: “A very Bengali choice of a name. Bengalis are very fond of lovely names” (227-228). Agastya is exhausted giving his own meaning to a name and also frequently irritated for any stranger’s obscure responses or self-explanatory notes on his name. As his name is not less than a riddle, his character is also very imperceptible and full of challenges to find out a concrete and appropriate identity.

From the very beginning day of his training phase in Madna, his life is in quite awkward position. In one hand, he submits himself to the job of administration but on the other, he does not immerse into the reality or hopefully to accept his life in Madna and successive challenges. All the way to Madna, he is engrossed in his mind about his life which has been exotically urban. But as the “shabby stations of small towns, incurious patient eyes and weatherbeaten bicycles at a level crossing, muddy children and buffalo at a waterhole” pass behind; his mind won’t understand if he would be spending “months in a dot in this hinterland” (4-5). The countryside landscape that he has come across is unprecedented in his metropolis life. The typical rural India landscape which comprise of usual day to day sights of “cigarette-and-paan dhabas, disreputable food stalls, both lit by fierce kerosene lamps, cattle and clanging rickshaws on the road” etc. are beyond the
grasp of his metropolitan conceptualization (5). He can not believe his life is witnessing all these paraphernalia in reality. These observations make him feel “as though he was living someone else’s life” (5). As soon as he reaches the Government Rest House with the Naib Tehsildar who has escorted from the Railway Station, he is fraught with the sense of dislocation. He ponders upon his days to come “to move from one room in a Rest House to some other room in some other Rest House – homelessness of a kind” (5). His vocational life begins in a Government Rest House of Madna with a filthy servant Vasant and horrible unhygienic cuisine. It is the late summer period and Madna tops the year before as the hottest place in India, a place well known for number of diseases – cholera, typhoid, malaria etc. His first night passes in staccato sleep due to extreme attack of the mosquitoes. He applies mosquito repellent cream all over the body and also lits an anti-mosquito coil as precaution. But he can’t escape from them and the sense of dislocation which has already transgressed into his mental terrain is resurgent afresh. When he finds difficulties in opening his swollen eyes the next morning due to mosquito bites, he thinks that “Calcutta’s mosquitoes seemed more civilized, they never touched his face. This place has drawn his first blood” (7).

For Agastya, it is not the beginning of a new life or a step towards adulthood; rather it is continuation of young adulthood. It is common among the modern late adolescents who desire to secure his/her life by choosing a vocation. It becomes a turning point for majority to attain maturity by entering into more responsibilities, disposition of better socialization of an adult behaviour. But Agastya is quite different; he loses the excitement that beckons an adolescent for challenging tasks and novel experiences. His acceptance during his conversation with Dhrubo in the midnight street of Delhi that “his life in Madna” would be quite “educative” is no more valid in positive sense. Instead, he wakes up the first morning in Madna “feeling terribly fucked” that he and Dhrubo predicted (7). He feels “like the fallen Adam” after eating the fruit from the forbidden tree of knowledge (7). The term “educative” for Agastya in Madna is not the exalted form of knowledge or accumulation of better experiences. The circumstances, the particular sequences, different working situations are educative only to redirect his life in seclusion. The scorching heat of the sun that “weaken the calves and dehydrate the head, like so many things in Madna was educative” (8). The heat teaches him the aphorism not
to fight the process of nature. He discerns the idea to remain indoors as much as possible and “turn nocturnal” (8). Later on, he himself wears a napkin as a hood over his head, supplied by the naib tehsildar which he has observed as peculiar mode of common people’s heat protection in Madna. The first day of Agastya in Madna starts with smoking a joint followed by listening Tagore’s *Shyama* in his cassette recorder that he has brought along. As he contemplates alone in the room, he discovers a dusty painting high up on the wall, amid the lizards. It is a painting with the scenery of “a sunset and water, a boat and a boatman in a Japanese conical hat” (8). At the back of the painting it is written as “donated to the Madna Circuit House, by me, R. Tamse, Deputy Engineer, Public Works Division, 4 July 1962” (8). By observing those pictures, Agastya tries to associate them in his life in order to grasp some significance out of these but he feels the painting rubbish. However, when he reads the poem below the scene, he likes it and tries to understand the painter and the significance of the painting. It is a kind of lyric written in deformed couplet as if to convey the sense of Robert Browning’s famous poem *Home Thought from Abroad* (Madna), a backwater hinterland. The poem of four lines is:

“Away from my old life and my spouse,

So many days at this Circuit House,

Away from Goa, my dear home,

On office work I have to roam”. (9)

He likes the painting because “despite the nullity of talent . . .” there is still an attempt to share a mood and an experience” (9). Agastya feels that Mr. Tamse has at least overcome his shyness to express his separation from home and his spouse. Since, Agastya himself has fallen into the same situation for being away from his home; the painting and the poem beneath recasts the sense of homelessness with more intensity. In order to justify his situation, he supports the feelings of Mr. Tamse and obliquely starts preparing his future strategies by thinking: “In a room and place like this, certainly not given to marijuana or inventive masturbation or hunting for sex, Tamse, what would he have done?” (9). The job, which he has undertaken against his will, is obvious to bring
such feelings of homelessness and his training in Madna or neighbouring areas are sure to
generate the similar feelings in due course.

His first day in district administration has been remarkable. He understands that
District Administration in India is still run according to the tradition set during the
colonial period. The British colony had set a pattern of administration and a tradition.
Later on, it is indianized in a few traditions because during the Raj the collector of a
district was usually inaccessible to common people but in postcolonial Indian
Administration, the collector is mandatorily fallible and accessible to the ordinary people.
Agastya, the new trainee in district administration, does not possess that serious attempt
as generally expected from any IAS trainee. Hence, the author’s comment is worth
mentioning: “. . . administration is an intricate business, and a young officer who lacks
initiative, cannot really be trained in its artifices. There is very little that he can learn
from watching someone else, Agastya learnt nothing” (10). No one can question about
his potentiality but the keen zeal and enthusiasm of an IAS officer are unfortunately
absent in the personality of Agastya. Whether it is serious or common landscape,
conversation or circumstances, his mind is always caught hold of something obscene or
irrational. The common people of Madna that he comes across in Madna on his first day
to the collectorate are strange for him and bear peculiar attitude. These common people
sitting, smoking, wandering gazing on the way with their everyday dresses in dhoti, kurta
and cap do not pass the mind of Agastya without inciting his strange and obscure
thoughts. He wonders whether the people of Madna wear: “Gandhi cap or Nehru’s or
Gandhi’s jacket and Nehru’s cap? And Patel’s vest? And Mountbatten lungi and Rajaji
shawl and Tagore dhoti?” (11). He can not accept the things in its usual form. He should
have shown his great awe and respect to these national heroes as a responsible citizen or
as a rising bureaucrat but such feelings are unfortunately absent in Agastya.

Once, he enters the Collectorate, he has to face and introduce all the other
officials like C. K. Joshi, Chidambaram, Ahmed and Agarwal (direct recruit). The
general excitement and formal code of minimum standards of social etiquettes have no
place in his personality. He is introduced with all these officials but he is not bothered at
all about those people and officers around him. Instead, he likes to thank God for
marijuana dose taken early morning at the Rest House for making him forgetful or unbothered about all these. He is in conversation with senior officials of different departments of the collectorate but his mind loiters somewhere at far distant. He enters into a brooding like condition. In the middle of the conversation, he is “again assailed by a sense of the unreal” (13). He himself acknowledges his misfit to the profession he has undertaken: “I don’t look like a bureaucrat, what am I doing here. I should have been a photographer, or a maker of ad films, something like that, shallow and urban” (13).

His bitterness against everything is reflected through his deeds and actions. He simply lies to the strangers whenever he has to face questions on his personal life. He feels irritated and dislikes even the questioner’s face sometimes without any reason. To Ahmed and Agarwal, he lies his age, marriage and lineage which is by far has no any connection with his life. He is twenty four years old but tells Ahmed and Agarwal as twenty eight. Out of courtesy they inquire about his marriage but he again takes them that he is married and simultaneously he also thinks for a second whether he should add “twice” (13). Since he tells them that he is married, it is a common inquiry added in the conversation during one’s first introduction. But the way he fabricates the entire information about his wife, her place of origin, description about her disease and lineage, can never be expected from a responsible bureaucrat except from a professional fraud. He says:

She’s in England. She’s English, anyway, but she’s gone there for a cancer operation. She has cancer of the breast. He had an almost uncontrollable impulse to spread out his fingers to show the size of the breast, but he decided to save that for later . . . He went on like this, careless with details. His parents were in Antarctica, members of the first Indian expedition. Yes, even his mother; she had a Ph. D. in Oceanography from the Sorbonne. After a while, the personal questions stopped. (13)

Agastya’s frequent derailment from the normal social ethics of conversation hardly brings repentance. Whatever he says to Ahmed and Agarwal or in some other occasions, there appears a momentary sense of guilty which fades away the very next moment. The life of Agastya and the generation as a whole is always stricken with the
sense of lethargy, dullness and sense of alienation. The beautiful world around and the simple ordinary living has no value in their thoughts. The job of Agastya or the life he has come across has been a colourful and well-brimmed journey throughout. But the mind is never static. He and all his contemporary adolescents and youth are unable to cull the oozing droplets of vivacity and lively tempo. Hence, references to dullness are abundant in the novel. This dullness is not a sudden upsurge due to his life in backwater Madna; it had been in his school days to college days and finally in vocational life in Madna. Agastya and his friend Prashant could not properly mingle with the Tibs and the Anglos. Their early adolescence which should have been busy with football, cricket, other games, dance, music and guitars passed on without being involved with anything particular. They were rather lazily cynical to other schoolmates who played or made fun of or enjoyed according to their preferences.

In *English, August*, Agastya or his generation is always marred by “lambent dullness . . . Yes, lambent dullness, definitely” (14). And the same dullness continues to backlash Agastya in his vocational life as well. When Agastya travels with Srivastav to attend Integration gathering at Gandhi Hall, he witnesses the common everyday life; the typical Indian story of all the rural districts – the people moving around for different purposes, cycles, rickshaws, cattles, shopkeepers, animals etc. There is nothing very specific to draw his attention. So, Agastya’s mind is filled with the same notion of dullness. He believes “the district life that he lived and saw was the official life, common to all districts, deadly dull” (21).

Agastya is carried away by anything which is usually regarded as baneful, anti-social and anti-Indian cultural values. However, such leniency is not openly operated; his entire activities are behind the scene, off the public domain. He indulges into such activities with those people who are already in practice, when he is in seclusion. His frequent dullness, or in own words, getting ‘stoned’ is made meaningful by his indulgence in such improper behaviour and activities. When the SP of Madna, kumar asks him if he wants to watch English movies on video, he gratefully accepts his offer with an expectation to get meaningful escape from that lambent dullness that has stricken his life in Madna. Kumar tells him about the collection of lots of English movies along
with latest collections in pornographic movies. He has good movies like *A Passage to India*, *Amadeus* and *The Jewel in the Crowns* but Agastya is excited only for the pornos which are procured by some local hooligans to keep the SP of Madna happy. Later on, he visits the SP bunglow and watches the English movies whole night, drinks and gossips those all dirty pornos. There is hardly a moment during his any social gathering or some serious meeting where his involvement can be recognized. The Integration Meeting at the Gandhi Hall on his first day experience in Madna would have been some exciting moments for others but for Agastya, it has no sense, no meaning or energizing effect. Everyone in the meeting including the collector Srivastav and the SP Srivastav continue their hypocritical courtesy throughout the gathering but his mind travels back to his last days in the college when his head of the department Dr Upadhyay shared his diheartening moment associated with his profession of teaching. Upadhyay’s displeasure had been persistent since his life in the old university where he taught *Macbeth* to MA classes in Hindi. But he was surprised in the present university also for trying to create another Cambridge in the most artificial way. His profession could not offer him the pleasure because he had spent his dull life “writing papers for obscure journals on L. H. Myers and Wyndham Lewis, and teaching Conrad to a bunch of half-wits” (24). He regretted for not appearing the Civil Service Exam despite his keen desire to do so. But he was happy for Agastya because he was leaving for a more meaningful context. He was also happy for him for he was going out of that place “to somehow a more real situation” (24). Agastya’s recollections of Upadhyay’s words or his feelings are no way inspirational. He rather ponders if he has achieved some meaning in his new profession. He wants freedom and pleasure but it has now generated multiple dullness and absolute meaninglessness. He feels himself in a position of exclusive “anchorlessness” (24). He suffers from internal agony for the uncertainty of the year to be passed, a sense of wastage of time. He feels “the incertitude of his reactions to Madna” about his job which he fails to establish a connection between his lambent dullness and responsibility (25). His official life has no charm. So, he wants to be free from that life to his ‘other life’ in his seclusion. There is light, colour and the bustle of life in the collectorate but he hates them. His room in the Rest House is darker and hotter than the collectorate but his gloomy life in the room has more impressive attraction. For him, there is meaning and absolute sense to be there
because there would be marijuana and nakedness, soft drugs and “hopelessly incongruous music (Tagore or Chopin)” (26). Most importantly, the internal thoughts that “ferment in isolation” are far better in comparison to the ordinary official life. He is simply excited that the “vaguely erotic” moment in the heat or “about watching his own sweat on his bare skin” (26). His loneliness and awkward activities are to some extent sensible only for himself. It is a kind of celebration as if he has desired for so long. But there is no truth; it is rather an escape, a self-delusional means among the odds. As soon as the door is closed, the preparation of another joint is imperative. He smokes very slowly till time and the most other things cease to matter. The life in seclusion he believes to be very precious. In his secret life, Agastya wants “to savour the seconds” no action is “automatic, changing clothes, even the brushing of teeth” and everything must “become sensuous acts” (26-27).

It is the intensity of mental agony for having compromised to his cosmopolitan life and the compulsive vocational choice. There is constant mental dwell within his self. The battle for the supremacy within either to reject the life in Madna and retreat to his past or to accept the compulsive vocational choice and fulfill the expectation of his father continues to disturb him. The family inheritance that he is associated with always poses a barrier to lead his life as a “stray dog” which he perhaps has desired more than anything. The activities inside the dark room of the Rest House deceive all the parameters of healthy and normal behaviour. His activities are insensible, humorous and depreciating as per his present social standing in Madna. But there is always a sense of utter grief, agony, disinterestedness and hopelessness that spontaneously provokes sympathy in the reader’s heart. His stand before the mirror on the dressing room table and seeking answers to his own personal questions to himself spontaneously arouses compassionate feelings towards him. The passage below is one of the most important parts in the entire novel to estimate the character of Agastya Sen:

Not even twenty-four hours over and he felt unhinged, without the compensations of insight or wisdom. He lay down and looked at the wooden ceiling. He could masturbate, but without enjoyment. What is it? He asked himself again. Is it because it is a new place? Yes. So do I miss the urban life? Yes. Is it because it is
a new place? Yes. The job is both bewildering and boring. Give it time, not even twenty-four hours. He waited for the mosquitoes. The ventilator was open, the room filled with the stench of the excrement of others when the wind came his way. My own shit doesn’t smell like that, he thought randomly. He absent-mindedly fondled his crotch and then whipped his hand away. No masturbation, he suddenly decided. He tried to think about this but sustained logical thought on one topic was difficult and unnecessary. No, I am not wasting any semen on Madna. It was an impulse, but he felt that he should record it. In the diary under the date, he wrote, ‘From today no masturbation. Test your will, you bastard.’ Then he wondered at his bravado. No masturbation at all? That was impossible. But then the marijuana really hit him and even that ceased to matter. He lay down again. (27)

His attempt to identify the odds and mistakes that he has committed is always there in his mind. He also endeavours to set a new rule and principle but it lacks that authenticity generally one should subscribe in determining such life. He is aware that his situation is due to shifting locations to a newer or unfamiliar place and because of away from urban life and also for the bewildering and boring job in administration. The sixth sense of Agastya can perceive the probable health apprehension for excessive masturbation, drinks or sleepless nights. So, he desires to avoid them and strengthen his will to do so. But he is not successful in either. Instead of getting stoned in workplaces or social gathering he prefers to share drinks with that all time boozing drunkard Shankar. He likes the idea to “get drunk at three in the afternoon” whenever he finds an opportunity to slip away from his room to another so that he can keep the visitors away from his secluded life style. There is excitement in his thoughts when he first drinks with Shankar because he likes “the idea of whisky with a stranger in a strange place at three in the afternoon” (28). According to Pultukaku, Agastya is the generation who is always after “something obscure and foreign, totally unrelated to the life and languages around” them (30).

Agastya’s lack of willpower to resist temptation towards drinks, masturbation or to his social standing gets a sort of interpretation in the words of Shankar. According to
him, both he and Agastya are governed by Saturn that makes them meet in such a distant place Madna. While they share drinks in Shankar’s room in the Rest House, Shankar has justifications for his singing and its connection with the drinks. He asks and responds himself: “Why do I drink? Because every singer in India is supposed to drink, its part of the image, and because drink gives me an excuse against my lack of will. It’s much easier, no to get drunk than to discipline one’s will” (32). Shankar’s comment is a kind of generalization and it has definitely some significance to estimate the character of Agastya. It is an excuse of Agastya to get drunk at odd times or whenever he has the opportunity. There is always a forecast of lambent dullness to discipline his will or his lifestyle. When Shankar asks him what he wants to do at that moment, his mind shamelessly almost tries to express his primordial sexual desire. In a Freudian emergence of his repressed desire he wants to say that he wants “to fuck Dhrubo’s mother (who had been an adolescents fantasy for almost all of Dhrubo’s schoolfreinds, and for Dhrubo too, they insisted, only that he couldn’t admit it, she had been slim and warm and inaccessible)” (33). Chatterjee definitely incorporates the theme os incest in this novel through the adolescent characters endless fantasy throughout their maturation process.

The feelings of Agastya are always upsurged while he is in his special chamber of seclusion at the Rest House. They are hidden in the deep residue of his psyche. When Shankar asks him what he wants repeatedly then a sudden momentary slippage of his desire occurs: “Well, what I want changes from moment to moment” (33). But he hesitates for a nanosecond however at Shankar’s insistence, he continues: “At the moment I want to know what my future will be like . . . Not in any vague sense … but what am I doing in Madna, will I get to like this sort of life … I miss my old life, I think, mainly because I was attuned to it, and it was, well comprehensible . . . of course, it’s only been a day, but it seems much much longer, and I just feel strange …”(33). The desire which is structured like a language in the unconscious seeks to resurface on certain occasions. Due to the intervention of ‘superego’ it remains in the unconscious but in Agastya’s case desire is articulated in slippage suddenly but the very next moment he feels himself ashamed for recalling his desire before Shankar and his insane brother Shiv.
Despite his disinterestedness in the prospect of administrative job, he submits to it. It is not largely his submission due to option less position but most importantly, his father’s insistence and counseling like advice to him in Calcutta. Before three weeks of his departure to Madna to join his job as an IAS trainee in district administration, his father unexpectedly tried to console him and encourage for the job. He had said while strolling on the lawn at dusk in Dalhousie Square: “Most of us Ogu, live with a vague dissatisfaction, if we are lucky: living as we do, upon us is imposed a particular rhythm—birth, education, a job, marriage, then birth again, but we all have minds, don’t we? . . . For most Indians of your age, just getting any job is enough. You were most fortunate, for you had options before you” (34). His father, a very gentle and distinguished person with track record of excellence in bureaucracy, the Governor of Bengal then, expressed his matured facts of life and living. He was brief in his deliverance and a taciturn man but his words had no meaning for Agastya. He accepted the things as his father dictated but without any internal determination to observe them. He had spoken the truth on the condition of most Indian youth.

The novel reflects that every educated youth in India suffers from the anxiety of security and appropriate profession according to his/her qualifications and ambitions. But due to ever rising rate of unemployment, they choose any vocation irrespective of appropriateness befitting to their age, ability and academic distinction. So, the Indian youth of modern India has to compromise with their ego, identity and status. There is always a sense of identity diffusion. Finally, they enter into the state of moratorium. However, Agastya is undoubtedly very lucky to have accomplished most lucrative Civil service examination. It is the ambition of most educated Indian outh to crack Civil Service Examination and secure a position in bureaucracy. But Agastya is different than the other common urban educated youth of the country. He likes a secretive yet complete freedom without chains of anything to prevent him from anything.

The novel’s recurrent reference to stray dog is a symbol of Agastya’s burning desire. In his secluded life of Madna, he recollects his school days when their new English teacher asked them to write a ‘frank’ essay on ‘My Ambition’. Every adolescent pupil in the classroom was not in a position to take up the writing of the essay seriously.
Although Agastya did not behave like outspoken adolescent, the novelist elaborates on what the worst ambition he had mentioned in his essay:

In his essay Agastya had said that his real ambition was to be a domesticated male stray dog because they lived the best life. They were assured of food, and because they were stray they didn’t have to guard a house or beg or shake paws or fetch trifles or be clean or anything similarly meaningless to earn their food. They were servile and sycophantic when hungry; once fed, and before sleep, they wagged their tails perfunctorily whenever their hosts passed, as an investment for future meals. A stray dog was free; he slept a lot, barked unexpectedly and only when he wanted to, and got a lot of sex. But to his indignation, the stupid teacher had made him read out his essay to the class. The class hadn’t heard him, and had instead yelled, ‘He’s lying, his only ambition is to be an Anglo-Indian.” (35)

His embarrassment could not be experimented with intensity as the entire class created hue and cry against what he wrote as his ambition. They yelled out: “He’s lying his ambition is to be an Anglo-Indian” (35). There was no definite line of thought, ideology and ambition. His life since his childhood had moved through aimlessness to anchorlessness.

It is not the fate of Agastya alone in the novel. The motivation and responsibility that should predetermine the life of an adolescent or youth genuinely lack in the entire generation of his time. Whether it is Dhrubo, Prashant, Agastya or Neera; everyone seems to suffer from that lack of determination, strong and organized disciplinary life. The episode of their classroom is an illustration of their slackening life-style like any other student of the time. Even Prashant’s ambition that he mentioned in the essay was to be a Tibetan, is completely an irrational and irresponsible thought. Agastya’s Pultukaku or even Sathe, that yellow journalist of Madna, rightly consider them as “cola generation” (47).

Nevertheless, Agastya's father had spoken about the social institutions that construct the ideology of an individual in the society. They are the social institutions which decide the course of any individual in the society since his birth to succeeding
stages of development and beyond. These social institutions in the long run construct the culture as well. Each institution associated with birth, death, education, job, workplace, marriage, social interaction or knowledge shape its colour according to its particular time and space. But Agastya or the generation of the time could not resist the overpowering impact of colonial domination even after the independence. It had deeply put an impression upon the psychology of the young Indians. The psyche of Indian adolescents and youth in postcolonial India is thus swung between the desire to become ‘other’ in one hand, and compulsion towards social institutions on the other so rampant in their day to day life. The imbalance of individual thoughts, lack of specific direction and improper habits and ideological nullity contribute in their aimlessness condition and successive dislocation in social environment. Instead of participation in the respective responsibilities, they suffer from sense of dislocation. They feel comfortable and quite relaxed being alienated from social environment, paraphernalia of social gathering and reciprocal amusement in interface sessions. The constant attempt to escape the common humdrum of life and responsibilities is evident mainly among the adolescents and youth of that time.

Agastya is more likely to suffer from this condition of dislocation because there is consistency of emotional, physical, social and ideological detachment since his birth to young adulthood. He is a tormented self in many in many segments. The detachment from his mother at very young age, or detachment from both parents for schooling or detachment from his family and friends in search of a vocation, nothing can be pointed out as contributing elements for the growth of a balanced and tranquil ‘self’. Everywhere Agastya is recognized as alienated character. Observing such complexities and tenets of detachment from multiple angles in the novels of Chatterjee, R. P. Singh explores the novels on the theme of alienation. He highlights on the negativity of the protagonist that underscores on the anti-heroic elements verifiable in every alternate page of the novel.

His frequent insane-like behaviour and activities are also oriented from his sense of dislocation. His mind is often surprisingly “too active” and sometime engrossed with “a mêlée of images” (36). His strange exercises such as “push-ups on the veranda” “two in the morning” or “running at two thirty in the morning” can not be justified as the
orientation from a sensible mind and balanced self for which he himself “grunted a laugh at the thought” later (36). He has his own justification of his exercises: “If you don’t exercise every day, unless you’re ill, you will never leave Madna” (37). His exercises, activities and behaviour at times are his part of attempts for an escape from a disciplined social environment and worldly behaviour of a responsible individual. He wants escape from his essence of being ‘Indianness’. He wanted an escape from social living in his childhood. Now also, he wants escape from his vocational life and workplace or even from his normal existence to something very odd confinement in a dreamy world. His occasional laugh at his own existence comments on his state of insanity. He laughs alone while writing scraps during serious conversations at the collectorate. Just to avoid the scowls of his higher officials and officialdom, he simply writes a long descriptive letter, a letter to Dhrubo, a third letter to Neera in Calcutta and a fourth to his uncle Pultukaku in Delhi. But all the while he conceals his sense of dislocation. He even feels “shy of revealing his real feelings” to his best friend Dhrubo. He can not perceive whether he is “too embarrassed or his feelings too confused, or too secret” that prevents to disclose his inner feelings to others (40). On the way to his first visit to the Superintendent of Police Kumar, a buffalo whisks some dung on his forearm. It is a normal incident for anyone acquainted with the rural life. But this is not a casual incident for Agastya. He has been already trying to save himself from the foul fragrance of holes and varieties of excrement on the road to SPs office. However, the buffalo’s dung infuriates him to a remarkable at first but the very next moment he starts comparing between the buffalo’s shit and his existence. The author describes the response of Agastya very amusingly: “Oh, you bastard, said Agastya. He scraped the dung off on a tree and smelt his arm. The stench remained. He began to laugh, oh how insane his existence was, it even included getting shit off his arms” (41). The condition of Agastya is catapulted from the various self-capitalized reservoirs so far in his inner psyche. He is quite opposite to his respectable father. But he feels that “his father perhaps would have understood, but he would also have been saddened” to know his condition. He knows very well that “life for him was a serious rather noble business, a blend of Marcus Aurelius and the Reader’s Digest, and on occasions” (40). Despite such noble lineage he feels dissociated from that filial
bonding. He often feels “quite apart from him” and a separate sibling as he incompatible to his progenitor (40).

The psyche of Agastya is haunted by the repressed desire for the sexual saturation. So, he is often convulsive at thoughts and activities whether he is in social environment or in his particular moment of seclusion. His sexual desires are part of infatuation for gratification. His mind is never ready to accept the things at their face value. His mind generally loiters and weaves something obscene at the presence of female figure or during any conversation associated with the opposite sex. When he meets Mrs. Srivastav for the first time, he finds her “fat, friendly” yet “surprisingly sexy” (53). Agastya naturally develops very strange capacity to observe women and make up something funny or sexual images out of their appearances very fast. Mrs. Srivastav, who wears a pink and gold Kanchipuram Sari on their visit to the club in Madna, draws his attention. He again notices that Mrs Srivastav is wearing the black bra beneath the pink blouse. He can not resist himself “looking at her thighs throughout the evening” (53). Again, on the day of their picnic to Gorapak, he sees Mrs. Srivastav “sleepy bad-tempered and sexier than usual” (121). One rainy day, as he walks back to the Rest House after short stroll around Madna, he sees a beautiful tribal woman with tall and rigid physical structure. These tribal women, according to his belief, do exist only in some films narrating agrarian reform. Observing her stout structure with cracked feet and veined forearms, there is sudden obscure feeling in Agastya. He wishes all the “women were like this, instead of being soft-white-thighed and demanding of tenderness after coitus” (101). For Agastya, the pregnant wife of Mohan Das is “shy and sexy” in his irrational sexual images (106). Agastya is shamelessly “aroused by the sweat patches under Rohini’s arms” and considers her as “bitch” in his frustration at Gorapak picnic (13). His attitude towards women and obscene thought process and also his strange behaviour altogether are found at its climax when he gets his finger cut while slicing the onions at the Gorapak Picnic. One can expect expression of discomfort at such moment of pain and bleeding. But there is no reason why he likes watching “the blood well up and smear the onion”. The author continues to describe Agastya’s strange reaction: “His hand looked false, he had expected it to be thicker and more maroon . . . unzipped his trouser and touched the tip of the penis with his bloodied finger. But he felt nothing. The mirror
blurred his face – he looked disturbed, faintly comic” (131). Although Agastya has stepped into vocational life which is generally viewed as the turning point for an individual’s life; there is ever presence of adolescent attitudes, behaviour and activities. The way he behaves and talks with a small boy Ashok, the son of Gopalan while playing cricket, can never be expected from a person holding a respectable position in the society. He is messed up in arguments with the boy when the boy claims to bat first. He declines his submission to the boy’s demand and very comfortably declines saying “then fuck off” to the small kid as if he is talking with his peer. Ultimately the boy gives in and both agree on terms of “No hitting” format of the informal cricketing. The boy is unable to make him out and becomes tired of bowling. He almost cries for batting. Just then only predicting the worse consequence, Agastya agrees to bat the last ball of his turn. But he very treacherously violating the rule of the game hits the ball hard to such a distant that the ball is finally lost somewhere. But the boy is also not in a mood to give up easily. When Agastya leaves the game entrusting Bhatia to play on his behalf, he very meanly instructs him: “Mandy, just break this fucker. Remember he is your boss’s son” (130). Agastya considers himself not much older than the boy Ashok. He does not care how he should behave with a small boy and what language code must be maintained to deal with them. There is no feeling of repentance in Agastya. He rather enjoys that indecency. Anyway, he confesses this behaviour with Dhrubo later on in Delhi that he “behaved very meanly” (153). There is ever absence of genuine maturity in his social interaction. Instead of encouraging his spirit, he is in a mood to destroy “the boy’s energy and joy” that can never be expected from a respectable elder in a civil society (130). His estimation of women or children is merely based either on sexual terms or irresponsible casualty. According to Kumar, Agastya is very much “moved by the sculpture on the temple walls” because they are “sexy” and portray the images of “couples having sex in impossible positions” (126-131). Again, Dhrubo offers the letter of Renu, the ex-girl friend of Dhrubo, to share with his friend. But Agastya is disinterested in a simple and ordinary letter. He wants something obscene, vulgar, erotic things in the letter. So, he says to Dhruba: “I don’t think I want to read the letter, unless it’s full of fond remembrances of your sexual techniques” (134). For Agastya, his best friend Dhrubo’s mother also does not escape from his dirty thoughts. When he meets her at Dhrubo’s
house, he finds her “sexy”. Every mother holds an equivalent position among friend
circles in Indian cultural imagination. But Agastya is different. He even does not hesitate
to flirt with his friend Dhrubo about his own mother on sexual gestures. When Dhrubo
says that she is “leaving for Khartoum in the afternoon”, he shamelessly says to Dhrubo:
“If she’s free, may I have a quickie with her?” (151).

The breakdown of boundary of social code of conduct inside the inner being of
Agastya is recurrently presented in the novel. He forgets the age, relation, sex, race, time
and place to construct his unwarranted filthy and disrespectful thought processes in his
psyche. During his stay with Pultukaku in Delhi, a person called Manik Kaku pays visit
to Agastya with an aspiration to seek suitable relation like Agastya for his daughter
pursuing M.A. in English. But he dislikes being disturbed so early and does not refrain
from having an imagination of obscene things. He wants to continue his sleeps. So he is
wondered “whether he should display his morning erection to send the old man away”
(165). At the lawn, they have formal conversation and talk about Agastya’s interface with
the old man’s daughter some ten years ago. The old man simply says that she has been
just a child at that time. But Agastya, having confessed his similar childhood period then,
interweaves his awkward thought process in his inner psyche to add inwardly “except
that if you unrolled a condom to find out how big adult cocks were, you could get very
worried” (166).

Agastya’s thought on marriage is also full of odd apprehensions. There is abrupt
manipulation of thoughts before he really enters into the relationship with the old man’s
daughter. There is constant transgression of various pointless points. He imagines what
she might think after marriage about his awful kinky shape and excessive exercises at odd
hours of night. He has doubt if she would steal his money and how he would react on her
or how she would consider about “kinky shape” or “sharing each other’s used
underwear” (167). His chain of thoughts raises innumerable questions and self-made
answers to them. Although he is not prepared to marry at the moment, he feels that
“eventually… he would marry” (167). But he understands that his marriage would be
merely an observance of convention rather than the necessity urged by real passion for it.
He conceptualizes the hypothetical dissimilarities with the girl who might be his life
partner. He predicts that there will be an obvious differences, arbitrary opinions rather than mutual understanding and feelings between them. He starts believing before coming to marriage terms that their marriage “would slide into a placid and comfortable happiness … And his once-secret life would be entombed in a mind half-dead to an incarcerating world” (167). In all his matter, he expresses his concern for his secret life that he does not want to confide with anyone or disclose before any one of his best friends. He better chooses to tell lies than accept the truth. When Madan asks him in Delhi what he does for sex in Madna, he simply adds something to what he has heard from Sathe. He has heard that his mentor, collector Srivastav, had an illegitimate relationship with a female BDO and fools them that he is sharing that female BDO with the collector for sex. He even adds that “she’s exhaustingly oversexed, like a case for Krafft-Ebing” (173). He relates that false story so that he can impress them about the authenticity to what he has said.

It is common for Agastya to talk about sex and women and fantasize or get engaged to sexual orientations. There is no consideration on age, relation or social hierarchy in Agastya’s mind. When he finds the short and fatty wife of Deputy Superintendent of Police, he considers her as “startlingly sexy” (173). Again, when Agastya meets the Englishman’s wife at the Collector’s residence, he finds her “heavy and full, like the centre of an adolescent dream” (184). There is no relevance between his moment of getting sexual ideas and the reference to what the circumstance or the part of any conversation contextualizes. But he is as if ever ready to get sexual in his own to draw pleasure from what he has construed. The esoteric fertility rite of the tribals with cobra is also a source for Agastya to contemplate on sexual associations. While shaking hands at introductory conversation with Mr. Panda, Agastya feels if the man has been masturbating below the bridge table because the latter’s hand is moist and sticky due to sweat. When he sees the Averys with a mild laugh in post-long drive bed rest in the Rest House of Jompana, he relates their courtesy to be “distinctly a post-coital laugh” (204). Avery’s wife Sita does not join Agastya and her husband to Marihandi trip due to her ill health but Agastya presumes that that might be her PMT aggravating to participate in the adventurous trip. It reminds him about Neera who told him about premenstrual tension many years ago and he recollects “how impressed he had been, in an obscene way, with
womankind” (208). Later on, he is furious and surprised to find a letter from Neera after he returns from Jompana because she writes about her relationship with a journalist of the *Telegraph* and lose of her virginity last week to him. His relations on discovering the truth is an admixture of disbelief and certain amount of frustrations. He says to himself: “Oh Neera, you darling bitch, … here for sex I have been masturbating into napkins and stripping in front of doctors and glimpsing peons buy aphrodisiacs at bus stations, and in Calcutta you have been humping a mouth spewing historical inevitability, with spectacles above it” (287). Thus his frustrations are ever resurgent as he is always deffered from saturation of that primordial desire that has been so annihilating to his being since his early adolescence.

The obsession with sexual thoughts or his articulations are not simply the part of Agastya’s particular behaviour but it is majority of the generation of his age who have earned a degree or already in a vocation or loitering for one. The characters like Prashant, Bhatia, Dhrubo, Madan, Mohan or even Sathe and Kumar are not devoid of such thoughts and subscription to them in their secret lives. Of course, the female youthful characters in the background, such as Neera, Renu or Sita present in the novel physically, are represented as open-minded women of India who are truly concerned both professionally and academically.

Dhrubo, the best friend of Agastya, is not much different from him. He also belongs to a well-to-do family background with a Ph.D. from respectable Yale. Both of them share the same schooling background and have come across similar social institutions, cultural ethos or religious beliefs. He is also addicted to soft drugs like marijuana and alcohol. His upbringing takes place in megalopolitan like Delhi and abroad. He has joined banking sector of late but he is desirous of quitting the job and try his luck in Civil Service Examination. At the very beginning of the novel we discover him engaged in desultory talks with Agastya on his new prospective experience in Madna. They are well hit by marijuana that makes them lethargic and still not done with the forty-third cigarette of the day. The conversation between Dhrubo and Agastya reflects on the character of both of them and also on the generation of Indian youth as a whole in postcolonial India. Dhrubo believes that his stay is not a typical Indian story
because he does not believe in the First World and Second World or Third World specifications. Despite his Ph. D. from Yale which he truly regards as “not a joke” he is aspirant to join the “Indian Administrative Service, if lucky” (03). This is an implication about desperate search for suitable vocation of Indian youth.

There is disinterestedness similar to Agastya’s in Dhrubo as well. He also suffers from the sense of dislocation because he must compromise between his Ph.D. degree from respectable Yale and the present vocation as banker. His schooling, similar to Agastya’s, includes always softer options or playing errands on occasions. On the day of writing the “frank” essay on My Ambition; his behaviour with the new English teacher highlights continuous deterioration of teacher-pupil bonding so meaningful in Indian tradition of education culture. He unhesitatingly and shamelessly began with “what I want to know … is what you are trying prove with your degree from Europe” just to insult the teacher (35). Consequently, he was sent to the principal for such indecent behaviour towards his own teacher. However, he is a potential adolescent that helps in earning a Ph.D. degree from Yale.

Though Dhrubo bears similar characteristics in behaviour, habits and language; his attitude towards vocational life is somewhat free from recurrent irresolutions unlike Agastya. His language since his school days has been abominably teasing with full of obscenity. Agastya recollects his school days when he sees fat Srivastav in tight jeans and T-shirt on the picnic day to Gorapak. He remembers Dhrubo who on seeing fat and loose skinned Prashant in Darjeeling’s school had said, “When he squats to shit he has to flick his boobs over his shoulder, otherwise his nipples tickle his balls” (121). Though Dhrubo has chosen to be an executive in Citibank with handsome salary, he feels administrative job as the better option. He wants to quit the job because he is “sick of Citibank. But not unbearably sick, really. … But ten years later I don’t want to tell myself, bastard, you should’ve changed jobs long long ago. But it’s not that really” (152). His desire to quit the Citibank job has some connection to his adoption of western life. His conceptualization about the First World as better and bigger since childhood gradually loses its impression on being the part of Yale or an executive in the Citibank. What he says to Agastya, to substantiate the reason of quitting, is the expression of his successive
fading allurement to the First World. Hence, he says: “I’ve … I think I’ve had enough of this whole occidental connection … All those expense accounts and false accented secretaries, and talk of New York and head office, and our own men in Hong Kong, it’s just not real, it’s an imitation of something elsewhere, do you know what I mean?” (152-153).

He tries to adopt the culture of the ‘other’ but the artificiality of such existence fades away gradually. The executive life-style, unlike common traditional Indian lifestyle, has played a vital role in radicalizing his thoughts. So, he further adds: “And I wear a tie, and use my credit card, and kiss the wives of my colleagues on the cheek when we meet, and I come home and smoke a joint, listen to Scott Joplin and Keith Jarrett, and on weekends I see a horror film, or a Carlos Saura, it’s … unreal” (153). Though Dhrubo sounds to be better sensible than Agastya, his disinterestedness towards the Citibank job is quite evident. The executive life-style, maintenance of official decorum and the code of social interaction in the job have no esteem in Dhrubo’s view. They are rather ‘unreal’ and he wants his former life back in India itself.

Some characters of this generation are represented in background of the novel. The characters like Neera and Renu also suffer from the sense of dislocation and disinterestedness with the job they are into. They do not appear in the novel in physical form but their existence through opinions and attitudes are very important for further enhancement on the issue of dislocation and wrong choice of vocations. Their letters also elaborate on their personal opinions on race, country and ideological issues. Renu, the Punjaban girl-friend of Dhrubo, is in teaching profession in the University based in Illinois. Her experience of the USA is founded on her story in New York and Illinois. She went to the USA in search of better vocation as a successful educated youth. Earlier, she believed that her needs could not be fulfilled in India. The allurement of the First World had been operating with greater force till she became a part of that foreign nation. However, that fluffy concept and allurement of the First World faded away when she had experienced it, had felt it in person and had tried to establish her belongingness there. Her experience later teaches her that the division of the World into many Worlds such as First, Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth has no value because they are mandated by the
power crisis and nuclear arms race in the world. She understands that it is the part of the
game played by the two Supreme Powers i.e. Russia and America throttling in the race
with their respective objectives: of the Soviet Necessity and American Dream
respectively. The very first evening in the USA with local Indian gang made her nostalgic
about the Teen Murti Library and the University Coffee House and the M.Phil
department of her native country. Gradually, she lost the desire to belong to so called
First World lifestyle. She could understand that her colour, accent and social interaction
vastly differ from those Americans. There is the expression of utter frustration in her
letter:

The people here are so dull, ignorant, smug and provincial. They are all that, but
there’s also something very wrong about my attitude to them. Because of my
colour, accent, etc., I feel wary and strained talking to Americans – the moment I
face one of them, I can feel the shutters going down in me, and I know my face
looks blank, bored and closed. (155)

Within a very short time of few weeks, she developed disinterestedness in her job
and social interaction in America. In order to avoid the irrational moments with the
Americans, she had assumed what she termed as the “greatest defense” appearing “quiet
and disinterested” (155).

Now she feels often low and really wonders sometimes what she was doing in
America especially when she encountered odd moments at times. She had one such
moment on the day when she had asked her students of the University to do an exercise
on free writing. But the response of the American students had been disappointing to her
because a student wrote a very insulting remark questioning her ability, accent and sense
of belongingness. The American student wrote: “I’m not paying big bucks to listen to an
Indian telling me how to write English. And her fucking accent is giving me a migraine”
(156). Such moments of her life in America raise big questions on her self-chosen place,
profession and the existence itself. Everything assumes negativity in perspection when
she does not feel herself to be one among the Americans. She feels herself as victim of
utter racial discrimination, and hence, fails to adopt the normal living. She writes: “. . .
it’s hard getting to know people. Everyone seems friendly at first, everyone stops and
asks, ‘Hi, how ya doin’?’ often awhile you realize that that’s it, nothing ever follows up that ‘Hi how ya, doin’?’ (156). The absence of natural and compassionate social interaction as she had been habitual in India disturbs her mind. She realizes that “the creed is to be bright, brisk and busy” to become a part of that land (156). There is a tone of self-reproach for not having similarities. She is shocked at the “disadvantage” of her “face” and “voice-dull, gloomy and lazy as can be” (156). The change of location for a meaning and cause become meaningless and causeless. Her antipathy against the land where she had desired to be a part is utterly self-deceptive. She becomes hysterical with the thought of her decision to be a part of another land and people. She wonders: “why people ever leave their own countries and go abroad. Why don’t we ever learn that all changes of place are the worse” (156). Here, Chatterjee enters into the discourse of home/homelessness, as we find in Amitav Ghosh in The Shadow Lines. The concept of Americans about India or any Third World nation is sulking. The Americans made Renu outrageous when they had asked her if she rode on elephant to school in her birth place Bombay. The ignorance sucked her but she could not help out to resist and so she had responded accordingly that she had to hire one as they could not afford an elephant in the family. Such oddities and low estimation of those racist Americans about the people and the country India makes her nostalgic about native land and people as if they beckon her back to the country where she originally belongs to. She feels herself foolish and says: “That’s entirely my fault, for not being where I ought to be, back home” (156). Hence, in her desperate moments, she becomes nostalgic that leads her sometimes to assume “extremes – watching Hindi movies, Guddi, Barood, etc.” to avoid threatening insanity (157). The relationship she wanted to break down earlier with Dhrubo now disturbs her for not giving time and a second thought. Nevertheless, the character of Renu comments on the same generation of youth that suffers from alienation, self-brooding and irresolution in postcolonial India. They crave for better and run towards the direction but ends up gaining the worse. The novelist draws the line between individual longing and the real belonging through the characters in the novel. Agastya is an extreme example of how the Indian youth are still so pestering for the western culture, people and land. But at the same time he distinguishes it by putting his characters like Renu and Dhrubo into real experience of it. In both the cases, these individual remain as lost identity because one is
never able to experience and another is fed up with the experience he/she has been so
dying to achieve it. This is the dilemma, the great fault of contemporary Indian youth
who extol between the desires to belong and what they do finally become.

Similarly, Neera, the girl-friend of Agastya, also appears through the letter
towards the end of the novel. Her feelings and attitudes are not much different than the
other youthful characters. She is frank unlike traditional girls of India who do not like to
share the secrets to anybody; especially connected with sex and relationship. But she
displays that she is the new product of the age trying to break out of the conventional
yolk of typical image of Indian women. She frankly admits her loss of virginity to a
journalist of the *Telegraph*. Instead of embarrassment, she bravely asks Agastya: “How
do you like my formal announcement?” (286). She enjoys announcing the news of losing
her virginity. There is no repentance or feel of awkwardness; it is rather a “great relief” as
if “shedding a burden” (286-287). To lose virginity in premarital stage in India is
generally considered as a severe act of sin. Such activities in the society may reward fatal
consequences in the social arena leading even to expulsion from the humdrum of social
existence or simply social outcast. But she is relaxed with what she has done and writes
that “it really made no difference at all” (287). The only thing that has remained as
complaint with the act is that she did it without “being in love” (287). Otherwise, it would
have been a better and blissful deed for her. Nevertheless, her feelings have no difference
since she believes in the fate that everything in the world cannot be accomplished.

On learning the fact of losing the virginity to a journalist, Agastya’s frustrations
evidently point towards the relationship both perhaps did maintain. His address to Neera
as ‘darling bitch’ and scolding alone after reading the letter, and how he takes refuse to
the sedatives like aphrodisiacs and masturbation, comment on his unsaturated sexual
desire with Neera. It is certainly an impressive infatuation that continually looms large in
his psyche. But the repression of his desire within his sub-consciousness leads him to
insane-like behaviour when he encounters women and gives vent to his obscure thoughts.
It is one of the vital points leading to his neurotic-like behaviour even when he happens
to be in his vocation as a respectable IAS trainee in Madna. On the other hand, Neera’s
break up and setting up a pre-marital sexual relationship with a person, who is not the one
she had really wished for such a major decision, comments on her attitude on sex as well as the cause of her break up. The way she justifies that disdainful act (at least in Indian context) as ‘great relief’ obviously indicate towards her repressive desire as well and also for missing undeclared relationship with her ‘closest friend’ Agastya. Agastya could not overcome his irresolution for Neera and simultaneously Neera, on the other, could never understand why she could not be the person to go for a premarital sexual relationship with the person she was so close to. Between such opposite thoughts in repression, Neera ends up being a sexual partner with an incompatible person much against her preference. But Agastya continues his alienation and irresolution under the impression of non-gratification of sexual fantasies almost on everything somewhere in the backwater hinterland.

The most crucial part of Agastya that makes him a problematic protagonist is that he is torn between the righteous obligations and his search for happiness. His dilemma between Indian classical music and western rock, jazz and pop music, western philosophy and Indian philosophy, western metaphysics and Indian metaphysics contribute in multiplying regression in his loneliness. Agastya’s life is largely a gamut of contradictions and confusions. His taste for music is not specifically confined to particular genre or tradition. His collections include albums of Keith Jarrett, Scott Joplin, Herzog films, Ella Fitzgerald, Vivaldi, Carlos Saura, Cole Porter, Krafft-Ebbing etc. These are the latest collections in western rock, jazz or pop albums of contemporary western music. He once said to his girl friend Neera that he did not like the gift of such western music as he could not comprehend their accents properly. But he still keeps them and listens frequently while he is stoned or in a state of boozing alone. In contrary, he also keeps classical genres like Tagore’s *Shyama* and Bollywood hit numbers. However, he does not stop at one music number and keeps on changing at few intervals from the classical to western or vice-versa. Moreover, his disorganized and continually ebbing life style is contrasted against two World famous meta-philosophical books: the translated version of the *Gita* and Roman *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius. The first one is offered by Sathe, the cartoonist of Madna and the later one, a gift from his father before his journey to Madna. He wants to cull inspiration and seek salvation by the wisdom of these books but the lack of resolution proves his reading futile. More he wants to comprehend
the significance more he arrives at meaninglessness position. Nothing seems to offer solace from his alienation and those relentless obscure thoughts in his psyche.

Some other youthful characters who appear in this novel and gradually become the part of the larger design of the plot are Mahendra Bhatia, Mohandas Gandhi, Prashant, Madan, Sathe or even Kumar, the Superintendent of Police. They also reflect similar attitudes to life, sex and social responsibilities. All of them either feel marooned with the sense of dislocation or seem to suffer from the same maniacs somewhere deep in their psyche. Majority of them maintain two lives: public life that is ever perceptible, and the other, only at times away from their family lives.

Bhatia is a wastrel and acute representation of emerging Indian youth. From his attire to habits, he presents himself as a modern fashionable, successful yet ethically sterile person in his inner self especially so when it comes to women, alcohol or marijuana terms. Bhatia is an emerging Indian youth comprehensively inspired by the American and European pulp culture. He had been a student of physics or chemistry from the same college in Delhi where Agastya and Dhrubo completed their graduation. He likes anything unconventional and not-Indian in nature (my italics). He leads a lifestyle where preferences are given to pulp culture, language and habits very common in European and American culture. Music literature, soft drugs, alcohol, fashionable clothes, electronic gadgets etc., make up his way of living. The character of Bhatia is another representation of metropolitan modern Indian youth and the author presents him as eccentric, humorous and subjectivized person. According to Dhrubo, he is “just one more urban Indian bewitched by American hard sell in the Third World” (75). The passage continues beautifully elaborating on the character of Bhatia:

Bhatia liked T-shirts and Calvin Klein jeans, Delhi’s fast food joints, Indian motorcycles (because he couldn’t afford a foreign one), girl-friends whom he ‘could lay anytime, man’ (they proved elusive), marijuana, even a little cocaine, the singers who won the Grammy Awards (and whom Indian TV, for his ecstasy, had begun, finally, to show), calling rupees bucks, and being called Mandy. His ambition had been to go abroad (‘to the US of A’), perhaps to show it how well he fitted in with his lifestyle. (76)
No other characters in the novel are given such concrete detail highlighting on the characters at a single passage. He is one of the finest caricatures of hybridized species. There is nothing he accepts as his own that bears Indian trademark. Whatever seen, found or practiced in American or European culture is always adorable, and so, he tries adopting them in his life immediately. The use of headphones and a walkman or habitual to abusive drugs like cocaine, listener to jazz, hard rock and pop music, wearing faded jeans and T-shirts with something extraordinary written on its body are abundantly found in the Western or American culture. So, Bhatia, who already possesses a headlong inspired subjectivity under the western pulp culture, rejoices at being a hybrid character. In spite of holding a respectable position as Assistant Conservator of Forests in the society, Bhatia likes to wear Vanderbilt, Calvin Klein Jeans and T-shirts that says “I don’t want no star wars” (76). In some other occasion, he wears T-shirt that says “Herpes is forever” (101). Agastya does not find any commonality between him and Bhatia because Bhatia is very frivolous in both outer and inner beings. But Agastya is only active in his seclusion. The only common thing between him and Bhatia, according to Agastya is “their dislocation” (76).

Though Agastya does not accept the commonality, it is obviously not the fact. Since he is much introvert in nature, there is no display of what he is, unlike the extrovert Bhatia. Otherwise, the issues that keep on haunting Agastya or Bhatia are not much different in configuration. Like Agastya, Bhatia also “ranted against his job, the small town, the people, the boredom, the loneliness, the absence of sex” in his initial days (76). Bhatia gives his feelings free outlet anywhere but Agastya prefers smouldering within. Bhatia dislikes for not getting anyone with free license similar to him, to talk, or no worthy place of visit, or to do something meaningful. For him, even Delhi and its people are not worth enough to be his equal. He does not dream to become a friend of Mohandas Gandhi who belongs to Delhi, rejecting him to be a “small-towner” (101). The daily official visits and getting drunk back in the room, feeling lonely and jerking off hopelessly, are deadly monotonous for him. His attitude to life and profession in Madna, as if overrules to the great misery of Agastya. Bhatia shares his secret life but Agastya feels offended because he makes his “secret life seem ridiculous … shattering one of his last consoling illusions” (76).
The character of Bhatia works as a gap between the inner self and the outer self of Agastya. He pronounces this truth at certain unsettling moment while accompanying Bhatia to the Forest Colony to meet Mohandas. He imagines Bhatia as “a funny-mirror image of himself” (102). Between such seamy conditions of detachment and awkward thoughts, Agastya displays the intensity of frequent mental agony. While Agastya and Bhatia get drunk, their discussion keep on shifting the themes ranging from loneliness, boredom, sex, marriage, and suicide to various ideological criticisms. The issue of suicide, which is very common among adolescents and youth, finds a brief space in this episode of the novel. There is no direct reference to their intention of committing suicide. But the way they do discuss on their condition of wretched living, the thought for such attempt is at a dormant state somewhere deep in their psyche. It is the slippage in their conversation that the inner feelings are uttered. The option for avoiding suicide is just to get married and settle down. However, their conversation highlights on new definition of suicide. According to Agatya:

> There are many indigenous methods of suicide. You could change sex, kill your husband if he does not die on his own, and burn yourself on his pyre, but I think sati (suttee to you) is prohibited – they’ve killed a great Indian tradition, but there’s a new one in its place – you could change sex and marry and get your husband to burn you – the ultimate kink experience. (77)

The mode of their discussion, of course, lacks the seriousness and genuine involvement. Whatever they talk in their drunken state, it carries them to momentary delusion. They talk on some black thing seen at the bottom of a whisky glass. But this is enough to keep on evolving many implications such as whether the thing is rat shit or something else. Bhatia asks his companion Agastya what would be the consequence if the rat shit is dissolved into the whisky and so on. There are certainly silly and incomprehensible logic in their pointless conversation. But one thing is certain that it is a momentary plunge into a mental state beyond which starts the border towards real neurosis.

Mohan is another young Assistant Conservator of Forest whom Bhatia comments before Agastya as “a nice guy, simple from Alwar” (104). He had spent two years in
Uttarkashi teaching in some underrated College. Gandhi is an agreeable young man very “quiet . . . stocky, self-possessed” with “large peaceful eyes . . . yellow-filmed and restless” (104). He is more sensible than Mahendra. He feels embarrassed with his name and his elder sister’s that are similar to Mahatma Gandhi and Indira Gandhi respectively and complains his parents for confusing families and generations. There is not much eccentricity and sense of dislocation in the character of Mohan. His lifestyle and attitude towards his prospects seem to be endowed with an air of self-contentment. So, the novelist describes his condition:

Mohan displayed none of Bhatia’s rancor against the Universe. He seemed not-happy, but reasonably at peace, satisfied with his lot; a room in Madna, a bathroom that he shared with a colleague, a sexy and patient wife-cook, a surly servant, low voltage … 1,800 a month, in a few weeks a posting to some black hole called Priatna … a healthy body … a love for Sarat Chandra in translation … and a future that would be predictable extension of the present. (105)

The incident that unfortunately handicaps Gandhi at Piratna mainly focus on two implications: firstly the sexual obsessions of Gandhi in absence of his wife Rohini, and secondly his divided subjectivity. His extra-marital relationship with a tribal woman of Priatna forfeits the dissection of hands making him handicapped forever. Towards the end of the novel Agastya and Bhatia have a conversation on this incident where they mention that Gandhi “had suffered … for his lust” because there was no other option except “these flecks of insanity” for being transferred from “one condemned spot to another” (262). Thus, it makes a sense to identify the sense of dislocation existent in dormant condition within the mindset of Gandhi as well. While at Piratna, he “smoked tobacco the tribal way … A dried and neatly rolled tobacco leaf . . . that familiar anodyne” to escape his sense of dislocation (262). Under that spell of tobacco leaf and also traditional tribal drink, some kind of tari, carried Gandhi to that such extent that ultimately costs him huge compensation. As Bhatia and Agastya later discuss the incident back in Madna guest house, Bhatia says what the chowkidar had said “that the woman was some kind of whore, as loose as a tooth about to fall” (267). But Bhatia also believes that “Mohan missed Rohini or something like that” urging him irresititably to get muddled
up with that tribal woman (267). There is a point what the Chowkidar had alleged on loneliness as the cause of his fall from the dignity. But Agastya does not accept the logic of Bhatia and says: “Don’t be silly, Mandy, you and I have been lonely and horny too, here in Madna. But you wouldn’t fuck your cook, not even if she looked like Khajuraho and sat down beside your plate while you had lunch and shaved her puss in front of you” (267).

What both of them would have done on such given situation is not predictable but Gandhi’s delusional attempt turns out to be fatal one. Nevertheless, the subjectivity of Gandhi based on what he had proved himself during Agastya’s first visit to his house at the Forest Colony or how he had behaved at Gorapak Picnic obviously indicates on the duality of his psychic being. His frequent tendencies to talk obscene at Gorapak Picnic or look somber and tranquil than the other characters are deceiving to any readers. It is mysterious whether the story related by the chowkidar and Prakash Rao over the incident is true since it has no scope for verification. Besides, it is also mentioned by Rao that many a time some notorious tribal leaders made some officers scapegoat as a part of their game for not getting proper advantage to their business in the forests. So, Agastya and Bhatia admit towards the end that their observation on Mohan had been wrong and reflect that they “didn’t know Mohan well enough” (267).

Again, Prashant, a good friend of Agastya, since his schooling in Darjeeling, behaves like any other youth of his time. He suffers from the similar problems of dislocation and possesses the attitude on life and living like Agastya. But there is a major difference between Prashant and other characters in the novel because he is the representation of homo-sexual youth. He is also a lazy guy and dislikes football. There was not cynicism in his attitude to those Anglo Indian and Tibetan students in the school of Darjeeling. His impression and opinion resembled with Agastya. He felt jealous against Anglo Indians and Tibetans for their colour, their preference to games and guitars to earn the attention of the girls. In his cynical outburst, he expresses his dissidence over not being like the Anglos: “The Tibs and the Anglos always have guitars. It’s the colour of the Anglo and Tib thighs not like us” (2). He was fat and loose skinned. So, Dhrubo imagined that he had to “flick his boobs over his shoulder” while squatting to shit (121).
Prashant also suffers from maniac of that westernism that had badly cast its shadow on the young generation of Postcolonial India.

Similarly, Govind Sathe is an unmarried youth and a cartoonist of Madna. This character reminds one with Ben Johnson’s Bobadil in *Everyman in his humour*. He influences anyone who comes into his contact. So, Deputy Collector Srivastav warns Agastya to avoid his company because Govind considers himself “as part of Cola generation … lives in anarchy” (47-48). He is the progeny of a forest contractor in Madna. His father made lots of black money out of selling timber and forest products. But he enjoys life by wasting his father’s black money. He is never worried for the money for he gets available food, wine and luxury free of cost off his elder brother’s money as well who runs a hotel there. So, he says to Agastya reasoning his life of a vagabond and wastrel: “I don’t need money. Now you see why I’m a cartoonist” (46). Apart from a cartoonist, he cracks “dull jokes every morning in four Marathi dailies, all published from Bombay and Poona” (43). Yet he is considered as yellow journalist by Kumar, the Superintendent of Police. He enjoys life drinking, smoking, playing cards, billiards in the club, writing columns in some infamous dailies and painting odd cartoons. He is not worried for time and looks for any opportunity at first hand to waste it. So, he curses the Deputy Collector Srivastav before Agastya for ruining the places like Madna Club that worked as place of entertainment for him. He says:

Idiot … He’s messed up the Club. Once it was a good place to have drink, play billiards and waste time. But he’s cancelled the licence – did he tell you that? He wants all the *families* to come to the Club and chat with him or something. I can’t understand it, this move of his to keep what he calls the non-officials out of the Club. It’s like the Raj, natives not allowed. (115)

His lifestyle is full of fun as he lives in his own world of entertainment, drinks and sex hunting. He likes western music, collects books for a huge self but without the purpose of reading them in fact. He likes anything absurd and extraordinary. In his opinion: “The best cartoon can only suggest pettiness and absurdity, very rarely something more complex” (47). Though Sathe says that he imitates others all time and “pick other people’s brains”, his opinion on his unfinished sketch is worth mentioning.
He draws a sketch showing a man at a typewriter beside a window through which the Statue of Liberty is visible. His explanation to Agastya about the punchline displays his artistic sensibility to capture the significance of an artistic piece. He explains to Agastya:

This is a very ambitious one. I wanted to suggest an Indian writer writing about India, after having spent many years abroad, or living there. There are hundreds of them – well, if not hundreds at least twenty five. I find these people absurd, full with one mixed up culture and writing about another, what kind of audience are they aiming at. That’s why their India is just not real, a place of fantasy, or of confused metaphysics, a subcontinent of goons. All their Indians are caricatures. Why is that. Because there really are no universal stories, because each language is an entire culture. (48)

What Sathe says to Agastya is not purely a reflection of his artistic sensibility but is obviously a hint towards those writers of the contemporary period whose writings were not grounded to the soil of the land. The voice of Sathe might be an equivocal to the thoughts and feelings of Chatterjee who tried to express his dissatisfaction against the expatriate writers writing about India and its people without the soul in it. Many critics have already expressed their dissidence over lifelessness in what some of the expatriate writers have written around the land and its people. The voice of Sathe, hence, may be considered as criticism of the author against some contemporary expatriate writers. However, Sathe’s opinions cannot be rejected outright despite its ambiguity. He continues:

Great literature has to have its regional tang – a great Tamil story, for instance, whose real greatness would be ultimately obscure to any non-Tamilian … I presume you know at least three Indian languages, English Hindi and Bengali, yet you find it so difficult to communicate here. And three language, you could be master of Europe. (48)

Thus, Sathe is an imitator to what masters, veterans or forefathers had said or did. But he knows well to consolidate and manipulate them according to his necessity. Of course, he does not claim his originality to what he says or does. Nevertheless, Sathe is
the only person whom Agastya likes to spend time because he can afford available time to anywhere at any moment. The character of Sathe is the prototype of Indian youth of “Babu Class” as Tabish Khair identifies in postcolonial India who wants to skip their ambition and pragmatism of worldly affairs.

Some other characters like Kumar, Srivastav, Menon and Shankar seem to have come across the boundary line of both adolescence and youth to the age of adulthood. But their adulthood is indicative only through their sign of ageing. Otherwise, all of them certainly seem to have the life of endless adolescencing. It is reflected through their occasional dress codes, behaviour and certain habits. All of them are still dipped in the choice of tight jeans and T-shirts, drinks and get engaged into either adolescent fantasy or illegitimate sexual relationship. Sathe visits brothels outside Madna, Srivastav maintains illegitimate relationship with a female BDO, and Kumar continues adolescencing and fantasizing sexual gratification through blue films. Another important aspect with regard to the sexual behaviour of the characters is that they do fantasize or engage in adultery when they are away from home and family. The unmarried youth either fantasize or establish illegitimate relationship as they are away from home and engrossed with the sense of dislocation. They masturbate, fantasize and discuss the obscene when they are at some distant places away from home. Srivastav, kumar and Gandhi are happily married and deeply concerned about their wives. But their fidelity and concern are confined only when they are attached with their legitimate partners. But as soon as they are separated from their partners, their sexual behaviour turn out to be adulterous and illegitimate, and also at many times proving fatal to their lives or self-respect.

The novel is a satire on the colonial rule and its effect in aftermath legacy. The characters adore and glorify the West but the novelist rather wants to present the critical and social and psychological perspective of the Indian youth. The locations like London, Paris, New York, Massachusetts, Cambridge, Yale, and also the western music, First World culture and literature are glorified in the mental state of the postcolonial Indian youth. The lives of the youth are shattered in due course against psychological confusions. But still there is occasional rise of cultural consciousness and nationalism followed by criticism against the colonial regime and the mode of imperialism. The
generation is evidently deracinated without success. So, we find the characters occasional voicing against the colonization and the mode of imperialism that continues to rule the Indian psyche at different levels. It is worth mentioning that Calcutta had been the epicenter of East India Company and the succeeding central governance point of the Britishers. Hence, the generation of Bengal in particular and India in general like Agastya’s, sustains adverse effect. There is reference to this effect from Dhrubo: “London is nice, bits of it are like washed Calcutta, and all Bengalis will love it, being Anglophile, to their balls” (93). Again, Mohan attacks Srivastav and says to Agastya: “What is the British India chip on the shoulder that people like Srivastav have?” (115-116). The tinge of nationalism is not completely erased from the psyche of these Indian youth. They would like to emerge out from the colonial bondage that has fastened them psychologically. So, Dhrubo’s displeasure for not writing the instructions in Indian language on the Gas-cylinder when he and Agastya had a narrow escape in Delhi is worth mentioning. He said furiously:

But why’re the instructions in English? The language of the blood-sucking imperialists, they made our hearts weep, and crippled us from appreciating our glorious heritage. I object, and like a good Bengali I’m going to write to the ‘Grievances’ column of the Statesman, that the instructions on a gas cylinder should be in all the fourteen Indian languages recognized by the constitution. (159-160)

Though Dhrubo and Agastya are hybridized Indian youth of postcolonial India, there is a tone of sadness, displeasure and voice for re-assertion of nationalism. There is a wish for harmony, peace and psychological discreteness in both social and individual beings. During Agastya’s visit to Dr. Darshan Mulatani’s residence, Darshan’s father recollects the fight for independence of India and the idea of vibrant nationalism prevalent in the hearts of millions of Indians. There is a kind of “irrational pride, a kind of anachronistic nationalism” in senior Multani’s voice (229). He tells his son Darshan and Agastya how they had missed the great historical moment of India. He says: “You generation has missed the most dramatically significant years, the first five decades of our century …” (229). It is a kind of re-kindling of the feelings of nationalism to that new
generation. So, Agastya can realize for the moment the “nationalism of those fifty years” and “sufferance of colonial rule” that people like Mr. Multani might have witnessed (230). He for the moment regrets that he and Darshan could not do so – neither could they understand that great feeling. He regrets that he “had just been born too late. He felt strange, both deprived and curious, what mustn’t have been like, to wander the streets of Calcutta and not be allowed entry into the Calcutta Club, Natives Keep Out ... and they have left behind cultural cripples, incapable of appreciation” (229-230). On the other hand, the old man continues: “Your generation is what it is, just like the English we speak, it is inevitable. That is why I was surprised at your name, and your knowledge of Bengali, I did not expect it” (230).

Whatever they discuss in the dialogism on the colonial regime, independence movement and postcolonial psychological effect on the generation are explication of reality that has been persistent in Indian imagination. The novelist tries to uphold the mirror to life and society of the late 20th century India. The predicament of the Indian youth as discussed above has been inevitable. Modernization as dictated by the compelling western culture, ideology and technology envisaged through colonization, triggers to loss of Indian cultural discreteness that influences the youth of the nation to rootlessness and psychic dilemma to a great extent. It pervades in both social and individual behaviour, responsibility, education, choice of vocation, leniency towards drug abuse and their culture and social behaviour. The identity of Indian adolescents and youth is so endangered that they fail to assert their valued existence and right approach to integrate. They arrive at a position that prevents to appreciate to what they have received from the ancestors. So, their alienation from the common humdrum of social living or disinterestedness in their vocation, leniency towards the drugs, marijuana, wines, cigarettes, deprecating sexual orientations and behaviour are bound to hit their life style.
Regression Ever: Problem of Maturation in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s Novel

*Weight Loss*

Upamanyu Chatterjee’s fourth novel *Weight Loss* (2006) is often simply considered as a black humour without accounting the psychological implication. The novel is about growing up and continues accumulation of odds and inappropriate conditions. The novelist explores into the psyches that are constantly tempestuous and sprout out of compartment of inner self reflecting incongruous behaviour and attitudes towards all the aspects associated in one’s life-style. It basically delves deeper into the psyche of adolescent and youth that rejects negotiation with family, society, sex, school, profession, relationship, ethics, culture or anything that comes across in its course throughout its growing phase. The transformation from a general social living to the world of incongruities makes this novel unique from the other novels of Chatterjee. There is humour in abundance, and also slightly perceptible sympathy with the characters despite their vagrancy or explorations into the world of improbabilities. Sometimes, Chatterjee takes us to an immoral and spiritually sterilized world of human psyche in this novel. He leads his readers to a territory where grooming of childhood is deprecating, adolescence as heinous and youth as anchorless sojourn.

The novel is about growth yet unlike any other bildungsroman, entwicklungsroman or kuntelusroman because physical growth is evident but other reciprocal growth is somewhat disrupted. The accumulation of ideas and experiences of early adolescence period continue to destabilize the character/characters’ successive journey through middle adolescence, late adolescence and beyond. The darker side of human psyche is intensified, corrupted and piteously pitted against every opportunity throughout the process of growing up. Every opportunity becomes delusional to such an extent that finally it dooms the character/characters to the deep chasm.

*Weight Loss*, as the title induces its literal meaning semantically, is all about losing weight, an indicator of health consciousness or relatively suffering from some disease. But the novelist’s main concern is not merely to represent the weight loss of any sort particularly associated with health or healing from a disease associated with the
problem of obesity. It is primarily the weight loss at all levels: physical, spiritual, sexual, social, psychological, emotional and even intuitional. Anything decent, healthy and ethical loses its meaning in both form and substance. There is no special honour to the values in an individual being though it is considered valued in societal space, of course, with utmost artificiality.

The novel is an inward journey into the psyche of its protagonist and some major characters who essentially participate in the course of the plot to give atonement to the subjectivity of the protagonist. The protagonist, rather an anti-hero named Bhola is a misconceptualized early adolescent as we encounter him in the opening pages of the novel. The introduction of the character is a slow process except his cruel teacher Anthony or hypocrite and voluptuous Miss Jeremiah. His best friend, of course, appears at the beginning of the novel. But the major characters like, Moti, Titli, the doctor and Mrs Manchanda, who play vital roles in successive development of the plot comparatively participate much later.

Bhola, the protagonist of the novel, is the progeny of a rich father but his biological mother has already left him to grow himself. His childhood and early adolescence is dependent on his step-mother and his biological father. There is lack of genuineness on the part of his step-mother who is slightly biased in her opinion. His father is a respectable person in the society and a representative of social snobbery. Hence, the complete attention and proper child-rearing is absent in his family. Instead of spending their time for the better foundation of Bhola, they are the regular visitors to the parties, clubs, and card games outside the home. Bhola thus remains without his parental care off his school schedules. However, the governess of their house takes care of anything important to his demand. He is offered good English education in a Jesuit school and freedom to choose his life-style.

Nevertheless, Bhola’s school life plays a crucial role in preparing future life and formation of his subjectivity. Though his school bears a good reputation in the city, it becomes a prime location for Bhola to germinate negative energies, unhealthy and unethical elements. He dwells in fantasy and irrelevant thoughts. His sexual obsessions reach to such point that complicates his living and descends him to the level of bestiality.
Bhola is a fat boy since his schooling days. Bhola is “tall, soft and almost Kashmiri-white, with large jiggling hips . . . a life of their own” at just the age of twelve years (6). His obesity and womanish appearance becomes a centre point of insults all around. His friends and teachers call him ‘fatso’ and ‘womanish’. Due to his physical appearance he has to face embarrassment frequently in the school. He can not participate in sports or PT classes that actually constitute the ground of proper growth in the school. His sports teacher Anthony hardly spares a moment to irritate and insult him at any available opportunity. He looks older than his age groups. The lack of commitment of his parents, his childhood and early adolescence encounter the worse moment to his early aloofness. The mentor-less home life, unsettling surrounding with hostile people and unfavourable opinions around the school gradually inseminate the germs of negativity in his mind and orientations. His thoughts start loitering and ensuing actions of disrepute. He never receives that boosting infringement neither from his parents nor from his teachers generally expected to be a child’s guide, philosopher and friend in school. His growth is stemmed under a shadowy phantom like darkness without any flickering point of hope.

Bhola negotiates his hostile environment both at school and at home. Both the institutions play a vital role in shaping the child to its right path. If any hindrance appears it is the duty of both the institutions to rectify and re-direct a child’s course. But he utterly misses the both and also the holistic approach generally claimed to be practised in a poshy private school. His sports teacher is a rascal, a complete villain in dealing with his students. Instead of training them as a dynamic teacher, he resorts to autocratic means. He dominates, thrashes, kicks and boxes his students mercilessly as if he is licensed to do so. There is no register of decency in his school teaching profession.

Bhola is a child already suffering from obesity, obviously needs a very special attention to physical education. Bhola’s inability to comply with the activity serves to tamper his revengeful attitude. He is completely a cruel teacher from his behaviour or activities. He considers his students as beast and uses methods or language unprecedented in any reputed institution. The opening pages of the novel are good illustrations to justify Bhola’s disconcerted life throughout his growth to the life of profession and marriage.
Bhola, his best friend Dosto and other classmates are trained in the scorching sunny midday during their Double Sports period from 12:05 pm to 1:35 pm. They have the exercise of inhaling and exhaling till the counting twenty by their teacher Anthony. Unfortunately, Dosto, already exhausted, is unable to hold his breath and gives up before the count of ten by his teacher. But it is enough cause for Anthony to turn ferocious. Before the boy explains something in his defence, Anthony mercilessly pulls him by the ear and boxes till he bleeds to make “him all right again” (3). His rage is turned towards Bhola as he utters ‘ridiculous’ on what Dosto has done in order to draw his teacher’s favourable attention. The atrocities of Anthony are beyond any acceptable limit in any educational institution. He digs his nails into Bhola’s ear and drags him out like a dead dog out of the line. The cruelty of Anthony is compared with a Nazi commandant of a concentration camp in English film who sneers at novice trainees trying to escape his rigid rules. The cruel teacher continues his punishment scolding in derogatory remarks to him: “So my little woman, you’ve been learning big words … Ridiculous. Only when you die, my woman, will you cease to feel ridiculous … you’ll find time enough later in my life, my boy, to learn big words” (4). He starts kneading the soft arm flesh between Bhola’s left triceps and armpit and after a sudden release predicting Bhola’s stumble, “he spreads his legs, thrusts out his crotch, snarled and called him womanish” (4). The poor boy remains in that impossible posture for long time till he holds by the boy’s hair. The boy in pain retaliates as he rises by hitting his head into Anthony’s crotch. Bhola tries to escape the punishment but it turns out to be another chain of action to regenerate the anger of the vengeful teacher because it gives terrible pain to the cruel teacher. It is a very extreme situation for Bhola for he knows well about the sky to fall on him. The teacher recomposes himself slowly and slaps hard twice on the boy’s face. He thrashes indiscriminately to the latecomers to pick up their sticks. But for Bhola, it is not an end. As Bhola struggles to pick up the stick, Anthony gets the opportunity to “push his knee into his buttocks” (4). Again, as he rise up from the bending posture with Anthony’s knee between the buttocks, the teacher catch hold of his left nipple through his shirt and tweaks hard making the boy moan with pain. Then he immediately picks up the stick before Bhola is capable to secure it and hits the boy hard once again on his head. The boy bleeds through his nostril but it is never a matter of concern for the cruel teacher. He
simply instructs the group to take him to the Dispensary and leaves the ground contented for the befitting revenge on the poor boy. Bhola at that stage of life has no other option than to bear the punishment. But his behaviour despite such corporal punishment is somewhat illogically obsessed with sexual feelings. He cherishes the moment for the feel of “warm at the memory of having touched Anthony’s body” (6). There is a note of strange admixture of helplessness and longing in his utterance: “Beat me, pinch me, you bitch make me bleed” (4). He is relaxed in his own way for having butted his head against Anthony’s crotch. So, he says later to his best friend Dosto that he heard ‘Cleopatra’s balls go plitch” (4). Anthony is nicknamed as Cleopatra by the students in the school.

Bhola’s obscure sexual perception is unique throughout the novel. It has no reason, no allurement of specific nature, no tantalizing effect or any seductive image. He has his own reason and preferences. He likes to spend his time at the Dispensary of the school than play to get punishment in the playground. He has special fondness to “its polished teak doors, the rows of dark-glass bottles, it's smells of disinfectant, the trays of cotton and felt secure in it” (8). Besides, he finds Brother Dr. David Tolaram “sexy too in a different, hairy sweat-and-cologne kind of way” (7). The novelist tries to give two specific directions of thoughts with regard to the growing up priorities of Bhola: obsession with sex without any identifiable object of desire as in common man’s perspective and likeness to foul, filthy and tasteless. In fact, his preference of Dispensary to playground indicates his changing perspective of his pleasure principle. The early adolescence that is generally ascribed to vibrant playful living shifts its dynamism under repression. The scope of proper nourishment is abandoned and the condition he must nurture during his adolescence thus ultimately resorts to soft options. The pleasure principle which is arbitrarily associated with sexuality in Freud or his followers is actually has number of deliverances. The Jesuit school of Bhola, as an institution has the largest potentiality for proper growth and manifestations. It should have transformed its mode in other forms and other activities. But under extreme repression, he chooses for the deformed, ugly and indecent; for he loses the faith to saturate his desire in normal institutionalized education. Hence, he develops sense of ugliness for attraction rather than the sense of beauty for his object of desire.
The institution with teachers like Anthony or Miss Jeremiah has no hope except despoiling their childhood and adolescent schooling. The sexual orientations of Bhola, Dosto, Anantaram and other possess deformed and corrugated manifestations. Miss Jeremiah, the new lady teacher is a hypocrite, cruel and immoral. She is a voluptuous lady of fortyish or something. Her behaviour in the classroom and her attire are emblem against her professional ethics of teaching. She diminishes the reputation of entire teaching fraternity with her behaviour and actions. Her autocracy and ready-to-object appearance fade away as soon as she learns about Dosto’s wealthy parents. She seeks favour, becomes friendly with his family and all of sudden the mediocre Dosto becomes a good performer in each successive tests. Her behaviour and attitude propagate immorality and generate ugly seductive feelings rather than reverence to an honest teacher among those adolescents. The pupils in the classroom release a sigh when she flaps “her thighs open and shut, open and shut, like an eye blinking, mesmerizing the entire front row” (14). The adolescents’ genital urge gets titillated, as if, she willingly tries to arouse their sexual vigour. Bhola and his friends naturally feel exploited between fantasy and desire.

Bhola’s opinion on Miss Jeremiah comments on his deformed sexual orientations. Of course, the responsibility for such degenerated level of sexuality rests on the institution and the role models always present before him. The general curiosity is intense after seeing and experiencing what he lacks. It rekindles his desire even though occasionally dormant under societal apprehension. According to Bhola, the flapping of Miss Jeremiah’s thighs, “as though she needs to breathe her own puss musk to live . . . he would gaze at her knees and thighs and his skull would swell with lust. Look at me, let me lick” (14-15). Bhola’s infatuation with Miss Jeremiah grows stronger at every encounter with her. But his infatuation is not founded on the general sensibilities of beauty or admiration. It is an admixture of odd and incomprehensible; a fathomless difference between likeness and dislike-ness. His feelings are twisted and unconventional. Even the perfumed and colourful pencil of his friend Sad Beri reminds him that the smell might have emanated from “Miss Jeremiah’s orifices” (15). He recollects Miss Jeremiah years later whenever he smells that fragrance. But this time the fragrance disappoints him and wishes it to be “harsh and strong” because he is much far away from her (15). His leniency towards coarse, indecent, harsh and ugly thus starts
maneuvering since his early adolescence. There are references when he tries to do the best and cull the flavour of better adolescing. But it smacks against the frontiers; sometimes the institutions and sometimes the people whom he seeks negotiations.

There are incidents with his cruel teacher or his seductive teacher Miss Jeremiah when his adolescent mind wretchedly faces negativity of thoughts. His expectations are warranted by the hypocritical and insensible temperament of his teachers. When Bhola chooses Patrick Henry’s poem, *Give Me Liberty, Or Give Me Death* for recitation in the Annual Elocution Competition, his endeavour is neglected by Miss Jeremiah. The emotional and passionate poem that would have changed the attitude and feelings of both the reader and the audience is hopelessly funny choice for Miss Jeremiah. She feels disgusted and advises him to choose something funny to suit his character. It is the part of negligence and attempt to avoid recognition to inherent potentiality of the boy. Neither Miss Jeremiah nor the cruel Anthony feels necessity of encouraging the child or preparing the pupils like Bhola to train in proper way. The duty, devotion, affection for the low performers and physically uncommon pupils are abandoned by the teachers. Hence, they provide the scope for Bhola, Dosto and others to deviate from their motivation, cause and actions. They are demoralized mentally and feel imposed what they don’t want to do, say or think. Appreciation for the pupils’ struggles seems to be out of their mind and vision. The sense of deprivation and denial to opportunities make Bhola and his friends to focus their desire on something unhealthy and antisocial activities. Bhola gradually becomes alienated, disowned and unsecured. The course of actions now diverts to mischiefs, truancy and vengeance. He is obsessed with both sex and obesity. He is shattered between gratification of desire and attainment of trimmed physical appearance. He, with the assistance of his friend Dosto, another victim of the tyrant teachers, enters into strange retaliation in disguise. He starts reading crime stories, popular teen magazines, Reader’s Digest, periodicals and western music. Such incorporation in his adolescent life offers him a new wave of adolescing through mischief and unhealthy behaviour. Whenever his teacher Miss Jeremiah attacks verbally or physically he hides his identity and asks in telephone: “Good afternoon. Miss, how is your armpit today?” (18). It is his vengeance against his teacher in his own fashion. Whatever she does or says to hurt him, he targets his vengeance on her through this
media. But significantly the cause of vengeance that possesses root in her actions shrinks to anything that causes him pain physically or mentally. There is a good description on his gradual shift of vengeance in the novel: “Whenever she was sarcastic and violent in class, and later, when anyone offended him in any way, when anything went wrong, if he didn’t get tickets for a movie or he cut his finger while sharpening a pencil with a razor blade, he would call her . . .” (18). Such vengeances against their superiors are often inevitable in any child whose freedom is curtailed and busted. Bhola is not different from those who succumb to wrongdoing for not getting proper outlet of their potentialities.

The vengeance of Bhola gradually attains its height when his feelings of deprivation or non-recognizance grow up with each passing day. Bhola after getting dressed and medicated in the Dispensary loiters around till the bell rings. He discovers his cruel teacher Anthony’s underwear and dresses in the changing room. Unaware of what he is doing, he pilfers money from the teacher’s wallet, wears his underwear and momentarily enters into mimicry of the teacher’s actions. He belongs to a well-to-do family. He never feels scarcity for his pocket money to pilfer from his teacher. It is nothing but a part of vengeance to what he has sustained during the Double Sports period in the playground. Bhola being unable to take revenge at face to face battle with his teacher, is anxious to devise some means to do so. He adopts a very unique method to irritate and disturb him in disguise. He writes very strange and appalling letters assuming to be a homosexual and dying to meet him physically in seclusion. He wants to arouse his sexual desire and feelings in quite funny way. He writes dozens of letters but very soon he loses interest to do frequently after his third letter. He plans to write in his first letter: “I am a boy and you are my god . . . can’t get you out of my mind or body. I want to worship your strong manliness and feel you great hard . . . Meet me on the 13th at 7 pm … I want to be your woman. From your slave” (10). In his second letter, he writes more passionately: “You did not come, you sexy ditcher … you will torture me by not meeting me. I love it but I love your body even more. Please please meet on the 20th” (11). Bhola even threatens in his passionate letter to commit suicide if he does not meet him on the day and place as proposed. After three days of his letter, he realizes that his calculation of receiving letter is wrong and it might have not reached Anthony. So, he writes one more in capitals: “IT’S ME. IF YOU LOVE ME, WEAR YOUR BROWN PANTS
TOMORROW SO THAT I MAY KNOW” (11). It is a trick to know if Anthony is able to read the letter and his response to it. But he is disappointed that he is unable to understand what Anthony’s reactions might have been in response to those tantalizing lines. Anthony wears his blue pant instead of yellow, the next day and Bhola is half-relieved. He tries to convince his vengeance by resorting to a set of programmes. By any means he wants to make him a target as a part of his vengeance against his teacher. So, he says to his friend Hiralal once in his class: “We could start a secret society called ‘the Mark Anthony Club’ with only him as target. Each member does something to him everyday – whacks his cash, pisses on his clothes in the changing room, writes him dirty letters, whatever” (13). There is no reference how the other schoolmates co-operate Bhola in his mission. But Bhola, of course, experiments this trick couple of times. Bhola with the assistance of Dosto tries to create fuss between Anthony and Miss Jeremiah. As he has already started to read crime stories, he and Dosto target against Miss Jeremiah as well. They phone her sometimes to get Anthony messed up with her. Bhola puts on a handkerchief on the mouthpiece and tries to sound coarsely so that his identity can not be divulged. He delivers a message with his identity as Anthony to Jeremiah’s grandmother. Whatever Bhola, Dosto or his friend play mischief by nicknaming Anthony as Cleopatra and Miss Jeremiah as ‘Hip-hippie-ray’ or ‘Jigletit’ may be considered as adolescent notoriety commonly found among these age groups. But Bhola and his friends’ actions are not merely adolescent frolicking for it is a part of their maturation process against the hostile environment. Bhola, being the worse victim, feels his position as abstract, without any existence in reality. He can not believe his existence for real. Whenever he is faced with something unreal he is unable to perceive his existence.

In *Weight Loss*, Bhola also suffers from this tension and becomes engrossed into fantasy, suicidal attempt, day-dreaming, sexual gratification and confusion over choice of vocation. He displays a unique pattern of maturation process and identity formation. It is because of his strange fantasy and his mission to accomplish it. His fantasies are not confined to opposite sex and some romantic or adventures. Its configurations are strange, awkward and irrational. Even his teachers like Anthony and Miss Jeremiah become the object of desire. But his gratification is not necessarily in sexual coition. It is gratified in the form of merely body touch no matter whether in the form of punishment, momentary
visual or unintentional casual touch. The letters that Bhola writes to irritate his teacher expresses his dilemma between male sex and female sex. Of course, there is sufficient ground to accept the fact that it has stemmed from repeated denial of his manliness. Anthony prefers him to call ‘womanish’ and Miss Jeremiah likes to consider him a ‘girl’ not a ‘boy’. He feels disowned and helpless. Physically he is a boy but it is his own consideration because others don’t consider so. What he writes to Anthony to be his woman or a slave, is the expression of his outcry to consider him according to the cruel teacher’s choice. But he wants to be a complete being not a half of an entity of either ‘boy’ or ‘girl’. For Bhola body contact enables him to experience his momentary completeness. However his sexual orientations get confused gradually in maturation process. He seeks completeness by being homosexual and heterosexual later. He wants to belong to both sexes alternately despite his manliness is evident since his adolescence period.

Bhola, at the age of thirteen, starts masturbation, a normal process in adolescence getting genital maturation. There is no question of being masculine in physical growth. But his obesity reminds him of his lack of parallelism with those male peers in the school. His masculinity is challenged by his mentors as well as his obese physical disposition. His identity keeps limping between trimmed physical disposition and authentication of masculinity against constant refusal of recognition. Consequently, it plunges Bhola into lifetime obsession with sex and weight loss programme. He wants to experience his masculinity and also femininity at times and also stay atuned to his personality. From the very early age, his nearly sexual experiences with both male and female, continues to affect his life. Simultaneously, his weight loss programme started at the adolescent period becomes intense with the growth to adulthood.

Bhola’s life in adolescence growth, encounters intense shaky moments when one day, he enters into the cruel teacher Anthony’s chamber nearby the swimming pool. It is to chart actions, to do the worst of his life; unprecedented. It is a complete bursting of his frustrations, depressions and deprivation. At the age of sixteen, the apex juncture for any adolescent, he is rusticated from his school following his act of excreting inside the school chamber of Anthony’s floor. It is a moment of unavoidable misdeed under
extreme compulsion of nature’s call. However, it is contextual to relate between his time of urgency and the choice of location for his release. He would have thought for many other options available in the school campus. But he chooses his teacher’s chamber for the purpose. His expulsion from the school is a turning point because it increases his depressions, anxiety and frustrations in leaps and bounds. He develops tensions of filial and societal apprehension concerning his expulsion and the cause of it. His childhood loneliness becomes more fanatical, more shadowy. The condition in which he hardly has a friend to share his secrets barring Dosto, or relatives to support, his orientations exclusively become plausible in fantasy – o sex, mild criminality, mischief and day-dreaming.

Rustication from school appears as a life changing episode for Bhola. Despite his reputation as a bright student, the principal finally expels him from the school. Since the day of receiving the principal’s notice inviting his parents in the school, he engages himself to more intense thoughts, methods to escape the punishment and maintaining his position intact as a good child among his friends or relatives. His decision to employ Dosto’s bachelor ‘distant uncle, Swaraj Chacha, cousin of Dosto’s father, a black sheep of fifties’ as his father to attend for the call, backlashes against his own ideas. His agonies recurrently bring the idea of suicide very commonly found among the adolescents. But as soon as Dosto’s uncle reveals that he himself wishes Bhola’s expulsion in front of the principal, he abandons his idea for a suicide. He determines to remain alive with a motive to murder him. His revengeful mind becomes more decisive with time.

Bhola’s life becomes monotonous as well once he is expelled from the school. He feels lonelier than before. He does not reveal his expulsion to his friends, relatives or neighbours. Neither does he reveal anyone that his parents are unknown about the fact of his expulsion. He gets ready for school as usual with his satchel and tiffin box and keeps loitering aimlessly in the city. Bhola’s post-rustication life is described in the following way:

He revealed to no one – not to Dosto, not to any of his acquaintances that his family continued to be in the dark about his rustication. The less said the better. With time, moreover, the need to inform the world of the developments in his
career receded. Life had gone on as before. Why complicate it? His subterfuge worked for seven long months because he was a loner in a family of loners, each immersed deeply in himself . . . The nights were difficult, though. In the dark, Bhola’s guard was down and his future black and black, without forms save for the ghosts of his libidinous past – Gopinath, Anthony, Miss Jeremiah, Titli, Moti – their figures and faces increasingly fuzzy, banteringly unreal; passionate physical contact with all of whom had been objectives that faintheartedness, it seemed, had prevented him from attaining … During the day, however, by the second week, in some park, smoking, eyeing the passersby but averting his glance before they stared at him lolling on the bench in his school uniform, he sometimes felt as though he were on vacation. Things could be cool. Even when one was outcast and lived to look around with a tranquil, receptive and open eye to note the simple pleasures that could reaffirm one’s faith in life. (60-61)

Bhola’s condition is comparable to a person in an option less tight corner. His career, life and reputation are at stake. His aimless whole day tour takes him to nothing specific destination and nights pass in endless libidinous fantasies. His wretched condition is easily understood from his activities. His adolescent experience is predictable through the anxieties that he has created for himself. It is strange to observe his thought processes that still beckon him to the world of sexual fantasies and never ending construction of such images.

Nevertheless, Bhola’s bi-sexual orientations start in his school life itself. But it gathers its resources frequently through different conditions he is destined to experience. His fantasies usually evident in any common adolescent are given momentum in dialogism, jokes and circumstances among peers and various occasions. His friend Dosto, for example, once said to him about unbelievable size of a penis. The man with such a long penis could not hold it so he wrapped the same around his “neck like a muffler or a snake and have its mouth pout out between two buttons of his shirt like a pink carnation: at a party, a society lady admired the flower – “oh what a beauty!” (25). He is reminded of this joke one day when he meets a sadhu on his way back home “the sort of person who makes one marvel at the variety of homo sapiens as a species” (23). The road is
deserted except Bhola, the Sadhu and a stray dog. The Sadhu, who is bearded, slim and dark, is holding a red cord in his left finger and the other part of the cord is invisible inside his kurta. He very strangely catches his hand and chants some mantras as if to sound mystical. He also inquired about the cause of sadness. He offers Bhola to twin the cord in his index finger with an advice to pull it with heartfelt love and pure thoughts to experience miracle. Although Bhola’s mind is not engaged in the act he tugs the cord to find “a rather phallic looking leathery cosh into the edge of the tip” and realizes that the cosh is the Sadhu’s phallus with “a perforated foreskin” (24). It is very surprising and unbelievable for Bhola but it reminds him “his first love, Gopinath, the family cook” (24). Bhola all of a sudden drops the red cord and run homewards. But the Sadhu does not let him go; he also keeps on following behind chiding the boy to act as his admirer. He urges Bhola to stop and experience to what he is upto. He says:

Whatever are you running away from? Friendship between strangers is more beautiful than the love act … the giver has to first make ready the taker, exactly like the woman in the love act, whose arousal has poetically been composed to luring a pet snake out of a hole by offering it milk … the intensity of friendship can even be measured by how far the snake moves out from the hole. Of course, it can enjoy the milk ever, with its body halfway out of its lair. (24-25)

The Sadhu follows Bhola and simultaneously keeps on urging him to be his mate in that strange love-act. Bhola, who is frightened and amazed, tries his best to escape that strange invitation and the figure following him. At last he feels relaxed when he reaches Makhanlal’s paan shop because the figure trailing behind is no more visible to him. Later on, Bhola feels that the Sadhu was both sexy and scary. The Sadhu gives him the world of fantasy. So he dreams days and nights for months about him. His world of fantasy leads him sometime to very strange thoughts. He fantasizes that the Sadhu’s mouth has “widened to engulf and suck on Bhola’s skull and at the end of the red cord jerked a fat, rigid snake, its sausage tongue twitched in and out like the head of a penis” (27). His dreams and fantasies continue to disturb his mind for many years. Sometimes it appears multi-personal happening; all the people from his life take part in those particular moments of fantasy.
Every child in growing period experiences sex not merely in his/her libidinal pleasure. It changes it pattern, mode and orientations according to the age-specific growth in physical and psychological manifestations. Bhola in *Weight Loss* has his sexual experience through fantasies at the beginning, followed by body touch and finally the genital gratification. His childhood gets titillated at the age of seven in a very comic situation. Bhola, as a child, denied of closer attachment to his parents, experiences childhood sexuality at the mercy of his governess and the cook. So, his first sexual experience, as he admits, is initiated through the cook Gopinath. When he is merely seven years old, he experiences sexual arousal with him. He has “fondled the blood-red cord” through Gopinath’s abdomen. He feels a kind of jerk through his pierced foreskin. Again, he is sexually aroused the day he follows Miss Jeremiah in the Jahanpanah Public Gardens. He is “hypnotized by her hips swaying like a duck’s in skin tight white slacks, he, as helpless and out of control as one of the stray dog suitors around a bitch on heat in a neighbourhood rubbish dump” (20-21). Anyway, the cook has been his friend, teacher and source of entertainment in his childhood life. The unprecedented incident that Bhola comes across with the Sadhu with long and strange penis tied with a red cord is a substantiating episode to what he has experienced years back with the cook Gopinath. Bhola is exclusively attended by the cook when his parents are away from house. Gopinath is a marijuana addict and sleeps on the terrace during nights. Bhola’s neighbours are suspicious if Gopinath is a eunuch and ask him to peep inside Gopinath’s pyjama. So, he is curious always to peep into it but never has the opportunity. Once, when his parents go to Gwalior, he and the cook are on the terrace to stay with him instead of sleeping indoors. Bhola wakes up at the wee hours to find Gopinath already fast asleep with his pyjamas heaving up and down according to the momentum of his breathing. Bhola, who is already curious, can not resist the temptation and immediately gets to work to open the strings of Gopinath’s pyjama. He tries to open loose but can not be successful. As he tugs the pyjama down, he is really taken aback. He sees:

Gopinath’s loins pop into view, dramatically, like a black breakfast sausage-with accompaniments – produced by magician. It was then, that he noticed properly for the first time the red cord he had seen a thousand times before around the cook’s
waist, how it descended to pass through a demure golden ring that pierced the foreskin of tumescent penis. (29)

He is enthralled and proactive to examine the penis at erectile position. He also plays “horsey-horsey” with the red cord and “watch the phallus prance” (29-30). It is a very novel discovery for Bhola, a sense of shivering to challenge his childhood innocence. It pulls him out from the abyss of innocent childhood pleasure principle to a newer world of experience of touch, feel and gratify the sexual needs. It gives him the first thrust of sexual desire for which he always feels “aroused yet depressed” (31). He initiates the sense of infatuation towards Gopinath. But the person introducing him to the world of sexuality, soon disappears from his life. He is inquisitive for sufficiently long time to his parents about Gopinath’s address. His parents try to divert his mind with some fabrications. However, his desire continues to inflame him in his fantasy. The novelist describes his untamed longing for Gopinath: (he) “had sorely missed the cook and had felt bitter at not seeing any sign of reciprocal affection” (31). It implies the character’s lack of emotional support that essentially bears duality of nature. His sense of deprivation of ‘reciprocal affection’ is due to insufficient involvement of his parents. So, there is obviously a turn towards one who educates him, nurtures him and befriends him. The separation from Gopinath sends Bhola into awkward fantasies quite often. In his fantasy, he “visit[s] Gopinath, they elope[d] and live[d] together” (31). The cook becomes the solicitor to his needs. He fantasizes himself as if “he becomes his servant’s servant and his cook’s cook, all in the prodigious and enduring fantasy…” (31).

Nevertheless, Bhola’s likeness and craze for Gopinath gradually changes its configurations in his succeeding years of growth. Bhola’s memory of Gopinath is gradually dimmed with the passage of years because some other figures start to replace the image. He is unable to preserve it for so long as he does not have any photograph in the family. Neither any significant occasion is associated with the family to preserve his memory. His memory is overlapped with the entrance of Sir Anthony, Miss Jeremiah, the Sadhu, Moti and Titli respectively. Accordingly, his fantasies too coalesce into various colours in the following years.
The sexual orientations initiated at the age of seven without understanding its true urges, gets further pungency with Anthony, Miss Jeremiah and the Sadhu. All the experiences he shares with these figures are either in the form of touch, sight and infatuation. The rising amount of infatuation extremely swings through his fantasy, dreams, in thoughts and feelings by the age of thirteen years. He starts masturbation by the time he meets Moti and Titli. The physical urge gratified in loneliness further wants exposure to real situations and with real people. The extremity of his untutored sexual habits gradually becomes deformed, obscene and bizarre. He loses the distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality. His only motive is to gratify his sexual needs with any partner irrespective of age, caste and sex. The growth of sexual duality occurs simultaneously throughout his adolescence to adulthood. He develops a special likeness towards odd things, situations and people of lower strata. His first meet with Moti and Titli, the vegetable vendors on a Saturday morning, is to decide his future course. He is in his mid-adolescence of fifteen years old then. The couple aged twenty years appears as vendors but Bhola’s mind gives birth to number of thoughts. He is curious to know whether the couple are “brother and sister – or husband and wife, or lovers” (40). He is carried away by the deformed physical structure of Moti and Titli. The small nose with rising cheek bones and stout like athlete with irresistibly swaging buttocks are the centre of attraction. There is a gap between his age, caste, social hierarchy and respective concerns but it has no value in Bhola’s estimation. He wants to befriend them not because he is keenly interested in their true friendship. But it is his non-compromising desire to experience them. At the beginning, his concentration is focused to the female, i.e. Titli. He identifies something special at the very first sight to meet his needs of infatuation, of sex or sense of pleasure, whatever. The adolescent desire shoots up his mind: “… the patches of perspiration at her armpits extended to her breasts … he wanted to lick the sweat out of her cleavage, wondered how many dozens were fucking her and then felt dizzy when he thought of the moist heat in her loins” (41). His desire is thus accelerated towards filthy, voluptuousness, vulgar and unhygienic things. Sometimes, his desire has no connection with sexual pleasure. It is simply aroused at bizarre and obscene. He knows that the vendor couple belongs to some unhygienic slum areas yet he seeks those unattractive figures. So, his fantasy takes him to those probable
hazards that he might face as consequence to what he desires. He imagines some dangerous contagious diseases that would attack him for his intimate contact with the couple. He counts at syphilis, leprosy, herpes, hepatitis B, tuberculosis etc. that he might suffer from. He also ponders over what he would spread in return. The couple reside in Ambedkarpuri, beyond the suburb of the city, a place known for Bangladeshi refugees in slums and well known for unhygienic and frequent epidemic diseases. Although he comes to know about their habitation, his infatuation does not descend; rather he urges them to be frequenter especially on weekends. It is the particular day he has waited for them. He grabs any opportunity to smell Titli or touch her during his unintentional transactions of vegetables. Bhola’s mind is excessively occupied with sexual thoughts. He often fantasizes and says to himself: “smash the bridge of my nose with the disdainfully powerful thrusts of your pussy muscles while my palms palpate with trembling adulation your breathtaking buttocks. While olisboi topple all around me, let me, inhaling the aroma of your vagina, swoon into oblivion” (44). He finds that strange relationship between them fulfilling. It is, of course, not always superscribed by the sense of sexuality or anything obscene in true sense. Mere presence of the couple that confined in touch and smell is promising to his adolescent desire. So, the novelist comments on the strange bondage between them:

… He freely touched their hands and forearms during their exchanges, thumped the man between shoulder blades, squeezed his waist in brotherly affection and tested his Maths by lobbing sums at him. Their camaraderie was in some senses even more fulfilling than sex because it comparatively innocent and therefore increasingly uninhibited; further sex with wife or husband or both together was likelier to be more explosive in his head than in reality. He was thus after a fashion content with his day – the Jeremiah, Tolaram and Anthony during school hours and then the afternoon to look forward to. (45)

The relationship between Bhola and the couple is not reciprocal in fact. They want to sell their vegetables to a customer and Bhola in exchange grabs the opportunity to gratify his needs. His entire focus is to provide an outlet to his urgency of infatuation
and fantasy. His relationship is something between infatuation and sexual desire. Anyway, both the parties satisfy their needs in their own fashion.

When Bhola is rusticated from the school, he is more engaged with his irrational fantasies and longing for Moti and Titli. Having nothing to do, his mind is confined to unprecedented whimsicality. In one hand, he has to maintain the secrecy of his expulsion and his gradual obsession with sex, fantasy and infatuation on the other. He maintains a life of duality in self. Simultaneously, he also maintains a school false life undisclosed to the people and his family. He prepares early, does all the works he used to and gets ready for school in time. But in reality he sojourns to a vagabond life roaming around the market, watching people around or daylong sitting blankly in the parks in his uniforms. As he returns home, his mind starts looking for Moti and Titli, the usual howling as announcement of arrival of those two particular vegetable vendors. But Bhola’s feelings get badly disappointed when suddenly Moti and Titli stop visiting his house. Their absence makes him impatient day by day. So, he one day picks up his bi-cycle and rides towards Ambedkarpuri. He wants to re-discover them as soon as possible. But it has been an unfamiliar area so far with slums of Bangladeshi refugees and number of alleys with shacks all around. His presence is curious for anyone because he surely does not belong to that place or people. He has no concern for anything except to find them out. After judicious prolonged search, he discovers them in a clinic called Dr. Vijayendra Borkar’s MBBS, General Practitioner, where Moti is an attendant and Titli a nurse. He spots them on the road itself. Despite the differences between their ages, Moti around twenty six and Titli in twenties, has been his destination. He is overjoyed to celebrate at sudden recognition of Titli though she dismisses him and ignores his approach and tries to move ahead. But Bhola, who is already in obsession for her, holds by shoulders and kisses her. His mind is immediately caught up with all those bizarre thoughts that have driven him ultimately to this mission of re-discovering the couple. His feelings are, of course, not disclosed but he actually becomes expressive to himself within:

I love you, screamed silently, suddenly, guiltily and rapturously at her docile profile, for your trudge up the social ramp, you make my heart quicken and my loins jump, you and my lust for you make belong in the work a day world of
Bhola like a true admirer expresses his dissidence over Titli’s negligence in showing concern for him. He behaves as if he is trying to impose his relationship. There is a tone of displeasure, complaint and pleasure rolled into one. But all of a sudden, he turns around and starts running homewards with his school bag thumping along. Bhola’s tumultuous adolescent mind is still not able to calm down. The wave of thoughts, torrents of desire, and the pain of separation put him in destitute condition till three o’clock that evening. His emotions are so powerful that he smokes cigarettes, masturbates, and consoles with Jethro Tull’s songs on his brother’s stereo to calm him down.

Bhola extols between fantasy and reality, truth and untruth, pleasure and pain, perceptible and imperceptible, fact and fiction, dream and wake situations. He loses the sense perception to the genuine and what is superscribed in social living. It does not matter him whether he is capable to accommodate himself into the world he has chosen. The common social parameters do not contain any significance in his deed or feelings. His complete solace can only be achieved when he is closer to Titli and her husband Moti.

Nevertheless, Bhola is not utterly a spoilt child from his academic point of view because he manages to continue his education despite his rustication from the Jesuit School. He appears his papers as private candidate from a municipality school and passes out with flying colours securing fourth position in the state. But he is quite different from the other modern adolescents who are excessively concerned for their future prospects and vocations. His father is very happy but yet confused enough for a tag ‘private’ in his certificates. He is ready to afford to any better distinguished college in the country. But Bhola’s obsession for Moti and Titli has been paramount importance than his academic pursuits. As Moti and Titli are vanished suddenly from Ambedkarpuri, it is a mission for him to relocate their habitation to which he has already gathered clue. So, he decides to take admission in an unfamiliar institution in a hilly region. His father finally offers his consent to pursue his higher education after satisfactory inquiry about the institution, i.e.
M.K.M.Z.A.P. Graduate and Post Graduate College for the Sciences and Humanities, somewhere in a valley several hundred kilometers away from his city.

Before his departure to the new location, he nearly has sex experience with a girl recently shifted to a house closer to his. It is a sunny afternoon on the terrace of his house with his peculiar fantasy of sex, imaginary parents, his foreign visit and masturbation when he meets Kaushalya, nicknamed Anandini or Anin for short. They gradually become friends and one day crosses the building to her terrace with a rope ladder for playing card games, jokes, drinks and even flirts. He flaunts before his friend Dosto even that he has physical relationship with her sometimes. He invites him as well to accompany him and Anin for a party on the terrace. All of them get drunk with bottles of whisky, rum, beer, Limca and Thums Up. Anin, who drinks for the first time in her life, is unable to control and starts belching soon. She is at her high after couple of rounds and finally lies down with a thud. Anin is older than both Bhola and Dosto but she is attractive, freer, unpredictable, “apt to get tipsy” for Bhola (85). But her condition scares both the friends, and Dosto leaves the terrace within no time. Bhola, who is anxious to know whether she is dead or merely fast asleep, wants to get her examined. His adolescent notoriety gets tilted when gets the feel of her bra strap beneath her kurta and a sudden thought enters the idea to be experimental. He creates an idea about her judgment regarding getting sexual. So, he thinks: “if she doesn’t wriggle her shoulder out of my grasp, it means that she’d like me to get physical” (86). As soon as Dosto is away, the constipation of his adolescent mind enters into soliloquies regarding what he should do sitting beside her. He decides to stay back for the apprehension of somebody getting her raped. He is at a loss beside her when Anin tugs him slowly at the hem of his trouser. As he sits down, she makes Bhola’s lap her pillow. He feels her head repose against his crotch and senses her exhalations against his jeans. His thought process becomes depressive for not being decisive at the moment. He wants to leave the place immediately to read Agatha Christie in one hand, and also wishes to hold that position longer on the other. But his adolescent mind repeatedly brings in torrents of thoughts to proceed with the opportunity to get sexual. He thinks:
May be if he unzipped himself, then took off all his clothes and rubbed and brushed his penis against her skin, and pranced it about all over her body like a lizard on the prowl and at the same time thought furiously of some sexy things, it would balloon up to a respectable size. And yet she was pretty, that was what was so horrible, he thought, stooping over with yogic ease and kissing her temple, she was attractive, warm and lovable …. (89)

It is for the first time, Bhola has the opportunity to experience the sexual feelings in a real situation with an opposite sex. He is inhibited, indecisive and perplexed at the prospect. He is back to his senses when the dog starts barking noisily. He puts her head down slowly, picks up the bottles and hobbles towards a dark place between water tank and chicken coop for seclusion. Bhola has a very narrow escape through his real situation experience due to the sudden appearance of Anin’s father and the maid servant.

Bhola’s life gets mechanical and focused on two things: weight loss and relocating Moti and Titli at his new place M.K.M.Z.A.P. College. His weight loss program kicked off in his early adolescence after facing constant demoralizing treatment and comments around gets a must follow routine in the valley. Since he belongs to a Brahmin sect, his father desires him to choose a Brahmin girl for marriage. He understands his ‘sexual proclivities’ very well. So, he warns him to avoid any such opportunity in the valley. Bhola is permitted to go to his new college with a promise that he “won’t be smitten by true love for some low-class, low-caste, dark female” (99). But his father is unable to predict that his son is not interested in woman but a male suitor Moti. His father’s approval is offered only after he finds out someone from his step mother’s acquaintances to keep an eye on Bhola. Yet Bhola has his own course of agenda and a satisfaction that he can continue with his mission there as long as it is concealed from other.

He arrives at his M.K.M.Z.A.P. College one Saturday evening. He is received at Inter-state Bus Terminus by Mrs. Manchanda, a pale, soft-spoken, bespectacled lady, and separated from her husband. She works in the same college and lives with her son Vivek about the age of Bhola in the ground floor apartment. She becomes his landlady for his college student life at M.K.M.Z.A.P. Immediate after his boarding in one of her rooms;
he starts his mission to find out Moti and Titli. So, he very ordinarily asks them whether Dr. Borkar, the employer of the duo, can be visited on Saturday afternoons. As the classes begin, he is occupied with adjusting himself in the new set up. He has to maintain his weight loss programme and mission to re-locate Moti and Titli simultaneously. So, gradually, he starts following a routine-like life through his growth to middle adolescence period:

He was – obsessed with keeping physically and mentally trim . . . He jogged, attended class, read, kept to himself, helped Vivek with his English comprehension, joined the Chess and Cinema Clubs, and turned eighteen. Though young, he was demoralized, nevertheless, at the unambiguous manner in which time was running out. (109)

His routine bound programmes are confined to seven activities but over the years it extends upto thirteen at one point. He, in fact, observes at least seven of the most important obligations he has incorporated in his routine. First of all, he ordains himself for weight loss, – secondly, reading Freud’s *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, – thirdly, maintaining of daily account in a diary about his sexual and other reminiscences of the past and present – Fourthly, almost a yogic method to blank his mind for few moments – Fifthly, to hold his tongue in silence – sixthly, using of left hand in some act to stimulate his unused parts of his brain and – finally, outdoor trips to help Vivek or some other persons of his acquaintances. In between, he also writes letters occasionally to his father, meets them personally during vacations and maintains correspondence with his friends Dosto or Anin through cards and letters.

Dosto and Anin also pay visit the following winter when he discovers Moti for the first time in the valley during their strolls along the lanes at the Himalayan foothills in a fine morning. Moti appears at a distance all of a sudden behind a tree. Anin is somewhere enjoying her trip. The monotonous life of Bhola, as if, changes into a blissful moment of celebration to find Moti just ahead of few paces. A strong torrent of hope, feelings of joy and lust excite him at his success finally. The novelist beautifully elicits his mood and says:
Just the sight of Moti’s rear ten paces ahead altered everything, gave the world bounce and exhilaration, reddened and warmed up his ears and cheeks, blurred the surrounding landscape into and Impressionistic fuzziness of brown and green and dust, and honed his life down to reveling in the tingling in his thighs as he vowed never again to lose sight of the figure in red. (116)

He meets Moti in a restaurant nearby where Anin is already present with a film Magazine in hand. Moti himself schedules a meeting somewhere at a lonely place, and finally it is decided to be at Mrs. Manchanda’s that evening. Bhola discovers Moti nine hours late the next morning shivering in cold, bare headed in a thin pullover, completely wet. It is the time for Bhola to go jogging; so very awkward feelings upsurge: “the unexpectedness of the sight first hit Bhola like a jab below the heart and then flooded him with a hot mix of rage and lust” (127). But he is not happy for his nine hours late arrival. Against all his attitude of ‘die for Moti’, he instead warns him not to follow and spoil his mood. When he touches Moti, he finds him like a piece of ice due to cold yet he moves ahead with his morning jog. When he is almost exhausted, he sees Moti trailing him all the way at a distant. Back in the room, he starts the heater and meets Moti naked. Moti falls down on the floor panting. He orders him to take off his clothes. Moti observes his command as if he is an automated machine following the commands of its master. Bhola is “excited by Moti’s doggedness” (129). There is no resistance from Moti while Bhola proceeds to fulfill his unrequited love and nakedness. The thin caricature with flattened stomach of Moti, what Bhola always has desired for himself has irresistible temptation. His feelings, by observing the kinky shape of Moti, are self-contemplating. The figure of Moti is a sharp contrast to Bhola’s obese stature. So, he longs for it and experience it:

His was the slimness of malnourishment. His stomach sank inwards, his hips were wide, flat and high, and his thighs wiry, brown and hairless. Bhola would have loved to have a body like Moti’s weight loss to the maximum, ribs standing out tight under the membrane as though against a sail in a high wind, nipples indistinguishable protuberances, the navel a tiny dip in the undulation of smooth, small muscles. (129)
Bhola’s behaviour, attitudes or treatment with Moti is beyond comprehension because it has no reason or any obligations. It is rather a part of exploitation to a poor, tottering and helpless person. Moti is a representation of a class seeking assurance of existence, a destination, a foundation to alight in peace and happiness. Moti becomes prey by choice because he needs money for some stupid operation of his penis advised by the freaky Dr. Borkar. Finding no other options, he has to surrender, no matter how his feelings and poverty is raided under some obscure momentary sexual experimenter. On the other hand, Bhola is not mindful to his deeds for he has been waiting and chasing them along at the stake of his career. The condition in which Moti meets him and explores homosexuality can never be conducive or humane from any point of view. Unconcerned of Moti’s tottering condition, he invites him despondently: “Here, let me warm you up” (129). The destituteness of Moti is very aptly considered by the novelist: “. . . unable to resist himself, he gently pushed Moti on to the bed, lay down atop him and pulled a quilt over them. He felt like an ascetic testing his endurance by laying flat on a glacier … He kissed Moti on the lips … Moti’s expression darkened faintly with a sort of surprised tenderness” (129).

Thus, Moti becomes the victim to experience his bi-sexual orientation fermented in his early adolescence. His long year’s infatuation, dreams, fantasy and thoughts are materialized but not in reciprocal interest and wisfull surrender. It is acclaimed against helplessness and circumstantial compulsion on the part of the victim. It is however significant to observe the impression of Bhola after getting physical saturation with Moti that his action is reactive for a very short span. Bhola feels dissociated with the act at the very next moment: “It had certainly been quick. A quickie, like a fast bowler at cricket” (130). The immediate fading away of feelings is followed by his deprivation to Moti, who has surrendered himself for a thousand rupees for his operation. Moti pleads that he needs money that day itself but Bhola denies, and instead, he asks him to visit again the next evening for a massage. As soon as he is done away with Moti, he is engaged into his fantasy of Titli for which he has abandoned his best city life: “Bhola tried to conjure up a picture of Titli as he had last seen her in the neighbourhood park, plump and meaty-thighed in a nurse’s uniform” (131). He insists Moti to meet Titli and locate their place of living. In between, however, Bhola continues maintaining a homosexual relationship with
Moti: “seducing Moti took six pleasurable weeks. They met on the average once every five working days in the afternoons in Bhola’s room after lunch … He paid Moti fifty rupees per encounter – or per massage, because that’s how they started and officially, that’s what it remained” (134). At the initial stage, Moti half-heartedly refuses accepting but later on he is used to it. Sometimes Bhola even doesn’t pay him and Moti often reminded the arrears.

Following Moti on a Monday after his friend Dosto and Anin have left the place, he discovers Dr. Borkar’s clinic in an untidy location. Dr. Borkar with his newly adopted family of Moti and Titli lives and practises his profession there. His only motive has been to find out Titli and to be the part of her life. The fantasy and daydreams Bhola visualized at his home finds its solace with Titli’s physical temptation. But it unexpectedly initiates with Moti who has perhaps not been his sole purpose of chasing them thousand kilometers away from home.

Anyway, he meets Titli after prolonged separation and as always her plumpy face and body curves arouse him a primitive desire. So, when he sees her at Dr. Borkar’s clinic, his desire stirs up afresh. He wants her “to sit on his face immediately and grind his jaws into dust with her pussy power, right then and there in front of her husband and the woman patient …” (136). At the same time, he is anxious to know whether Dr. Borkar is acting as her husband on sexual terms, for Moti is impotent while Titli is too sexy. It is surprising for him to learn after his several visits that his doubts are not actually the whole truth. On many occasions, he notices that Dr. Borkar discontinues attending his foolish patients all of a sudden in the middle of his examination. He pushes Titli to a nearby room and bolts behind and he appears within a very short moment. Later on, he comes to know for his satisfaction that Dr. Borkar is actually an impotent and he merely foreplays with Titli to saturate his fake sexual orientations. The relationship between Bhola and Titli or between Moti and Titli or between Borkar and Titli are complex in nature. Each of them perhaps is dependent on the other. It is reciprocated by material, sexual and emotional drives. At any rate, both Moti and Titli become prey willfully. They choose to be victims in order to survive. Their debauchery is perhaps sacred for it is genuinely subdued by their means of subsistence and also imposed by
their emotional attachment since long time enough with each other. Bhola and Dr. Borkar are experimental of their sexual desires. Bhola under the whims of adolescent fantasy and novel experience of sexual spurs, and Dr. Borkar under the burden of separation from his wife and family gets engaged in the sinful act of illegitimate sexual gratification with Moti and Titli. The helplessness of Moti and Titli finds different interpretation beyond rationality. According to Dr. Borkar, Moti’s “impotence is a typical psychosomatic case” hence his relationship with Titli is justifiable (139). It is an opportunity for him to fill the void although he himself is an impotent. On the other hand, according to Bhola, Moti is incapable “almost imbecile in his inarticulateness” for Titli’s physical demands (139-140). But ironically Moti is the most desired object to explore his fantasy. Bhola gets difficulty in defining his relationship with Moti. It is neither a relationship of lovers nor a married couple. He always gets to work right after massage and reaches climax too early. But its duration depends primarily upon the arrival of his landlady Mrs. Manchanda or her son Vivek. But Moti has no ‘heightening of desire’; his penis remains “half a kabab dough” (141). Bhola never wants Moti to continue staying with him as soon as he is done with because he wishes “Moti to die, to disappear instantly and not return to Bhola’s surroundings for a week or two” (141). Moti’s necessity of money and too doggedness is impressive for him. So, Bhola does not leave any scope for mercy with the poor fellow. He undertakes his sexual experiments at anytime, anywhere, anyway. Moti feels obliged and follows his instructions accordingly. Bhola never tries to ponder over the doggedness of Moti. He takes it as part of his kindness shown for Moti rather than raid on his helplessness.

Bhola’s relationship with Moti is never smitten in terms of complete sense of contentment. There is a fringe of desire towards Titli disturbing his mind constantly. When he calls up Dr. Borkar, he wants to breathe sex into Titli’s ear whenever she happens to pick up the receiver. He remains in touch with the trio even when he is away to his home during vacations so that the trio would not be lost again. His mind does “oscillate between the masseur and his wife” (142). His fantasy for Titli most of the time brings him very intimate infatuation, ugly thoughts and warm feelings in him: “In his head, she lay naked before his face, pale, giant thighs parted and her vagina, wriggling and writhing like Borkar’s worm like lips, emitting with its heady sewer smell the words
of wisdom of the doctor … Her thighs and loins would start to pulsate, slowly and domineeringly” (142). Despite his excessive leniency towards Titli, he is indecisive with regard to his sexual partner. So, the “swings of the pendulum of his desire between male and woman, husband and wife” keep on rolling (143). Bhola carefully maintains secrecy of his relationship with both Titli and Moti simultaneously. Neither Titli nor Moti knows that both of them are engaged in sexual relationship with the same person for money. When Bhola starts his relationship with Titli, he feels as “a nightmare comes true, obese, disingenuously demure, passively basking in his attentions, a voluptuous slab of fish meat” (154). Titli also pays special attention to her appearance. She wears georgette sari or anything rich like and necessary make up: “she sprinkled talcum powder in her armpits and between her breasts but her loins reeked of the sewer, perhaps because Bhola’s lips were the first to nuzzle them – or so she claimed” (154). Bhola spends his entire monthly pocket money of rupees hundred per encounter with Titli, an amount doubly paid then her husband’s fee. His feelings are similar after each encounter because he does not wish to see her for couple of weeks. Yet he enjoys the feeling of guilt, disgust and the smell of her loins that keep on disturbing for long time enough. However, his temptation overshadows his momentary disgust and sense of guilt for he repeats the same action again. His relationship, as with other partners, is of explorative nature with Titli as well. He wants to know whether she has been in physical relationship someone other than Moti or Bhola in her previous life or if she anyway has tried to suck of anyone of them or even whether the person she had relationship before possesses black, fat and smelly penis. He wants to know her excitement, her attitude and feelings during the intimate moment. He would often urge her to react looking into her eyes. The divinely pleasure as induced and justified in Indian imagination is never an integral part of Bhola’s moments of coition. The commitment and reciprocity are absent in their relationship. Even if an illegitimate relationship case in Indian society would not have degenerated into such an abysmal point as it happens with the trio. Besides, neither it is his mode of simple adultery. It is particularly a method of his playful agenda, an inhumanly exploration and exploitation of psycho-sexual obsession. The novelist here seems to be rather pornographic in his detail. But he has an intention to delineate the filthy and darker world of psycho-sexually off-beat generation of adolescents and youth.
All the three prime characters – Bhola, Moti and Titli can roughly be categorized as youthful generation. But nobody is represented as chaste, meaningful and rational in his/her pursuits in the world of experience. Both Moti and Titli are already engaged in sexual relationship before their elopement. So, according to their compliance to seductive mission does not circumscribe as exploitation in literal sense. On the other hand, the society both the parties, Bhola from an elite class and Moti and Titli from the lower strata has nothing to do with the successive indulgence into debauchery or moral degradation. They are however obliged under their respective needs.

Nevertheless, Bhola despite being opportuned to gratify his sexual needs with both Moti and Titli gradually turns sexual maniac. It is the year 1998, Bhola already turned to be aged twenty nine years when he opens another chapter of sexual relationship. This time the novelist takes to a gloomier world of adultery. Bhola, one morning, after his routine run, happens to share tea with Mrs. Manchanda. He somehow cultivates a sinful idea about Mrs. Manchanda. Since he has already been used to such sexual relationship, he pulls Mrs. Manchanda towards him without hesitation and develops one more relationship with a woman about his mother’s age. Bhola’s mind becomes habitual to immediate sexual reflexes. Mrs. Manchanda is without make up that morning but her faint lemony after shower perfume is irresistible to explode his filthy ideas. So when he sees her, “kind of longing, like being homesick for a woman’s body” disturbs him (214). His conscience and ego turn indomitable and indulges into another heinous episode of his adulterous life. The new chapter inaugurated thus continues to be his part along with his previous affiliations with Moti and Titli simultaneously.

Bhola’s life of debauchery appears to have come to an end when he is married to Kamala, the sister of Kaushalya. It is believed to be initiation of a responsible life and mature understanding to worldly affairs. But Bhola’s perspectives deceive all such predictions and further jeopardize his own being. His thoughts at the prospect of his marriage with Kamala, is worth observing. He thinks: “. . . another life had been inaugurated. He would marry Kamala and on evenings like these, he would cocoon himself with Mrs. Manchanda or some rickshaw-puller and then at the end of it, in the long, long run, he would pay for his transgressions; that seemed quite reasonable” (223).
Bhula’s father has always been insistent on caste, sub-caste, clan or hereditary things in terms of marriage relations. But Bhola has no any concern for such issues. He is even ready to make Mrs. Manchanda his life partner. When he meets her first, he notices that although she seems to be a motherly figure, his relationship over the years enables Bhola to believe in final belongingness of his desire. His self argument in favour of Mrs. Manchanda is often jostled within him but fades away after few moments for she disapprovingly seems to belong to Hindi-belt community. Eventually, he is married to Kamala, a divorcee and daughter of Inspector General of Police. Despite his father’s dissidence for status, he finally accepts Kamala for his life partner. Bhola’s transition ‘from paid sex with an ex-vegetable vendor and her husband to unpaid sex with an ex-landlady’ and finally to a divorcee through socially recognized relationship, brings him new wave of thought processes (228-234). The grand party of his marriage ceremony in five star hotel with dignitaries across the state, is a major occurrence in his life. But his feelings are quite obscure at the prospect of his new sexual life with Kamala. She is a good humoured, decent and worldly lady. But glancing at Kamala’s profile with her countenance in the party Bhola is “wondered how on earth they were going to have sex together and that too in the next few hours. May be they would do without it” (234). He develops an idea that everyone in this world certainly does sleep with someone or the other. But he has seen since his childhood that his father and stepmother are different from the group because they sleep in different rooms. He believes that it is his father and stepmother’s couple in the entire world to do away with the tradition of sleeping with the partner and his would be the next couple to follow it. Besides, he also realizes that the true mutual love for Kamala would surely be lacking as he has been leading a different life with different partners over the years. His love for Kamala perhaps would be turned into actual sense when he would be aged sixty eight or something. He thinks: “Till then, he would roll and pitch through his days, oscillating between maddening lust and a revulsion with loneliness on the one hand and a kind of loathing on the other of the human body, of its implacable and brutal demands” (234).

Obviously, his prediction of a brutal consequence is eventually verifiable in the later phase of life. However, his prime concern of being fatso, perennial search of sexual gratification and novel experience drives are never disclosed even though he is tied with a
sacred bondage to Kamala. His desire for both Moti and Titli or Mrs. Manchanda cannot be unleashed from the deeper level of his psyche. The old adage ‘as you sow so shall you reap’ is very beautifully illustrated in the novel *Weight Loss* through the character of Bhola and others. Dr. Borkar and Bhola do forfeit in the long run as the plot gradually move on to its climax. Dr. Borkar does the stupid operation to Moti as his experiment to revive Moti’s genital erection. His circumcision of Moti’s genital organ is one of the most horrible episodes of the novel where we find the piteous and stupid Moti bleeding on a stretcher while Dr. Borkar perform some nonsense rites ignoring the fatal pain of the patient, Moti. He even indulges into his petty activities of seducing Titli simultaneously in between his task of operation. Bhola, who has been curious enough since his childhood about the ring around the penis tied with a red cord that he saw in the cook and the Sadhu respectively, becomes curious too and enjoys the entire bone reeking stupid operation. But both Bhola and Borkar forget to perceive the agony of the helpless couple – Moti and Titli that is bound to backlash very soon in the doctor’s life. Later on, both Moti and Titli run away from Borkar after beating him nearly to death. By the time Bhola is married, both of them remain out of access to Bhola or anybody. But their existence is ever palpable to Bhola in other forms and shapes in other occasions. These figures keep on emerging constantly in his thoughts. Since they have become an integral part of his thoughts and imagination, their existence flaunts through in a transferred mode. So the novelist says: “He – they – were never far from Bhola’s thoughts, Moti and Titli . . . occasionally and unexpectedly bobbing up in the features of other men and women whom Bhola met in cheekbone, a smile, a forelock, a ponderous gait, a lanky inability to stand straight” (237). A sense of absence, a void haunts Bhola though he, otherwise, seems to be complete with his family and profession. His love for sexual experimentation cannot be mitigated with the legitimate relationship with Kamala. He needs the vulgar, awkward and illegitimate coition that he has been used to.

Bhola, later on rediscovers Moti with Dosto and Kaushalya’s help who are already in business of body fitness club. The frequency of sex with Moti, Titli or Mrs. Manchanda has been more than his merely eight times in three years sex with Kamala. On the other hand, Moti remains away from him for some thirteen years and Titli with Borkar till his death. All of a sudden, when Kamala is expectant of a baby, he telephones...
Bhola. It is the only moment he seems to look forward in his marriage life. But there is a very disturbing thought in him while expressing his wish for the baby to Kamala: “. . . that it would be nice to have a child, to father a warm, living thing that would be part of the commonplace joys of the ordinary world, distinct and distant from that other distorted and arid universe of oppressive blood—coloured walls and intoxicants . . .” (253). Accordingly, Kamala conceives in the April of 1991. All the while, however, he continues his debauchery with Titli and Mrs Manchanda in the hills. But he is conscious about Titli’s rising disinterestedness and unconcerned behaviour about Bhola’s sexual activities. He notices that Titli has lost her former voluptuousness. Since, she is abandoned by her idiot husband Moti at the mercy of nonsense and bedridden Dr Borka, she becomes unmindful to Bhola’s approach: “she waited, cold, for him to finish so that she could pick up her earnings and trudge back to clean up Borkar’s vomit” (258). Bhola feels that he is somehow responsible for such condition of Titli. After the death of Borkar, she calls up Bhola about his demise and her loneliness but Bhola has no any categorical concern for her despite his partial admittance of his fault. He simply replies her that Moti would soon join her and asks her to come up to him afterwards. But she does not come up actually. He decides to enquire about Moti and Titli later on through Anin but he desists immediately. Somewhere deep inside his psyche, the longing for her is weakened to know her habitation really. He receives a call from Moti in the evening of Kamala’s false alarm of delivery urging for an important meeting. He is surprised to find Moti after such a long thirteen years gap. Next morning, he is anxious to know about Moti’s intention to meet him. He does not want to get up for his usual runs and dislikes the idea of having sex with “a male lover from his past” (260). A tide of binary pulls in his inner psyche disturbs him. He wants to avoid his sinful act in one hand, and also wants to remain faithful towards his pregnant wife on the other. The mind is full of opposite thoughts about his wife in hospital expecting a baby and his desire to meet Moti. He realizes that his craze for Moti is sinful and very irresponsible as if his wife is beckoning to have his baby. He ponders over Moti’s prospective meeting and feels as if Moti is deadly impatient for his bodily pleasure that he has been missing for years. Despite his resistance, the spectre of Moti appears and hypnotises his senses “by longing like the white waves of dawn, leaping upon an abandoned lighthouse” (261). Bhola meets
Moti the next morning at Jahanpanah Public Garden and fetches him along. But he does not comprehend that Moti is already a changed man, self-composed and out in his secret mission. Since his wife is in the hospital, he wants to re-experience his past unaware about Moti’s drastic changes in attitudes, behaviour and mode of response. The conversation between Moti and Bhola inside his house displays Moti’s changed personality and Bhola’s stupidity to ignore while Bhola urges him to go physical just like before:

I want you to take off your clothes, relax and massage me. Don’t worry about money. I will pay you whatever you need . . . Take off all your clothes like me. There’s only us. And God. (274)

There is sharp contrast between past and present behaviours of Moti. It is now more powerful voice that Bhola has never imagined during his past relationship with him. There is firmness in what he says to respond Bhola: “I don’t like what we were doing.” He refuses to observe the commands of Bhola unlike his former ‘doggedness’. Bhola’s tries to be playful in his words and actions. He even holds Moti’s genitals comments: “A Peanut is best for winter”. Bhola predicted Moti’s early surrender to him as before but Moti surprisingly disapproves the challenge to his masculinity: “I am slow to rise . . . I am now strong in my loins. I can hold on for hours. The longer one can retain oneself, the stronger one is morally”. Bhola is able to comprehend the tone of boasting masculinity but he wants to hear more to intensify the mood and asks Moti: “Can you now enter a woman? And when inside and pumping away, how long can you hold on then?” (272-274).

Bhola is carried away by the present situation of desire to rejoice with wine and cigarettes unaware about the terrible future. He has never dreamt of Moti that he could be a changed man. Bhola always estimates Moti as emotionless fool to be exploited at any time. There is very contrastive image of Moti in his idea that he is “attractive as a physique, depressing as an individual and interesting as a type – rootless, totally adrift, mentally dislocated, illiterate, the quintessential constituent of a mob, waiting to be
leavened by some demagogue, rabble rouser or saint” (274). But that day Bhola fails to recognize Moti’s transformation to a stern, rough, capable, determined and vengeful person. He is busy with preliminary preparation of massage and sex. He is insistent and encouraging as well to return to his earlier demure, passive and cold position. But Moti has regained his masculinity with a macho attitude. He objects any sign of insults neither in words nor in texture or tone of Bhola. The dark chapters of Bhola as if are suddenly disclosed before Moti. Earlier he has been tolerant to Borkar’s oppression against him. He might have believed the notion that the relationship between him and Bhola grew up under the compulsion of financial constraints. So, it had been considerable because of his singular involvement in the heinous act with Bhola. The disclosure of the fact of Titli’s involvement was an intolerable discovery. He justifies his vengeance considering Bhola’s loathsome dirty activities irrespective of relations. He shoots him down on the spot with his revolver that he brings along, saying – “you are very dirty … First my wife, then me, sometimes on the same day with the same lips” (277). The incident occurs on the day Bhola’s baby comes to this world in the hospital.

Fortunately, Bhola survives despite the fatal attack. He is recovered senseless in a very unusual and naked position for the timely medical support. Since his father-in-law is the Director General of Police, he starts the investigation to trace out the miscreant through Inspector Mudalier from Criminal Investigation Department. Bhola, however, very shrewdly records his statement with self fabricated story, a fine admixture of fact and fiction, presenting him completely innocent in the entire incident. He conceals his relationship with Moti and presents him as merely an acquaintance from his college life at M.K.M.Z.A.P. about thirteen years back.

Anyway, Bhola’s psychological impressions are sometimes quite unpredictable. Although the worse consequences he has faced over the years, he seems to remain unchangeable; neither in his worldly approach nor in his activities. The bullet wound is not healed yet he seeks Moti and Titli’s whereabouts. So, he inquires with Anin over the telephone and gets the message dropped that he wants to talk with both Moti and Titli face to face who happen to be taking shelter in Anin and Dosto’s house for some time then. Bhola and Kamala have been seriously looking for a good caretaker for their
daughter Karuna when Titli appears before Bhola on Anin’s recommendation. It is a moment of disbelief and extreme happiness for Bhola whose sexual urges have been dormant for quite some time. As he drives with Titli to fetch Kamala, Karuna and the maid from his mother-in-law’s house, he immediately returns to his past filthy actions with Titli that have been residual following the fatal attack. The serpent of bestiality overlaps the honest and sacred love for his new born baby and his wife. The novelist elaborates the initiation of Bhola: “He began to paw her while driving during the first ride itself. Foreplay was him humming . . .” (341-342).

Bhola avoids sexual relationship with his baby’s caretaker Titli for a few beginning months. But when he returns from M.K.M.Z.A.P. College after his week’s service he is aware about his wife Kamala’s absence at home. He is already informed by her that she would go to the hospital to pay a visit to her ailing mother while he would arrive at home. All the way back home he imagines a good time with Titli as she would be alone with the baby. As soon as he reaches home, he hears the heart-rending cry of his baby. So, without wasting a moment he rushes to his flat. As he has already an extra key of the locked door, he unbolts the door and stealthily runs towards his bedroom. As he enters through, he finds Titli hiding something under a pillow sensing Bhola’s arrival. Bhola is skeptical all of sudden about something unexpected; the baby’s uncontrolled cry and tiny livid swellings on her elbow obviously alerts him. But Titli gives simple explanation of the swellings as heat boils. Bhola is easily taken into confidence as he is preoccupied by the stirring sexual desire for Titli. So, no sooner has he calmed down the baby in his arms, he immediately gets into his dubious action of filthy sexual games with Titli. He manipulates Titli to undress herself and wear the baby’s vest although it is unfit for her size. Being unable to restrain his desire any longer, he puts the baby in the playpen and unburdens his sensations. But he notices the red plastic tube slid under the pillow a few moment before. He discovers it to be a syringe full of baby’s blood. He understands the entire cunning strategy of Titli. He hits hard on the face of Titli and gets the detail of her intentions. But he is again misled by her because she tries to justify her act by saying that it is part of cure to treat the high blood sugar level in the baby’s body. This is one of the most important episodes of the novel Weight Loss. It directly comments on Bhola’s character, his perspectives, above and all, the final breakdown of Bhola’s
inner conscience. The feel of belongingness, the spontaneous flow of filial affection, enlightenment towards the new world of significant living, he started to cherish since Karuna’s birth, re-emerges. The intensity of feeling is now perceptible in genuine form. It is both realization and revelation moment for Bhola. His genuine feeling for the baby is given outlet: “He held her tight against his chest and began 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” (350). However, there is still lack of determination to choose an honest and just life. He is at the juncture of two roads: one leading to a sacred and honest life and another leading to moral ennui. When he rushes haphazardly to the pediatrician, he shows still an unusual behavior with Titli. The stern and furious attitude that generally permeate through any parent against malicious elements perilous for a child is alarmingly absent in Bhola as biological father. It is partly because he himself has been responsible at large and lack of courage to abandon the life of debauchery.

The incident with the baby decides his future life. The relationship between Bhola and Karuna, and the in-laws deteriorates gradually. His father-in-law begins to look for another suitable husband for Kamala. The married life of Bhola thus arrives at the brittle point. He tries to explain Kamala about the semen stained body of the baby during the incident. But Kamala keeps silence all the while. Both of them try to find fault with the other. Finally, they are separated after couple of months and the powerful father-in-law starts taking revenge on both Bhola and Titli. Bhola pays the price through separation from Kamala and his dearest daughter Karuna. Titli faces the worse consequences getting assaulted almost to her death at Jahanabad and hospitalized therein. Life of Bhola then onwards transforms into guilt and impending doom rather than guilt and regeneration paradigm commonly found in many popular narratives. The night he spends at the bus terminus at Jahanabad after meeting Titli in the hospital and recording his statement to the police Inspector, reminds its readers the old King Lear in the stormy night tottering in the street:

At three a.m. shivering with cold, he got up, wandered off and returned from a piss to find that his place had been taken by two rock-star type beggars. Hugging himself, ambled off to look for another spot, found none vacant, and finally
settled down against the side wall of a closed ticket booth, idly wondering whether he had seated himself on and was rubbing his back against a stranger’s dried urine …. (363)

The difference between the two can only be measured on the basis of scale of magnitude, intensity, sympathy, moral issues and past actions. The sense of guilt of Bhola intensifies his depression to the point of neurosis. He feels himself distanced from everything he has been enjoying around his life. He is alienated from both inner and the outer world – separation from “everything in those four years – his state of mind, his memories, his friendless, dead disciplined life – everything …” (364). He seems to hasten his ageing period and loses his weight faster than ever before. Bhola is gradually sterile in his moral, social and personal judgments. He is incapable to differentiate between matter and metaphysics, facts and fiction, rational and irrational, belongingness and loneliness. It appears, as if, he forgets the distinction between his intuition and physical urges; a state of unwarranted stoicism. So, the novelist describes his condition: “Bhola had reached that state of depression – a sort of Nirvana – when he could bear nobody in the world a grudge, neither the person who shot him not the person who extracted his infant’s blood for sale, nobody” (364). It is, however, very strange that he continues his illegitimate sexual relationship with Mrs Manchanda in absence of her second husband and her son Vivek. He forgets the frequency of having sex with Mrs Manchanda. Bhola’s mind loiters day-dreaming and visualizing extraordinarily some odd apprehensions. He visualizes his daughter being separated from him and bidding good bye again and again to each other. Sometimes, he also visualizes someone trying to kill his baby and asking for some ransom. It is the beginning of his insane behaviour. When he receives the news from Titli about the death of his best friend Dosto over telephone, he forgets how to react on hearing the news. So, he wishes Titli not to disconnect phone till he knows how to react. Later on, he discovers that his friend has died of overdosed drugs.

Towards the end of the novel, we find the trio – Bhola, Titli and Anin in a hell-like mental state in the Calm Centre of Anin and Dosto. Bhola lives in illusions and behaves insanely. He does not know exactly what he is doing even when he is having sex with Titli. He does not feel whether he is using his genital organ for sex or some other
parts of his body. Similarly, Titli and Anin also do not know in fact what they are doing. It is a cursed life at the Calm Centre. It seems, as if, the entire world has gone mad. The final retardation in the Calm Centre culminates into oozing out of Bhola’s life in drops. In his feat of mental state, he picks up a sharp knife and goads his testicles. When it is unbearable, he shifts the wound to the artery of his left wrist and cuts it down. He, under the feats of those extreme moments, imposes his self-chosen ultimate penance. It is his way of unburdening the weight of his sin and misdeeds. The last few moments that he sees in his feeble and closing mind is his only daughter who has been separated for long time enough. He foresees the world from where she has come down to this world of pain. It beckons him as well to the land where she belongs to. The closing paragraph is the articulation of selfless true love and affection for his daughter that he has missed:

Before the blurred orange-dark veil of his eyelids, a child’s face, moon-like grinned ecstatically at him. It was his daughter, he was sure of it, from the world to come, reassuring him that all was well. He had the impression that she wanted to pummel him for several minutes into waking up from the life that he was in. never in all his years or in his dreams had he seen anything more welcome, more beautiful … Then his daughter stopped smiling. Do people really weep for God as they do for their wife and children? … And why on earth should they? Retorted Bhola, gently musing his daughter’s hair careful not to bloody it as the life dribbled out of him. (416)

The world around Bhola has always been ugly, uncouth, awkward, shabby, and immoral illusions. His inner eyes fail pitiously to recognize the good and beautiful in his entire life journey but suddenly the sense of beauty and goodness genuinely pervade spontaneously through his dark ignorance. However, it is too late to mention the relevance in Bhola’s case as he dies young due to his ever preference to wrong people, place, friends, path and unconventional sense perception. Weight Loss elucidates the predicament of growing up people from early adolescence to the youthful days. But most importantly the representation of adolescence is unending. It is never brought to its fullest extent. Most of the characters, apart from Bhola, Anin, Dosto, Moti and Titli, do not reflect any particular growing up phase that distinguishes between adolescence and youth
or adulthood. The novelist for example cites this unique theme through the character Bhola in this novel: “Even at thirty seven, he puzzled like an adolescent over the mysteries of the world … He couldn’t understand how, at the end of the twentieth century, people could still die by the millions out of poverty. He spotted the wretched everywhere” (377).

No character in growing up age in this novel is represented as adolescent or youth motivated to chase a particular dream or aim in future life. There is no concern for the choice of vocation. Neither Dosto, nor Anin or Bhola’s brother seems to take the worldly affairs seriously. They are either governed by the sexual obsession, drug abuse or the artificialities of the world. They remain experimental whole their life since early adolescence to adulthood. Accordingly, they forfeit as predicted at the very beginning of the novel. Dosto dies of overdose of drugs. Anin also suffers from addiction and finally ends up her life as mentally retarded person. Similarly, Bhola’s brother, who appeared to be a little bit conscious about his career, faces a wretched life later on. These characters, the representatives from civil societies, spoil their lives partly because of their own faults in nature and largely due to lack of proper nurturing through their environments or accountable various agencies. But the lives of Moti and Titli are sabotaged for being the game of the financially capable people around them. They are the oppressed class and the oppression is obviously carried out by the circumstances developed by the master sections. Anyway, the novel though appears to be humorous and light in texture, it poses the question on the existence of suitable maturation process in the society.