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Geographic Expedition Of Societal Conflicts In The Fiction Of Upamanyu Chatterjee

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Abstract

Upamanyu Chatterjee is one of the significant writers focusing on the societal problems in contemporary Indian writing in English. His books are written in a diverting style and parody Indian Administrative Service and Indian working class family issues. His topics are metropolitan and provincial life, degenerate administration and domestic issues. His books are worried about contemporary Indian issues – monetary, cultural, political and social. Chatterjee's books show the cultural struggles of people in different circumstances. The fundamental characters are confronting cultural struggles in the public eye. Struggle emerges for various reasons in human culture. This paper is an endeavour to investigate the societal conflicts in the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee.

Keywords: cultural; struggle; Chatterjee; defilement; Agastya; Jamun.

1. Introduction

Upamanyu Chatterjee has worked as an Indian Civil Servant for over thirty years. His novels bring about the Post- Colonial bureaucracy and financial, political, and cultural characters in the drama of an Indian institution. Chatterjee's position on contemporary issues is voiced through many characters in his novel. His views are scattered throughout the novels. The concept of cultural ambivalence is depicted by different characters in the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee, and the roots of such consequences are the product of western education, adverse condition of parental relationships and different attitudes towards sex and lack of social consciousness.

Societal conflict is the struggle for agency power in society. Societal conflict occurs when two or more actors oppose each other in social interaction, reciprocally exerting social power to attain scarce goals and prevent the opponent from attaining them. Societal conflict occurs in a family unit. Sociologists would describe this as intra-unit conflict. In most cases, these conflicts arise from a crisis involving familial roles. Examples include father-son, mother-father, and husband-wife conflict. Such factors may cause conflicts as simple as rudeness, claim to seniority and laziness. Conflict is inherent

in society because it has been structured as such. These are the stimulating factors in local and international conflict and the essential characteristics of the global human society.

2. Societal Conflict

Conflict in English, August: An Indian Story

English, August: An Indian Story is Chatterjee's maiden novel. Agastya Sen is the protagonist in the novel, which comments on the Administrative services in India, the corruption in the educational field, the government office and the inability to eradicate poverty and problems. He has received the best education in Delhi but is not interested in his job in the Indian Administrative Service at Madna. Because of the English education, he feels he is distanced from his Hindu Cultural alienation, which the English-educated urban youth of India experiences. R.N. Srivastav is a district collector in Madna. He has an affair with a Female BDO, but he refuses to marry her, and she commits suicide. The Dainik publishes the suicide news and how a collector takes advantage of his post.

While portraying the rural life of India, Agastya seems to be mocking at the movement. The exposition of the tribals' exploitation and injustice does not stop here. District Officers, Forest Officers, Revenue Circle Inspectors, and Head Constable take advantage of such a custom and make easy victims of the women folk. Chatterjee focuses on the corruption in Indian Administrative Service and explores how tribal people are suffering without proper water and transport facilities in rural areas like Madna and Jompanna. The people face the problem of scarcity of water. Their children have to go to the well to fetch water. Chatterjee is quite critical of the government's contribution to the development of the tribal people. Agastya does not know the problems of rural area because he was born and raised in urban areas like Delhi and Calcutta. Agastya later finds that the politicians and civil servants are responsible for the terrible conditions of the villagers. The protagonist of *English, August*, suffers from an inexorable sense of exile and this feeling of exile is due to an acute awareness of his colonial legacy.

Conflict in The Last Burden

The Last Burden brings out that the traditional extended family system was gradually abandoned in favour of a nuclear family system among the middle class towards the end of the 20th century. Chatterjee has very well drawn the impact of the constant fighting between the husband and wife on their little kids. Extended family is gradually becoming a thing of the past. With the rise of the nuclear family system, the old values of culture and family love and care are lost. Shyamanand's family symbolises a broken family where no real love or bond exists. Each member is an 'Island' and is guided by libido. Chatterjee portrays that the love of the family never ends through the character of dying Urmila. She is not afraid of her death. However, she is scared of her husband's departure from the family. At the centre of the novel, the family consciousness of struggle emerges between the two sons of Shyamanand because of the expenditure of Urmila's illness. Chatterjee is aware of the disease that afflicts middle-class life. Through *The Last Burden* and the portrayal of Urmila's family, he attempts to paint a searing picture of reality. *The Last Burden* shows the parent's disgust and disappointment at their sons failing to live up to their expectations and meet their emotional demands.

Conflict in The Mammaries of the Welfare State

The Mammaries of the Welfare State, the sequel to his debut novel, won the prestigious Sahitya Akademy Award in 2004. His first protagonist Agastya Sen renamed August, reappears here, this time with his original name a little bit sombre and severe, in the same working zone. The prequel focused on August, lost in the world of corruption, aimless and apathetic. They do not care for society and are not inclined to do anything to uplift the poor. Most IAS officers are symbols of lust for power, lust for money and a sex craving. Societal conflict is struggle over status, power and values in the society. It occurs due to imbalance of money or power. The Indian Administrative Service posting in Madna gives a tremendous culture shock for Agastya. Chatterjee explains the conflicts, emotions and needs in

Joint Family. He gives a picture of savage, high-velocity passage through the bureaucratic India. It shows the conflicts in the Administrative system. Chatterjee presents India in its miniature through the evolvement of Aflatoon Welfare State. Greed for money and lust for sex are universal aspects as represented in the novel.

Chatterjee has touched upon the pathetic condition of the tribal people living in remote forest areas in the most unloving conditions. *English, August*, in hindsight also comments on the Naxalism in India, which seems a little out of context. The injustice done to the tribals turns them towards Naxalism, the self-proclaimed social workers of the tribes. Chatterjee presents the government's perspective of the Naxal movement. The innocent tribal women are the easy victims of sexual exploitation. The novel criticises the Reservation Policy of the Government. As a result of this policy and as the quota system is to be followed, many inefficient and under-qualified candidates are selected for various posts.

In *The Last Burden*, Chatterjee has very minutely observed the loss of cultural values especially among the younger generation and has tried to present the cultural clash between Hinduism and Christianity. Religion plays a significant role in the novel. *The Last Burden* is a realistic portrayal of the middle class family. Upamanyu Chatterjee focuses on how gradually the nuclear family system is replacing the extended family system. This novel focuses on unbalanced nature of characters, entanglement of dilemmas, loss of morals, anti-heroic qualities of Jamun, quick wits of incidence, irrational reason of the characters and complicated ways of life. The novel *Mammaries of the Welfare State*, reflects the decay and depravity of the Government of India and brings out the corrupt elements of the bureaucracy. Many Government servants spend office money on their work, instead of doing their duty. Junior officers have to do work for seniors in the latter's houses. Some juniors have to take the children of the seniors to school and cover their text book with brown paper. In the political world it is the caste of a candidate which decides whether he will get the ticket from any particular constituency to contest the election or not. Chatterjee wants to present them to his readers without changing the essence, but raw and uncooked. IAS should reflect the tendencies of the age, should be the mirror of the society, and culture. However, in reality most IAs officers are corrupt. The novel portrays corruption, loose morality, loose character, illegal relationship, ignorance to health, unnecessary expenditure on security, irrelevant use of public money, loose of human values, and bribe are the recurrent aspects of Indian society.

3. Conclusion

Societal conflict, which is a struggle over status, power and values in society, occurs due to an imbalance of money or power. In *English August*, the IAS training in Madna gives a tremendous culture shock for Agastya. Then it became a process of self-discovery. This novel portrays how the urban realities are in contrast to that of rural India. *The Last Burden* portrays life in an Indian middle-class family. This novel explains a joint family's conflicts, emotions, needs and desires. *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* give a picture of savage, high-velocity passage through bureaucratic India. It shows the conflicts in the administrative system.

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