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SOCIAL REALITIES IN KIRAN NAGARKAR'S 'RAVAN AND EDDIE'

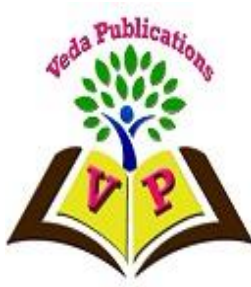
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ABSTRACT



This paper highlights the level of poverty in India as a whole, and in Mumbai chawls in particular, even after several decades of independence. Ravan and Eddie, characters in Kiran Nagarkar's novel, play an important role in addressing the issues of poverty in Mumbai chawls. The researcher hopes to effectively depict the tragic plights and state of existence of protagonists. People's lives in chawls are deplorable, and Ravan, the son of orthodox Hindu parents, and Eddie, the son of Roman Catholic parents, revolt against poverty with their actions. They see the world through the lens of experience, as it emerges from the self's encounter with the world outside.

Keywords: *Poverty, Revolution, Mumbai Chawls, Characters*

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Kiran Nagarkar captures the essence of contemporary social reality while also being able to present the realities as critical commentaries. The Indian society is unique in its diversity. It represents unity in diversity. The social institution itself is a mash-up of various cultural, religious, and linguistic groups of people. Kiran Nagarkar examines both sides of a coin. He not only comments on the oppressed people's attitude, behaviour, and psyche, but he also makes keen observations on the oppressor. In his investigation, he does not spare anyone. He reveals the true intentions of the colonisers who have long oppressed Indians. Kiran Nagarkar describes the subjugated people's innocence very well. He believes that subjugation has harmed the Indians' psyche to the point where they cannot imagine, let alone begin to live, a life without the oppressor. Their mindset has been irreversibly shaped to the point where they are content with being slaves. There is no desire for liberty in the Indian mind. Slavery has become so entrenched in the Indians' lives that they are unable to break the habit of being someone else's slave. Even in the absence of the British, the Indians always seek approval from someone. This is one of the main reasons why rich Indians continue to exploit poor Indians.

“Writing about poverty in India, even within India, is such a risky enterprise. And writing about poverty is so difficult because

ultimately people end up seeing only those circumstances: how poor someone is.” Says Deepa Anappara author of *Djinn Patrol on The Purple Line* Literature is a beautiful work of art that demonstrates the multifaceted aspects of the society through the imaginative creation of the writers. Literature believes in the real and true representation of the society and also its history. It treats truthful events and their consequential occurrences. Indian novelists treat various facets of history and society in a factual manner. Novelists like Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao, Manohar Malgonkar, Ahmed Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh who have all won fame, far beyond the shores of India have really enriched the heritage of Indian English fiction in a realistic way. The realist type of fiction deals with real life.

The novel in India can be seen as the result of philosophical, aesthetic, economic, and political forces in the country's larger life. Despite obvious regional differences, a basic pattern appears to emerge from shared factors such as Puranic heritage, hierarchical social structure, colonial education, agrarian disjunction, and many others that affect both the form and content of the novel. (Mukherjee)

Kiran Nagarkar is among India's foremost novelist whose books *like Ravan and Eddie, Cuckold, God's Little Soldier* have won him



readers and admirers everywhere the planet. *Cuckold* is a must-read for anyone with an interest in English literature in India. It is Nagarkar's crowning achievement and a masterpiece of imaginative art. In 2000, he won Sahitya Akademi Award for his good work. Makarand R. Paranjape considered it to be a part of a canon of Indian English novels (Paranjape) Jaina C. Sanga considers the book as an excellent one. The book has been praised for its "blending of traditional narrative against a historical backdrop presented with relentless detail" (Sanga)

Kiran Nagarkar holds society accountable for its blatant disregard for issues such as poverty, exploitation, caste, religion, and discrimination. His points of view are truthful in their presentation of reality. The novel is witty, but it is also realistic and enlightening about human existence in the midst of daily struggles. The novel depicts the lives of families from the lower middle and lower classes. The novel tells the story of families with over a dozen members living in two rooms, sharing a common toilet at the end of the corridor, and drawing water for drinking and bathing from a public tap.

The novel depicts chawl life in Bombay and its multi-cultural community. Simultaneously, he depicted a youngster's fascination with Hindi films. The novel is witty, but it also portrays human existence among

daily hardships in a realistic and illuminating way. The lives of lower middle class and lower class households are depicted in the novel.

The novel *Ravan and Eddie* (1995) represents the actual fact of the lives of the Mumbai city. Kiran Nagarkar explores the anguish and confusion of his protagonist. His main character Ravan struggles to discover who he really is. He puts up with the tightening pressures of anxiety and gets caught up in it occasionally. Through wit, satire, and grim but passionate humour, Nagarkar depicts their tragic state. He highlights the challenging situation that modern man face when attempting to live in a multicultural culture. The novel portrays the lives of two boys. Eddie Coutinho is a Christian, Catholic, and Ravan Pawar is a Maratha, Hindu boy.

The novel depicts the realities of life in Mumbai. People who live in Chawls. Chawls in Mumbai are the multi-story buildings with common amenities built in the 19th century by the cotton-mill owners for the mill workers. Girangaon was a specific locality in Mumbai where these chawls were saturated initially, since most of the mills were in Girangaon (Giran, in Marathi, means a mill). Dozens of family members share a common toilet and bathroom, drink water from a public tap, and have no privacy. Families with low incomes such as drivers, conductors, lower division clerks, and



peons live in the Chawls. Nagarkar captures the essence of Mumbai life and society, with multi-cultural and multi-lingual facets. People's lives are difficult as a result of the poverty in the chawls. He explains Mumbai's infrastructure in depth. Today, it appears that Mumbai's buildings are literally reaching the sky. We discover constructing competition. Problems with fundamental services including water, health, education, employment, hygiene, and a clean environment get worse as population density rises. The reader is made aware of the human race's extreme need and lack of resources in the novel's subsequent lines. "Water and blood. Is there a distinction? The water battles had begun. The women of the CWD chawl had taken a while to comprehend the need of water" (R&E 72). The emergence of multilingual aspects has increased the likelihood of language fusion in Mumbai. It discusses the blending of various languages, including Marathi, Hindi, Parsi, Gujrati, and Kokni.

India is a developing country. The proportion of the population living below the poverty line is higher in the country. Such a percentage can be found in a metropolis like Mumbai. Despite the country's advancement in science and technology, the basic needs of the people are not met due to poverty. Religion is the foundation of Indian society. It is the source of the political upheaval. The writer elaborates

on the issue based on religion. He describes the opposing forces of religious creeds.

Kiran Nagarkar's *The Extras* is the sequel to Ravan and Eddie. This novel is a social commentary on Mumbai and its social reality. The normal process of the life of lower middle class and lower class people who struggle to make a living in a busy city like Mumbai is the focus of the novel. The writer is once again able to bring out a detailed picture of the social reality that encompasses human beings in a place, which is overcrowded. Continuing the life story of the two boys Ravan and Eddie, the novel extrapolates their lives and their lifestyles, which are deeply influenced by their environment. The writer throws light on the hidden lives of Mumbaikars who are often pushed into the darker side of the city. Kiran Nagarkar's view on society and human beings is a perfect picture of real status of the society in this modern era.

From ancient times to the present, poverty has not been completely eliminated from society. For their daily food, people who have suffered and toiled continue to do so. In the Central Works Department chawls of Bombay, where their lives ran parallel, the two boys' lives, Marathi Hindu Ravan Rao Pawar and Goan Christian Eddie Coutinho, are chronicled in the novel *Ravan and Eddie*.



The story follows the antics of the two titular male protagonists, Ravan (a Hindu) and Eddie (a Christian), whose "subjectivity and identity" are shaped by their various religious outlooks and ideals. The grim world of CWD chawls is viewed through the eyes of the young anti-heroes, who fumble and falter at every phase of their lives but never allow fiascos or setbacks to dampen their spirit en route the pursuit of their dreams to become Bollywood superstars.

The author offers us thought-provoking asides and meditations on a variety of topics throughout the book, including the relevance, significance, and power of the English language in postcolonial, post-independent India and its role in influencing people's lives, the role of the moving image and cinema in modern society, the enduring issue of water scarcity, particularly for the underprivileged and economically disadvantaged communities in modern cities, and the history of the English language. The life in a chawl is not at all a matter of pride or celebration. Its heterogeneity does not reveal 'unity in diversity'. Rather divided by their class, caste, race or gender the cultural world of the chawl negates any possibility of homogenous identity of the people living in it.

The rigid separation of the different floors of the chawls in terms of their communal identity and religious affiliations is so glaringly

obvious that it divided the Hindu and the Christian communities into two disjunct and isolated worlds marooned in space and time. As Nagarkar states, "it was ...religion that was the source of all the differences between the two communities" (R&E 172). The novelist, while empathetically ironically hilarious, exposes the social and cultural gaucheries of members of the two groups as well as their blatant and total insensitivity to one another's sentiments and way of life.

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