On the Tarmac of Nationhood: Dismantling Caste and Tribal Loyalty in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Shadrach Ambanasom's *Son of the Native Soil*

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The White Tiger is Aravind Adiga's first novel just like *Son of the Native Soil* which is Shadrach Ambanasom's first oeuvre. The two novels address two major social concerns (the caste system and tribal loyalty) that impair national cohesion in India and Cameroon respectively. Briefly speaking, the caste refers to the classification of peoples in India (and other South Asian countries) into in-marrying hereditary social classes of the privileged and the underprivileged while tribal loyalty refers to selfish attachment to a tribe or clan to the detriment of community or national feeling. The two concepts are related in the sense that the word "caste" derives from the Spanish or Portuguese "casta" meaning race, lineage, breed or clan. In both cases therefore, the issues of sectionalism, division, discrimination, selfishness, marginalization, and hegemony (amongst others) are at play—issues that impede the notion of nationhood. Read principally from the Marxist perspective of power dynamics and class struggle, the paper argues that Adiga and Ambanasom through skillful manipulation of symbols, time, characters and events, try to imagine the deconstruction of caste and ethnic loyalty in India and Cameroon respectively, which to the two authors, are only historically and socially erected edifices rather than natural order. For the two authors, although global forces may seem to play in favor of a more equitable human society, a necessarily violent revolution might be required to dismantle a blighted body politico-modus operandi that has operated in the people's psyche for a long time, as characters and events in the two novels reveal.

Keywords: caste, tribal loyalty, Marxism, globalization

Introduction

The caste system in India is a system of social stratification which historically separated communities into thousands of endogamous hereditary groups called *jatis* (castes). They are thought of as being divided into four *varnas* (classes): *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras*. The *Daltis* are excluded from the *varna* system altogether and ostracized as untouchables. It is the plight of this stigmatized group that Adiga explores in his work. Similarly, Ambanasom's novel looks at a community of people—a clan of nineteen villages called Dudum that has been torn apart by ill-advised village loyalty, egotism, intrigue heartless cruelty, nepotism and political rivalry. Ambanasom's focus is on the political ramifications of such human behavior in a fragile post-colonial Cameroon made up of three major ethnic groups and a plethora of diverse tribes and languages. In this light, Ambanasom's novel although set in an imaginary clan in one part of the country, becomes a

microcosm of some of the burning political conflicts in Cameroon.

For Ambanasom and Adiga, the status-quo both in Cameroon and India needs to be overhauled through any effective means including a revolution. This is in line with the Marxist world view and method of societal analysis that focus on class relations, societal conflict, materialist interpretation of historical developments and a dialectical view of social transformation. Culture according to this view is seen as the product of a much more vigorous struggle and cultural domination arises from a complex play of negotiations, alignments and realignments within society. This domination as seen in the two novels operates as an ideology, that is, the production of images of superiority and domination by a hegemonic group—a kind of false consciousness that is eventually accepted by other groups. According to Marxists, because the ruling class controls the society's means of production or the superstructure of society, the ruling social ideas are determined by the best interest of the said ruling class. These ideas are in every epoch the ruling ideas, that is, the class which is ruling the material force of the society is, at the same time, the ruling intellectual force. The caste system and tribal hegemonies in India and Cameroon respectively function along this Marxist principle.

Adiga and Ambanasom in the two novels ascribe to the Marxist view that the struggle between social classes is a major force in history and that there should eventually be a society in which there are no classes. The idea of a classless society usually sounds like a utopia but its possibility lies in the fact that class stratification and hegemony are for the most part historical and societal constructions that are eventually internalized and eventually accepted as truth or reality. If classes and hegemonic groups are only societal and historical constructions then they can be dismantled. Adiga and Ambanasom join Marxists and other progressive social movements in an unpromising hostility to all forms of domination including, class, sexism, racism, nepotism, sectionalism and segmentation which are embodied in the notions of caste and ethnic domination which undermine the virtues of nationhood. Like most social constructions, caste and tribal loyalty in India and Cameroon respectively have historical and cultural origins.

Historical and Cultural Perspectives of Caste and Tribal Loyalty in *The White Tiger* and *Son of the Native Soil*

The caste in India is a system where people are socially differentiated through class, religion, region, tribe, gender and language. Although there are other forms of differentiation that exist in all human societies, the problem in India is that the caste has become the sole basis of systematic ranking and unequal access to valued resources like wealth, income, power and prestige. The Indian caste system is considered a close system of stratification, which means that a person's social status is obligated to which caste they were born into and there are limits on interaction and behavior with people from another social status.

The caste system classifies people into four hierarchically ranked castes called varnas as earlier stated. They are classified according to occupation and determine access to wealth, power and privileges. The Brahmins, usually priests and scholars, are at the top. Next are the Kshatriyas or political rulers and soldiers. They are followed by the Vaishyas, or merchants, and the fourth are the Shudras, who are usually labourers, peasants, artisans and servants. At the very bottom are those considered the untouchables. These individuals perform occupations that are considered unclean and polluting, such as scavenging and skinning dead animals. They are considered as outcasts, they are not considered to be included in the ranked castes. Balram, the protagonist of *The White Tiger* falls into this category. Born in a rural village in India and son of a rickshaw puller, Balram and other members of his family are not entitled to any privileges with their status of "untouchables".

The caste system although with pre-modern origins was transformed by the British during the colonial period. The collapse of the Mughal era¹ saw the rise of powerful men who associated themselves with kings, priests and ascetics, affirming the regal and marital form of the caste ideal, and it also reshaped many apparently casteless social groups into differentiated caste communities. The British furthered this development, making rigid caste organization a central mechanism of administration. Between 1860 and 1920 the British segregated Indians by caste, granting administrative jobs and senior appointments only to the upper castes. The lower castes were left only with manual and less lucrative jobs. In *The White Tiger*, the protagonist's journey through the countryside to the city offers Adiga the opportunity to expose this social stratification that has become the order of life in India.

New developments took place after India achieved independence, when the policy of caste-based reservation was formalized with lists of Scheduled Castes (Dalit²) and Scheduled Tribes (Adivas). Since 1950, the country has enacted many laws and social initiatives to protect and improve the socio-economic conditions of its lower caste population. However, the lower castes as presented by Adiga in his novel show no indication that their economic situation has improved. Rather, the situation appears to be deteriorating with every passing page. In a series of letters to the Chinese Premier, the protagonist captures the appalling conditions and the treatment reserved for the lower castes in India. The caste classifications for college admission quotas, job reservations and other affirmative action initiatives, according to the Supreme Court of India, are unchangeable. Though caste is considered a dominant feature on Hinduism³, in Indian context, it has influenced other religions too like Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism in the Indian Subcontinent. Adiga's *The White Tiger*, therefore is a condensed representation of the wider caste repercussions in the Indian's Sub-continent in general and India in particular.

Cameroon, like India, has problems of social inequalities and tribal rivalry owing to its geographical, historical and social composition. Cameroon is made up of more than 250 tribes for the most part, speaking different languages. Most of the tribes constitute kingdoms or chiefdoms headed by powerful kings and chiefs. Some are larger and stronger than others but each tribe jealously preserves its territorial and cultural boundaries from encroachment by its neighbors. Consequently, there are constant inter-tribal conflicts resulting from this situation.

The North West Region of Cameroon from where Ambanasom hails happens to be the region with the greatest inter-tribal conflicts in the country most of them resulting from land/boundary disputes but also from the quest for hegemony and domination. *Son of the Native Soil* at the surface level grapples with such inter-tribal scuffles as can be seen in the conflict between Upper and Lower Dudum over land, chieftaincy and administrative domination. Administrative boundaries in the North West Region of Cameroon first created by German colonial powers and later maintained by the British disrupted the social set up of the region. Administrative boundaries that were created cut across ethnic groups and cultures. Chiefdoms were split and

¹ The Mughal Empire ended after the First Indian War of Independence sending into exile the last emperor of India, Bahadar Shah to Burma. It was an ignominious end to what was once a glorious dynasty, which ruled the Indian Subcontinent for more than 300 years.

² Dalit means "oppressed" and highlights the persecution and discrimination that India's 160 million untouchables face regularly. Today it is used by some activists to refer to all of India's oppressed peoples whether Hindus, Muslims, Christians, minorities or women.

³ To be born a Hindu in India (following a legend) is to enter the caste system, one of the world's longest surviving forms of social stratification embedded in the Indian culture for the past 1500 years and which follows the basic precept that all men are created unequal.

some indigenes found themselves having to pay allegiance to a different chiefdom. In the same light certain sacred sites became a bone of contention between some chiefdoms and this was not the case before. Today, the Region counts seven Divisions and thirty-one Sub-Divisions cutting across several tribes, traditions and languages. The Dudum Sub-Division in Ambanasom's novel, created for administrative reasons, and to ease tension between belligerent tribes is a case in point.

During the German annexation of Cameroon as a whole and the North West Region in particular, tribes that were hostile to the German colonial authorities were subdued and put under the authority of tribes that were friendlier and cooperative. Even some small tribes that were under the authority of larger ones and friendly to the Germans were recognized as independent villages and their leaders recognized as chiefs creating a lot of bitterness in the whole region. This is evidenced in *Son of the Native Soil* by the controversy over who the paramount chief of the Dudum clan really is as both chiefs of Akan and Anjong claim this title. To know who of the two chiefs is paramount Achamba has to go to the national archives in Yaounde for information. In the North West Region of Cameroon, the social organization recognizes the chief or Fon as more influential than the official administrative authorities. The Fon is also considered the living representative of tribal ancestors. That is why in Ambanasom's novel, the people pay more allegiance to the chiefs, prefer to solve their problems using traditional methods and only go to the administration as a last resort.

One of the conflicts in *Son of the Native Soil* is that resulting from communal land. Renown Cameroonian historian, Verkijika Faso explains that with little understanding of the function of communal land, colonial authorities destroyed its existence with unwarranted demarcations, instilling a sense of private ownership among village groups who previously exploited land in common (1982, p. 82). During the transitional period between German and British rule, Faso explains, the British due to ignorance, complicated the issue by either demarcating such land, or by assigning it exclusively to one party and this explains the alarming number of inter-tribal conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon. *Son of the Native Soil* aptly captures this picture in the land dispute between Akan and Anjong.

Abdul Raufu Mustapha (1998) corroborates Faso's submission by insisting that by redefining pre-colonial notions of political and physical space, European colonialism established a new dispensation and interpretation of belonging in the grasslands of Cameroon. It altered pre-colonial structures of economic opportunity by giving undue advantage to particular communities. Unfortunately, post-colonial Cameroon authorities maintained these demarcations. The result up till today, according to Mustapha, is an unprecedented wave of identity consciousness among and between village groups, as well as a redefinition of the limits of their hitherto geographical confines (Mustapha, 1998, p. 34). The events and characters in Ambanasom's novel are a microscopic representation of this shuffled social set-up.

As will be seen in the second part of this essay, *Son of the Native Soil* dramatizes a much broader perspective of nationhood crises in Cameroon as the clash between Upper Dudum and Lower Dudum reflects the conflict between the French speaking and English speaking sections of Cameroon. Historically speaking, Cameroon, a former German colony was, as a result of the latter's defeat in the First World War divided between the allied powers of France and Britain as a mandated territory with France taking two thirds of the territory. When the United Nations replaced the League of Nations after the war, Britain administered her section of the territory (Southern Cameroons) as part of Nigeria. The French territory finally got its independence from France as La Republique du Cameroun. In 1961, a Plebiscite was organized under the supervision of the United Nations Organization during which Southern Cameroons got her independence by

joining La Republique du Cameroun. The event was sanctioned by an agreement of equality with regards to governance and sharing of opportunities in the different aspects of national life. Since that event Anglophone Cameroonians have seen their rights and claims continually disregarded by their Francophone counterparts. The reaction of the Anglophones has been vigorous and robust in many domains including the creative arts.

Evidently, the annexation of Cameroon by different European powers further engendered linguistic and cultural differences. In this regard, the conflict in Ambanasom's novel (as earlier stated) would be a micro-depiction of the macro Francophone/Anglophone divide in Cameroon. Like India therefore, Cameroon is historically predisposed to conflict and division problematic to nationhood. One of Ambanasom and Adiga's concerns in *Son of the Native Soil* and *The White Tiger* consequently is to explore possibilities of bridging historical, geographical and cultural borders in their communities in order to foster nationhood.

Dismantling Caste and Tribal Loyalty in *The White Tiger* and *Son of the Native Soil*

Son of the Native Soil is a novel set in Dudum traditional area of the North West Region of Cameroon. Dudum is a clan made up of Lower Dudum, consisting of four villages whose chief village is Akan, and Upper Dudum consists of fifteen villages, the chief of which is Anjong. In spite of their common lineage and parallel languages, the two tribes are often in conflict for supremacy in a number of domains including land boundaries, chieftaincy and administrative leadership. This conflict has devastating consequences both for the two tribes and for the nation Cameroon as a whole.

The White Tiger on the other hand, is a novel set in India. The protagonist Balram Hawai is born in Laxmangath, a rural village in "the darkness". Son of a rickshaw puller and an "untouchable", Balram tactfully moves from his status of servitude to a successful entrepreneur by killing his master and stealing his money to establish a taxi service. Using the epistolary device, Balram exposes the ills plaguing modern day India including caste, violence, corruption and poverty amongst others. In the two novels Adiga and Ambanasom strive to dismantle the above ills that undermine the fundamental principles of nationhood in India and Cameroon respectively.

In political science, nation is often used synonymously with state or country to refer both to the territory, government and the holder of sovereignty which shapes the fundamental norms governing a particular people. Ernest Renan in "What is a nation?" in *Nation and Narration* (1990) considers a nation as a spiritual family, the outcome of the profound complications of history; a spiritual family, not a group determined by the shape of the earth (Bhabha, 1990, pp. 18-19) while Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) argues that a nation is,

...an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow—members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (Anderson, 1983, p. 15)

In the same vein, Seton-Watson (1977) points out that "All that I can say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one" (p. 5).

In the above definitions, the underlying fact is that a nation is something imaginary, not determined by ethnic origin, color, race, language, culture, religion or belief systems. It is a feeling of belonging constructed by society and sanctioned by the institutions that have been put in place. Nationhood is based on the principle

of mutual coexistence and acceptance of the “other”. In this respect, sectionalism, segmentation, borders, fences, demarcations, segregation, discrimination, xenophobia, bondage hood, caste, and tribalism amongst others; must give way to fraternity, tolerance and entente. This is not quite obvious and so a lot of will and abnegation is required both at the individual and collective levels. Adiga and Ambanasom through a plethora of literary techniques in their works prove that in nations like India and Cameroon where the people are proudly willing to shed a history of misapprehension, tensions and disparities, it is possible to dismantle human barriers that impair nationhood. One technique evident in both novels is symbolism which the two authors exploit to good effect.

Firstly, the titles of the two novels are symbolic. The title “The White Tiger” in Adiga’s novel refers to the protagonist Balram Hawai. He is different from all the other members of his lower caste origin. A white tiger symbolizes power in East Asian cultures in general and in Vietnam in particular. It is also a symbol of freedom and individuality. *The White Tiger* is a novel about man’s quest for freedom. Balram, the protagonist in the novel works his way out of his low social status (often referred to as “the darkness”) and overcomes the social obstacles that keep him from living life to the fullest that he can. The book is a Bildungsroman that traces Balram’s journey from “bondagehood” to freedom in India’s modern day capitalist society. Balram cites a poem at the beginning of the novel which captures slavery as a self-imposed phenomenon because a slave is someone who “can’t see what is beautiful in the world” (Adiga, 2008, p. 34). Balram sees himself as an embodiment of one who sees the world and takes advantage of it to free himself from servitude.

Similar to the concept of freedom is the symbol of the “rooster coop” exploited by Adiga. The narrator mentions the rooster coop when describing the situation or characteristics of the servant class in India and he also defends himself for murdering his master with it. The narrator first describes how the roster coop looks like in the market in Old Delhi in order to give the visualization to the audience.

Hundreds of pale hens and brightly colored roosters stuffed tightly into wire-mesh cages, packed as tightly as worms in a belly, pecking each other and shitting on each other, jostling just for breathing space; the whole cage giving a horrible stench. (Adiga, 2008, p. 147)

The rosters in the coop smell the blood and see the organs of their slaughtered brothers and this picture is synonymous with what the rural poor experience in India.

From the analysis of the structure of the inequalities in the country, the narrator comes to believe that liability for the suffering of the servant also lies with the mentality of the servant class, which he refers to as “perpetual servitude”. This ideology according to the narrator is so strong that “you can put the key of his emancipation in a man’s hands and he will throw it back to you with a curse” (Adiga, 2008, p. 147). According to this philosophy, individual action is the key to break out of the roster coop and the servants are self-trapping. Balram validates his evil actions to his master by saying, “I think the Roster Coop needs people like me to break out of it” (Adiga, 2008, p. 257).

Like the title of Adiga’s novel, Ambanasom’s “Son of the Native Soil” resonates with both tribal inclinations and the broader Francophone/Anglophone divide in Cameroon. The conflict between the tribes of Akan and Anjong over land, chieftaincy and administrative leadership is synonymous with Anglophone/Francophone conflict over leadership and access to opportunities in Cameroon. Just as “The Squirrel” and the revelation of the national archives declare Anjong (the chief village of Upper Dudum) as the rightful administrative head quarters of Dudum and their chief as paramount which gives them total control and

hegemony over Akan, Francophones who constitute the majority in Cameroon enjoy near total hegemony over the minority Anglophones who are attributed only second class status in all domains of national life.

This marginalization is not because Anglophones are incompetent in handling top positions of governance but this is simply a question of domination of the minority by the majority as well as the hegemonic control of power. This situation is captured in *Son of the Native Soil* by Achamba from Akan (a minority tribe) who is assassinated for daring to become the general president of the Dudum Cultural and Development Association and the spokes person for the two communities. Amongst his enemies are his own tribesmen including Abaago who masterminds the assassination. This is in line with Balram's assertion that the servant class is self-trapping as it is an accomplice in its own predicament. In Cameroon, Anglophone servitude has been sustained by a few Anglophones in some relative top positions who exploit the situation to their advantage.

The title "Son of the Native Soil" actually has more significance when examined from the uneasy co-habitation of the two major linguistic entities in Cameroon. Because the Francophones enjoy near total hegemony in Cameroon, they are the real sons of the soil while the Anglophones because of their historical attachment to Nigeria have always been regarded by Francophones as some kind of strangers. The English language continues to play a sub-status in Cameroon and its speakers and non-French speaking Cameroonians considered as "other". They could not really be "sons of the native soil" (Cameroon).

Son of the Native Soil therefore must be read within the context of Cameroon Anglophone writing which sprang in the last decade of the twentieth century and demarcated itself from the first body of writing that dwelt essentially on revalorization and veneration of indigenous culture or the castigation of the ills of colonialism. Cameroon Anglophone literature is a kind of protest literature against what is now known as the "Anglophone Problem". The Anglophone Problem according to John Nkemngong Nkengasong, is characterized by various forms of resistance to the marginalization, assimilation, dictatorship and fake democratic practices which have since the so-called independence hindered Anglophone Cameroonians from having control over their destiny (Nkengasong, 2011, p. 2). The situation of Anglophones in Cameroon places them in the rooster coop where the lower castes find themselves in India. The parallel is very evident as Balram makes us understand that the different social castes have now been narrowed down to two only; darkness, inhabited by poor and underprivileged who cannot even meet their bare minimums and the lighted world inhabited by the rich and privileged who shamelessly exploit the lower class and keep them perpetually in darkness. The lighted world and Darkness in India corresponds to Francophone and Anglophone sections of Cameroon respectively.

By giving symbolic titles to their novels Ambanasom and Adiga indict both the dominant the servant classes in India and Cameroon; the dominant class for their heartlessness and recklessness and the marginal class for their complacency in their own plight. The two authors encourage acts of bravery as demonstrated by Balram and Achamba, for a Marxist revolution may just begin by a single act of bravery. It was an individual act of bravery, we remember, that instigated the Arab Spring that started in Tunisia on the 18th of December 2010 and spread through North Africa to the Middle East. Balram through acts of bravery successfully breaks through the roster coop and moves up the social ladder and becomes a living example and although Achamba's courageous step leads to his death, this brings unity to Dudum and his revolutionary ideas live on.

Another important aspect in the two novels is time. *The White Tiger* is a depiction of India's class struggle in a globalized world. The novel is set at a time where increased technology has led to world globalization, and India is no exception. India is growing so fast that Ashok believes in just ten years India will be like America (Adiga, 2008, p. 77). Balram notices this quick transformation of his country and realizes that in order to rise

above his caste he should become an entrepreneur. Although the taxi service is not an international business, Balram plans to keep up with the pace of globalization and change his trade when need be: "I'm always a man who sees tomorrow when others see today" (Adiga, 2008, p. 274). Balram's recognition of the increasing competition resulting from globalization contributes to his transformation.

Ambanasom, like Adiga, is not concerned with today or yesterday but with tomorrow. Tomorrow in the novel is represented by Achamba's son, the fruit of his relationship with Echunjei, Chief Akaya of Upper Dudum's daughter. It is a relationship that is interpreted by the people of Akan as an act of treason. Yet the son Achamba has with Echunjei becomes the hyphen that unites the whole clan. This boy represents tomorrow like Balram in *The White Tiger*. To Ambanasom, a son of the native soil is not one born in a particular tribe, region or section of Cameroon but one who sees himself simply as a Cameroonian and consequently works for its unity and development. Ambanasom's message is that a nation is not built on tribal inclinations. Rather, it is built on differences as strength. That is why Clara A. B. Joseph in *Nation Because of Differences* (2001) talks about mobile national boundaries and fluid cultural demarcations arguing that the contractions and differences that the nation attempts to remove are in fact constitutive of the concept of nation. The nation according to her is constituted by the very difference it seeks to overcome (Joseph, 2001, p. 57). Homi Bhabha similarly, argues that although the nation is a unifying entity, the various representations of the nation reveal division and disruption at strategic junctures so that the definition is rendered either meaningless or controversial (1990, p. 19). To Ambanasom and Adiga therefore, the diversities in India and Cameroon should constitute frameworks for building strong and prosperous nations for future generations and not vice versa.

In their search for perspectives of nationhood Adiga and Ambanasom both make use of the journey motif. The journey is a powerful symbol often used to represent a character's adventure leading to an epiphany, or some sort of self-realisation. *The White Tiger* is structured on the protagonist's journey from his native village first to Delhi where he works as a chauffeur to a rich landlord and then to Bangalore the place to which he flees after killing his master Ashok and stealing his money. Through this journey Balram is exposed to the extensive corruption and inequalities in India. He discovers that these ills would not come to an end too soon. The prospects are that they would go on and on. Using the epistolary device Adiga's protagonist in a series of mails informs the Chinese Premier of the situation in India. This might be Adiga's way of calling world attention to the caste situation in India. It may suggest that it requires global reaction to it since government effort has not brought about the much needed fruits.

Like Adiga, Ambanasom's protagonist is always on the move to find solutions to problems in his community or to arbitrate between belligerent factions. In one of such journeys he rescues his incarcerated clansmen from harsh treatment and in another he gets the true history of the Dudum clan from the archives in Yaoundé as a final answer to the leadership crisis in the clan. The protagonist's acts are a driving force for his fame and prowess but they also attract the anger and resentment of his adversaries. This culminates in his assassination, a fitting ending for a tragic hero. Although Balram does not die at the end of the novel for his actions like Achamba, he however explains that his family was almost certainly killed by the Stork as retribution for Ashok's murder. At the end of the novel Balram rationalizes his actions by saying that his freedom is worth the lives of his family and Ashok. In spite of what happens to the protagonists because of their acts the two authors appear to approve of such courageous acts as they might just be the spark for the Marxist revolution required in the transformation of society.

Conclusion

This study has compared Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Shadrach Ambanasom's *Son of the Native Soil* as texts that address the problematic of nationhood in India and Cameroon respectively. Although addressing two different issues—caste (for Adiga) and tribal loyalty (for Ambanasom) the two novels indicate that the two problems have almost the same devastating repercussions with regards to the question of nationhood.

While Ambanasom uses allegory to explore a macro-problem in Cameroon from a local level, Adiga through the epistolary device explores the inequalities in India along the sidelines of a global economy dominated by America and China. This is very significant because Adiga sees Americanization in India as a partial solution to the caste problem given that America, to the author, represents progress, freedom and equal opportunity for all. By writing to the Chinese Premier, the protagonist in Adiga's novel appears to indicate that the Indian Government's response to the problems of the lower castes has not yielded the much needed fruits and so a global response may be needed to address the issue. In other words, international pressure may be needed to force India to address the caste problem.

Although caste and tribal loyalty both have pre-colonial origins, the authors indict colonialism for its role in complicating an already problematic situation. They also blame the powers that be for their lack of political will to address these issues. Moreover, the two authors interrogate the greed, selfishness and arrogance exhibited by hegemonic groups in both countries towards their own kind and kin as sons and daughters of the same nation. Finally, they indict the subjugated classes for their complicity in their own predicament.

Perhaps the most important indicator of the authors' commitment to nationhood is their inclination towards the Marxist ideology for societal transformation. Significantly, the two authors ascribe to individual rather than collective action as a spark for social change. This is because mobilizing the entire community to insurrect at once seems quasi-impossible as recent events have proven. The salvation of society, according to the two authors, therefore depends on such courageous individual acts as demonstrated by Balham and Achamba that may ignite the splinter for social transformation. In other words, Adiga and Ambanasom have ended their novels along the lines of the Marxist inevitable future workings of the laws of history which stress that every oppressive system must someday collapse through a proletarian revolution. And this revolution, as earlier said, may just begin from a single act of bravery like Balram's in *The White Tiger* or Achamba's in *Son of the Native Soil*.

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