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Lack Of Sex Education Among The Indians: Aravind Adiga's Observation In Selection Day

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Abstract

Sex education is high-quality teaching and learning about various issues related to sex and sexuality. . Sex education leads to the appreciation of sexual diversity, prevention of partner violence, development of healthy relationships, prevention of child sex abuse, and increased media literacy. It also helps young people evade unintentional pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). This paper explores the Importance of sex education *and the lack of sex education in India*. Aravind Adiga hints at the lack of sex education in India among adolescent boys and girls in his novel *Selection Day*.

Keywords: Sex Education, Martyr, Mediocrity.

1. Introduction

The most significant obstruction to sex education in India is almost undoubtedly cultural norms against talking about sex. These norms are heavily deep-seated in Indian society. In 2014, then India's Health Minister, Harsh Vardhan, said he wanted to forbid sex education in India. Further, he wanted to substitute Sex education with Yoga in Indian schools. He was against sex education because he believed it was against the long-established Indian values.

Not only the minister but also some right-wing groups like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Shiksha Bachao Andolan Samiti were against sex education. They led an attack that included "threats of physical violence" against the teachers and schools that were bold enough to carry out sex education as stipulated in the 2007 health education program that was promoted by India's National AIDS Control Organization and the Ministry of Human Resource Development. As a result, many several states in India banned sex education. These organizations opposed sex education because they also believed it was against traditional Indian values. (Emily Joy Oomen, 2020)

However, in reality, sex education has been misunderstood in India. Sex education is high-quality teaching and learning about various issues related to sex and sexuality. It helps people gain the knowledge and skills needed to navigate relationships with themselves, partners, and the community and manage their own sexual health. Sex education can occur in schools, at home, community settings,

or online. Sex education leads to the appreciation of sexual diversity, prevention of intimate partner violence, development of healthy relationships, prevention of child sex abuse, and increased media literacy. It also helps young people evade unintentional pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). However, Aravind Adiga observes a lack of sex education among the Indians, both young and old.

Aravind Adiga is one of the famous diasporic writers of India. His first novel, *The White Tiger*, won the 2008 Man Booker Prize. *Selection Day* is his third novel, published in 2016. It is the story of Mohan Kumar, a chutney seller who trains his two sons: Radha Krishna and Manju Kumar, for Mumbai's under-19 cricket team. He brings them to Mumbai to get enrolled in a club so that they may achieve their goal. The two brothers play exceptional cricket and prepare for the selection day. Mohan favours Radha, praying that he becomes the greatest cricket batter of all time and that Manju becomes the second-best. Nevertheless, on the selection day, Radha, who desires only to be a professional cricket player, does not perform well and fails. Manju, who does not want to play cricket, performs exceptionally well and is selected to play for the Under-19 league and plays brilliantly for three years. He is then selected by the Mumbai professional team and plays for several more years.

The story goes on with many twists and turns. At the same time, Adiga exposes here and there his observation on sex education and feels that there is a lack of sex education among the Indian population, especially among Indian parents. Whenever the image of the dead body of an American man lying naked on a dissecting table was flashed on TV, Manju Kumar, the protagonist, was emotionally moved. It was happening all the time, sometimes even when his father or brother was in the same room. He was afraid to share his feelings with them and was perplexed. (18)

Adiga hints at the lack of sex education in India among adolescent boys and girls. They are ignorant that these kinds of sensations are natural at their age. Also, Adiga indirectly condemns the Indian mentality that sharing sexual emotions with parents, brothers, sisters, or elders is taboo.

Indian parents are suspicious of their adolescent boys and girls, and most fear that their adolescent boys and girls will quickly go astray. So they watch every movement of their wards. Here in SD, Mr. Mohan, the father of Manju, watched his sons looking at a water body and asked, "What were you looking at?" They told the truth that they were watching turtles. However, their father imagined that they were watching naked or half-naked girls and cried, "There is blood in your cheeks, Manju. That comes from hormones." (22). This is a big irony. It exhibits the ignorance of the father about his son's sexual taste. Manju was fascinated by people of the same sex, but his father was worried that he was attracted to girls and beat him black and blue.

Similarly, one day lying on the bed, Manju was watching *CSI Las Vegas*. Radha, the elder brother, was holding up the iPad to make it comfortable for Manju. Then, Radha asked Manju why he had played with his broken thumb in front of Srinivasan Sir, a selector of cricketers. Manju revealed that he had to play with the broken thumb because of their father. While listening to his brother, Radha walked to the door of their bedroom and slammed it shut. Soon Mohan, standing outside the house, asked his sons to open the door at once. Moreover, he asked if they were watching blue films on the computer he bought for them to watch only cricket. His high-pitched voice uttered, "Blue films? Foreign films? Foreign women in foreign films?" (78) It appears that Mohan had become a hysteria patient. Thus Adiga exposes a psychological truth - the suspicious parents would become psychological patients at last, and also it is the result of over concern of parents about their wards.

Even the elder brother or sister does not have the proper understanding of the young one's emotions in India. Radha did not have the right understanding of Manju's emotions and sentiments. It is revealed in the following episode. One day Radha told his brother that all the people saw *the young lions* on TV and asked him, "Which girl in school do you like?" (25). Manju was irritated with the question and angrily replied to his brother, "Shut up." Furthermore, the fact that Manju was attracted to a person of the same sex is evident from his acts of watching a woodpecker and thinking of Mr. Javed with a beck nose and his smiling face (42). Though Radha was elder to Manju, he was always

with Manju, and though he had all the chances to observe every movement of his younger brother, he had no proper understanding of his brother's emotions. So it goes without saying that the elder could not guide the younger one. Here Adiga exposes that young adolescents are not correctly understood and guided by their elders regarding sex and its related emotions.

Adiga warns about the new culture that is growing among the city boys and girls through the mouthpiece of Tommy Sir. Tommy Sir, the mouse cricket coach, tells his daughter that on a moonlit night, boys and girls in the city go to the sea Bay of Bengal; sit on rocks; kiss each other and cuddle together; and God alone knows what goes on behind the screen. Then he prays that the tide may cover the rocks and they may not come back (136). Thus Adiga has exhibited a critical situation that reveals not only a want of education, especially sex education but also cultural education among Indian boys and girls.

In Adiga's point of view, attraction toward a person of the same sex is not abnormal. Sofia, the ex-girlfriend of Radha, told Manju that people were discussing his personal life a lot. She said further that it was because his brother spread the news that Manju was a homo. Manju was broken into pieces. Then, Sofia asked Manju to relax and said it was the twenty-first century and he was in junior college.

Further, she asked him to be what he was. She told him that it was not abnormal and affirmed that it was 100% normal. For, there were/are lots of homosexuals, and so it was not a big problem. She said there was a club for gay and lesbian people in one of the city colleges (197). Here we could consider that Adiga expresses his opinion about homo sex through Sofia. He indirectly points out that youngsters should have undergone sex education to have such a mature opinion of our attitude to homosexuals. Further, he condemns the habit of discussing one's personal life in public.

According to Adiga, Section 377 - "Unnatural offences" is unnatural. While going through the legal code, Javed, the best friend of Manju, turned to section 377 - "Unnatural offences". It talks about unnatural carnal intercourse and the punishment for such illegal acts. Javed took out his pen and drew a big penis over that page (243). Here we could take that Adiga has expressed his disapproval of the penal code through the actions of Javed. In Adiga's opinion, the so-called 'unnatural offences' are pretty natural in the animal kingdom. If so, it is also natural to the rational animal i.e. human beings. Further, in his opinion, only 'the section 377' is unnatural. Thus Adiga indirectly points out that to have this kind of advanced thinking, sex education is the only remedy.

Adiga firmly believes that if it is to be blamed, it is society and not the individual. On Manju's birthday, both Radha and Manju met together. Radha asked Manju to get married or go back to Navi Mumbai and stay with Javed. Radha lost hope for his brother, for Manju appeared to love men at one moment and women at another. He was got in between his two desires, like a hunted animal. Manju also realized that he had been and was still fascinated by men and women. Manju had contempt for his lies, weakness and cowardice. However, he had more contempt for the world that had never made him know a clear path. Here Adiga condemns the society that is ever ready to find fault with persons with sex deviation. He indirectly instructs society to come forward to guide and direct such people on a clear and right path. Finally, he indirectly advocates sex education for all Indian adolescents and adults.

One night Anand Mehta felt the thrill of having a bet on Manju who had returned from England and wanted to see him at once. While driving to the three Kumars' house, on the way, he watched the buildings stuffed with the seventies' concrete and nineteenth-century morality. Not only were the concrete buildings hollow, but the fat middle-class people were also hollow. It means that the moral beliefs and principles of the middle-class Indian society such as i) Indians are the most moral people; ii) Only married people should live in good buildings; iii) Girls should be virgins, and iv) Homos and lesbians should be in prison - are hollow or meaningless. In that context, Adiga advocates through Mehta that we should get rid of the farces and declare a sovereign, secular and socialist of cock and cunt (146). So he wants to fight for a sovereign, secular and socialistic Indian society where the homos and lesbians are treated humanely.

When Manju expressed his intention of becoming a cricket coach, Radha begged him not to become one more Tommy Sir, who acted as the coach for Manju and Radha. Manju warned his brother not to mock Tommy Sir. Then he posed as if he were holding an invisible bowl with his cupped palms and stared at it. Radha shouted that that was not Tommy Sir. However, Manju stood erect with his strange gesture. Radha realized that Manju was dreaming of returning to cricket and consoled himself by saying, "Every man must martyr himself to something: but we have martyred ourselves to this mediocrity" (279). Adiga considers Manju as a mediocre. Mediocre is the one who is inclined towards someone or something for some time and changes his mind later towards another person or object. Sometimes Manju was attracted to women, but another time he was attracted to men. Similarly, sometimes he was very interested in playing cricket, but then he wanted to give up cricket and become a scientist.

2. Conclusion

Thus Adiga hints at the lack of sex education in India among adolescent boys and girls. They are ignorant that these kinds of sensations are natural at their age. Also, Adiga indirectly condemns the Indian mentality that sharing sexual emotions with parents, brothers, sisters, or elders is taboo. Adiga concludes that as a human being, every man must martyr himself to something such as money, power, women, land etc. Persons like Manju have martyred themselves to this kind of mediocrity. Adiga asks us to accept such persons and allow them to be themselves. Sex education is a must to achieve such a matured mentality.

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