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Corruption and Aravind Adiga

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Abstract

“Corruption” which presents the inner wheel of social reality through fictional media. This research paper has attempted a critique of his works by documenting and interpreting Aravind Adiga’s fictions which depicts the social and cultural conditions affected by the political degeneration and the corrupt practices of the politicians as well as the civilians. It also focuses on issues which make us aware that today’s oppressed are tomorrow’s oppressors. The oppressors-oppressed binary nevertheless remains functional. The image of real India as represented by the novelist can be well interpreted if the readers analyze the various major social problems raised in the novel. Adiga’s entire fiction deals with social aspects of the contemporary world. It is groundbreaking in presenting the reality of Indian society. Corruption, as an anti-social habit is one of the dominant traits of the people in Indian society from time immemorial. It has been continued to appear in myriad forms which has undermined the India’s edifice as a solid political power over many years in the past slowly but steadily. Corruption consists in misuse of power, position and credit for the sake of personal or private gain. In administration, instances of corruption are found right from the clerks to the high profile persons such as politicians, bureaucrats, police and army personal, and judiciary. All classes of Indians invariably pursue their selfish motives to amass wealth and enjoy life at the cost of public money and country’s resources. Their practices of corruption in turn ruin the nation in an immeasurable extent. They also become impediment to the development of the nation in various spheres. Though India has completed its seventy years of independence, its dream of corruption free India continues to remain only as a dream till this date. There are medicines available even for incurable diseases but corruption remains incurable since Indians lack honesty which is the only disease immediately connected to the nature profoundly recognized as a characteristic of the Indian individual. It seems that there is no medicine to cure this illness of the society.

Keywords: Corruption, social, corrupt practices, India, binary, politician and police

Introduction

Corruption, as an anti-social habit is one of the dominant traits of the people in Indian society from time immemorial. It has been continued to appear in myriad forms which has undermined the India’s edifice as a solid political power over many years in the past slowly but steadily. Corruption consists in misuse of power, position and credit for the sake of personal or private gain. In administration, instances of corruption are found right from the clerks to the high profile persons such as politicians, bureaucrats, police and army personal, and judiciary. All classes of Indians invariably pursue their selfish motives to amass wealth and enjoy life at the cost of public money and country’s resources. Their practices of corruption in turn ruin the nation in an immeasurable extent. They also become impediment to the development of the nation in various spheres. Though India has completed its seventy years of independence, its dream of corruption free India continues to remain only as a dream till this date. There are medicines available even for incurable diseases but corruption remains incurable since Indians lack honesty which is the only disease immediately connected to the nature profoundly recognized as a characteristic of the

Indian individual. It seems that there is no medicine to cure this illness of the society.

Life and Work

In the galaxy of Indian novelists in English Aravind Adiga stand out as original endowment. Aravind Adiga was born on October 23, 1974 in Madras. His father, Dr. K. Madhava and mother, Usha Adiga hailed from Mangalore, Karnataka. His paternal grandfather late K. Suryanarayana Adiga worked as the chairman of Karnataka bank. Brought up in Mangalore, he finished his schooling from Canada High School and St. Aloysius High School. He completed SSLC in the year 1990 ranking first in the state following his elder brother Anand Adiga who secured 2nd. Later on for the rest of his studies he was shifted to Sydney as his family migrated to Australia. Adiga studied at James Ruse Agricultural High School in Australia and then pursued English literature from Columbia College, Columbia University in New York, where well-known British historian Simon Schama was his colleague. He complete graduation in 1997 and then moved to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he was taught by Hermione Lee the current president of Wolfson College. Oxford.

Aravind Adiga started his career as a financial journalist at the Financial Times covering stock market and investment, interviewing luminaries like Donald Trump (American business magnate and a television personal). He also wrote literary review, the famous one being the one about “Oscar and Lucinda”, written by the previous Booker Prize winner Peter Carey. He then shifted to “Time” where he worked as South Asia correspondent for three years. He then give up “Times” and opted to work as a freelancer. It was during his freelance period that he wrote *The White Tiger* – ‘The Man Booker Prize’ novel. In this way he became he stated his literary career and become the fourth Indian to achieve this prize. He is now living in Mumbai, India. Shortly after bagging the Man Booker Prize, he was accused that he sacked the agent to secure his contract with Atlantic Books. His novel *The White Tiger* was a big success and was popularized by many other Booker Prize winners and his novel was adopted in a film according to an announcement made in April 2209. The Indian Hardcover Edition of his award winning book *The White Tiger* has sold in excess of 2,50,000 copies. His second book, *Between the Assassinations* that depicts 12 interlinked short stories, was published in November 2008 in India.

Today, he has five books to his credit-*The White Tiger* (2008), *Between The Assassinations* (2008), *Last Man in Tower* (2011), *Selection Day* (2016) and *Amnesty* (2020). Beside he wrote short stories like –*The Sultan’s Battery* (2008), *Smack* (2008), *Last Christmas in Bandra* (2008) and *The Elephant* (2009). The short stories like *The Sultan’s Battery* and *Smack* were included in the collection of short stories *Between The Assassinations*. In addition to this, he wrote several articles on politics, business and the arts appeared in international newspapers and magazines like ‘Time’ and ‘The Financial Time’ and ‘The Sunday Times’.

Corruption

Chitra G. Lele in his *Corruption in India: Causes, Effects and Reforms* quotes the comprehensive definition of corruption stated by Kofi Annan,

“Corruption is an insidious plague that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets erodes the quality of life and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish.” (Chitra, 8)

Nowadays corruption like a cancerous growth has pervaded the society and it causes hurts everyone who reckons the integrity of the people. It vitiates the moral values of society and its consequences are unimaginably serious. The multi facets of corruption are bribery, defraud, lobbying, extortion, favouritism, nepotism, patronage, graft, and embezzlement all of which pose as the greatest challenge and play an undelatable venomous force of the contemporary India. It poses greatest threats to the peaceful and happy living conditions of all and sundry in the contemporary Indian society. It becomes a radical endemic, which is in need of radical move for a radical solution. It needs to be destroyed before it destroys the democratic set up of the nation and the people of India. It requires the positive participation of both the giver and the receiver of money for the things done illegally.

In particular, the rapid development of this evil practice hurts the people who are already financially burdened in the society and those who cannot bear such extra costs in the name of corruption. Though there is a hue and cry against corruption

in recent times from every nook and corner, corruption is a deep rooted one and the agony it causes in the minds of the honest and the poor, remains unabated.

The literary creation which presents the realistic portrayal of the ways of the world and imparts how life ought not to be lived through its portrayal with the suggestive value of how it should be lived is the mirror of society. The masterpieces like *An Area of Darkness, India: A Wounded Civilization, India: A Million Mutinies Now* by Naipaul and *The White Tiger, Between the Assassinations, Last Man in Tower* and *Selection Day* by Aravind Adiga seem to bring forth the unbridled corruption existed in India. The motivated writers observe that India is highly infected by the contagious malady of corruption. It is a moral perversion which wipes out the country bit-by-bit. They have raised their voice against the prevalent rottenness and attempted to prove their deep concern as well as mounting opposition by scrutinizing, critiquing this evil power artistically which is entrenched virtually in multi segments of the society like politics, security forces, law and order, education, government hospitals and so on. These authors prove with their penning that corruption acts as a catalyst to increase the number of crimes and destroys the supreme importance of the law that governs the whole society.

V. S. Naipaul, the postmodern Indian novelist of diaspora, in his *An Area of Darkness* states that in India there is “Corruption and nepotism rule everywhere” (A.D,97) He further adds that both always go together, and one becomes the cause of the other to thrive. It is found that the moneyed, influential and politically powerful people become corrupt and make all government governing bodies act as the tools to get things done in their favour for which their itching palms are also handsomely greased. In this mess of Indian political and social affairs, India loses her gifted and skilled people. Naipaul has realistically highlighted the uninterrupted continuation of the administrators becoming dishonest and thereby betraying the trust of the people. The honest and the upright administrators simply look at the corruptive forces being dominant in human avatars helplessly. This kind of existing bitter reality in the government governing bodies forces the honest intellectuals to prefer foreign life to Indian one where it is allegedly believed that their inherent and acquired aptitude is given due recognition. It has resulted in the dearth of efficient hands to guide the politicians properly. In his writing it is found that Naipaul projects the views of a common man in India, who reports that due to corruption, “Everybody wants to get out to United Nations jobs. Doctors are going abroad. Scientists are going to America. The future of India is in the darkness.” (A.D, 98) It cannot be denied that the corruption in India has hindered India’s progress to be one of the advanced countries of the world. The fertile growth of the rottenness creates a brain drain and hinders India’s progress to claim as a developed country. Thus corruption deters and discourages the honest and the bright human resources from contributing their skills and ideas to enrich the society and the nation.

Aravind Adiga is deeply hurt by the prevalence of corruption and degradation of moral values in Indian society where people’s representatives and public servants do all the monetary crimes and hide themselves under the shadow of corruption. In *Between the Assassinations*, Adiga deplorably records, “corruption is like a demon.” (B.A, 33) It stretches out its cruelty all over the nation. He attacks the bitter truth that all the corrupt practices are carried out in disguise of

name great men like Mahatma Gandhi or the holy pictures of innumerable goddesses and scriptures.

In all of his masterpieces Aravind Adiga clearly focuses on the excessive corruption as if the incurable diseases that destroys the functioning of the vital organs of the country. He uses the critical tools as x-ray eyes to pinpoint the wounded areas owing to corruption and explore all the impacts of this pervasive phenomenon through his narratives. The target and views of Adiga predominantly lie on Indian polity, the most affected sector of Indian circle. He elucidates a crystallized nature of encroachment of corruption in Indian politics. In his Booker Prize winning *The White Tiger*, Adiga clearly states, "On the fifteenth of August, 1947-the day the British left-the cages had been left open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law. Those that were the most ferocious' the hungriest had eaten everyone else up, and grown big bellies." (W.T, 64)

He finds that modern rulers have the same instincts like British colonizers who attained the power in India through their cruel nature which lead to further dampening of the democratic machinery of India. He further adds in his work *Between the Assassinations* that, "India had been ruled by three foreigners: England, France and Portugal. Their place was taken by the three, native born, thugs who were embodiment of Betrayal, Bungling, and Backstabbing." (B.A, 104) All politicians amass wealth disproportionate to their known source by all means and it can be seen when they disclose their assets at the time of giving nomination. In every election, their wealth increases in leaps and bounds. A.G. Noorani remarks,

"How the Political Class has Looted India, politicians dutifully disclose their ever increasing assets at each election but no questions are asked about how they acquired this increased wealth. Neither are any explanations provided by them regarding unimaginable rise in the assets." (The Hindu) In India constitutional and parliamentary form of democracy are made for the purpose of protecting and promoting good governance, accountability and welfare of all citizens. India has the parliamentary form of democracy in which all powers of the state are vested in the hands of elective representative of the people. It is thus enforced on the part of the elected members of the parliament and the members of the legislative assembly in the states, to behave according to the norms laid in the constitution, adhere to strictly ethical behavior and strive to protect the heritage and the moral values of the country.

Nowadays, the democratic system of governance has lost its meaning and all the hopes of the people cum voters are shattered and buried by the undesirable attitudes of the corrupt officials in the ministries, and the politicians holding the ministerial status. These officials and the ministers seem not only increasingly greedy, but also ambitiously fond of money. So far as they are concerned, it seems that the idealists' morality, service and honesty are a disgrace to their occupational maladies. They always look egotistical, evasive and indecisive.

Similarly, it is also true that the corrupt politicians do not possess human virtues like gratitude, helping tendency, service mindedness, sympathy, and selflessness. They are hypocrites to the core. For them the ideals of morality, service and honesty are regarded as unworthy and are filled with smugness, evasiveness, indecisiveness, lack of empathy, greed and hypocrisy. As soon as they become the representatives of the people, they become the law makers and the laws they make are only meant for the people and not

for them. But the irony is that such law makers also turn out to be the law breakers for their pecuniary benefits. Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu have voiced their concern saying, "Over the years, there has been a decline in the effectiveness of Parliament as an institution of accountability ... but the instruments, which it can use for accountability... are increasingly being rendered dysfunctional." (Indian Parliament as an Institution of Accountability, iii)

Aravind Adiga witnesses the present conditions of the country and sadly states the bitter truth that the political leaders are incompetent and for decades have been victims of corruption, showing no developments. Aravind Adiga finds that most of people who adopt politics as a profession are uneducated, unskilled and ill-mannered. It is a sorry state of affair, he mentions the word "half baked" to establish the inefficiency of the elected politicians and also highlights that, "having half-baked politicians is a whole tragedy of this country." (W.T, 10) Indeed this is a clear statement suggesting that the potential candidates should be qualified to bring positive change to the country as well as being committed and determined to take the country to greater heights. Criminalization and politics always go together in the modern day Indian politics.

In the event of the politician with criminal background becoming ministers, they continue to carry on their criminal activities. Through their agents, they indulge in embezzlement, human trafficking, immigration rackets, rape and murder. In her article Neha Sharma comments, "no political party is taking measures towards the reduction or elimination of criminal members in the party because such members eventually prove to be beneficial for the party to win in the election." (A Threat to Democracy, 9). Adiga doesn't have any respect for such politicians and their feelings against them find best expressed in his works.

Conclusion

Adiga's texts seriously highlight the multi headed problems that confront India. He deals with many issues such as the sharp social and economic inequalities between the rich and the poor, poverty, corruption, caste based discrimination and the decline of human moral values are some of the burning issues on which Adiga fearlessly and brilliantly expresses his views. The current issues of multiculturalism, globalization, poverty and the skewed relationship between religion and society and dualism in human existence are touched extensively and deftly by the author in his works. Adiga's seminal works namely, *The White Tiger*, *Between the Assassinations* and *Last Man in Tower* are chosen target that are selected for the study throw light on the dark side of India and reveal how the humble, the poor and helpless marginalized people are oppressed by the powerful, the well-to do in society. Besides, they challenge the basic notion of the concept of development and progress at the cost of human values. His works have tried to capture the miserable plight of the underprivileged. In a true Marxian parlance, Adiga's fiction seeks to study the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletarians and it also tries to subvert the very Marxian thesis that calls for revolution by the proletarians to overthrow the unjust rule of the oppressor. Here, Adiga seems to be suggesting a new strategy or route. It is not the route of crime. He seems to propagate the idea that violence against the oppressor can put an end to the miseries of the proletarians temporarily. Balram kills his master to come out of the coop. His father and brother do not follow the route that Balram takes and so they remained in the rooster coop. Adiga being a

postmodern novelist is anti-essentialist. He rejects the notion that there is an essence in the phenomenon such as truth, loyalty and faith.

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