



Culture Replication in the Novels of Aravind Adiga & V.S. Naipaul

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Abstract

Nowadays people have disassociated themselves from their own identity, tradition and cultural heritage. Undoubtedly, the 21st century is the period of disappearance of national identity. About 95 percents of population in India is overwhelmed by the Western culture and tend to forget the native Indian values. Owing to the cultural decay, Indians face unbearable bitter experiences in particular the younger generations are most affected. Drinking and smoking have become the style of the students. They become the addicts of the internet and pornographic culture. Girls and women hurl the dressing style of India and wear the clothes like English people. Some survey reports that these drastic changes are one of the sources for the moral deprivation of youths and they involve themselves into rape and other violence on females which have been increased in the last ten years.

Keywords: disassociation, cultural decay, disappearance of national identity, moral deprivation

Now a days people have disassociated themselves from their own identity, tradition and cultural heritage. Undoubtedly, the 21st century is the period of disappearance of national identity. About 95 percents of population in India is overwhelmed by the Western culture and tend to forget the native Indian values. Owing to the cultural decay, Indians face unbearable bitter experiences in particular the younger generations are most affected. Drinking and smoking have become the style of the students. They become the addicts of the internet and pornographic culture. Girls and women hurl the dressing style of India and wear the clothes like English people. Some survey

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‘Social Realism’ has taken various concrete shapes and forms because of the attitudes and the consequent behaviour of people towards one another. It is not a new concept used in literary works. It has begun as a movement against Classism and Romanticism and don’t expect idealism in the ways of life. Social Realism is neither limited to any one country nor to a particular century nor to a particular



group of writers. As a movement, it has been closely associated with the literary movement in France during 19th century. It started in France with the works of the novelists like Flaubert and Balzac. It became very popular in England with the works of George Eliot. The works of William Dean Howells had established its individual identity in America. As far as India is concerned, there are innumerable Indian writers who have displayed their social consciousness by following this narrative technique, and display their social awareness of such societal ills affecting the people who are powerless and who find very difficult to make both ends meet during their livelihood.

Thus 'Social realism' is an extraordinary search for understanding of social life. The writers in their works provide their keen interest on observations and unfiltered representation of the society. They confront the truth underlying in the ordinary existences of their contemporary society and neglect nothing that is ugly or painful in which the injustices and the fallible existence of the society is brought out. Thus, the writers use the visual art technique to unravel the layers of the social fabric relating to social readjustments and maladjustments.

The literary artists who give expression to the social issues in their works are the people with strong social consciousness and they are called 'Social Realists'. It is they who have "focused on the ugly realities of contemporary life and sympathized with working class people, particularly the poor. They have recorded what they have seen [as existed] in dispassionate manner" (*Academic Decathlon Curriculum* 294). Hence, their works have become the voice of the existing incurable ills of the society. Such social ills are the discrimination among human beings on the basis of gender, social standing, religion, ethnicity, and cultural tradition; the betrayal of trust and love in human relationship and the indulgence of power mongers in corrupt practices to enjoy more illegal pecuniary benefits and so on.

There is a galaxy of Indian writers in English, show their national consciousness through their works. Under the technique of social realism they portray the truthful and honest picture of the society

and try their level best to create awakening in the suffering Indians, voice their concern in favour of the elimination of social evils and express their desire for social reforms for the betterment of all Indians irrespective of their religious, social and professional status and the differences in cultural habits in society.

Even though great efforts were taken by several writers, the eradication of the social issues of India remains a mystery and till date it has not been uprooted. Hence the contemporary social realists – the renowned Commonwealth writer, Sir Vidiadhar Suraj Prasad Naipaul and the Indian writer, Aravind Adiga, take-up the responsibility to rewrite the images of the miserable social issues of the country, India, which is the ancestor's motherland for V.S. Naipaul and the mother land for Adiga.

The writers V. S. Naipaul and Adiga could be seen as keen in their observations on the cultural decay of India. With the burdened heart, the disappearance of the Indian culture- the oldest as well as richest is seen by the writers when western culture establishes its strong base and gradually wipes the unique culture of India. At present, people show very much curiosity to imitate the trends of western countries which results westernization greatly encroach and affect the life of the present Indian people which is unimaginable. V. S. Naipaul in *India: A Wounded Civilization* reports that "India continues [its] imitative . . . India without its own living traditions, has lost the ability . . . (126). Western culture has led to many important social changes. Today's festive-mood ceremonies, the common dress code, familial relationship, craze and the domination of the language English etcetera stand as the evidence of the vanishing Indian culture and it seems that Indian culture becomes a word and it may remain only in the dictionary.

The Westernization has pronounced the need for the English language throughout the world. English has become the important language for Global community. It is represented as the language of masters in India. More instances are chosen from the author views to uphold the craze in the language English. The beginning of the novel *The White Tiger* suggests the superiority of the English. Balram writes to Jiabao, Chinese Prime Minister. "Neither you nor I



speak English but, there are some things that can be said only in English” (3). Balram’s master Ashok and his wife Pinky mock at Balram about his mispronunciation of pizza. Pinky says:

Ashok,’ she said. ‘Now hear this. Balram, what is it we’re eating?’

I knew it was a trap, but what could I do? – I answered. The two of them burst into giggles.

‘Say it again, Balram.’

They laughed again. ‘It’s not p iJJA. It’s pizza. Say it properly.’

‘Wait – you’re mispronouncing it too. There’s a T in the middle. *Peet.Zah* (154).

V.S. Naipaul finds the middle class Indians who takes pride in nicknames which are Westernized so that Anand becomes Andy and Brijesh becomes Bunny. He indicates the imitations of an army officer in *An Area of Darkness*, he says the Indian army officer “manages to look English, his gait and bearing are English, his mannerism, his tastes in drinks are English his slang is English. In Indian setting, this Indian English mimicry is like fantasy” (57).

In the article “A Post Colonial Bestiary: Metaphors of Power in Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*” Esterino Adami quotes the words of Krishnaswamy who says that

Those who can afford, get imported whisky and the best English education; at the ext lower level, people go in for ‘Indian-Made-Foreign-Liquor’ (IMFL) and better English education; at the lower levels, most people will have to be satisfied with the government approved locally brewed liquor sold in ‘toddy shops’ and government-run-English medium-schools, and still lower are those who consume the illicit arrack, the least expensive but the deadliest, while their children learn how to say ‘Daddy and Mummy’ in some ‘teaching shops’ which pretend to be ‘English medium schools’. The basic rule is the same-one for the Master who can afford it and one for the poor boy/girl who lives down the lane! (10)

The total hybrid life style of people creates a bogus concept that Westernization is one of the major parts of Indian civilization. For instance, Aravind Adiga verifies that everything - liquor, girls, language, and dressing is superior if it is from western and

proves That the consumerist culture aims at the destruction of the native culture and identity. In *The White Tiger* Adiga establishes through Balram, the hero of the novel who explains to the Chinese Prime Minister Jiabao:

I should explain to you, Mr. Jiabao, that in this country we have two kinds of men: Indian liquor men and English liquor men. Indian liquor was for village boys like me - toddy, arrack, country hooch. English liquor naturally is for rich. Rum, whisky, beer, gin - anything the English left behind. (73)

The writers are the big shots in unveiling the abominal repercussions of the cultural decay. V. S. Naipaul and Adiga declare that complete imitating of the cultures of others is a drawback for India. They state emphatically that India remains incomplete due to the borrowal of foreign culture and the unawareness of the country’s own potentials. It is highlighted by the writers that the blind influences of the predominant cultures is should be avoided. V. S. Naipaul says in *India: A Wounded Civilization* that “India blindly swallows its past” (116) and travels in the unfit path for its own identity.

Owing to the cultural decay, Indians face unbearable bitter experiences in particular the younger generations are most affected. Drinking and smoking have become the style of the students. They become the addicts of the internet and pornographic culture. Girls and women hurl the dressing style of India and wear the clothes like English people. Some survey reports that these drastic changes are one of the sources for the moral deprivation of youths and they involve themselves into rape and other violence on females which have been increased in the last ten years. V. S. Naipaul and Aravind Adiga, with their penning bring out the various issues to the light to describe the negative impact of westernization and the loss of Indian identity and its culture. Aravind Adiga brings out the worst impacts of the pornographic culture in which younger generations lose their life and unscrupulously ruin the life of others also.

In Adiga’s *Between the Assassinations*, D’ Mello, the strict, orthodox and highly idealistic teacher at St Alfonso’s Boy’s High School feel deep resentment on



the moral depravity of the younger generation when his dearest and sole comfort student Girish desires to see the pornographic pictures. It makes his blood boil about the immoral behaviours of the youths and feels cultural decay occurs in India is the source for their degradation.

By developing the bad and immoral behaviors students and younger generations turn as hindrance to the society and its people. They develop lust and involve into the sexual violence against Children and girls. Metropolitan cities like Delhi and Bangalore are the most affected by these abominable changes. Everyone proudly talks about India's capital, Delhi which is "the capital of our glorious nation. The seat of Parliament, of the president, of all ministers and prime ministers. The pride of our civic planning. The showcase of the republic . . . And the truth is that Delhi is a crazy city" (118). Today this capital turns to be a rapist capital. Changing culture is the root cause of these evil effects. Totally India's style of attire is lost. People want to change their attire like that of the English people and try to attract others. Metropolitan cities have become slaves of this other culture. In the novel *The White Tiger* Balram's master's wife, Pinky madam is an American. She continues the American culture even after her marriage which does not fit the Indian culture. Balram says: "She wore trousers; I gaped. Who had ever seen a woman dressed in trousers before – except in the movies? I assumed at first she was an American" (75).

Adiga vividly portrays how Westernization ruins one's culture and heritage. Indians follow the dress code of English people and caste out their own dress codes. Balram explains: "I had stopped the car at a traffic signal; a girl began crossing the road in a tight T-shirt, her chest bobbing up and down like three kilograms of brinjals in a bag. I glanced at the rearview mirror – and there was Mr. Ashok, his eyes also bobbing up and down" (199). Through the recollections of Balram, Adiga reflects the fast deterioration of moral values and open exhibition of female sexuality in the fashionable society of Delhi.

The cosmopolitan cities have developed with full of vulgarity and glamour. They target only the flesh of females. Printing and supplying of obscene magazines

among the amoral is a profitable trade now. Mainly drivers are affected by these illegal attitudes. They go with the pimps or see the lewd magazines, thinking that they will get peace of mind. All these behaviors of an individual and the moral degradation of the society has created a unsafe zone and untold misery to people particularly to women.

Balram as a driver explains how cultural conflicts had a bad impact on the drivers. Balram says, "The driver with the diseased lips was sitting apart from them engrossed in his magazine. On this week's cover there was a photo of a woman lying on a bed, here clothes undone; her lover stood next to her, raising a knife over her head" (78). In metropolitan cities, girls at a very early age start to sell their bodies to lead a luxurious life. This change in culture makes them to think that selling their body is a worthwhile business and not a sin. Balram's friend, who is a driver, explains this midnight culture:

My master's daughter works in one of those buildings too. I drop her off at eight o'clock and she comes back at two in the morning. I know she makes pots and pots of money in that building, because she spends it all day in the malls. He leaned in close – the pink lips were just centimeters from mine. Between the two of us, I think it's rather odd – girls going into buildings late at night and coming out with so much cash in the morning. (128)

India's cultural values are at peril and the contemporary India is in need to take necessary steps to keep these values alive in every citizen. Cultural degradation causes women to become victims of sexual abuse and prostitution. They are degraded as objects for male sexual gratification and prostitution. Due to the influence of Westernization people give importance more to foreign languages than to the regional language.

Earlier there were no night parties, theatre-going culture or celebrating parties in hotels. These are the negative impacts of Westernization. Adiga pays his attention particularly on Bangalore and the capital city, Delhi as he considers that these two cities have lost their culture. People destroy their Indian identity and culture by going to hotels to celebrate and have



fun. This is the repercussion of Americanization. Balram says:

PVR Sacket is the scene of a big cinema, which shows ten or twelve films at the same time, and charges over a hundred and fifty rupees per film – yes, that’s right, a hundred and fifty rupees! That’s not all: you’ve also got plenty of places to drink beer, dance, pick up girls, that sort of thing. A small bit of America in India”. (203)

The Indian society is greatly being affected by the Western culture. With the upcoming trends and modernization, Indians move towards the West and ignore their own cultural values. It has produced profound changes in structures of the family, marriage and in relationship also. After being settled in the western countries most of the Indians start thinking and comparing their own nation on the touch stone of the West and they sometimes stubbornly resist India and the country craves and cries for her ungrateful son and daughters. In Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*, Pinky, wife of Balram’s master Ashok, returned from America, but hates the Indian traditional and social restraints and feels that Indian way of living is a deterrent for her freedom. She leaves Ashok and moves to America to have a modern and westernized life. Both the writers thus stress that people should not let down their own tradition and culture and that Indians have to be proud to be Indians.

In the name of modernization, some of the people have lost the ethical values in them. The most effective way to destroy a people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history and their culture. It is said that the changing culture among girls are one of the sources for increasing number of sexual harassments and molestation. V. S. Naipaul says in *India: A Millions of Mutinies* that “The sexual harassment of women in public places, often sly, sometimes quite open, was a problem all over India”(20).

The lesbian and homosexual culture is the echo of the American culture too. This loathful relationship is everywhere in the metropolitan cities. They openly declare they are lesbians. Indian judiciary declares these unnatural relationships are sick to the society and an offence as well. But the shameless group,

protest against the verdict and clearly spells the danger awaiting to Indian culture. Balram writes about this in his letter.

In fact, the sight of these golden haired foreigners – and you’ll discover that Bangalore is full of them these days – has only convinced me that the white people are on the way out. All of them look so emaciated – so puny you’ll never see one of them with a decent belly. For this I blame the president of America. He has made buggery perfectly legal in his country, and men are marrying other men instead of women. This was on the radio; this is leading to the decline of the white man. (305)

Adiga pinpoints the life style of people in Bangalore. IT fields are the repercussion of Westernization. This changes the life style of human beings as animals. Balram describes:

Let me explain, Your Excellency. See, men and women in Bangalore live like the animals in a forest do. Sleep in the day and then work all night, until two, three, four, five o’ clock, depending, because their masters are on the other side of the world, in America, big question: how will the boys and girls – girls especially – get from home to the work place in the late evening and then get back home at three in the morning? There is no night bus system in Bangalore, no train system like in Mumbai. The girls would not be safe on buses or trains anyway. The men of this city, frankly speaking, are animals. (298)

There is a change in the moral attitudes of people. The industrialization leads to mechanization and as a consequences of mechanization man becomes an automation and loses his independence and moral autonomy. The industrialization has produced a man who functioned in a manner of a component of a machine. He feels himself a victim of circumstances.

As industrialization has created great demand for working hands, women get along work with men. Due to this they have achieved economic independence and are no longer. The old moral values are broken down in these environments where people astray from their morality and turn as sick to their own culture and society.



Adiga in his novel *Last Man in Tower* anatomises how Indian identity are ruined in the constructions of houses, high rise apartments through which the corrosion of middle class values are exposed clearly by Adiga. The writer brings a struggling life of a man, Masterji who loses his life to save his own old building. The real estate owner, Shah wants to demolish the old building which is in way of Indian construction and needs to build a luxurious apartment like that in the Western countries. But Masterji fights rigidly to save the building but loses everything. When he is compelled to vacate, he resists. Masterji's resistance is futile.

Masterji thinks all human beings become merciless for money. He says "*Pigeon, crow, hummingbird; spider, scorpion, silverfish, termite and red ant; bats, bees, stinging wasps, clouds of anopheles mosquitoes. Come, all of you: and protect me from human beings*" (126). At last, Sha captures the building after the death of Master ji. *The story is premised on clear moral fractures. Everyone has become self-centered and madly pursue his or her self-interest without any considerations of others which is totally contradictory to Indian culture which teaches its public to be a part of each others' joys and sorrows. People are blindly following the western culture without knowing its consequences.*

The tale of this one man Masterji who refuses to leave his home is the present status of the middle class people. If a politician or a rich person wishes to buy a land they inform the land owners to vacate; if they deny, they loss their life. According to this greedy groups the life of human beings are invalid. Adiga compares the bulldozers to monsters which are used to demolish the buildings. He pinpoints:

It was a monster, sitting at the top of the pit with huge metal jaws alternately gorging and disgorging immense quantities of mud. Like creatures that had to obey it, men with troughs of mud on their heads walked in circles around the machine; they did not look much bigger than mice. Even in the winter night the sweat had made their shirts stick to their glistening black bodies. (158)

The real estate culture paves the way to deforestation. **Deforestation also very danger and a dreadful one in India.** For new constructions of big concerns and apartments deforestation is massively done. In some extreme case farming lands are confiscated for international companies. It often results in damage to the quality of the land and gives numerous troubles to the human society. Deforestation is a life-threatening issue being carried out in the name of development. The innumerable laws and rules and regulations remain only in paper in a situation where laws enforcers and law breakers seem to be on the same side.

Aravind Adiga paints the picture of deforestation in the novel *Between the Assassinations*. He indicates that

One morning in 1987, all of bishop street woke up to hear the dull thack-thack-thack- of axes hacking away at the trees. In a few days chainsaws were buzzing and cranes were scooping up giant portions of black earth. And that was the end of the great forest of Bajpe. In its place the inhabitations and an army of bare-chested migrant workers caring stacks of bricks and cement bags on their head like ants moving about grains of rice. A giant sigh in Kannada and Hindi proclaimed this the future sit of 'Sardar Patel Iron Man of India Sports Stadium.' The racket was incessant, and dust swirled up from the pit like steam from a geyser. Outsiders who came to Bajpe thought the neighbourhood had become a dozen degrees warmer. (250)

There is no harm in imbibing and learning good things from western countries which does not mean that one should completely adopt it and pretend to be western and misrepresent the Indian identity. It is inevitable that India grows in every field and there is necessity of knowing all the other cultures and traditions. To some extent it is fine but one should not pretend that they dislike the Indian values and likes only western culture. Indians have the responsibility to preserve their own culture and should not let it become degrade.

During the narrative course of their journey through India, the writers V. S. Naipaul and Aravind



Adiga explore the fact that there is no identity of Indian culture, which has completely vanished from the society because of Westernization. Caste system splits human beings into upper and lower class and it gives a miserable life in particular to the lower class people. Religious conflicts and communal riots disturb the peace and unity of the nation. Aravind Adiga leaves India in the hands of the God to save his nation from these monstrous problems. He concludes that “God save everyone else” (305). In *India: A Wounded Civilization*, Naipaul reminds the words of Annie Besant who says that “God save our mother land, God save our noble land, God save our Ind[ia]” (10).

The writers give an awakening call to the Indian people about the various existing conflicts of the nation. The image of India which one imagines after reading the books of V. S. Naipaul and Aravind Adiga may be more scathing and scornful than what a reader can find in other books about India. It seems that to project the social reality, the writers have crossed the boundaries and their writings are not depressing ones; they should in fact can be appreciated as novels of reawakening, realization and reconstruction. Their portrayal of the conflicts is not from a brown study of India but from their own personal experiences through which they expose the realistic view of the nation.

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