

# A Study of Self Realization and Repentance in the Novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee

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Upamanyu Chatterjee is one of the finest writers in the realm of English Literature. He has rendered his services as an IAS in Indian Government. He introduces his heroes' mistakes and the consequent process of self realization for self-correction in their portrayal. Upamanyu Chatterjee's heroes feel trapped in the frustrations, family bonds, physical pleasures and criminal tendencies in their lives and get desperate to move out of these circumstances. He uses highly spiritual concept to highlight this pattern in his novels. This pattern of self realization and repentance is present in all his novels - *English, August* 1988, *The Last Burden* 1993, *The Mammaries of Welfare State* 2000, *Weight Loss* 2006, *Way To Go* 2011 and *Fairy Tales at Fifty* 2014. He explores the different shades of human anguish suffered by his characters for example in his work *English August* and *The Mammaries of Welfare State*, he deals with the work frustration, in *The Last Burden* and *Way To Go* he talks about frustrations arising out of family bonds. The third novel *Weight Loss* discusses the problems caused as a result of leading a life of excessive indulgence. In novel "*Fairy Tales of Fifty*" he also connects the concept of self realization with the Buddhist folklore of Angulimala. The main protagonists of his novels are engrossed in materialistic a life, completely cut off from the moral world. They are so deeply immersed in their selfish motives, which shortly reach a stage from where they cannot see any way out. They commiserate with their circumstances of life and get desperate librated themselves from their painful

surroundings. His Heroes continue to go ahead in the journey of their sinful life without receiving any external help of good advice. The upheavals and hardships faced by his heroes' initiate the process of self-realization which ultimately leads to repentances and self-correction. This realization helps them to arrive at right solution for their problem and brings drastic change in his heroes. Upamanyu Chatterjee discovers own kind of Nirvana for his heroes in his novels which helps to restore their mental peace.

Key words – Folklore, Repentance, Nirvana, Self-realization, Self-correction.

Upamanyu Chatterjee plays prominent role in Indian contemporary writing. He introduces an overpowering strain of guilt consciousness in his heroes. His heroes begin their journey with a restless attitude which makes it difficult for them to make right choices in life. Upamanyu Chatterjee's heroes go through Nirvana phase in their life. Nirvana means liberation from life of desires. It has different meaning in different philosophy. In Hindu philosophy Nirvana refers realization of identity. It concentrates on the concept of human self and inner soul. It negates all the calculation of materialistic world. Human beings generally ignore the spiritual aspects of life and are mainly busy in the pleasure of life. Human beings are busy to secure comforts in the life. Nirvana is the moment when the need of inner peace dominates their materialistic concerns. This requirement leads to self realization. In Jainism, Nirvana has slightly different meaning from Hindu philosophy. Jainism concentrates Nirvana as liberty from karmic bondage. Jainism believes Nirvana ends up the cycle of Karma in human life. The soul has to be free from the burden of good bad karma. Buddhist Philosophy brings another theory of Nirvana. Buddhism believes that nirvana focuses on emptiness. It senses that human has cosmic spirit inside the body. Human beings are reborn in this painful world till they have a burden of bad karma.

Upamanyu Chatterjee is greatly influenced with the concept of Nirvana. He introduces self-correction concept in his novels. He chooses certain pattern to make his heroes realize their mistakes. Upamanyu Chatterjee's heroes commit all brainless activities. Upamanyu Chatterjee's heroes display carelessness which ultimately leads them to make blunders. But at same time, Upamanyu Chatterjee's heroes are so sensible enough to realize their mistake and to recover from it. The crux of Upamanyu Chatterjee novels is their heroes' quest of self-realization. Self-Realization leads them to choose right path of self-correction.

The frustration and irritation faced by the protagonists of Chatterjee's novels compel to do something wrong. Their attempt of doing wrong make them feel guilty. This guilt consciousness is observed in his first novel "*English, August.*" The protagonist Agastya Sen joins Indian Administration Service. He was fascinated with the glory associated with Indian Administrative Service, but is soon disillusioned to witness the struggles of Indian bureaucrats. He gets frustrated due to his struggle for survival and wants to resign from the post of Indian Administration Service. Upamanyu Chatterjee projects two simultaneous struggle of Agastya Sen. First, he struggles from inner soul. Most of the time, he consoles his ethics to survive in Indian Administration Service. Secondly, he struggles with outer world. He always tries to give his best to justify his job.

Agastya Sen's Nirvana projects later in sequel work of "*English, August*" in "*The Mammaries of Welfare state*" instead of resigning; he begins to learn tricks for survival in the bureaucracy. He realizes the importance of his job later. Initially, He did not give much respect to his job but later he feels different while talking to his friend Dhruvo. His friend also tried for IAS but could not succeed in various attempts. This news makes him realize importance of job and leads him to accept of his job. Upamanyu Chatterjee highlights the rugged path many hurdles of the Indian bureaucracy. Agastya Sen tries his best to fight against it, but he fails in each attempt. Upamanyu Chatterjee projects Agastya's Nirvana from his work place frustration; he gives up all his professional desire and accepts the reality of Indian bureaucracy.

Upamanyu Chatterjee elaborates another concept of self-realization and repentance in his second work "*The Last Burden*" and its sequel "*Way To Go*". He elaborates the self-realization and repentance from the pressures of family bond. Sometimes people give too much importance to blood relations. This love creates some obstacles in the realisation of other goals of life. It happens to Shyamanand and Urmila. This couple puts his all emotional investment in their kids. Unfortunately, life shows them another reality of love. Shyamanand never ever gives importance to his wife Urmila. She always tries to be an ideal mother and wife. She thinks her family also loves her in the same way. When Urmila's illness is revealed in the beginning of novel, she expects everybody to look after her as she looked after everybody in the family, but she felt disheartened to see the emotional neglect of the family. "*The Last Burden*" focuses on the burden of Urmila's illness. Repentance comes in sequel work of "*Way To Go*." Shyamanand feels alone without his wife Urmila. It seems

that he is unable to live alone in his house. Therefore, Shyamanand leaves the house. Half of the novel revolves round the mystery of that Shyamanand's death or disappearance. Urmila's death gives self-realization to Shyamanand about his excessive dependence on his son's love. Second nirvana in the novel gets by Burfi. He acts selfish at the time of responsibility. He shows himself helpless when his mother gets ill. He consoles himself for ignoring his financial responsibility towards his mother by suggesting that he is married man and had his family's responsibilities. Thus, his father or Jamun has to pay his mother's medical bills. This escapist tendency is revealed again in "Way To Go." He does not show any concern to search his missing father. Later on he becomes actively involved in property distribution. His ill behaviour leads him nowhere. Later on, his family is shattered due to his careless behavior. Shyamanand and Burfi also reach the stage of self correction through self realization of their faults.

Upamanyu Chatterjee continues self-correction in his novel "Weight Loss." Bhola commits several blunders in his life. Self-realization appears in his life when he has crossed the limits in his life. Bhola commits mistakes since his childhood. Upamanyu Chatterjee shows as him a careless child. He is expelled from his school but he never informs about it to his parents. He tasted hard drinks and sexual pleasures in the early stage of his adolescence. He never gets any kind of reprimand for his blunders. It reduces the chance of self correction. Bhola keeps doing blunders in his life. He drowns himself in sexual fantasy. He realizes his blunders when one of his sexual partners sells Bhola's daughter blood and tries to shoot him. These major incidents make him realize his mistakes. He moves forward to spirituality. Upamanyu Chatterjee projects the journey from sexuality to spirituality in "Weight Loss".

Upamanyu Chatterjee has used the famous folktale of Angulimala at the backdrop of his novels *Fairy Tales At Fifty* to highlight the theme of self correction. Upamanyu Chatterjee elaborates self correction from criminal tendencies of Jhabua in the "Fairy Tales At Fifty". His grandfather narrates Angulimala's folktales. His grandfather thinks that Jhabua would be inspired by the positive characters of folktales but unfortunately, he gets fascinated by Dacoit Angulimala. He told his father about it. Jhabua changes his name to Anguli. Little Anguli begins to act like dacoit Angulimala. He starts to kill people in the early stage of his life. Meanwhile, he meets his twin brother Nirip. Both brothers get excited to meet each other after fifty years. They exchange their life experience. Their life changes from here. Nirip surrenders himself in front of circumstances and

adopts his father's criminal profession and Anguli surrenders himself in front of knowledge. He left everything and moved ahead to follow knowledge in Takshshila.

Towards the end, Upamanyu Chatterjee clears his character's repentances. Each character is trapped in different emotional circumstances. Every character rises high from their desire and greed. In first novel "*English, August*" and its sequel "*The Mammaries of Welfare State*" describe the emotional trap of work place. Agastya Sen studies hard to get prestigious job in the country. The glory of job enhances the hope of luxurious life. Agastya Sen is disheartened in his struggle for the fulfillment of his basic needs. Upamanyu Chatterjee shows self-realization of irresponsibility in "*The Last Burden*" and "*Way To Go.*" These sequel works reveal depression resulting from responsibility. Shyamanand feels repentance and leaves his house. He welcomes death. Shyamanand loves his boys but later on he becomes disillusioned out from son's love. Upamanyu Chatterjee concentrates on self realization and repentance of sexuality in *Weight Loss*. Bhola indulges in sexual activity in early period of his life. He grows from sexuality to spirituality. He realizes true meaning of karma. Spirituality is the last hope from their blunders. Upamanyu Chatterjee highlights true example of Nirvana in "*Fairy Tales at Fifty*". This work discusses self realization of Jhabua from his criminal attitude. At last, it can be said the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee begins with confused heroes but later they realize their mistakes that helps them to come on self-correction. Upamanyu Chatterjee's concept of self realization leads to self correction. His all heroes move ahead in the journey of self-correction.

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