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DYSFUNCTIONAL DEMOCRATIC BEHEMOTHS: POLITICIAN MANDARIN NEXUS IN  
UPAMANYU CHATTERJEE'S "THE MAMMARIES OF THE WELFARE STATE"

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ABSTRACT

Indian Democratic system is mutated to Kleptocracy as the giant bureaucrats and politicians indulge in an oceanic extortion, cronyism and all kinds of exploitation. The concept of 'Welfare State' has been vilified since the dysfunction seems to be the order of the day, canoping the clout and protecting the vested interests of the behemoths i.e. law makers and its top executives. Upamanyu Chatterjee, the Postmodern Indian novelist and a bureaucrat, takes a sharp satiric sledgehammer to hack the nexus between these two huge forces in his novel "The Mammaries of the Welfare State"(TMWS) that won him Sahitya Akademy award. He leaves no stone unturned in stripping the system stark naked of its unnecessary officialdom and legal plunder by the corrupted politicians and as well bureaucrats. "Self- interest is the only commandment --naturally--of the welfare state, the rest is waffle", is the text censured by Chatterjee. The novel is a hilarious mockery of the follies of the system in which the novelist lampoons at every one who sucks the dugs dry off the welfare state. TMWS is in fact the sequel to Chatterjee's first novel "English, August: An Indian Story" and the leitmotif in the prequel 'bureaucratic lunacy' is blended with 'political venality' in its sequel thus making TMWS a satiric tomfoolery and political-bureaucratic potpourri.

**Key words:** Agastya, Bhanwar, Raghupati, Aflatoons, Welfare State, bureaucrats, politicians.

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INTRODUCTION

"The Mammaries of the Welfare State"(TMWS) is an interesting record of Corruption, Caste, Clout and Complacency nature that plague the Indian administrative and political set up and in turn malign the very entity of the 'Welfare State'. The novel is evolved from the astute and satirical pen of Upamanyu Chatterjee, the renowned bureaucrat -Postmodern Indian novelist that was published in 2000 and fetched him 'Sahitya Akademy' award in 2004. In fact this novel is a sequel to Chatterjee's maiden novel " *English, August: An Indian Story*"( E,A) in 1988, in which he created a sweet, lovable hero 'Agastya Sen' or fondly called 'August' or 'English' by his friends . His second novel "The Last Burden" picturises a family drama of the straining

relations among the members of a modern urban educated family. It is obvious that Chatterjee could not stop loving his first hero Agastya and so he has woven another massive story around him. "*The Mammaries of the Welfare State*" (TMWS) has its back drop same as that of his first novel E,A. The protagonist in the first novel is an anglicised, urbanized youth has just entered into the career as bureaucrat, where as in its sequel, he is now no more 'English' or 'August', but simply 'Agastya', a true son of the soil, who put on eight years of service in the 'Steel Frame' of the society and was made to be a real Indian 'Babu'. The leitmotiv in the first novel 'bureaucratic lunacy' is blended with 'political venality' in its sequel TMWS, that brings into limelight the duo's corruptive practices in exploiting the Welfare State. Rochelle J. Almeida tells that *The Mammaries of The Welfare State* (TMWS) was Chatterjee's third novel which was inspired by an editorial entitled "The New Class" that appeared in the '*Sunday Statesman*' of March 8, 1992."

The idea of Welfare State dates back to Plato's era, in which there was 'Ideal Republic'. But it mainly proclaimed about two classes of people, Rulers and Ruled which doesn't suit to the present day system of governments. The modern concept of Welfare State is adopted first by German Chancellor Bismarck in 1840 by introducing support programmes like old age pension, accidental insurance and medical care. But the term 'Welfare State' was popularized by Anglican Archbishop William Temple, the authour of '*Christianity and the Social Order*' that was written in 1942. (Wikipedia.com) We all agree that the Democratic type of Government is the most desired one that focuses on liberty, equality and fraternity, a government formed at the will of the majority, erasing the discrimination between the ruler and the ruled. It also aims at the welfare of the common man, marginal sections, exploited classes and create better platform for everyone to live comfortably with equal opportunities. This very noble idea is distorted and the notion 'welfare' to the deprived has become a plunder, a looting platform to the many greedy dishonest politicians and bureaucrats. In TMWS, Chatterjee presents the deplorable, degenerating and abysmal condition of the present democratic system that has become dysfunctional by a host of these corrupted lawmakers and its executives.

The *Mammaries of The Welfare State* (TMWS) is a potpourri of political - bureaucratic filth and their illegitimate bond. The novel houses a host of bureaucrats and politicians seeking high positions, craving for power, the underlings manipulating things to make quick secret bucks, and many more parasites like theatre groups, attendants, drivers and other free loaders who are at snapshot ready to gobble up whatever that comes their way. Every one's aim is to milk the boobs of the Welfare State dry to their own advantage. There is always greasing hands, getting 'cuts', enjoying free government accommodation, state sponsored foreign trips, hikes in salary, perks, celebrations, erection of statues and what none! Thus no stone was left unturned by Chatterjee to make a mockery of the follies and failures of the Welfare State. He points out that the concept of Welfare State is distorted and the welfare is not reachable to the poor, needy and citizens of the below poverty line. But the welfare is made handy only to the people in office, in power, somehow attached only to the government or its representatives. Corruption has almost been officialized, all pervasive and nobody seems concerned about it. Chatterjee sharpens his sarcasm and wit to blow out the misappropriation of the sources, power, energy, wealth of the nation and ridicules the failure of the system. He is successful in stripping the system stark naked and in the form of hilarious satire, he focuses light on the wrong doings of the administrative and political system. The narration is comic but the issue is too serious to be ignored. It's really appreciable on the part of the author to scan through the polluted bureaucracy in which he himself is the part and he is unhesitant in attacking the dysfunction of the democracy and its main representatives i.e politicians and bureaucrats with his massive and sharpened tools of wit and satire.

Murari Prasad observes, "He (Agastya, the protagonist) detests the bureaucratic setup, dominated by hierarchy and statistics, and seeks cravings..... The novel is particularly harsh on the self-seeking politicians and avaricious bureaucrats who feed on the dugs of the Welfare State."

This article gives a glimpse of how the Indian bureaucratic and political system is completely corrupted and dysfunctional thus making this huge democratic country which is also a 'Welfare State' a dwarf in terms of concrete and wholesome development. The Law makers (legislators) and Executives (bureaucrats) who are supposed to be the main pillars of the Welfare state have become the dysfunctional democratic

behemoths, plundering the State and exploiting its resources at any given situation. The novelist makes an attempt to spill the beans out of as many departments in the Government, say, Treasuries, Ministries, various departments like Public health, Heritage and culture, Labour, Construction, Personnel Housing, Police, Govt. Hospitals, Mines and so on. He is successful in bringing out various elements into lime light such as misappropriation of funds, grants, power, manipulating promotions, appointments, transfers, resorting to nepotism, hooliganism, murders, sandal wood smuggling, hunger strikes, street performances, fire accident, and ghoulis incidents of sexual abuse, plague diseases, dirty offices, unnecessary official procedures, long and boring memoranda, wasteful official expenditure, problem of accommodation, evasion of electricity bills, income taxes, luring music CDs, matinee idols and many more.

Chatterjee is gifted with a rare talent of wit, satire and black humour who is concerned with the official absurdities of the native land and comments in a poignant satirical language that serves as an obvious contrast to his contemporary writers who mostly deal with the theme of 'Diaspora'. Other unique features of this novel is, using a score of acronyms for different government schemes and organizations like HUBRIS, BOOBZ, DIPRAVED, KJEA and so on. These titles seem to be funny but it is Chatterjee's way of christening the useless committees, organizations that open the doors for corruption and devour the funds instead of fulfilling the motive behind the very purpose of those government schemes.

The aim of the novelist is not to resolve the issues that he raised, but to make us understand ever pervasiveness of the deeply rooted evil of corruption in all walks of the life of the people of the Welfare State. It, the evil of corruption appears in the form of greedy minds misusing power, sources, amenities, grants and any other thing that is available to a public servant or its representative. In the name of Government, everyone is at his best to exploit the State. As the picture on the cover of the novel depicts, the State is compared to a she-goat with a huge udder. The Civil Servants, the Politicians, their subordinates and the underlings are ready to squeeze the mammaries dry off to its last drop. The protagonist Agastya says, "I smell a rat all the time, it is the odour of corruption"(109)

Chatterjee introduces an opportunist and self-styled politician who was once an advocate's clerk. He is Boothnath Gaitonde, a well behaved law abider and the dweller of the largest slum in the city of Bhayankar (Mumbai?). He gets a court stay order when the Municipal Corporation authorities tried to demolish the shacks of the slums. He argues: "If the Welfare State is the driving force, - me lord-we (slum dwellers, petty workers) are the wheels". "I have been in Bhayankar now, me-lord, for twenty-two years, in which time the Welfare State's done nothing for me for free- which is as it should be. I'm not a freeloader. And I'm not complaining. I've paid in bribes for my ration card, my photo pass and my electrical meter. I've been bribed in return for my vote-but that's all fine, it's the proper procedure. Self-interest is the only commandment-naturally -of the Welfare State, the rest is waffle."(14)

His words visualize the naked truth that any citizen of the Welfare State should bribe to get minimum facilities extended to him which is entirely contrast to the idea of Welfare state. He also confesses that during elections their votes are bought by the politicians. It's the common man's experience that the corruption has become inseparable part of one's life and has been officialized. He works in the city; he is one of the millions that make the city work. If the working class vacate the slum and move away from the city, who can attend the works in the offices in the city and in the bungalows of the steel frame early in the morning or late into nights? Thus, Gaitonde choose politics and his career rose to the position of a member of Legislative Assembly and later Member of Parliament through his own party 'New vision Democratic Party', leaving the slum back. He also becomes a potential rival to Bhanwar Virbhim, the local public representative over a long period. Gaitonde, though had some leftist ideology, is not too idealistic. He has his own plans to make a way for his growth in the politics and always waits for a chance to plague the Welfare State. He takes up the issue of blind girl who got her eye gouged out by Karam Chand, an attender in the blind hostel. He plans a protest, takes up a rally in which sixteen inmates are injured in the police action. Gaitonde was ready to make the best use of the situation to exploit the administration and keep the government in irksome position. He was waiting for the crisis to use as ladder for his growth in the political career. Gaitonde's episode raises the curtain to the fact

that the existing dysfunctional system makes the platform ready for the opportunists help launch their political career through black mail, revolting against law and order and exploiting the system through its gaps.

The novelist depicts the Indian rich, greedy and corruptive politicians by introducing Bhanwar Virbhim, a senior politician, who served as Member of Legislative assembly, Member of Parliament from Madna and also served the state two times as Chief Minister. In between his two terms, Virbhim served as Deputy Minister for Information and Minister for Culture and Heritage at centre. He is intelligent, ambitious, determined, ageing frightful hoodlum. Bhanwar plays caste card posing as Don of the masses. "I am the voice of the down trodden. I am the soul of all the depressed, backward, repressed, suppressed and unrecognized castes".(104). Bhanwar is highly loyal to Jayati Aflatoon, the de- facto Prime Minister. She is the wife of a cousin of the Prime Minister Bhuvan Aflatoon . Bhuvan and Jayati were school mates and Bhanwar Virbhim was backed up a lot by Jayati. Bhanwar has a son, Makhmal Bagai who is notorious with his frightening temper, a gun lover, moves around the city in his lorry like Tata Safari, abducts and molests the girls in the moving vehicle, murders the victims like his father if the occasion demands. He likes to be called Prince of Madna and demands respect and prominence. "...over the years , the outrageousness of Makhmal's offences against society and the law had kept pace with his father's increasing clout."(105). He, Makhmal is very much the symbol of the young aspirant scions of the political clan who makes the democracy dysfunctional , by misusing the power, heckling at law under the clout of their criminal-politician-parents.

The Welfare State is helpless and can never hinder the hooligan-politician behemoths and their unlawful growth. Ironically, due to complacency nature, people also remain silent and are forced to respect those criminal-leaders and thus somehow come under their poisonous clout for their selfish gains. "It is one of the functions of the munificence, the kindness of the Welfare State to allow within it the worst rogues to become utterly respectable."(105) When a journalist asks Makhmal Bagai if his criminal record would embarrass him in his political career, he replies "Not at all. Why? Look at our Parliament .One hundred and seventy four honourable members have criminal records. I think you want the State to discriminate against criminals exactly the way in which it discriminates against the lower castes. What is your caste? May I know? We are innocent until proved guilty."(106). Instead of feeling guilty, he claims that it is a politician's right to indulge in criminality and manipulate everything. Makhmal feels safe under his father's political clout and under the canopy of the caste. He also plans to celebrate the fiftieth birthday of Jayati grandly. While the millions of down trodden, underdogs suffer from poverty, discrimination due to their poor social status, injustice and inequality, the politically established persons enjoy the power and wealth using the same caste card. It is really ironical that the humiliation, exploitation and discrimination of the low caste applies only to the financially poor and slum dwellers, but not to the wealthy and politically empowered of the same caste. Paradoxically, the very caste card has become the poor man's weakness and the rich man's strength in the Welfare State.

Makhmal is incompetent , dangerous and his father has no choice for him except joining him into politics. He helped his father during elections, taking jeep full of goons to capture, frighten, distribute cheap whisky, beating up the rival party men, shooting rounds in the air and so on. His father appointed him as one of the General Secretaries of the party and wanted him see the world and learn something useful for his political career. " His father had wanted him to learn some of the facts of life, to rever wealth, not to remain forever retarded, to grasp that money was infinitely more powerful than the gun, that nothing was socially more respectable than power, that to be on the right side of the law, one simply needed to be above it." (286). Makhmal Bagai's record of violence earned him Z- category protection, he also went to Madna prison for a few weeks and his father thought that it would better his Curriculum Vitae. After having released from prison he straightly goes to consult Raghupati, the senior IAS and his mentor to discuss his political future. "He wished to be the Minister of State for Coal and Mines for he'd heard that bribes for the lease of a mine could touch a crore of rupees. Think big, think quick, that was his style."(288).

The bureaucrats brush their shoulders and crave for the clout of the elected legislators for their selfish motives, higher positions. Bhupen Raghupati, the senior IAS, protects the interests of the crooked politician

Bhanwar Virbhim and advises his young son, a notorious hooligan and a politician in making Makhmal Bagai to read, learn, stop slapping rival party men and leave the guns and fast cars. But Bagai replies negatively, "I must have a reason to discipline myself. In the last three years, I've attended as a special visitor nine sessions of the Assembly. The anti-craft scandal, the sugar deal, the bank fraud, telecom fiddle, fodder swindle, urea scam,.....bomb blast, riots after riots. Not a whisper, in three years about welfare, about the good of the common man, whoever he might be. Why should I discipline myself?"(289) The dunderhead Bagai witnesses the deplorable condition of the Assembly, where the democratic lawmakers work and make futile discussions leaving the very welfare of the common man for which the honourable house is constituted. It is very obvious that the law makers are busy in accusing one another of their scams, estimating the amounts that one has devoured up, leaving the plans of welfare of the needy. R.P. Singh rightly observes: "The Welfare State, here, does not mean a state for the welfare of the people but a hunting ground for predatory sharks who masquerade as public servants."

Raghupati was the Chief Revenue Divisional Commissioner at Madna and served in different positions at centre. He is an obese, betel-leaf eating, tooth gaped and had brutish mouth, listens to Mutesh when he was being massaged by his lanky in his puja room. He sparked off a riot because he removed a peon from the work when he was Asst. Collector at Koltanga. Raghupati is an icon of proud, vicious corrupt Civil Servants. He is the ultimate symbol of greed for power and position, completed twenty three years of service and he is a perennially hungry carnal man, lustful, abuses all the underlings, a pervert and finally ends the life of Chamundi, his young masseur after homo sexual abuse. He is a devotee of Baba Mastram, a god man and an astrologer and Raghupati takes his advice to do anything and release his Shakti. His idea of the Welfare State, and even many of the civil servants is 'Suck above, Kick below'. In his view, exploiting others is exhibiting his inner power. To Raghupati "Everything sounded and looked, smelt, tasted and felt like sex."(86)

The corrupt mandarins i.e bureaucrats spend their time and strengths, hone their skills not to serve or better the administration but mostly to procure wealth, higher positions to lead the luxurious life. "Twenty three years of service of the Welfare State had cracked him up. Its waste, inefficiency, sluggishness, and futility had honed his sense of time running out at the speed of light and there by sharpened as well his consequent excitation that was half-foreboding." (87) "He (Raghupati) is controlled by passions larger than him'.(89) As he suspected, two unfavorable incidents took place in his life. He was sued by her assistant, Miss. Lina Natesan Thomas for his misbehavior or rather bottom pinching at a water cooler at the Golf Club, and secondly, a bizarre incident took place in his puja room owing to his perversion that lead to make him a murderer of his servant Chamundi.

Raghupati manipulated the things and declared that Chamundi simply slipped to his native forest against to the fret and fever of the city life. The authority given to him being a Civil Servant was utterly misused, to the extent of murdering a youth after a couple of minutes of perverted carnal pleasure. He committed such a ghastly sin in his puja room before idols of many Gods indicting that his religious worship, meditation, reverence to gods does not stand before his physical desires and greed for everything whether it is flesh or pelf.

R.P.Sing comments, "Carnal desire is a running motif at the level of phantasy as well as physically, and forms a crucial component of the exploitative psyche of the mandarin-politician nexus." Thus, Bhupen Raghupati, Bhanwar Virbhim and his son Makhmal Bagai the crooked trio- are the icons of the corruption at its peak with thousand hoods. They protect each other's vested interests, misuse the law for their own plunder, always keep higher positions and become mighty and wealthier day after day. They impress the common man with their clout and mesmerize them that they are the real protectors of the Law.

The celebrities of the movie field are no exemption from the corruption or getting favours as they are ready to squeeze the milk of the welfare state in spite of their wealth and fame. Kum Kum Bala Mali, the actress of the yester years, submits a representation to Bhanwar, the cabinet Minister regarding the problem of her official bungalow. Then Raghupati, secretary to Ministry of Heritage fancies her and plans a dinner with her and mutters, "The entire edifice of the government, Madam, is based on a quite feudal system of favours.

It's even been drafted into our rules and regulations in the form of the powers of discretion granted to our public servants to interpret the law.....all have favours to seek and grant, like barter system in a primitive society." (268) Raghupati is ever horny, plays 'Love, Like, Hate, Adore' game on paper like a teenager and fancies everything sexually. For him 'money is sex is power'. And in another episode a film hero, a nominated member of the Parliament vacates his official bungalow after his tenure, leaving electricity bills due, worth of eight lakh rupees. Can we imagine a common man without any political clout avoiding such bills unpaid?

Chatterjee attacks on how the Government officials make waste expenditure for even petty personal fulfillments. Dr. Onorari Kansal the chairman of the eponymous Commission misuses State government helicopter to bring his favourite sleeping suit from his home, an off-white kirta- pyjama that he forgot. Is it not really sucking the dugs of the Welfare State till last drop? In contrast, in the district of Madna, Agastya himself had found concrete evidence of at least eighteen cases in which poverty had forced families in the block of Jompanna to sell themselves, literally body and soul, as bonded labourers for seventy-five rupees per year. "The bounty of welfare extends in all directions and knows no bounds; only the niggardly and the short sighted think of economics. In a large country, you have to think big."(283)

R.P Singh rightly observes: "....The Mammaries of The Welfare State has its theme the day to day regimen of the corrupt and depraved mandarins of the welfare state. People like the high state official Bhupen Raghupati, the politician Makhmal Bagai. The astrologer baba Mastram, the artist Rajani Suroor and several others play out the daily drama of venality and depravity on the bare bosom of 'the Welfare State' - (Singh 51)

Chatterjee introduces 'Aflatoons', an imaginary political dynasty and the large extended first family of the nation and ridicules the nepotism adopted by them. The bureaucrat and columnist Uma Mahadevan Dasgupta felt that the word Aflatoon could be the Hindi word for Plato. Chatterjee, a true Postmodern writer makes use of 'Subversion', and undermines the sublimity of the terms Plato and Welfare State as they are presently degraded by the corrupted law makers and its executives. He mocks at the patrimony of the Aflatoons and states that as many of sixteen Prime Ministers ruled the Welfare State over seven decades after getting independence. He mocks at the extravagant use of the title 'Aflatoon' for many buildings, parks, monuments, institutions, hospitals, gardens, community toilets, stadiums and many places are named after them. The title is used as a clout, for protection for illegal activities. As the novel progresses, we see Agastya confronting with the daily mis- happenings around him and the bureaucratic colleagues' venality. Though he exhibits ennui and disinterest in the beginning of his service, he becomes habituated spectator and grows into a matured Civil servant, observing the official follies. Agastya states, "In my eight years of service, I have not come across a single case in which everybody concerned didn't try milk dry the boobs of the Welfare State"(23). This statement shows his keen interest in observing the senior colleagues and how the exploitative psyche of the mandarin-politician duo topples the original concept of the Welfare State and takes completely antonymous perception when it comes to practicality.

Murari Prasad says, "Eight years passed since Agastya joined the IAS, and in the course of time he has mutated from 'a malingering probationer' into an honest and clear sighted civil servant. He is acutely sensitive to the tardy and wasteful bureaucracy in the Welfare State that is contemporary India".(7) Agastya has not left his usual disinterestedness in his bureaucracy but now and then he muses to resign, not exactly to leave the position, but he sees some futility in the system itself. Nandini Lal in her review 'Bleating Bureaucrat' says, "Sen's cynicism is only a mask for rage and despair."

Agastya feels that Welfare State is overloaded with many employees, officers and the routine that takes place in the offices are not really of much importance. Still they are intelligent enough to keep themselves busy, in other words, this wasteful expenditure, unnecessary proceedings are strategies to manipulate and just to show that they are working if possible suck the dugs of the Welfare State dry. "At any point of time at least one Department in the Secretariat is transferring one of its offices from one room to another; since movement is action, a permanent housing problem is itself proof that the government works"(16). Chatterjee mocks severely at the crippled, name sake functioning style and emptiness of the administration of the Welfare State.

Chatterjee ridicules various schemes, loans and privileges that are being misused by beneficiaries as well the sanctioning authorities. Even the semi literates, free loaders with utmost greed wait for their turn to plunder, encroach, exploit and misuse the government schemes for quick bucks. A physically challenged person has been granted a kiosk alongside the stairs of an office on payment of one rupee a month as rent. That guy had started Xerox and started making a sound business as there are many offices in the building and around. Later he managed to get sanctioned of three various loans such as 'The rural Poor Self-Employment Generation Scheme', 'The Physically Handicapped Economic Self-sufficiency Project', 'The Depressed Classes Financial Independence Plan'. Later he got all the loans waived off and subleased his kiosk for two thousand rupees to another disabled person. The episode reveals the setbacks and backdoors of the Welfare State and how one can exploit it to the maximum extent possible. It also shows that many Government schemes are getting overlapped and only a few deserved are benefited. The real needy, depressed classes are unaware of the benefits extended to them.

Agastya reads the mindset of bureaucrats and says that when there was a problem locally, the Civil servants wish to have another bigger crisis. Madna, a hinterland town was effected by Plague, there was A.C. Raichur' declaration of hunger strike, Rajani Suroor was attacked by Makhmal Bagai's hoodlums and was comatose. At that crucial juncture, Prime Minister was about to visit Madna to see his hospitalized friend Rajani Suroor. So the big event of PM's visit would erase all other small crises. He refers it to Matsyanyaya. "...., by Welfare State standards, just wasn't critical enough. When faced with a crisis, what all civil servants longed for was a bigger crisis. In the bureaucratic mind, the tensions of demonstration, for example, were easily resolved by an outbreak of the plague.....It was a bit like the ancient law of *Matsyanyaya*, of the Big Fish gobbling up the Little Fish, and of being gobbled up in turn by even Bigger Fish." (163) Everyone is indulged in exploitation of the welfare state, no bureaucrat is readily willing to resolve the problems immediately. Their general listlessness, complacency nature, the authority of the highest office and mostly the nexus with the law makers make them feel secured and go on manipulating the things to their advantage. Agastya calls Matsyanyaya in his own words Nutsyanyaya. "He could find an example of lunacy wherever he looked in the Welfare State, but no one else seemed to bother, most found it funny or pleasantly incomprehensible."(164,165) In the Welfare State no individual is harmed directly, if there is some deterioration of the rules or regulations. But it cankers the whole system, if they fail to grasp that, it would eventually devour up everybody.

The administrative environment is pro-corruptive, and it's really a hard task for Agastya to keep himself away from that polluted administrative regime and he might have been a black sheep in the sight of other inherently fraudulent colleagues. Along with Agastya we see a very few non -corrupt -yet officers in the novel who do not indulge into venality. Chatterjee writes: "There have been times when completely honest and comparatively honest – officers- Agastya Sen, for example, and Dhruvo Dastidar, Kumari Lina and HariHara Kapila – have wondered whether they are in fact as honest as they have always thought themselves to be – the idea of honesty having become more and more slippery with the years – and secondly, what good being honest has done them."(271) So even the once honest, upright persons may let lose their integrity in due course, may succumb to ever pervasive and alluring enticement of the adulteration. Chatterjee says 'of course, one could also make hay in inclement weather. Truly the land of opportunity, the Welfare state could boast of thousands of officials, great and small, who had not let a single chance to rake it in slip by ..." (270) . The accountants charge a percentage for each salary, increments, allowances, emoluments, sanctioning officers get fifty rupees per day for allowing unauthorized absence, drivers getting extra fuel bills, peons submitting fake overtime bills, officers get cuts for passing the bills, everything under the sun is worth for greasing our palms. ".....The list is long, varied, and intricately interwoven and the corruption is insidious". (270) R.P.Singh aptly says "one gets a full –view glimpse into the multi departmental degeneration of the entity called Welfare State. The core of this degeneration is a satanic hunger for power, pelf and flesh, with the concomitant devilish commitment to satiate it. (Singh57)

The Civil servants, the steel frame of the system are very few in number when compared to other categories in the government. But the mandarins enjoy the comforts, princely salaries at the cost of the other classes. "Needless to add, the crème de la scum floats far above economy- measure circulars, which apply – with solid severity – mainly to the submerged 96.4 percent of the employees of the welfare state- namely the millions of peons, and asst. Grades, I, II, III and IV,... dafadars, Junior Clerks, drivers, book – keepers, Deputy clerks, attendants, auditors, Senior clerks, stenographers, cashiers, principal clerks, typists, accountants, stenotypists ..." (62)

There is another IAS officer Chanakya Lala, who gobbles large sums. Dr. Kapila wonders at his greed at that young age. Lala hails from good family, highly educated, a member of the Steel Frame, reads good books and plays golf with other officers. "He is tall, bespectacled with a womanish sway in his hips in his walk. He stinks of perfume' His policy is 'Suck above, Suck below'. He invariably shares his booty with the dacoits who are his political masters and whichever of his official superiors are willing".(249) Dr. Kapila also talks about the sycophantic civil servants , "...If I ask them to eat my shit, they'll gobble it up with pepper, chilli powder and gratitude".(252). He laments that in the present Dark Age it is all degradation, the ethics are at stake, with the changing times there is moral decline.

Chatterjee mocks at the mandarins' greed for foreign trips. When a civil servant enters the administration of Central Government, he is interested to talk about international agencies like UNICEF, ILO, WB, IMF, FAO and plans to move around the world, visit cities like Paris, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Geneva, New York. Their lust for travel abroad is for handsome daily allowance that is paid in dollars. Moreover, they will be received by Indian diasporas and minimize their expenditure. Chatterjee says that they manage to save in a week's trip is equivalent to two months' pay. They enjoy the trip at the expense of the State, accommodated in star hotels, provided comfortable travel, snazzy suits, women in skirts, insane sightseeing, wining and dining, high risking whoring and the handshakes in meetings in which nothing is ever discussed decisively. ".....having experienced all that and having gained two months' pay in the process, the civil servant returns home to find his job rather shabby and dull, without any fizz".(236) And they start speaking lingo of External affairs. Dr. Bhatnagar, after his trips, starts regularly corresponding to Ambassadors, High Commissioners of the countries he had visited, of course with his wife many times. He calls his P.A. Satish Kalra and orders to send fax conveying thanks, warm regards from his wife and self to them. Even Agastya is sent to Europe for training but unfortunately, Agastya is not after making money out of the trip. It is a tense-making programme for him with strict schedule. So he laments on phone to Dhrubo "Everything was efficient, formal, cold and different" (397). He is summoned to Madam Europe Olympia's office, the Director of the training programme. She is aware of Indian participants and their lack of interest in learning.

She says. "You perhaps are not aware, Monsier Sen, that over the years, your country's record, its performance, at the Institute has been abysmal. This year, for example, you began with two of you here, but one returned home within a fortnight.....Truly the less said about you, the better, even though I've much to say on the score... We're untrainable...in short..."(400). Agastya feels that even the trainings abroad are nothing but simple, common sense blended with management jargon , some boxes, arrows, circles and charts, and he feels his trip is an exile missing his Madna.

Dr. Srinivas Chakki is almost the deuteronomist in the novel as he speaks out the mind of Chatterjee after the protagonist Agastya. Both these primary characters are poignant, ironical in their expressions to bring home the seriousness of the issues they touch upon that can't be ignored. Chakki talks about hygienic conditions of Government Hospital at Madna "... Faeced matter, mouldy bandages, cockroaches, enormous spiders and rats ...does anybody know what it takes to keep a hospital toilet clean?" and he also says that there are seventeen sweepers working in the hospital.(138). The town is affected by plague, the situation is alarming, but the condition of hospital is abysmally low. He describes the ward and toilets. Not only hygienic conditions, but the fitness of the people and even that of athletes is not up to mark. Dhrubo, the Under Secretary supports A.C. Raichur's run for National Integration and comments " the fitness level of one of our average national athletes equals that of the average , middle aged, depressed, divorced, Scandinavian



housewife'.(146) Chatterjee laments over the worse condition of the welfare state's unhygienic and poor health practices of its people. It's true that we care little about cleanliness and physical fitness and never exhibit remarkable performance in Olympics or in any other global competitions.

Agastya sees no difference between Welfare State and Police State. In fact, the police draw much respect in society, though it arises from their threatening skills and uniform. As Agastya is a dope smoker, he funnily replies to a question for his joining in Civil service and says, "... Because within the civil service, one is likelier to know somebody who knows somebody who knows somebody and who knows a cop". Interestingly, his friend and colleague- mandarin in his interview for selection of IAS , Dhruvo answers, "Within the Civil Service, one is likelier to have a peon, a personal assistant, and an Ambassador car as buffers between one's good self and the rest of the government" (170). Agastya calls our administration 'Ambassodarocracy' as all the officials, ministers use the standard Ambassador cars. He tells about the superintendent of Police of Madna Pannalal Makkad, a senior IPS officer, who put up 35 years of service, wise and wicked officer about to retire. He is a widower, ill tempered, a boozier, there are rumors spread that he had burnt his wife as she questioned his habit of heavy boozing. When plague erupted at Madna, the Police and Para Military forces are deployed , Agastya says " Nothing in our country moves or happens without them-naturally- we being a Police State as much as Welfare State"(53). The police are diffused to any kind of work, track down the municipal workers , scavengers and make them work , prevent suspect plague victim from escaping , guarding abandoned houses and funnily he says they found plague affected Dr. Chakki after two days lying at garbage dump with a dead rat in his right hand.

Agastya had a confrontation with a cop on parking his cycle at wrong place. He says that the cop might not have liked his face. So he writes a letter to Prime Minister to allow Civil Servants to wear the Police Uniform of course with a lighter shade to make a difference that they( IAS) are above Police . "...Sir, may I officially be allowed to keep a gun to protect myself from the police? " ...Sir, Give us Uniforms, exactly like the cops have, threatening to explode around the belly and bum like terrycot covers stretched beyond endurance over bags of cement and twin ghatams, the navel visible like a hairy peeping Tom's eye at a key hole.."(169,170) Thus he takes a sledge hammer of satire to mock at the police, their uniform and physical unfitness. There is an episode of Sukumaran Govardhan , a forest goon, sandal wood smuggler. He has at one time two hundred cases filed against him and he has one hundred and eight houses across the country. It is clear that the police are complacent, not sincerely searching for him and are not committed to arrest and punish him. This may be due to his nexus with the politicians an even the police would get their cut from his loot. Dinkar Sathe, the owner of Madna International Hotel always tries to continue the relations with officers in Government or its representatives. He sees Welfare State as the platform for manipulations, grab the wealth, encroach whatever possible and feel secured under the clout of political influence completely ignoring the law and its sanctity. "Thus in his eyes, Sukumar Govardhan , for example, the Lord of illegal traffic of the Madna jungle, could well be the minister for Forests and environment- though considerably more powerful. Because of his faith in the wand of power, its wielders.....who could be milked for how much and for what in return ..." (97,98)

Chatterjee opined through Chakki's script that it would be better to juxtapose the retired or highly experienced bureaucrats with the existing politicians who make legislations. Because many of the law makers are illiterates like who paint and post the sign boards at the junctions and on the high ways who do not know and follow that is exactly written there. "The senior most Civil Servants are", Chakki writes "After all, they too, at the end of their careers, have worked at all kinds of Government jobs for thirty five years. On the job Training, absolutely, and probably more effective than Plato's more formal, academic cultivation of body and mind" (429).

At the end of the novel Miss. Lina tells Raichur about the ideal state "We have to think small. Big is clumsy and slow to move. Once it moves, Big is uncontrollable because of its size. Filthy, inefficient, wasteful and causes calamities.....the establishment taken by government has been unsystematically ruined. The state needs immediately to shed weight, you know, it can retain defence, foreign policy, finance, justice, and a

couple of others but no more, I say.”(436) It’s really appreciable if the government plans to get relieved of the burden of some minor departments, make some other organisations part of administration with precise accountability and concentrate on the very essential and crucial departments to curb the corruption and uplift the standards of living. Thus Chatterjee is more successful as a whistle blower in focusing light on how the evils of ‘Corruption, Caste, Clout and Complacency nature’ of the two strong pillars of the society i.e lawmakers and bureaucrats have rotten the noble concept of Welfare State. It is really high time that the welfare state was saved from the cruel hands of the plunderer behemoths like criminal politicians, corrupted civil servants or any other opportunistic individuals who squeezes the sap out of the Welfare State. It may be on cards that we get another sequel in which Chatterjee, being the part of the Steel Frame, would come out with realistic and approachable measures to better the system of governance to keep the nobility of Welfare State in its word and deed.

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