



Arvind Adiga's Fiction as a Reflection of Contemporary Socio-Political India.

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ABSTRACT

Arvind Adiga is one of the most significant contemporary Indian English novelists. His debut novel *The White Tiger* brought him success as a writer within a very short period; which is very rare and phenomenal. His works often offer a critical portrayal of the socio-political realities of modern India. Adiga's fiction raise social issues with the gloomy image of India which he painted with the darker shades of corruption, poverty, casteism, immorality, insensitivity, etc. His narratives move around the contradictions of India's economic progress, where prosperity for a few privileged often coexists with the deprivation and injustice for most of the people. Adiga's characters challenge the established power structures and reveal the moral and ethical dilemmas arising from social and political inequalities. Adiga's protagonists can be seen as the major victims of such social vices which are delineated through their struggles and challenges while facing them. His works function as social commentaries, offering valuable insights into the realities of twenty-first-century India.

The present paper explores a reflection of contemporary socio-political India through Adiga's literary works *The White Tiger*, *Between the Assassinations*, *Last Man in Tower* and *Selection Day* with a view to understanding critically how caste, class, corruption and politics work together to sculpt Indian lives. This paper also analyzes these fictions to debunk the social structures and the evils within, and how they, altogether, affect the common masses..

1. INTRODUCTION

In the literary firmament, Arvind Adiga, one of the most iconic authors in contemporary Indian writing in English has created quite a stir worldwide. His novels, known for his scathing critiques of Indian society, have won him international praise. The intellectual works of Arvind Adiga like- *The White Tiger*, *Between the Assassinations*, *Last Man in Tower*, and *Selection Day*, are an exploration of complexities of social evil that ensnare the nation. By letting us read about the struggles and triumphs of his characters, Adiga gives a complex view on the human condition within a rapidly changing society and on problems that never seem to disappear. The present paper attempts to explore the literary merit of Adiga holistically with particular focus on the unmasking of socio-political structures indulging in rampant evils and their bearings on the quotidian life of common people.

1.A Tale of Injustice and Corruption in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

Adiga's first novel, *The White Tiger* (2008), has won him the Man Booker Prize. The novel is narrated by Balram Halwai, a young man from the dark corridors of rural India who tells his extraordinary and sometimes twisted journey from the heart of darkness to success in an era of material prosperity. The story of Balram is an illustration of caste and class division in India, and the distinction between "Light" (i.e., privileged) and "Darkness" (Adiga 2008). *The White Tiger* is the story of Balram Halwai who drives around the wealthiest family in Delhi while discovering exposure to an entire world of corruption, exploitation & moral dereliction that mold the Indian society. The book more or less exposes the grim and hostile tendencies, which Balram is always reminded of his class position. Combining dark humor and satire, Adiga constructs a complex narrative that highlights the surreal and unjust in the system while simultaneously provoking us to both laugh and cringe in response.....

The way Balram evolves from a groveling driver to a cut-throat entrepreneur on the other hand speaks volumes about his grit and aspiration. Nevertheless, his acts of crime, like killing his employer, forces us to ask the moral question about how one can succeed in a world governed by injustice. The ambiguity of Balram, and the difficulty that comes with survival and ambition in a society built to take everything you have does not make for an easy moral conflict as presented by Adiga.

The novel is written in an epistolary fashion, the letters penned to the Chinese Premier provide another layer to Balram's story. And it allows him to speak directly to a world audience, which underscores the universality of his tale as well as the interrelatedness of social problems in a globally connected era. And Balram's voice expresses equal parts cynicism and optimism, mirroring the mixed emotions of a man who has seen India at its worst, but also at its most promising.

The White Tiger may be a rags-to-riches story at heart, but it is also a blistering indictment of social equality in India and the institutions that have helped foster these inequities. As resilient and ambitious as Balram proves to be, a journey from dirt-poor village to successful businessman, his story cannot exist without opening up the corrupt institutions and oppressive systems that rule Indian society.

Beautifully crafted with black humor and satire, Balram's narrative is an infused social satire. Through his witty remarks on the "Big Socialist Republic of India" and the symbolic imageries, "The Rooster Cage", he blatantly condemns a system which falsely promises equality yet thrives with inequalities (Adiga 2008). Through an irreverent narration that drips with arrogance, Balram's character refuses the status quo and boldly challenges readers to think of different truths from the ignored side of India.

The story examination of corruption is especially sharp. Balram experiences firsthand the extent of bribery and corruption in all levels of Indian society, through local police to up-there politicians. He discovers that success is usually the result of a moralistic shame, but there is no need to accept it in upward mobility. This lack of an absolute moral center was a difficult question to ask, one that hinted at what people were willing to do in order to move away from slavery and tough questions about powerlessness.

The master-servant relationship is another particularly significant element of Adiga's novel, *The White Tiger*. But the way Balram interacts with Ashok encapsulates every power imbalance in Indian society, period. The destitute Balram is treated as a human at the convenience of Ashok, a member of the ruling class who regards him with thinly veiled disdain and apathy - a slap in the face that spotlights the buried layer of prejudice underlying power imbalances. However, the manner in which Balram eventually breaks away from Ashok can also serve as a metaphor for the grouses of the disenfranchised who are increasingly restless and looking for autonomy and empowerment.

The epistolary format of the novel, writing a letter to the Chinese Premier, does several things. This way, Balram can speak directly to a global audience and stress that his story is universal and social issues are increasingly interconnected in a globalized world. The letters provide a place for Balram to give voice to his cynical yet astute observations about Indian society, which offer us an unusual look at the strengths and flaws of the country. This paper aims to holistically examine Adiga's literary merit, with a particular focus on how he exposes entrenched social structures that breed rampant vices and impact the daily lives of ordinary Indians.

2. A City Unbound: Social Dissection in Arvind Adiga's *Between the Assassinations*

It is a series of twelve interlocked stories comprises *Between the Assassinations* (2008) that to create a kaleidoscopic picture along the lines of Indian society. Through these tales he probes the lives of people from myriad circumstances, as we run smack bang into the influence of caste/class/religion and a little bit of gender in their desire and its possibility. Between them, these films paint a poignant portrait of a nation caught up in civil war, suffering from political corruption and drowning in economic inequality.

A peculiar sad story in the collection, *The Elephant*, Shankar is a teenaged mahout (elephant driver) forced out of his village by destitution. Even in the city, Shankar experiences the human termites and racial slurs as a casteless person on fallow land. The story brings shame upon at some point of the story as in all places in which those untouchables have been compelled to stay - all over bestial poverty drives them into dehumanization, and portrays a society that casts out its outcasts.

In yet another story, 'The Accountant', you witness the poisons and perils of the corruption-riddled lives of a lower middle-class man, Khosla. Khosla's metamorphosis into an ethically challenged selling out is a cautionary tale of the widespread



corruption in contemporary India and the ultimately debilitating consequences it has on individuals, and by extension society.

Adiga weaves these separate strands of narrative together as he exposes the web of social issues that bind Indians. Instead, the issues facing the characters are not isolated events but indicative of a broader structural issue. These stories make readers engage with uncomfortable truths of Indian society and also ask them questions about the systems that feed inequity and injustice.

Between the Assassinations by contrast, offers a kaleidoscopic view of Indian society in all its diversity and contradiction, and if it was nearly as good as this book we would have quite a novel on our hands. The book features a dozen stories that range in theme from caste to class, religion to gender, corruption to violence, and the very art of storytelling. Adiga, through these various narratives, shows the multi-dimensional Indian society and the problems encountered by people of different strata.

The plain portrayal of everyday struggles of common Indians stand out in the collection. They are not clean shaved hero nor a cardboard villain; they are flawed by complex beings doing the best they can to navigate their own lives in a world that often feels set up against them. They are stories of hope as well as despair, or resilience and resignation - each indicating the varying emotions and experiences shared by a group of people stumbling through an upheaved society.

The narratives also delve into the dark Indian underbelly - the hail of violence, hate crimes and urban bias that bubble up beneath the veneer of urbane life. In "The Elephant" Shankar is mob-murdered in a racist attack on an Indian village, exposing the terrors that lurk behind the facade of civil society faced daily by those on the margins; In "The Call Centre," we see just how globalization denudes and exploits service industry drones.

In his fiction, Adiga has often posited characters pulled between the old and the new -- how do their ancient cultural selves integrate into a rapidly shifting world. It is in really the stuff of stories like 'The Adivasi' that dwell on tribals and development, or 'The Muslim' who lives more as a stranger at home with the Hindu world due to his minority status in any crowd.

Offering a smorgasbord of voices, *Between the Assassinations* is an insightful and tender portrayal of India's social fabric. The tales compel audiences to face the country's most mortifying social decadences while pushing them ponder upon the assorted variables that beget such abominations.

3. Exploring Social Conflict in Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower*

In *Last Man in Tower*, Adiga now brings us to the booming market of Mumbai real estate, a reflection of changing economic realities in India. You have a novel with the seasoned residents of Vishram Society, a crumbling apartment building that is to be torn down to make room for an upscale high-rise. The tale leads us through the collision between tradition and technology and potential, as the villagers face being bought out by a developer.

Masterji is retired schoolteacher, the novel's protagonist and the improbable hero in the struggle to safeguard Vishram Society. Masterji's idealism, and his blind trust in community spirit make an ironic foil to the greed of land developer Dharmen Shah and company. The stand-off 'Masterji vs Shah' mirrors the national conundrum of those who are determined to conserve India's cultural history and others who would not allow anything to come in the way of economic growth.

This is in a scathing critique to the unbounded capitalism of the city and the real estate industry; something that Adiga does so well. The book uncovers the ensnarement between uplifters, lawmakers, and lawmen (who often partner to hustle out rent payers and gentrify sections). The inhabitants of Vishram Society are not innocent bystanders, but well-rounded characters with their own wants, needs, and goals. Their narratives provide insight into the courage and fortitude of common individuals in the midst of tragedy.

Community and social alignment in a fast-evolving world have been dealt with by him effectively even in his earlier books like *Last Man in Tower*. Even though the residents of Vishram Society differ from each other, they join forces to protest against the intentions of the developer and in collective action lies strength. But this unity doesn't last long as they give more importance to their personal interests than fighting against the injustice.

4 Unmasking the Game: Social Struggles in Aravind Adiga's *Selection Day*

Selection Day inhabit the poverty-stricken slums of Mumbai and both young boys, Manju and Radha, aspire to cricket success as a way out. Introducing his sons Arjun and Vivek to the sport, Mohan Kumar trains them to play cricket at an elite level, culminating in success at the Test Cricket International Tournament. Yet the sports element is only part of the

story; it's a deeply layered look at family relationships, class struggle and hardship in an urban slum.

Mohan Kumar (R Madhavan) is a former cricketer whose dream to play for India was truncated by poverty, his sons serving as a vehicle for him to find success, albeit vicariously. He drives them to great lengths often ignoring whether they are mentally or physically up to the task. The novel comments on exploitation of sports academies and the try-anything atmosphere for young talented athletes.

The relationship of Manju and Radha is a spectrum of complicity, friction, struggle for identity and power. Manju, the older brother, is gifted at cricket without being a natural talent, and he does what it takes to succeed but can't shake the weight of his father's expectations. The more introspective member, the younger brother Radha questions they are sacrificing for a sport that in all likelihood will never make their dreams come true. Highly contrasting personalities and personal aspirations showcase the struggles and sacrifices one endures in order to succeed in a cutthroat industry.

Selection Day is also about discovering one's true self. As the boys grow up, they start to question their father's strict demands and carve out their own lives. Manju Firebrand, in his case, struggles with his sexuality, as all bright sparks do when they are young and athletes in India. The loss of Manju to the shadows of self-denials is as vivid in this novel, and there lies its strength - a testimony to how one needs to accept oneself as they are, despite how society looks at things.

6. Conclusion

Arvind Adiga's novels provide an intense, occasionally disturbing snapshot of the contemporary India. He forces his readers to face the dark or gloomy aspects of the Indian society; about caste, class, corruption and inequality through his unabashedly close examination of societal ills. The readers learn of the challenges and struggles experienced by his characters, which presents a complex perspective on the human condition and their never-ending hardships within an ever-changing society. More than just entertaining, there is a political aspect to what Adiga contributes with his literature as it serves as a form of social commentary which highlights the social evils such as dishonesty, immorality, greed, crime, corruption etc. that lead people to think and challenge their conditioned self. Adiga, by exposing the violence beneath the veneer of Indian society, makes his readers want a better future where people are genuinely treated honestly. His depiction of Indian society pushes us to sit and reconsider our assumptions and prejudices so that progresses are made towards a fairer society in the future.

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