

INDIAN WRITERS IN ENGLISH IN PORTRAYAL OF POVERTY IN THE WORKS

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ABSTRACT

Poverty has been a major challenge that has remained in India. The impacts are broad with impact on the social and economic structure of the country. It leaves the individuals with a feeling of being grouped in two groups, the rich and the poor. Owing to their low-income, uneducated and limited resources, the poor are bound to work beneath the rich. When a man is not rich, he becomes emotionally, physically and psychologically ill. The Indian world-famous authors such as Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Arundhati Roy, and Aravind Adiga reveal the poverty-stricken conditions in the contemporary Indian nation. The general aim of the paper is to explain how the callousness and the inability to empathize with the poor that characterizes the wealthy lead to violence, and their brutality, which makes the poor feel hopeless and out of context with the rest of the society. It also demonstrates the inability of the class differences to create conformity in the society.

Keywords: Poverty, violence, cruelty, injustice, exploitation, social uniformity etc.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is one of the things that have continually haunted the human race. It is a social issue which requires a big change of power and societal priorities to achieve the needs of the poor. In simple terms, poverty is said to be the state of lacking money to support basic needs and minimal earning of life. Poverty is associated with lack of health as well as lack of education and life skills and also lack of motivation to work. Poverty is characterized by being poor; that is running short of money or material things; that is having insufficient amount of money or material properties to satisfy the basic needs of life ("Poverty"). It is a form of social stratification and the rich will be on one side and the poor will be on the other and the wellbeing of the poor on the other. Socially, it describes a person in all their aspects based on what they consume, their living style and their words and actions. Persons living in poverty are so because of a number of reasons e.g. population growth, inflation and low agricultural yields among others. The socio structure of India contributes to the manifestation of poverty even more. Makers of the Indian society that rest on the top rungs of the economic ladder are completely independent and middle and lower classes are dependent on bare necessities such as food, shelter, and medical needs. They will be always the slaves of the wealthy.

There are instances when acts of brutality and violence are the result of the insensitivity and the heartlessness of the rich towards the poor. Being rich in other instances makes them an ally of the wealthy and in other instances a pathetic monster. This condition has to be changed and regulated. Well, poverty is one of the greatest challenges that demands the entire privileged community to collaborate to help the poor come out of poverty. There are various ways through which poverty has been addressed by several relevant reformers in history. Mother Teresa and Swami Vivekanand are two such heroes that have come to the rescue of

the poor all the time. The works by Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Arundhati Roy, and Aravind Adiga have presented the reality of the human being and the society in different socioeconomic contexts of the world of Indian English literature. They have addressed the issue of poverty which comes out of different socioeconomic backgrounds. They have indicated how poverty has impacted lives of people today.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To understand the poverty as represented by Indian writers in English.
2. In order to discuss themes, characters, and environments that are employed to show issues of the poor in India.
3. In order to study the impact of poverty on the life, feelings and the decisions of characters in the chosen texts.
4. In order to analyze the social, cultural and political backgrounds in which poverty is depicted.
5. To draw a comparison between the way the Indian authors have portrayed poverty at different times and different locations.

He Who Rides a Tiger (1954) by Bhabani Bhattacharya is an important example of social realist novel. Kalo, a poor blacksmith who is outstanding by his courage, his progressive idea and social sense, is an interesting character. His life revolves around morality, honesty and hard work. Such an important event as the Bengal famine in 1943 plays a decisive role in the plot and impacts on the life and ideas of people. The rich could rely on their savings during this hard period and the poor had to deal with abject poverty, danger of famine and lack of steady occupation. Kalo is also a victim of poverty and brutality of human beings in the years of famine.

The story becomes more interesting when Kalo goes to Calcutta to seek employment opportunities and leaves his sole daughter Chandra Lekha with one of the old members of his family. With no food in days, he loses it and grabs three ripe bananas in the first-class compartment where he is caught by the police in the process. A series of events, which happened next as a part of the procedure, prove how vile rich and influential individuals were. When the judge asks him why, he says to the magistrate, I was hungry sir. I was jumping out of my wits. I was really convinced that I would die should I not eat. I went of my head. According to Bhattacharya, there was no other option than to live (31). This is illustrated by the fact that Kalo does the worst theft that he could have possibly ever imagined which is a clear indication that he is helpless. Why did you create to live? It is verse 31 as per Bhattacharya which says that the magistrate asks Kalo in derision. Kalo believes his lines to sound flabby and is too scared to say the next words. He is sentenced to three months in jail even after clarifying that he has a responsibility of supporting and taking care of his family as a daughter. As a result, he gets furious against the rich and gets disillusioned about justice reigning. Puletipalli states that a man is the embodiment of debased morality as he is hungry. The rich never experienced the plight of the poor and thus they know nothing of the struggles the poor have to endure.

The poor find it tough to get quality jobs. Three months since being out of prison, Kalo is worried on how he will secure job to enable him earn a living in the city. However, he hardly has anything at all with which to start except having no money to rent a rickshaw.

Sadly, he finds the courage to volunteer as a stretcher bearer to accumulate the bodies to the crematorium. Kalo is confronted with reality due to the view of the bodies of those poor individuals who failed to get any job in the city. He is given one rupee the first day however his salary is halved the following day. The later scene is when he is forced to pay at least one rupee by the city official who refers to him inhumanely saying that the rates have gone down and says, I have no patience with man like you. He adds that there are much more people who are willing to work at the new price. I will never look on your face again, Bhattacharya explains (51). Despite the fact that the two view the job with a distaste, the episode highlights the reality of the situation, which is they are forced to work in low pay jobs, which fail to provide them with good living, yet they are struggling to make both ends meet. The poor are driven into doing distasteful jobs because of their deplorable economic conditions and the cruel treatment because of their poor status in the society.

Kalo is compelled to become a procurer in that city brothel since he has no option. He sacrifices his interests to that of his own daughter by accepting a job that he does not believe in. He is afraid about the dreams of his daughter as he was eye witness of the hopelessness of thousands of people living on the streets and desperation of youngsters who have no other choice but go through trash cans and pick up scraps. Unluckily, when he finds her on the brothel, the attempts to redeem her out of the claws of poverty are of no avail. Even before his eyes could see her, he takes her away out of that cesspool. She says that there was not a soulful delight in her at her salvation and that she was nowhere but completely overwhelmed with fatigue. This implies that Chandra Lekha is completely overwhelmed. She just wanted a good night sleep or rather to die (Bhattacharya 70). Kalo was powerless and could not say something that would console her. When he decided to take care of his daughter, he even exploited his morals and became a prostitute. This is unfortunately the fate of the poor. In the same way, the daughter of Chandra Lekha is fooled by a lady who made her believe that her father had met with an accident and needs his daughter in the hospital. She goes traveling with Lekha in tow to Calcutta in the mirage. Bhattacharya exposes the crooks who exploit the poor. They go after the poor so that they can exploit these people.

Being a responsible artist, Bhattacharya goes to an extreme level of the lower classes oppression that an ordinary person could think of. Although all men are considered equal, it is established that there exist socioeconomic differences and this makes the poor engage in low-wage work to make ends meet (Bhattacharya 113). It is so hysterically required that a more equal and compassionate social structure is required because the author illustrates the plight of the poor and how the society nonchalantly treats them.

The theme that flows throughout the 1954 book *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya is that of poverty. It is a novel about Rukmani who has to struggle with poverty in her everyday life and also in her relationships. She and her household derive their living on vegetables they plant in their country hamlet. Their lives however, go into the worst turn as their harvest is

ruined by intense rain and subsequently drought. The poverty is overwhelming which has made them reach a point of starvation despite selling both clothes and household items. The three sons of Rukmani go out to seek employment when they struggle against the evil grip of poverty, and one of the places that they end up is Ceylon. Her fourth boy Raja manages to get a work job at the tannery despite the inhumane treatment meted against employees of the factory by the tannery owner because he wanted to earn twice the money. Raja is lost and the loss is immense to Rukmani.

One of the guards suspects a suspicious stance and approaches him who is on suspicion of stealing calfskin at the tannery. The guard tries to protect his property by hitting Raja; however, he dies immediately. The extent of Rukmani sorrow is huge. There is nothing disclosed to her concerning the death of her son. It is through these events that the tannery guys visit her and inform her that Raja was fully responsible when he died. When the chowkidars found him, they already found that he had stolen a calfskin, and he was found in the yard-where he should not be- (Markandaya 93). Despite the fact that they recognize that this could have been avoided, the tannery guys are bent on demonstrating their fairness by behaving like they are superior. Rukmani, because she is poor becomes so helpless that she does not even bother trying to find the cause of the death of her son. She might not believe what his son told her about stealing but she can understand the impacts of malnutrition on his physique. On her part, he worked hard, and ate little (Markandya 94). It is revealed in the event how the poor members of the contemporary world are forced to be at work beyond their physical capacities. It is not unusual when people belonging to work class, rickshaw smarting, tonga smarting ride in such circumstances.

Irawaddy, Rukmani, and Nathan have their only daughter who is living with and staying with them after she was abandoned by her husband because she is infertile. Though she leads a depressed and lonely life, she is consoled by her younger brother Kuti. She handles him with all the as much maternal care as possible. The family even eats grass in a bid to avoid starvation and this sends them on the path of despair. When Ira could not stand her inability to eat anymore, she makes the sad decision of becoming a prostitute just so that she and her family, especially Kuti can eat. She has received appalling bruises where she is bleeding on one side of her lips where her tooth had bitten down due to the abusive behavior of the clients (Markandaya 99). The harshness in the world ushered itself into the life of Ira who had to struggle with poverty and lack of authority. She is subjected to psychological, social and physical abuse but she is financially unstable which makes her tough at heart. Ravening hunger affects her more than being socially lower or violent acts. It was said that she had been cut very bad. She has no intention to leave prostitution to help her family after getting a deep deep cut on her left side and another on her left wrist even though sharp. According to Markandaya, there are 99. She takes the role of a harlot every night, as long as it is required. This was in fact because of this that I will never be hungry again (Markandaya 102). She is physically abused because she is poor and people with greater financial power get to exploit her. The way she says to her parents, that the cuts will heal, it reflects the fact that she has accepted this sadistic reality grimly. This is the reason why men stay away from me (Markandaya 103). The sight of poverty is pathetically portrayed by Markandaya thus

reducing the down and out individual to nothing other than a trifling object of ridicule and shame.

Nathan, the husband of Rukmani, is not far away towards becoming poor. His health has worsened due to his extreme poverty and difficulties that he faced because of the flood and hunger. Due to his physical weakness and a load exerted on him, Nathan experiences rheumatism and besides that, had numerous fevers (Markandaya 131). They are not able to afford paying the rent on their acreage because their crops continually fail, and they survive crop to crop. Drought-induced recession: request of income guarantee by landlord. They are cruel and want to ensure that they get the profit and they do not care about the helpless fragility of people. Before giving him the property, Shivaji warns Nathan that he could not be able to pay, and he would have to allocate the land to someone else (Markandaya 75). Their land ends up being taken over by the landlord in order to make a profit. Due to the level of the severe effect it has on him and his family they want healthy food twice as much. An individual with no money would be shunned in society since it is a well-known fact that money is king (Shalika Sharma & Pankaj Arora 371). Shaken and grieved, Nathan and Rukmani go to the city to seek the place where her son lived so that both are forced to work as laborers at a stone quarry to sustain their lives.

Nathan also has the problem of overworking himself physically. Because of this his health further deteriorates and he gets very weak. In any case, he manages to bravely and patiently cut the stone despite the fact it is even raining. He feels exhausted and ill due to overworking and shivers due to poor health because of the fever and the inability to withstand work. Despite Rukmani resorting to all the possible channels of cure, he collapses to his disease. The book contains a lot of recurring food cravings. It depicts all the problems that are associated with being poor. The society in terms of treating the poor with brutality and cruelty has well been depicted through the story of declining health of Nathan, prostitution of Ira, and migration of her son to urban area in search of jobs and food.

Arundhati Roy wrote *The God of the Small Things* in the year 1997 and is a heart wrenching story of the struggle of Velutha to live a decent life even though she is poor. Though he has a lowly background, the life of Velutha is characterized by the need to be educated and the acute sense of what evil people of the poor have to face. The poverty and the untouchability are too cruel to him, even though he tried the best to cross the boundaries of classes and discover his identity. Baby Kochamma captures Velutha by charging him against his untruth of raping Ammu, kidnapping Estha, and Rahel. The authorities caught him at an unseen location which only makes them more suspicious.

The police officers have so much brutality that they woke Velutha up with their boots even before his guilt is established (Roy 308). In an attempt to drive him into a confession, he is a victim of physical assault in prison. The police also arrest him without making any investigations as they identify with him as a victim of such a gruesome killing. He gets paralyzed by their pain that they subject him to. His skull had three fractures. His blurry pulpy face was caused by broken cheekbones and a nose (Roy 310). He is killed in such a way that he is made completely incapacitated with wounds and broken bones. The truth about

Velutha being innocent is brought out after all the possible inquiries made against the allegations of violence regardless of his actions have ended. Said the judge, "No case" (Roy 314). Roy discusses the domino effect of the rich by lending their powers on the ruling body and making sure that they still get the good they have. The police warn Baby Kochamma of false FIR and then the police demand that there must be an evidence that either the rape-victim must lodge a complaint. It is the between that she finds herself in. The next alternative is that the kids can utter the words, the pravan kidnapped us so that they can prove their point and not appear before society as the victim of another person wrong-doing (Roy 314-315). The forces of class, social norms and taboos wear out Velutha. In this sentence, Roy seems to have a good argument against the unfairness found in society. Through the book, there has been a powerful statement as to how prejudice, injustice and the abuse of power has still persisted notwithstanding the economic and social inequality.

The White Tiger is a 2008 Man Booker Prize winning book, written by Aravind Adiga about the harsh and savage aspect of poverty. Through Balram Halwai, Aravind Adiga shows the real face of a master and a servant in the manner that makes the watcher to think. In the beginning, Balram undergoes the unpleasant experience of being mistreated and put down by Ashok and his family, who are his masters. Although his master belongs to a liberal category it is his self-consciousness over his being because of the unkind attitude of his elder brother Mukesh as well as other members of his family. He takes offense about something that in no apparent way should cause offense. On the way to Dhanbad Mukesh assigns him the challenge of discovering his lost rupee on the floor of the car. His phrase, I got down on my knees is a strong one. I went through a crawl-space between the mats as if I were a hound to locate that one rupee (Adiga 139). He gives him a rupee thence out of the wallet, to save him the sting of his brutality. Mukesh is a symbol of the extreme confusion that the rich experience when they see the poor as none other than a figure. The wealthy hate the poor suspecting them of crimes, greed and lies that they are said to be involved in. The moment they charge Pinky with the crime and request him to put his signature on the declaration of the case characterized by him, without consulting him in the business, we can see how strongly mean in the behavior of his leader.

The concept that an employee would come forward and rebuke his master when he is in the wrong is well instilled in their culture. He is a kind of a family member. Adiga says, he is a good boy (167). The rich people want their servants to obey blindly their commandments, hide their own evil deeds committed by his or her employer; the servants have nothing to do but to obey. Balram says that his life was written off. I was going to pay the penalty of a murder I had not committed. Although I was scared, I never even thought that I could run. Not once did it occur to me that, I will tell the truth to the judge (Adiga 177). A submissive character is created when people lack resources and know that they are junior compared to others. In which the notion of money has replaced all other systems of living (Mahal 5647), Adiga shows the harsh reality of the contemporary civilization.

This paper brings out the numerous reactions to poverty in this way. All of them: Arundhati Roy, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, and Aravind Adiga have different

approaches to the issue of poverty. Having known the injustice in the society, Rukmani suffers a lot and eventually gives up to fate.

The mercilessness of the caste that is in power is also demonstrated through the death of Velutha. He does his very best but society still does not look at things through his perspective. However, Kalo and Balram Halwai are not concerned with what is right and wrong but only against the mistreatment of elites. Consequently, the various psychological impressions that poverty leaves translates into different views of people about the society. It is repressive in its attitude and hostile as well. Some of them live in self pity by accepting the way life has been given to them, others become furious against the ruling classes and take up arms against them by committing robbery and murder and lies among others, as a personal protest against the way their lives are dominated by others. The gap that exists between the powerful and the oppressed is gigantic; they should have some form of control. The rich and the empowered need to collaborate with the poor to give them a home in a bid to make them equal. The thing is that we should realize the differences in our current system of social relations, we should hear the voices of people who are at lower levels of the social geography, and we should find the means to correct the state of inequality and make it be balanced once again (Surendran and C. S. Senthil). It is high time that the society feels the need to be more integrated where all people can enjoy access to resources such as education, work, and social appreciation.

Future Scope of the Study:

1. There is scope of doing more studies about the role of poverty in the literature of the region of India and contrast it with English literature.
2. In the given study, one can go further to discuss the aspect of poverty representation in contemporary Indian filmmaking, dramas and digital storytelling.
3. The future research can be devoted to the investigation of the shift that happened over time in the image of poverty, i.e. colonial versus post-independence and modern.
4. One more area that can be considered by researchers is that of gender, caste and religion of the impact the same has on literary depiction of poverty.
5. One can discuss the role of poverty in children's writings, autobiographies, or travel writing by the Indian authors.
6. It is possible to make a contrasting analysis between Indian English and foreign writers that publish their works on poverty.
7. One can also study the influence of such literary works on the consciousness of readers and the state policies.

Conclusion:

Indian writers in English through this work reveal how to talk about poverty in an insightful and forthright manner. Authors such as Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga provide compelling narrations on the plight of poor in

their day to day life. In their books poverty is not only a case of lack of money; poverty means pain, injustice, hunger and loss of respect.

Both stories reveal an opposite face of poverty. Others attempt to retaliate and some characters endure. It compels some people to do what they do not like to achieve survival. These narrations make us know the suffering that poor people experience and also how they are mistreated or overlooked by the society.

The authors make us experience the hard times of the poor and inform us that we should be more concerned and consider everyone quite equal. It is through their books that we get in order to recollect these realities, that the rich and powerful are supposed to eradicate this disparity between the rich and the poor. We are required to live in a more just society where everyone is having food shelter education and respect.

Finally, this work reveals that literature has the power to wake us up and make the difference in the real world.

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