



A STUDY OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS IN THE SELECTED FICTION OF ARVIND ADIGA

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ABSTRACT

In post-modern Indian English literature, Arvind Adiga is one the greatest novelists and authors who depict the root of Indian, known as Indian divers culture including multiculturalism, counter-culture, cross-culture, youth culture etc. In the selected fiction such as *The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassination*, Arvind Adiga has depicted the real pictures and the condition of socio-cultural aspects through various characters. This paper aims to find out the socio-cultural and present the relevant to socio-cultural aspects in his selected fiction. Along with it, this paper attempts to analyse the first Booker Prize (2008) fiction *The White Tiger* and find out the division of social groups, lower class and upper class and the cultural imperialism of the western world through the journey of Balram's life. Most over it, Arvind Adiga, in his short story collection *Between the Assassination*, presents the facts of Indian culture such as crisis and the binary issues of national importance including poverty, hungry and social exploitation and the discrimination on the basis of caste, class, gender and religion. The entire fiction focuses on the socio-cultural conflict and social status through humour and Irony.

Keywords: multiculturalism, counter-culture, cross-culture, youth culture, socio-cultural conflict

**INTRODUCTION**

Aristotle is called man as a social animal, but man can be mentioned itself as a social and cultural animal in the twentieth century and the 21st century. Generally, society is defined as a group of people, who live in a particular geographical area, organized ways of co-operative manner and sharing a common culture. In other words, a society is known as a social group, while culture is a system of the common heritage of society. So we can say that society can not be without culture and culture can not be without society. Literature is a mirror that throws light on our society and culture and represents the image of society, and culture at a certain time and place. Indian English fiction, from its beginning, has evidence, social-culture, economy and political changes in the destiny of this country. In India, English literature is an effort to realize the mistake of society. The authors of India try to show the deep concern about these problems in the past, during the late twentieth century, many brilliant author have written about the socio-culture and social evil, political changes as poverty, exploitation, disparity, casticism 'purdah pratha' child marriage, cultural conflict, historical happing and the romance tales are the common theme of the fiction of this period. Socio-cultural is one of the types of theme culture. There are many writers who use this type of theme and Arvind Adiga is one of them.

Arvind Adiga is an Indo-Australian author and born in Madras (now Chennai) in India on October 23, 1974. Arvind Adiga offers the most significant contribution to represent the Indian society and culture by his fiction in the field of English literature, many authors write or represent the various cultural issues and garnet the protagonist and character like those people, who live in the society and face many social and cultural problem. In his fiction, Arvind Adiga shows growing between poor and rich as well as other serious issues like corruption, terrorism political turmoil, poverty cast and, class discrimination. He focuses on the Indian economy it democratic political system, its social and cultural heritage. Today India is shining on the world map and

there are billion people who are deprived of ultimate necessities of life, behind this shining glow. Arvind Adiga has criticized the person's faults for the social and cultural status bases on cast, religion, wealth and rotten, political system which are working together for the human viruses and the whole society. He wants to observe, social and cultural evils, corruption and growing difference between rich and poor, of life around him. In an interview, Adiga clears his point about internal unrest and outbreak of terrorism-

"These problems have been brewing for a long time. The causes are complex, but one common theme I find is the heightened tension within the country that's caused by the growing gap between the rich and the poor .the flair- ups can often take the form of ethnic or regional protests, but the underlying grievances are often economic: "those people who live over there are doing much better than we are. Fixing the economic disparities has to be part of any attempt to address India's growing unrest. The country's intelligence and police - agencies need to be reformed and modernized; right now they seem way behind the terrorists. In particular, the police have to make an effort to reach out to Indians of all religions – right now religious minorities are intensely suspicious of the police and with good cause."¹

Arvind Adiga is the author of four critically acclaimed works. The first is the Main Booker-prize winning novel *The White Tiger* (2008) second, the short story collection *Between the Assassination* (2009,) third *Last Man in Tower* (2011) and fourth *Selection Day* (2016).In the first and the Booker prize-winning novel *The White Tiger*, he portrays the various issues such as poverty, missing health care and the education system of rural India. In the second sort story collection *Between the Assassination*, Arvind Adiga talks about a journey of Indian society and culture form aspiration to disenchantment and the third novel *Last Man In Tower* portrayal struggle of middle-

¹ The Statesman, Nov 16,2008.



class man in Mumbai city and the story of the recent novel *Selection Day*, unsettling and absorbing story in contemporary India. His contribution to English literature, apart from novels and including many short stories such as *Sultan Battery*, *Smak*, *Last Christmassin* Bandra and *Elephant*. Apart from, Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie Kiran Desai, he is the fourth Indian born author, who won this distinguished award and well-known socially committed novelist in modern English literature. Generally, he focuses his attention in his novel on the misery, pain, suffering and depression of appressed section of society along with it, he suppresses Indian society. The theme of his novels covers various themes including religious, hypocrisy, feudal system, politics, democracy, corruption, poverty, hunger, exploitation and the role of woman Indian society. Arvind Adiga, in his fiction, gives a social message to the Indian people about modern society and portrayal the life of poor people, who lives in the crushing poverty. The character of his novel is not too hypothetical; the real situation. Arvind Adige contributes to offer the various formulas for complexities in Indian society. Arvind Adige's writing takes around the social and cultural life of simple man and common man, as well as a short story represent the picture of Indian society, centres on the predicament of common people. Like, Eagles' eye, he focuses on social Evils, Corruption and growing differences among the rich and poor people, his four novels reflect on contemporary society.

Arvind Adiga's first novel *The White Tiger* is a Booker prize award-winning novel (2008) that reflects on the division of social groups, lower class and upper class and the cultural imperialism of the western world. In it, Adiga portrayed the physical and psychological journey of its protagonist Balram from a compressed rural boy to a compressed cosmopolitan entrepreneur and he kills his employer in the final act of the novel.

Arvind Adige is not only concerned that the protagonist, how climbed the social ladder rather than, he provides several examples to justify his end action and also intends to find out the causes of his

act. Balram the protagonist of the novel, belongs to the lower level of society by class and cast. He was born in the family of Halwai whose profession to prepare food ingredients, and sell them in the village to maintain his family. His profession was not respectable in India by any standards. Balram suffered from the behavior of his villagers and he looks it as a challenge to take the revenge at every factors of humiliation open him in his childhood. Generally, in the village people look down the eye open Balram. His mantel's structure is a result of contemporary situations of social and his last action of murder is a result of social inequality and frustration emerge. going out of it. According to Preetha-

"Balram's journey from Laxamangarh to Dhanbad then Delhi and finally to Bangalore certifies that the socio-psychological condition of the underclass remains unchanged. Balram as the representative of the underclass exemplifies their anger, frustration, protest and revenge. He decides to defy the moral code of conduct to succeed in life. His murder of Ashok is the reaction of deep-rooted frustration of underclass experiencing the polarities between the upper class and lower class".²

The novel describes the socio-economic and cultural conditions in rural Indian society, the institution of marriage plays a major role. The villagers celebrate the marriage, customs and conventions by taking loans from money lenders or landlords and then they force their children to return the loan. Balram was exploited, such convention of marriage with his cousin sister. According to their custom and culture of society, the family of girls gives dowry to the families of the bridegroom. Balram says-

"Because we are the girl's family, we were screwed. We had to give the boy a new

² 4.Nawale,Arvind.and Bite, Vishwanath. Booker Prize Winner Indian English Novels. Jaipur :Avishkar Publishers and Distributors.2011,p.227.



bicycle, and cash, and a silver bracelet, and arrange for a big wedding- which we did."³

Balram Halwai belongs to the village in Laxmangram and he studies in a local school where an inspector gives Balram the name 'The White Tiger' as the rarest boy of the rarest class who is wise in the crowd of huge idiots. After taking responsibility to return to the lone at the edge of ten years, he left his school to join as labour in a tea stall.

The novel deals with the paradoxical nature of Indian social and cultural systems in the post-independence era. In the various situation, the characters of the novel is embedded where cast religion, rural and urban discriminatory issues of Indian social and cultural system. The author shows social and cultural structure of Laxmangram as-

"...see this country, in its days of greatness, when it was the richest nation on earth, was like a zoo. Everyone is in his place, everyone happy. Goldsmiths here. Cowherds here. Landlords here. The man called a Halwai made sweets. The man called a cowherd tended cows. The untouchable cleaned feces. Landlords were kind to their serfs. Women covered their heads with a veil and turned their eyes to the ground when talking to strange men."⁴

Adiga also attacks on the social and system and says that a poor gets proper clothes only after death. He describes about the funeral procession of the mother of Balram Halwai on the bank of the Ganga, the holy city of Banaras. When Balram is a young boy in

Laxmangram, his mother dies. Although she is a minor figure in his life, but Balram remembers that she had great ambition in his life, Balram realizes the hopelessness and futility of his life and vows to make a better future for him as she wishes.

³ Adiga, Aravind. 2008. *The White Tiger*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers India.

⁴ Adiga, Aravind. 2008. *The White Tiger*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers India.

"my mother's body had been wrapped from head to toe in saffron silk cloth, which was covered in rose petals and jasmine garland. I don't think she had ever had such a fine thing to wear in her life."⁵

Adiga's second book a short story collection *Between the Assassination* defines a journey of Indian socio-culture from ambition to disenchantment in the wake of the IT revolution. In the whole fiction, Adiga emerges crisis and the binary issues of national importance including poverty, hungry and social exploitation and discrimination on the basis of caste, class, gender and religion. The entire fiction focuses on the socio-cultural conflict and social status through humour and Irony. In the Time Online, Peter Parker states about Adiga's second fiction as.

"Adiga is at his best when describing the everyday realities of village people who escape to a big city, or are sent there by their families and end up living on the streets and doing the most menial jobs".⁶

In the beginning fiction, Adiga focuses on the religious system and exploited the society by some evil people, he shows through the character of Ziauddin. Ziauddin a twelve-year-old Muslim boy, who belongs to a farmer labouring family and works in a tea stall at the tender age, after staying with his family four months the boy losing his innocence and shares a pried of religion and sense of separation. Eventually, he comes into the contact with Pathan terrorist who spread a sense of separation and religious pride in his mind. Ziauddin feels insecure and hates the Hindus with whom he has spent some time of his happy life, and catch in the communalism tension of Hindu Muslim issue. Terrorists attempt to attack a trend but Ziauddin refuses to do this work. He was abused and tormented by foreign terrorists.

"There are fifty thousand Muslims in this town.' Every one of them seethes. Every one of them is ready for action. I was only

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Adiga, Aravind, 'Between the Assassinations', Picador, India, 2008. 20.



offering this job to you out of pity. Because I see what the Indians have done to you. Otherwise I would have offered the job to any of these fifty thousand fellows".⁷

The author describes the division between the have and the have-not and the behaviour of aristocrat-class toward the servant class. A view from Below-

"The servant-master system implies two things: One is that the servants are far poorer than the rich- a servant has no possibility of ever catching up to the master. And secondly, he has access to the master- the master's money, the master's physical person. Yet crime rates in India are very low. Even though the middle class- who often have three or four servants- or paranoid about crime, the reality is the master, getting killed by his servant is rare.... You need two things (for crime to occur) - a divide and a conscious ideology of resentment. We don't have resentment in India. The poor just assume that the rich a fact of life.... But I think we're seeing what I believe is a class-based resentment for the first time"⁸.

Next, Adiga shows the cast system and socio-culture through the case of Shankkara's. His father belongs to Brahmin and mother low cast Hoyka woman. Shankara is a half-Brahmin and half-Hoyka boy who is ostracized from every side and takes against the cast biased society by burst a bomb in his school. He things-

"burst a bomb to end the 5,000 year-old caste system that still operates in our country. I have burst a bomb to show that a man should not be judged, as I have been merely by the accident of his birth".⁹

Shankara is in the false conception that his school teacher will surely ridicule him behind his back. Among the relatives of Hoyka, Shankara is always considered a special person because he is half-Brahmin and higher than them on the caste scale. Shankara's father is a Brahmin plastic surgeon in the Gulf country, who was disappointed Brahmins' marriage with Shankara's low cast Hoyka mother so, he is not secure about his social and cultural identity in the society neither a Brahmin nor a Hoyka. He feels both races are worst for his because socially disconnected and ignorant he becomes more violent. His mother feels paltry in the company of the Brahmin relatives-

"She did not want to meet the Brahmin woman alone. Her sole claim to acceptance, to respectability, was the production of a male child, an heir and if he wasn't in the house, then she had nothing to show. She was just a Hoykatres passing into a Brahmin's household".¹⁰

CONCLUSION

Thus, Arvind Adiga is one the most significant authors in the 21st century who wrote on many theme such as feminism, culture, Indian Issues but in the selected fiction such as *The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassination* present the depiction of India through the socio- cultural aspects in his fiction.

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⁷ Ibid

⁸ Adiga, Aravind, 'Between the Assassinations', Picador, India, 2008. 20.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Adiga, Aravind, 'Between the Assassinations', Picador, India, 2008. 20.