



CULTURAL SPACE AND IDENTITY IN THE NOVELS OF ARAVIND ADIGA

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Abstract

The present research paper focuses on cultural space and identity in India with reference to Aravind Adiga's novels like *The White Tiger*, *Between the Assassinations* and *Last Man in Tower*. Aravind Adiga's novels focus on society, culture and identity. The contemporary Indian English novels revolve around the socio-cultural themes. They catch the glimpse of the ideologies and attitudes that is developed by the present generation. Thus, the article will analyze the society, caste, class, cultural and economic condition of India with all its complexities. This article efforts to make a study of Aravind Adiga's novels present how they project a clear picture of contemporary society when traditional set up of society losing its ground very speedily all moral and social values are on the wane.

Keywords: Society, Culture, Caste System, Identity, Haves and Have-Nots.

Introduction

The present article focuses on cultural space and identity in India with reference to Aravind Adiga's novels. Aravind Adiga's novels are the record of a sharp and glaring look at modern day India. Adiga elucidates the age-old dissection between the rich and the poor, existing caste system, corruption in Indian politics and the miraculous economic growth in India. Adiga highlights how the norms of social institutions are being changed. As society is changing very quickly, it causes changes in the norms of social institutions also. Here he points towards the newly emerged norm of marriage-live-in-relationship.

As the novelist writes: "Among young people today, it is a common thing for boy and girl to live without marriage, ... there is no sense of shame in the modern way of life, ... the modern, shame-free way of living counted for nothing" (2011:22). Aravind Adiga's novels are observing cultural norms and values as a resource structure for entrepreneurial activity makes sense when one considers that the rules of economic behaviour are embedded in national, regional and organizational cultures. The novels portrayed India's society as very negative towards the lower social caste system. The classification of people according to their caste is one of the underlying causes for many a violence in the country.

Even though the country is fast developing in all the sectors, still there are many murders done due to the bane of caste system. It has donated in understanding the life and culture of the people both in rural and urban India through analyzing some of the most powerful metaphors of the text. These novels are lauded for the way it deals with larger social issues in light of emerging global advancements. Adiga's novels powerfully symbolize the spreading annulled between the rich and the poor. All corrupt practices are carried on like bribing to the bureaucrats, showing nepotism, instigating communal clashes and making the criminals to go scot-free.

The novelist condemns this change and expresses his grave concern over its emergence. Balram analyses every situation on the causality of materialistic approach. He, like the rich, thinks that all the social and political system of the country can be controlled by money. Balram is completely devoid of moral and social values. He follows the path of crime that is shaped by the external world around him. The protagonist is fully aware that the poor are always oppressed by the rich. As he laments his agony: "How the rich always get the best things in their lives, and all that we get is their leftovers" (2008: 233). Adiga indicates that the people of India are waiting for the dawn of their freedom from all of their exploitation.

The novelist is fully aware that the present society is changing rapidly. The wave of modernism is affecting every sphere of life. But the changes are tangible on our social institutions. The norms of our century old institution such as marriage, family, education, economy and so on are being replaced. The changes in the norms of marriage are very significant. So the new generation does not pay much respect to the earlier ones. This mode of the new generation indicates a particular aspect of society and hints at how quickly society is advancing.

Culture in metropolitan cities is changing very fast. Traditionalism is losing its ground. This outlook of the new generation causes the change in the norms of our social institutions. Religion and caste system are no longer rigid as in the earlier times. With the help of this mode of society, the novelist highlights how quickly the culture of the metropolitan cities is changing and this mode of the new generation points toward a particular aspect of society. As the novelist remarks: "In the old days, you had



caste, and you had religion: they taught you how to eat, marry, live, and die. But in Bombay caste and religion had faded away, and what had replaced them”. (2011: 217)

This paper demonstrates that this image of a modern India. It has identified how the landlordism, low standard school, unhygienic hospitals, corruption in police, political leaders, judiciary and bureaucracies have been impeding the growth and development of the nation and degenerate the human values of the society. The contemporary Indian English novels revolve around the society, cultural, inequality and identity themes. They catch the glimpse of the ideologies and behaviors that is developed by the present generation. These novels, highlighting the age-old worries, anxieties of the downtrodden, are a pulsating critique of the deep-rooted socio-economic inequality rampant in India.

Adiga's novels challenge against the image of a developing and outstanding India and make the world rethink about their perception. Since most of the representations of India “in films and books coming out of India” carry the stories of the economic, political and technological boom, the lives of the underclass are “invisible” (2014: 199). Against this backdrop of representations, Adiga took a bold step in narrating the stories of the unprivileged people who live in an India of Darkness (2008: 10).

For the last many decades domestic servants have been an integral part of rich traditional household all over India. Due to rising economy and disintegrating joint family structures here has been a spurt in the demand for this working class in the present century. Working classes particularly, servants, drivers, cooks and security guards, living beside their rich masters in the cities, watch helplessly their luxuriant lifestyle, see their glamorized world and crave an upward mobility. Last Man in Tower is a strong reflection of globalization and socio economic culture of modern Mumbai and its narration is rich in detail and the recreation of everyday life.

Adiga's novels revolve around the socio-cultural, economic and political discourse in India. That's what I'm trying to do - it's not an attack on the country, it's about the greater process of self-examination.” It is an effort to analyze the brilliant work of Aravind Adiga's novels with special reference to cultural imperialism in the present ultra-modern world. Novels emphases on the central issues of Indian society like identity crisis, cultural discrimination, political corruption, class discrimination, complexity in the socio-economic, influence of foreign culture and degradation of traditional values and fanatic nature of Indian societies towards the west.

Adiga's novels are the product of cultural imperialism and the structure of Indian Cultural hierarchy is quite different from the Western hierarchy of sects and groups. Adiga's novels illustrate Antony Gramsci's theory of hegemony and war of positions.

Adiga's agenda seems to appropriate the lower caste or subaltern castes against warrior race in India. Of course, the Western scholars read it not for this cultural politics but for documentation of Indian poverty and also for marketing cultural products. The world politics influences Indian literature in one way or the other.

In all dimensions of cultural life, this dominant discourse is a prime agent in creating an essential staging for cultural exchange. As pointed out earlier modern husbands and the cosmopolitan culture of Mumbai in the rising Indian tradition after the onslaught of globalization are vividly presented. Adiga employs a sort of second division of imagery which he over-indulges: ‘This place with sea view had palace-of-sin flushness’ doesn't make much sense and ‘the ocean storm swollen, its foam hissing thick like acid reflux, dissolving gravity and rock and charging up the ramps’ seems to contain four not very precise metaphors. Also, occasionally the jokiness of his imagery is at odds with the underlying seriousness of his project. This is remarkably a dynamic trend in use of metaphors after the successful acceptance of Indian English writing over the American and British English.

The fruit of India's freedom has been consumed by the tiny minority and the other “99.9 percent” (2008: 103) of the population has been relentlessly exploited. The fictional world of Adiga, as a continuation to that custom, demonstrates how the Indian society has been heading towards moral and spiritual decadence and economic exploitation. Adiga has rightly been able to address in his novels. He has raised the issues of social problems of utter poverty, moral corruption, rising intolerance, child labor, communal hatred, escalating unemployment, tax evading rackets, embittered master servant relationship, weakening family structure and economic and social disparities prevalent in Indian society. Theses novel also reflect the brighter picture of shining India, social mobility and progressing India. (2012: 6).

However, so far economic growth has irrationally benefitted only the rich. Adiga's novels are the epitomize poverty, illiteracy, joblessness, caste and culture struggle, dogmas, dowry practice, financial difference, land lord system and manipulation of



marginal farmers and landless laborers, increasing Naxalism, corrupt education system, poor health services, tax escaping racket, disillusioned master-servant relationship, prostitution, commercial success and its consequence etc. establish the basic structure of Indian civilization which principally forms the dark replica of India.

One of the central objectives of this article is to outline the evidences from the text to confute the hyped image of a modern India. This paper demonstrates that this image of a modern India of landlordism, low standard school, unhygienic hospitals and corruption in police, political leaders, judiciary, bureaucracies etc. have been impeding the growth and development of the nation and degenerate the human values of the society.

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