

A Comparative Study of Metropolitan Cultural Challenges in the Select Novels of Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat

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Abstract

Phenomenons like social, cultural, economic, regional, religious, and psychological in Indian life have been thematically picturized by Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat in their novels. Both Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat assume a Marxist point of view while describing the social reality in India. Both novelists highlight the problem of contemporary Indian society. They have deftly brought out the socio-economic and cultural issues of the society in detail. Hence this paper focuses on major challenges in metropolitan culture in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Chetan Bhagat's *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*.

Keywords: Metropolitan Culture, Indian Youth, Religion, Business, Love, Friendship.

Introduction

Aravind Adiga has been writing since 2008. He is a journalist, author and winner of the Man Booker Prize 2008 for his debut novel *The White Tiger*. He is an Australian citizen but of Indian origin. He was the fourth Indian-born author to win the Booker Prize award. *The White Tiger* is about rural India and urban India. Rural India is the "India of darkness" and urban India is the "India of the light". He describes someone's reality right from birth to death. Chetan Bhagat is one of the most popular contemporary Indian novelists in Indian English Literature. He has portrayed young dynamic and modern Indian youth and their culture and tried hard to make them successful in their lives. Chetan Bhagat is highly appealing and tells the originality of the Indian society and its culture and tradition which is far more different from the Western lifestyle and truly captures the essence of different cultures. Both writers detail the prevailing culture to suit the expectations and current trends of society.

This paper focuses on various challenges in metropolitan culture in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Chetan Bhagat's *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*. Both of them are the most popular contemporary Indian novelists in Indian English Literature. Both novels deal with different cultural perspectives on cultural issues. They bring about corporate culture as a term used to describe beliefs and a value system that provides its unique taste and attitude to a friendship in metropolitan-culture, the condition of youth is very pathetic. In this world of metropolitan culture, there is a major focus on India of Light with access to education, health care, transportation facilities, roads, hospitality, electricity, the rapid growth of technology, running water, hope, justice, and emerging entrepreneurial power in the world surpassing China. Social, economic, cultural, and psychological phenomena of Indian life have been very artistically captured by Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat in their fictional worlds.

Literature is said to be a reflection of the society in which it was born. Different periods and styles of literature reflect the changes that took place in that particular society at various points in time. Political and economic changes affect the psychology of the people and since literature is created by human beings, it cannot help being influenced by such changes. So the novelists write what they feel. Fiction transforms the actual world into the imaginary world. Literature deals with the period and its problems, hopes, and fears. A novel is not merely a photographic picture of society but a reflection of social facts and conditions of the particular moment in which it is written. The sufferings and problems of people are the sufferings and problems of the characters.

Both writers use the same approach of common man, works of Chetan Bhagat and Aravind Adiga could become movies with heavy acceptance. The protagonists of their stories have busy work schedules, mostly shifts, have targets to achieve with several struggles that are common to the middle class, and have dreams and aspirations. Both know that pulp fiction will have multiple tales and fill pages with some major challenges of metropolitan Indian society like Patriarchy, male-dominated, hierarchy-based, caste diverse, taking dowry at marriage, sycophants, corrupt, and complete slave of western styles, Their stories are not in rural settings but completely in urban and semi-urban area. Both explain the religious sentiment and the fights that emerge.

Adiga makes it very clear that his endeavor is not an easement on the country but it's about the greater process of self-examination. He writes in every inch of his novel that the social responsibilities of the people always depend on the social values of human beings. He points out human values and social welfare and describes the luxury of the rich and the liability of the poor. Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* discusses the various evil systems like riots in elections, corruption, poverty, unemployment, educational system and misuse of welfare schemes, and failed marriages which are the major challenges in metropolitan culture. Adiga dares to explore the horrible reality of India, in the current years. *The White Tiger* is set in the backdrop of an economic boom in India that has guided the great gulf between "the haves and have-nots". Sinful acts, opportunism, the entrepreneurial success of Balram, and the emergence of Socialists in India alarm that the voice of the underclass cannot be ignored for long. Adiga's major focus is on India of Light with access to education, health care, transportation facilities, roads, hospitality, electricity, the rapid growth of technology, running water, hope, justice, and emerging entrepreneurial power in the world surpassing China.

The story revolves around Balram Halwai who lives in the suburbs of rural India. He is the son of a rickshaw puller and did not have sufficient means to complete his education despite being talented. He had to do petty jobs like working in hotels and mines. Balram begins to learn about vehicle driving as he learns from people that drivers are paid handsomely. He finds a rich employer Ashok very soon. Ashok had returned from America and was trying to come to terms with Indian society. His personal life was in a mess as he had an unhappy marriage with a girl from a different caste. Balram was quick to learn the city life. He realizes the wide gap that exists between the rich and lower classes. He breaks the barriers of the caste system by not sending money to his grandmother. Balram visits various government and semi-government offices and officers with Ashok and Pinky Madam. He comes to know that there are legal and illegal practices going on there. He finds that money plays a crucial role in business contracts. He realizes those rich commission agents and not the elected representatives of the people who run the government. He made up his mind to grab money under any circumstances. The sequence of events drives him to more ambitions and he harbors a dream of becoming rich at any cost. Things take a vicious turn when Balram realizes that the only way to become rich and famous is to murder his master and survive the storm. He

realizes that there is no point in brooding over the wretched past. Along with it, the situation began favoring Balram. His master gets involved politically. His divorce from his wife also made him lonely. One fine day when Ashok is on his way to bribe a politician, Balram seizes the opportunity and murders him. He runs away to an alien place in Bangalore with his cousin Dharam. He starts his own taxi company. Things finally become good for him when he changes his name to Ashok Sharma and becomes a wealthy industrialist. He forms a taxi company known as 'The White Tiger Drivers'.

Chetan Bhagat's novel, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* shows India as a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. Culture and religion are used by human beings in many ways; they express themselves to unite with others, form a group, define an identity, and even distinguish themselves as unique. Metropolitan culture has a moral and regulatory role and has a wider significance in going beyond specific situations. For example, the episode of the Post-Godhra riots in the novel puts all the protagonists into a dangerous situation where Govind and Ishaan lose their loved friend Omi. However, they were successful in saving the life of Ali, which was a major challenge at the time of the crisis. The Indian society is not a huge one. This is a natural effect of the fact that diversity is a part of the Indian way of life. From region to region, variety in the social structure is outstandingly seen. Unity in variety is best seen in India in a maze of seemingly different people. One social unifier is the Indian system of caste adhered to by all the racial groups belonging to the Hindu religion. Moreover, socialism and passion also play their destructive part in India's metropolitan-cultural life.

The story of the novel *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* woven around Govind's life is very simple. His friends and other characters in the novel are Omi and Ishaan. Ishaan is very talented and well-aware of his qualities. He never tries to negotiate the things in which he does not believe or does not trust. Ishaan has represented district-level cricket several times in matches. Yet he failed to make it big. That's where his dreams were shattered and he started behaving very weirdly to everyone except his best friends. As a side effect of it, he became habitual watching cricket all the time on television. Omi is a simple person, he is neither as intelligent as Govind nor as good a player as Ishaan. He believes that he is not perfect and attentive all the time with his friends but still, his commitment and dedication towards his friends is excellent and this makes him an inseparable part of his trio. Omi belongs to a Pandit (Brahmin) and religious family and his father was a temple priest of the city. But Omi hates the job of the priest and breaks the tradition of being a priest in the temple. Omi is an important character in the novel. He believes in the deep bondage of friendship although he belongs to a very religious family he shares his cream time with his friends.

Chetan Bhagat writes for the youth, and the style and the presentation of the book almost remain the same as it was in his other novels. The best part of this novel is based in Gujarat and it is said for Gujaratis that they love to be in the business and respect business more than any other place in India does.

Adiga and Bhagat use contemporary conversational English. Comparing the situation in Chetan Bhagat's and Arvind Adiga's novels performs the same function for male characters. This strategy, with variation and focus peculiar to these writers, reveals the attitudes of different characters about the social contexts in which they are located. The metropolitan-cultural context of the narratives - late twentieth century or early twenty-first century - provides an opportunity to view the implied social criticism from the point of view of the young generation characters responding, reacting, and striving to transform the age-old social institutions. The transformation occurs not only in the morphology of the social institutions but also, perhaps more importantly, in the contemporary metropolitan-cultural system. The resolution of the plots in most cases follows the pattern of popular literature, i.e. all the problems of the lead

characters/protagonists are solved to their satisfaction. The way different characters and situations are developed by novelists against complex socio-cultural practices offers the readers an opportunity to see people and social institutions in an interactive mode. Metropolitan culture keeps the person from engaging with 'real' culture and holds them in the manipulations of the culture industries, so popular literature as a manifestation and product of metropolitan culture must be studied seriously. It enables us to look at the implied social criticism in terms of the creation of images or validation of images that may have angularities from the point of view of 'real culture'. Adiga highlights the impact of rapid economic growth on society that undermines the values of the old generation. Secondly, Bhagat writes about the existing education system and projects the impact of a materialistic approach which causes the disintegration of families, alienation, and frustration. He also deals with religious politics, the concept of marriage, corruption, and the commercialization of education.

Conclusion

The concept of metropolitan cultural challenges is meant to include some alterations in the institutions of society that affect its social system, including values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior of individuals and groups. There are numerous dimensions of social change such as social, political, economic, etc. If more investigation is made on challenges in metropolitan culture, it can include education, women's place in Indian society, tradition, religion, Science and technology, marriage, and economic development. These two novelists project the changing picture of contemporary society. Adiga's characters overstep all social and moral values to become successful in their lives. While Bhagat's characters negotiate the contemporary world by becoming successful. Hence the present paper is likely to help one to have an understanding of Chetan Bhagat and Arvind Adiga as social critics.

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