

A Study Of Re Examined Concept Of Socio-Economic Realism In Aravind Adiga's Short Stories

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Abstract

Realism is a style of writing that emphasizes on the harsh reality and true sense of local colour of Aravind Adiga, a leading Indian author who has tried to explore and examine the socio-economic reality of India by distinguishing it using two things India of the dark or of that of poor and India of the light that is of the rich; Through this which he tries to solicit some solutions for these challenges. This research paper aims to explore the socio- economic realities that are depicted by Aravind Adiga on the Canvas of literature. This study mainly focuses on the perspective of both stereotype and socio-economics in the short stories of Aravind Adiga," The Sultan's Battery" and "The Elephant". Because stereotype or archetype at certain point leads to the problem of Socio-economics, like how, dowry system works in India. This illegal system which is practiced still now, will take the parents of a daughter directly from heights to the ground as they need to strive longer to achieve it. Ratna of Sultan's battery, is one such person who is affected by it. Another cheap stereotype is that bargaining from poor will make them suffer economically like how Chennayya gets affected in this short story. Aravind Adiga has discussed all these perspectives of class struggle in global world through his works. These discussions are being analysed in this paper in a socio-economic perspective.

Keywords: Stereotypes, Socio-economic reality, Proletarian, Class struggle, Discrimination.

Introduction:

Indian English writers, unlike what Uma Parameshwaran asserts in “A study of representative Indo English novelist” (1976), who considers that Indian English novels are immature and insignificant; but there are authors in Indian English literature who have proved it wrong, and Aravind Adiga is one among them. He is an Indo-Australian writer and journalist born in Chennai and, as a writer he is firm in writing about the voice of the underclass. His works has a society that is infested with suspicious dogma which literally destroys the morality and serenity of the contemporary India. Thus, he correlates to the society by highlighting the injustice of the current Indian society. A pessimistic approach is done by Aravind Adiga which will bring a benefit in the growing middle class by making them to be more cognitive in evading the societal problems. Focusing on the misery, dejection and sufferings of poor, Aravind Adiga’s works can be divided into two categories, one is autobiographical and the other is social. The short stories published by Aravind Adiga are an abridged version of his famous novel “Between the assassinations”.

Kittur –Miniature of Indian economic problems:

Every work of Aravind Adiga takes place in an imaginary town called Kittur. Unlike R.K Narayan’s famous imaginary town called Malgudi which was a town full of enthusiastic activities and lot of people with innocence and satirical humour, Aravind Adiga portrays Kittur as a disturbing landscape of a small city. The novel ‘Between the Assassinations’ which is set in the backdrop of Kittur, takes the readers to its imaginary tea shops, railway stations, religious places, streets, bus stations, markets, pavements etc, that make them feel kittur a real place as if they are already familiar with it since birth. Kittur plays an important role in the narration of the stories, thus we get a clear idea of the harsh economic reality of the contemporary India. In other words, Kittur is a miniature of the nation.

Depiction of Indian society:

The “fictional writings of the most of the contemporary writers concentrate on the creation of different possible human situations instead of the depiction of major incidents having epic dimensions” says N.K Neb in “Indian English novel: An overview’. Depiction of an India that according to Aravind Adiga has lost its moral framework as well as the traditional social structure is what we see in most of his works. "It’s amazing. The moment you show cash, everyone knows your language,” says Aravind Adiga. It is a true fact that nearly a third of the population in India is still illiterate and is below poverty level, but the conventional idea of corruption and dowries are still in prevalence. Those helpless figures are depicted in a subtle manner using several stereotypical nuances. For example, dowry can be considered as a benign in the Indian society. It is something which is as ugly and corrosive to the people in the lower strata of the society. This causes the people to do anything which according to Aravind Adiga can be termed as ‘darker’. One of the most intriguing stories of Adiga titled “The Sultan's Battery” deals with a socio-economic realism in theme, where Ratna the protagonist’s cells are

medicines for venereal diseases like STDs, just because to him it is the only way through which he can raise money for dowries and he has three daughters.

Ironical fact that could be drawn from this story is that, we cannot jump into a conclusion by branding Ratna as a stereotypical villain who does anything for the survival of his family and the luxurious life of his three daughters, He is an archetypal caregiver who has a generous heart with a selfless mind or soul, thus it gives the audience a duality or Hippocratic characteristic setting. The protagonist undergoes a change in his life due to his social interaction and a generous soul which was hiding in him. Like Chennayya, the protagonist of his another short story, "The Elephant" who turns completely gloomy at the end of the story due to some social interaction; Ratna too undergoes a drastic change which leaves their life further.

In most of his works, Adiga narrates the stories through the consciousness of the characters created by him and those characters are portrayed as if they are real by presenting their actions and thought processes in detailed manner; and Chennaya is one among those characters. Once in an interview given to 'The Indian Express', Aravind Adiga said that, "When I was writing this book (The white Tiger) one of my aims was to provoke and even to disturb some people because I think I have a journalistic instinct, unless something disturbs some people it can't be good. I think that provocation is one of the legitimate goals of literature" (The Indian Express). "The Elephant" isa short story which has a typical proletarian citizen and has a lot of symbolisms and motifs that helps us to prove the concept of "Rich have become richer and the poor have become poorer". A proletarian according to Latin language is "a person who has no wealth in property who only served the state by producing off springs".

Chennayya, the protagonist of the story is a coolie or porter who works in Mr. Ganesh Pai's shop and used to carry things in his cart to the customer's house for a small tip. Life until he started to help a candidate in the election who like all the politicians gave false promises to Chennayya by offering some money. He believed the politicians and worked for him, but he was disregarded. Here Arvind Adiga portrays politicians as a typical one who is selfish and treats the supporters as a slave. This is represented by an elephant in the short story, in which an elephant works for his master, never gets a pay but food. Adiga in turn clearly shows that there is no difference between the man and that elephant. Aravind Adigahas not only created characters that represents the rural India but also have portrayed an inhuman approach of the so called upper middle class society towards them.

This kind of marginality or discrimination could be found all over the globe, especially in India, Africa, South Asia etc. Hence it can be termed as an archetypal depiction of human being. When we take literature and other artistic works published in India, characters like Chennayya could be found throughout and, we can clearly say that the living conditions of the people who belong to such a proletarian society. Being in such a community and a society which expect the parents to provide dowry for the marriage of their daughters, people like Ratna has no other option but to just survive. Again, the stereotypical mindset of Indian youths who go behind prostitutes and

belong to lower strata of the society is clearly depicted in this by making Ratna himself a person who sells fake cures on venereal diseases. Not all the people in such a community do so, but a few. Many major works written in the background of the late 1970s have one such character in it. Vasu in the "Man-eater of Malgudi" by R.K Narayan is one such a character. But unlike Vasu, the first suitor who comes for the first daughter of Ratna had contact with prostitutes and unfortunately, he was affected by venereal disease.

At first Ratna was rude to the boy for not telling the truth, but later he himself decided to help the boy out of humane thoughts. Ratna also follows the stereotypical psychology so as to endure his customers. For example, he at first sells his bottle by saying "Each bottle costs just four rupees and fifty paise ! Yes, that is all you pay to atone for sin and earn a second chance in the life. !Four rupees and fifty paise". Ratna is creating an inferiority complex among the people who are affected by this disease directly calling it as a sin, thus by hurting their emotions. Yet, the only thing that he wanted was to make money so to surpass the financial problems faced by him.

In a research article titled "Contextual Antithesis in Aravind Adiga's Between the Assassinations" asserts that "there is rage against cumulative impact of numerous flaws in Indian society, predominantly prejudiced against and discrimination due to gender, religion, caste and class." This rage and prejudice against the protagonist Chennaya is evident throughout the stories, especially chennaya, though he behaves in a good manner to Mrs. Engineer, she found him very disgusting. He was also not allowed to go inside the factory or other words he was thrown out while he was in search of a job, and the attitude of the prostitute towards the character clearly shows the discriminated society. Discrimination is at its lowest recede here, Chennayais exploited by making him work hard, yet even when a poor man like him works hard and dreams of atleast a rise up in their life, he will not be believed and treated as equal by the so called upper class society.

Apart from the depiction of the minority people like the boy who came as a suitor to Rukmini, Adiga also speaks about the job seekers of India. Ratna after his sale of pills, also sells brochures and small books on general knowledge and information. He in bus "Spoke at the top of his voice : Ladies and gentlemen! All of you know that we live in a rat race, where there are few jobs, and many job applicants. How will your children survive, how will they get the jobs you have? For life in this day and age is a veritable rat race." Aravind Adiga, not only Characterizes but also through the voice of the character he tries to focus our attention to the harsh realities of life of common people in India by giving a true sense of "local Color" to it. Situation of India is like so, Adiga through Sultan's battery and "The Elephant" has done a beautiful fictional recreation of this situation. The character is given more importance than the story, plot or action, which is the reason why Ratna and Chennayya remain in the mind of audience than to think about the open ending both stories do offer.

Socio-economic Realism:

Rise of materialism in the new generation is carefully portrayed through the character Ratna, who always longs for money which makes him so corrupted and selfish. He only wants money and no concern is given to the wellbeing of the people who is around him; this is why he sells fake pills for a vulnerable disease. Influence of a materialistic outlook plays an important role in shaping the psyche of people like Ratna, Ganesh pai, Chennayya and Mrs. Engineer. Chennayya at one point even decides to run away with the cash of Mr. Ganesh Pai so that he can start a new business like a tea shop. The author through these depictions tries to express his serious concern over this major contemporary issue.

The stereotypes of going behind bonuses were also criticized by Aravind Adiga. This could be seen in the Short Story, "The Elephant" after Mrs. Engineer purchased a furniture from my Mr. Ganesh Pai's shop, she pays for it and asks for a bonus gift for buying and Mr. Ganesh Pai Comments that "she may be the wife of the richest man in town but She is still a Stingy old cunt" after she leaves. All these stereotypes points to the economic crisis that is hiding behind every situation that happens in the life. She doesn't need a bonus as she has the ability to buy even extra furniture so that some other will be benefited it, yet she does so. Mrs. Engineer is also a character who belongs to the section of people who tend to bargain for small price which is also one of the harsh realities that happens in India, People tend to buy things for fixed price in super markets but bargains with lower strata of people as if they make more money than the super market people. As already said Chennayya is so poor and illiterate yet dedicated. Mrs. Engineer's stable was delivered by Chennayya and he had to pedal till there. Unfortunately, she gave only three rupees and he demanded Six. Out of this Six he had to give commission to Mr. Ganesh Pai for selecting him to deliver the materials, so he makes almost nothing after working very hard. Mr. Ganesh Pai, being the owner of the shop makes money from Business, but Chennayya has no other means, other than delivering these objects. This can be considered as a significant example for the famous aphorism "Rich gets Richer, Poor get Poorer" on the basis of Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'A Defence of poetry'.

Chennayya once shouted at a man who was coming from newspaper and he gives the cart pullers a suggestion, that they can try work in factory or something. For which Chennayya Shouted. "Those who are born poor in this country fated to die Poor. There is no hope for us and no need to of pity. Certainly not from you, who never lift a hand to help us. "Nothing even changes". This clearly shows the reality of the nation, everyone is striving for their survival in the nation some way, yet they couldn't accomplish because of people the Mr. Ganesh Pai and Mrs. Engineer.

When compare all the stories of Aravind Adiga, there is one similarities in all, Adiga has portrayed India by distinguishing between two things, one is India of darkness i.e., of poor and the India of the light that is of rich. Mrs. Engineer in "The elephant" is shown as a character who is fat enough who adds up ten kilos to her body every year, Whereas Mr. Chennayya is so thin that he does not even get much calories needed for every day. At one point of time he even realizes one thing, "Only one level of society was lower than him: the beggars. Just one Slide, and he would be down with them, he thought. One accident. And that would be him", such worse

was the condition of Chennayya. It is just like how Balram says it in "The White Tiger" "There are just two castes : men with Big Bellies, and men with small bellies. And only two destinies, eat or get eaten-up".

Employees in today's world are being increasingly treated as robots or machines and never tries to understand the effort and emotions of each employee put into their job to make profit for the company they are working for. Organizations all over the globe are just concerned about the investments and not the wellbeing of the people worked to achieve it. Chennayya feels that the other pullers who works for Mr. Ganesh Pai "never had good or bad days; they did their work like machines". Chennayya felt very bad as he thought that only he had emotions and hatred when compared to his co-workers, others are just working to fuel up their body. This is the reason why none except Chennayya tries to get a job in a much better company but fails to show a good impression. The Symbolism of elephant as already told, Plays a significant motif in this short story, both of them are underpaid, and are the most neglected living being in the elite society. Chennayya also realized that he is one odd man out, which in his language is a baboon, because it is only him, who tries to come out of the margin or boundary, rest of the fellow-Porters are satisfied with what they get. Apart from the representation of an elephant, Aravind Adiga has also included another animal representation in this short story, which is a pig. After delivering the mattress he was so aggressive and started hating all the human beings around him. He felt like defecating on the faces of the people who were in the train, but when he saw a pig next to him, defecating there, he realised and found that there will be no difference between him and a pig.

"God, what am I declining into?"asks Chennayya to himself, after he saw the pig in railway station. He was so irritated and was fed up with the disrespectful attitude, the people have towards the community to which Chennayya belongs to.(ref) People like Chennayya have no other means of showing their hatred towards the rich community. Helplessness of them is also being exploited at every corner of their life. When Mrs. Engineer refused to pay an extra tip for fixing the furniture (as his job was only to deliver it), Chennayya "picked up a rotting banana skin and hung it" near the gate "so that it would startle the owners when they come out."Chennayya cannot complain about anything to anyone, if at all he did so, will not be taken into consideration and so doing such silly things pleases his mind, as if he had taken a great revenge.

Though he was a poor man, his desire to live a better life is portrayed carefully by the author through many nonverbal actions done by the character. For instance, when Chennayya returns after he delivers the furniture to Mrs. Engineer, he meets Mr. Ganesh Pai to pay the money for which he was called for, at that time Chennayya was focusing on the beautiful water bowl of Mr. Ganesh Pai, which looked like lotus petals, just like as if he wanted it so badly. He was scanning the patterns drawn on the structure around the bottom of the water bowl. Clearly indicating how he is wishing his life to be in the future. Even a poor man has his own way of enjoying the art or beauty despite being homeless, just like how Aravind Adiga says in 'White Tiger', "See the poor

dreams all their lives of getting enough to eat and looking like the rich."and, in extreme contrast we find Mr. Ganesh Pai taking away two rupees out of three rupees he got as tip from Mrs. Engineer for delivering the furniture, thus shows that money is a great obstacle for Chennayya to become successful.

"Unlimited exploitation of cheap labour power is the sole foundation of their power to compete" says Karl Marx in his book *Das Kapital* published in the year 1867. Chennayya and his co-workers are purely exploited by Mr. Ganesh Pai. Just like many other employers around the globe, Mr. Pai squeezes them hard to extract the maximum amount of labour they could get from these people. Two incidents from this short story can be taken as instances. One when Mr. Ganesh Pai demands money for choosing one particular cycle cart puller, albeit they are not paid enough for doing so. Second one is when Mr. Pai never allows him or his co-workers to take the cycle cart if the object to be delivered is a light material like a mattress. The workers including Chennayya has to carry it on their head and should again pay for the privilege that he is chosen. We can also see Chennayya often moving his neck from side to side as it is hurting him too much and to relieve the pain he does so. Carrying huge mattresses often made a shaft of pain down his spine and back, we can see Chennayya in a situation where he is in a complete trance.

A clear cut representation of Indian way of treating employees can be seen in Mr. Ganesh Pai and how he behaves to his employees. It was and is been so normal in India by making the people to work or more than twelve hours a day and are never paid enough. Especially of those companies which create unnecessary work stress and pressure and just how like Mokokoma Mokhononana, a South African author says that "Retirement is a stage where an employer discards an employee that he cannot exploit further". Such is the case of an employee around India and other third world countries. They are disrespected and disregarded in every manner. Thus, Chennayya can be considered as a central figure of representation of every Indian employees working under such circumstances.

So, it is not an unexpected thing when people like Chennayya loses temper and shouts at people who tries to disregard him by considering him to be from a lower class of the society. Like how he reacted when he carried a huge mattress all the way to railway station from the umbrella street for a person who is a demeanour and refused to pay the tip, and only if he gets the tip he would be able to pay Mr. Ganesh Pai as the privilege, that too would be more than fifty percentage of what he receives.

The objective of the author is echoed in Chennayya with a rebellious spirit at certain times, especially when he leaves the job to find a better one, the same type of character can be seen in the novel "The White Tiger" where Balram shows his rebellious nature while giving a statement that, "I was destined not to stay as a slave" (The white Tiger). These Characters just replicates or reflects the agony that a common man feels.

Conclusion:

Through these works, Adigatires to turn our focus and sympathy towards the discriminate sections of the society and through so, tires to solicit some solutions to the challenges like to India and the world, at the same time we can also see that the author have portrayed reality in such a way that the conscience of the readers is pierced so to make them understand the dark side of the contemporary India. At the end of every work of Aravind Adiga we find that along with moral values, human values are still strangled. Aravind Adiga asserts that the reason why he is portraying so is because he wants the people to know what is happening in and around them and it may evoke a feeling that could help them to wipe out the problems that is in existence.

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