CHAPTER 3
From an existential study of modern man, his alienation and the loneliness he suffers from, his dilemma about the conflicting claims between materialistic life and a life of renunciation, the making of a choice have preoccupied the structure of *English August*. In his second novel *The Last Burden* (1993) written five years later the author now focusses on the family. So, the move is from macrocosmic undefined area of action. This novel concerns itself with the microscopic unit, the family. However, the family enlarges itself to such a volume that the characters and their relationships become vaster in their magnitude. Chatterjee seems to realize how important the family is in Indian social life.

It is a well-known fact that family is the strength in Indian society. The relationships among the members of the family are so strong that they last long. It does not mean that the relationships are always cordial and characterized by love and devotion. There are
quarrels, bickerings and violence in day-to-day relations. Even so, the family, as an institution has survived and has withstood the western microscopic family system. It is a drama of love-hate relationships, of eternal sacrifices and endless misunderstandings, that constitutes the stuff of The Last Burden.

The writer's observant eye never misses even the smallest detail that happens in a family. Because the story centres round a lower middle-class family in which money is always in short supply, the members quarrel over minor details. The indifference and lack of sympathy from the daughters-in-law who belong to other castes and faiths is a common attitude. Extramarital relationships have become common in Indian society. All these have been presented very dramatically by the writer. Since the focus is on the family, the actors are few and relationships fixed, the novel suffers from for want of variety.

The Last Burden portrays Jamun, a young and sensible bachelor in a middle class family who returns home on receiving the news of his mother's heart attack. His family consists of his father Shyamanand, a retired Government Official and his mother, Urmila, a chronic patient combating with hypertension, piles, corns, arthritis, heart and personal...
problems such as marriage and mind. They live in a house built on their "own clod of earth." Meanwhile, Jamun's elder brother, Burfi and his Christian wife Joyce, who is bored with her parents-in-law, and their two children Pista and Doom also arrive. They also live with them for some time. Urmila gets admitted in Dr. Haldia's Clinic for her heart trouble. A pace-maker is transplanted in her heart. It costs twenty five thousand rupees. There are hot exchanges between Shyamanand and his sons on money matters. The sons, Burfi and Jamun quarrel with each other over the expenses and speculate on how much they will get out of Urmila and what could be done with Shyamanand when Urmila passes away. After a long tussle, they somehow share money. Shyamanand also gets paralyzed after the death of Urmila. He becomes all alone and perhaps "The Last Burden" to Jamun. His brother Burfi, gets transferred on the advice of his artful wife, Joyce. They go faraway. Jamun, being unmarried, takes up the responsibility of looking after his father.

Chatterjee presents the vision of bleakness in the novel The Last Burden. Sambuddha Sen relates: "What makes The Last Burden about ordinary affairs extra-ordinary is the bleakness of its vision". Chatterjee presents a world where dawn breaks with "tint of ashes" and
people "with imploding tensions" "yawn and squawk" at each other. One is struck by a passage like the following which captures the mood of the whole book that reveals the plight and fight of the Indian middle class family for the need of money:

"But to ignore the weight of cash...is dawn hard... we ourselves have suffered from not having enough of it...when we were young...weren't Ma and Baba hardup because they had to raise two of us...They became comfortably off only we'd made it."²

To this Burfi respondents" Yes, you and I'd be an asset to any parents.” And he adds:

“Don't be brainy...Gratitude between generations is a two-waything...”³

Shyamanand “adores his petty cash too intensely to spend it even for his own well-being”. For Shyamanand conserving money is exhilaration and his bank deposits are his uppers. For Burfi, the expenses of Urmila’s medical care is not definitely an issue at all for he tells his father that “she’s your wife, you hatched her maladies. You should pay for them.” Urmila curses Shyamanand: “His money will
damn him...he is going to carry his money over with him when he croaks”

Quarrelling of the members of Jamun's family adds gravity to the vision of bleakness and contributes a lot to the action of the novel. Sambuddha Sen views: “Quarreling is indeed the central organizing feature of the novel: the experience around which a great deal of action revolves.”

Shyamanand is “a monumental hoarder of trifles, to each of which is affixed for him an evocation, a sentiment...he has always found it easier to cherish the inanimate rather than the vital.”

We find ourselves trapped between Shyamanand's “yawping” and Urmila’s “squawking”. Shyamanand is “a worthless husband, but a good father” and Urmila is a “weepy wife, but a proud mother”. They share little in common. “Urmila and Shyamanand comport themselves like two uncongenial hostelers constrained to room together for fifteen years”

But they continue to live together stewing in mutual resentment. For Urmila “her husband is her obsessive topic...his incivility, his nutrition, his gluttonous appetite...he needs her company only as a butt for his derision...for ridicule...”. She weeps every time from importance and rage. Burfi and Joyce also quarrel with each other similarly. Ordinarily Burfi's chats with Joyce on any subject conclude with “her scudding off
to her parents, Doom pursed into her arm-pits..." Jamun startles to find that in the world parental incompatibility is a common phenomenon. He says to his girl friend Kasturi:

"Kasturi, my parents don't exactly bicker and wrangle, ... they don't chat to each other at all...are sort of webbed in a glacial spleenful hush. They maintain silence speaking a few words. And any inoffensive statement can sizzle in seconds into a brutal tiff."\(^9\)

Shyamanand tells his son that Urmila is masochistic. She craves to feel persecuted, harrowed and it is her way of tugging at attention. She shows her husband as unpleasant and miserly to the world. Shyamanand thinks of resigning himself to be masochistic. Shyamanand’s scorn and disparagement for his wife touches off pity in Jamun. Even Urmila’s scorn is less pitiable. When Jamun thinks of all this tussle, what moves him is “a nebulous, ineffable sensation of the beggarliness of existence, the web of a shabby life...when he sees his father silent, unmoved to enlightenment."\(^10\) Thus Jamun’s disappointment is more compunction, a hazy gentleness than disenchantment.
The degeneration of filial relationships in the post-modern Indian society lends its gravity to make the novel more bleak. Geniality dissolves in the family. “Parent and sons chat shabbily to one another without motive or jest.”11 For example, a quarrel of abuse flares up on the simple subject of the repair of a fan. Shyamanand being inly “so misshapen and scrunched up” that he “always found it easier to cherish the inanimate rather than the vital.” Alluding to illegitimate relationship between Jamun and Joyce, he calls Jamun “an incest” and continues:

“You itch for that artful Joyce...you hurtle home every three months for her...you’ll die of some contagion.”12

Jamun, in turn, spites his dad:

“you bastard... we should thank God that we are sons, if you’d hatched a daughter, you’d have bedded her...you fucking ingrate...” 13

Burfi has become inured to Shyamanand’s criticism. “Husband-hood and Joyce’s unremitting, subdued disdain have secretly seared him...the elementary parley, with parent or with wife, appears to have become a potential spark for factiousness.”14
What Burfi assumes is that his house is just like a septic tank. They (his parents) grouse day in and day out about Joyce and Burfi. They complain that Burfi spends his time with the fuck Joyce and not with them. Here is an example of Shyamanand’s grousing on his daughter-in-law, Joyce:

"Your daughter-in-law adores this loafing about in glitter and gloss, trailing two good looking men, wearing clothes too youthful for her, slopping money on flippery, glutting her brats with candy and other junk, triumphantly islanding her husband and even brother-in-law, from us even on a holiday."\textsuperscript{15}

On the other hand, Joyce especially seems to relish brutally debunking her parents-in-law in the presence of her children. On the occasion of Burfi’s birthday, Joyce sobbing and jeering, complains to Burfi, “Your father is so beastly, ill-bred; he spurned the cake that I had baked for your birthday."\textsuperscript{16} Burfi boiled and foamed and to placate his terrific wife he reviled Shyamanand with obscenities and screeched, “I will slice the fucker’s balls off.” Urmila assuages Burfi “Never mind we’ll die both in good time.”
Defiance of and disobedience to the parental authority seems to be the generational canon. That was the time Jamun's mother Urmila, was hospitalised. One evening Shyamanand happened to see Jamun, Burfi and Joyce watching a Hindi Film on the T.V. Perhaps the very sight of Joyce, her vacuous vanity, her viewing of T.V. in a day-dreaming style, vexes Shyamanand and he asks, "Shame on you all. Is this the hour that you consider suitable for Hindi movie muck? While your mother is dying in hospital?" Jamun counters: "There is nothing unseemly or sinful in lolling in front of T.V. while Ma recuperates in hospital in Intensive Care. She is not Indira Gandhi, that we have to hurtle out into the streets and thwack our tits to voice our grief." Shyamanand sneers:

"Grief! How can you even conceive of sorrow in your bogus, looking glass age? To you, a wimp in a Hindi Movie, tweeting the tropes of intimacy, is more moving than your sinking mother."

Shyamanand is deeply pained by Burfi's indifference and utters:

"I have been disgraced by my children. When my daughter-in-law shames me, my son does not demur at all..." Shyamanand repents he had fostered his sons to hate him and bewails "Perhaps we should have
spawned daughters instead.” His vanity in his wealth of sons will
atomize to stubble. Yet Shyamanand is no rogue. He only hankers after
the love of his children and is befuddled and piqued that they plainly
prefer their mother. He learns that the fondness between mother and
sons is potent only because it’s genetic. Despite learning this fact he
always yearns to sire sons and chortles in triumph even at the birth of
his grandsons. For Chatterjee this is how middle class families and
siblings speak to one another.

Marriage appears to be a powerful factor that plays a decisive role
in the action of the novel, The Last Burden leading to alienation and
isolation of the individual. The intercaste marriage between the Hindu
Burfi and the Christian Joyce is also a powerful factor that leads to loss
of love and affection among the members of Jamun’s family. Marriage
that founded on sex and lust is “as prodigal a corrupter as time.”
Because of this “closeness dies between parent and seed” and
“Shyamanand’s rapport with his eldest son crumbles with his
marriage.” Burfi, for whom “sex before marriage” is essential blunders
into “a marriage of passion” and is psychologically governed by Joyce.
He “being a vainchild” and “like an elated kid” is found “parroting her
(Joyce’s) convictions at all times on all subjects” and thus “his
opinion...has been recast by his marriage.” For Burfi and Joyce “staying with them (parents) is screwing...marriage up” and “a sort of embarrassment, a dreadfully lower middle-class practice.” Jamun ironically remarks: “...his wife’s graces have disclosed to him the shoddy outrageous lower-middle-classness of his previous avatar.”21 Burfi himself is hardly more adult because he has chosen to escape the hard burdens of his parents by surrounding himself with material pleasures and so is his wife Joyce. He is henpecked and is a “gone case” in Jamun’s words. He is a slave to modern consumerism. Even before marriage Joyce’d asserted that “our children should grow up as Christians.” Thus Joyce contaminates the pure Hindu family of Shyamanand with her “Christian depravity.” Shyamanand is gnawed by “the waning Hinduness of the family” and “...the dishonourable anglicization of his own sons, the erasure of the patrilineal family organization.” Chatterjee, through the voice of Shyamanand, uses the Corinthians of the Bible to relate the married state of Burfi:

“He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord how he may please the Lord; but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.”22
This is really ironical to refer to Burfi who married a Christian woman.

The cataclysmic marriage of Urmila and Shyamanand is an instance of mutual loafing and loathing. Sambuddha Sen says that Shyamanand "may not quite beat his wife, but like many respectable Bengali gentlemen, manages successfully to reduce her, with his relentless derision...into a soggy mass of nerves bereft of self-confidence." Urmila herself admits: "one ought not to judge all marriages by the corrosion of theirs" and Jamun concludes that "in a marriage one crops exactly what one merits." The same is found in the marriage of Burfi and Joyce. On the surface theirs appeared to be happy marriage but in reality they both were "bearing themselves idiotically." Joyce "is sick of being sapped by the demands of Burfi’s family and that she wishes to quit...this stinking place..."

The other factor that leads to bleakness of the novel is the murky atmosphere of death, gloom, disease and doom in Jamun’s family. The following passage reflects the atmosphere:

"...the cold sweat years...the sluggish, interminable, unremarked decade between Shyamanand’s first cerebral stroke and Burfi’s return to the city of fosterage...her (Urmila’s)
entire existence...a medley of fear...that Shyamanand’ll die on her hands...”24

Shyamanand, torn under a fit of celebral stroke screeches “I’m tired to death of having to wait and wait.” Jamun too is menaced at “...the disconsolateness that exudes from Urmila’s soul” which seemed “like a contagion”. The entire house appeared to him demoralized and cold shouldered him. Joyce bubbles, “I am entombed...by illness, death and the evocations of those who dislike me.”

The figure of MOTHER emerges dominant in the life of the Indian family. Chatterjee has exploited the life of the Indian family. Chatterjee has exploited the image of Mother adding much to the splendor of the meaning of The Last Burden. The words of Geetha Doctor are apt here:

“...the figure that emerges from the maze of memory (of Jamun, the hero) is that of Urmila, The Mother, the still centre of the Indian family, the beginning and the end of its image of itself, Urmila is a powerful presence, even, though we see her at her worst. She is trapped in a life-long struggle with her husband Shyamanand. We see her through the uncertain eyes of her two sons, who
compromise themselves in their relationships of the women they meet, unable to understand or resolve the tension until it is too late. We watch her tottering around in her old age mimicked by her two young grand children.""25

Her presence is "so unaweinspiring, long suffering, so lulling, that no oddity...kindle any disquiet in her family." Jamun recalls, "Malice...was the sentiment that this mother never expressed...and the only way to commemorate was to emulate her...one had to atone for her passing by bettering oneself." However she symbolizes the fountain of the life of vicissitudes of the Indian family for "the aspiration of her existence...had not been happiness..one feasible vindication of living, the simple glow among the anguish, malevolence, rancour and rage..her drab childhood, her toilsome youth and her catastrophic marriage."27 However, Jamun being a chip of sense and sensibility yields to her woe. By and by Urmila submits to Jamun's solicitude for her well-being. Her life "had been fruitful..as she had fostered two sons."

Upamanyu Chatterjee underlines the underlying and unacknowledgeable factor of lust that makes up for the lack of love. The comment of Geetha Doctor is quite apt here:
"May be lust is all that the Indian environment will allow, just as the garden that both Jamun and his father try so hard to tend finally reduces all their efforts to one thorny cactus plant, that doesn't need their care at all. Certainly that is what Jamun settles for at the end a comfortable lust that does not make any demands."

That is what he gets from Kasturi and Kasibai. That is one of the reasons for Jamun's arrival and his stay with his parents. Kasturi, a college friend of Jamun, continues premarital illegitimate sex with Jamun even after her marriage with Agasthya and delivers "a petite sex bomb." Perhaps she has faked the periods she's missed or craftily used some contraceptive. The situation of Kasturi is just like that of Neera and Renu of English, August: An Indian Story. Kasturi too is a symbol of post-modernity imploded by the tensions of contemporary complex problems of domestic and psychological spheres involving incompatible marriage with Agasthya "a fairly hopeless guy."

Thus, Chatterjee's The Last Burden is a saga of the Indian family with its ebb and flow and the same is reflected in Urmila's words:
“...all family narratives are despicable, hideous...if they are faithful to the essential life...aimless rancour for one another, the most guileless event milks from us our watchful malice...living together merely to thrill in unkindness, marrying, mounting and spawning because we are all afraid being corporealy alone.”

Being a sensitive writer Chatterjee’s concerns are disintegration of the family, discontinuity of the tradition, conflict between the generation and several other issues which result in loneliness and isolation of an individual.

Kasturi’s words are what actually constitute the substance of the

The Last Burden:

“We are all – at the middle point of the cycle with allegiances and responsibilities before and after...enduring the stress of grihasti, when both our parents and our kids need fosterage...grihasti is domesticity, the family, and a mortal life’d be fragmentary without it...”

It is this “enduring stress of grihasti” that is carried out by the protagonist of The Last Burden. Jamun’s introspections and broodings
over the changing ebb and flow of life have philosophical flavour and reach the great heights of almost Hamlet's broodings. He grows mature and begins relishing the sweet bitterness of the life of his family. Jamun, now, views that, "to hold true to one's blood is more noble..."

Hearing his mother's tired sobs Jamun "inflames with the tenderness of contribution" and hugs her saying "I want to see you smile." He wants to "expiate himself before his parents...to convince them that he, despite his vulnerabilities is truly grateful to them for the gift of life."31

Shyamanand's pitiable ill-health makes Jamun reflect on human life:

"This was how finished...abandoned by our basest faculties...its fatuity before one's eyes when father became a child in the years before dying."32

A primal remorse oozes through his veins, when exhausted by "fatigue...bed-pan world" of his parents:

"We can never express the true sentiments love, devotion, kindness...we can never act humanely, while those who we cherish are healthy and alive."33

He realises that "Woe is no emotion for display...in a Hindu way one must learn that existence is immensely vaster than birth and..."
mortality."

Jamun, having got self-realization, is convinced that
"since they've all (Jamun’s family members) acquitted themselves
abominably with Urmila, they fully deserve to writhe with
mortification."

The sense of guilt chafes him. Jamun comes to terms
with himself. He has begun to believe that “living is elementally a petty
indecent, punishing business: its value lies in struggling against its
meanness. In such a universe remorse is weak selfishness, and
mourning a remorse. When one grieves, one in fact only repines that one
has not conducted oneself better...Regret is futile...”.

Upamanyu Chatterjee’s The Last Burden could be examined in
the light of the saying “the tussle of fathers with mothers for the love
of their sons is, for the fathers, hopeless from the start, because son is
yolked to mother more sinewily than even daughter to father.”

The years of fosterage persuade Shyamanand that the fondness between
mother and sons is potent only because it is genetic, is the primal sexual
bond between father and daughter, and mother and son. He’s eviscerately
taunted to see his sons cleave into their mother and the eldest Burfi
crawl from her mother to his wife, Joyce.

The Last Burden is paralleled with D.H. Lawrence’s Sons
and Lovers and also Hal Porter’s The Watcher on the Cast Iron Balcony.
The common denominator among Chatterjee, Lawrence and Porter is "the most palpably important relationship" recorded between son and mother.

Another parallel which intensifies "the important relationship" is autobiographical element in these novels. The Watcher records Porter's account of his mother's death and funeral, which can be compared with Paul Morel's tearing grief which is the climax of Sons and Lovers. Coincidentally Chatterjee's mother died during the writing of The Last Burden and the writer finds objective correlative in Jamun's grief. Porter has turned fifty, Lawrence was twenty-eight and Chatterjee was thirty-four. The perspectives are different because of difference in the levels of maturity on similar material. So, the mother-son relationship in The Watcher is different from Sons and Lovers which in turn drastically differs from The Last Burden. In Sons and Lovers the mother-son relationship is that of a possessive lover always demanding on each other whereas in The Watcher and The Last Burden sons do not suffer from neurosis as is the case with Paul Morel. Jamun after his mother's demise somehow, behoved him to acquit himself better, more humanely, with all living things. For him:
"All parents die, so every human-being must experience the anguish or the discomfiture of their passing...one's reaction to such a death was controlled by one's maturity and one's closeness to one's parents."³⁸

Jamun is unlike Paul Morel in the famous closing line of Lawrence's book:

"Mother," he whispered.. "Mother! "she was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this. And she was gone intermingled herself. He wanted her to touch him....

But no, he would not give in. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence.... He would not take that direction, to the darkness to follow her."³⁹

The striking difference between Paul and Jamun is that one could never liberate himself from mother while the other has no obsessional independence left on his mother. Jamun compromises with the reality of his mother's death and grows maturer. Jamun, in the final phase, takes on the responsibility of looking after Shyamanand. "But the last burden has not been shed, for there is no last burden; the responsibility
of living means keeping your shoulders to the wheel; parents die, children appear.”

In his *The Last Burden* Chatterjee, as Pradeep Trikha puts it, "probes into the mysterious working of the human mind and delineates the complex problems of the complex age in contemporary Indian Society."41

Tejpal points out “the book is powerful affirmation of the ties that bind parents and children.”42 Chatterjee’s *The Last Burden*, as in Harry Haseltine’s phrase, graphs “structure of emotions” as it records “the hero’s changing moods and the ebb and flow of his emotions”. The members of Jamun’s family “carp at each others’ infirmities callous with their emotions.” Rumina Sethi’s impression on *The Last Burden* is: “Bizarre and bitter, the novel nonetheless takes us away from the routine expressions of many Indian novelists into a relatively unexplored domain of lower middle class materiality, meanness and avarice.”43

Mohan Ramanam’s reading regarding to the study and substance of the novel is that

“…Chatterjee’s exploration of the middle class Hindu society has a satirical function with the
positive aim of purging middle class readers of their middle class enormities and enabling him/her to settle down to a more healthy life."\textsuperscript{44}

Upamanyu Chatterjee himself reiterates thus in an interview:

"My new novel, \textit{The Last Burden}, is concerned not with growing up but with family ties. It takes a close look at an Indian family, the complexity of relationships and how these change as 'cataclysmic event' occurs."\textsuperscript{45} Chatterjee feels that his work is done in projecting what the relations are and not as they ought to be, what emotions are and not as they ought to be.

Compared to his first novel, \textit{English, August}, Chatterjee's narrative style in \textit{The Last Burden} make an advance. Flitting back and forth in time and space, he has employed the technique of flash back. Dom Moraes points out: "Chatterjee has made a very brave attempt. This was done by James Joyce in \textit{Ulysses}, language employed by Chatterjee is 'Joycean'."\textsuperscript{46} He even compares Chatterjee with Henry Green and Antony Powell for his wit and humour.

Amitabh Matto feels that \textit{The Last Burden} is "about the construction and deconstruction." Flashback gives clues to inner
consciousness of Chatterjee's characters. The narrative is such that the temporal sequence comes first and the narrative sequence follows its hard ruthless logic.

There are certain minute descriptions in The Last Burden which have a Zolaesque quality. When he speaks of a pacemaker of Urmila:

"Urmila continues ruthlessly to knead her collarbone flesh, pulling up dollops of it like plasticine, eyes remote in concentration."47

Some passages have poetic flavour and reach dramatic heights. On the captivating beauty of Joyce Chatterjee writes thus:

"Time has nurtured her comeliness, tutored her to accentuate her eyes and hair, to smile more often and without pretext, to remain hardy and robust...to ensure that her sons cherish her more than their father, unremittingly to remind her husband, in a thousand ways, that she is in every manner more versatile and masterly than Burfi."48

The metaphorical expression on old-age is very beautiful:
“This was how we finished...this was the end of the wheel of life...when father became child in the years before dying.”

Coming to the language of The Last Burden, Chatterjee faces a linguistic challenge: how to reproduce in English, the nuances, idioms, the flow of an alien language. He opts to engage in a process of constant translation, rendering as accurately as possible the conversations, arguments, quarrels as they might actually occur in Jamun’s family. He mixes slang, abuses, unusual ugly sounding words such as ‘crabbedly’ or ‘pawkily’. His English, bleak in nature expresses the bleak life in which the characters live, breathe and speak. It is an enclosing language with monochromatic inflexibility. The past mingles with the present and time seems to have stopped and as Sambuddha Sen points out that “nothing is allowed to grow or change...although Jamun, like the hero of the classical bildungsroman grows from boyhood to maturity, in fact the process of maturation turns out to be illusory. Enveloped always in Chatterjee’s ‘tough’ sceptical prose, ‘bellyaching’ and ‘thwacking’ at 28 just as he did at 8, Jamun never really goes through the process of growth because he is never allowed a boyhood in the first place. In the final analysis, this dead lock of movement, of language, of a sense of possible, constitutes the major drawback.”
Geetha Doctor says that Chatterjee’s prose “has all the felicity of a boa constrictor”. For example, we can’t get instant meanings for such words as “vicinal, scissioned, penduline, minacious, gynanders, feculence, vocability.” The descriptive prose vents itself into the dialogue, lacking completely in discipline, and drowns the characters in their own verbiage in a primal slobland.

The very first page of The Last Burden builds an atmosphere “hot and somehow full of blood” aided grotesquely by the sight of a “crushed dog on the road”, the ‘cauterizing Sun’ and the stench of Heigiste’s arm-pit. The woman ophthalmologist has “bull lips that will not bestride her teeth”; Kuki’s “blowzy, stretched skin look about to slit, like a mouth for a lawn”; the cook is seen as “a mosaic of vulgarity, unenlightenment, slumminess, tunnel vision, ill-bred voice”.

There is little rationale in using “desuetude” for disuse, ‘etiolated’ for ‘sickly’, ‘ululate’ for lament, or ‘sluiced’ for soaked. They are puffed-up mouthfuls only. The other baffling feature is the omission of letters, that is the use of shortened form--baba’d (baba would), sons’ve (sons have), marriage’ll (marriage will), we’d’ve (we would have). They make the text more non-standard and colloquial.

Chatterjee’s prose, in the words of Rumina Sethi, is a
“transparent exhibition of linguistic skills, playing with words acquired labouriously during an elite college training.” Chatterjee’s fiction comes in through his sheer inventiveness and his neologisms and locutions ‘procumbent Urmila’ and ‘unbridled satyrs of burgeoning desire’ are the examples. Let’s observe the sentence:

“...her dextral forefinger pressed against her roseate schnozzle lips.”

Haldia’s diagnosis of Urmila is the best example:

“Hahn, your Mrs’s case...infraction...angina...coronarythrombosis...intense hypertension...clot...embolism...dyspnoea...cardiovascular murmur...phlebitic...arteriosclerosis...arteritis...dogtired...heart...pacemaker...surrogate, standby, booster”.

Chatterjee uses slang, taboos expletives relating to sex and lust. This, of course is a novel, but unhealthy feature of modern Indian fiction in English. In The Last Burden, Chatterjee uses expressions such as motherfucker, grandmotherfucker, greatgrandmotherfucker, garamgandu (Hot Arselender), dogsucker, vagina, penis and anus. These words may sound indecent and cause the English Language appear repellant to those who want to learn good English. There are
certain passages that reveal adolescent obscenities of sexuality and sensuality. Jamun slants forward and kisses her warm cheek and says, "Fuck you Kasturi, in as many ways as feasible." (p.148) Jamun slants forward and kisses her warm cheek. Jamun calls Kasturi "bitch" and "a bloody fib factory." (p.150) Urmila reveals to his son Jamun about her privacy:

   "In the last three weeks, your Baba, with his unprecedented pep, has tried to sleep with me five times."

   "He has not touched me for 18 years. We have not gone to bed in the same room since you were conceived."

   "...When he perched on the frame of my bed... I was rocking and gaping... from there-at Baba and me, bitter, incredulous." (p. 197)

Another passage is about Jamun's sexual affair with Kasibai:

   "One dark Saturday afternoon, he is underneath her, tonguing her, feeling her beginning to undulate, her thighs snuggling his ears. Kasibai, naked, surmounts Jamun's face." It seems Jamun likes cunnilingus.
There are certain passages that evoke laughter and humour. Underneath these passages we find some tears also. Jamun calls his mother A-one bore. She misunderstands A-one bore as whore. She bewails thus: “And if your Baba hears that you called me a whore, he will, instead of rebuking you, scoff at me even more for not having nurtured you rightly.”

Jamun pleads:

“Ma! You are insane! “God: I did not call you a whore, I said Bore-B.”

The very comic vein of the telegraphic message is highlighted. Posts and Telegraphs can also be banked on to fuck up the text of the telegram – BABA STROKING NURSES AT HOME. COME SOON.(p. 204)

The gastronomic names of characters are an interesting irony or parody. Jamun and Burfi are both sweets. But, in their real life they are not so. Jamun seems an escapist and Burfi becomes bitter by being contaminated with his christian marriage. They proved themselves bitter to the sweet aspirations of their father. Pista is a dryfruit- withered by christian depravity of his mother. Chana is a cereal. All the characters eat or regret their inability to eat. This choice of names
echo a dominant theme of *The Last Burden*, the devouring nature of family relationships. It appears that “The content of the novel takes second place to its inflamed form”.

Chatterjee uses Indianisms as Salman Rushdie did and does not provide any glossary at the end in *The Last Burden* assuming that it is the reader’s risk to know the meanings for words like ‘Thakuma’, ‘Thakuda’, ‘grihasti’ and ‘Charpais’. Everything considered, *The Last Burden* is “a work of far greater substance and originality” that explores the darkside of kinship and family ties with a rare linguistic brilliance and wryness.

On the art of Upamanyu Chatterjee, Indu Saraiya’s comment is:

“He brings to the Indian a style and feel, a conviction and maturity all its own.”53
NOTES


3. Ibid., p. 53.

4. Ibid., p. 64.


7. Ibid., p. 165.

8. Ibid., p. 179.

9. Ibid., p. 162.
10. Ibid., p. 200.

11. Ibid., p. 16.

12. Ibid., p. 51.

13. Ibid., p. 51.


15. Ibid., p. 80.

16. Ibid., p. 130.

17. Ibid., p. 230.

18. Ibid., pp. 230-231.

19. Ibid., p. 231.

20. Ibid., p. 125.

21. Ibid., p. 91.

22. Ibid., p. 79.


27. Ibid., p. 255.


30. Ibid., p. 236.
31. Ibid., p. 193.
32. Ibid., p. 214.
33. Ibid., p. 226.
34. Ibid., p. 232.
35. Ibid., p. 232.
36. Ibid., p. 232.
37. Ibid., p. 215.
38. Ibid., p. 253.


48. Ibid., pp. 131-132.

49. Ibid., p. 214.

