

**Colonial Legacies and Modern Ambitions:  
The Intersection of Dark Humour and Socio-economic Realities in  
Aravind Adiga's *Selection Day***

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### Abstract

Aravind Adiga is renowned for his satirical portrayal of various social issues in contemporary Indian society. His novels are critically acclaimed for their depiction of raw and complex characters. This paper examines the use of dark humour in Adiga's third novel, *Selection Day*, a narrative that intricately intertwines post-colonial themes with the harsh realities of a developing nation. Dark humour seeks to challenge conventional perspectives and provoke reflection by juxtaposing serious or tragic situations with humour or unexpected outcomes, and Adiga employs it to highlight the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of post-colonial India. The novel examines cricket as a colonial legacy in India, captivating the masses with promises of success and improved social status. By analysing key instances of dark humour, this paper elucidates how Adiga's narrative strategy enhances the reader's understanding of colonial attitudes and structures that continue to shape socio-economic disparities, and cultural identities in contemporary India.

**Keywords:** Colonial Legacy, Cultural Identities, Dark Humour, Socio-economic Disparities.

### I. INTRODUCTION

This paper probes how Aravind Adiga employs dark humour in *Selection Day* to bring forth the protracted effects of colonialism and the modern socio-economic challenges in India. It explores how in the novel, humour critiques societal norms and reveals the complex interplay of ambition and inequality in a post-colonial context. By analysing key instances of dark humour, this study aims to demonstrate how literature can offer critical perceptions about the lingering impact of colonialism and the socio-economic realities of modern India. Understanding these themes is crucial for comprehending the nuances of post-colonial identity, ambition, and societal values. This paper is based on the premise that humour, particularly dark humour, plays a significant role in highlighting the socio-economic issues present in a post-colonial, developing nation.

Aravind Adiga, the winner of the Man Booker Prize in 2008 for his acclaimed novel *The White Tiger*, delves into themes of ambition, corruption, and social inequality in contemporary India in his works. Known for his meticulous detail and compelling character portrayals, Adiga's writing offers profound insights into the socio-economic realities of modern Indian society. His experience in journalism equips him with the skills to meticulously present the contrast between the colonial legacy and the modern ambitions of a developing nation. His acclaimed contributions have established him as a prominent voice in Indian English literature.

*Selection Day*, the sports fiction by Adiga, delineates the narrative of two brothers, Radha Krishna Kumar, and Manjunath Kumar, hailing from the confines of a Mumbai slum, whose lives are intricately entwined with the pursuit of excellence in cricket. Their father, Mohan Kumar driven by an unwavering frenzy for their success, forces them relentlessly towards the stardom in the sport, even at the expense of their individual aspirations and happiness.

Set against the backdrop of Mumbai's gritty landscape, the novel unravels the brothers' journey through the cutthroat world of cricket, where they confront myriad challenges and temptations. Radha, the elder sibling, possesses an innate talent, while Manju grapples with the complexities of adolescence, sexual identity, and career choices. The brothers oscillate between their lifelong efforts, mostly forced, for brilliance in cricket, and their yearning for autonomy from the overbearing father.

*Selection Day* provides a multilayered exploration of India's post-colonial identity, reflecting on the lingering effects of British imperialism and the evolving socio-economic landscape of India. A critical assessment of the text provides a unique perspective on the intersection of dark humour and socio-economic realities, offering a nuanced portrayal of ambition, identity, family dynamics, and the harsh realities of pursuing success in a setting marked by social injustice, corruption, and disillusionment in contemporary India.

## II. THE PLAY OF DARK HUMOUR IN THE PORTRAYAL OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC REALITIES OF A POST-COLONIAL NATION IN *SELECTION DAY*:

*"Kattale is darkness in Kannada, his mother tongue: and so much darker than any English-language darkness"* (Adiga 1).

To portray the colonial legacies pervaded in the grim socio-economic realities of present-day India and its modern ambitions, Adiga skillfully employs dark humour. It is a literary device employed to infuse elements of irony, absurdity, and often discomfort into narratives. According to Herron, the dark humour arises from the ironic juxtaposition of the instinctive horror and revulsion that readers encounter. It aims to challenge traditional viewpoints and stimulate reflection by contrasting serious or tragic scenarios with humour or surprising results. It involves finding amusement or irony in situations that are typically grim, morbid, or taboo.

*Selection Day* paints a comical picture of grim cityscape in post-colonial India satirizing the haphazard modernization of big cities. "The silhouettes of the municipal building and the spiked dome of the Victoria Terminus" struggling "against the morning smog, and the air in between them" scored by "cable wires" (Adiga 13) show how the development is unplanned and rapid in the metro city. The imagery of grand buildings against a backdrop of pollution and waste subtly underscores the socio-economic disparities in the city. There are several incidences where Adiga highlights the ironic and absurd contrasts between the city's colonial history and its contemporary struggles. The growing slum, "at the very edge of Mumbai's municipal limits," and the vivid description of a landscape crisscrossed by modern infrastructure, implying progress and modernization, highlights the clash between tradition and modernity. Adiga reveals the incongruous development in the city when he portrays that to reach the practice field, one has to pass "so many black sewers, so many concrete towers, so many patches of grassy wasteland onto which slums encroach" to finally reach "somewhere within Kandivali West, a little Eden: a green field where boys practice cricket..." (Adiga 112).

Another theme that runs throughout the novel is the sad reality of capitalism in a post-colonial developing nation. It is depicted as a powerful and often harsh force that shapes the lives of the characters, particularly in the context of Mumbai's competitive cricket scene. The novel explores how the pursuit of success, wealth, and recognition in a capitalist society can drive individuals to extreme measures, often at the cost of moral values. For instance, Mohan Kumar and Anand Mehta are shown as money-oriented autocrats whose main concern is to cash the talent of the Kumar brothers for their gains. Such a pursuit can also drive individuals to

take agencies that cost them their personal happiness. In the novel, we learn how Manju becomes disillusioned by the unexpected scholarship offered to him for his training in the UK and his brother's envy and reaction to it, leading him to contemplate absurd possibilities. He thinks if Radha continually pinches his nerves and damages his hand then "he could tell them in England", that he "can't play cricket anymore," but "can study forensic science" and wants to join their London CSI team instead (Adiga 135).

Adiga covers capitalism from different angles. From a poor's perspective, he writes that "Revenge is the capitalism of the poor" (Adiga 40), suggesting that in the absence of material wealth, the act of revenge becomes a valuable and empowering currency for those who have little else. But the rich like Anand Mehta think that "Without understanding what capitalism means", India has "vaulted". To explain the stance of people in a capitalist society, he rhetorically asks "what is Indian, after all?" And answers, they "are animals of the jungle, who will eat" their "neighbour's children in five minutes," and their "own in ten" (Adiga 234). This reflects the abject cutthroatism in a money-minded society and the individualistic nature of capitalism, where personal success and achievement are prioritized over collective well-being, Adiga shows how such attitude leads to a sense of alienation and isolation among characters, as they navigate the competitive environment of Mumbai's cricket world. Manju does not love cricket, he wants to be a scientist but succumbing to his father's and coach's expectations, devises a way to perform well in cricket. Adiga calls it the parting of "the shroud" when Manju realises what he needs "to make him a great batsman" he simply needs "to hate the game" (Adiga 219). Rather than love or passion, it is this intense emotion of hatred that fuels his dedication, focus, and determination to succeed.

Adiga shows that capitalism often leads the characters to face ethical dilemmas and are forced to make difficult choices in their quest for success. The boys' innocence, tormented by their father's absurd demands, begins to corrode, leading them to contemplate emancipation from him whenever the opportunity arises. They think that "Let their father become old: they would make him beg for every rupee they gave him" and in this comical way, Adiga shows how the helpless poor like "Both Mohan Kumar's sons", turns into "entrepreneurs of revenge" (Adiga 50), when they systematically and deliberately cultivate this form of retribution, much like entrepreneurs who develop and manage a business.

Another facet of capitalism in a post-colonial developing economy is the limited opportunities for growth available to the marginalized in their hometowns, illustrating how they often remain trapped in their circumstances until they choose to take a leap of faith. Such attitude is depicted in "the farmers toiling in the wheat fields" from Mohan Kumar's childhood memories. They are remembered as "no more unmanacled than that elephant" that Mohan had seen once in his village-show, dancing to the tunes of its master. Mohan Kumar, the ambitious one, is shown to have "never forgotten" this "truth about life" and is portrayed as among the many to have "come by train to the big city" and when, "Ramnath, his neighbour in the slum," mouths his hopes towards a revolution by the proletariat, Mohan Kumar smirks and responds "Here, we can't even see our chains" (Adiga 32). A dancing elephant presents a humorous picture but also alludes to the pervasive and subtle nature of societal oppression.

In *Selection Day*, Adiga skillfully uses sports to highlight the contrast between characters of varying financial means and their differing hopes and expectations. While Mohan sees cricket as a potential pathway to financial liberation, his impoverished neighbour views it as a capitalist enterprise "brought here by the Britishers to entrap us" (Adiga 60). Adiga portrays the commodification of cricket and its role as a means of capitalism in a humorous way. For instance, the boys are bargained for a scholarship by their father and coach. Mohan Kumar demands, "Eight thousand... For one boy. And fifteen thousand for both" while Tommy sir attempts to persuade the sponsor, Anand Mehta, by stating, "What is cricket, anyway, Mr Mehta? Game of chance. Take two, one may win" (Adiga 39).

Adiga reveals how socio-economic realities and power politics shape the destinies of young cricketers. The novel critiques the systemic barriers that prevent truly talented but less privileged players from advancing, highlighting the pervasive influence of capitalism and corruption in sports. It is evident when Mohan Kumar cautions his sons, in a comical way, about the rich and influential players who might pose competition to his boys, emphasizing that the one thing a player needs "more than a rich father in Mumbai" is

a “godfather”. It is the “combination of money and influence” that makes a player “irresistible” to be selected (Adiga 63). It sheds light on the harsh realities faced by aspiring athletes in a post-colonial developing economy like India, where success is often determined by factors beyond mere talent and hard work.

Dark humour also serves as a coping mechanism for characters dealing with the harsh realities of their circumstances. It allows them to find moments of levity amidst the pressure and challenges they face. In *Selection Day* the father-son relationship between Radha, Manju, and Mohan is fraught with tension and dark humour. The absurdity of their father’s behaviour offers the sons brief moments of relief from his relentless ‘best batsman’ fixation, allowing them to feel that, “Once or twice a month, their father became a woman” (Adiga 78). Adiga caricatures Mohan Kumar to illustrate the helplessness of ambitious Indians to change their social standing. He portrays him as a “penniless migrant to Mumbai”, living with his two sons in a “320-square-foot box of brick... divided by a green curtain” for nine years (Adiga 17). He considers himself as the “pro-

gen-i-tor of pro-di-gies” and teaches himself medicine and pharmacology to ensure better sculpting of his sons as India’s fine batsmen. Typical of an Indian parent who ignores his own circumstances and failures, Mohan nurtures an obsession to make his children successful. To achieve this dream, he adopts a variety of absurd and irrational methods. His relentless push for his sons’ success often leads to comical situations that highlight the underlying pain and desperation of their impoverished lives. Mohan’s obsession, in reality, is the desperation of lower-middle-class families striving for upward mobility in a post-colonial society, placing immense pressure on children to surpass their parents’ expectations. When Mohan’s sons get the sponsorship he feels that his plan has begun to roll to carve a name not just for himself but for his entire lineage to come, “Because his sons will soon have sons, and they too will bat: a dynasty of cricketers is rising in Mumbai from two drops of Kumar semen” (Adiga 80). While it may seem humorous, this sentiment highlights the deeply ingrained patriarchal mind-set of many individuals who seek to control not only the destinies of their children but also those of future generations.

Mohan’s single-minded focus on cricket serves as a source of both tension and dark comedy, highlighting the absurdity of his ambitions. When Manju gets the scholarship he thinks that, “A drop of my semen is going to England for six weeks!” (Adiga 132). He is a man of limited opportunities and often reflects a willingness to adopt extreme measures to ensure the success of his plans for his sons, when Manju, after receiving the scholarship, behaves irrationally, Mohan feels “Down his right arm... a nerve twitch. Let me fix it, Mohan, it said: let me hammer the scholarship out of the wrong son and into the right one” (Adiga 133).

By portraying such scenarios, Adiga explores the complexities of family dynamics and patriarchal pressures within Indian society in *Selection Day*. Mohan’s constant drilling and bizarre rituals for his sons’ training, such as making them practice cricket swings in their tiny, cluttered home, are both absurdly funny and deeply tragic. The humour arises from the exaggerated and almost ludicrous methods he employs, but it also underscores the suffocating pressure and lack of normal childhood experiences for Manju and Radha. Herron asserts that dark humour, particularly when addressing taboo topics such as incest and bestiality, can serve as a vivid demonstration of how the moral compass functions. He further adds that dark humour often addresses topics such as death, suffering, or societal issues in a manner that may be unsettling or controversial. In *Selection Day* Mohan Kumar’s behaviour towards his sons, in the name of their training is highly controversial. Training that involves a breach of privacy brings forth the horror that boys face from their father’s behaviour towards them. All through their lives, the boys follow their father like robots coded for just one task. They constantly fear him and never dare to rebel, enduring his ridiculous methods, because, deep down, they are convinced by his ways and believe that they will become world’s best batsmen, but when Anand Mehta threatens Mohan Kumar, Manju realises the truth as 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 years, there had been no secret contract with God, no scientific method, no antibiotics and no ancient wisdom: just Fear” (Adiga 212).

According to Colletta, “When external reality threatens the stability of the individual from all sides, dark humour allows for the triumph of narcissism, the protection of the individual, and the pleasure of laughter” (13). Radha’s narcissism is evident in his behaviour towards his younger brother. He insults and beats Manju, and when he realizes that Manju is a better player who might outshine him, he teases him about Manju’s confounding sexual identity. It is also revealed that Radha even lies about his brother’s sexual orientation to secure his relationship with Sophia.

In addition to this, Adiga employs dark humour to display power politics as well in *Selection Day*. He creates a narrative that highlights the absurdities and harsh realities of the characters’ lives and underlines the often grim and oppressive nature of the power dynamics at play, providing a satirical lens through which the reader can examine the societal and personal conflicts in the story. The revelation about his father’s fears stirs in Manju a profound sense of powerlessness and awakens him to the harsh dynamics of the power game. In his pursuit of power, he begins to act brutally towards his family and friends, resorting to unprecedented behavioural extremes. One day, in an attempt to outrun his brother during a chase, Manju revealed a new facet of his evolving self. “Something new” begins to unfold in Manjunath’s life when he steps, “knowingly, on the fat body of that pigeon” and holds “it under his shoe”, Manju feels “exultant” as “he had tasted power” (Adiga 201). Mishra and Verma opine that *Selection Day* is a deep examination of the power dynamics involved in the pursuit of success through the game of cricket, a sport whose influence has spread globally. They present a critique of the unthinking imitation of cricket, the dishonesty and corruption surrounding it, and the pursuit of an extravagant lifestyle, all of which taint the human mind. Their study suggests that ambition, material success, and instant fame are mere illusions that disrupt peace of mind and cause numerous issues.

According to Prem Singh, Adiga depicts the need for young people to define their identities and how they utterly fail at it. Manju fears awareness about his own sexual orientation, and in a bid to keep it a secret Manju starts “batting to protect himself” (Adiga 151). To the dark humourist, societal deviance or even antisocial conduct is just a tiny portion of the disorder sensed in a vast, uncaring universe that appears hostile to diversity and stifles personal identity. While not every character in dark comedy employs humour for self-protection, the narrative tone of such texts is boldly comedic, providing readers with a shield against the traumatic events depicted by exploring them from a secure, humorous perspective. Just as we start to grasp a character’s nature, they surprise us with absurd or extreme behaviour, disrupting our expectations. The challenge in comprehending the connection between motive and action within the characters mirrors a broader sense of uncertainty about the meaning of life and existence, which serves as the foundation of dark humour. It implies that disorder is the only consistent reality. Occasionally, it explores themes of alienation and absurdity through the deeply personal viewpoints of characters, but more frequently, it offers an objective assessment of chaos and fragmentation (Colletta 2 -10).

In the novel we see that the boys’ disgust and their father’s unyielding insistence create moments of dark comedy, reflecting the absurd lengths Mohan will go to achieve his dreams through his sons, and the physical and emotional toll it takes on them. We learn that Radha, the older son, “at the age of fourteen and a half,” becomes “conscious that his father’s rules, which had framed the world around him since he could remember” are, in reality, nothing less than “prison bars” (Adiga 27). His frustration is exacerbated by the ambiguous sexuality of his younger brother and the pressure of the selection process. Succumbing to the pressures imposed on him, he smashes his bat into the sea as he grapples with questions like “Is the world’s second-best batsman a homo? And is the world’s best batsman, the one with the secret contract, not going to be selected for Mumbai?” (Adiga 176). And, it is revealed later in the novel that he succumbs to this pressure as “he watched through the corner of his eye it (ball) found its way through his prayers and fifteen years of early mornings and late evenings at the nets. Mohan Kumar’s first son was the bails fall” (Adiga 205). *Selection Day* satirizes the pursuit of success and status symbols as a means of validation and self-worth, often leading to a sense of disillusionment and existential angst among characters.

According to Bloom, defining dark humour proves challenging since its expression in significant literature inherently involves irony, the literary device where words convey a meaning contrary to their literal

interpretation, often expressing the opposite of what is stated. Radha's failure captures the comedy of fate as it highlights the unpredictability of life and the futility of trying to control outcomes despite one's best efforts. Furthermore, *Selection Day* is replete with ironic moments that encapsulate the fragility of modern Indian aspirations, revealing the emotional and psychological toll on marginalized sections of society when years of hard work end in failure. It is both ironic and comical how Mohan Kumar's fate unfolds in the novel. The autocratic father, who attempts to control every minute aspect of his sons' lives, ultimately ends up being perceived as nothing more than a disappointment by them, "Out there, Manju thought, with regret - a regret he would feel so keenly for the rest of his life - there must be fellows who are actually proud of their fathers" (Adiga 241). Adiga makes excellent use of irony to humorously reveal the destinies of his characters in the end. Radha gets injured and cannot play cricket anymore, disillusioned with his fate he spends most of his time in a bar. Manju is revealed to be playing celebrity cricket as a "non-celebrity", Tommy sir dies with a desire to see Manju play for Mumbai, Anand Mehta could never materialise his plan of making "a man free" and mint money out of cricket through sponsoring talented boys and Mohan Kumar, an abject failure as a father, is lost in obscurity.

Another technique that a dark humourist employs is Displacement. According to Colletta, Displacement in dark humour primes the listener or reader to anticipate a specific response—typically a disturbing or traumatic one—then redirects focus onto something different, thereby subverting those initial expectations (29). Adiga employs displacement when the readers discover the tragic fate of the Kumar brothers, only to suddenly shift focus onto Sophia and the revelation that she ultimately marries someone else.

In *Selection Day*, Adiga infuses dark humour through the absurdity as well, as depicted in the exaggerated portrayals of Coach Sawant, Tommy Sir, and Anand Mehta. The head coach Sawant is described as "a fat pipe in the filtration system that sucks in strong wrists, quick reflexes, and supple limbs from every part of the city, channels them through school teams, club Championships, and friendly matches for years and years, And then

one sudden morning, pours them out into an open field where two or maybe three new players will be picked for the Mumbai Ranji Trophy team" (Adiga 6).

Anand Mehta, the manipulative and cunning businessman, embodies the complexities of cultural hybridity and globalization. His command of multiple English dialects—American, British, and Indian—suggests a negotiation of identities shaped by post-colonial influences. He identifies Radha and Manju as potential future successes and agrees to sponsor their training only after he is assured that Mohan Kumar will guarantee a profitable return on his investment. Anand Mehta identifies a "pre-liberalization stare" in Kumar's eyes, he notices in his eyes "not milk and honey for his sons" but "fire" (Adiga 58). He thinks that by sponsoring young boys he is actually setting "a man free" (Adiga 260). He is portrayed as the one having the most sceptical view of modern India. He critically observes "Moving past Nariman Point" where "the surf subsided near the blue-tarpaulin-covered shanties. The exact spot where Ajmal Kasab came with the jihadis to kill us on 26/11. If only he'd done a better job" (Adiga 145). This shows a disillusioned mentality, harbouring nothing but contempt for the skewed development in a post-colonial society.

Adiga skillfully projects his characters in the grey area. And, Colletta asserts that ambiguity and simultaneity are essential to dark humour, as they disorient the reader and prevent clear moral judgments about the characters. Dark humour satirizes the very norms that would enable such judgments, grimly implying that because these norms are human-made—and humans frequently misunderstand their own motivations and fall prey to greed and tyranny—there is little hope for societal improvement (48). Such flawed nature of human-made norms and the bleak prospects for societal improvement is evident in Mehta's thinking of Mumbai and its middle class as "hollow", and defines them as people with "Self-obsession without self-belief". Using this character, Adiga skillfully juxtaposes the grotesque and the real. His very thought that "Nothing's illegal in India" shows the mind-set of the super-rich and their disrespect for the country's law system and their relentless aspirations. Mehta's character is shown as a symbol of the cunning greed of a developing nation where competition is intense, even among the rich to accumulate more wealth and their scrupulous value system. The humour lies in his volatile stance towards cricket, he invests in the

boys initially but when Radha fails, he thinks that cricket is “fraud, and at the most fundamental level” (Adiga 237).

Another humorous character in the novel is Tommy sir, the cricket coach, who is caricatured as being “both an atheist and a cricketer”. He is described as a “superstitious man” who holds a very critiquing view of Indians, as “In nothing” can they “find the right balance, not even in tolerance” (Adiga 123). He often speaks in hyperbolic terms about the greatness of cricket and the destiny of his players. Although he is deeply passionate about cricket and possesses extensive knowledge about the game, he is also disillusioned with the state of cricket in India. He is cynical about the commercialization and corruption that have infiltrated the sport, and this cynicism often colours his interactions and decisions. “You could hear it already, the whispering and the bargaining, the lies and corruption: it has just begun, and before the sun rises again, India will be sold and India will be bought, many, many times over” (Adiga 139). His character embodies humour primarily through his cynical and exaggerated demeanour, which contrasts sharply with the earnest ambitions of the Kumar brothers and the intense world of cricket, “‘Cricket in India still smells good.’ The old scout winced: oh my forehead. My fore... It must be the pollution, he thought, smoking his cigarette by the window” (Adiga 139). His over-the-top speeches and exaggerated promises to the boys are comically inflated, but they also reveal the hollow, exploitative nature of his mentorship, where the boys are more pawns than protégés. Adiga uses the character of Tommy sir to comment on gender and social power dynamics, as well, through the use of dark humour. Lata, Tommy sir’s daughter, a prolific volley-ball player, “had dropped out of sport” because her father had told her “what future for a woman in sport?” (Adiga 137). The limited agency of female characters and the patriarchal norms they navigate are depicted with a satirical edge. The societal expectations and the often ridiculous standards imposed on women are portrayed in a way that both highlights the injustice and mocks the societal structures that perpetuate these inequalities.

Furthermore, the author critiques various aspects of post-colonial Indian society through the use of satire on the education system and class dynamics. The “Ali Weinberg International School” where Radha and Manju receive their training and education is shown as nothing but a facade, with its promise of a globalized education. This elite institution represents both the promise of opportunity and the stark realities of socio-economic disparities in Indian society. It is a symbol of aspirations of upward mobility for many families, including the

Kumars, and is seen as a shortcut to success by them. But the humour lies in the actual purpose of such institutions. The founder of the school, Karim Ali, thinks “anti- intellectualism” and “sensationalism” as the root of the “real problems” of India and that’s how he justifies starting this school to ensure “Academic Excellence” and to “feed” the media “what they live and die for. Sensation. And the biggest sensation we have in this country is called cricket” (Adiga 128), and to achieve his dream, he “recruited, with financial aid, if necessary, and from deep within the slums, if necessary” (Adiga 127).

The contrast between the affluent students and the Kumar brothers highlights the socio-economic disparities present in Indian society. It is depicted as a high-pressure environment where students are constantly pushed to excel. Familial expectations and societal pressures often form the backdrop against which individual aspirations are played out. In this context, humour becomes a means of coping with and critiquing these pressures, as evident in the laments of a rich student, Sophia, “My knees hurt, but Mummy says, get into college, and become rich, and you can go to hospital and pay for shiny new knees” (Adiga 65). The school is pictured as a microcosm of the larger societal inequalities, showcasing how different backgrounds can impact opportunities and experiences. When for the underprivileged Kumars, cricket is a gateway to success and wealth, the rich boy Javed thinks of it as mere “corporate propuhgunduh” where “Tatas batting, Reliance bowling. Cricket is just- brain control...” (Adiga 166). Such portrayal underscores the entrenched inequalities in such education institutions that persist in post-colonial Indian society, and the sharp contrast with the local realities and cultural tensions of the students in them.

Another area where Adiga employs dark humour is in his critique of the corruption and exploitation rampant in the cricket industry. According to Colletta, dark humour often leans towards portraying a dystopian and bleak outlook, yet through its comedic aggression, it resists being completely consumed by the

absurdity and hopelessness it depicts. While this type of comedy doesn't promise transformative change, it does provide readers with temporary relief from feelings of powerlessness and existential discomfort (7). The absurdity of certain situations in the novel, exposes the rot within the system, eliciting both laughter and dismay. The narrative reveals the dishonest practices of coaches, agents, and administrators who exploit young talent for personal gain, perpetuating a culture of deceit and dishonesty. Such portrayal prompts reflection on the societal implications of a sporting industry tainted by corruption, including the disillusionment of aspiring athletes, the erosion of fair play and sportsmanship, and the distortion of values among stakeholders. For instance, in a bid to justify his stance, Anand Mehta argues with Tommy sir, "The slum kids beg you for money, you beg me, I beg my classmates, it's just a big circus. Cricket" (Adiga 144).

Yadav in his paper *Cultural Spectrum in Arvind Adiga's Selection Day* remarks, "menace of corruption is a double-edged sword – on one hand, it brings the crusader like Mehta in the game and on the other, it horrifies the ever-dreaming father like Mohan Kumar." Gupta asserts that *Selection Day* is "a raw take on growing up on the wrong side of the fence in India." Adiga delves into the complexities of individual aspirations and identity within the context of a rapidly changing society. Garner in his review of *Selection Day* in the New York Times wittily remarks, "It's a book about bargains in which no character makes a wise one."

### III. CONCLUSION

Aravind Adiga's *Selection Day* examines how colonial legacies shape contemporary Indian society. The sport itself is a colonial legacy in India, enticing and exciting the masses with the lure of success and better social standing. Adiga craftily shows that in a developing country, the sport is seen as an avenue to build wealth, whereas in a developed nation, it is often viewed as "just a game" (Adiga 143). The novel explores the socio-economic pressure on a lower-middle-class family, linking their cricket aspirations to escaping poverty. Adiga uses humour to highlight their struggles with familial expectations and societal constraints. Mohan Kumar symbolizes lower-income challenges, tackling unemployment and family support burdens. His sons reflect the existential angst in a society burdened with cultural and economic constraints. Darkly comic vignettes expose the absurdities of pursuing success in a corrupt, unequal society. Adiga deftly critiques issues such as corruption and talent exploitation in cricket and highlights the "baroque" (Adiga 84) mentality of the elite involved with this sport in *Selection Day*. In doing so, he masterfully blends humour and seriousness to unveil the stark contrast between aspiration and reality, laying bare the profound injustices woven into the fabric of postcolonial society.

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