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# Exploring the Unexplored- Postcolonial Issues in the novels of Upmanyu Chatterjee and Arvind Adiga

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Dr. Manoj Shankarrao Madavi

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Annasaheb Gundewar, College, Katol Road, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India

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## **Abstract**

*Indian English fiction writings have flourished after the post-independence period. Most of the Indian English novels were dealing with post-partition, changing social-political values and impact of colonial rule on Indian Psyche. Upmanyu Chatterjee wrote some of the prominent novels focusing on changing values of Indian society in postcolonial India were having high education and all comforts of life, characters in novels finds themselves in a cultural dilemma. Postcolonial literature of India which deals with the decolonization of the minds of colonized communities. Important issues like socio-economic disparities, cultural domination, ethical subjugation, identical marginalization, political nepotism, and corrupt bureaucracy have been brought to the forefront by Arvind Adiga in postcolonial Indian English fictions. This research article examines the different aspect of postcoloniality as reflected in the selective novel writing of Upmanyu Chatterjee and Arvind Adiga.*

**Keywords— Culture Clash, Uprootedness, Neoimperialism, Deprivation, Broken Identity**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Upmanyu Chatterjee was the first novelist who satirizes the Indian Administrative services of postcolonial India. His magnificent novels are *The English August* (1981), *The Last Barden* (1997) and *The Mammaries of Welfare State* (2000) where we find the anti-hero's observation of India. The heroes of these novels find themselves in a cultural clash. They are confused between their modern upbringing and traditional values. Their urban materialistic mentality, family values in the contemporary scenario and their inner turmoil. Upmanyu Chatterjee's novel gives us an idea of how was the consequences of encounter and fusion of traditional Indian Society and British colonial mentality. The way Chatterjee has narrated the colonial ruling and native responses through his writings; it seems that he is the by-product of both the cultures. He has a very good study and analysis of East and West cultures and their value system. In this regards, Minakshi Mukherjee has given a very good opinion, "The intellectual nature of his own writing becomes for such

a writer a theme of profound interest. Therefore the search for one's identity is found to be a common and recurrent theme Indo Anglican fiction" (Mukharjee: 1971:66).

Through his novels, Chatterjee has shown his protagonists crave for identity. Social traditions in India are brilliantly focused on him. A postcolonial trauma of cultural hybridity and cultural assimilation runs through his novels. The frustration of the characters, inner struggle and marital conflicts are some of the points on which their psychological states are observed by the novelist. His characters come to know that the root problem of their alienation in western educational modes, a different attitude toward physical needs and their parental relationships. Upmanyu Chatterjee's novel, *The English August*, *The Last Burden* and *The Mannoses of Welfare State*, all deals with the difference between western materialism and eastern upbringings. Obviously, the cultural uprootedness, cultural loss and the identity of a confused mind, find the main theme of his novels like the other postcolonial novelist including,

Rukim Advani, Mukul Keshvani and Nalinaksha Bhattacharya. In this regards, S. N. Sharma opines in his *Recent Revelation of Indian Fiction in English*,

When an individual goes abroad and stays there for quite a few years quite possibly there is a silvering and disbranching. He gets alienated from his roots in native soil. He is no longer year's chestnut, the great rooted blossomed. When he gets back home with the accretions of foreign cultures, he finds himself in distress acclimatizing himself. His is the case of rootlessness, of loyalty and of identity. This agonizing awareness of difference and sameness is the plight of the isolated individual trying to forge precariously a delicate balance. (Prasad: 1983:207)

## II. POSTCOLONIAL IDENTICAL AND EXISTENTIAL ISSUES IN NOVEL WRITINGS OF ADIGA AND CHATTERJEE

Chatterjee has shown August Sen as the anti-hero of the novel posted as BDO in the small town of Madana, West Bengal but because of his urban and elite education, he finds life utterly boring, his other administrative colleagues are dull and his administrative mechanical work finds him no reason of good life. He takes refuge in drinking and drugs. This novel is a striking satire on bureaucracy and how bribery is indirectly important for officialdom. Sophisticated cynicism in spite of efficient stage of mind has been brought out convincingly by Upmanyu Chatterjee. In the novel, he experiences selfish civil servant, opportunistic political leaders, the violent face of naxals, wretched tribals, and a true Gandhian Dr. Rammana who is a worker for the leprosy patients. After seeking his refuge in drinking and drugs, Augustya takes his job seriously, taking inspiration from Rammana. Following conversation of Augustya and his colleagues shows his disliking about his working culture, fitting with the three men, he was again assailed by a sense of the unreal. "I do not like a breaker what am I doing here. I should have even a photographer or a maker of aid films, something like that, shallow and urban" (Chatterjee: 2003:02).

Chatterjee another novel of postcolonial social realism is *The Last Burden* (1993) where three-generation lives under one roof having different

outlooks towards life. In a real sense, *The Last Burden* is the story of unaccountability of life. Jamun, the central character whose philosophical longings finds no escape nor gives any concrete idea of his reasoning about human existence. He is shown as a drifting object between family expectations and personal longings. R.S. Pathak comments on this psychology as follow, "This is the unbearable burden of family ties as Jamun the protagonist comes to realize when he returns home, after being informed that this mother is critically ill. The better and sweet memory of the past mingles with the tensions and irritations of the present. This could have made for an absorbing drama in the theatre of the mind" (Chatterjee: 1993:70). The psychology of modern educated Indian youth has been depicted in the character of Jamun who depicts an average Indian youth, who considers that his life will be easier in London or New York than in small place of India. The relationship status in middle-class Indian families is the main focus of Chatterjee's writing. The protagonist is born in the family which is hateful. Notice, the mindset of the protagonist,

At fifteen and at twenty-eight, Jamun recognized the disparity in what money denotes to him and to Berfi rather at fifteen, he was certain at twenty-eight, he fancied that a difference in their attitudes might exist, but also that it might not matter. He himself gauges money to be wily. If he has the money, he will by chewing gum or condoms or a refrigerator. If he does not he will puzzle himself to do without. The self-discipline becomes in itself quite piquant. But for Berfi, deprivation is a failure, a cudgel to his self-esteem. (Chatterjee: 1993:69-70)

Chatterjee's next novel, *The Mammaries of Welfare State*, is the sequel of his first novel, *The English August*. It presents a more drastic picture of modern bureaucracy than his first novel. Chatterjee takes us on a completely new pattern of 'Banderland of Bobudom' and uses several ironical devices to pinch their absurdities. Bureaucratic red-tape, nepotism, sheer corruption and lethargic pig-headedness are brilliantly delineated by the novelist. Management of the corrupt politics, bureaucracy with their personal benefits to certain classes, the depravity of marginal, subaltern section and finally the false image of the *Welfare State* have been skillfully constructed by the novelist. *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* is a much bigger and

much wider book than its precursor. Augustya Sen is older now but as shiftless minor character drifts in and out when you least expect them in again. There is not even the excuse of a plot. Because really nothing happens except a lot of bureaucratic confusions" (The Hindu: 1 April 2001: 04). The novel shows the barrenness, opportunistic state policies and the elite families who fail to understand the meaning of life.

### III. LITERARY SILENCE ON MARGINALITY BY POSTCOLONIAL INDIAN WRITING

Indian English fiction writer looks down the regional literature, therefore, they do not want to educate themselves with the regional themes and literatures about the various perspective of local and native life of the Indian community. Writing in English is one kind of linguistic imperialism. This must not forget that English education in India was a kind of linguistic imperialism. This is the language which was forced on the Indian psyche. It could be a better medium to resist neo-colonization in India. But English writer is still in the hallucination that they are getting world recognition by the western literary world. Writing in western style, entertaining western materialistic values is another form to revive colonial legacy. Indian English fiction writer should oppose the recolonization of Indian minds and literary subjects. They can take inspirations from African writers like N. Gugu WA Thinogo and Chinua Achebe. The Indian writers should give priority to native, aboriginal themes in their writings. They should promote indigenous culture, local issues and strengthen the voices of the agrarian society in India. Writing with western values can not become you westerner. In spite of all the literary crafts, you will be still orient in the eyes of western sophisticated canons of literature. Indian English writer should take regional themes and revive the martyrdom of freedom fighter which should become a literary discourse in the western world also.

He has studied tribal- Dalit and minority life under these policies. Most of the evils which are the root cause of the discrimination among tribals and Dalits are still exist in India after Independence. His first novel *The White Tiger* deals with numerous contradictions of the early free Indian villages. Novel presents the dark life and sufferings of tribals and underclasses. The novel has taken Laxamangarh, Gaya, and Dhanbad as its main locations which are major tribal- Dalit dominated territories. Dalits and tribals are still the oppressed souls in this country. The novel presents their

exploitation, problem of illiteracy, employment, zamindari practices, social taboos, rigid class discrimination, corrupt politician sick educational system, shrewd entrepreneurs, illusive media and moll cultures. He is of the opinion that all these materialistic objects contribute to exploit Dalit, tribal and marginal society.

*The White Tiger* is the gripping story of tribals, underclasses and their misery where life begins for food, for the rights of the land, seeking shelter at the roadside and their place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of India. Balram also belongs to the marginal community. Here, we can consider that Balram is the mouthpiece for Dalits, tribals, labourers and farmers because most of the part of the novel is situated in Dhanbad (Jharkhand) which is the major tribal populated territory. Here, Balram opines:

So the rest of the village waited in a big group outside the shop. When the buses came, they got on packing the inside, hanging from the rolling, limbing into the roofs and went to Gaya, there they went to the station and rushed into the train, packing the inside, hanging from the railings, climbing into the roofs and went to Delhi, Calcutta and Dhanbad to find work. A month before the rain, the men come back from Dhanbad and Delhi and Calcutta, learner, darker, anger but with money in their pockets. The women were waiting for them, they hide behind the door and as soon as men walked in, the pounced like wild cats on a slab of flesh. (Adiga: 2008:26)

The novel, *The White Tiger* is set in U.P. and Jharkhand which are Dalit-tribal belts of India. Obviously, after the seventy years of Independence, Dalits, particularly tribals are still struggling for their rights. Their struggle of survival is continuing for the last three centuries. Yet Government is not able to give them their constitutional rights. So for the employment, tribals are leaving their local places and wondering to North India. This is the contemporary reality of India on which Adiga has commented. The novelist has shown a rural as well as urban society which is deceased with western parameters of modernity. The east is copying west, therefore the problems are arising. Novel boldly attacks Indian evils like the major ratio of illiteracy, cast discrimination, cultural deprivation, superstitions, exploited tribals, struggling farmers, marginalize

women, malnutrition infants, the rise of naxalism, poor health service, tax-evading rackets, weakening family structures, prostitution, corporate success, and its fallouts. Everything is incorporated brilliantly which makes the real picture of postcolonial India. Novelist Adiga has created the picture which he has shown from his little brisk sentences:

Half backed that the whole tragedy of this country. Typhoid, cholera and election fever, are the main diseases of this country and the last one the worst". Voters discuss the election helplessly as eunuchs discussing the Kama sutra. (98) Moneybags, muscle power, police, strategic alignment of various factions and power to woo the underclass assure the victory in the political game. Balram reports I am the Indians most faithful voter and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth. (Adiga: 2008: 102)

#### IV. NEED TO BREAK THE CULTURAL HEGEMONY AND REPRESENT THE BROKEN CLASSES IN LITERATURE

Adiga has developed the theme of his novel from the villages of early free India. No doubt his description of economic disparity, growing materialism, suppression of aboriginals and marginals are very powerful as compare to other novelists who justified social realism of India after independence. We can say that the novel *The White Tiger* is in true sense *Postcolonial Manifestation of Modern India*. Adiga has made a serious comment on the writing culture about India when he has given an interview to *Guardian* claiming that, one of the most important challenges of a novelist is to write about people who are not anything like me. This is the reality for a lot of Indian people and it's important that it gets written about, rather than just hearing about 5% of people in my country who are doing well. Now the question arises why this happened in postcolonial Indian English Fictions. Regarding this analysis A.K.Chaturvedi comments:

In order to bring into the light the lifestyle and social status of scheduled tribes, in particular, a few Indian writers have depicted them in their writings. Although twentieth-century writers have profusely dealt with rural life, they have rarely touched upon

tribal as such in their writings. This smells to a conspiracy of silence against a large chunk of our society which is doomed to remain marginalized and lead life in its periphery. (Chaturvedi: Prafece: VII)

Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* is a prominent voice in postcolonial India which demands a socialist manifesto to dismantle the inequalities and dissemination between Big Belies and Small Belies. The novelist has made a major comment on homelessness rootlessness unemployment and displacement of tribal societies which are dislocated from their own land and find shelter in the muddy area of the metro. His picture of modern India clearly visible from his next comment, "Thousands of people lives on the side of the road of Delhi. They have come from the darkness too. You can smell them by their bodies, filthy faces, by the animal-like way they live under the huge bridges and overpasses, making fires and washing and taking like out of their hair while the car roar past them. These homeless people... never wait for a red light" (Adiga: 2008:120).

The novel *The White Tiger* gives a historical view of India that poor, tribal, Dalit, farmers, laborers are exploited, on the basis of their culture, cast, occupations and economic status by the elite mainstream. The history of the world is the history of ten-thousand year of the war fought between the rich and the poor. Each side is eternally trying to hoodwink the other side. (254) This results in the incurable paralysis of one part of the society to which Balram, tribal, Dalit belongs and other remains sophisticated, elite with their materialistic mentality. This paralyzed community is presented with extreme realism by the title as *The White Tiger*. Final message Arvind Adiga gives to the social, political and democratic system to be aware themselves of the tribal, Dalits and marginals rights. He longs for the social, political, economic rights of marginal and broken communities. They are still waiting for their constitutional and social rights of respect and dignity. If their suppression, exploitation and dominance continue, they will bring out the monster in themselves and become criminals. These marginalized are sympathetic towards their broken communities and for entire human races on the planet. It may be turn out to be a decent city where the human can live as like human beings and the animal can live like an animal. Regarding the regional voice of Mahashweta Devi for tribals, Dinesh Mishra opines *In Marginalization*



of *Tribals: Literature as Resistance* in the edited book, *Literature and Social Change*, opines:

The tribal have suffered marginally and its inevitable deprivation for a long time. Literature has been a witness to it, but not a dumb witness. Writers like Mahashweta Devi in her novels, short stories and prose writings have exposed the villainy of profit mongering industrial and mining, corporates, inconvenience with the writing classes. She is of the view that forest belongs to the forest dwellers, the tribal communities. They must not be ousted from their own land and environment, just to satisfy the ambition of some profiteers with insatiable greed. (Mishra: 2015:148)

## V. CONCLUSION

It is expected from postcolonial Indian English fiction writers that they should oppose the neo-colonization of the native communities. They should understand the importance of mass resistance against Imperialism. They should come out from their colonial educational background and sophisticated western patterns of literary writing and make a collective front of the world's socialist order where society, social concern, values of equality and liberty will be the main focus of writings. They should learn from the dark reminiscences of colonialism but should be very attentive about contemporary issues of writings. They should relate the Indian English literature with the postcolonial writings of Africa, America and Asia. They should strengthen the voices of tribal aboriginal, minorities, laborers and farmers against recolonization of the world. Indian English writers should focus on imparting the importance of social justice and communal harmony. They should promote the agrarian masses to be the ruler of the state and promote public centric policies. They should refuse the interference of corporate in governmental administration. In this way, India English fiction writers can promote resistance literature and challenge the intensity of global capitalism. In this way, our novelist can give justice to broken identities and existential issues of the Adivasi community.

The postcolonial writing in India speaks about Indian transformation after Independence. But global policies, corporate interference in governmental

decisions, neoimperialism of Indian culture, tribal language and literature rarely becomes the topic of novel writing whereas we can notice these subjects as the main topic of African and Latin American writing. Today Imperialism has maintained the governments of the many third world nation countries through their corporate agents. Imperialism uses the local military to suppress the resistance of indigenous communities. These happened in Native America, Latin America, the African continent, Asia and Australia. Regarding this, Anand Varma says:

Imperialism is the power structure of dead capitalism. Handfuls of stock exchange shareholders of Wall Street decide the future or death of a company. They can decide what to eat and where to eat. They give birth to drought, pollution war or cultural genocide. The common man, the farmer who is away from these global policies becomes the prior victim. The huge profit of these multinational seems only on the screen of the bank computer. In the contemporary global world, the organization likes the International Monetary Fund and World Bank are deciding the policies and future of the mass population of Africa, Asia and Latin America.(Varma:2009:161)  
(Translated)

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