Chapter - 1

INTRODUCTION

The background of the Birth of the Anti-hero

Upamanyu Chatterjee is a social realist for whose creative endeavour the overarching theme of identity and its plight in a hostile world forms what may be called the bed-rock. He has written three novels—English August: An Indian story (1988), The Last Burden (1993) and The Mammaries of the Welfare State (2000). The common thread that binds all the novels is the anti-heroic image of the protagonists and other characters. The genre of fiction in general being a verbalized from of social reality, the relationship between this genre and the realistic portrayal of the human condition makes a novelist naturally inclined to the foibles of men and women of the created fictional universe. In fact, there has been a very cogently argued critical position which classifies literature on the basis of hero’s power of action, which may be greater than, less than or the same as of ordinary beings. The hero superior in ‘kind’ to others is divine hero of a myth, and the hero superior in ‘degree’ to other human beings and the environment is the typical hero of romance. The hero superior in ‘degree’ to other beings but not to his environment is the hero of epic and tragedy and the hero superior neither to other human beings nor to his environment is the hero of the low mimetic mode i.e. comedy and realistic fiction. (Northrop Frye: Anatomy of criticism: Four Essay). The fiction of
Upamanyu Chatterjee is realistic fiction par excellence. His fictional world is marked by antiheroic symptoms like moral ennui, alienation, angst and absence of every thing that may be called noble. It is an unheroic world but a world which refuses not to seem factual.

It is the concept of anti hero and its treatment which marks out Chatterjee as a significant presence amongst the novelists who have a sharp eye on what prevails in our society. The concept of anti hero which we find in the novels of Chatterjee is central to the colonial disruption of the urban Indian educated personality in terms of multiple splits. Here are splits between man and his traditional moorings, between man and his family, between man and his environment; and lastly but most importantly, the split between man and his inner being. The implication of this split at multiple levels of human existence is noteworthy in terms of their various manifestations; but the broad single reason behind this split is the rupture that occurred in the psyche of the English educated urban ambitious youth. Chatterjee's concept of antihero brings to the mind the explanation which the noted Indian English novelist G.V. Desani gives while writing about the significance of the title of his novel *All, about H-Hatterr*. Desani writes, “H” stands for Hindustani, while Hatterr is one who has his hat bigger than his head. Hatterr is Eurasian, he is a curious combination of the East and the West. One can see in his personality the clash of cultures. (Desani 232).

Cuddon’s Dictionary of Literary Terms defines the anti - hero as a ‘Non - hero’. It further explain him as ‘the antithesis of a hero of the old fashioned kind who was
capable of heroic deeds, who was dashing, strong, brave and resourceful (Cuddon's dictionary 45). Who is the non-hero or anti-hero in the conceptual universe of Upamanyu Chatterjee? As indicated above, the concept of anti-hero as we find reflected in the fictional oeuvre of Chatterjee rests on the alienation suffered by the people who received English education as a 'gift' of the colonial encounter that India underwent. This encounter gave birth to a personality whom some critics call 'Babu - an urban, westernized, English educated person' (Khair 9). The condition of babu-hood implied a violent wrenching of the westernized English educated urban Indian from the sustaining source of his traditional native moorings. This Indian personality was antithetical to the older generation of intellectuals for whom Frankish knowledge was by no means superior to Indo-Islamic knowledge, and it was Abul Fazl more than Adam Smith who remained their administrative lodestone (Bayly 229). The antithesis implied the interchange of the throne of importance between Abdul Fazl and Adam Smith. It, in turn, starkly implied an internalisation of the western value systems and standards of moral, socio-cultural and intellectual assessments. This internalisation worked at the twin psychic levels. On the one hand, it devalued, in the perception of the new westernized Indian, the grandeur of nativity, and on the other, did not provide a salutary substitute for the devalued old structure of values. In fact, the borrowed epistemology of thinking and judgement, brought into existence by the internalisation of alien values, was not capable of providing anything like a sustaining pillar. Its tragedy was that it itself was mired in the quagmire of challenges and failures. What it did was to drag the urban English educated Indians into the
antiheroic situation so vividly worded in a cogent study of modern man and its predicament. An eminent critic’s remarks in the context of his perception of the crisis in the life of the Western man are quite relevant in a consideration of the Indian anti-hero who is linked to his western counterpart owing to the colonial encounter. He writes, ‘we are not the first epoch to feel puzzled, confused and anxious, but we are, I think, the first to be pervaded by a feeling of guilt, an uneasy and nameless guilt. (Issacks 49).

The two world wars fought within a period of less than forty years shattered every hope and dream of moral advancement of the human race. Henry James expressed his despair in a letter written the day after Britain entered the First World War. In it he lamented that ‘The plunge of civilisation into this abyss of blood and darkness... is too tragic for words (Coote 9). One of the cardinal consequences impinging on the implications for human consciousness, of that ‘plunge of civilisation into’ the ‘abyss of blood and darkness’ was the collapse of certainties. Those certainties had been as, James suggested, that the world was comprehensible and things were on the whole getting better because at the foundational level these were linked to the grand project of Enlightenment and modernity. The birth of modernity is traced back to and linked with the discovery of the new world, the Renaissance and the Reformation, but it was the phenomenon of the Enlightenment at the end of the eighteenth century which opened the massive fountain head of the modernist state of mind. Daniel Bell opines that the idea of the modern ‘opened explosively with the French revolution with the belief that a
religion of humanity would replace traditional faiths and in the conviction of unlimited progress in man's material achievements and the spread, if not the dominance, of rationality (Bell 43). It was the triumph of reason that was believed to be formed by the natural progress of civilization. Philosophers like Rene Descartes and Immanuel Kant lent their full authority to the ideas of cognitive harmony, order and rationality. Descartes, a contemporary of both Newton and Galileo, scripted the agenda for a new science with his famous principles, 'Cogito, ergo sum' (I think, therefore I am) and systematized the world into two diametrically opposed realms: the realm of the thinking mind and that of the inert matter. Immanuel Kant became the harbinger of scientific enlightenment when in 1781 he declared in his critique Pure Reason that 'Our age is, in essential degree, the age of criticism and to criticism everything must submit (kant 7). In his well known article, "What is Enlightenment" he provided the key and the salient message for the project of modernity that depended on the autonomy of reason and pleaded for a quest of autonomy itself. He believed that much of the suffering of humanity stemmed from the inability to think for itself and from its slavish adherence to dogmas and traditions which kept it in a state of 'permanent immaturity' whose only antidote lay in 'the daring of reason' (kant 55).

The devastation of the world wars coupled with the experiences of the Holocaust jolted the project of modernity so violently that the western mind seemed to lose its moorings. It had been led to believe that progress was historically inevitable, that the
premodern worldview of obscurantism and dogma had finally been supplanted by the enlightened worldview of science, reason and unstoppable advancement. But what stared in the face of humanity was the absurdity of homo homini lupus—man is a wolf to man. As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer remark, ‘In the most general sense of progressive thought the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant’ (Adorno and Horkheimer 3).

The central ingredient in the phenomenon of the destabilisation of the western man’s consciousness was the weakening of the belief in the much touted claim of rationality. It came to be realized that modernity was a cold-hearted neglect of important values of tradition, community, of attachments and commitments which, even if non-rational, should not be rejected as irrational. The intellectual landscape of the second half of the twentieth century darkened with moral confusion raising doubts about the conceptual foundation of western modernity. Behind this confusion was the fact that the claims of the modern west, permitted on the idea that it embodied the best in human society because of its universalist position on rationality and morality, were rigorously questioned. Man was at a loss to understand ‘why a culture that had given rise to a tradition .. where the themes of critical emancipatory reason and the concrete realization of freedom were so dominant provided such fertile soil for the rise of Hitler and the Nazis (Bernstein 41).

The confusion was in fact a serious rupture at the level of consciousness caused
by the pathologies generated by modernity. Max Weber diagnosed it as the consequence of what he called the triumph of Zweckrationalitat, a purposive instrumental rationality which can affect the entire spectrum of social and cultural life. While rejecting the necessary linkage between the growth of science, rationality and universal human freedom, he forebodingly visualised the creation of an ‘iron cage’ of bureaucratic rationality from which there was no escape. He captured the tragedy at the heart of modern man in his memorable words:

No one knows who will live in this cage in the future or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or if neither, mechanised petrification embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For this last stage of this cultural development, it might be truly said: “Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart, this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved” (Weber 182).

The disenchanted world was a world marked by moral confusion, collapse of consensual human values, individual’s crisis of identity and a pervasive sense of guilt. In short, an incoherent world. It was a state which Durkheim called anomie, a form of rootless unhappiness and in the Weberian formulation it was Entzauberung– disenchantment or disillusion consequent on western man’s over-rationalization. To Weber,
modern man lived in a world which was going through a state of unmagicking that was caused by too much emphasis on science and rationalization. He suggested that some functional substitutes for myth and religion were essential to preserve the coherence of the socio-cultural personality of the western human animal. But it was not to happen, and the result was the emergence of a personality split at the inner level owing to the loss of anchorage of certainties regarding the present and the future. This personality was the personality of the antihero incapable of thoughts and actions traditionally associated with heroic personality.

The Indian Antihero—the Product of the Colonialist Discourse

Upamanyu Chatterjee, in his novels, is deeply concerned with the consequences of the encounter between the British colonialists and the Indian society. In fact, his concept of the antihero rests on his perception that the power relationship between the colonialist discourse and the Indian society, heavily tilted in favour of the former, engendered an urban English educated Indian personality which was alienated from its cultural mooring. Therefore, it is quite germane to the topic of research that a mapping of the colonialist mind be undertaken. The colonialist design and discourse, to repeat the well known, were a reflection of the confidence which a belief in the idea of reason-driven progress bestowed upon the people who happened to rule India. Colonialism itself was a politico-territorial extension of the thinking which prided itself upon the
conviction that Providence had chosen the European civilization to enlighten the large part of humanity which remained, according to the western measurement and assessment of human progress, unenlightened. As was pointed out by thinkers like Michel Foucault, it was an illustration of how power relations in society are formed, maintained and transformed, how the dominant class imposes its idea of ‘right’ or ‘truth’ on those without power. The colonised society became the site where ‘the vengeance of the sovereign was applied, the anchoring point for a manifestation of power, an opportunity of affirming the dissymmetry of forces’ (Foucault 55). But the historical irony is that the colonised elite took the colonialist project in an un-Foucaultian way.

The desire for and belief in the ideas of comprehension and control marks the heroic self-perception of the people who embarked on the project of civilizing (as they believed) the uncivilized (as they perceived), their ‘other’ ‘The white man’s burden’ was a term which reflected the patriarchal confidence of those who considered themselves heroes whose appointed heroic task was to carry this burden efficiently and spread the message of science-generated progress and moral advancement. It was a time when the antitheroic characteristics of self-doubt and moral ennui, which became visible hallmarksof the mindscape of the western man later, had not raised their agonising fingers on the heroes who were imbued with self-confidence girded by their firm faith in science, reason and the progress which was certain to follow in the temporal wake of their intellectual endeavours. In 1792, Charles Grant wrote a tract entitled ‘Observation on
the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain' which can be taken as
a representative treatise showing a heroic self perception of the colonial strength in
comparison with the colonised society. The central assumption behind the arguments
advanced in this tract was that the English nation was 'formed by superior lights and
juster principles and possessed of higher energies'. (Viswanathan 73). He confidently
advocated the idea of one 'Power, one mind' which reflected an intellectual moral stability
of the colonial heroism marked by a total absence of self-doubt and anxiety about the
design of casting the colonised into a single moral code preferred and believed in
resolutely by the colonialist mind. The famous minute of Macaulay on the introduction
of English literary studies in India was a continuation of the spirit charted by Grant. It
was all marked by the confidence characteristic of a stable intellectual personality. It was
this very personality which turned unheroic and lost all the confidence and stability at a
later stage, but after winning over the India elite.

The Colonialist Polemics which won over the Colonised

[The Indians] daily converse with the best and wisest Englishmen through the
medium of their works, and form ideas, perhaps higher ideas, of our nation than
if their intercourse with it were of a more personal kind (Trevelyan 152).

Grant's formula of 'One power, One mind' was a succinct formulation of the
design of the colonial heroes to see and judge everything, from politics and morals to
to knowledge and truth, in the mirror of western intellectual achievements which were,
according to them, self-evident. They were never in doubt regarding this. The above
quoted statement of Charles E. Trevelyan is a measurement of the then prevailing colonial
thinking that the western civilization symbolised the best that humanity had achieved
hitherto. Its tap root was in the unshakable (according to the then perception of human
cosmology) belief in the culture of ideas which taught that universe worked the way a
man's mind works when he thinks logically and objectively, that, therefore, man can
ultimately understand everything in his experience as he understands, for instance, a
simple arithmetical or mechanical problem.

The idea couched in the statement of Trevelyan has the relevance of power in
explaining the working of the mind which, in its self-confidence concerning itself and
the wide world, considered its intellectual process as well as the product, to be the last
word on everything under the sun. The natural corollary of this thinking appeared in the
gamut of interpretations and viewpoints which disagreed with and cartigated the artistic
and literary works and categories which were not on the same wave length as their
own. One of the very salient parts, as far as our research purpose in hand is concerned,
of the interpretive enterprise was the grounding of literary studies into a rigorous
consideration of the society and culture which produced literature. The inaugural lecture
of A.J.Scott at the university College, London in 1848 can be taken to be the earliest
instance of a formal academic plea for the study of literature as an expression of the culture of an age and as a reflection of society. By 1852 the historical study of English literature was firmly established in the College. In 1875 the alliance between literature and history was accorded institutional status with the merging of the Chair of English Literature with that of History. Never very clear or stable on the point of the relationship between language and literature, English as a discipline became even more blurred and confused when a separate Chair was created for English language in that same year. This transition of the literary emphasis from the tradition of belles lettres to the historical study of literature is very significant inasmuch as it goes very far in giving an idea of the then reigning intellectual thinking which was prescriptive in its soul and firm in the belief that the greatness of the European literature was the reflection of the corresponding greatness of its society and culture. The practical pedagogical consequence of this stand was that the object of literary training came to be understood as two fold: first to develop a historical awareness of the cultural moments which produced the literary works and second, to reclaim those moments as explanatory instance of truth, coherence and value.

Scholars like D.J.Palmer link 'this new historical and organic awareness of society' to the Romantic reaction against the Industrial Revolution and its impoverishing effect on cultural life. They describe the emphasis on order, continuity, sequence and moral purpose as an internal shift within English literary studies and dub it as 'the immediate condition alike of a revivified approach to classical studies and of a social philosophy
such as Coleridge's to bind the present with the past' (Palmer 42). Colin McCabe explains this transition as a displacement of Renaissance conceptions of language that 'removed attention from the situation of utterance and located all significance in the logic of language which was determined by nonlinguistic considerations' (McCabe 26). Described thus, the shift within English studies appears to have an inner logic and consistency; but the description is marked by a curious reticence on the inescapable conditions of the mind and knowledge in hand which require such a momentous shift from present to past, from rhetoric to history. Colin McCabe does not make clear how exactly the logic of language is determined by nonlinguistic consideration. It is even less clear why that should cause an alliance of literature with history. To explain this development solely in terms of widened conceptions of language with the rhetorical study of argumentation giving way to the appreciation of style as cultural expression, is to confine discussion of the development of English studies to changes merely at the level of form.

It was the need of the self-satisfied autotelic colonialist hero to cast the discipline of literary study into a mould which enabled him to judge the vast expanse of the literature produced by the people his country governed in the mirror of his own familiar stands and viewpoints. This critical development of grounding literature into the milieu which produced it had another significant dimension as pointed out by Judith Wilt in one of her seminal article entitled 'The Imperial Mouth: Imperialism, the Gothic and Science Fiction'.
Wilt argues that western incursions into the unknown in Africa, India and the Middle East 'produced a neurosis in the Victorian imagination about how the future would appear' (Wilt 618). That anxiety, Wilt says, is reflected in works like H.G. Wells' *War of the worlds* (1898), Bram stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), science fiction works that she reads as mutations of victorian Gothic, the colonial encounter being the catalytic agent for such transformation. This encounter, in a way, had the ominous potential to disturb the flaunted stability of the western intellectual man. Therefore, the need for the above mentioned critical shift from the rhetorical to the historical seems all the more pressing. The hero, to be and remain a hero, brooks no disturbance in its perception of itself or of others. So the reading of literature as an expression of culture and society became a cog in the larger wheel of the dialectics between truth and error, the former being the monopoly of the west and the latter the condition of the east. In this context the Anglicist-orientalist debates were important in that they gave birth to redefinitions of truth as the discovery of error. The idea of a dialectical progression towards truth through error came into being and it caused the relativization of cultures which in term promoted literary study as intellectual exercise, assuming that the European literature was the beacon of light toward which all literatures should advance. English studies were established in direct dialectical interplay with the eastern tradition and its literary-cultural endeavours. This interplay took the totality of Indian society and culture, its contradictions and anomalies as a reference point for critical formulations. It was not surprising in the light of the fact that the British ruling
in India were administrators and not literary critics. It was natural that the multiple realities of India with which they had to deal would force an expansion of the traditional framework within which literature was normally discussed to include other levels of India represented by its laws, religion, government and social institutions.

It must be noted that the mindscape built and sustained for a long time by the ideals of truth, knowledge and progress dictated by the idea of Enlightenment tended to put each and every aspect of the society and culture of India in the colonialist frame. The appeal of Warren Hastings to estimate the Gita by excluding for a moment ‘all references to such sentiments or manners as are become the standards of propriety for opinion and action in our own modes of life’. (Wilkins 7) and see them ‘as by no means applicable to the language, sentiments, manner or marality appertaining to a system of society with which we have for ages been unconnected’ (ibid.), created a massive critical trend to view the literary productions (which later critical opinion established as great works of art and literature) of India as reflections of the socio-cultural practices which were declared decadent by those who saw difference as absurd, indecent and barbarous. James Mill deployed his theory of historical readings in practical criticism. In his hand, the derivation of standard of literature by empirical methods became a devastating rationale for literary evaluation not in relation to the intrinsic properties of the work, but in relation to a doctrine of utility that approached it in terms of the social and religious practice it threw open for examination. William Jones’ admiration for Indian classical literature and the favourable comparisons that he made on its behalf were dismissed by Mill as naive
responses made solely at the level of form. After reading Jones' translation of 'Shankuntala' of Kalidas, he grudgingly conceded it to be a good example of pastoral but witheringly objected to Jones' belief that the features of pastoral marked by 'courtesy and urbanity, a love of poetry and eloquence; and the practice of exalted virtues;' (Mill 111) were an adequate measure of a healthy sociocultural milieu. Pronouncing Jones as an ahistorical reader, he charged him with an uncritical stance. He opined that Jones had succumbed to the seductive pleasures of a literary genre that obscured consciousness of the evil social practices prevalent at the time and branded him a perfect example of the literary response that was devoid of any relation with the actualities of life and society. Grant and Mill were part of the general colonial mindset which wanted to see and judge the Indian culture and society in the mirror of its own socio-cultural traditions and moorings. This mindset was both the cause and result of the confidence that Europe was the embodiment of superiority. Difference from the things European was tantamount to inferiority.

Edward W. Said in his seminal study of the western approach and attitude to the east has called the colonial tendency to claim the discursive grip over the 'other' and the distant as 'imaginative geography'. This pregnantly evocative phrase sums up the entire gamut of responses and evaluations indulged in by the colonialist mind towards the Indian, in particular, and the eastern, in general, civilizational endeavours. Said further qualifies this substantive phrase with the adjective 'arbitrary' because, as we can easily believe, the 'imaginative' geographer we are concerned with does not call for any feedback audit from the people he is dealing with in his discourses and treatises. It is just a simple
case of the master speaking profusely about the mastered. He writes with characteristic explicitness;

:"I use the word "arbitrary" here because imaginative geography of the "our land-barbarian land" variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for "us" to set up these boundaries in our own minds; "they" become "they" accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from "ours" (Said 54).

The difference was automatically translated into inferiority which, in turn, was discursively manipulated and controlled quite arbitrarily by the twin strategies of emphasising the textual and appropriating the right to represent the east. It was a high mark of the high confidence of the colonial mentality that a distinct academic discipline grew around the theme of the east which came to be called Orientalism. The force behind the 'ism' is the insistence on the distinction of this discipline from every other kind.

One very important feature of the intellectual aspects of the colonial encounter was that the basic approach of the Britishers towards India was almost entirely textual. It was a part of the growing body of knowledge about India as well as the whole Asian continent. The views were sought to be verified by the authority of the prior texts on the
subject. India for them was a textual universe by and large. Actual experience was not deemed necessary for forming ideas and viewpoints. Books and manuscripts (not even sculpture and pottery) were sufficient to convince western academic individual that the frontiers of his chosen area did not extend beyond them. By our today’s academic and research standards such an ultra-textual approach might seem a blasphemy against the tenet of rigour for acquiring knowledge but in those days momentous ideas were formed on the strength of such an approach towards the subject of one’s study. From Sir Alfred Lyall to Balfour to Cromer to Charles Grant to many others, there was the essential agreement that the Indian mind abhorred accuracy which meant that untruthfulness was its main characteristic. As the counterpoint, they believed that the European mind loved reasoning, facts and rationality. It meant that it hated ambiguity and liked truthfulness and clarity of perception. A well defined relation came into existence. Many binary terms were used to express this relation. Irrational-rational, depraved-virtuous, childish - mature, different - normal, were some of the oft - repeated pairs of discursive expansion. It was assumed, rather believed undeniably, that the two worlds lived within their own internally coherent cultures and epistemological boundaries. It does not need mention that the bottom line of this relation was the unequal equation between strength and weakness with all its implications. Said writes:

‘... at the outset one can say that so far as the West was concerned during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an assumption had been made that the Orient
and everything in it was, if not patently inferior to, then in need of corrective study by the West. The Orient was viewed as if framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual (Said 42).

The Internalisation of the Alien Angle

A close study of the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee shows that the alienated antiheroes like Agastya Sen, Jamun and others are the victims of the process of being uprooted from their cultural roots. If we link this uprootedness to the historical process, it appears that what happened was that like any set of durable ideas, Orientalist notions influenced the people who were called orientals as well those called Occidental, European or Western. The process which is to be noted is the process of internalisation of values and perceptions by a person when he/she comes into encounter with a culture other than his/her own. In the context of the colonial influence over the colonised, it was quite visible that the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised was a power framework in which the ideas of modernity constructed the path of communication between the two. The process of internalisation has been widely commented upon in the area of post-colonial studies all over the world. All of them agree upon the premise that the colonised person having been colonised and subordinated for so long becomes obsessed with one thing: proving to the white man that he is worthy of something up to the mark. The famous post-colonial thinker, Frantz Fanon, remarks that the colonised is 'preoccupied with constant comparison, with self-evaluation vis-a-vis the white man
The force behind this process of internalisation was the agreed upon right of the coloniser to represent the colonised, to give a voice to them.

The bottomline of the colonial perception being the Baconian twin themes of knowledge and power, the colonial masters assumed without any tinge of doubt that their knowledge about the ruled gave them the authority to speak for them. They attributed virtual dumbness to them. To have knowledge was to represent that about which knowledge was in the hand of the knower. This knowledge had a sort of scientific status. It was ontologically stable. The divergences, if any, existed, but only within the frame work of the undisputed and indiputable intellectual structure. The divergent test were parts of the collective body of discursive formulation. The main thing to note is that the disagreements referred to the textual positions of the impugned texts, not to the actualities that lay starkly beyond the texts. This frame work was, as mentioned before, the binary opposition between the West and the East. The opposition had its ramifications which have been discussed above. The western power over the east was taken for granted because it was a thing of consensus that the latter had escaped the Newtonian revolution. It was assumed that the cultures which could not benefit from the impact of Newtonian thinking were rendered incapable of viewing the real world as external to the observer. It flowed from this assumption that the Indian mind took the empirical reality to be internal to itself, and so objectivity and accuracy were the qualities of which it remained deprived. The British imperialist thinking ran: as thinkers we are better than they are, because we had our Newtonian revolutions, they did not. The natural corollary of the we-they
dichotomy was the conclusion that it fell upon the western mind that it represent the eastern mind. The white man’s burden had to be carried! the Providence had chosen them to civilize the uncivilized, and to civilize them, it was necessary to represent them

‘City and Cantonment Structure’-The distinctive style of the Encounter

The loss of connection between the English educated Indian urban youth and the large Indian masses is a recurring theme in Upamanya Chatterjee. The resultant alienation of this snapping of ties is the central focus running in all the three novels of Chatterjee. The Chatterjee protagonists are doomed to remain anti-heroes primarily because of their inability to connect with the refreshing stream of the cultural sustenances provided by the general Indian ethos. Their personalities are split from that ethos. In moments of agony they pine for connection; but their English background inhibits and restricts them. They have been weaned away from their maternal source of living, and so their bridges lie burnt down.

To have an understanding of this snapping, it is necessary to keep in mind the fact that the English educated Indian urban mentality, particularly as presented by Chatterjee, has inherited the culture of segregation from their colonial idols G N Devy in his After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism has employed the metaphors of city and cantonment to represent the Indians and the British respectively. He writes,
A distinctive feature of the British colonial rule in Indian was its reluctance to penetrate the interiors of Indian land and society. The colonial British valued the pragmatic concern of preserving their own cultural identity more than the idealistic concern of captivating Indian culture. When cultural influences were exerted in a conscious way, the reasons were always pragmatic and material (Devy 92).

As we see, searching for the driving force behind the culture of segregation, Devy rightly grounds it in simple concreteness. The bottomline of this simple explanation lies in the fact that the colonial masters lived in the pre-relative paradise of self-superiority. The city-cantonment metaphor sums up the essence of the coloniser-colonised relationship. The cantonment symbolises power and strength, and the city represents the site where this power and strength is exercised and displayed. It is not for nothing that another perceptive post-colonial commentator on socio-cultural issues, Ashis Nandy has tried to see the colonial British-Indian relationship in terms of a sexual metaphor. According to him, the colonised culture (represented as female) tries to imitate the colonising culture (represented as male) and ends up by becoming neither (represented as androgynous). This metaphor (The Intimate Enemy) explains strongly the effect of colonialism on the class whose representative is Agastya Sen of English, August: An Indian Story of Upamanyu Chatterjee.

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

This condition makes the antiheroes deprived of the native resources of warmth and emotional sustenance. They become lonely at their innermost level, rendered incapable of any noble action. Life becomes a long tale of suffering for them, solitude brings frustration and despair. They seek recourse to moral action which is barely possible. They struggle constantly to retain values which they feel inadequate as moral paralytics. Being incapable of any meaningful action, they indulge in false pretensions and hypocrises. They try to self-introspect, but even the occasional self-realization paralyses the will. The antiheroes suffer fighting out the cobwebs of their own moral guilt. They seek future peace and tranquillity but get involved in miseries of life. Suffering and torture derive them to despair. They are the products of an age of chaos and confusion arising out of the decline and collapse of moral values. Consequently, their lives are despairing
glimpses of those individuals who live without commitment and faith. They are the protagonists who lack the attributes that make a heroic figures, as nobility of mind and purpose, a life and attitude marked by action and purpose and the like. The notably negative qualities became fashionable in the post-war years as a reaction against the idealised heroes of fiction. The antiheroes are deliberately cast in unheroic mould of moral passivity, selfishness and cowardice; but are impressive in their own ways because of their self-deprecatory and sardonic wit. They are part of the 'anti' theme that has surfaced in other branches of literature as well; a vital development of the authenticity of the interface between the actualities of life and literature. For the concept of the antihero, which we find in Upamanyu Chatterjee's novels, the assessment of Saul Bellow is particularly relevant. For him the antihero is

... the individual under a great strain labouring to maintain himself or perhaps an idea of himself (not always a clear idea), he feels the pressure of a vast public life, which may dwarf him as an individual while permitting him to be a giant in hatred or fantasy. In these circumstances he grieves, he complains, rages, or laughs. All the while he is aware of his lack of power, his inadequacy as a moralist, the nauseous pressure of the mass media and organisation (Bellow 23).
Works Cited


