

EXPLORING MULTICULTURALISM IN POST- INDEPENDENCE FICTION IN ENGLISH: A STUDY OF SELECT NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Multiculturalism helps to subvert the dominance of one culture over the others and protects the idea of equality of opportunity and rights of minority cultures. The paper is an attempt to apply the principles of multiculturalism to a few selected novels in English written in post-independent India. The paper shows the manifestation or the debunking of multicultural principles in many of these novels. Anita Desai's "Baumgartner's Bombay", "Bye Bye Blackbird", "Journey to Ithaca"; Nayantara Sahgal's novel, "Rich Like Us", "Mistaken Identity"; Vikram Seth's "A Suitable Boy"; Kiran Desai's "The Inheritance of Loss"; Arvind Adiga's "The White Tiger"; Rohinton Mistry's "A Fine Balance" and V.S. Naipaul's "Magic Seeds" have been reviewed to discern the expression of the principle of democratic multiculturalism.

Keywords: Anti-colonialism, eastern and western culture, minority culture, monoculturalism, principles of democratic multiculturalism.

INTRODUCTION

Many people have the idea of monoculturalism firmly riveted on their minds. Multiculturalism challenges a monocultural society; hence it celebrates above everything, cultural pluralism. One of the primary aims of human beings is to develop a healthy human society. Such a society should be characterized by co-operation, tolerance, respect and love. The creation of such a society is only possible when numerous cultures and sub-cultures co-exist together. The only way by which we can preserve diversity of cultures is by recognizing different cultures, not to speak of representing those cultures in the public arena. We can only

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conceive of an integral and truthful society by the preservation of different cultures. As a principle, multiculturalism is vehemently opposed to cultural hegemony of any group that has within its purview the promotion of its own cultural group. So, multiculturalism appreciates the diversity of culture and respects the notion of multiple identities in the same society.

Minority cultures have always been at the receiving end, on account of the self-assumed superiority of the members of the majority culture. Minority cultures have been suffering for reasons more than one: social injustice, exclusion, marginalization, dispossession, dislocation and social discrimination.

The followers of the principles of multiculturalism, both in theory and in practice, recognize the sufferings of the members of the minority culture as a fact and hence they respect minority cultures. Multiculturalism explores the different ways by which it can break down inter-ethnic, inter-racial discriminatory attitudes and the cultural jealousies among different groups. By doing so, multiculturalism advocates social harmony and mutual acceptance of all cultures. In this paper, an attempt has been made to look at multiculturalism from sociological perspectives.

Multiculturalism has been adopted in the policy decisions made in countries like Canada, Australia and U.K. As an official policy, multiculturalism succeeds to create socio-cultural harmony, mutual tolerance and respect among different cultures. It is the process of appreciating cultural diversity and enabling the visible minorities in attaining equality and social justice. Many people have acknowledged the bearing of multiculturalism on other areas of knowledge. Judith Squares underscores the relevance of multiculturalism for political theorists, for social theorists, sociologists, political scientists and educationists.

Multiculturalism is related to various disciplines. It preaches and practices the harmonious co-existence of multiple cultures and sub-cultures. It recognizes the value of tolerance. It gives equal respect and value to all cultures and does not discriminate between members of majority culture and those of minority cultures. Its diversity is evident on the cultural, religious and ethnic plane. It supports the cultural liberty of all the members of the society. It not only recognizes minority cultures but also recognizes differences between them. It believes in the equality of the members of different cultural groups and grants equal opportunity to them. Its principal goal is socio-cultural harmony. It is ever conscious of the special rights, privileges and exemptions for minority cultures. It stands for social heterogeneity and diversity.

The manifestations of multiculturalism abroad and how they affect Indian immigrants are two ideas explored here with reference to Anita Desai's *Bye Bye Blackbird*. The Indian immigrants' problem of acculturation is an important theme of the novel. In the process of acculturation, there is a continuous dominance of the Occidental culture over the Oriental. That dominance leads to social disharmony, cultural shocks, unrest and friction. Desai presents blackbirds (Indian Immigrants) as marginalized, dislocated, rejected and unwanted foreigners staying in an alien land. The feelings of alienation, emptiness and bareness perturb the immigrants. Throughout the novel, *Bye Bye Blackbird*, we see continuous shifts of ideas in the minds of different characters. Thus the analysis of the novel brings to focus Adit's fascination for and disregard to Occidental culture, Dev's disregard to Occidental culture, Europe's racial discrimination, cultural intolerance, problems of interracial marriage, identity crisis, social

ostracization, marginalization, cultural rootlessness, socio-cultural conflicts, acceptance, rejection, adjustment and oscillation between Oriental and Occidental culture.

There are instances through which Desai underscores the greatness of multiculturalism, which is essentially Indian. Yet she has no illusory belief that the fabric of Indian multiculturalism is strong. Rather, she seems to assert that multiculturalism is possible only when the parties involved have the readiness to forget and forgive. She also seems to believe that multiculturalism can be maintained only with difficulty. The picture of India outside is rosy and romantic, but it is not really so. Desai makes Adit say it for the knowledge of Sarah who is going with him to India with much hope:

... that romantic India in which all flowers were perfumed, all homes harmonious and every day a festival. She's not going to live in a maharaja's palace, you know. She's going to live in a family of in-laws, a very big one, and learn their language and habits.

(Bye Bye Blackbird 213)

The family she is going to is a microcosm of the culturally diverse India. It is large, there are people with conventional and modern viewpoints and there are also chances of friction. Yet such large families still survive; they show how this difficult balance of diversity/differences is maintained. Like these families, India too has maintained the balance of cultures, religions, sects, beliefs and opinions although it has been occasionally made upset by intolerant groups. Shedding of ego, adjustment to unknown set-ups and respecting others' sentiments are the essential factors that have contributed to the continued existence of multiculturalism in India.

Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* is a remarkable fiction which deviates entirely from the traditional art of fiction-writing. In fact, this novel begins where its story ends. It is totally based on the working of memories and the stream-of-consciousness. "Accepting but not accepted" is the story of Hugo Baumgartner's life. It is the psychic process around which the entire plot-structure of the novel rotates. Spending his childhood in Berlin and having strained relations with his parents, Hugo visits Venice, Calcutta and then Bombay in connection with his business as a timber merchant.

As a Jew wandering throughout his life, Hugo undergoes social, racial and political pangs. In Germany, he lives with his mother, but his life is not fully contented. Even his mother, like his own anxiety in India, creates in him something to realize the deformity in his physique:

Even if he had used hair-dye and boot polish, what could he have done about his eyes? It was not that they were blue- far from it; his mother, holding him on her knee and clapping game, had called them dark eyes, 'dunkele Augen', but Indians did not seem to think them so. Their faces sneered 'firangi' foreigner, however, lacking in malice. ... Accepting but not accepted; that was the story of his life, the one thread that ran through it all. In Germany he had been dark - his darkness had marked him the Jew, der Jude. In India, he was fair - and that marked him the firangi. In both lands, the unacceptable.

(Baumgartner's Bombay 1).

After spending his early childhood in Germany, he comes to Venice and then to Calcutta in connection with his business of furniture. As he lands in India, he distinguishes between the

East and the West. In India, he arrives at Calcutta in search of his identity. Here he stays in a hotel on the Middleton Row that looks like a substantial villa. He has seen in Calcutta certain unavoidable possibilities for the tropical disease of Malaria. However, he feels satisfied here and intends to make India his permanent abode. He thinks of bringing his mother to India. He confirms the validity of his belongingness. He thinks that he would have to make her accept India as her home. It was becoming clear to him that "this was the only possibility, there was no other" (*Baumgartner's Bombay* 10). Thus, Baumgartner, instead of thinking of his motherland Germany, he thinks of his mother incessantly.

In the meantime, the outbreak of war between England and Germany haunts him deeply. In another episode he was caught as a German native and was put in an internment camp in the hill regions of Himalayas. He is, thus, torn between his identity as a German and his future belongingness. Here we see the conflict between the two cultures acting on his personality. He is shocked enough to know that "some of the prisoners had not only a past but a future too outside and beyond the camp" (*Baumgartner's Bombay* 11). In the camp he thinks of his mother, of himself and of his future belongingness. The sense of isolation so haunts him that he comes to Bombay after some time in search of a place for his belongingness. He settles here in a small flat of Hira Niwas. He also becomes a business partner with Chaman Lal. He does not feel now cut off from the remaining world. Living in Hira Niwas, he feels Bombay as his home: "So many years now it is my home, and I have a place for everything, my cats including" (*Baumgartner's Bombay* 12). By forging an emotional link with Bombay, Baumgartner slowly understands the meaning of multiculturalism. Disillusioned by the havoc of war, "he would have to accept India as his permanent residence" (*Baumgartner's Bombay* 13). And now, he accepts India as his native land.

He now develops attachment to Bombay. As an inhabitant of it, he torays the adjacent of Hira Niwas where he finds a sleeping man inside the cracks and crevices of the building "like so many rats or lice" (*Baumgartner's Bombay* 14). They have their predicament that ends only in misery, suffering, squalor, filth, dirt and beating of their wives. The plot goes on through the sensations and emotional upheavals of the narrator. Here at Bombay, women start working long before day-break till late at night in washing and cleaning the pots, "yet nowhere could one see any sign of cleanliness – the tape only created a morass of mud and slime; children squatted anywhere to urinate or defecate" (*Baumgartner's Bombay* 15).

Apparently, Baumgartner may be a failure, but mystically, he succeeds. He voices forth cruelty, artificiality and the snobbery of human relationships which he finds not only in the European society but also in the Indian society. The chief purpose of the novelist is to show the varied groups of human relationships in order to seek the universal values in them. The principal aim of the novelist is to show the importance of multiculturalism vis-à-vis her principle of universal tolerance. He also strives constantly in search of his life. He finally accomplishes it when he opts to follow the higher vision of life which he attains by his understanding -the essence of India.

The clash of Western and Eastern culture is also the subject of Desai's *Journey to Ithaca*. Very early in life, the Italian Matteo is inclined towards spiritual pursuits when his tutor,

Fabian enkindles in him a curiosity towards Vedanta philosophy. After his marriage with Sophie, both of them leave for India. Chapter One describes their wanderings from one ashram to another. The culture of the West and the East are brought into headlong collision. Their experience in the Kumbh fair at Allahabad, their arrival in an ashram of Bihar and again their aversion towards the activities of the ashram are brought into bold relief. Their meeting with Mr. Pandey is significant in the sense that it provides them with valuable insight into Hindu religion and culture when he recites some philosophical *shlokas* from the Bhagavad Gita.

Spiritual doubts in Sophie are not out of place for a Westerner trying to comprehend the mysteries of Indian spiritualism:

Can there not be many ways, more than one way ----- the Christians way to glorify God? he raged. Hers is to create belief in people through her powers. Is that wrong?

Sophie who feels more at home with the Christian culture of the West questions Matteo about his purpose of staying in India and his rejoinder is:

"I told you ----- to find India to understand India, and the mystery that is at the heart of India."

In the ashram in Bihar, Matteo is appalled by the ostentatious life style of some sadhus who flash gold plated lighters and keep cigarettes in their pockets. Sophie deciphers casteist signs in the conduct of the members of the ashram. In this way, Sophie's idea of India as a multicultural state suffers a rude jolt.

After the birth of her first child, Giacomina, Sophie is pregnant again. She is appalled by the cultural backwardness of the Indians and is opposed to the idea of making her children barbarians in India. So, she with the anxieties of a mother leaves the company of her husband as an ashramite and comes back to Italy to her parents.

The arrival of Sophie in India brings a new turn in the story in the third chapter. Sophie inquires of the Mother from the doctor and he narrates her entire story ----- how she becomes the Mother from Laila, the dancer. In Paris, she purchases books on Oriental philosophy and never bothers about Islamic books. Her opposition to Islamic philosophy and culture is tantamount to her opposition to the principles of multiculturalism. She has imbibed both "sweetness and light", to use an Arnoldian phrase from his *Culture and Anarchy*.

She read Edwin Arnold's Light of Asia, Pierre Loti's L.Inde, Kalidasa's Shankuntla went through Great Religious of the World, Max Muller's Sacred Books of the East, Vivekananda's Raja yoga, the Bhagavad Gita. Tagore's The Gardener and Gitanjali ---- pouncing on every reference to Krishna, to Radha, seeing in their romance the model of her own affair, and yet clinging, secretly to the name she had first chosen: Laila of Krishna Lila, because that contained the first impulse, the one that led the way.

(Journey to Ithaca 212)

As Sophie feels urgency to report about the secrets of the Mother, she forgets that "for Matteo too, the wheel had turned". Sophie now heads straight for the Abode of Bliss

where she comes to know from Diya about the *Nirvana* of the Mother. After the death of the Mother, Matteo undergoes "an expression of agonized weariness. Now, Sophie undergoes a metamorphosis at the cultural level. The same Sophie, who denigrated the charitable activities of the Mother now realizes the significance of charity, rightly emphasized in Hindu religion and culture. When Diya asks Sophie whether she would follow Matteo, her quick rejoinder is "I'll have to, what else?"

Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* is a compassionate portrait of people struggling to find a spiritual home. It delineates Matteo's alienation and the concomitant quest for spirituality. Like Hugo Baumgartner, he is a 'perennial outsider'. He has come to India in search of spirituality. "It is the spiritual experience", he tells Sophie, "for which you must search in India", "nothing less" (*Journey to Ithaca* 36). Disgusted with the drab and mundane reality of familiar and conjugal life, he is out for the life of a sage in an ashrama.

Nayantara Sahgal's novel, *Rich Like Us* explores the hidden wealth of India and Sahgal finds this hidden wealth tucked away in her hoary tradition, her cultural values and her sublime spirituality. As an ardent believer of the principles of multiculturalism, she finds the grim poverty plaguing the economy to be the arch-enemy of multiculturalism. It is from the mouth of the beggar that Rose learns about the hideous fact of poverty baring its ugly teeth in rural India. The beggar relates to Rose the harsh fact of women disappearing into the kilns of their workplace never to return and this factual report petrifies her.

Some theorists of multiculturalism underscore the principle of equality in the society and they further state that different communities should co-exist as equals. But in *Rich Like Us*, Sahgal makes no bones of the fact that two classes exist in the Indian society: the rich and the poor and that the twain shall never meet. The newly rich people of post-independent India who remain aloof from the middle and lower classes, become the butt of Sahgal's satire. The Minister of Industries thanks God at every turn of his speech, but that, in the opinion of Rose, is a hoax to cover up his ill-gotten wealth stashed away in Venice.

The promulgation of Emergency dealt a shattering blow to the multicultural fabric of the country. The idealist who clung to certain lofty ideals in politics were made to suffer the pains of conscience and memory. The self seeking, powerful politicians were always hand-in-glove with the corrupt businessmen. The case of Dev was an illustration in point. Sahgal was most critical of the Emergency: the illegitimate constitutional amendments, brutal police action, abrupt arrests of politicians and commoners alike, detention without trial, exploitation of the poor, vasectomy camps and press censorship. Sahgal's language is full of virulent satire:

No one wanted trouble. So long as it didn't touch us, we played along, pretending the Empress' new clothes were beautiful. To put it charitably, we were being realistic. We knew we were up against a power we couldn't handle, individually or collectively.

(*Rich Like Us* 23)

The grim realities associated with the Emergency and its implementation certainly leaves the readers with a feeling of pessimism which is hard to placate. But it is in the latter

part of the novel that Sahgal exhales the spirit of optimism when she glorifies the richness of the Indian tradition, history and religions. The appropriateness of the title of the novel can be found in this section of the novel. Sahgal turns through the pages of Indian history to re-discover the multicultural values which were present during the Mughal reign of the seventeenth century:

The seventeenth century was the great age of the Mughal Empire. Akbar had reintegrated northern and central India and given it a Persian form.

(*Rich Like Us* 300)

It is from the pages of history that Sahgal quotes with a feeling of pride, the legend that was India:

"India presented an impressive picture of the world and created the modern legend of wealth and power which lasted well into the nineteenth century."

(*Rich Like Us* 300)

The narrative of *Mistaken Identity* is woven round two landmark events of Indian political history, both events of the Gandhian era, the Khilafat Movement and the Dandi Salt Movement and the political repercussions thereof. If *Rich Like Us* is replete with details of various kinds: autobiographical facts, the rich/poor divide, political turmoil with the proclamation of Emergency, the evils in the bureaucratic system, colonial and post-colonial perspectives and globalization, *Mistaken Identity* has very little to do with such details. What accounts for the fictional appeal of the novel is Nayantara Sahgal's uncanny ability to weave elements of fantasy around socio-political events.

The narrative revolves round two embodiments of love, the principal character Bhusan and his mother, the queen of Vijaygarh and their separate romantic love affairs. The multicultural element is reinforced in the plot itself. The Hindu, Bhusan, takes a Muslim girl as his first love; unfortunately Bhusan is not able to marry her. His mother, the Rajput queen of Vijaygarh falls in love with a Muslim comrade and gets married to him, who becomes her second husband. If this plotline is viewed properly, the real elements appear to be eclipsed by the fantastic elements. Jasbir Jain in an interview with Nayantara Sahgal asked her the seminal question, "Would you say that this can happen in real circumstances in India today?" Sahgal's quick rejoinder was, "It is" highly unlikely. Today it might happen but not in 1929 – 1930." (*Establishing Connections: Interview with Nayantara Sahgal* 175).

The novelist introduces us to the nine prison mates of Bhusan. Four of them, Yusuf Iyer, Pillai and Dey are comrades. Bhaji is a committed Gandhain whereas Sen is a political activist. Sahgal touches upon several political events with minute fidelity to truth. The reader follows her closely as she describes the atrocities of the colonizers on the colonized in India. Sahgal throws her searchlight on political events outside India viz. the overthrow of the Caliph of Turkey by Kemal Pasha. She scripts political events with the sense of detachment befitting a historian or a political analyst. We get a kaleidoscopic picture of the Meerut conspiracy case, the Dandi Salt march, the Khilafat Movement, Hindu Muslim riots in India and the emergence of communists in Russia.

Sahgal gives an eye-opening account of the communal riot in which all the principles of multiculturalism are thrown to the winds:

A mob of five or six hundred had made Hindu-Muslim war with knives, stones and broken bottles on the front lawn of the Female College. Someone set fire to one wing and the mob stampeded in to loot pots and pans and sewing machines with yells of 'Allahu-Akbar' and 'Ram Ram'. Then they went on a rampage through the town and the killed and raped count was rising in the hospital.

(*Mistaken Identity* 70-71)

In making Bhusan search for his true identity, Sahgal allows him to keep the values of multiculturalism alive, be it in his relations with Razia or Sylla. Bhusan's relations with Razia and Sylla stand out symbolically in terms of Hinduism, Islam and Zoroastrianism. Sylla cannot understand that Bhusan has "*opened and closed and lived and died over and over again*" (*Mistaken Identity* 150) around his lost love, that "*loving might be a vocation like medicine or the priesthood, that the worshipper in all of us must have the last word*" (*Mistaken Identity* 150). Sahgal underscores the multicultural elements in Hinduism of India and the Sufism of Persia. Worship and love are inextricably unified both in Hindu devotional poetry and the poetry of the Sufism of Persia.

In *The God of Small Things*, Roy tries to highlight the need of a casteless and peaceful society where everybody's interest should be protected and respected for strengthening the principles of democratic multiculturalism. Velutha's anti-colonial voice, though defeated, definitely conveys a message to the postmodern society, that, time has come to accept the fact of social heterogeneity because everybody is now very much conscious about his/her caste, culture and religious identities which are more or less equally valuable. If we disrespect any culture or caste, it will lead to conflict and social unrest. Therefore, in the postmodern world, identity recognition and recognition of differences becomes the lifeline of multicultural societies like India. Velutha's act of entering into the 'prohibited zone' challenges the upper caste hegemony and give the message that no community/culture should attempt to dominate another, especially at a time when everyone is getting more and more conscious of his/her own 'space' in society. A multicultural policy in India sometimes becomes lethargic due to misunderstanding of caste stigma and social stratification based on class, culture and religion.

The recurring pattern in the narrative of *A Suitable Boy* is Mrs. Rupa Mehra's efforts in finding an eligible suitor for the hand of her daughter, Lata. This is not to deny the love story which is central to the novel, set in independent India. Though the novel begins in the imaginary town of Brahmpur, yet Seth does well to keep the principal events shifting from Brahmpur to Calcutta, then to Delhi and finally to Kanpur. In shifting his story to the metropolitan cities of India, Seth is able to add an attractive colour to his novel. Seth keeps the interest in his story unflagging by bringing into his narrative, the tale of four families with their diverse socio-cultural backgrounds: The Mehra's, the Chatterjis, the Kapoors and the Khans.

Seth's multicultural values emerge on his portrayal of Mrs. Chatterji. Multiculturalism shows respect for people belonging to different cultural backgrounds. By priding on the

culture of Bengal, more particularly the cultural achievements of Tagore, Seth is showing his non-chalance to people of other cultures. His attitude is different from that of an enlightened individual who is respectful towards the diversity of Indian culture.

Seth shows the peculiar mindset of Mrs. Rupa Mehra and her indifferent attitude to the Chatterji family. In her letter to her daughter Savita, she writes with a feeling of amused contempt about the Chatterji family, despite its capability of inculcating the finest elements of eastern and western culture:

'But the Chatterjis are unusual family. They have a piano but the father wears a dhoti quite a lot in the evenings. Kakoli sings Rabindrasangeet and also western music, but her voice is not to my taste and she has a modern reputation in Calcutta. Sometimes I wonder how my Arun got married into such a family but all is for the best as I have my Aparna.'

(A Suitable Boy 937)

One of the greatest obstacles to the multicultural concerns of Seth in the novel is religious intolerance. Differences in religion mar the marriage of Kabir and Lata. There are riots in the name of religion. The inefficiency of the police and its laxity in the administration become evident when there is a clash between the processions led by the actor Rama and the Tazia processions led by the Muslims on Bharat Milap day. The Partition of 1947 dealt the severest blow to the multicultural relations of people in the sub-continent. There were streams of Hindu and Sikh refugees from West Pakistan and hordes of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims who lived in perfect amity before the Partition, who participated in each other's festivals, who shared each other's joys and sufferings, found themselves uprooted or supplanted from the land of their birth and origin and made to settle in places that were not their homeland. There were dissensions in the Congress Party. Both the Nehruites and the Tandonites differed with regard to the Muslim question.

Multiculturalism always helps to subvert the dominance of one culture over the others and protects the idea of equality of opportunity and rights of minority cultures. However, the principles of multiculturalism referred to above, are not positively reflected in the novel, *A Fine Balance* because of the rigidity of Indian caste system, which divides people on the basis of colour, occupation and the wrong notions of purity and pollution. The upper caste Thakurs in the village of Dukhi is a clear example of how exploitative power is associated with force. The Thakurs of post-independent India do not participate in any war, other than caste war. They waged their wars against the members of the reserved category. They achieved their stranglehold on the members of that category by beatings, torture, rape and what not. Dukhi's story brings us to the apex of the Independence struggle in India. At that time, some people with the zeal for social reform took pledges of waging a crusade against caste injustice. But it is a colossal irony that it is still to be redeemed.

Multiculturalism and poverty are the leitmotif in the novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* and it is in the fitness of things to take up the multicultural theme which Kiran Desai handles in a style, at once distinctive and graceful.

It is the insurgency in Darjeeling and Kalimpong that makes the principles of

multiculturalism melt into thin air. The irrational and frenzied Gurkha militants lose the power to distinguish between a genuine philanthropist and a spy. Father Booty's work on a model dairy for the economic uplift of the poor Nepalis of Kalimpong is reduced to naught. The Nepali militants throw all sanity and humaneness to the winds when they arrest Father Booty as a spy for his possessing the harmless photograph of a butterfly. The diasporic hub in Kalimpong and Darjeeling are comprised of mixed communities, but the narrow regional identity of the GNLFF leave the hills terror struck. More than any community it is the Bengalis who get embroiled in 'generations worth of trouble' (*The Inheritance of Loss* 241). Lola and Noni cannot buy provisions from the stores of the Nepalis. When Lola complains to Pradhan, the GNLFF Chief, about the illegal encroachment on their property by the militants, he proposes Lolita to be his "fifth" queen as he already has four queens about him and to cap it all, he is the 'raja of Kalimpong' (*The Inheritance of Loss* 245). Desai shows how the friendship between different communities which was built over forty years and which defied the lines of race, language and culture was sounded a death-knell by the militant nationalism of the Indian Nepalis.

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga's satirical portrayal of contemporary India has not left any facet of India untouched: ideal marriage institutions, modernization of big cities, parliamentary democracy and electoral system. His pungent satire cuts across people of different professions: businessman, politicians, educationists, social reformers judges and doctors. The 'Rooster Coop' analogy and expression is fittingly used by Balram to describe the poverty-stricken oppressed and confined section of the Indian population. Balram's chequered journey from abysmal poverty to incredible fortune makes the reader pause and think over Balram's observation: poverty and long servitude create monsters and he is one such monster. In his interview to *The Sunday Times* (April, 2008), Adiga spoke of the falling apart of servant-master system and how "*its unraveling will lead to greater crime and instability.*" All these features goaded Michael Portillo, the chief in the chair of Man Booker Prize 2008 to comment, "*The feeling among the readers was that here was a book on the cutting edge reading with a different aspect of India, unfamiliar perhaps to many readers. What set it apart was its originality.*"

The rising debate on homogeneity of cultural practices of nationalism is an opportune moment to look at the alternative discourse of multiculturalism in which thousand flowers bloom and millions feet thump resonating with the music of harmony!

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