



## **EXPLORATION OF INDIAN POLITICS DURING THE TIME BETWEEN THE ASSASSINATION OF LT. INDIRA GANDHI AND LT. RAJIV GANDHI THROUGH *BETWEEN THE ASSASSINATIONS* (2008) BY ARAVIND ADIGA**

**Dr. Pareshgiri Dhanarajgiri Gauswami**

Assistant Teacher, Higher Secondary, Girls High School – Talaja, Dist: Bhavnagar, Gujarat  
[pareshgauswami@gmail.com](mailto:pareshgauswami@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*Politics is an integral part of any society. A civilization can never exist without politics. In the same manner that society exists, so does politics. One must research the politics of any society in order to comprehend it further. To get a thorough grasp of Indian society, one must study political conditions in a country like India where so many cultures, languages, beliefs, and customs coexist. Literature has always served as a lens through which to view any social element since it reflects society, one of which is politics. Many English-language writers from India have included political themes and issues in their writing. Aravind Adiga is one of those who has fearlessly and beautifully shown India as one of the largest democratic nations in the world. Adiga has drawn so many shades of Indian politics in his novel *Between the Assassinations* (2008). This book highlights many problems related to politics in India. The present research paper will probe over the problems related to Indian politics through the views from *Between the Assassinations* by Aravind Adiga. The research paper will also try to deal with those problems.*

**Key words:** Aravind Adiga, *Between the Assassinations*, Indian Politics, Socio Political aspects.



[Scholarly Research Journal's](http://www.srjis.com) is licensed Based on a work at [www.srjis.com](http://www.srjis.com)

**Exploration of Indian Politics during the time between the Assassination of Lt. Indira Gandhi and Lt. Rajiv Gandhi through *Between the Assassinations* (2008) by Arvind Adiga:8**

“The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.” This quotation is taken from one of the speeches of John Kennedy which he gave on June 11, 1963 which shows the importance of politics for society. Politics is one of the pillars of any society and Indian society is not left behind. Politics is one of the essential aspects to study any

society. here, the select novel *Between the Assassinations* by Aravind Adiga portrays a perfect collage of Politics and Politicians in India. The exploration of political elements from the select is an attempt to understand Indian politics which further enables to improve the faults of Indian Politics. The novel indicates the time period between two major political events in India. The first one is the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the other one is the assassination of her son Rajiv Gandhi. Both were serving as Prime Minister of India when they were assassinated. The novel chronologically reflects the events of one south Indian town Kittur near Mysore which is utopian town by Aravind Adiga. Though the time frame is different, it is related to the current scenario of the nation. No nation in the world can exist without politics. Politics is the first crucial and fundamental basis for any society. Politics can change almost all aspects of society. The below discussion offers a detailed study the novels that emphasizes political aspects of *Between the Assassinations*.

### **Socio-Political Aspects in *Between the Assassinations***

In the prologue to the chapter “Day three (Morning)...” of *Between the Assassinations* Adiga writes: “The Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Maidan (formerly King George V Memorial Maidan) is an open ground in the center of Kittur” (Adiga, *Between the Assassinations* 98). The political undertones in this line are noteworthy. This demonstrates how politics may impact both localities and society. It shows the King George V Memorial Maidan of Kittur has now become the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Maidan. Kittur is a utopian town in this novel. Adiga purposefully utilised brackets to highlight India's political influence. In India, renaming well-known locations is frequent and is influenced by politics. The novel depicts the time when the Indian National Congress was in power. As a result, the King George V Memorial Maidan in Kittur is now changed to the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Maidan.

In India, casteism is primarily a factor in politics. In India, caste and politics are intertwined. An great illustration can be found in the book, where Adiga describes the Hoyka boy Shankara. According to Adiga, the Hoyka caste is creative. Aravinda Adiga created it to symbolise a lower caste in the state of Karnataka. Despite being a lower caste, Hoykas make up the majority in Kittur. Despite being a member of this caste, Shankara has a great standard of living. His family has a solid reputation in the Hoyka neighbourhood of Kittur and comes from a prosperous background. Shankara recalled Daryl D'Souza, who had been the only person during his twelve years in the educational system to show him kindness. The professor and Shankara first met at a political gathering. According to the newspaper the next day, this

was the "Hoyka Pride and Self-Expression Day Rally" at the Nehru Maidan, which was the biggest political gathering in Kittur history. On the maidan, 10,000 Hoykas had assembled to demand their rights as an official group and retaliation for five millennia of tyranny.

The introductory speaker discussed the linguistic barrier. Instead of making Kannada, which was the language of the Brahmins, the town's official language, it should proclaim Tulu, the language of the ordinary man.

A thunderclap of applause followed.

The professor, although not himself a Hoyka, had been invited as a sympathetic outsider; he was sitting next to the guest of honour, Kittur's Member of Parliament, who was a Hoyka, the pride of his community. A three-time MP, and also a junior member of the Cabinet of India - a sign to the entire community of how high they could aim.

Eventually, after many more preliminary speakers, Member of Parliament got up. He began to shout: 'We, brother and sister Hoykas, were not even allowed into the temple in the old days, did you know? The priest stood at the door, saying "You low-caste!"'

He paused, to let the insult reverberate among his listeners.

"Low-caste! Go back!" But ever since I was elected to parliament - by you, my people - do the Brahmins dare do that to you? Do they dare call you "low-caste"? We are ninety per cent of this town! We *are* Kittur! If they hit us, we will hit them back! If they shame us, we will-

After the speech, someone recognized Shankara. He was led into a small tent where the Member of Parliament was relaxing after the speech, and was introduced as the plastic surgeon Kinni's son. The great man, who was sitting on a wooden chair, a drink in his hand, set his glass down firmly, spilling his drink. He took Shankara's hand in his hand and gestured for him to squat down on the ground beside him.

'In the light of your family situation, your high status in society, you are the future of the Hoyka community,' the MP said. He paused, and belched.

'Yes, sir.'

'You understand what I said?' asked the great man.

'Yes, sir.'

'The future is ours. We are ninety per cent of this town. All that Brahmin shit is finished,' he said, flicking his wrist.

'Yes, sir.'

‘If they hit you, you hit them back. If they ... if they ...’ The great man made circles with his hand, to complete the slurred statement.

Shankara wanted to shout out in joy. ‘Brahmin shit!’ Yes, that was exactly how he would put it himself; and here was a Member of Parliament, a Cabinet minister in the government of Rajiv Gandhi, talking just as he would!

Then an aide led Shankara from the tent. ‘Mr Kinni.’ The aide squeezed Shankara’s arm. ‘If you could make a small donation towards this evening’s function. Just a small amount...’

Shankara emptied his pockets. Fifty rupees. He gave it all to the aide, who bowed deeply and told him once more that he was the future of the Hoyka community. (Adiga 60-61)

The excerpt above captures a lot of Kittur’s everyday life. As was already said, Kittur is a miniature version of India. Casteism and its privilege are evident in the professor’s soft place for Shankara. The professor has developed a special affection for Shankara because they both belong to poor castes. The inescapable social structure of casteism in India has an effect on politics as well. The caste system is a tool used by politics in the nation to win elections. The crucial role of caste in India is demonstrated by the fact that even political parties give their election tickets to the leader who represents the majority of that specific locality. This excerpt talks about caste conflict as well as linguistic conflict. Political figures profit from the nation’s linguistic variety and back the majority of them. As a means of advancing his political ambitions, Kittur’s member of parliament criticises the Brahmin community while praising the Hoyka community, so provoking friction among the various factions. Despite not being a member of Hoyka, the MP backs them because they make up 90% of Kittur’s population. They therefore represent his election’s winning card. Shankara thinks MP confirms Hoyka, therefore he’s astonished when the professor explains to him:

‘He is one of us, sir. A Hoyka.

‘Not quite, the professor said. He is a Kollaba. Have you heard the term? There is no such thing as a Hoyka, my dear fellow. The caste is sub-divided into seven sub-castes. You understand the term? Sub-caste? Good. The Member of Parliament is a Kollaba, the top of the seven sub-castes. The Kollabas have always been millionaires. The British anthropologists of Kittur noted this fact with interest even in the nineteenth century. The Kollabas have exploited the other six Hoyka castes for years. And now once again, this man is playing the Hoyka card to get himself

re-elected, so he can sit in an office in New Delhi and accept large envelopes filled with cash from businessmen who want to set up garment factories in the Bunder. (Adiga 62-63)

The professor reveals the political ambitions. The Hoyka community is not the MP's favourite, but he supports them out of avarice. The same chapter has another situation when corruption is employed for political benefit. Adiga writes, "Shankara watched. Already hundreds of men were getting into lines, where beer and quarter-litre bottles of rum were being distributed to them, as a bribe for having attended the rally and cheered the speakers." (Adiga 61-62). Each election includes this type of temptation. In many regions of the nation, all political parties engage in it on a regular basis:

Elections in many parts of Chennai turned out to be a low-key bribing affair for political parties. Political cadre were seen distributing 'biryani' packets and bottles of alcohol to those willing to sell their votes. This resulted in good business for biryani centres, which received hundreds of orders an hour. In most cases, the biryani and alcohol were distributed to voters by party cadre entrusted with handing out voting tokens. ("Partymen Turn")

Even the Indian electoral commission is aware of the situation, which is quite familiar to all Indian citizens, yet no one objects to it. The same newspaper report also states that,

In most of these cases, the bribes were given by the party along with the voting tokens and took place in close proximity to polling stations, but election officials turned a blind eye to it. "It is true, we don't have enough people to give voting tokens to people," said an election official at a polling station at Tambaram" ("Partymen Turn").

This happens frequently throughout every election. Whether it be a Loksabha, Rajyasabha, State Assembly, or even a Gram Sabha election. During election season, the common people are fed well, but later, those politicians forget about them. Another kind of event is one that society remembers for a short while before forgetting. For the sake of their political reputations, all politicians honour the national martyrs and heroes on their anniversaries, but subsequently they also forget their ideals. In the book, Adiga provides several extremely beautiful examples of these situations. He writes: "A flurry of alarm bells rang at ten to nine, warning that this was no ordinary morning. It was a Morning of Martyrs, the thirty-seventh anniversary of the day Mahatma Gandhi had sacrificed his life so that India might live" (Adiga 73). Adiga emphasises that this is simply a temporary situation and that regular school activities will soon resume. They simply do it for pride of accomplishment. Both these leaders and the nation's morals are no longer present. Adiga laments his loss and says:

“Ever since Sardar Patel died, this country has gone down the drain, he said, and the little boy nodded. 'We live in the midst of chaos and corruption. We can only do our jobs, and go home, he said, and the little boy nodded”(Adiga 89) Adiga frequently discusses these national heroes in his writing, which definitely relates to idealism. Adiga wants to make clear that modern politicians lack the idealistic qualities offered by these national heroes.

Political violence in India is a common occurrence. Violence is a reality in Indian politics. Politicians engage in violent altercations with one another for political gain. One of the news articles of 1991 shows the same phenomena about political violence in India. It says, Dozens of voters were shot, beaten or stabbed to death in election-day clashes throughout northern India on Monday, while thousands of low-caste Hindus and other minorities were physically barred from voting through widespread intimidation and poll fraud as the Indian nation began its crucial, weeklong parliamentary elections.

Initial reports Monday night put the opening-day voter turnout at just 50%, the lowest in India's 44 years of electoral history. Most analysts attributed the low turnout to the brutal summer heat and to a sense of dread and cynicism among the voters who constitute a nation traditionally called the world's largest democracy. (Violence Rampant)

This report shows the exact time duration what the novel has depicted. The violence on the election day threatens the voters which results into low voting. Apart from this, Operation Blue Star resulted in the murder of Indira Gandhi. She had no personal animosity, yet one of her political assessments led to her death. As part of political violence, her son Rajiv Gandhi was also slain by a suicide bomber. In *Between the Assassinations* Gururaj Kamath, who reports for the press discusses such brutality in politics. He tells, “BJP City Councillor, who needs money in a hurry to build a new mansion on Rose Lane, blasts Congressman. Tomorrow he will receive a brown bag full of cash from the Congress party, and then he will stop blasting the Congressman” (Adiga 151). This passage from the novel demonstrates how such violent acts are common in Indian politics. Thus, Adiga has successfully explored all most all the factors related to politics in India. These aspects will help to understand the problems related to Indian Politics which will ultimately lead to improve the political scenario of the nation.

## Works Cited

- Adiga, Aravind. *Between the Assassinations*. New Delhi: Picador India, 2015. Print.
- Galston, William A., Elaine Kamarck, and Aaron Klein. "India's Electoral Democracy: How EVMs Curb Electoral Fraud." *Brookings*. 2 May 2019. Web. 19 Sept. 2022.
- Migrator. "10 Longest Serving Lok Sabha Members." *Deccan Herald*. Deccan Herald, n.d. Web. 19 Sept. 2022.
- NewIndianXpress. "Partymen Turn to Biryani and Booze to Woo Voters in Tamil Nadu." *The New Indian Express*. The New Indian Express, 18 Apr. 2019. Web. 13 Sept. 2022.
- "Violence Rampant as India Starts Voting : Elections: The Official Death Toll for the First of Three Days of Balloting Is at Least 38. Turnout Is Just 50%." *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, 21 May 1991. Web. 19 Sept. 2022.