

The Brutality Of Slum Clearance And Urbanization In Aravind Adiga's *Last Man In Tower*

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ABSTRACT

Between the Assassinations written by Adiga outlines India between major historical conflicts. The novel mirrors the issues pertaining in the society on the basis of religious.political and economic status. The consequences of discriminations faced by the protagonist of all the stories are painted explicitly by Aravind Adiga. Child labour, corruption, haves and have nots divide, caste, economic inequality, poverty, bribe are revealed as the blatant truth of the society in India. The real picture of dalits through the story of Xerox Ramakrishna is assayed realistically. Religious fanaticism is delved in an explicit manner. The paper attempts to throw lights on India in darkness through Between the Assassinations.

KEYWORDS: Corruption, Bribe, Religious, Fanaticism, Discrimination.

Between the Assassinations is a social criticism focusing and highlighting on the poverty and misery of India. The range of social status is wide from the rich, filling their leisure with watching porn, to the poor who are not sure about their next meal. The entire fiction raises very crucial and binary issues of national importance such as poverty, hunger, master-servant relationship, corruption, communal disharmony, religious fanaticism, violence, terrorism, child labour, economic, political and social exploitation and discrimination of the weaker, marginalised section on the basis of caste, class, gender and religion. Peter Parker in "Times Online" truly states about Adiga's second book 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". The paper portrays how Adiga presents a satirical critique of the individual in iniquities such as hypocrisy, faithlessness, duality, deceit, greed, ego and arrogance in one's social status based on abundance, rotten caste, social, religious and political systems of the nation that are working together for degeneration of human values and leads to the even increasing gap between the Big Bellies and the Small Bellies in Indian society as a whole.

The beginning story of Ziauddin is the replication of child labour predominant in our society which is the fruit of great poverty and marginalization of the downtrodden. Eventually he is a doll in the hands of rich Muslim Pathan terrorist that picturises the marginalised psyche of the poor innocent boy trapped in the tension of Hindu-Muslim issue.

The writer does a decent job of describing the divide between the haves and have nots and the way the servant class is treated. Between the Assassinations opens with the account of the train station that highlights the master- servant relationship as: None of the other shopkeepers near the railway station would hire Muslim but Ramanna Shetty, who ran The Ideal Store, tea and samosa place, had told Ziauddin it was okay for him to stay (3). The cruelty

experienced by the servant -class is portrayed through the treatment given to Ziauddin by this master Ramanna Shetty when he was caught red handed stealing of samosa as "Ramanna grabbed him by the shoulder and pushed to the ground hit him and then shoved him out of the tea shop while the other boys huddled together and watched impassively, as sheep do when watching one of their flocks being Shorn" (7).

The author further explores the ways, the marginalized face the oppression of the richclass i.e., the big bellies. Between the Assassinations tries to highlight great duality in India. Nona Walia in Times of India writes that Adiga in his debut novel uses the metaphor "Men with big Bellies' and 'Men with small Bellies" to capture "the duality (feast or famine) of human existence in India today" (16).

Adiga discloses the Bathetic picture of Indian poverty and how it is deep-rooted based on caste in Indian society Shaila, The little lower caste servant girl in the advocates, house gets married only after her master sends money to her parents reveals the fate of poor women in the country.

Jayamma and Shaila were servants in the same house, Jayamma disdained Shaila for being a lower caste. Jayamma's words indicate the peak of humiliation based on caste "You lower caste demon! Jayamma hissed. Mind your manners" (206). The story of Mrs Engineer, Mr Ganesh Pai, owner of furniture shop and his poor servant, Chenayya also focuses on classdivide, inequality and difficult barrier between master and servant, giving rise to poor-rich divide in India. Furious Chenayya shouts as: "those who are born poor in this country are fated to die poor. There is no hope for us, and no need of pit (172).

The story of Xerox Ramakrishna, as dalit book seller expresses chauvnism of the upper caste people on the Dalits. Xerox Ramakrishna was proud in selling illegally xeroxed books at low rates despite his father's profession of cleaning toilets. When he is caught selling Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses', the upper caste Inspector takes pleasure in breaking his legs. Aravind Adiga reveals the problems of untouchables. He brings out the real picture of the dalits in the society. Adiga explicitly portrays the story of dalit bookseller known as 'Xerox. Xerox narrates his own father's story. He divulges out the fortune of dalits and how his father takes the crap and goes to as it is the traditional occupation of the people of his caste. When he hears the thud, he had to run to the wall, and pulls out the retractable potty through the hole in the wall He has to clean it with coin cloth and get it ready for the next person to use it .He humorously says the realities in their lives as:

All day long, his old man would hang around the back wall of the landlord's house, waiting for the smell of human shit, as soon as he smelled that smell, he came up to the house, and waited, with bent knees; like a wicketkeeper waits for the ball (xerox bent his knees and showed how).

The author highlights that the caste and class discriminations are two sides of the same coin. It is obvious in the case of Jayamma who works as a cook and has to suffer from the continuous depression though she belongs to the Brahmin family. The story discloses the truth. that within the upper castes the poor remains poor, they can not be equal with other counterparts who are rich.

Adiga spotlights how religious extremism is exploited by some evil people in our country through the character of Ziauddin. Ziauddin works in a tea stall, is 12 years old, six of the eleventh children of a poor family. In the town of Kittur, Muslims are discriminated against and are not part of the conventional society. The marginalization of the Muslims extends to

employment opportunities as well. The shop keepers near the Railway station never appoint a Muslim worker but Ramanna Shetty employs Ziauddin due to his innocence. The mind of the young boy is defiled with a poison of religious pride and a sense of separation. He had spent many happy moments of life with Hindus but a feeling of insecurity and distrust make him hate Hindus. The search for identity raises when Ziauddin comes in the contact with North Indian Muslim Pathan with whom he develops a sense of belonging. The expensive dress and the handsome appearance with costly perfume make him take a pride in his associate. He feels This man is countryman of mine. The wrong teachings by some religious revolutionaries lead the child the hatred against the beloved ones. He shouts "I am Pathan!... we came here and built the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort in Delhi" (7).

Adiga, through Zia's story, tries to alert the causes behind terrorism. Even in the first story of Ziauddin, it is said that he turned down the attractive offer of becoming a terrorist. Adiga tries to warn the people that our secularism is under threat. He also throws light in a few stories up on corruption which is wide spread and deeply rooted evil in India. The story Bandar reveals that the Bandar has the highest crime rate in Kittur. Abbasi, a Muslim Businessman shuts down his golden shirt factory because of corruption. Abbasi's conscience is an impediment to pay bribe to the corrupt officials. Adiga has raised a voice against the corruption of bureaucrats as: "a man has to eat these days, Mr Abbasi. Prices are rising so fast. Ever since Mrs Gandhi died, this country begun and to fall apart" (22).

Adiga explicates the rate of corruption in India as: "corruption There is no end to eat in this country. In the past four months, since he had decided to reopen his shirt factory, he had had to pay off (24). Sunil Shetty's words depicts that corruption exercised every day in India is like champions practicing sports. "black -marketing, counterfeiting and corruption, we are the world champions. If they were included in Olympic Games, India would always win gold, silver and bronze in those three' (20). Bipan Chandra in "Run-up to the New Millennium and After writes: "corruption at the lower level of the Bureaucracy was an issue of everyday concern for all citizens rich or poor, and it was widely felt that high- level corruption created conditions of legitimacy for the lower-level variety" (12).

In the field of education also bribe plays a vital role as an obstruction in the development of students. This is evident when the Canada language teacher affirms: "This is no mix-up, it's deliberate! the Angel Talkies has bribed all those bloody politicians in Bangalore, so they'd send our boys to a house of sin"(77). When Xerox Ramakrishna was arrested, he explains the conditions and corruption of police force. This mirrors the apologetic state of the Judiciary of India. Aravind Adiga touchingly demarcates the psychological crisis of a changing nation as the common man finds himself helpless in the face of corrupt and mighty state and system.

Corruption is a foremost evil affecting India today. It is an extensive and even growing melody that affects our society. Abbasi is a God fearing businessman, still he had to overcome a number of impediments to reopen the factory. He had to pay off the electricity man, waterboard man, income tax official, sanitary inspector, health inspector, union leaders and political leaders etc. He had to offer bribe for his existence.

The chronology of proceeding in Kittur at the end of the book proves that kittur is a mirror image of India between 1984 and 1991. Kittur has memorials of riots, violence, corruption and psychological suppression. Sarita Singh in her critical paper, 'Contextual Antithesis in Aravind Adiga's Between The Assassinations, presents a pathetic picture of people belonging to different castes and classes living in a kind of fear in Kittur and the flaws in Indian society, predominantly gender, religion, caste and class discrimination and writes:

Aravind Adiga stories *Between the Assassinations* focuses on the disillusionment with liberal democracy in India. Despite inheritance of which history and culture, colossal scale identity and diversity of language, we are moving towards a fragmentation, loss of reality and depthlessness because corruption has proliferated in all areas of social and political experience. (6)

Adiga pictures Kittur as a representation of India in miniature as well as the characters in Adiga stories are the redeeming feature of Indian society. Although the setting of the novel is local, the subjects raised by him are of national importance. He has excellently narrated the stories of every man in 'every town'. He attracts the readers towards inequalities between the poor and the rich, communal disharmony, corruption, violence and hypocrisy. He has never taken his eye off the poor, and he strikes blow on their behalf.

Between the Assassinations is evocative. It mirrors the beauty of Kittur which represents India. So, there is no doubt in pointing out that Adiga's *Between the Assassinations* reflects the pathos, injustices, ironies and realities of Indian life and society

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