

SOCIAL JUSTICE THEMES IN THE FICTIONS OF ARAVIND ADIGA

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Abstract

Aravind Adiga's novels are a most visceral indictment of the social order, a portrait of the rot at the heart of class divisions, caste rivalry and systemic injustice in modern India. His fiction-*The White Tiger*, *Between the Assassinations* and *Last Man in Tower*- explores the tensions between the peripheries and the centres, and the replaceable and the unshakeable; and challenge the multiple and oppressive worlds of India's urban and rural poor. With well-drawn characters and a satirical mix of irony and realism, Adiga enters the social imaginary of the elite, giving voice to the oppressed and revealing the moral compromises and hypocrisies of the entitled class. The characters in Adiga's novels wage battle against poverty, corruption and oppression in their quest for dignity and autonomy. His heroes come from below, rebelling against or at least subverting oppressively repressive castes or capitalism. They are imperfect, damaged, human beings products of their own environment. This intricate characterization forces readers to examine uncomfortable revelations about complacency, endurance and rebellion against injustice.

This article analyses Adiga's thematic focus on social justice rendering justice to his works, and arguing that his fiction not only critiques but reflects India's changing political scene since independence-a legacy of historical injustices and present-day conflicts.

Keywords: Adiga, corruption, capitalism, injustice, moral compromises, and social justice.

Postcolonial social justice narratives in the post-apartheid moment

The current literary climate has seen an explosion of interest in stories detracting the multi-layered aspects of social justice, in particular within postcolonial spaces that struggle with enduring inequalities. Aravind Adiga, an internationally recognized Indian author, has emerged as an important voice in the genre, using his stories and narratives to rail against social constructs and to highlight the sufferings of the marginalized masses.

Adiga's novels, unsparing and relentless in depicting poverty, graft, and structural oppression, resonate with readers because of their gritty truth-telling and incisive social criticism. His stories explore the complex network of power relations, caste oppression, and economic inequalities that characterize present-day India, providing fascinating insights into the lives of people left to survive on the margins of society. Adiga's writing offers readers a reflection of a country struggling with its identity and the lasting effects of colonialism.

The themes of Adiga's stories are reflections of the socio-political conditions in India with the stark contrast between the rich and the poor. He paints a powerful picture of the systemic failings of social justice—the graft and exploitation that undermines life at every level of Indian society. His novels are postcolonial texts, mirroring the unbridgeable divide between the oppressed, poor populations and the dominant rich. He invokes questions of mobility and migration, dislocation, and the loss of identity that are also commonly found in postcolonial literature. His protagonists are often working-class heroes who embody the grim realities of life, and the quest to survive and make it in a heartless world. Adiga lets his characters' experiences illustrate the soul-crushing effects of poverty and the lengths to which people are often driven.

Adiga's writing goes beyond mere narration to become an explosive indictment of a society that conditions inequality and injustice, and demands readers to face inconvenient truths about the world. His novels lean toward satire, and Adiga attacks no one, not even the parasitic ruling classes, with kid gloves. No one is immune in this blistering picture of the scorched absurdities barely concealing the pain of India today.

The concerns with social justice that permeate Adiga's fiction are not mere surface trimmings, but significant parts of the way he builds a tale—as plot, character, and thematic engine. He draws attention to the silent horror of "no extreme slouch, no plummeting of the shoulders, no close facial hair" that is caste prejudice, a bulwark that remains deeply rooted to this day, marginalizing millions of fellow Indians, all denied opportunity and subjected to violence based on what they look like at birth.

Adiga's writings have always faced controversial contents like religious bigotry, political frauds, the plight of foreign workers, etc. His tales highlight the necessity of societal change and the value of standing up to oppressive systems. The issues of social justice that Adiga's novels tackle are not depicted as abstract ideals but become real, lived experiences by his characters and are therefore tangibly felt for the reader. Cultural studies provide a useful framework for examining Adiga's work, as it is heavily rooted in social phenomena. What makes Aravind Adiga a living legend in modern literature is his uncompromising honesty in depicting life's inequalities and bringing fortune's outcasts to the stage. His novels are a chilling reminder that the world remains awash with injustice and an urgent call for change.

By refusing to sugarcoat the impact of poverty, corruption, and discrimination, Adiga forces readers to confront the unseemly realities of life and the roles we all play in either enabling or challenging injustice. Adiga manages to make it impossible for us to romanticize poverty or seek a simple solution, forcing us to confront the complex problems India—and the world—confront.

His writing has won wide critical acclaim and a large, devoted audience, as well as a host of awards that includes the Triangle's Lifetime Achievement Award. His work has made him a tireless voice for the voiceless and a vital champion for human rights. Adiga's stories are not only Indian but are universal stories of injustice and domination, which are as true elsewhere as in India. Adiga does show that same sort of hybridity, which we see in many postcolonial works, in that these are characters who are torn between their traditional pasts and the modern future.

Adiga and His Works

Aravind Adiga's debut novel is, above all else, an important book in the world of contemporary fiction and a powerful voice in the literature of India and its societal and political structures. Adiga's books are much more than fictional narratives; they are also powerful social commentary that strips away the layers of complexity of Indian society, and reveals our fundamental contradictions and systemic injustices. His stories go deep into the lives of these victims of poverty, caste bias and corruptions, giving them a voice to express their frustration, their ordinary ambitions and their pain.

Adiga is not interested in making things pretty, but his brutal aesthetics—his sharp language and satirical humor—make his novels so compelling, and so difficult to read, precisely because they force readers to acknowledge the less than ideal conditions in which they find themselves. His contribution to the contemporary literature lies in his unwavering commitment to social realism, giving voice to the voiceless and shedding light on the forgotten corners of Indian society.

Adiga's one-of-a-kind storytelling fuses realism, satirical wit, and sharp social commentary for a voice that is all his own, bringing us an enormously compelling novel that is at once serious, significant, and side-splitting. His books are known for their rapid pace, intense characters, and rich descriptions of city and country life. The use of colloquial language and slang is particularly effective in lending their voices authenticity, making them recognizable and believable.

His stories are mainly from the point of view of oppressed people and revealing their lives and struggles to the readers. The vibrancy of contemporary urban India, a fine eye for detail and a capacity to gently lead a reader into a deeper understanding of human nature also characterize this little novel.

His debut novel, *The White Tiger*, which won the Man Booker Prize, made him widely known commercially, establishing his presence in the canvas of present-day world literature. The main character, Balram Halwai, is a young man from a small village who becomes an entrepreneur in Bangalore, and the entire story is told through his letters to the Chinese premier.

Witnessed through the cynical, merciless eyes of Balram, Adiga gives voice to the underlying truths of the new India – the untouchable nature of caste, the power politics of the pervasive rich, petty and the corrupt. A devastating critique of economic and social injustice and the caste system in India, *The White Tiger* also asks readers to come to terms with the unspoken mythology of India as a global power.

Among the latter are *Between the Assassinations* and *Last Man in Tower*, which confirm his status as a brave, unsparing chronicler of today's India. *Between the Assassinations* is the story of a range of personalities in a small coastal town, and is a miniature of Indian society and its various predicaments. Like Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*, this book evokes elements of a dream.

Last Man in Tower: A novel about real estate development in Mumbai is a scathing indictment of the rapaciousness, exploitation and decimation wrought by rapid urbanization. Adiga's range as a writer and his willingness to address difficult social issues with complexity and subtlety are on display in these novels.

Adiga's novels have created much controversy and discussion in India and abroad, as some critics felt his novels depicted a reality, outside the bubble of the middle class, in India of which few were aware—others accused it of stereotyping and worsening an Indian image. Whatever one feels about Adiga's novels, though, they have definitely raised important questions for compassion and justice in our world today.

Adiga, like Kumar, also subverts tradition with his muscular prose. His stories compel readers to rethink their images of India as well as India's position within the world, giving a nuanced understanding of the paradoxes that define the country.

Social Justice Themes

Aravind Adiga's writing is thematically steeped from the very beginning in social justice: is incisive commentary on inequality and oppression in contemporary India. His novels are explorations of the lives of these isolated groups, and the systemic hostilities that keep them mired in poverty, exclusion, and violence.

Conflicts and victories of Adiga's characters will make readers question the ugly realities of their society and what (if anything) they are doing to make the world a fairer place for everyone. Adiga's contribution is in humanizing the idea of social justice, and turning it into something flesh and blood, something his characters live. Adiga's examination of equity is more than a catalogue of disparity; he probes the origins of these inequities, which are the result of a complex interaction between historical, economic, and political factors that support their sustenance. His novels underscore how castes, classes, religious divide intermingle to form barriers in terms of getting rid of vertical push of less-privileged class of society.

Adiga uncovers the discriminatory practices that members of these communities are subject to, from lack of access to basic services to structural violence and exploitation. He also criticizes the exacerbation of social inequality by globalization and neoliberal economic policies, stating that economic growth tends to promote inequality rather than justice.

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga uses the character of Balram Halwai to expose the brutal realities of the caste system and its impact on individual lives. Balram's journey from a poor village to the bustling metropolis of Bangalore is a conundrum of struggles Dalits and upper-lower castes face in their attempt to climb the ladder of social and economic mobility.

Adiga challenges the romanticized narratives of India's economic rise, revealing the dark underbelly of exploitation and corruption driving the country's development. Adiga provides no easy answers to the questions he points out; instead, he paints a nuanced and complex portrait of a society haunted by centuries of inequalities.

Likewise, *Last Man in Tower*, is an exploration of the social and commercial effects of extreme urbanization in Bombay. The novel at its core is about residents of a crumbling apartment building who are coerced to sell their homes to a real estate developer, and it's a story about displacement and dispossession that come along with urban development.

In doing so, Adiga illustrates the greed and corruption at the heart of the real estate industry; a sector in which the relentless pursuit of profits all too often trumps the rights, interests and lives of the everyday people who rely on it. Many of his writings have been concerned with long-term effects of European colonization on Indian culture and society. India's linguistic diversity, as mentioned, complicates these narratives even further.

In this tale, Adiga is critiquing the worst excesses of globalization and the loss of community in an unbridled capitalist world. In many of Adiga's works we see the perseverance-effort respectively of the so often under-footed people. His characters

find a hard-won strength, resourcefulness and steadfastness despite the many injustices that are systemically inflicted upon them.

Adiga's fiction is a much needed wake-up call persuading us to fight against injustice to make society egalitarian and fair. With powerful narratives and unapologetic social criticism, he challenges readers to recognize their own role in systems of oppression and to imagine what they can do to build a fairer world.

Critical Analysis

An appreciation of Adiga's social justice themes requires a close reading of the narrative strategies he has adopted as well as the social and political world in which his characters inhabit, and the ethical implications of his writing. By focusing on power relations between characters, the structure of embedded inequalities in society, and possibilities of resistance and change, a solid grasp of Adiga's commitment to social justice can be gained.

This response would also need to take account of the reviews of Adiga's work, which did praise him for his portrayal of society as it really is, and which criticized him for reinforcing stereotypes, or for exaggerating the negative dimensions of Indian life. Amid the swirl of a changing India in the new millennium, this critical/sensational fiction series paints a hugely relevant portrait of Indian life in the 21st century—from the desired to the destitute, the corrupt to the idealistic.

Adiga's prose style is instrumental in projecting his social justice motives. By taking to the extremes satire, dark comedy, and gritty realism, he makes evident the hypocrisy and absurdity of cultural norms and structures. His characters are frequently conflicted, morally ambiguous, speaking to the profound personal compromises people make when they are forced against a wall of institutionalized subjugation.

Adiga's stories push us to face uncomfortable realities about the world we live in, all whilst urging us to examine our own thoughts on justice, equality and more. Plus, the characters, so often taken from the lower rungs of society, are portrayed with such vulnerability but also strength, which is key in depicting them in their fight against systemic inequities and in their reclaiming of power and combativeness.

Adiga's social justice motif has extreme bearing to him in the context of contemporary India's known socio-political underpinnings. His novels reflect the increasing divide between rich and poor, the continued discrimination among caste members and the increase in religious fanaticism.

Adiga's work also addresses more global concerns, like neoliberalism, eco-destruction and the exploitation of labour. Adiga's social justice themes overlay

postcolonial issues, and are concerned with the effects of colonization on India in the past and present. The history and geography of his characters is laid down as a base for his stories.

And, as a consequence, Adiga's stories become potent challenges to the current social order and cries for systemic reform, arguing for a more just and fair society. Adiga's fiction, too, addresses corruption in political institutions, demonstrating how power is often used to get wealthy, at the expense of the common good.

The complexities of social, economic and political forces reshaped by corruption in maintaining inequality while no upward mobility to the underprivileged is offered by the author. Adiga's commitment to bringing social injustices to light in his novels is very important in conversations about social justice.

Not only is this approach an exercise in increasing awareness, but it furthers the deep thinking on systemic problems that plague our world today, showing the vital role that empathy and ethical action play in the pursuit for a more just and equitable society.

His mode of engagement does not only facilitate greater awareness, it encourages a critical response to the structural injustices of the contemporary world, stressing the importance of empathy and ethical intervention in the pursuit of a just society.

When reading on social justice in Adiga's novel, it is crucial to analyze how the ethical dimension is used in these stories. Adiga's books tend to ask tough questions about morality, responsibility, and the possibilities and limits of personal action.

Adiga's stories challenge readers to think about who and what they value, what they believe, and where they stand in the face of what undermines or empower him. The investigation of social justice issues in Aravind Adiga's fiction reveals the complexities of inequality, oppression, and protest in contemporary India and the wider world.

His novels are a stirring indictment of the human failure to close the gap between the God we preach and the world we make and a powerful reminder of the necessity of empathy, critical thinking, and collective action in tackling the world's most pressing challenges.

Adiga asks readers to consider their own complicity in the face of systems of oppression, and to question what they can do to help continue to build the kind of world that values a sense of justice for all.

Conclusion

The novel of Aravind Adiga further enriches the debate on social justice by presenting a critical view of social inequalities and their effects on marginalized individuals.

Adiga's stories not only expose the cruelties of inequality but also force his readers to weigh the ethical dimensions of such social systems.

His fictional works stir minds and prostrate thriving discussions about justice, egalitarianism and the moral responsibilities of human beings in unjust institutions. Adiga's in-depth analysis of social and political problems increases our understanding of the challenges faced by those who strive for social justice and facilitates a more committed engagement towards a fairer world.

Through the fictions of Aravind Adiga we have a much-needed and provocative way of viewing the social and moral infrastructure of contemporary India. His stories are animated by a powerful concern for justice—not as an abstraction but as the lived effects of history, economics and culture.

Through a diverse set of characters, environments and voices, Adiga tells stories that make you confront the ugly realities of poverty, casteism, corruption and exploitation. In the process, he questions the mainstream stories of development and modernization as they often do not take into account the often silenced voices of the disenfranchised. In a world marked by inequality, Adiga's fiction echoes beyond India. His fiction is in dialogue with larger global questions of justice, identity, power and his position belongs with writers who are committed to social critique through the medium of the novel.

With his humane attention to forgotten strivers, by giving voice to others on the not-so-happy side of the caste divide, Adiga is effectively joining the debate on social justice.

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