

UPAMANYU CHATTERJEE'S *WEIGHT LOSS*: A SOJOURN IN SEARCH OF SEXUAL SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Upamanyu Chatterjee, the Indian English novelist portrays the mental and manual aspirations of the Indian youth with all its manifestations. In the novel *Weight Loss* Chatterjee portrays the life of Bhola, the protagonist, as an extraordinary personality who is in search of sexual satisfaction. The search for sexual satisfaction through all the possible means in the society makes his life tragic and turns him an individual unfit for the society. The life of Bhola is devoid of values and ethics as he finds both men and women as the tool for his sexual gratification. He establishes illicit relationships with the Physical Education Teacher, the servants and he even thinks of finding sexual pleasure in animals. The novel thus turns to be a sojourn in search of sexual satisfaction.

Upamanyu Chatterjee plays a significant role among the Indo-Anglian novelists, as he focuses on the Indian youth in his novels. He portrays the youth with their temperament, their attitude towards the corrupt society, views towards the weaker sections of the society and reactions towards the social institutions in the country. The mental and manual configurations of the youth are closely analyzed in his novels, as they play pivotal role in the progress and development of the nation.

Chatterjee's fourth novel *Weight Loss* unveils the story of Bhola who is in search of quenching his thirst for sexual gratification. The novel exposes Bhola as the representative of the misfit Indian youth who celebrates the urges of senses through all possible means available in the society. The sojourn for sex is the core of the novel. The novel depicts the life of Bhola, the protagonist, as an immoral one roaming around for sexual gratification. Upamanyu Chatterjee presents Bhola as an oversexed person who finds as many things as possible for his sexual satisfaction. Bhola can be seen as a young man who went on with his sexual urge and met his tragic end. Even from the childhood, Bhola developed the urge for sex. The parents played a major role in moulding the character of Bhola. The parents were not morally sound and they failed to impart the values to the child. This made the child Bhola to shape his mind devoid of values and ethics to fit himself for the society.

Even at the time of his school education, Bhola developed sexual fantasy towards his physical education teacher Anthony. He longed for as much as physical intimacy as possible with Anthony. For this, he indulged in all sorts of mischiefs and problems so as to get punishments from Anthony including pinches and beats. Bhola want to have Anthony's bodyparts and organ pressed to his body through all means possible. He generated a mad feeling

towards Anthony's body, which compelled him to make problem to Anthony through all means and thus developing the bodily intimacy with him. Bhola simultaneously disliked Anthony and yearned for the presence of Anthony and the warmth of his body.

Even at the age of eleven, he discussed sex with the seniors in school and he wondered that he was not aroused by women.

“He was scared and ashamed of himself for not being aroused by women. With his friends, he snickered and joked about breast and cunt but he - they all - had the vaguest notions about the second; about the naked female form divine he was curious without feeling for it any desire. He had noted, for instance, that his stepmother's breasts were large but nothing within him had stirred all visualizing them” (WL 9).

The analysis of Bhola's childhood proves that he was very much attracted to the obscene world which is full of sex and lust. The attitude of Bhola was not befitting a child. His thoughts were not inside the canvas of the childhood. It wandered in search of lustrous nooks and corners of women though he was not aroused by them. He found sexual pleasure in both men and women. The 'preys' included his teachers Jeremiah, Anthony and all female teachers in the school. He discussed sex with the smoking seniors of his school and cracked vulgar jokes with them.

The gay attitude with Anthony was full of troubles and problems. Bhola made all the problems in order to have a body contact with him. He enjoyed all the punishments like pinches, beatings and ear-tearing and he loved it to the most. Though he was excluded from the school for the indecent behavior towards Anthony, the gay attitude never failed in him unto his death. He never cared for the problems both mental and manual, faced by others, because of him. He only shaped his own way to the fulfillment of his views, dreams and senses. The attitude seems to be strange for those who analyze Bhola, but scrutiny proves that the society includes these types of characters in the corners of the world. The behavior of Bhola towards Anthony is indigestible to the common man in the society. He treated Anthony in such a manner that the relationship between Bhola and Anthony degrades from a relationship of teacher and students to a faulty friendship. Bhola found fancy in the articles belonging to Anthony and exploited the lustrous aspects in them. Bhola developed a negative approach to both Anthony and his belongings. Simultaneously he enjoyed the physical intimacy of the teacher.

“The boy then made to get up and butted his head into Anthony's crotch. ‘I heard Cleopatra's balls go *plich*,’ he later told an envious Dosto.

The teacher toppled over with a gasp that the class rejoiced to hear. Bhola tripped against and sprawled over him, rubbed his nose in the crook of his throat, pushed his knee into Anthony's abdomen and scrambled up before he could gush out in his trousers”(WL 4)].

The urge for sex with Anthony and to enjoy the warmth of his body is evident in the letter which Bhola wrote to him. He unveils his lustrous zest towards Anthony in the letter.

"The first read:

I am boy and you are my god. I saw you once and can't get you out of my mind or body I want to worship your strong manliness and feel your great hard buM forever over my face. Please my god meet me on the 13th at 7pm at the North Gate of the Centenary Stadium. I want to be your woman. From your slave” (WL 10).

For the intimacy of Anthony, Bhola subjugated himself to Anthony and the slavish behavior in search of sex is evident in his attitude towards Anthony. It must be noted that the

homo sexual, gay attitude towards the teacher is openly expressed by a school student in his teenage. The age is not supposed to be the time which the boys of his age express the sexual quest. The slavish attitude for sex reveals that he was ready to do anything and everything to fulfill his mental and manual fantasies.

In the teenage he was not only interested in the manliness of Anthony but also in the body of Ms. Jeremiah. His stepmother generated curiosity and enthusiasm in Bhola. Though his class teacher Ms. Jeremiah was fortyish, Bhola found the zeal in the nooks and corners of the teacher. “Thus Bhola at thirteen was fantasizing his new Class Teacher Miss Jeremiah even though she did not dispel any of his womanish myths (WL 14). He expressed his attitude towards Jeremiah during the conversation with Dosto. He says” I want her to close her thighs around my ears like that” (WL 14). In the classroom Bhola was diverted by the Jeremiah’s lustrous body. He never took interest in the lessons or in learning while Jeremiah took the classes for him. “In class he would gaze at her knees and thigh and his skull would swell with lust” (WL15). The unusual behavior of Bhola towards teachers can be seen throughout the school days and at the time of graduation. He never spoiled any occasions from which he can enjoy the fantasy from the world around him. It may be the manliness of Anthony, lost womanliness of Ms. Jeremiah or other female teachers.

Though there were unnatural elements in the childhood of Bhola, he cannot be blamed as the sole responsibility for his deformations in the behavior. The environment in the family influences the child in every society. Though there are only passing references about the family of Bhola, the influence of parents on Bhola cannot be neglected. The case of Gopinath proves the attitude of the parents. Gopinath, the servant, was very intimate to Bhola and loved his presence. But the parents neglected Gopinath when he fell in ill. They took little care in the treatment of Gopinath. The attitude of the parents is unveiled in the occasion. The reply of the father in the case reveals that he never cared for the sufferings of the needy and the poor. He was pointing to the lack material benefit by visiting the ailing servant. This lack of humanity is also evident in the case of Bhola as he neglects other feelings in attaining his goals. The lack of values and morals in Bhola’s life is the result of the misconduct of the parents.

There was no place for love in the life of Bhola. All he wanted was sex. He was ready to sacrifice everything for it. The celebration of the youth in the life of Bhola developed with the relationship with Moti and Titli. Introduced as the low class vegetable vendors in the novel, Moti and Titli became the indispensable part of Bhola. He never cared for the class distinction existed in the society. There were differences in many aspects like economy, caste, and social status between Bhola and the vegetable vendors. But he never minded for their differences in search of lust. “His entire life was to be a quest for sex on tap and on payment with females and males of the lower orders” (WL 38). The search for sex was directed towards Moti and Titli and enjoyed sex from all sorts as he even thought of having sex with cattles. But after he met the vegetable vendors he couldn’t escape from the dreams around them. Bhola’s life changed with the change in the living conditions of Moti and Titli.

Even at the first sight of Titli, Bhola thought of having sex with her. The outlook of Titli attracted him the most. “He wanted to lick the sweat out of her cleavage, wondered how many dozens were fucking her and then felt dizzy when he thought of the moist heat in her loins” (WL 41). Bhola craved for the salty sweet in the armpits of Titli. Her body odour aroused the tender feeling of Bhola. He was tensed in the absence of the couple. He enjoyed the gay sex with Moti. He exploited the weakness of Moti and used him for sexual gratification. The poverty and lower

stratified status of Moti helped Bhola to exploit him. He forced him to massage his body and then sexually used him.

Bhola ignored the relationships between Moti and Titli. The illicit relationship of Moti and Titli with Bhola was known to both, but their pathetic condition compelled them to suffer Bhola's exploitation. The novel in this occasion seemed to be elitist. The normal concept of the husband-wife relationships is shattered with the intrusion of Bhola. The novel seems to say that there is little importance for the relationships among the lower classes and the norms in the society are not for the lower class of the strata. There were no fluctuations in the relationships between Moti and Titli even after the relationship with Bhola. Moreover the concept of sexuality was a puzzle before Bhola. He enjoyed sex with all women possible and he found time for masturbation also.

The concept of sex and nudity was something obscure for Bhola. He used to exercise in the terrace without any dress in the morning. Anin witnessed this many times, but the presence of an outsider for his nudity was not a problem for him. The attitude towards sex was also strange in Bhola. He liked the enchanting smell and warmth of Titli and Moti and for that he roamed around them. The sex with Moti and Titli attracted him very much and he couldn't part with the couple. The unquenchable thirst for relationship with Titli made him to do his graduation in MKMZAP College, though it was in a hilly area in a faraway place. The craze for Titli and the search for sex forced him to cling to a faraway place. The separation from the family was not a problem for Bhola as his sole aim was the sexual satisfaction. The disappointment and remorse in Bhola because of failing to find Titli in the college shows that he was very much satisfied with her though she was from the lower working class with salty taste of sweat.

The dreams and expectations of Bhola bore fruit when he found Titli in the house of Dr. Borker, the fraud. She was working as an assistant to him. The promotion of Titli from a low class vegetable vendor to a medical assistant surprised Bhola. But the love for her body odour remained as it is. The news of Borker having sex with Titli shocked him but it was never an impediment for him to go on having sex with her. Though Borker performed abnormal and distorted mode of sex with Titli he hated Titli having sex with Bhola. But Both Borker and Bhola engaged in sex with Moti.

Despite the disagreements in the matter of sex with the couples Bhola and Borker co-operated in matters where there is evil and malice. Though with little knowledge and amenities for the venture both of them performed the circumcision of Moti. The evil thought of getting Titli for their wish after the death of Moti governed them much for the dangerous act. This proves that Borker will go far all possible means, irrespective of the moral and spiritual background, for the fulfillment of his sexual pleasures. The relationship between Borker and Bhola was not confined to the case of Titli and Motias they co-operated in the evils as they drank and smoked together. The status in the society and the norms in culture did nothing in changing the attitude of the sex maniacs. The sexuality of Borker is distorted as he found time to masturbate on Titli even between operations and consultations with the patients.

Though enjoyed sex through all means, the conflict with the conscience of the characters can be seen in the novel. For the uncontrollable sex and the deformations in the sexuality Bhola wanted to point excuses and arguments to support his unleashed behavior. He tried to substantiate his sexual urge by saying that it will help him to lose the weight. He managed sex as a method for weight loss which was a problem for him for all times. The overweight and plump nature of Bhola made some disturbance in his sexual life. He yearned for a body that he can control freely and found sex as a tool to the maintain fitness in addition to the regular exercises and warm ups.

The overflowing thirst for sex and the warmth of both men and women made Bhola to relate sex and women to spirituality and myths in Hinduism. His state of being over whelmed by sex was compared to the Hindu god shiva who took much transformation for the sexual gratification. He related himself to the innumerable gods and demons that enjoyed with infinite women and married as many as possible. For him, “The sex act therefore, properly regarded and approached, is a channel for the highest spiritual experience, a means of salvation (WL 143). The aim of spirituality is salvation, according to Bhola. So in order to meet the gods and the dignified spirits he followed the paths of Hindu mythological figures to justifying his sexual extravaganza. In the words of Bruce King:

The novel filled with Hindu metaphysics twisted into justification for lust:

He would sink into the scalding morass and then burn. Burn he would atlast emerge in another life, pale whittled down to the bone thin and light bleached of all desire.

As for Bhola’s passion for Anthony and Moti and his bisexuality

Think of shiva as Ardhanarishvana, fused with the form of his consort parvati. Think of Krishna who as the god head is the one true male entity and the world and its creatures are all female in principle created for his pleasure. In the mundane world too all men and women combine the same duality one is complete when one accept within oneself the qualities of both genders.

Both Borker and Bhola tried to universalize their feelings which they had in trespassing towards sex. They had tried to bring justification from psychology and philosophy in order to clarify their distorted sexuality.

Bhola’s vision is similar to that of the fake doctor who excited himself while proclaiming that the sperm is the one. He likes to twist philosophy upside down by getting the words but not intent right. If resting worldly temptations is troubling, then give in immediately” (79).

Bhola’s marriage with Kamala, Anin's sister, made a rift in the relationships with Motiand Titli. But Kamala never satisfied him and he was not much interested in the married sexual life. The fantasy he found in the extramarital sex was absent and he was in want of gratification from Kamala. He was not true to Kamala though she tried to be dutiful towards him. The married life was fruitful only in the sense that Kamala gave birth to a child. With his marriage, Moti and Titli faded even from the life of Bhola and he enjoyed sex from the extramarital relationships. The picture of Borker with the false treatment diminished from the mind of Bhola as Kamala intruded into his life as the wife. Bhola confined more to himself and his family.

But the flow of the novel turned upside down with the incident concerning Borker and Bhola. The couples Moti and Titli murdered Borker and robbed him for his exploitation and ill-treatment. The return of Moti into the life of Bhola was drastic and unpredictable. The changes in the minds of Moti were visible after his return. He never wanted to be a tool for exploitation and protested against the activities of Bhola with the blend of morality and spirituality. The picture changed as he shot Bhola on Chest with a pistol and eloped from the scene.

The fall of Bhola began with the shot from Moti. Soon after his recovery he was challenged by the presence of Titli as an aya to his small child. But Bhola realized that Titli was taking revenge with Bhola by selling the blood of the infant. The sex with Titli happened to gain the title of pedophile as his semen was spotted on the garments of the kid. This shattered him

completely as he suffered mental and manual agony. He thought that God whom he called only in depression was punishing him for all the evils. Bhola realized his powerlessness and his fate. So he left the scene by cutting his vein on the wrist. The tragic end of a chaotic life full of distortion in sex and sexuality is elucidated in the culmination of the novel.

Though Bhola committed suicide before prime, at the age of thirty nine, he celebrated his youth with all sorts of sexual extravaganza. He accomplished in gratifying the sexual feelings with the attainment of zeniths of sexual pleasure. The analysis of life reveals that he was only concerned about the sexual pleasures. There was no role for the tender feelings of human beings in the mind of Bhola. Love, which is an important element in the sexual satisfaction was lacking in his sexual ventures. The emotions, which blended the sexual gratifications, were away from the life of Bhola. According to Bruce King his life is “A boy’s life of wildly self-destructive impulses ending at the age of thirty nine” (78).

Bhola cannot be blamed for his extraordinary sexual urge but the problem lies in the approach towards sex. It is more wild and destructive. It never liberated Bhola but made a chain of problems in his life one after another. The celebration ended with a tragic note as his approach was destructive. It degraded him and led him to his pathetic, tragic end. In the words of Nandini Lal: “Sex here is not a liberating experience. It is degrading for Bhola and ludicrous to the reader and that is precisely the author’s intentions (7). He diverted the sanctity of sex and he tasted its consequences. He diverted the sanctity of sex citing from the religious scriptures and Hindu mythologies for the exploitation of the lower class of the society. G.J.V. Prasad discusses the main problem with Bhola:

This ambiguity or difference in our ancient philosophical approaches to sexuality is that sex to be celebrated and is a path to liberation, while it is at the same time to be controlled and sub limited because it ties us down to the material world. Bhola want life on his own terms, he want sex without the muddying effects of love or emotional commitments. He wants to maintain order and control he wants to be the dominant partner in his relationships, to take or leave as he pleases (95).

Despite all the abnormalities in sexuality he was true to himself. He never attained the trust of even his wife or any other members of the family. Thus for the celebration of his own youth he shattered the sanctity within him. In the sixteen years of sexual activity he spoiled eight- four men and four women. But the spoiling was not mere manual as he polluted their minds with his attitude for which he sacrificed his life in search of peace, which was unattainable for him.

References:

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Abbreviations:

Weight Loss - WL