

## **Shifting Social Values: A Study of Aravind Adiga's *Selection Day***

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### **Abstract**

Aravind Adiga has painted an extraordinary panorama of contemporary sports, greed, celebrity and mundanity. *Selection Day* is about ambition, success, capitalism and corruption and Aravind Adiga has chosen the international glory to criticize the form of corruption. Earlier cricket epitomized certain values, endurance, loyalty and global profile also. But since last decade with the coming of IPL, the cricket has become the spearhead of capitalism in India and a way of focus on money in extraordinary fashion. The cultural and moral stagnation and backlash has spread out. The cult of success has become interlinked with cricket. Adiga tries to expose the dynamic nature of success and failure in games. Games are the source of access on global stage and globalizing propaganda. Success in sports can be most temporary state and is never without a personal cost. Throughout the story, Manju struggles to forge an identity in a culture corroded by cynicism and where originality is punished. So this paper is an attempt to look into the shifting norms, different forms of corruption, capitalization, repression, suppression and erosion of social and moral values in contemporary society. The waning humanity and competition of getting rich are contradictory because the richness will lead the erosion of humanity. The deprivation of slum dwellers and their ambition to reach high pedestal always keep them involve in capitalistic policies of rich.

**Keywords:** Panorama, spearhead, cynicism, waning humanity

**Introduction:** Aravind Adiga, winner of Booker Prize for his debut novel *The White Tiger* (2008) is an Indian-Australian writer and journalist tries to explore the clutches of globalization and capitalism. The clutches of globalization are not restricted to economic aspect of a person. Economy is the basic element in shaping the life of its people. The endemic of getting economically well-off has affected the lives of individual in all spheres, be in cultural, social or political. The personal and social lives of people are full of clashes, contradiction and instability where the emotional bond has been sacrificed in favour of a world of personal gains. The instincts of personal gain has overpowered the sense of moral and immoral, valid and invalid, what matters more is to grasp the commercial and financial opportunity to become wealthy.

Mohan Kumar, a money obsessive father wants to make his two sons number one and number two batsman of India. Because it is the only source for him to rise from poverty to richness, so he treats his sons strictly and if they make any mistake, he beats them. He brings up them in a strict masculine environment. As a desperate poor father he never wanted to realize that what his children really aspire for. Because Mohan Kumar's wife already left away her husband and sons so the complete focus of Kumar was on his sons. His sons are not his sons but they are his business. He examines them weekly and imposes restrictions over them. He says, "three dangers on the path to glory – pre-mature shaving, pornography, and car driving." He adds one more-The Mohammedan Javed, a left- hander. (63)

When Tommy sir, the cricket coach tells Mohan to leave the ground when his sons were practicing, then Mohan Kumar became so angry that he started to abuse Tommy sir that they are not his children "they are my children, I made them," (28) he shouted back. The boys are forced to sacrifice their childhood in grueling practice. It has built in them a narrow perspective. They couldn't even think about shaving and girls. But with the passage of time, these two brothers start to talk about girls but without knowing to father. Radha's relation with Sofia also gives him some kind of relaxation from the world of his father. Manjunath is a more complex and unusual character, always pining for his absent mother finds solace in Javed Ansari .When one day Javed

asks Manju about his England visit for cricket that- “Did you think of yours family when you were in England? Looking Javed in the eye, Manju said: Not Once (155).”

Sexual awakening in both these brother pushes them to run away from the boundary line and enjoy what they really desire. The sexual orientations between Javed and Manju have become the matter of gossip among his father, brother and Sofia as well. So this type of sexual orientation which had considered unfair or unusual in our society now has become decriminalized in section 377. Even when Manju tells Javed about his brother and father’s doubt over him, then Javed scolds Manju for becoming so conscious over it. He finds no problem in calling him gay by others. So these days it is not a big taboo as it was few years before. Now nobody wants to live behind masks. Everyone tries to explore their self and their true psychological identity. So breaking established norms and shifting social and moral values have become the center.

Radhakrishna Kumar and Manjunath Kumar both these brother were born in slum and they wanted to drive from slum to stardom. Their father was so obsessive about money that when Anand Mehta , a business entrepreneur offers Mohan Kumar the money for sponsoring his sons, then Mohan Kumar demands –“Eight thousand for one boy. And fifteen thousand for both (38).” So it shows that how all are mad after money. Masculinity of environment makes it more intense. Anand Mehta is ambitious because he wants to gain one third profit from these two brother’s future earnings. Capitalism in cricket degraded the glorious image of national glory. With capitalism enters corruption and starts to play with the morals and ethics of people. We can refer here Vivek Shanbagh’s novel *Ghachar Ghochar* for play of money- “It’s not we who control money, it’s the money, it’s the money that controls us. When there is only a little, it behaves meekly; when it grows, it becomes brash and its way with us.” (Ghachar Ghochar 49)

The bourgeoisie and proletariats relations, their approach towards life, their way of living build their perspective towards life. They have their own way to deal with situations. Poor always wait for right moment to take revenge of their wounds. In the modern world Adiga explores a different species of ambition in a father and resistance of ambition in son. Manju wants to become a forensic scientist and he loves to watch CSI Las Vegas. He goes to morgue

also without telling to father. Even when Javed asks Manju about his will to go Junior college, then Manju says, “I want to become a forensic scientist (116).” Radhakrishna Kumar who wants to become number one batsman feels weight transfer problem and despite a lot of practice his dream remains unfulfilled. At last Manju gets selected for Mumbai under-19 team.

So the resistance of ambition in the narrative shows that things do not happen according to will. From the very beginning people start to think about something else, grow with something else and end with other thing. The provincial anxiety in the post-colonial world to become rich and drive from slum to stardom push poor person to become uneasy and always aspire for something big. The mental and physical contest in Manju makes him ambivalent even about his dream. The perils of growing in a country where big thief walks free and small thief gets caught also presents a contrasted and degraded picture of Indian society and wildness of capitalism and corruption.

The rising of a newer rich in this narrative is symbolic with the rising of Mohan Kumar from slum area Dahisar to Chedda Nagar of Mumbai. With the preposterous money laundering operation in cricket people have started to focus on money in extraordinary fashion. When one day Anand Mehta’s wife Asha asks him about his anxiety then he tells her about Mohan Kumar’s greed for money. The truth was that Anand Mehta also had doubts which were rekindled on the first of each month when Mohan Kumar turned up at his office and looked at the white envelop in Mehta’s hand which held that month’s cheque. Because Anand Mehta had seen in Kumar’s eyes which he called ‘a pre-liberalization stare’, an intensity of gaze which he found common in people of the lower class before 1991, when there was old socialist economy was which we found these days only in communists, naxalites and terrorists: the wrathful gaze of those who could not possess things, but only waste them. What he saw in that “mad father’s eyes was not milk and honey for his sons: it was fire. (58)

The preposterous money laundering in IPL has created a money making fashion in cricket and capitalistic outlook towards it. Cricket has become the spearhead of corruption in India since last two decades and a way for poor to rise above poverty because they have started to look games from that perspective. So from the postcolonial perspective also the focus on

money has become the primary objective of people. They try to reach above and above and discard the basic moral values. The greed for money not only lies in poor but in rich person as well.

The present system of economy is changing our nature. People have become more self centered and less human. This change manifests in various ways. In this post colonial era the individuality and shifting of all traditional norms, conventions, the ways of looking for living and even thinking in the growing and emerging of new India has changed. As much as the middle class want to overlook the economically disabled strata of society and don't want to mingle with lower class, as much lower class people aspire to match with upper class one. In this way it seems that capitalism has brought us on the verge of losing all that considered valuable for humanity. The cultural and social implication in this post colonial era provides a new kind of outlook. The concept of power discourse of Foucault can be applied here because it is the power which shapes the ideology of people. Power lies everywhere in its abstract form and shows effect in strong way. The reflection of power can be seen in this narrative when Mohan Kumar dominates his obsession on his sons and Anand Mehta shows his money power over Mohan Kumar. When Mohan Kumar and his younger son Manju come to meet Mehta in his house in Narimon Point, polish area of Mumbai, then Mehta treated to them in not a good way and after drink Mohan Kumar becomes unconscious on the gate of his house.

Manju come close and examined his immobile father. He saw no eyes, no lips, no features; and he realized that for all these years, his father had not had a face. All these these years had been no secret contact with God, no scientific method, no antibiotics and no ancient wisdom: Just Fear. (212)

So the ditch between rich and poor presents the sympathetic picture of poor and complex attitude of rich towards them. Sometimes behind the ambition and frustration of poor people, a strong root of deprivation and discrimination works because they want to take revenge of their wounds after reaching on the top for which they always aspire. They fatten their insult with new insult and wait for right moment to strike back. The Indian urban masculinity in this capitalistic world is damaging the social and moral values and waning of these values is not a good sign for

democratic environment. The complexity and confusion in this environment leads nihilism and ambivalence in people and sometimes it leads suppression and repression. The mental trauma in youth now these days because of so much pressure of expectation is imposed upon them leads the way of psychological destruction.

The collapses of self identity and self esteem in post-colonial era lead frustration. Manju, who feels isolated and ambivalent and finds solace in childhood memories about his mother. The intensity of masculine environment is also the result of post-colonial ways. The critique on modern education in the narrative has been shown when all try to learn English because it provides them dignity. Manju sometimes speaks loudly in English because it makes his father proud on him. Sofia, a friend of these two boys only plays games because it will advantage her in her SSC marks. Father like Mohan Kumar sees no future in pursuing study any further other than cricket. The smothering of childhood dreams and grueling practice of cricket had snatched the softness of their heart. The chaos, decentralization of mind and binary forms of corruption deny to present ideal picture of Indian society. In capitalism the dirty games are not so dirty for capitalists since they help individual to grow up. No doubt that capitalism weakens the traditional hierarchy of Indian society. So in this highly capitalistic milieu of Indian society, the new ways of capturing money are surpassing the social and moral ethics of society and capitalistic policies are preparing the ground for upcoming age.

**Conclusion:** The narrative provides opportunity to peep into the capitalistic policies and ways of making money. These policies are interlinked with the hunger for money in human beings. The complex challenges of capitalistic globalized world engender the suffocating competitive atmosphere and smother the emotional moral core of human kind. The quest for money and power is inherent and intense in human nature. It operates human relationship in myriad ways and most important drive behind all human pursuits. The homoerotic orientations come in front with the relationship between Manju and Javed. So these are issues which are challenging the traditional and conventional norms of society and making a drive towards shifting.

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