

The Silent Suffering: Poverty as a Central Theme in Aravind Adiga's *Between the Assassinations*

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ABSTRACT

India's prominent voice in the twenty-first century is Aravind Adiga. He portrays the suffering of India's oppressed class. Adiga creates a striking image of the life in *Between the Assassinations*. The major themes of his works are poverty, hunger, and the exploitation of those who are poor. The novel's twelve parts, which focus on the various aspects of life in the village of Kittur, offer a glimpse into the India of Darkness. The novel, explores how poverty, the mother of all evils, creates other evils in society and sheds light on the social and political unrest that India saw in 1984 and 1991. There are many different types of characters in the novel, ranging from the town's poorest person to Kittur, the richest person. It portrays the terrible reality of underdeveloped rural communities forced to migrate to cities in order to exist as homeless people

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INTRODUCTION

Aravind Adiga is a novelist with a strong social conscience who won the Man Booker Prize for his debut novel *The White Tiger*. He emphasizes the hardships of marginalized and vulnerable groups in Indian society in all his writings. He has written five novels namely *The White Tiger*, *Between the Assassinations*, *Last Man in Tower*, *Selection Day*, and *Amnesty*. He portrays the pain and suffering of the lower classes in nearly all of his writings. The major theme of his novel continues to be poverty and socioeconomic disparity.

The novel *Between the Assassinations* clearly shows that heartbreaking image of poverty and the division between the rich and the poor is shown in the stories Day Four: “Umbrella Street”, Day Four (Afternoon), “The Cool Water Well Junction”, Day Five: “Valencia” (to the first Cross Road), and Day Five (Evening): “The cathedral of Our Lady of Valencia”. These stories demonstrate how, despite India's current period of privatization and liberalization, the state of the poor has gotten worse.

In “Lighthouse Hill”, Xerox Ramkrishana, a poor Dalit book seller, must offer cheap copies of works such as Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* and Karl Marx at unlawful prices in order to make money. Xerox has been arrested twenty-one times for selling illegal *Satanic* texts, but he restarts his company after gaining his freedom. His father cleaned the toilets of wealthy landlords while wearing a loincloth and removing trash from their homes, as was traditional for members of his caste.

Xerox is forced to entertain the cops after he is taken into custody by telling them various welcoming stories. The sad part is that the upper class rich jailors and police officers have great pleasure in the heartwarming story of lower caste poor Xerox's father. When Xerox tells his father's pathetic story they laugh as follows:

All day long, his old man would hang around the back wall of the landlord's house, waiting for the smell of human faeces; as soon as he smelled that smell, he came close to the house, and waited, with bent knees, like a wicketkeeper waits for the ball in cricket. (Xerox bent his knees

and showed how.) Then, as soon as he heard the ‘thud,’ of the boom- box closing, he had to run to the wall, put out the retractable potty through a hole in the wall, empty it into the rose-plants, wipe it clean with his loincloth and insert it back into the wall before the next person came to use the toilet. That was the job he did, his whole life, can you believe it! (43).

Xerox sells books in Lighthouse Hill at that time the cops break his legs and warned him and his daughter for selling illegal books.

In the story “The Cool Water Well Junction”, Saumya and Raju, poor children of a drug addicted, Ramcharan have to bring their father a smacked cigarette. They do not receive any money despite their continuous begging and hunger throughout the day. The kids both accept their fate and go to bed with empty stomachs.

The condition of poor people's children is quite terrible. Due to their poverty life, they are unable to eat a healthy and sufficient food. As Soumya does for her brother Raju, these children must take care of their younger brothers and sisters instead of attending school. She feeds Raju in a heartbreaking way: “Mixing the dry rice with the rainwater, she squeezed it into gruel, and stuffed morsels into Raju’s mouth. He said he didn’t like it, and bit her fingers each time she fed him”(215).

Day Five: “Valencia” (To the First Crossroads) tells the story of Jayamma, a poor cook. Her life is a series of horrors and problems. She is the eighth of her mother's nine daughters, making a total of eleven children. Because of their extreme lack of resources, Jayamma is fed ass milk. “By the time Jayamma was born, number eight, there was no milk in her mother’s breasts- they had to feed her an ass’s milk in a plastic bottle. An ass’s milk, yes!”(230).

Because of their poverty, Jayamma and her two sisters must remain single for the rest of their lives. Aravind Adiga shows this: “Her father had saved enough gold only for six daughters to be married off; the last three had to stay barren virgins for life” (230).

Jayamma recognizes the undeniable fact that a person's wealth impacts their social standing in the current world. Despite the protagonist’s attempts to distance herself from Shaila due to caste differences, she is aware of their shared struggles and common humanity. With these remarks, she comforts Shaila: “Stop crying. You’ve got to get tough. Servants like us, who work for others have to learn to be tough” (240).

The irony of this unhappy Jayamma's situation is that she must commit the crime of stealing the punctured ball after being forbidden to take it by the youngster Karthik, whom she feeds. In contrast to Shaila being forced to live away from her family in order to support herself, upper caste Jayamma is also sent to fatten the offspring of others. Should Jayamma's eternal virginity be her fate, poor Shaila too suffers as her marriage is dissolved due to the gold necklace's failure to satisfy Shaila's prospective in-laws.

In the story, *The Elephant*, 29-year-old Chenayya, who works as one of the delivery men for Ganesh Pai Fan & Furniture Store. Large furniture, electronics, are allowed in rickshaw and other objects that are fixed to his cycle for delivery. It is the distress of having to carry something light on his head when it is something that needs to be delivered. “Every turn of the wheel undid him and slowed him down. Each time he cycled, he was working the wheel of life backward, crushing muscle and fiber into the pulp from which they were made in his mother’s womb, he was unmaking himself” (*The Elephant*, 11).

Chenayya physically demanding and dull profession is the source of his rage. When all of his suffering is not enough to end his poverty, Chenayya portrays the realistic picture of how a poor people becomes enraged and envious in an attempt to better himself. At the conclusion of each delivery, he is required to offer Mr. Pai two rupees: one rupee for the lunch and another rupee for the privilege of working for Mr. Ganesh Pai.

Chenayya cannot afford to eat enough due to his low salary. Here, Adiga criticizes the pitiful state of the cart pullers, saying that even with a lifetime's money, they are unable to operate a small tea store or an auto rickshaw. A cart puller's life expectancy is lowered by the demanding nature of his work, and he faces the risk of developing tuberculosis:

Chennayya's savings were all that you could manage, that were fortunate to make four hundred a year. It would cost twelve or fourteen thousand for an auto rickshaw. A tiny tea store four times larger. It would take them thirty to thirty-five years to complete this work before they could move on to something else. But “did they think their bodies would last that long? Did they find a single cart puller above the age of forty around them? (*The Elephant*, 11).

Chenayya's pay is insufficient to support a healthy diet. Undernourished Chenayya gets a burning sensation in his chest and lungs and his tendons in his neck begin to stand out like cords when he is required to

climb over Light House Hill to deliver wealthy people's items on a regular basis. Despite fact that he must continue moving. Chenayya feels angry at the way of the world, "When an elephant gets to lounge downhill without doing any work at all, and a human being has to pull a cart with so much wait on it?" (*The Elephant*, 8) Chenayya believes there is little difference between his situation and that of beggars. "Only one level of society was lower than him: the beggars. Just one slide, and he would be down with them." (*The Elephant*, 20)

A poor person's life remains unchanged till they pass away. Because this is the world where, Chenayya finds it unable to even express her objections, you have to attain a certain level of richness before you can complain about being poor. When you are this poor, you are not given the right to complain.

In Sultan's Battery, Ratnakar Shetty is forced to assume as a fake sexologist and visit a mosque to sell bottles of sugar pills that his daughters had made and packaged to treat genital illnesses. In addition to selling white pills, he also makes money by selling General Knowledge books, which enables him to have his three daughters married.

Therefore, the novel *Between the Assassinations* extensively addresses the issue of poverty. Many of the characters in the novel are from the lowest ranks of society's hierarchy. A cart puller, construction laborers, youngsters who beg, and a poor cook are among the characters. The work sheds light on the harsh realities of slavery and broadens the understanding of the suffering of the oppressed. This novel is a powerful representation of the voiceless impoverished people. Thus, the research paper focuses on India's economic growth, the country hasn't made significant progress in reducing the gap between the rich and the poor or improving the lives of the downtrodden.

WORKCITED

Adiga, Aravind. *Between the Assassinations*. Harper Collins Publications, 2008.

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