

Representation of Social Problems in Arvind Adiga's *Between the Assassinations*

Komalben Arvindbhai Bhatt^{1*} Dr. R. K. Mandalia²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Science, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Anand

² Head of Department, Department of English, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Anand

Abstract – *The main aim of the paper is mainly to exhibit that these focal points are very much related to all different kinds of social issues, which are expressed in the book of the name, Arvind Adiga's Between the Assassinations. This research showed that the social issues as well as the problems are never very prominent and significant but these right treatments or conducts are needed for certain social issues, which are very much prominent in this Between the Assassinations.*

Adiga represented the contemporary and the modern India. He also represented the social as well as political milieu. And he represented this modern India by providing various kinds of examples which include different types of gross malpractices, which are still practiced in the democratic. This research found out that any message in this novel mainly focuses on misery as well as poverty of India. It also explained all the religious as well as socio-political of the contemporary India.

Keywords: Social Problems, Arvind Adiga, Novels, *Between the Assassinations*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In this time, most of the novelists in their books, try to present the modern society and its culture. They present all the social issues from their perspective and their point of view. These novelists created all these protagonists and the characters that are like the people who survive in the society and live in it, with all its social problems and issues (Adiga, 2008). Arvind Adiga also is one of these people in the society. He is a very popular modern day Indian novelists. He entered his world of literature with his debut novel of the name 'The White Tiger'. For the book, he was awarded with the honorable 40th Man Booker Prize.

There are many social affairs that existed in this society and also became the very important social issues in the society such as the unemployment, the corruption, the gang rapes, the terrorism, the poverty, the crime, the illiteracy, the prostitution, the child abuse, the gambling, the discrimination, the western organization in India, and of course the casteism, as well as the dowry system in the country of India.

In this modern time one can find various modern issues such as the quest for the identity, the loneliness, the alienation, the sense of a non-

belonging and the existential crisis. These crises are reflected and portrayed in the novels, written by Adiga. In his 'The White Tiger', he portrayed a society which is realistic and deals with realistic issues (Chandrasah, 2008). Also, he has a huge contribution which offers various kinds of formulas which help one to deal with the complexities as well as the concerns of a society.

"Me, and thousands of others in this country like me, are half-baked, because we were never allowed to complete our schooling. Open our skulls, look in with a penlight, and you'll find an odd museum of ideas: sentences of history or mathematics remembered from school textbooks (no boy remembers his schooling like the one who was taken out of school, let me assure you), sentences about politics read in a hour before falling asleep--all these ideas, half formed and half-digested and half correct, mix, up with other half-cooked ideas in your head, and I guess these half-formed ideas bugger one other, and make more half-formed ideas, and this is what you act on and live with (Mill and Stuart, 1967)."

The present research paper tries to shed light on the social problems of India as represented by

Arvind Adiga's Novel "*Between the Assassinations*".

A. Representation of Indian Social problems in novels of Arvind Adiga

The writings of Arvind Adiga generally talk about the people in the society, who are not recognized. The usual social life of the ordinary man. All of this pathetic condition and situations of the underdogs are deeply presented as well as portrayed by Adiga. He explains and writes explicitly in the novels, what makes a common, poor and innocent man kill, rape, rob other. He explores the psychology which forces every man of such position and status to take the wrong path. He also explored the main facts and evident of common Indian life. He tried to give and offer the readers his perspective on these matters. The social lives of the common people, their survival stories and stories of hope and faith are also revealed in the novels, written by Adiga. "I am India's most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth (Sebastian, 2009)." The main characters in the novels, written by Arvind Adiga are often compared with characters of William Shakespeare. Though the situations and issues are very much real, the characters are completely imaginary.

No need is there, to highlight all those things, written by the writers. These consist of various kinds of precious thoughts as well as ideas on various kinds of social awareness which is needed for the betterment of the society. In all these modern literatures and novels, the social issues are explicitly analyzed and explained by many of the novelists. Various social issues are talked and discussed about. Few of the great novelists and writers who did that are Rabindranath Tagore, Narayan, Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao, their modern followers such as Khushwant Singh, Nayantara Sahgal, Manohar Malgaonkar, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai etc. These admirers actually followed the main footsteps of these legendary writers. Arvind Adiga is considered to be one such admirer, who is following the footsteps of these legends. This is of course a very difficult job to do. It is a continuous process. One has to understand the society, the people in it and the issues which are eating and eroding them. Only then a writer can portray their stories in real words. He or she also has to give their own perspective on this matter. All in all, the protagonists and the other characters have to be felt and understood by their creators. "A house in a slum, a kid in college (Swarup, 2009)."

Vikas Swarup explained "Arvind Adiga, has boldly gone where few Indian writers choose to venture, casting his gaze beyond the complacent smugness of middle-class drawing rooms to the anger and squalor lurking in the underbelly of urban India (Singh, 2013)." This novel has been set in a fictional town of Kittur, a microcosm of India- a small and ordinary town in India. The author has given us a

glimpse of the various ills affecting the town of Kittur and thus by implied comparison India through various character sketches. The characters are representative of various classes and castes that inhabit our society.

Adiga tried to prove that a writer can never change the society. He or she also cannot make the society free from such malices. He or she only can present his or her view points, perspectives and opinions. And only this way he or she can influence the readers and thus the people of the society. The writings should be such influential that it will make the readers think. The protagonist in Adiga's novel, 'The White Tiger' is Balram, the halwai. He chooses the wrong way in order to enjoy a very luxurious and free life. He wanted to be rich, happy and powerful. "You young man, are an intelligent, honest vivacious fellow in this crowd of thugs and idiots. In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals – the creature that comes along only once in generation?" "The White Tiger" "That's what you are, in this jungle (Nikam and Nikam, 2011)."

From his early childhood to his youth, Balram did nothing that he wanted to do. He was never a part of a sophisticated community. But all he did was try to become one. In this particular novel, various elements of the quest such as identity as well as alienation in Balram's life are portrayed. He does all those things which he wanted to get but still he did not get that freedom or that mental peace of satisfaction. Adiga's interpretations to the social matter of contention reveal the human circumstances. The modernization has come in 21st century but still society has not changed. Here society works according to the classes, Upper class people are going higher, Middle class people are trying to become like upper class and nobody cares about the lower class and poor people.

The second book of Adiga is *Between the Assassinations*. It was published in the year 2009. This book is a collection of short stories. *Between the Assassinations* depicts the characters of rural areas in almost all the short stories (Singh, 2008). The protagonist in this book is just like a mundane man and after going through this book we can realize that the characters we have read in *Between the Assassinations* are no more different from the people we came across in our society. Like Murali- the communist, Gururaj kamath- the newspaper columnist, Mr. D'mello, an assistant headmaster, Ramakrishna "Xerox", Christian Headmasters, Muslim tea boys, upper-caste bankers, Ziauddin, lower-caste rickshaw pullars, Shankara- the mixed-cast student, George D'Souza- a "bitter man", Soumya and Raju- the beggar children, Keshva- the village boy, Ratnakara Shetty- the fake sexologist, Abbasi- the idealistic shirt factory owner, The Raos- a childless couple, Jayamma- the spinster etc. Each short story has its own message and unique concept. In this Short

collection of short stories Adiga presented his views very well regarding the community. Between the Assassinations was the second creation of his thoughts on social affairs.

Adiga published his second novel of the title Last Man in Tower in the year of 2011. In this particular novel, Adiga's protagonist or main character is a 61 year old, Masterji. The masterji lives in a very small apartment. His apartment is actually surrounded mainly by rural areas as well as the middle class Indian people. These people belong different communities. Some of them are Hindu, while others Muslim, Shikh and even Christian. This novel begins or starts its tale when a particular builder enters. He is needed for the modern construction. This builder is very eager to purchase the particular building as well as the area. This is the building where Masterji has lived for years and he does not want to sell it. Here, the novelist has used the tool of literature and helped the readers understand the social stances, the social perspective as well as the cultural and the economic condition and situation of the society. These characters usually revolve around the race, the gender, as well as the class issues. The reader most explicitly and conventionally understands and realizes the social difference. Adiga, in his novel, Between the Assassinations mainly focuses on the differences in the social statuses. Here, he talks about the differences between the poor and the rich, the communal disharmony, the corruption, the violence and of course the hypocrisy" (Saxena, 2008).

B. Representation of Indian Social problems in Between the Assassinations

Between the Assassinations (2008) tells some interesting aspects of Adiga's writing to brilliant effect: the class struggle rendered personal and the fury of the underdog (Surendran, 2002). Adiga has aptly captured the reality of our society in a kalideoscopic manner in his novel, Between the Assassinations. He has captured the various malpractices that are rampant in our society such as corruption, child labour, social discrimination on the grounds of caste, religion, class and gender through a story of 'everyman' of 'every town' of the period of transition between the assassinations of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi viz. 1984 to 1991. Adiga seems to suggest that for our country to move on the path of progress we have to tackle these burning issues. According to Chandrahas (2008), "Adiga's main theme, one at which he hacks away relentlessly, is power relations – between rich and poor, master and servant, high-caste and low-caste, majority and minority, even haughty English and the low vernacular – and, as a consequence of these relations, moral perversion and subaltern rage (Chandrahas, 2008)."

Adiga has highlighted how religious fanaticism is exploited by some evil people in our country through the character of Ziauddin. Ziauddin, a twelve year

old, sixth of the eleventh children of a poor family, works in a tea stall. Working at a tender age, he develops a sense of isolation from the society. Left to fend for himself, he has to struggle for survival like an adult. In the town of Kittur, Muslims are discriminated against and are not part of the mainstream society. The marginalization of the Muslims extends to employment opportunities as well i.e. the shopkeepers near the railway station never hire a Muslim worker but Ramanna Shetty employs Ziauddin due to his innocence. After a stay for four months with his parents, the boy returns completely transformed, losing his innocence. He develops a sense of pride in his religion and yearns to know his ancestral roots.

The search for identity of Ziauddin gets magnified after his meeting with a Northerner Pathan person who is also a Muslim. With that person, Ziauddin grows a feeling of belongingness. The unknown person's

Costly garments and appearance, good looking personality as well as the fragrance of his perfume create a mixture of his vanity and prideful mentality. He thinks that the person is his brother who comes from the same motherland. Because of this relatively unknown person Ziauddin feels the urge to count the trains carrying soldiers from India and this follows by some actions that have a connection with terrorism. While making an appeal by means of boasting his personality being Muslim Pathan, the unknown person attempts to extract his objectives. Although, Ziauddin feels to be utilized for fulfilling propaganda in connection with terrorism and then flees away to lead a simple life by being a rail station coolie (Mill and Stuart, 1967). The author, by symbolizing Ziauddin, attempts to look at and find the mentality of being terrorist, how brainwashing is done to cultivate selfish intention to spread terror across the world.

Truth is the most vulnerable aspect of an environment where bureaucracy exists at the forefront; this is explored by Gururaj Kamath, a fearless reporter who feels disgusted while looking at the deep-rooted corrupted society, unfair privileges and politics (Mill and Stuart, 1967). The author, Adiga has crafted Gururaj in such a way that it shows how truth and reality are not shown in order to seek to establish it. Adiga has demonstrated the ways through which the unreal and pretentious coverings of newspaper and media are removed to showcase the actual truth of these platforms, just to make them commercial ways to do trade and deals.

The manipulation of real news is demonstrated so truthfully that it is evident what we read in newspapers is a manifestation of capitalism. In such a topic, a staff of a big businessman gets engaged in a mishap, however, the actual details are suppressed through power and money. The

honest reporter Gururaj extracts the reality of the business tycoon to hit the victim, but the police details were altered to save the tycoon. The businessman manages a staff of his organization to take the charge of driving the car during the mishap and that staff provided an oath while talking the charge and affidavit. The novelist has made it clear for the readers to understand how money and power can change the reality by influencing the police as well as the country's judiciary. Mere four to five thousand bucks are enough to get away with police and shuffle or replace the vehicle hitting a person with a new car. The tycoon bribes the police with another thousand bucks to alter the reported car to be a Fiat. Lastly, that tycoon becomes free to drive with that very car across the city and the Police are aware of the truth. Even after Gururaj's constant attempt to reopen the case while searching the reality, he has to face his editorial head as an obstacle who wants to suppress the issue. Gururaj's anger makes him shout in fury that the actual guile and criminal are living freely but the innocent is rotting in jail for no reason. And people like the editor just want to bury the issue (Singh, 2008). The news media is not uttering a single true word because this day has a business person as the owner. The reality of every journalist is a fake world where virtues are not appreciated because those don't serve the capitalist truth. In spite of knowing the truth, nobody has guts to publish it or be vocal about this.

Adiga, in the story, has concentrated on the way through which venereal ailments are treated as a stigma or forbidden thing despite the fact that there are several sufferers across the world (Adiga, 2008). Medical attention is not given due to fear from the social pressure and maximum people go to the charlatans and eventually things get worse. In the novel, a person named Ratnakar Shetty, who has three daughters, is a fake quack who claims to be a sexologist. His real intention is to earn sufficient money for his daughters' marriage-dowry. Apart from that, he is a salesman who sells books and stationery items while returning to home at the end of the day. His headache is to save enough dowry for his last two daughters as that of the first daughter is managed till now.

After fixing the groom for his elder daughter, he finds that the person is a patient of venereal disease that he becomes infected with a prostitute. To Shetty's horror, that boy comes to him for finding the medicine. In spite of advising to reach an actual physician, the would-be groom fears the social stigma. Lastly a real doctor checks the boy to confirm that it's a kidney failure, not a sexually transmitted disease which he is suffering from.

Indian society is caste-ridden. However, the legal clauses and Indian Constitution makes it abolished, the real picture is far away from the so-called abolishment. It's like an integral part of the society. A mediocre or impoverished person is not accepted by

the upper castes and classes even if he toils hard to become big. A person named George who has the work of spreading pesticides to repel mosquitoes, attempts to woo and love a wealthy woman, Mrs. Gomes, and however goes in vain. George understands the discrimination gives the wealthy to do mistakes multiple times, but for the poor, there's no such scope (Sebastian, 2009). Later he gathers courage and takes the profession of a part-timer garden maintenance staff and lastly a driver. His idea regarding Mrs. Gomes is still high and he feels that she's not like the others. He introduces his sister as a cook. Although the expelled cook who is rusticated so that Maria can get in comments that she knows the truth, and alerts the lady of her upcoming fall. Although she doesn't listen as she's now blind to his deeds.

Nikam says that George is content to see Maria becoming a friend to Mrs. Gomes and now Maria can be wedded to a good groom because of her current status as a good cook in a wealthy family (Nikam and Nikam, 2011). Because of impoverishment as well as shame and bitter fate, he had discarded the idea of getting married long back although his remorse of not doing satisfactory things in life keeps coming back in the form of his relationship with a wealthy lady. Although his delusional idea gets destroyed when the rich lady ordered him to spray mosquito repellents in drains just like previous times. George realized nothing has changed much and he's the same old pesticide guy who can be treated inhumanely. In the previous time, he could have done anything for her, although his eyes are now open. He feels every wealthy person treats every poor in the same manner and they use impoverished people for their own reason. A wealthy lady cannot see a poor person in the same light. After understanding her goodwill and image is at danger, the rich lady discards George as well as Maria from service.

As far as Indian society is concerned, caste and class are imprinted as tags since a person takes birth. Such concepts are deep-rooted in everyone's mind and almost impossible to be changed.

Adiga has explored the instance of Shankara, whose father belongs to a higher class Brahmin and whose mother is from a low caste Hoyka lady. Shankara's identity crisis as well as confusion is at a higher level and his crisis is transformed into rage against the caste-ridden society. His fury is expressed when he explodes a bomb at the school. His belief is to destroy the age-old caste and creed through bombing is childish, yet strong. Being judgmental about someone's identity due to birth is not fair because that is not in someone's hand. Taking birth to some house is accidental (Surendran, 2002). Shankara also has an inferiority complex which makes him believe that his educators mock him apart from students. The bombing symbolizes his attack on caste-and-creed

and he expects to get a heroic treatment in jail due to his noble deed. The Hoyka community, as per his belief, would start marching for his release and the police and judiciary would not touch them. He might be greeted like a great person's comeback to the society and his identity would give him a lucrative political future.

Among his relatives from Hoyka community, Shankara is elevated due to his father's Brahmin identity and they are quite wealthy. All these aspects make his position way higher than the other persons of the same low caste. His doctor father practicing in Gulf region got married to his low caste mother. This made the Brahmin community surprised and anguished. Therefore, Shankara's caste identity, a mixed breed, is quite confusing as per the social laws and is treated like an illegitimate child. He's afraid and anxious and at the same time rebel without rationality, showing the negative features of both the communities (Mill and Stuart, 1967).

Isolation, as well as lack of knowledge, makes Shankara full of violence. His Brahmin relatives consider him like a fruit of exciting actions and adventurous mind of his father. His mother suffers from a strong inferiority complex due to her low born aspect and feels ashamed in front of Brahmin people. As if her son is the only thing to be proud of and if he's not at home, there's nothing respectable to demonstrate. Then she becomes a Hoyka trespasser in a Brahmin household. Shankara asks her mother not to pay heed to the Brahmin people's boastings.

As per Nikam (2011), the author tries to investigate the confusion in Shankara's mind as well as doubts if this caste discriminations are the most disgracing part of a society (Nikam and Nikam, 2011). In spite of being wealthy, Shankara is not given the status in high caste section. Although, his Brahmin driver is impoverished as well as an old Brahmin showing sympathy to him is also poor and it's beyond his power to ride a car, Shankara's prosperity is of no use. His contemplating belief comments on what is the meaning of an upper caste poor and a low caste rich. He thinks caste system is in the psyche and gets removed if one understands the reality.

Corrupted society in every sphere is a huge issue for India and the disease is constantly spreading. The character of Abbasi, a religious Muslim business person values the wellbeing of others and closes his organization where ladies work delicate needle work, causing them blindness. Although other businessmen who are also friends with him do not do the same.

For reopening the organization, Abbasi had to go through a long battle. His experience of meeting corrupted government executives for bribes while demanding them shamelessly spoke of the hollowness of the society. In a chain like system, he

was forced to give money to the electricity person, water board staff, income tax officer, sanitary examiner, wellbeing examining official, union leaders including various political people, just for reopening his shirt mill. Although he's an honest person with virtues, he has no other option but to offer money in order to survive. In massive disappointment, he exclaims about the country's ever growing corruption, Black Market, counterfeit criminal wrongdoings in every aspect and the country, on these things, is at top across the world.

The novel tells the impoverished, dignity less and ill-fated lives of urban labor section. They themselves push their kids to beg on streets. Ramachandran, a heroin addict, smashes wealthy person's homes at the Rose Lane of Kittur. He compels his kids to beg and physically abuse his wife.

In spite of being arrested and beaten up for several times, nothing is changed. He is still the same evil who addicts in the money of his small daughter who begs at tourist spots. The misery of the brother-sister is narrated in their accounts. Their father doesn't even feed them; compel the boy to go at various places and torture by hitting. This story explains the immoral attitude of downtrodden and poor people who can stoop to any level for their selfish means. The evilness of a father to exploit his own offsprings due to his addiction is a characteristic feature of Adiga.

II. CONCLUSION

The present research paper has shown that author Arvind Adiga has put all his focus to different malaises of the Indian society in the novel "*Between the Assassinations*". His critical demonstration is concentrated on the impoverishment, illiteracy, and other religious, social and political wrongs where the fundamental rights and freedom of mass is violated. Discrimination between wealthy and poor, high-born and low-born, religious majority-minority, child labour and extreme miseries of the non-bourgeois and subaltern classes are the central flavour of his stories.

Adiga has defined the current socio-political scenario of the country where ample of wrongs and evils exist predominantly in spite of claiming to be the biggest democracy of the world. The study has understood that the *Between the Assassinations* speak about the relevant and vital issues of India and are helpful in overcoming those aspects. The findings have demonstrated adequate measure towards the misery is much contextual and important.

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Corresponding Author
Komalben Arvindbhai Bhatt*

Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Science, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Anand

E-Mail – komal3789@yahoo.com