Urban Space and Family Predicament in Upamanyu Chatterjee's Way to Go (2010)

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Abstract

Upamanyu Chatterjee's Way to Go (2010), a sequel to The Last Burden(1993) makes the way to the end of an epic story of a poor middle class family that is derivative of the fictionally represented family narrative in his second novel The Last Burden. Chatterjee seeks to impart a committed and didactive account on how the joint family equilibrium in Indian society is running an inevitable threat of collapsing into the formal and functional extremes under the spell of challenging changes resulting from the emergent socio-economic processes in 21st century. While The Last Burden looks more focussed on marital conflict and the fraternal disputes revolving round the medical treatment of a dying mother like Urmila, Way to Go offers a well- informed documentation on the abuse of the elderly like Shyamanad against the backdrop of a poor middle class family in the urban space like Calcutta. The harrowing experience of physical and cognitive challenges lived by Shyamanand makes him function as a representative paradigm for crore of old parents in urban setting who are to stoically embrace their preordained fate of seeking a 'way to go' to the 'old age homes'. The socio-economic and geographical mobility with the increasingly declining importance of territorially demarcated shadow lines are triggering a certain measure of predicament to manifold facets of family relationships inclusive of conjugal, filial and fraternal ties. The characters are in an existentialist search of a new 'way to go' away from the old last burden of 'wrenching familial memories'. The objective of the case study is to manifest the ethical wasteland of the urban family resulting from the heart of darkness what each character falls prey to. The critical interpretation of the family predicament under the socio-economic mobility with contextual reference to The Last Burden and Way To Go is predicated on the recurrent disappearance of Shyamanad which is symbolically indicative of the life in death and disappearance and death in rotting life. Chatterjee pointedly critiques how globalisation and modernisation are the compelling force for Burfi and Jamun in calling the functional significance of home and family into a relevant question. The title of the chapter 'sell the house, buy a new life' is clearly indicative of the traditional value of the home under the endangering spell of socio-cultural mobility in the wake of globalisation. The deleterious effect of social changes in urban space necessitates the restoration of the family ecology to 'bond father and sons together'.

Key words: Urbanisation, cultural globality, family erosion, elderly abuse and family survival

According to Post-War modernisation theory, the nuclear family of the modern western type (Comprising parents and unmarried children) is demonstrably the family form most suited to the requirement of the modern, urbanised, industrial society founded on individualistic values. __Patricia Uberoi (Freedom and Destiny, 2009)

Urbanisation refers to the socio-economic process of infrastructural, social and cultural change coming into existence as a resultant response to industrialisation, structural modernisation, labour transition and de-peasantization within the larger context of agrarian economic set up. The attainment of political autonomy after an epic independence struggle has advocated a host of long-awaited infrastructural and economic transformations touching multiple developmental facets of our nation. The rapid industrialisation with its attendant process of urbanisation in the aftermath of national liberation started emerging out of a social demand for markedly progressive change and a compelling necessity to overcome the developmental challenges offered by the legacy of so called colonisation. The primary means of earning livelihood for the majority share of Indian population was predicated upon the agriculturally oriented professions. The redefined idea of internationalism and its impact on stressing the global approach to inclusive development affected the notional prejudice of strictly following the ancestral occupation as the only means of earning bread. The gradual technical advancement in the industrial mode of production, the application of fertilisers, high yield seeds and tools started causing serious damage to the labour employment elasticity. This deplorable situation in agrarian environment caused instead the replacement of labour force with mechanical mode of production. The long- term employability crisis in the rural family gave rise to the agrarian transition of rural labours towards the urbanised territory. The green revolution and the capitalist farming compelled the people to experience the rural-to-urban migration in search of employment there in the industry-ridden urban space. In relation to it the Indian sociologist Nadeem Hasnain in his The Indian Culture: Change and Continuity assumes the increasingly crucial role of technology in carrying the agricultural productivity a step forward:

"Capitalist farming and investment for increasing productivity is accompanied by the mechanisation of farm operation". (73)

The over population in India is seen to be coinciding with the increasing demand for food, fashion, entertainment, employment and habitable place. The acquisition of farmland with view to construct habitats to an ever increasing pace is giving birth to additional number of labour forces. The sociological viewpoint by Hasnain in relation to it looks more convincingly identical:

"Finally, structured employment on capitalist farms does not provide space to absorb surplus labour." (75)

In default of due employment opportunity and economic productivity in the rural environment, the labourers are undergoing a large- scale dispersal towards the urban areas in order to fulfil their primary demand for job and a more comfortable lifestyle. The massive absorption of migrated labourers is giving rise to high population density within the context of urban territory. According to Hasnain, such societal changes engender the release of labour on one hand and its absorption on the other. Such experience of geographical transition from rural to urban or urban to rural spaces amounts to certain changes to both structural and functional approaches to Indian family relationships

In addition to this virtually steep decline in agrarian economy, another seminal defining factors contributing to a noticeable expansion in urban area include the complex network of transportation and an advanced access to the digital communication system. The instant and easy access to digital and infrastructural privileges happen to intensify the population rate in urban space. Another critical determinant addressing the enormous enlargement in urban context correlates to the centralisation of governmental and non-governmental service centres offering a cluster of bread earning means. The growing number of professional institutes and close proximity to advanced medical backups wholly function as a persuasive 'pool factor' triggering the state of population explosion there. The socio-cultural changes dictated by the current infrastructural level of change and challenges unmistakably act upon divergent facets of poor middle- class family within the context of urban space.

The objective of the case study is to conduct a sociological investigation into a family narrative in Chatterjee's Way to Go addressing the notable predicament in traditional family role performance, commitment, value rendering, ideology, gendered bargaining and patriarchal framework of power allocation in a middle- class family against the background of Calcutta. The detrimental consequence of the globalisation on multiple facets of Indian urban family is beyond denial. The changes in family life never come into being independently of the changes on socio-economic and cultural levels. The multidirectional and complex transition of global approach to culture and economy is playing a functional role in shaping the phenomenal transformations both in the point of family and society in India. With the advent of neo-liberalism the free worldwide movement of global cultural norms is seen to be exerting a pronounced impact on a set of issues like the mode of livelihood, professional orientation, infrastructural modification and the ways we speak, dress and think today. The urban space finds no way out to steer clear of the process of cultural globalisation and it naturally operates as an epicentre of cultural amalgamation between the global and the local.

The cultural globalisation, a chief facet of globalisation process is commonly held to be triggering a host of drastic changes to the popular ideals of Indian joint family framework traditionally run by the patriarchal model of family role and power allocation and their strict instrumentalization. This global multifaceted socio-economic process with transboundary transaction of population, tools, ideas and its resultant reciprocal interfaces of cross-cultural interactions is visible as amounting to an in-between space whereby the people in India across caste, class, religion, ethnicity and professions are experiencing an intertwined cultural response to the emerging phenomena. The deterritorialization of global cultures makes various parts of the world look closely identical with each other and it gives birth to hybrid

culture spaces. This intermingling between the global and local cultural entities is navigating the cultural transformation both in the point of rural and urban context. Thus, globalisation is perceived as effectively operational and functional in promoting the redefinition in relation to traditional family role and strict commitment to the role performance. The cultural synchronisation plays a critical role in begetting a strong sense of discontents in the joint family life by the simple dint of offering a space of competing assumptions regarding traditional value rendering. Under the spell of globalisation and modernisation process the lines of perceptive pluralities between the traditionalist and modernist are coming into prominent existence and it is thought of as effectively instrumental in giving rise to the intergenerational conflicts detrimental to the prolonged conventional family cohesion.

The transnational access of global idea, ideologies and values through media culture to the Indian society is a mentionable determinant directing a set of marked changes to the traditional social institutions like family, marriage and kinship. Now a days a greater extant of elementary stress is being focused on the western model of redefined family ideals as notably convincing rhetoric of affirming different familial development plan implementation. A host of demographic changes in Indian society emerging out of existing geographic, socio-economic and educational mobility is accelerating the pace in the formal nuclearization of joint family. From the onset of globalisation process onwards the Indian social entity is marked by the commonplace familial issues such as trial marriage, premarital sexuality, divorce, cohabitation causing predicament to the family ecology as the detrimental social consequence of global cultural articulation. In her *'Freedom and Destiny: Gender, Family, and Popular Culture in India'* Patricia Uberoi assumes the role of westernisation process in triggering the familial changes:

It was assumed that modernising societies would inevitably follow the developmental path travelled by modern western societies. First, and most importantly in this model, the extended or joint family form would be replaced by the nuclear type. (22)

The western ideological pronouncement that the institutional affiliation of the people with the training institute of national and international importance regardless of gender specifics assign infrastructural and financial backup to developing society gains an exclusive momentum from the commencement of the socio-economic processes. The institutionalised discourse of western ideologies pertaining to the institutional curriculum and the access of the young generation to the social medias are collectively affecting their intellectual acculturation of the young generation in a new way. Such current version of distorted social structure in India is resulting from the familiarity with the global way of living. The advent of neo-liberalism coincides with the unexpected reaction of the young against the patriarchal approach to marriage, parenthood and 'partnership formation'. So the emerging dominant idea of premarital life and cohabitation in the urban space of India are addressed by the social dimension of globalisation. In the essay *'Globalisation and Family life'* Melinda Mills makes an agreeable assertion in relation to the global rise in the social practice of cohabitation during the premarital phase:

Finally, changes in living arrangements and partnership formation are another important element that has transformed family life, particularly the rise of cohabitation. (258)

In order for any nation like India, an overpopulated country, to meet the rising demand for employment, the necessity to substantiate the scope of industrialisation is beyond denial. More importantly, the substantial enlargement of manufacturing sector is commonly designated as the stepping stone to reduction in the concern of unemployment. Right at the same time the growing trend towards privatization of the national companies is intensifying the risk of being exposed to the detrimental outcome of employment uncertainty. Less convincing stability in the occupational retention navigates the merging of the youth into the uncertain course of their future action. A relevant reference to the above-mentioned essay by Melinda can be highlighted as to assist the concerned proposition:

Family life and decisions surrounding the life course have been fundamentally altered by the globalisation, since decision-making increasingly occurs under highly uncertain condition. (259)

The overpopulation, competitive economy and uneven concentration of industries and service centres in urban space necessitate the geographical dislocation of the people from place to place within a country. The urge to avail the employment opportunity beyond the birth state functions as a 'pull factor' contributing to the population shift. That very enlarged distance between the family and individuals in the wake of geographical mobility imposes a strongly affective influence on the breakdown of the family and kinship ties. The accessibility of the digital communication protocol provides the migrants with better communicative support. Beyond shadow of doubt, this emergent version of advanced interaction system has reduced the distance for those who are to undergo the spatial dispersal from their home and family. Right at the same time digital communication support, a consequence of cultural globalisation promotes a long term estrangement of the migrants from their residents in urban territory. In relation to the theoretical insistence on the impact of migration on the family cohesion Melinda rightly comments:

Alternatively, virtual communication may increasingly replace physical meetings and represents a fundamentally different type of interaction. (259)

The existing global phenomena, the enactment of administrative policies, geographical mobility and changing socio-cultural climate are some of the forceful determinants defining the socio-economic transformations. The changes on individual level consequently causes societal changes in extended sense. The well-informed understanding of society, family, marriage, class and caste is of compelling necessity for exclusive exploration of the inherent social and familial concerns. Important more than ever before, the unnecessary and socially unexpected changes in the family framework demand an interdisciplinary investigation into noticeably distorted state of family. From the onset of globalisation and neo-liberalisation onwards the formal separation of joint family is coming into existence at an unprecedentedly increasing pace. This nuclearization of extended household in urban space looks nothing new in the wake of late capitalism and rapid cultural transformation across class, caste, gender and religiosity. The key focus of the case study is concentrated on addressing the defining factors accountable for the disintegration of the joint family and predicament in family relationships.

The geographical space as a determining construct conditions the respective societal changes from which the family structure and kinship can by no means be isolated. The

changes in professionalism, individualism, attitude, aspiration, academic orientation, recreational activities, the search for independence and self- identity are seen as engendered by the compelling necessity to ensure a befitting adoption to the socio-cultural and economic requirement in urban space. The evolving social consciousness and the urgency to conform to the social expectation condition a new cultural imagination associated with the relationship between the family and society. The growing demand for experiencing more comfortable life style gives rise to the events of an individual's relational dissociation from the family obligation to live up to the patriarchal ideals with an enduring retention. It is required to contextualise a highly relevant theoretical preconception on the functional importance what the urban family is deprived of with a contextual reference to Louis Wirth's *Urbanism As a Way of Life:*

The transfer of industrial, educational and recreational activities to specialised institutions outside the home has deprived the family of some of its most characteristic historical functions. (21)

We must critically impinge upon the affective consequence and legacy of colonisation in India in tern of redefining the idea of what is called the Indian joint family. Beyond the colonial era coming to an end after 1947, the colonisation process does no longer appear to be an effective and direct variable transforming the family, marriage and kinship. Instead, the current socio-economic process of changes like globalisation, cultural imperialism, industrialisation and resultant event of urbanisation strike an emphatic impact on family breakdown in term of relational predicament. In an attempt to establish with theoretical attention a profound interrelation between Indian family and western cultural essence, anthropologist, T.N Madan points out:

As for the assertion that industrialisation and urbanisation specifically will alter the family institutions, this too is based on what are believed to have been the consequence of these processes in the west. (418)

The socio-cultural and economic dimension of urbanisation is triggering a radical transformations to three core forms of family relationships such as filial, conjugal and fraternal ties. The patriarchy as prime structural model of popular Indian family is running the threat of getting partly dismantled. The joint family integrity is generally held to be premised on the flexible and committed interpersonal correlation among the family members by the descending sequence of power transference from top to the bottom of the pyramidal family configuration. The current trend towards emphasizing personal preference, professions, partnership and marriage is calling the family cohesion into inevitable challenges. A relevant statement evidenced by Madan's empirical investigation can be seen as convincingly supportive in attesting the issue:

It has also been asserted that the authority- structure of the Hindu household discourages the collective discussion-making on rational ground. The head expects and usually receives obedience from the other members, even if only grudgingly at times. (423)

To drive home the case study in this respect, Upamanyu Chatterjee's Way to Go (2010) has been selected. Way to Go by Chatterjee is a sequel to his second novel The Last Burden

published in 1993. The Last Burden and Way to Go thematically deal with common issues of a Hindu joint family against the background of changing socio-economic processes coinciding with change and challenges on personal, familial and societal levels. The moment The Last Burden was penned and published is well indicative of the fact that the novel offers a fictional representation of a Hindu extended family within the context of an evolving socio-cultural environment being under the spell of globalisation and migration. The Last Burden in term of its temporal setting marks the onset of different global phenomena encouraging the establishment of industrial society and the rapid expansion of the urbanised territory in India. The above-mentioned two novels comprehensively present a lengthy story of poor middle-class family in Calcutta. While The Last Burden is set in a number of cities like Bhubaneswar, Calcutta and a fictional city of Maharashtra, Way to Go predominantly focuses its attention on the home and family of Shyamanand in Calcutta. In the concluding part of The Last Burden, Jamun moved back to Maharashtra after the death of his mother, Urmila and Way To Go starts with the return of Jamun from Maharashtra to Calcutta where he dwells with his half-paralysed father, Shyamanand.

The commonplace issues like social change, class distinction, cultural transformation, administrative corruption, family, marriage and kinship constitute the core thematic fundamentals of the novels he penned. The social and cultural changes impacting the typical Indian joint family equilibrium shapes the lead narrative foundation of the novel, Way to Go. Chatterjee unearths with an enduring spirit of dark humour the realistic portrait of family predicament in the urban space like Calcutta in India. The novelist in the novel concerned aims at revealing the story of how an urban family is undergoing a drastic evolution in the wake of the globalisation and urbanisation. Chatterjee critically insists on a fictional narrative of a Bengali family with view to explicate noticeable dimensions of family predicaments in joint family structure. In response to a question of why he has selected the Bangali family in Calcutta, Chatterjee analysed the reason to a representative of The Hindustan Times:

Look, I need to have some depth in my characters. That's why they are all Bangalis. I can not imagine writing a book with someone called Sexena as the hero.

Death, disappearance, disintegration, discontents and degeneration are some of the common events fashioning the narrative from the beginning to the end of the novel. That the frequent disappearance of Shyamanand makes a significant sense sounds convincingly clear once the novel lays a recurrent stress on three parts each of which begins with the same chapter 'missing person'. Almost the entire part of the narrative is concentrated on the search of Jamun for his infirm and paralysed father who has departed the home and family leaving Jamun in the state of oscillation between partly intended death and uncertain existence of Shyamanand. In an interview with Hamish Hamilton, Chatterjee made a philosophically argumentative proposition regarding the impact of loneliness and identity crisis on the disappearance of a person in relation that correspond to his death. He thinks that the long-term ill treatment of an elderly in the family necessitates his existence nowhere in the map of family relations: I was trying to suggest that you don't have to die to disappear in a relationship.

Here the term 'disappear in a relationship' well implies the steep decline in the filial relationship between Jamun and Shyamanand. Chatterjee highlights how the family disintegration emerges out of the relational discontents caused by the moral degeneration on individual level. The majority part of the textual case study consists of a critical analysis on manifold layers of family predicaments such as growing insignificance of home and family, geographical dislocation and family in danger, loose family ties under emerging cultural changes, lack of family obligation and structural breakdown.

While The Last Burden projects the struggle of Burfi and Joyce to avoid being overburdened with the responsibility of a joint family, Way to Go shades light on how the characters like Jamun, Burfi and Shyamanand look for a 'way to go' away from home and family liabilities. The epic family story ranging from The Last Burden to Way to Go incorporates into the narratives a cyclic process of structural growth and contraction in the family. The Last Burden depicts a nuclear family with unmarried Jamun and Burfi and ends with the tragic death of Urmila in a joint family whereby Burfi marries a Christian girl named Joyce. Way to Go offers a realistic projection of how Burfi went to Noida along with his wife and children leaving on the shoulder of Jamun the charge of taking care of half-paralysed father Shyamanand in Calcutta.

Chatterjee's Way to Go revolves round the story of a poor middle-class family where Burfi and Jamun have lost their mother Urmila nearly fifteen years ago and Jamun lives with his father at the home built by him after his retirement at the age of fifty eight in Calcutta. Jamun is found to be interacting with Burfi occasionally over phone because he lives in Noida with his family for few years. Burfi comes back to home in Calcutta after the disappearance of Jamun in third part of the novel. The novel functions as a mirror to the formal and functional disasters in the family of Shyamanand under the determining grid of socio-cultural and infrastructural level of changes in the urban space. The contemporary evolutions in social, economic and cultural domain resulting from the global way of life exert a considerable measure of consequence on the formal and psychological layer of family life. Any facet of social transformation is by no means possible to be interpreted independently of changes on personal and familial level. Sudhir Kakar and Katharina Kakar frankly acknowledge how family a formative construct triggers a wide range of changes to society. They philosophically argue that family is an epicentre shaping the contemporary transformations from social perspective in India: If there is one "ism" that governs Indian society and its institutions, it is familism. (The Indians, 2007)

In the post- industrial society, the transnational network of global cultural narrative tends to promote the pursuit of rapid urbanisation. Within the context of the urban society, the poor middle-class family falls an innocent prey to threatening consequences of economic disparity and professional uncertainty. The commercially purposive privatization of national companies in India is encouraging the concentration of financial capital in the hands of the capitalist opportunists. Consequently, the situation is offering the social challenges such as economic inequality and class consciousness. Therefore, the hegemonic rise of corporeal employment protocol disheartens the 'self-employment' in urban society. In relation to the growing rate of familial instability in urban middle-class environment, Sanjukta Dasgupta and Malasri Lal made a contextually relevant observation:

If the family is facing problems of instability and disintegration today, it is not because women are asking for their rights. It is because of the socio-economic changes, market forces, consumerism, and environment degradation that contemporary families are facing a range of challenges for survival. (12)

The physical existence of home correlates to the psychological level of solidarity establishing the bridge of intergenerational linkage within the preordained context of long established family framework. The ideological assumption that home and family are complementary and they look mutually integral to each other is subject to enculturation over centuries. The family endurance premised on the age-old moral theses conventionally plays a functional role in consolidating the regulatory obligation of the 'living family'. The cultural root embedded in the emotive affiliation with the memory of ancestral home is visible as a thread drawing the diverse forms of personal preferences together in the family. So, the home is credited with providing the family's individuals with spiritual support to persuade them to respect the strict obligation of living a life of togetherness. The existing global and modern way of living continues to amount to drastic collapse in the skeletal frame of conventional codes of conduct. The urbanisation-sponsored infrastructural changes and significantly growing rate of geographical mobility have been collectively endangering the historically defined meaning of home and family. These structural dimensions of territorial transformation with the penetration of techno-culture are affecting the family stability. The densely populated urban space like Calcutta in the 21st century problematizes the sound form of settlement and this concern of overpopulation gives rise to the shortage of habitable space. The private company owners are making a commercially profitable trajectories to construct the sky-high buildings apart from leaving for the middle-class family the least space to live undisturbed and afresh.

Chatterjee explores an ever-insatiable passion and lust of an estate agent like Lobhesh Monga who is found through out the novel to be exercising forcibly his social influence and financial might over the acquisition of the landed property occupied by dwellers ancestrally. The business-oriented agent like Monga aspires to attempt commercially beneficial infrastructural modification out of which the home of Jamun and Burfi run the danger of experiencing the disappearance of home and family. Chatterjee with a highly acclaimed narrative subtly depicts the process through which Monga claims to redefine the idea of what it means to be a home in modern era:

He has eaten into it, a good thing, Funny though, considering that he wants to buy us out and break the house down and construct some new horrible marble-and-glass thing. (WTG 147)

In order to execute his professionally purposive modification strategy, sometimes Monga seeks to apply an enduringly persuasive and rhetorical endorsement. This implication comes more prominent once Burfi claims that Monga consistently tries to 'steal the house away from us' which was 'Shyamanand's life work'. Here the authoritative grid of commercial manipulation [uts an enduring impact on the changing individual preferences of Jamun and Burfi who acknowledge their utter failure to defend their parental resources from the clutches of Monga for whom 'buying and selling property was his principal avocation'. (WTG 227)

Since 1990s onwards, the globalised culture and economy are considerably affecting the Indian sentiment, values, hierarchy, culture, family and the ideological assumptions. The people strongly believe in the colonial discourse of European cultural supremacy whose historical legacy still continues to shape the definition of cultural superiority and inferiority. The Indian people in particular and society in general seek to evaluate the quality of life on the common ground of western cultural metaphysics and symbolic language. The global economy after the national liberation has been an effective incentive in the wider expansion of urbanised space and it has , consequently, brought about a host of noticeably drastic changes to the primary demand, taste, employment, occupational preference and attitude. The discernible disparity in term of cultural orientation and value rendering between two or three successive generations has made the way to a conflictual emotive spaces in the family.

The younger generation is marked by their struggle over the articulation of emerging cultural landscape. Few months after his retirement, Shyamanand built up a home investing a great deal of hard-earned finance. He heartily expected his two sons, Burfi and Jamun to be with him at his home in Calcutta. On the contrary, Jamun remained far away from home both before and after his mother's passing and Burfi spent few months there with the chronic patient, Urmila and the half-paralysed father Shyamanand with a strong sense of hatred and disgust. Over and time again Burfi explores his and his wife's intense dislike for being in such highly irritating and incompatible atmosphere of the home. He is consistently seen to be demanding for more updated version of infrastructural privilege that will leave a sensory impression on the mind of the viewers. He does always have an objection to his father's strict adherence to the age-old model of construction that is possibly traceable back to that of 1970s:

In building in its bedrooms those ceiling-to-floor cupboard along the wall that is shared with its neighbour_ the house later to be occupied by Naina Kapur _ he had followed a fashion of the late sixties or seventies that accorded with tastes. (WTG 145)

The cultural synchronisation, an accompanying consequence of so called colonisation and emergent globalisation, is seen to be giving rise to the cultural clash between the generations in the family. Burfi in the novel is representative of young Indians who aspire to prioritize the elevation of their social and economic status to a noticeable height by imitating the global way of modern living. Since he was at the age of twenty Burfi does have a sense of disregard in relation to his birth in the poor middle-class family. The intergenerational conflict between Burfi and Shyamanand on the subject of contradictory cultural values, in practice, constitutes the majority part of the interpersonal conflict.

In the second chapter of the of the second part entitled 'a topic to bond together two brothers' Burfi accuses his father of not conforming to the modern way of building a home:

It is very ugly and lower middle classness to have the concrete slabs shelves hidden behind the enormous laminated door. (WTG 144)

The current trends towards being modernised is what represents the diminishing degree of imperative inclination with the traditionalist way of approaching the meaning of life. The contradictory perceptions on the idea of life arising out of current cultural changes become a

serios impediment to the retention of family resilience. Therefore, it intensifies the gravity of interpersonal disagreement among the family members within the same family unit. Burfi very often enters into a terrible disputes with his father centring round the diametrically opposed taste and demand between father and son. In the second chapter of the second part, Burfi, ridiculously, is confronted with the superstitious assumptions concerning 'vastu' whose present position is supposed to account for the lasting ominous effect:

Its vastu vibes are wrong. The bedrooms do not point east or south or whatever. You couldn't have noticed in your hashed out haze how all the people who have ever stayed in it have been unhappy. That is the atmosphere taking its revenge because we ignored it. (WTG 143)

That the home and family against the backdrop of urban space are altogether in face of inevitable predicament becomes convincingly obvious as Chatterjee injects into three parts of the novel nearly the same title such as 'sign the house, sign my life, away', 'sell the house, buy a new life' and 'sell the house, save your life'. The above-mentioned chapters of the novel well signalise the fact that the house associated with the life of family is struggling with its endangered existence under the influence of urban society. A set of infrastructural change and challenges locate the home and family within the context of intrinsic problematic situations. Burfi is marked by his increasing proneness to coming out from the set pattern of joint family living and old-fashioned home. Repeatedly he has made a disheartening commentary on how the underprivileged atmosphere of home invests him with a strong sense of discontent. In an attempt to delineate with subtlety the inner mental trauma resulting from the deplorable state of the home, Chatterjee employs an analogical construct of 'ventilation'. By the term concerned he tries to compare a dying patient in ventilation with Burfi who assumes that he much like a highly sensitive patient is almost on the verge of approaching faster a certain death:

What we have is a corpse being ventilated, not life being maintained. Tell me what is the traditional definition of death? A total stoppage of blood circulation? No spontaneous heartbeat or respiration? And some functions occur but are artificially sustained_ and brain is dead? We would then say that what we have is corpse being ventilated, not life being maintained. (WTG 254)

From the structural and emotive viewpoint, the Indian family is subject to an exclusive acclaim of glistening glory. The life is always characterised by the succession of sorrow and happiness. The family life universally faces up to the diverging situational adversities with different layer of changes in society. By the dint of resilience, reorientation and adoption to different requirements a family happens to put its form and function in due ecological order. The uniqueness of the Indian family is considered to rely upon the psychological flexibility of members who, through the fulfilment of socially shared collective obligation, are committed to the sustenance family of bond. The legacy of epically portrayed filial, conjugal and fraternal relationships are seminal determinants in perpetuating the social conformity to the century-long relational pattern in Indian family. The filial relationship, an important part of family life is facing challenging outcomes of drastically changing socio-cultural climate. The urban space is a centre of cultural and economic transformations largely because of its embeddedness in a globally significant environment of cross-cultural interaction.

The social, educational and occupational mobility are some of the determinants partly accountable for resulting in predicament to the family cohesion. The traditional form of intergenerational relationship between father and son is undergoing a phenomenal erosion from the onset of globalisation and its accompanying social consequences. On the contextual reference to The Last Burden, Shyamanad's family experienced a condemned version of familial disaster revolving especially around the filial relationship between him and his two sons. The modern way of defining the notion of family by Jamun and Burfi looks instrumental in betraying the proverbial assumption and social expectation that 'something dies with you when your parents die, no matter how old you are'(WTG 343). Chatterjee has introduced into the novel three prime parts each of which begins with the same title 'missing person' apart from fiving an explicit reason behind the disappearance of Shyamanand, Naina Kapur and finally, Jamun. The recurrent use of the term 'missing person' is well indicative of the sever discontents and the anxiety arising out of the oscillation between commitment tot the ethical compulsion and eventual exposure to the unconscious. The final disappearance of Shyamanand what the novel begins with implies the frequent departure of the old and almost dying father from home. Through the flashback mode, a narrative mechanism Chatterjee explores how Jamun seeks to shade the burden of filial responsibility by the effort to 'quarrel hellishly with his father about everything under the sun' (WTG 342).

The disappearance of Shyamanand is credited with offering manifold facet of symbolic interpretations. His frequent departure primarily points to how the disheartening father-son relationship has accounted for mounting an intolerable psychological stress within him. The life at the concluding phase of his developmental course appears to be a social curse of infirmity what he feels overburdened with. The heart-rendering condition of the family under the spell of societal changes has enabled Shyamanand to prefer death to life as the only way of escaping the hated reality. Chatterjee thinks the psychological concern of loneliness and negligence as slowly but more assuredly leading him to his disappearance in the family. The deplorable situation signifies the 'nowhere-in-the-map-of-family' notion for an old man as he feels deprived of the spiritual support. The life within such context is supposed as 'ventilated corpse' living insignificantly out of indifference and nonchalance. Chatterjee attempts to establish the philosophic approach to difference between death and disappearance: And when your heart is warm and throbbing into the right place, who can tell the difference between disappearance and death. (WTG 347)

The home which was once supposed by Joyce and Burfi as lacking in sufficient habitable space now becomes a home to a number of residents like Madhumati and Naina Kapur. Shyamanand's disappearance resulting from ill-treatment and paralysed body, is followed by that of Naina Kapur and Jamun. Their departure well signifies the long-term persistence in the familial disorders and discontents at the home. The lack of sustainable state in filial relationship between them is hinted at by the back-to-back disappearance from the family. Long after their settlement in Noida Burfi and Joyce come back to Calcutta with view to find out Jamun who is now found missing. To find out Jamun becomes less important for Burfi than to keep the parental property in his possession in the absence of Jamun at the home. His lack of control over the acquisition of the ancestral property starts surfacing as Burfi enters into a commercial negotiation with 'vulture' like estate agent, Monga. In response to Burfi's objection to Monga's claim to pay unexpectedly less amount of money, Monga highlights the

darkest side of the home: Off course that would affect the price- one suicide, one murder, two disappearances- that has quite a record for two houses for two years. In death they could have united, you could say, but death was bad for a business deal. (WTG 272)

The Indian society with due degree of reverence approves of the family as both the obligatory and indispensable social and institutional entity committed to offering material and spiritual support and security to the members varying from different gender to generations. The family associated with home is traditionally perceived as the primary training institute imparting the socially didactive and purposive essentials to the children and adolescents so that they can defend the moral toughness and combat different aversive situations in life. A child from tender age onwards learns to articulate family norms and customs essential to the retention of hierarchically transmitted rites and relationships. Such collectively shared common aspirations and their due internalisation shape a firm intergenerational relationship. Due to the growing trend towards valuing the personal preferences and freedom, the age-old backbone of family structure is getting demolished. In an attempt to unearth the glorious history, the Indian family as a holly institution is compared with a temple underscoring the sublime aspiration of begetting the socio-culturally expected personalities. Chatterjee tries to foreground the significance of home and family in the way: A temple it was, he always believed without being religious, a temple, so he had taken care of it, ready or so he had thought, at a moment's notice to crawl out of it when summoned. (WTG 345)

The joint Hindu family in urban India is characterised by the process of nuclearization which is faster than ever before in the wake modernisation today. In his second novel The Last Burden, Chatterjee brings out the character's struggle to make an effective way to go away from the burden of supporting the physically distressed parents. In the concerned novel he critically insists on how the dual career couples in poor middle-class family are representative of the culturally and ideologically changing individuals aspiring to live a modern life even when it is against the wellbeing of family. Central to the participatory dissociation of the married sons from the joint family in the urban space is the institutionalisation of a counter joint family discourse disheartening the conventional contribution of the joint family to the ethical socialisation of the children. The novelist expresses with illustrative subtlety the strong disgust of Jamun and Burfi at living up to the customary obligation of the joint family. He employs with recurrence the contextually relevant imagery of cage and prison in an attempt to project the severe inner mental trauma as well as embarrassment springing from their presence in the joint family. The home, the life art of Shyamanand continues to be a major reason for Burfi's discontents even long after his return to Calcutta. In relation to the distressed state of home, Chatterjee comments: He was virtually a prisoner in that house he did not like much. (WTG 275)

The joint family through the development of preordained relational framework offers the component members a balanced state of living. By the means of mutual exchange of love, care, affection and responsibility the family life in India functions as a befitting solution to the intergenerational disputes resulting from the clash of competing perceptions about contradictory ways of living. The grandparental authority within any family provides the children with the prescriptive suggestion on how to survive different situational hostilities and mental stress. The family represented in the novel is visible as undergoing relational

predicament from the perspective of traditional family forms and functions. Within the context of poor middle-class family, the patriarchal authority is seen to be experiencing faster breakdown in the cyclic process of structural growth. Shyamanand's family is credited with having dual career couples as Urmila is a government employee and Joyce is also appointed to her respective profession. In The Last Burden, Burfi is found coming in terrible dispute with his father on different familial issues. A bitter form of filial bond is visible between Shyamanand and Jamun in Way to Go as well. In the absence of Burfi, Jamun feels dissatisfied with taking care of his half-paralysed father. The absence of Burfi and Jamun's liability to take care of Vaman, the son of Kasibai and his own old father inject into him a sense of resentment. Chatterjee tries to draw a minute exploration of Jamun's internal conflict on the employment of entertaining metaphor whereby Jamun and Shyamanand are thought of as convicts in the prison-like family. After the departure of Burfi from Calcutta Jamun's each involuntary effort to escape the possibly inescapable familial accountability goes futile. His utter failure to have emancipation from such hellish environment makes him assume dying Shyamanand as a corpse in the prison of family awaiting its subsequent 'reeking decomposition': He could not on anything. His mind felt like a metal cage, with Wiremesh for walls, in which lays the corpse of his father recently dead, not yet reeking and over which buzzed a million agitated flies of regret. (WTG 72)

Shyamanand both in The Last Burden and Way to Go is by no means found to be forging an intimate filial relationship with either Jamun or Burfi. It is the conflictual culture space that intensifies the gravity of culture clashes between two generations. The way Shyamanand and Urmila are treated over few decades by Burfi and Joyce convinces the readers of an unbridgeable relational gap between parents and sons. Jamun's remark here better assures us of the radical changes in the intergenerational relationship: My father used to refer him as his third son. But sarcastically, mainly because he found sons one and two so unfilial. (WTG 219)

The functional chaos in different forms of family relationship is representative of remarkable socio-cultural changes triggered by the neo-liberalisation and globalisation. The sublime act of rendering deserving reverence to the parental and grandparental authority rests on the family-specific socialisation whereby the prime stress is laid on the mutual interaction among the family members of different age and generations. The conventional form of family in Indian society is defined by the common parameter of mutual exchange of spiritual and material support between parents and children. The Indian family in industrialised and urbanised society is undergoing gradual rootlessness. The educational mobility arising out of current social and personal aspirations imparts a strikingly affective influence on shaping the nonconventional occupational identity. According to the patriarchal structure of family living, it is quite natural for the economically independent members to assume the ethical liability of standing by the infirm parents. The global mode of living almost in each and every walk of life has left a persuasive effect on minimizing the customary and regulatory obligation towards the family responsibilities. The problematizing unfilial relationship between parents and children constitutes the core of the family story in The Last Burden. The dual career couples like Burfi and Joyce become eventually the victim of loose morality in term of executing the hard and fast family rules and liability. Another mentionable form of family predicament is the erosion in the fraternal ties between Burfi and Jamun resulting from the

subject of paying medical fees for Urmila, a cardiac patient. The hegemonic rise in term of materialistic quest for individual preference and freedom makes Jamun think the old father's treatment as nothing but a burden. In Way to Go Jamun and Burfi are in constant search for an appropriate way to go away from the physically ailing parents who are for them two last burden to be mitigated: At the death of his mother sixteen years previously, he felt that he had shed his first burden that he would hereby mourn with comparable intensity the departure of his father. (WTG 109)

After Urmila's death, Burfi and Joyce took a leave from Calcutta to Noida with their children. Few months after the death of his mother Burfi, an opportunist left the home and family and it well represents his implicit aspiration to ensure the release from the 'prison' of joint family. He strongly believes in the nuclear family as a befitting social institution to be highly inducive to the act of providing the children with better academic and other indispensable accommodations. Such type of desire does not apply to the case of Burfi only. The identical intention to escape the family compulsion find a notable expression in Jamun as well. Family for Jamun looks less crucial in comparison with his need to experience the sexual interaction with Kasturi in Calcutta and Kashibai in Maharashtra. Over the course of few decades Jamun prioritized the family formed by a trial marriage with the rural cook Kashibai. Chatterjee represents through the portrayal of Jamun the young generation in the joint family who challenges the pre-existing mode of filial bond formation. Jamun after Urmila's passing valued the implicit objective of coming to Kashibai there in Maharashtra to meet biological demand and avoid being burdened with distressed family. In the nineth chapter of the first part, Chatterjee penetrates deep into the inner world of Jamun to manifest his hidden ambition and interest: Jamun had daydreamed for years about life without his father, just Kashibai, Vaman and he himself together and stinking as of old in the half light of dawn, fantasizing about sinlessly getting rid of Shyamanand, packing him off to some far country- the details of which has always been hazy. (WTG 112)

In addition to the facets of family erosion mentioned already, another important dimension of family predicament in urban society is inclusive of the migration and its impact on the traditional role, relation and functions in the family. The constitutional amendment to employment rules, the empowerment policies and the unevenness in job opportunities in states are some of the valid reasons behind the noticeably increasing experience of geographical mobility. Apart from some intrinsic variables, there must be a number of global factors triggering the dispersal of the population from place to place. The globalisation is playing a vital part in affirming the disappearance of the geographical borders that are supposed to symbolise the visible and invisible resistance. The worldwide web of flow in varying components and population is instrumental in affirming the increasingly declining importance of both national and internal boundary. The overpopulation along with its attendant consequence of increasing demand for job and education of national and international importance becomes reasonable factor of transboundary movement. The socio-economic process of infrastructural development resulting from such global phenomena is seen to be exerting its convincing impact on the social institutions like marriage, family and kinship in India. Chatterjee's Way to Go offers a detailed a detailed documentation of drastic changes in a poor middle-class family by locating it within the context of emerging happenings with a view to shape the present meaning of home and family. The home in the

wake of globalised culture and economy appears to be the 'grandest material remains of his family' (WTG 201). A convincingly relevant and philosophic statement by Chatterjee can be quoted to crystalise our understanding concerning the redefined meaning of joint family life: So, what if the house had become a shell and the family disappeared like pollen. (WTG 201)

The issue of migration is nothing new today. But the migratory process in India is undergoing a rapid acceleration directed by the current socio-economic needs. According to the contextual reference to the migration Shyamanand makes a confession about his dispersal from Bangladesh to Calcutta in the past. His family from the beginning to the end of its story is subject to the internal dislocation at the interval of few years. At a certain point of the narrative, Shyamanand acknowledges his dislocation from home in Calcutta to Simla when his father died a natural death. The detrimental effect of migration confessed by Shyamanand well reflects the physical gap between old parents and sons and its resultant ill-treatment of the elderly in the family. The following cautionary remark made by him explores the emptiness in physical and spiritual support to be necessarily rendered to the old parents to ensure the fulfilment of their primary requirements: If I die in bed when you are in office or upstairs smoking or out of town – in general, if I die when you are absent, just not there. It would be like my being two thousand kilometres away in Simla when my own father dead. (WTG 339)

The severe family discontents are, undoubtedly, caused by the irresponsibility towards the old parents while the independent sons construct a neo-local residence after marriage moving far away from the ancestral home in the place of birth. For example, in The Last Burden Jamun went to Maharashtra to serve his professional purposes and Burfi at that moment failed to assign due degree of support to the old parents. Chatterjee in different certain parts of the narrative points to the distressed state of the filial relationship arising in default of resilience and mental flexibility. The compelling necessity to serve the occupational and educational purposes, Burfi few days after his mother's passing finalised his decision to find a way to go to Noida. The Last Burden ends up with the death of Urmila followed by Burfi's departure and Way to Go begins with the migration of Jamun along with Shyamanand from Maharashtra to Calcutta. In this sense, the story of Shyamanand is full of a series of migrations from place to place and from time to time. Chatterjee explicates how the home and family do no longer exist with memory and meaning as Urmila's passing was followed by Shyamanand's disappearance from a dark and rough walled home 'looking pale, flabby, lower-middle-class-ness' (WTG 341). The following statement looks relevant to the above-discussed concern:

True, Urmila was dead and Shyamanand gone, and Burfi had departed long before his father, principally to avoid being with him. (WTG 201)

An emptiness and loneliness reign supreme in the isolated home of Shyamanand while Jamun is away from home. The long-term absence of Burfi and Joyce intensifies his psychological stress and it makes Shyamanand fall a prey to a mental patient suffering from an isolated existence deprived of the material and spiritual backup from any of the family members after the death of Urmila. The prolonged estrangement of Burfi from home gives rise to a profoundly complex and insatiable filial bond between Jamun and Shyamanand. The

unbridgeable gap in father-son relation becomes inevitably probable as Burfi, by no means, showcases a jot of interest in making a desperate attempt to investigate into his father's disappearance informed over phone by Jamun. At the introductory interaction between Modhumati and Burfi after his return to home, the condition of the home starts surfacing in this way: I am glad that you are back. I've stayed alone in this house now for too long. (WTG 117)

The story of Shyamanand's joint family contains a decade-long period of a weak filial bond between father and sons which subsequently appears to be the core factor hastening the fission of the extended family into nuclear one. The breakdown in such interpersonal relationship may arise from the lack of ethical commitment to the execution of traditional filial responsibility. Therefore, such steep decline in the functional sustainability is thought of as coming from the lack of bouncebackability among the family members pertaining to different generations. The act of going away from the home has a considerable degree of cognitive impact upon the socialisation process in the family. The family under discussion is devoid of resilience and it well implies Shyamanand's utter failure to inject the commonly shared family values and the Hindu tradition into the adoptive mind of his sons. The epic familial narrative delineating a host of episodic humiliations for Shyamanand gains momentum in The Last Burden and this cold attitude towards the elderly culminates in the disappearance of the paralysed and metaphorically ventilated patient, Shyamanand.

In course of offering an in-depth documentation of Shyamanand's inexpressibly contaminated relationship with his sons, Chatterjee as a grownup author better approaches the mental state of the elderly. He thinks that Shyamanand feels more comfortable outside the home instead of being in the home with wasteland-like family. He assures the readers of no prospect of Shyamanand in term of coming back to home after month-long departure from the family. The following lines from the chapter 'helpless' well represents the indescribable ill-treatment of the elderly in the urban family: And Shyamanand once free, tired but triumphant, hobbling around those gloomy, lethal street, dodging in slow motion the screaming cars that would not stop. Why would he ever, return to this emptiness. Because he missed his sons who had avoided him as much as they decently could, day in and day out, during the years that they'd spent together. (WTG 162)

These are the conflicts, infirmity, migration and the old age home that fashion the narrative of the novel Way to Go. The marital conflict between Shyamanand and Urmila is what the novel The Last Burden revolve round thematically and it was followed afterwards by the long-term familial disputes on who will assume the liability of paying for the surgical operation of Urmila. In The Last Burden each and every son including the daughter-in-law, Joyce compete with each other to escape the responsibility of the dying parents. The life beyond seventy years operates as an additional family burden and it becomes a drawback to the enrichment. Urmila much like a stereotyped wife is committed to the holy act of assigning expected care and supportive treatment to Shyamanand during his brainiac stroke even though they never do have a comfortable marital relation with each other. After the physical demise of Urmila caused by the heart attack, Shyamanand falls prey to the loneliness, anxiety, stress and the sense of being imprisoned by the cold attitude: For the preceding several years – ever since Urmila's passing – the sons had become accustomed to being

sporadically tender with their father; Most of the time he had been for them an everyday thing, unremarked, unremarkable, on the wane, not much different in spirit from an urban sunset, not someone who could wound them or whom they want to aggrieve in any way. (WTG 342)

Now a days the establishment of old age home in urban space, the non-residential institutions and NGOs are motivating the rapid increase in the incidents of homelessness of the old parents like Shyamanand. The only way to go for them is nothing but the old age home which signifies the breakdown in the joint family and the loss of traditional filial relationship. In the nineth chapter of the second part, during a critical interaction between Chagla and Jamun, Chagla encouraged Jamun to sell the house built by Shyamanand. Within this context of conversation Chagla made Jamun remain alert over the current social climate where the educated and employed sons leave their old parents alone at the home. Here Chagla's rhetorical and profoundly provocative proposal for Jamun to sell the house out signifies the unprecedentedly growing trend of the sons towards compelling the parents to approach the old age home: In the modern times, it is better to be independent in your old age. Sell the house, buy a new life. What if you are paralysed and bedridden and your son's wife is rude to you when you make a pass at her. What is point of having money then? Health is wealth. (WTG 227)

The intellectual movements like neo-liberalism and feminism functions as vital variables in promoting the society to allow both the men and women an equal access to education and decision-making programme of national and international importance. The educational advancement necessitates the dispersal of women from the family and their traditional roles. Such reigning socio-cultural phenomena of dislocation is amounting to the disorders in the conventional pattern of family role and relations. The elderly people, at present, suffers the deprivation of the familial privileges. Shyamanand falls an innocent prey to such identical fate of family predicament. Chatterjee well efficiently offers the philosophic essence of 'death in life and life in death' to unearth the exact gravity of filial deformity which does not get confined to the case of father-son tie. Instead, it applies contextually to the deformed form of filial experience lived by Shyamanand as Joyce denies the Hindu family compulsion to provide the old parent with material and spiritual support. Notwithstanding her return to the home in Calcutta with Burfi after the disappearance of Shyamanand, Joyce informs Burfi of her objection to the act of moving back to the parental home or 'vastu' her desperate effort to distance herself away from the old home explores an effectively symbolic manifestation of her trends towards tracing a 'way to go' from the burden of parental care: Not quite so, hence Burfi nor Joyce was staying there in the house that Shyamanand had built. Joyce quite expectedly hadn't even visited it, the place where she had spent eight acutely unhappy years; she was staying with the family of her ex-boss and in any care was set to leave the following day. (WTG 253)

Chatterjee seeks to explicate an epic evolutionary course of a Hindu middle-class family with three generations against the backdrop of given socio-cultural transformations resulting from the reigning socio-economic processes of change and challenges since the onset of globalisation in 1990s. He predicates the novel on the commonplace familial experiences of dislocation of the family members from parental home, the gradual relational decline and the

elderly abuse in urban family. The novel Way to Go makes an inclusive and comprehensive insistence on how the changes in cultural values on individual level tends to trigger the notable deviations from the traditional mode of defining the popular meaning of home that relates to family stories. The prioritisation of personal preference and their competitive conformity to the existing socio-cultural demand and expectations cause a serious damage to the family resilience and endurance in the wake of globalisation.

Notes

WTG: Here it refers to the novel of Upamanyu Chatterjee entitled as *Way to Go*.

Vastu: The term signifies a homestead in Bengali language and this is socially expected to be inhabited across generations in patrilineal way by the family members.

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