



POST-MODERN ELEMENTS IN UPAMANYU CHATTERJEE'S *ENGLISH, AUGUST* : AN INDIAN STUDY

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Upamanyu Chatterjee, as a post modern writer has very unpleasant and unhealthy portrayal of life and society in most of his novels. In all his works, he gives the readers to experience life as meaningless, unpredictable, bizarre and ridiculous. He approaches the world with pessimistic lens. In *English, August* one can find the essence of Post-Modern elements in high level. Upamanyu chatterjee's narrative is filled with meaningless and dilemma, the crisis of existing alienation, chaotic and unpredictable world, cynical lifestyle of characters, incomprehensible situations and the emphasis of "room" to bring in a claustrophobic effect, and all his narration is marked with his inexorable love with death and preoccupied with obscenity, Hence the postmodern elements are noteworthy in Chatterjee's *English, August*.

In this novel Chatterjee portrays a complete chaotic world where absurdities are in plenty and Agastya is pelted by a sense of fake and meaninglessness Chatterjee in this novel dipped every single matter of his world with absolute absurdity. "the absurd, never far from him, would assail him" (70). Thus, here he presents a microcosmic farcical world. The protagonist, Agastya sen, been uprooted from his urban life, where he had covered himself with the absurdity of life, for joining in Indian Administrative Service and posted in Madna, it is in Madna, he attains insight to face life without mask. But his insight and approach towards life is all ghoulish and tiresome. The usage of "Absurd" and "Absurdity" are frequently used by the writer in this novel. Here Agastya undergoes survival problem; he gets new job, new home, new atmosphere and everything anew but he finds all these things morbid and gloomy. Not only in Madna, even in his native place and with his old pals, have the problems of alienation and lack of interest continued.

Tiresome lifestyle, unfulfilled wishes, and crisis of survival are hallmark of the protagonist's life. M.K.Naik and Shyamala A.Narayan writes that "...the look finally leaves as wondering whether the protagonist's existential angst is not after all a routine gesture of conformity to modern cynicism, rather than a adequate by motivated state of mind"(59).

Indeed just like all modern hero's Agastya finds solace nowhere and sees his life as a burden, he also worries about his place in the world; he is completely standing aloof and has no stable mindset. A complete discomfort and anger about his presence in the world corrode him throughout this novel. He feels "self pity in an uncongenial clime, the incertitude of his reactions to Madna, his job, and his inability to relate to it- other abstractions too, his niche in the world, his world, his future, the elusive mocking nature of happiness, the possibility of its attainment" (26). This sense of detachment is not only seen in Agastya, but also in his friends, Dhruvo and Madan, who were placed in very good jobs in Delhi. Their ideology towards life is something that

But the world isn't a wonderful place and full of exciting opportunities. It's generally dull and fucked everywhere... There are many indigenous methods of suicide. You could change sex , kill your husband if he doesn't die on his own, and burn yourself on pyre, but I think sati (sutee to you) is prohibited – they've killed a great Indian tradition, but there is a new one in its place – you could change sex and marry, and get you husband to burn you – the ultimate kink experience (78).

In this novel the author has given unmeaning full indistinguishable affairs and information's, unanswered actions and incidents that are confusing and unclear. For example, the meeting of Agastya, Shankar and his brother seems to be puzzling, which Chatterjee never tries to clear it up. No clarification is provided about many incidents in the novel. To him it is normal for he thinks many things in life in life remain puzzling and unanswered.

Another important characteristic of Chatterjee's writings is the significance of 'room' where the protagonist finds his shelter moving away from a confusing unclear and violent world. Agastya finds complete comfort in his 'room' where he leads his happy private life and finds to be "He safe while, to him" (73). The protagonist runs away from a freaking world and feels comfort staying inside his 'room', which is sacred, private space which is far away from the scary outside world. In fact, he never allows his visitors to enter his room instead he attends them only in veranda. When his friend Sathe, entered his room, he turns discomfort and tensed. Agastya finds even a calling bell's noise at his doorstep most scary because he feels that his privacy is getting threatened, and he finds that another person at him room is most inconvenient and strange.



On the first day of his training, Agastya feels bored and isolated in his new atmosphere so desires to reach his room, his own world,

His secret life that year was lived in his hot dark room in the rest house, or in other hot dark rooms in other rest house. His secret life became much more exciting and more actual than the world outside. In the afternoons the rooms were dark because the windows had to be closed against an incandescent world (27).

The attachment of Agastya to his room and the peace of mind he feels there show what Bill Naismith speaks, “the essential isolation of the individual and his wish to avoid communication with the outside world” (6). Though Agastya faces severe food problems he never wanted to leave the rest house, when Mr. and Mrs. Srivastav offered him a room in their house he refused their offer because staying with other means the deconstruction of safety walls he was so far constructed around him. This craving for privacy makes Agastya more isolated from the rest of the world and his interaction and relationship with the outsiders becomes certainly impossible.

The barrier in communication is the next important feature of Chatterjee’s work. Agastya’s problem surprisingly does not arise because of his ‘inability’ to communicate, rather because he constantly attempts to ‘escape’ communicating with others. Agastya uses words more only to avoid communication, he refuses to be open with others. While Kumar, his senior tries to talk with him he ends his discussion telling a lie, for the reason that “Agastya wished that Kumar would shut up” (138). And he accepts tea from his cook through he disliked it because “refusal would mean conversation” (37). The same occurs when Agastya meets his college friend Dhruvo, they were sitting together like “two islands” (163). They both have emotional talks but they couldn’t reach one another. In that occasion Agastya spontaneously spoke to him silently nobody can help with our ongoing issues in this postmodern world.

The absurd way of Agastya’s living made him to be a sadist. He involved himself in dirty thoughts, lust and behavior, and enjoyed pleasure in others pain. In his world love, law, peace, reason were always absent, which creates a pressure in his mind and this is released through his sadistic actions. When he was playing a cricket with a small boy Ashok at his office picnic his only aim was to make the boy cry. All he wanted was to destroy the joy, happiness and the energy of the little boy as Agastya was jealous of all these qualities. Once he was deployed to cut onions in the picnic. He hurts himself by cutting his fingers against the knife to avoid doing this work. Agastya finds delight in his own bodily pain. He steals Mr. Srivastav’s car key and finds pleasure seeing the dejected face of him. His sadistic acts are the only way through which he asserts his identity.

There is an explicit way of representation of post modern existence and civilization can be derived in postmodern literature is part of socio-political and chronological progress. Its uplifted efforts in deceitful society have been showed the distinctiveness of human being.

English August is filled with comic elements created through black humour. Upamanyu Chatterjee’s characters are general monotony in nature, he doesn’t use black humour to offend or disgrace others. The protagonist, Agastya throughout the novel, feels not only from Madna but also from the universe itself. Agastya’s surviving predicament is viewed from Indian bureaucratically setup in the postmodern world.

Work Cited

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