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IMPACT OF CASTE, RELIGION AND POLITICS IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S NOVEL BETWEEN THE ASSASSINATIONS

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Abstract

The paper explores the factors and impact of caste, religion and politics in the second novel of Aravind Adiga *Between the Assassinations* (2008), in which multi factors of the consequences caused due to the evil system of caste, religion and misuse of political powers on the hands of corrupt politicians for their personal gains is depicted through the different characters who represent both the common and privileged man of both rural and urban people of different places, regions and sections of the society. In this research paper various types of injustices and discriminations based on the caste, class, region, language and religion in different situations and places are put into light through the different characters in the period between the assassinations of two great leaders viz Indra Gandhi in 1984 and her son Rajive Gandhi in 1991 are revealed. A struggle of the unprivileged class and lower caste is seen where they struggle to raise from their parent's way of living a pity and unclean life the life of living with dignity in the modernized world of education, science and technology is witnessed. The lower caste, class and unprivileged tried to break the laws of the evil caste system existing in the society. The division of the people on the bases of their caste and religion is used as a powerful weapon by the corrupt politicians to secure their vote bank to come to and or remain in power for their personal and political gains. Many disturbances like murder, robbery and communal riots are the preplanned by the politicians to show their false sympathy to the innocent people to become their sympathizers to get the votes in elections and come to power. Many innocents were forced to accept the murder like crimes forcefully in place of the rich, businessman having political connections, which actually they did not commit. Many poor and low caste people are used by the politicians during the elections to get votes but when they won the elections, these poor people were not given their due share in the party but instead kicked them out of the mainstream politics. The divisions on the bases of caste are the deep rooted and had put a big scar on the Indian society. For the caste based divisions Arundhati Roy writes:

"Deep at the heart of the horror of what's going on lies the caste system: this layered, horizontally divided society with no ...human – humane- interaction that

holds the layers together. So when the bottom half of society simply shears off and falls away, it happens silently. (Roy 2011:6)

The media which is the fourth pillar of democracy is directly controlled by the politicians and by the people in power resulting in injustice to the innocents. The innocents are put behind the bars for doing no crime and the criminals are freely enjoying their luxuries in the open.

Keywords: caste system, religion, politics, injustice, communal riots, media, corruption, militancy, naxalism.

INTRODUCTION

Aravind Adiga is one of the youngest and fast growing internationally acclaimed writers. In his writings an apparent style of simplicity of life and true depiction of class, caste, gender, religious and political levels of discriminations and their changing styles prevailing in the globalised society are very effectively depicted by the way he has characterized his characters covering each and every section and situation of society in such a way which made him a great writer that of Charles Dickens, R.K Narayan and V.S Naipaul. In his works he explores the simple and complex life of a common man. In his novel Aravind Adiga depicts the concerns of discrimination and injustice with the unprivileged people due to the discrimination on the bases of caste, creed, sex, gender, class, region and religion in the contemporary society because of the misuse of politics and or the political powers by the self interested politicians who run the government machinery.

Adiga is very much successful writer in presenting things. He had tried to cover almost all types of social, cultural, economic and political issues and evils of the society in practice. To cover and present each and every aspect of the way of life in the modern India, Aravind Adiga very artistically has used one major tool to cover all things i.e. the seven days, a basic unit which technically itself covers all the days of the week, which technically covers the months and round the year activities and therefore all the seasons, customs, rituals, social, cultural and political life style of the people living in the society.

Through his literary works Aravind Adiga recommends and supports the on time treatment of the social evils prevailing in the society by facing

them boldly and by not running away from the situations. He suggests that by facing these social issues, find solutions and cure it will help to end the practices of these social evils of discriminations on the bases of caste, class, gender, region, religion and political affiliations but if one neglects the situation due to certain reasons, it will help encouraging those who practice these types of discriminations which still exists in our society while living in a modern, globalised society. He advises that it is not important to only know the issues but the right treatment at the right time is prominent. And it needs awareness and knowledge of dealing with these situations. Aravind Adiga's style of creating the characters is so nice that his readers feel emotionally connected with him as the readers feel and find necessarily someone of the characters as their own character. In his novels Adiga depicts the two worlds i.e. 'The world of Light' and 'the world of Darkness' representing the two main aspects of the society, which relates India to Marlow's Heart of Darkness, and made Adiga the Christopher Marlow of India.

In this novel, *Between the Assassinations*, Aravind Adiga has smartly portrayed the picture of the society living in Kittur, a fictitious town modeled on his native town Mangalore in Kerala in India. Like R.K Narayana's fictitious town Malgudi.

In this novel, *Between The Assassinations*, Aravind Adiga represents the plight of India between 1984 to 1991 of the assassination of Indra Gandhi, the consequences caused out of caste system, religion and misuse of the political powers by the self interested politicians like corruption, injustice, caste and religious and linguistic discriminations lead to the birth of criminal acts like murder, Naxalism, militancy, communal riots, linguistics, which caused a big threat of disintegration of India.

Aravind Adiga has very beautifully created the fictitious town of Kittur modeled on his birth place Manglore in which he has created some important rural and urban markets with multi cultural, lingual, religious and busy market places to fulfill his aims and objectives of creating different social, economic and political activities and situations covering almost most of the places and people of India. Kittur is hub of various activities and an emerging town having various forms of commercial, religious and political activities with many malpractices due to the misuse of the social and political status of the elite group in the town.

In Kittur, Aravind Adiga has created some prominent places with various activities of caste system, class, religious and political activities took place. These places are: some prominent religious monuments like Kittama Devi Temple, The Cathedral of Our Lady of Valencia, Kaliaamma River, the educational institutes like St Alfonso's Boys High School and Junior College, and other important offices, monuments and roads like, Offices of The Dawn Herald, The Bishop Street, Nehru Maidan, Salt Market Village, The Railway Station(the place of main attraction), Angle Talkies Cinema, Double Gate, Cool Water Well Junction, The Sultan's Battery, The Bus Stop, The Light House, Bajpe Forest, Alencia, Rose Lane, The Hader Ali Road, and the Old Court Road etc.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NOVEL:

Between the Assassinations

The story is narrated by the narrator in seven consecutive days covering different kinds of activities and situations in the fictitious town of Kittur by creating different situations that occur in different places of Kittur to depict the impact and effects of caste, religion and politics. The glimpses of day wise happenings and occurrences are as under:

[1]. Day one (Morning): The Railway Station: This is the story of Ziauddin a Muslim hailing from northern part of India who comes to Kittur to get some job and had to face many difficulties at different places he get some kind of job, like Ramanna Shetty's Ideal store, at the railway station working as a coolie. He works for a stranger called Pathan to count trains

carrying the army for rupees five a day, but finally rejects his offer when he tried to use him being Muslim to be a spy for the army was setting a base camp in Kittur to avenge the Muslims of Kittur for the militancy related happenings in Kashmir. Ziauddin shows respects for the Hindu religion by not entering the temple when he accompanied Ramanna Shetty going to offer prayers in the Kittamma Devi temple. He thought being a Muslim it is not good for him to enter a Hindu religious sacred place like temple and so makes distances a few feet, hesitates and ran back to the scooter declaring that he is a Muslim and cannot go inside a temple.

[2]. Day One (Afternoon): Bunder: Aravind Adiga has very beautifully created the character of Abbassi who represents all those middle class people who are being tortured and forced to pay bribes to all the concerned officials and departments due to the corruption by the government machinery headed by the corrupt and selfish politicians to secure his small business of embroidery. Abbassi had to pay money to the electricity man, the Water Board man, half the Income Tax Department of Kittur, Half the Exercise Department of Kittur, six different officials of The Telephone Board, a land tax official of the Kittur City Corporation, a sanitary inspector from the Karnataka State Health Board, a health inspector from the Karnataka State Sanitation Board, a delegation of All India Small Factory Workers Union and delegations of the Kittur Congress Party, Kittur BJP, Kittur Communist Party and the Kittur Muslim League. Being fed up with the system, Abbassi finally threatens them of calling police and too of beating who came to get money from him.

[3]. Day Two (Morning)

LIGHT HOUSE HILL

The Xerox Rama Krishna who belongs to a low caste used to sell the photocopied books, journals, notes etc. to the students of St Alfonso's Boys High School and Junior College to earn his living. He cannot admit his eleven years old daughter Ritu, in school because of his poverty because of his parent's caste and had to engage Ritu to assist him in selling the books in the park in the vicinity of the Light Hill House. Xerox Rama Krishna was illiterate because of

his caste as the lower caste people were not allowed to go to school and get education. His father had to do the unclean work like cleaning the toilets and removing the shit from the houses of the upper caste people. In the past nine years he was arrested twenty one times by the police and released after listening to some stories of some girl and his father how he waited for the thump of the shit into the boom box/flash to remove it through the hole in the wall and wash the latrines by his linen cloth in the houses of the rich upper caste people.

But finally he was arrested for selling the banned book of Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Versus*, Inspector Ramesh and the advocate D'Souza took wines, calling him a lower caste beat him with the iron rod breaking his legs and other bones.

[4]. Day Two (Afternoon):

ST ALFONSO'S BOYS HIGH SCHOOL AND JUNIOR COLLEGE

Shankara is mixed caste boy who had to face discrimination of caste system at each front where ever he goes. He is mixed caste become the talk of the town. His father Vasudev Kinni a Brahmin, an educated person and a surgeon in Golf countries and do not believe in caste system, married to a Hoyka girl and therefore the caste of Shankara is a mixed caste, a Brahmo-Hoyka caste. Shankara has to face discriminations and humiliations at many times. His mother is also treated as lower caste among the relatives and many times she had to face humiliations by them so Shankara avoids his mother to meet those Brahmin relatives to avoid humiliations of caste system. If they respect her it was only because she has given birth to a male heir. One day Shankara was returning from Nehru Maidan after playing cricket, an old man enquires him of his parents high and low castes and also tells him that he tried to stop Shankara's father from marrying the Hoyka girl as the other Brahmins will not accept her as equal to them and result is that Shankara is born neither Brahmin nor a Hoyka caste and hence is considered a bastard.

Even if Shankara was rich and enjoy luxury at home but in the school and college Shankara had to face caste discriminations on part of his professor

Lasrado and the school management where he was given the rotten, defective food and fruit. Shankra feels himself proud when his Hoyka relatives meet and respect him as a higher than them because of his father's caste. Even Shankara sometimes feels that why those Hoyka people are on earth here because they have low status in the society, but at the same time he is being discriminated and made feel ashamed and lower in status when his Brahmin relatives did not treat him equal to them as a Brahmin because of his mothers Hoyka, a low caste.

One day a Brahmin boy invites Shankara to his home it was a modern family so Shankara was sure that there he would not be discriminated for his caste. But when he left the room after taking some tea and biscuits and happened to turn and look back, the boy's mother was seen washing and wiping the sofa on which Shankara seated. The harassment and caste discriminations made to him to made Shankara to hate Hindu religion and praise Christianity and other religions which do not have the caste system and hence no discriminations of caste. Shankara is totally annoyed by the caste system and bursts off a bomb in the college, an education institution where caste system is prevailing instead of education of equality and justice to put an end to 5000 years old defective and evil caste system which made the life of the lower caste people miserable.

If the police asked him for a statement, what he would say was this ' I have burst a bomb to end the 5000-year-old caste system that still operates in our country. I have burst a bomb to show that no man should be judged, as I have been, merely by the accident of his birth.'(Between the Assassinations- 51)

The caste system is so deeply rooted in the Hinduism that there are a number of castes with in the lower castes. For example the Hoyaka caste, it has seven sub castes and on the top is Kollabas caste people are rich and always exploited other six castes.

The Kollabas have always been millionaires. The British anthropologists of Kittur noted this fact with interest even in the nineteenth century. The Kollabas have exploited the other six Hoyka castes for years. And now once again, this man is playing the Hoyka card

to get himself reelected, so he can sit in an office in New Delhi and accept large envelopes filled with cash from businessmen who want to set up garment factories in the Bunder." Seven subcastes? The Kollabas? Shankara had never heard any of this. He gaped. "This is the big problem with you Hindus," the professor said. "You are mysteries to yourselves!" (Between the Assassinations- 63)

On the other hand the politicians play the card of caste and religion to secure their vote bank by befooling the innocent people with false promises. In the olden days the people were discriminated by the upper caste people but with the entry of Hoyaka, lower caste people in politics and other privileged posts, it is prohibited and very rare cases of caste-ism took place.

The lower caste people were not allowed in the temples by the Brahmins. But now the people belonging to the low caste cannot be exploited because of their caste, and if someone tries to do so is put to justice by the law. Another kind of caste based discrimination of language is also witnessed where even the language of Brahmins and other lower caste and Muslims is in use affiliated with the language of their caste. The language of the Brahmins is Kannada and the language of common people is Tullu. So Kannada being the language of Brahmins is the official language of Kerala and hence politicians raise demands to announce Tullu the language of the majority people as the official language.

[5]. Day Two (Evening): LIGHTHOUSE HILL (THE FOOT OF THE HILL)

There is a tussle between the Christians, the Muslims and the school authorities on the issue of an old masque which was thought was constructed during the period of Tippu Sultan a great emperor of Mugal period and the school authorities allow the Muslim students to offer Friday prayers in the mosque whose parents gave the written consent for it.

[6]. Day Three (Morning): Market and Maidan

Keshav, a Hoyka caste works with his men ferrying his buses at route no 5 helps them to beat the buses of the Christians, he helps to beat the buses of Christians.

Gururaj Kamath, Deputy Editor of Kittur's finest newspaper, Dawn Herald is an honest and bold media journalist works boldly during the times of Hindu Muslim riots and reports the truth in media which helped the minority community in the tough times and so Gururaj is being welcomed as a celebrity among the people in Kittur which makes Gururaj feel happy for his honesty and impartiality. Gururaj next morning he goes from house to house, from shop to shop and inquires about the truth and gets a terrible truth about some happenings about the previous night. The Member of Parliament has a preplanning of the riots created in Bunder. He along with his goons went to Bunder and destroyed the shops and property of the people.

About the Hindu-Muslim riots is also totally false, it was the preplanning of the MP and the goon's belongs to both the communities backed by the same political party or MP. No Hindu burnt or destroyed the property of Muslims and no Muslim burnt and destroyed the property of Hindus. In fact the Hindu goons burnt and destroyed the property of Hindus and the Muslim goons burnt and destroyed the property of Muslims. Actually the MP has an eye on the property of the people which he transferred to the name of a new fictitious trust called New Kittur Port Development Trust. It was a political mischievous game played by the politicians to befool the public and fulfill their personal gains.

"I heard that our MP, along with the Mafia down at the Bunder, instigated the riots. And I heard that the hoodlums and the MP have transferred all the burned and destroyed property into the hands of their own men, under the name of a fictitious trust called the New Kittur Port Development Trust. The violence was planned. Muslim goons burned Muslim shops and Hindu goons burned Hindu shops. It was a real estate transaction masquerading as a religious riot." The editor stopped sipping. "Who told you

this?" "A friend. Is it true?" "No." (Between the Assassinations- 144)

Gururaj Kamath, tries his best to put the truth in light and put the real criminals to behind the bars and save the innocent who are made to accept the crime which they never done and go to jails in place of the rich having political connections but failed to do so. He finds that the media is in the control of the politicians and can prove the criminal an innocent and the innocent a criminal by their political powers.

This is the fate of every journalist in this town and in this state and in this country and maybe in this whole world, thought Gururaj."Had you never guessed any of this before, Gururaj? It must come from It is a false earth I am walking on. An innocent man is behind bars, and a guilty man walks free. Everyone knows that this is so and not one has the courage to change it. [Between the Assassinations. P-146-47].

[7]. Day Four (Morning): UMBRELLA STREET

Chenyya a lower caste boy works hard day and night sparing his time from plying the cycle puller cart on the cost of loss of his day wages, pastes posters and banners of a congress party candidate in Bunder.

All the following week, whenever he knew his number was not going to be called for a while, he rode around on his cycle, sticking up posters of the Congress candidates in all the Muslimdominated streets, shouting, "Vote for Congress-the party of Muslims! Defeat the BJP!" (Between the Assassinations- 179)

He campaigns against BJP and in favor of Congress Party candidate who won the election with good margin defeating the BJP in Bunder. But when after the wining of the Chenyya visits the party office hoping that they will appreciate and thank him for his help in the elections where only that one candidate of Congress won and all other contestants loose to the BJP.

The week passed. The elections took place, the results were declared. Chenyya rode his cycle to

the Congress Party office, parked it outside, went to the doorkeeper, and asked to see the candidate.

"He's a busy man now; just wait out here a moment," said the doorkeeper. He placed a hand on Chenyya's back. "You really helped us do well in the Bunder, Chenyya. The BJP defeated

us everywhere else, but you got the Muslims to vote for us!"

(Between the Assassinations- 179)

Even the caste discrimination is seen where when Chenyya tries to sit in an empty chair in the waiting room but the door keeper orders him to sit on the floor.

[8]. Day Five (Morning): VALENCIA THE COOL WATER WELL JUNCTION

(TO THE FIRST CROSSROADS)

To put light on the fact that education plays a great role in eliminating the severe social evils like caste-ism, class and religious disparities Aravind Adiga has very smartly created the town of Valencia with the people belonging to three main religions viz. Hindu, Muslim and Christian in Valenica, a town in Kittur in Kerela which is represented as a model of the society. Majority is the Christian with a few Hindu and Muslim population. The people are educated, employed rich and own their own homes. They lived as good neighbors and did not quarrel with each other on the name caste, class or religion. They respect each other and even celebrate their religious occasions like Christmas collectively and perform the prayers according to their religion in the form of carols and hymns in the early mornings on the eve of Christmas.

Valencia is the largest neighborhood of Kittur; most of its inhabitants are educated, employed, and owners of their homes. The handful of Hindus and Muslims who have bought land in Valencia have never encountered any trouble, but Protestants looking to live here have sometimes been attacked with stones and slogans. Every Sunday morning, men and women in their best clothes pour into the Cathedral of Our Lady of Valencia for Mass. On Christmas Eve, virtually the

entire population crams into the cathedral for midnight Mass; the singing of carols and hymns continues well into the early hours.(Between the Assassinations- 204)

To depict this fact Adiga has very artfully created the character of the Advocate who represents all those rich and educated people as well lawyer / an advocate belonging to the new generation with an advance and optimistic mind, who despite being a Brahmin do not believe in the evil caste system and treats all as equals. He believes in the character, its evils or virtues and not in the caste system. He in his house had employed the upper as well as lower caste to work in his home. Jayamma, a Brahmin old lady is employed as cook and Sahila, a lower caste girl as a servant and there is no concept of discrimination or favor on the basis of caste in his mind.

But on the other hand the character of Jayamma represents all those old generation upper caste people who are still caste ridden and do not want to mix up with the lower caste and want to continue this killer disease of caste system. She is totally annoyed with the Advocate for not respecting the protocol of the caste system by employing a Hoyaka, a low caste girl in his house.

"What kind of era is this when Brahmins bring lower-caste girls into their household?" she

grumbled as she stirred the lentils in the morning. "Where have the rules of caste and religion fallen today, O Krishna?"

(Between the Assassinations- 211)

She claims that all those families of the masters where she worked for last forty years were the good people but complains about the behavior and way of living in the house of the Advocate where the cooks and servants belongs to any caste and the master and family did not support the dignity of the upper caste but instead the lower caste servants used to break rules of the caste system. The lower caste servant did not respect the upper caste Brahmin cook Jayamma and enter the kitchen, access everything in the house making it unholy.

"For forty years I've lived among good Brahmins, Lord Krishna: homes in which even the lizards and the toads had been Brahmins in a previous birth. Now you see my fate, stuck among Christians and meat eaters in this strange town, and each time I think I'm leaving, my sister-in-law tells me to stay on some more..."

(Between the Assassinations- 206-7)

Finally the Advocate drives himself his car to take Sahila to her home when she was going to her home for her marriage. This all shows that there is a big difference in the thinking of the old and the new generations of the society. Jayamma, who represents the old upper class people who believe in all the laws of caste system and want to continue it in future but at the same time the character of Sahila who represents the new generation of so called lower caste fights for her dignity. She feels that it is only education which can help to put an end to this caste system and starts learning to read and write things. At the same time the character of the Advocate who represents all those young generation, rich, educated and a member of the judiciary is honest to his role and responsibilities and tries his best to play his role in a good and positive way and also tries to protect the rights of all irrespective of their caste or religion.

[9]. Day Seven: SALT MARKET VILLAGE

The next story to explore the effect of caste and politics in the society, Adiga has created the plot of the story by creating a site of a village called the Salt Market Village in the town of Kittur with three main characters of Comrade Thimma, a well educated who has had his BA from Kittur and MA from Mysore and a politician in the Communist Party of India, Anand Kumar a lower caste politician, Murli a Brahmin by caste and a graduate in law from Madras joins politics in order to set the things right which caused destruction because of the evil caste system and corruption in the government machinery run by the corrupt politicians and many other social evils prevailing in the society. His father had wanted him to practice law but he drag himself to the politics. Sulochana, a lower caste girl who could not had access to education in her early days because of

her caste and poverty, works in her fields to whom fifty five years old Murli a Brahmin proposes of marriage. Many things are set right by the young politicians in Kittur by making social, economic and political reforms in the society.

Murli had to face many difficulties because of the deep rooted corruption and other malpractices in the politics and society. Initially Murli joins Congress party with a hope to bring social, economic and political reforms in the society. He campaigns for Anand Kumar, a lower caste contestant candidate of Congress Party of India but on winning he found that the other workers who work as his assistants collect money from the people who wanted to meet Anand Kumar to redress their problems. They take a dozen rupees along with the letters or uses of the applicants. Murli opposes this all as corruption and threatens of complaining to Anand Kumar, but the corrupt assistants humiliate him, and warn him publicly to do whatever he wants. So Murli thought that this party the Congress party is not in support of putting an end to the corrupt ways.

He joins the Communist Party of India who works for the common good of the people and opposed the capitalist mindset. The party runs many welfare programs like women education, population control and campaigns to eliminate the caste system in the society. The workers of the Communist Party of India headed by Comrade Thimma started a campaign to aware the people of their rights and also used to distribute the pamphlets among the people with the message of Carl Marx. To make it more clear to the common masses Murli an educated, Murli re-writes the pamphlets so that the common man can get it through easily. Murli, a protagonist of the episode tried to break rules of the evil caste system by proposing Sulochanna of marriage, a low caste and poor girl of a widowed old woman. The old woman told him that they were poor and no one will marry her daughter.

CONCLUSION

Aravind Adiga's novel *Between The Assassinations* is an Kaleidoscopic novel in which he has very smartly tried to cover and explore all kinds of social evils caused due to the discrimination with

the marginalized and depressed people of the Indian society on the bases of caste, class, language, region and religion due to the misuse of political powers by the self interested politicians who use the card of caste and religion to befool the innocent people for their self interest. They follow no rules of equality and justice and can prove their black money the white, can prove a criminal an innocent and an innocent a criminal. The innocents are put behind the bars and the criminal roam freely. These corrupt rich, businessman and politicians has made the life of the lower caste, downtrodden and unprivileged people a miserable life. Adiga in the selection of his characters has tried his best to cover each caste, class and religion and all kinds of social evils they face on the hands of the elite class and caste. Through this novel Aravind Adiga has tried to give a message to all the sections of society to introspect their selves, their role and responsibility and play their role in eliminating all kinds of evils from the society. He through this novel advises the youth, the depressed and marginalized section of the society to let their children get education as if they are educated can think of their future and raise their voice against any kind of discrimination. He gives a strong message through his characters who face discriminations of any kind be it their caste, gender, race, class, region or religion to rise above their status and fight for your rights as it is only you who can bring a change in the society and no other will like you to be at your best, so his protagonist's are always seen at their best because of their courage and fight against the evils of the society.

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