

**Investigation of Family Relations in Upamanyu Chatterjee's *The Last Burden***

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**Abstract**

The main objective of the research paper is to explain the multidimensional viewpoints of family relations in India. *The Last Burden* starts at the death bed of Urmila and the narrative is narrated through Jamun, the son of Shyamanand and Urmila. The novel investigates in deepness the association between son and mother. It represents the common disagreements between the life of town and the village. The protagonist of the novel is a representative of the middle class Indian youth who wishes for a life in the attractive city world simultaneously being unable to feel at home in the town. Shyamananda holds Urmila accountable for critical remarks of Jamun and Burfi and detestation towards him. Love marriage of Urmila isn't delightful and strong. Joyce and Burfi take all the benefits of living with the family. They demonstrate before others as if they are making a huge sacrifice due to their parents and they don't spend a single penny. Upamanyu Chatterjee described effectively the life of a modern Indian family and relations of family member.

**Key Words:** Marriage, Parents, Relationship, Sufferers, Sympathy

The present research paper attempts to portray many aspects of postmodernism and its ideas in the novel, *The Last Burden*. Upamanyu Chatterjee investigates the dim surface of relationship and family binds. It is a tale of a middle class Hindu family. It investigates the binds of dependence among contemporary family of India. Chatterjee usually depicts the customs and impulsive actions of the social environment and daily life of his characters in his novels. He is one of those writers whose thoughts are thoughtfully concerned with the mysterious area of life. Indian circumstances of individual life are so dreadful that any responsive imaginative author would portray these sides of life in his or her works. Chatterjee has represented the irrationality of life, the sadness and illness of life in his works very expressively and brilliantly.

Families in the present world experience the harmful impact of contemporary society. Characters in *The Last Burden* are either sufferers of contemporary society or winners of family life. They become sufferers and defenseless to such a level that they begin trailing their internal moral strength and physical potency to stay alive in the money-oriented world. The researchers in the present world have began their researches in many fields in common and in literature in particular for they have anxiety and sympathy in the fellow human beings as the subject has become burning problem. The major objective of the research paper is to explain the multidimensional viewpoints of family relations in India. It explains theoretically through the narration of Jamun's family in Upamanyu Chatterjee's *The Last Burden*.

*The Last Burden* is the second novel from the creative work of Upamanyu Chatterjee. It is one of the most truthful novels of Chatterjee's creation. It is published in 1993. *The Last Burden* focuses very solemn and actual life question. The characters depicted in the novel are very genuine. They can effortlessly be found in middle class families of India. The novel focuses the pain and problem as faced by the modern middle class Indian families in everyday life on the practical front. It generally highlights the burden which has rather become intolerable for most of the Indian middle class families living in all type of environment. *The Last Burden* is about ungratefulness of the young generation about their parents in their old age. The kind of behavior given to the age old people by the young lot is a type of new phenomenon as the similar has been a kind of scarcity in older times and environment. The burden in actual sense is the accountability of the old lot in a family and the author very delicately title it as last because after that the young lot will be the burden for the forthcoming generation and after taking care of the last burden they think that they will have to bear not anything else in their lives they shall be comforted everlastingly.

The novel didn't get high serious favor when it was published. But, it is a bright representation of life in a middle class family of India at the end of the 20th century. One of the big themes permeating Indian life is societal interdependence. People are taken birth into groups such as families, tribes, sub-castes, castes and religious communities. They live with a stable wisdom of being part of these groups. All societal communication engages stable concentration to admiration, respect, the emotions of others, privileges and responsibilities, kindness and presents of groceries, clothes and other attractive objects. Delicately, refrained custom assist facilitate each individual various societal relationship. *The Last Burden* starts at

the death bed of Urmila and the narrative is narrated through Jamun, the son of Shyamanand and Urmila. Jamun obtains a message through the telegram from his family informing him about his mother Urmila's heart attack. Jamun comes back from the city to his village to see his ill mother.

The novel investigates in deepness the association between son and mother. It represents the common disagreements between the life of town and the village. While Jamun expects to get a house in the town he is frequently drawn by the memories of his house in the village. He gets comfort in the reminiscences of his mother while living a life of estrangement in the town-

“You are good. You must visit me  
and not always only Satyavan. If  
you do not come and visit me, then I  
will visit you” (*TLB*, 11)

The protagonist of the novel is a representative of the middle class Indian youth who wishes for a life in the attractive city world simultaneously being unable to feel at home in the town. Chatterjee has depicted the ironic unhelpful relationship between Urmila and Shyamanand. It is difficult to understand such a relationship probable between two persons more than sixty years living in the same home. They have no esteem for each other as they are always fighting for something. They haven't been capable to set up a significant association even after more than 35 years of their married life. Social traditions of India are also accountable for their current tragic relationship. Urmila has not loved Shyamanand but she has to marry him. She is married to a human being for whom she has no emotion of adore and love. Jamun couldn't make up his mind about marriage.

“Why do not you and Ma display at  
least some signs of intimacy, of charity,  
towards each other, acquits yourselves  
a little like some other married  
couples.” (*TLB*, 161)

Jamun watches the outlandish familiarity between his father and mother. In his 17 years, Shyamanand and Urmila have never gone to bed in the same room. Unlike any

common ordinary couple they have never celebrated their marriage anniversary and birthdays. Therefore, Jamun doesn't know even the dates. Jamun replicates the regular Indian rising up in an Indian mega polis and emotions constantly that he will be more at home in London or New York than in a small place of India. This replication doesn't stop at the incapability to look in the direction of the warm house; rather it goes further. The disaster lies in his admit defeat to the estranging powers. And, a simple surrender is a symbol of the antihero who lacks the power of optimistic struggle. Jamun fundamentally concerns for his mother and desire to do her bidding but knows that it isn't his cup of tea and gets sucked into the vortex of modern youth's dream of superior life.

Upamanyu Chatterjee depicts the hopelessness and collapse of love marriages as is seen in the case of Urmila and Shyamananda. Shyamananda holds Urmila accountable for critical remarks of Jamun and Burfi and detestation towards him. Love marriage of Urmila isn't delightful and strong. It is full of incredulity, hatred, covetousness etc. Shyamananda and Urmila approach together not out of love, fondness and respect for one another but because of the attractiveness of sex. Therefore, Urmila got her pregnancy terminated two times earlier to her marriage. Actually, a female is bodily dominated and her health isn't taken into worry in the man subjugated culture. Urmila despite of all the backbiting and disputes with Shyamananda is just a distinctive Indian married woman, who loves her husband like God and desires to die before him. She feels responsible for not being with her husband when he has the attack. She instantly comes to look after her husband. She seems to be a totally devoted wife who is concerned about of her husband's health. Her nervousness to know the whole thing what happened when he has the stroke demonstrates her anxiety for her husband.

The problem of money arises in the family when Urmila was in hospital. When Urmila falls ill, the factual faces of her sons and husband come out very resentfully. Her sons and husband quarrel at the expenses of the hospital bill of the woman who dedicated all her life to them. Shyamananda and Burfi argue over the matter of sharing the hospital bill of Urmila. Shyamananda gives the opinion that Joyce should also contribute in Urmila's medical bill which Burfi opposes resentfully. He says to his father that,

“It should not be an issue at all! She is your wife. You hatched her maladies. You should pay for them.” (*TLB*, 44)

Shyamanand attempts to make Burfi understand that the person about whom he is talking is his own mother and being her elder son he also has some accountability to fulfill. Chatterjee has revealed the factual image of a lower middle class Indian attitude when he remarks that Jamun, the most sensible of the family members, recommends his father that Burfi and he should also give money to the treatment of their mother. Further he says the costs of Urmila’s treatment have already destroyed Shyamanand’s savings plans. Jamun gives twelve thousand rupees to Shyamanand for the rehabilitation of his mother. The life of Shyamanand transforms totally and he finds himself inaccessible after the demise of Urmila.

Joyce and Burfi take all the benefits of living with the family. They demonstrate before others as if they are making a huge sacrifice due to their parents and they don’t spend a single penny. Shyamanand and Joyce don’t talk with each other directly. Joyce never addresses her father, father-in-law, uncle and something like that. She constantly addresses him as your father and Shyamanand too avoids calling her daughter and always addresses her as your wife. This reveals the level of hatred which both of them has for each other. The relation between Joyce and Urmila is similarly dreadful and both hate each other. The backbiting between the sons and father gets worse and worse trading charges and countercharges. Burfi’s approach towards his father is even brutal. When Urmila has her first heart attack and Shyamanand makes a decision to spend some of his own hard earned money on her treatment, Burfi comments:

“Baba’s first love, his money, will now be gobbled up by this hocus-pocus to extricate his first hate, his wife.” (*TLB*, 63)

Burfi and his wife Joyce lived with the parents but had small to present them in terms of esteem. Joyce always looked down at family of her husband. Her husband’s family had a lower-middle-class state of mind particularly his father. They had been in the similar home with parents for 18 months before Urmila died. In 18 months the relations were terrible. The

grandchildren, Doom and Pista, stayed around their grandparents and in their protection after school. Joyce and Burfi took benefit of this truth. Burfi didn't pay for anything in the home. Neither electricity nor water payment was done by him. He also managed not to invite friends and saved money. He always had a reason of living with old parents. His self-centeredness had no limits. However, he didn't feel a complaint when he screamed and raved that it was due to happiness of his parents that he sustained to reside in the home rather than accepting his accountability towards them. Joyce and Burfi ultimately disconnect. Divorce has increased among urban families. The discord caused in the family because of divorce has a sturdy impact on young children at house. Doom and Pista had seen Burfi, their father, being aggressive towards their mother. When Joyce came back from work children were glad. They sat jointly while Burfi sat in his den hoping for a call to join them. Though, that never happened and ultimately the family dropped.

It is a recognized truth that family is the power in Indian society. The relationships among the members of the family are so burly that they last long. It doesn't mean that the relationships are always pleasant and distinguished by affection and attachment. Upamanyu Chatterjee has brutally investigating the family relations in this novel. The originality of the novel really comes from the truth that family members are uncovered in their relations with others. Chatterjee has depicted the characters as self-centered, hopeless, pessimistic, aggressive, separated and disastrous. These conditions describe the relationship between wife and husband, children and parents. The entire novel is organized around the narration of the pessimistic relationships that survives between Urmila and Shyamanand, Kasturi and Jamun, Burfi and Jamun, Joyce and Burfi, etc.

The novel, *The Last Burden* is an evidence of the conflict between two generations. The difference can be observed in psychological as well as in physical approach. The older one isn't willing to alter itself according to the transform that has come in the life style and the new isn't ready to follow the old. Chatterjee has raised the family question of the isolated old parents by their daughters and sons. The parents dedicate their entire life but once the children mature they don't hesitate to leave them on the compassion of their own destiny.

Upamanyu Chatterjee's novel is related not with growing up but with family relations. It takes a closer look at an Indian family, the complication of relationships and how this transform as catastrophic event takes place. The family members are proficient at imposing

unhappiness and take pleasure in other's emotional pain. Chatterjee investigates that relationship between husband-wife is the fundamental and most significant amongst the network of relationships on which a family rotates. Strong relations make possible the spouses not only to achieve their roles efficiently but also assist in appropriate socialization of their children. Alternatively, marital disagreement leads to family inadequacy and has unconstructive results on the rearing of children. The excellence of communication between a wife and husband has consequences on the entire family. Children of Urmila and Shyamanand faced the results of their parent's attitude in their life.

The novel represents the economic, societal and emotional issues that make people favor a nuclear family in contrast to a combined family. It gracefully describes the sacrifices and decisions made by dissimilar members in the family and the disturbances thereby. Thus, it can be concluded that it is a reasonable and sorrowful novel. Upamanyu Chatterjee described effectively the life of a modern Indian family and relations of family member. He explained the relationship amongst family members is full of troubles and intolerable obligations. He depicts the capability to modify the thinking of people through the family relations in the novel. Chatterjee has a strong message honorably, religiously and ethnically through the representation of immoral and deceitful characters.

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