

# Tracing the Evolution from Masculine Identity to Human Essence in Selected Novels by Upamanyu Chatterjee

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**Keywords – Humanity, Struggle, masculine identities, alienation**

*This study delves into the nuanced narrative terrain of Upamanyu Chatterjee's selected novels, meticulously tracing the transformative journey from a singularly masculine identity to a broader and more encompassing human essence. Through a critical analysis of the author's literary works, this exploration aims to unravel the layers of character development and thematic evolution, shedding light on the intricate interplay between masculinity and humanity. The abstracted essence of this investigation lies in deciphering how Chatterjee's characters undergo a profound metamorphosis, transcending gender-specific boundaries to embody a more universally human experience. Through a keen examination of narrative elements, character dynamics, and thematic resonance, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the author's exploration of the human condition within the context of evolving masculine identities.*

Upamanyu Chatterjee has sincerely attempted to portray real conditions of male in modern society.

Upamanyu Chatterjee is a contemporary writer who has successfully presented the issues of male's desires, problems, emotions and thoughts have widely expounds in his novels. He was born on 19 December in 1959 in Kolkata. He completed his higher education in Delhi University. He became Indian Administrative Officer in 1983. He also produced memorable novels like *English, August: An Indian Story* (1988), *The Last Burden* (1993), *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* (2000), *Weight Loss* (2006), *Way to Go* (2010) and *Fairy Tales at Fifty* (2015), *The revenge of Non-Vegetarian* (2018) (Novella), *Villain* (2021).

This research has provided a depth study of the themes of male perspective in Upamanyu Chatterjee's works *English, August: An Indian Story*,

*The Last Burden, The Mammaries of the Welfare State, Weight Loss, Way to Go and Fairy Tales at Fifty*. All these novels revolve around the lives of male protagonist. His protagonists are neither rude nor dominating but at the same time they cannot be considered as weak. Generally, males are considered as a robust and dominant gender. It is safely assumed that the men's life is a smooth sail and they do not have to face any hardships in life. Unfortunately, males have not escaped from cruelty of life; they also face the problems in life. The literary writers usually represented their side as cruel, rude, violent, rapist, dominant, strong etc. Besides these grey shades, male blesses with many gracious other human characteristics which need to explore in front of world.

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Upamanyu Chatterjee is one of the best contemporary writers in Indian English Literature. His literary works are known for their perfect portrayal of Indian culture. The novelist has enriched the charm of his works with a variety of male aspects of contemporary society. The writer presents his first protagonist as an IAS officer Agastya Sen. Indian Administrative Service has prestigious and powerful place in Indian contemporary society but the protagonist struggles for basic amenities of life. Second protagonist Jamun is young working man and struggle to save his mother. Third protagonist is Bhola who wrestles for discipline his desires. Last protagonist is Jhabua and Nirip who contends to get acknowledge in the life. The writer highlights dual condition of his protagonists where they swing between strong and weak situations in life. Being strong human being, all protagonists are struggling for normal things in life. Therefore it is useless to consider male or any gender superior. All genders are equally puzzle in the vexation of life. The concept of superior gender puts male's life in more pathetic conditions.

Upamanyu Chatterjee concentrated to show male aspects through the themes of Indian working measures, human relationship, adolescent characteristics, self-realization, alienation, classism, generation gap, selfishness, emotionless, crises of choices, social evils: religion, corruption and criminal prospective. The novelist has pointed out the true picture of Indian male in quite different from general perception of male in Indian society. His first protagonist, Agastya Sen is an IAS officer in *English August: An Indian Story* and its sequel *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*. Agastya Sen was overwhelmed to join the prestigious job of the country, later he appeared as most depressive man in the administration. He wanted to resign from the Indian Administration Service, but his family's pressure never allowed him to do so. Upamanyu Chatterjee raised issues of work pressure where Agastya is unable to do anything according to his wish. He becomes the victim of office politics. The level of corruption in the office shocks him and makes him feel as helpless human being in the administration. The protagonist Agastya gets disturbed to see the groupism in the office. Groups are one of the serious issues of Indian bureaucracy. The groupism divides

according to the caste, class and post. The writer projects the influence of groupism where working place becomes battle field to fight for own favors. Religion is the important factor of Indian culture. Upamanyu Chatterjee keys out the difficult level of work when employee develops degrading consciousness for other employee. Agastya held a powerful post but he failed to fight against social evil of corruption, casteism and classism in the administration. The novelist depicted the journey of alienation of Agastya Sen. His alienation began in his school days. He studied in boarding school. The distance of his family created loneliness in his life from the very early in his life. The shadow of alienation chased him in his youth when he lived in Madna as trainee in Indian Administrative Service. He was used to metropolitan life whereas Madna was primitive small village. Agastya felt disgusted in the rustic life of Madna and could not adjust at new place. The absence of emotional support of family and friends at Madna made him feel alienated. He faced the dissimilarities of thoughts with his colleagues to enhance his pain of alienation. His unmarried status created the vacuum of love in his personal life. The author accentuates the aspect of alienation in professional atmosphere. The novelist gives preference to activities of adolescence period. This period played prominent role in life. Infatuation is commonly found in all adolescents. Agastya has put his all efforts to impress the Tibetan girls in his adolescence period. The writer has highlighted the friends' influence in adolescence. The protagonist always complains regarding mismanagement in administration and wants to resign from his job. But later, he observes his friend Dhurbo struggle to get selected for IAS. It helps him to realize the importance of job and get him ready to prepare himself for the challenges of Indian bureaucracy.

In *The Last Burden* and *Way to Go* Upamanyu Chatterjee has described the challenges faced by male in their personal life. They are suppressed under the family responsibilities. The burden of responsibilities is clearly revealed in the incident of Urmila's illness. Shyamanand and his two sons are financially independent but feel hesitate to handle the heavy medical bills. They start to shift their responsibilities on each other's shoulders. This blame game shows the stress of men and hesitation for handling the

hurdles in life. It shows the pitiless situation for them. Indian society considered as male dominated society, but these three men unable to manage single sick women. The novelist portrays Jamun's family as a victim of alienation in the works. Jamun loves Kasturi but her mother has not allowed him to marry with her. He is unable to fill the emotional corners of his life, firstly, Kasturi moves away from his life then his mother died. Instead of giving him emotional support, his elder brother Burfi keeps himself busy in his family life. At last, he lost his father which broke him deeply. In spite of living in the joint family, he faces the problem of loneliness. He is not only character of the family who tolerates the pain, but other family members also face the problem. Urmila also feels alone when she is in hospital. She searches love and care when her family has busy taken care of her illness expenses. Their negligence breaks her emotionally and ends up to desire to live. After Urmila, Shyamanand faces the problem of alienation. The absence of his wife depresses him which causes him to leave the house at once. The elder son, Burfi portrays as family man but the load of desires lead him in alienation. He keeps extra marital relationship to reduce alienation from his life but it causes to ruin his married life. Everyone in Shyamanand's family suffers from the pain of alienation due to their selfish nature. The males in the novels keep themselves in comfort zone. Their self-centered attitude makes them weak and shatter them deeply. The paper reflects the struggle of males to balance them in the scenario of contemporary society. Upamanyu Chatterjee drags other issues of transfer. It brings the trouble in the life of employee. It shows in *The Last Burden* and *Way to Go*. It would become hard to work away from family. Upamanyu Chatterjee elaborates an issue when Jammu gets news of his mother illness. He leaves everything and come to see his ill mother. But the journey is not less than torture. Upamanyu Chatterjee draws the attention on long distance of working place. It raises home sickness in the employee's mind and sometime it generates bitterness in relationship. It has best example in *Way to Go*. It shows that Burfi gets transfer and for certain reason he stays away from his family. Distance destroys the essence of love in the relationship, later on this relationship shattered. Employee gets effects when they stay away from their family.

The third male protagonist, Bhola gets good academic atmosphere but his indulgence in nuisance of sexual urges in the novel *Weight Loss*. The novelist presents male image as weak human beings who cannot control on own body urges. Despite of getting good family background and professional stability, Bhola led his life to disaster due to his lack of self-discipline and control. Bhola faces the problem of loneliness in his childhood. Bhola's parents never project any concern toward him. The lack of parent's guidance in Bhola's life sends him in wrong path of life. It proves when his parents remain unaware about the fact of his school expulsion. He searches the love and affection from outside of the house where met with wrong people. His approach for love to wrong people and they ruin his life. The impact of friendship deeply affects his life. His friend Dosto always stands by him on his mischief activities. The element of Self-realization occurs in his life when he finds his daughter's life in danger due to some of his wrong decision of his life. He discovered the journey of sexuality to spirituality in *Weight Loss*.

The next male protagonists are Jhabua and Nirip who are twins' brother and mess up in cruelty of criminal world as well as aware the importance of knowledge in *Fairy Tales at Fifty*. Both brothers got separated from their actual family by birth. The twin's brother's life go through in the pain of alienation. They missed the aspect of familial in their life. Jhabua has started travelling as truck driver and spent fifty years of his life in alienation. His loneliness dragged him into criminal path. Jhabua lives as truck driver who uses his truck as his home. This situation also becomes pathetic for arrangement of his food, nature calls, bathing and sleeping etc. Nirip has felt lack of belongingness because he was surrogate child of Pashupati who was just a nominee of Pashupati's property because someone to lead the family. The mysterious attitude of adolescence impacts totally different on Jhabua. Jayadev narrates him Buddhist folklore of Angulimala. He impressed with Angulimala instead of Buddha. He started admiring Angulimala so much that he changed his name from Jhabua to Anguli. It shows the influence power of adolescence. It seems to be difficult to predict the choice of any adolescence. It leads him into criminal world. Another protagonist, Nirip shocks to know about his father's criminal aspect and

decides not to follow his footprint but he exhausted in his life to do something ownself and join his father's profession. His lack of confidence drags him into the criminal world.

This research has provided intense study of the themes of male prospective in Upamanyu Chatterjee's works. All his novels revolve around the males in the plot. Generally, male considered as dominant gender among the genders. The novelist concentrated to show male aspects in Indian bureaucracy, human relationship, adolescent characteristics and criminal prospective. He highlights Indian male picture quite different from usual picture of male dominant society. His protagonists were not rude or dominant but they were not weak also. His first protagonist, Agastya Sen was IAS officer in *English August: An Indian Story* and its sequel *The Mammraies of the Welfare State*. Agastya Sen has overwhelmed to join the prestigious job of country, later he had shown as most depressive man in the administration. He wanted to resign from the Indian Administration Service, but his family's pressure never allowed him to do so. He posted at most powerful post in India but his helplessness in front of social evil of corruption, casteism and classism. The second male characters were portrait opposite of dominant family men. They were strong, working men but puzzled to take care of sick human. Their theoretical knowledge failed in front of practical knowledge. The third male character was Bhola who struggled to manage himself. He well qualified man but his personal life sunk into mud of sexuality. The fourth male characters Jhabua and Nirip whose journey moved from wrong track to right track in their life. Upamanyu Chatterjee highlights his protagonists as normal human beings who have strong and weak human traits. The condition of genders in the contemporary society is quite normal and any gender cannot be predicted well-built or invertebrate. They become strong or weak according to the situations and one situation or aspect has proved their characteristics.

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