

Charles Dickens' Industrialization and Aravind Adiga's Globalization-A Study

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Abstract: "There may be short term shocks to our economy and we need to face them. That is the reality of operating in a globalized economy, whose benefits we have reaped over the last 15 to 20 years". On hearing this statement one is compelled to think of the cultural, social and political changes too apart from the economic changes that have imprinted into the society due to this global thought and is compelled to see the tremors that one needs to face today. Days ago, Charles Dickens was shocked to see such a change at the face of Industrial Revolution. In his works he reflected the social and cultural changes that such a revolution was to bring about in England. 'Charles Dickens vehemently opposed the Industrial Revolution. He was part of the literary circle that wrote "the industrial novels," that depicted the harsh realities of child labor, mechanization, overpopulation, etc.'

Key words: global, social, Industrial,

I. Introduction

The year 2013 for Indian economy had been a very worse one. With the rate of inflation on the rise and fall in the value of Indian money, people had been facing increase in the price of the essential commodities, no food security, insecure jobs, poor health care, corruption, vote banking, etc.

The Indian Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh speaking in the Lok Sabha on the devaluation of Indian rupee and the economic crisis on 30th August said, "There may be short term shocks to our economy and we need to face them. That is the reality of operating in a globalized economy, whose benefits we have reaped over the last 15 to 20 years". On hearing this statement one is compelled to think of the cultural, social and political changes too apart from the economic changes that have imprinted into the society due to this global thought and is compelled to see the tremors that one needs to face today.

The economic crisis that India faces today is worse than that it faced in 1991. The government too hasn't taken any drastic measures to improve the situation. Most economists attribute the causes of all these problems to the governments' wrong management policies of globalization. Speaking about globalization it came with ideas of equality and comfortable living. It raised the standard of living of every Indian in the middle class. With the growth of the IT industry, small cities gained prominence and started developing. The spending value of an average Indian increased. Great complexes and shopping malls were opened with branded items and international products available at home. People could enjoy things at their home towns which would be available only abroad. India emerging into a developed nation was the pride of every Indian. Being a part of that great development and reaping its harvest was the dream of every one.

But no greater change can come without its side effects. When the fast developing middle class were keen on the progress, the upper class and the capitalist took advantage of the situation to make higher profits. They grew richer and richer. Meanwhile the people under the poverty line unable to run this race grew poorer. The economic divide has become so great. But unfortunately, people often brush aside the differences amidst the progress. Even when voices rose against globalization it was soon silenced.

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II. Industrial Revolution and Dickens:

The Industrial Revolution (1760-1851) happened as a result of the chain of events like the agricultural revolution, the population growth and colonial power. The revolution was viewed as a means of development with increased wealth of the merchant class, easy and comfortable living, and an indicator of the growth of civilization. The revolution taking place in England first when compared to other nations, was also indicative of

England's political foothold and fight for sustainability of power. Also, "the Industrial revolution created the middle class that created businesses, kept women at home and developed a moral code that stood in contrast to the working class". (Ebey Soman)

The socio-economic and cultural activities of individuals determine the literature of the age. When there was a class of people who praised the revolution, Dickens through his novels presented the bleak side of it. He wrote about the unsung heroes of history. He brought out through his creations the development of the larger towns that attracted a lot of people migrating themselves to the towns for better livelihood which resulted in the over population, pollution, diseases, poor family relationships, labour issues etc.

In *Oliver Twist*, he speaks about the poverty, moral decadence, child labour, the squalid working conditions, people's thirst to make quick money and the struggle to assert their individualism. He presents the characters of boys who work as chimney sweepers. The children were forced to work only to make a living and their life too was no better. In the novel, Dickens presents the condition of the society, where the people are forced to live in squalid conditions and are separated from the families just for a meager gruel and an opportunity to be inseparable from their work. The warehouses for the neglected children and their miserable life there is portrayed in the novel.

So they established the rule that all poor people should have the alternative (for they would compel nobody, not they) of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it. With this view, they contracted with the waterworks to lay on an unlimited supply of water, and with a cornfactor to supply periodically small quantities of oatmeal, and issued three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week and half a roll on Sundays. They made a great many other wise and humane regulations . . . kindly undertook to divorce poor married people . . . instead of compelling a man to support his family, as they had theretofore done, took his family away from him, and made him a bachelor! There is no saying how many applicants for relief, under these last two heads, might have started up in all classes of society, if it had not been coupled with the workhouse; but the board were long-headed men, and had provided for this difficulty. The relief was inseparable from the workhouse and the gruel, and that frightened people. (*Oliver Twist*, ch-2)

Not only is *Oliver Twist* a study of child abuse it also presents slum life during the Victorian Age. When Oliver goes to fetch the body of a woman dead of starvation, he sees dilapidated slum houses.

Some houses which had become insecure from age and decay, were prevented from falling into the street, by huge beams of wood reared against the walls, and firmly planted in the road; but even these crazy dens seemed to have been selected as the nightly haunts of some houseless wretches, for many of the rough boards which supplied the place of door and window, were wrenched from their position, to afford an aperture wide enough for the passage of a human body. The kennel was stagnant and filthy. The very rats, which here and there lay putrefying in its rottenness, were hideous with famine. . (*Oliver Twist*, ch-5)

Dickens also presents the life of little Pip who goes to London hoping to be a gentleman in his novel *The Great Expectations*. Pip is being corrupted by the modern society in London in the face of utilitarianism. He begins to dream that his life would be great if he were wealthy and a gentleman. Pip is ashamed of his home and is ashamed of his trade. He wants to be not common; he wants to be a gentleman. He wants to live a life that he had seen at the Manor House.

Dickens' fictions also depicted the class inequalities. He often portrayed the exploitation and oppression of the poor and condemned the public officials and institutions for such abuses. He strongly condemns this in his novel *Hard Times*. He uses satire to illustrate how this marginalized section of the society was termed "Hands" by the factory owners. His writings inspired others, in particular journalists and political figures, to address such problems of class oppression. People were so after the ease of machines that they forgot human values and emotions and treated each other as machines. Mr. Gradgrind and his follower, Bounderby believed in educating the children that way that, Louisa grew up emotionless, dull and mechanical. The over use of mechanization is also presented in *Hard Times* where Louisa comes to her father's home complaining that there is something missing in her life.

In *The Pickwick Papers* Dickens nostalgically creates a world before industrialization and urbanization. He presents what might be the effects of industrialization on English society.

It was quite dark when Mr. Pickwick roused himself sufficiently to look out of the window. The straggling cottages by the roadside, the dingy hue of every object visible, the murky atmosphere, the paths of cinders and brick-dust, the deep-red glow of furnace fires in the distance, the volumes of dense smoke issuing heavily forth from high toppling chimneys, blackening and obscuring everything around; the glare of distant lights, the ponderous wagons which toiled along the road, laden with clashing rods of iron, or piled with heavy goods — all betokened their rapid approach to the great working town of Birmingham.

As they rattled through the narrow thoroughfares leading to the heart of the turmoil, the sights and sounds of earnest occupation struck more forcibly on the senses. The streets were thronged with working people. The hum of labour resounded from every house; lights gleamed from the long casement windows in the attic storeys, and

the whirl of wheels and noise of machinery shook the trembling walls. The fires, whose lurid, sullen light had been visible for miles, blazed fiercely up, in the great works and factories of the town. The din of hammers, the rushing of steam, and the heavy clanking of engines was the harsh music which arose from every quarter. [Pickwick Papers, 632-33] The worst part of it was that the working class had no representation in the government to voice out their grievances.

Authors frequently draw their characters from people they have known in real life. Dickens's experiences of his father as a prison inmate, his early working in factories, his office as a law clerk and a court reporter gave him inputs on the creation of his characters and scenes in most of his novels. He is regarded as next to Shakespeare in characterization.

III. Globalization and Adiga:

Of the various writers belonging to different generations who were influenced by Dickens's style, Aravind Adiga is one. He, living in the contemporary age is a witness of the modern revolution called globalization.

"The globalization and liberalization and privatization are interconnected. Thus, it is typically defined as a period in which the sovereignty of nation states has declined, and modes of exchange – of money, technology, products, and people – operate with increasing ease and speed across national boundaries, producing configurations of power that exceed the boundaries of the nation state." (Satyawan Sudhakar Rao Hanegave)

Adiga who self-styled himself in the Dickensian style, has followed Dickens in his novels not only in style but also in thoughts. Having brought up in Australia and heard much about the hype of the Indian Sub-continent's growth, he came home to be shocked by the glaring difference that globalization had produced in India. Being a journalist he had the eye to see what emotional people failed to see about the development. The under privileged who live in the shadows of Globalization became his heroes. He presents how development has impacted the socio-cultural as well the moral values of people.

His *Last Man in Tower* presents the tale of the common people in the face of development and personal growth. In this novel, he depicts the problems of corruption, politician - builder nexus, lack of standard life, unhygienic conditions of living, slums, etc... The Vishram society originally built for the Catholics is now the abode of the ordinary people who lived peacefully in a multi-cultural background. When it comes to personal benefits of money or power, the ordinary people who were so considerate of each other and stood and supported one another, stooped so low to murder ruthlessly and with no great regret.

The problem of redevelopment arises due to the scores of people who migrate from all parts of India to Mumbai through trains hoping for better life. Even though they come from different places they make Mumbai their own and the city has to accommodate each one. How the redevelopers and their goons acquire lands by using threats, beating up or even murdering, or giving sweeteners (ie.) money or promises of favor have also been exposed.

From Catherin she (Mrs. Rego) heard about big changes in Bandra. One by one the old mansions on Waterfield Road were melted down like ingots - even her own Uncle Coelho's. It was the same builder, Karim Ali, who broke down the houses. When he wanted to snatch Uncle Coelho's house on Waterfield Road to put up his apartment block for Bollywood stars, he too had come with sweets and smiles - it was all 'Uncle and Auntie' at first. Later on, the threatening graffiti on the walls and the late-night phone calls, and finally the day when four teenagers burst in when Uncle Coelho was having dinner, put a cheque on one side of the table, a knife on the other, and said: 'Either the knife or the cheque. Decide before dinner is over.' (*Last Man in Tower*, 168)

The globalized economy has forced people to live in ease and with all comforts. It has made people selfish and forget the values of friendship, relationship etc. In *Last Man in Tower*, the masterji began to stand against the developer Shah for the Pintos and his wish to live in the place where his wife and daughter lived was secondary. The entire of the neighborhood for which he supported, ultimately joined hands to murder him for their personal benefits. Even Shah realises that the residents did everything not because they wanted him to bring up his dream project of Shanghai, but for their personal ends. The son of the masterji was not able to understand his father. He was concerned only for money. He did not stand by his relationship. The condition in the city had become so worse due to migration that Mr. Puri says to his wife, "Let's go to a civilized place like Pune. Some place where ten thousand beggars don't come every morning by train. I'm sick of the city, I'm sick of its rat race." (*Last Man in Tower*, 157)

The law that should be the custodian of the just has started to act according to money and power. When the masterji registered a law suit against the developer, the police was not of much help to the old man. The lawyer who promised to take his case too, advises him the next day to give up the case taking bribe.

The builder, Shah too wants the redevelopment of the particular building because he was in cut throat competition with the other builder J.J. Chackoo, who was constructing an apartment in the opposite lane. To show his power and strength, Shah wanted the deal badly.

A similar current of plot in the background of globalization is been used by Aravind Adiga in his first novel, *The White Tiger*. Balram Halwai goes to Delhi hoping to be big and learns the true nature of light the hard way. A simple driver who stood so different from others even at school and was nicknamed 'the white tiger', on entering upon the city is corrupted and aspires to be one of those multitude who travel in cars like eggshells, or shop in big malls, go to pubs, drink foreign brand whisky, or spend nights with women with golden hair. In his own words he says, "I was corrupted from a sweet, innocent village fool into a citified fellow full of debauchery, depravity, and wickedness" (*The White Tiger*, 197)

'Development in terms of globalized India' marks the clear divide in India of the haves and have not's. In the novel, Balram voices how people like him come from darkness into the light. But the workers building these great malls live on the streets near them. The drivers' quarters with the stench and the mosquitoes and cockroach afflicted staying rooms, reveal the working condition of people. "However, displaying their usual genius for this town planning, the rich of Delhi had built this part of Gurgaon with no parks, lawns, or playgrounds - it was just buildings, shopping malls, hostels, and more buildings. There was a pavement outside, but that was for the poor to live on." (*The White Tiger*, 225)

The people leave their villages and their families back at home, to migrate to cities to work in mines and other places. The parents of the child that was run over by Pinky ma'am would not make a complaint because children like the one killed come to cities alone and live under bridges or flyovers and there would be no one to care for them or else the child would be one among the eight or nine children whose names the parents would not even know.

In the Victorian England, people had no political representations but in modern India the representation of the poor are rigged. The politicians and the rich had nexus in the corruption and Balram says, "...the tea shop owner had already sold us. He had sold our fingerprints which the illiterate person makes on the ballot paper to indicate his vote. I had overheard this from a customer. This was supposed to be a close election; he had a good price for each one of us from the Great Socialist's party" (*The White Tiger*, 97)

IV. Conclusion:

All rapid changes in short time have had the most profound impact on society. Both Dickens and Adiga, project the fear that one has at the face of change. Both Industrialization and Globalization brought about the creation of larger towns and development of the metropolis like London in Dickens' novels and Gurgaon, Bangalore, Delhi or Mumbai in Adiga's novels. The immigration of huge population into these cities made it crowding and urbanization has resulted in the failure of systems in such cities. The people who migrate to these cities leave their families to make big in life and the necessity to stay away from families has resulted in the disintegration of family system. The working and staying condition of the working class people become hard and in spite of development the divide between the rich and the poor steadily increase and leads to the exploitation of the immigrants.

But, the redemption that both offer to the problem at the end of their writings, differ. Dickens insisted on the values to face the circumstances and Adiga presents a warning that the contemporary society might face. Dickens living in the Victorian England had strong holds in values that were also the key tone of the Age. But in the age in which we live, one including Adiga too does not know for sure what it might be tomorrow. Some might call him Psycho and some psychic. But his novels are indeed the fear of a man, who had seen the impact of Globalization abroad and the reality of the great divide the globalized economy was causing in India. In his own words, *The White Tiger* is not just a book about India; it's about "globalization," and an entire world culture that is insidiously unraveling under its vicious pressure and devastating impact.

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