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**Tarun Pithode's *I m Possible* :**

**A Critique of Contemporary Indian Society, Culture and Politics**



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***Abstract :***

*Tarun Kumar Pithode is a Civil Servant of the Madhya Pradesh cadre and I m Possible is his debut novel. It is a motivational novel based on the life of a small town boy, Aditya who pursues an unusual dream and struggles hard to achieve that dream despite all odds. However, the story is simply a medium for the author to touch upon a myriad of problems that the contemporary Indian society faces and to show how difficult it is for one from a lower middle class background to chase one's dream and become successful. The present paper attempts to read Pithode's novel as a socio-cultural critique of contemporary Indian society. The paper focuses on Pithode's critique on education system, communalism, politics and his idea of 'inner voice', motivation and success.*

***Keywords :***

*Education system; communalism; politics; inner-voice; motivation.*

## Review Article :

Tarun Kumar Pithode is a Civil Servant of the Madhya Pradesh cadre and *Im Possible* is his debut novel. It is a motivational novel based on the life of a small town boy, Aditya who pursues an unusual dream and struggles hard to achieve that dream despite all odds. The book narrates a simple story of the boy from his adolescence in school, his boyish infatuation with a girl, his college life where he finds his love, his separation from his love for the sake of career, his struggle to become a successful politician by doing social work and his ultimate success in winning an election and also getting back his lost love who has become a civil servant. However, the story seems to be simply a medium for the author to touch upon a myriad of problems that the contemporary Indian society faces and to show how difficult it is for one from a lower middle class background to chase one's dream and become successful.

The first obstacle that one finds in the Indian system in pursuing one's dream is in school. Indian education system over the years has not evolved to be a system that inculcates the spirit of enquiry and manifests the hidden talents in the students. The system has rather focused on how the students can perform well in the written examination by reproducing the answers from their memory that were dictated in the class by the teachers. The classroom activities centres on making the students memorize definitions from books even if the students fail to grasp the actual import of the definition. Queries in the classroom are generally discouraged and taken to be a nuisance, which ultimately demotivates the students. Aditya experiences similar situations in his class. Though he is not a hardworking student, he was intelligent to ask vital questions and raise pertinent issues in the class out of his curiosity. But the teachers failed to recognize and acknowledge this gift which made him disillusioned and demotivated. The author is very critical of the attitude of the teachers:

On many occasions Aditya's inquisitiveness met with cold response. His teachers failed to recognize the validity of his curious questions; nay they failed in their duty to mark the eagerness, which is the first test of intelligence. Asking questions require greater intelligence than answering mugged up answers. Still he continued to seek their attention, not knowing that teachers, the insensible pedagogues, expect two things from the students, one good performance in the examination and other respect for the teachers. He neither gave an extraordinary performance nor was favourably disposed towards the teachers, for he considered them to be more attentive towards the toppers and children of influential people. He thought an ideal teacher to be – an

advisor, an educator and a guide, who remains free from all biases and considers all the students at par. He was disillusioned with them. (13)

Mr. Pithore traces the origin of criminals in our society in his book and fixes the responsibility on the teachers, parents and relatives for this. Neglected, demotivated and disillusioned students in schools are also neglected and disdained at home by their parents and relatives, which develop in them the feelings of contempt and rebellion against society. Lack of love and care alienates them from society and without knowing how to achieve what they wanted in life they go astray and become prey to the criminal world in their tender age. A similar thing happens with Aditya and two of his friends Rafiq and Sayid. They run away from home to go to Mumbai which they learnt from movies to be the city of dreams. However, they are stopped from boarding the train to Mumbai by a corrupt TTE. They end up walking the highway near a village in an unearthly hour and ultimately caught by a group of village thugs who take these boys to be thieves. They were mercilessly beaten and dispatched to their homes the next morning. Ironically, what the parents and teachers could not do that one day experience of the harsh realities of life and the encounter with the corrupt TTE and the village thugs could do. At least, Aditya was saved from going astray. After this incident, he makes up his mind to concentrate on studies and do something in life.

However, his friends Rafiq and Sayid do not draw much lesson. They are fated to go astray. It seems that the author has deliberately chosen these two Muslim boys to show the norm of the society in which the Muslim youth generally drop out from school and pick up odd jobs and some of them fall prey to the world of crime. Notwithstanding, this episode only perpetuates the notion that the Muslim youth are not capable of higher studies or any high ambition. It is expected of them to drop out from school and run away from home. It is the Muslim boys who are the mastermind in the episode of truancy. Aditya simply falls prey to their design. It is to be noted that Aditya while running away with his Muslim friends assumes a Muslim name, Anis Khan. Probably, he thought that his real name would invite suspicion from people because nobody would believe that a Hindu boy of his age would travel alone with two Muslim boys. When the company is apprehended by the village thugs they do not believe Aditya to be a Muslim because of his soft features and good clothes. One of the village thugs rants: “We cannot trust Muslims as they have taken away Pakistan from us. They deserve to be beaten to death” ... with all the vengeance and venom against Muslims’ (44-45). This shows the ingrained communalism in society, which does not approve the coming together of people from different communities. The author’s well-meaning analysis of the conditions of the Muslims of India in the voice of the narrator is a fact and part of everybody’s

commonsense that they are the victims of the majoritarian politics as well as their own inability to evolve leadership who can work for the development of the community.

Another aspect of Indian society that Mr. Pithode highlights in his book is the choice of career of the youth and how politics as a career choice is looked upon as the last resort of a scoundrel. After completing their school when all the friends of Aditya plan to opt for professional courses to pursue lucrative careers he plans to opt for Political Science in some Delhi college and to join politics later. Most of Aditya's friends reacted sarcastically to his future plan. Politics as a career for brilliant students from middle-class families is unthinkable. Either one should be from the family of illustrious politicians or one should have money and muscle power to be a politician. Aditya has to confront muscle power in the very first election he contests for the post of Prime Minister of the College Parliament. Later, when he contests for Legislative Assembly he has to confront all the dark faces of politics — money, muscle, liquor, character assassination. His opponent, a rich businessman holds a press conference and indulges in Aditya's character assassination by reporting his delinquency of running away from home. However, Aditya wins the election after losing it several times. He is able to garner support for him by his untiring social work for the common people with the help of his NGO that he opens for this purpose. He becomes a leader of the people. Through Aditya the author seems to express his ideal of a politician and dreams of clean politics for the country.

Mr. Pithode is at pains to theorize on motivation, success and justice throughout the book. Aditya gets motivated from his own setback and from the inspiration of his mother. According to Aditya, one of the prerequisites of being successful is being selfish. He argues that all scientific discoveries were possible because the discoverers were selfish themselves. They pursued their interests consistently neglecting the expectations of their families and this way they succeeded in discovering new things. No act of greatness is absolutely selfless. Even Gandhiji did not work to impress others but for his own satisfaction and contentment. 'Selfishness brought the best out of him and did so much good to the society' (119). Selfishness is neither good nor bad. It can bring out the best in us. The author seems to suggest that the work of an altruist and the work of a criminal are equally selfish. In both the cases people work to satisfy themselves. Another key to success suggested in the book is 'inner voice'. But the author fails to suggest in clear terms whether the source of this 'inner voice' is the latent strength in a person to be discovered and identified or it is something divine. At one point, the author defines it as 'the messages of the universal cosmic power' (169) at other place the author says that, 'faith and belief in ourselves enable us to hear the

inner voice' (170). On success and failure the following statement made by the author is quotable: 'Only those who try, fail, but those who fail and try again succeed' (189).

Tarun Kumar has touched upon so many subjects in one book – from socio-political problems of India to foreign policy of different countries; from child labour to subjugation and marginalization of women, minorities and lower castes; and surely from personal motivation to personal relationship. But none of the issues raised in the book has been properly developed and made into an integral part of the plot. Too much presence of the authorial voice has marred the smooth flow of the story, which has made the novel less enjoyable. To do justice with the issues raised in the novel it should have been thicker than its present form and the narrative should have been more descriptive rather than expository which would have made the reading more palatable. A proper editing of the novel would have saved it from wrong usage of some words and make the writing appear more mature.

The most beautiful moments in the novel are those when Aditya and his friends are trekking in the Himalayas. In the serene atmosphere of the Himalayas Aditya and Puja express love for each other. Within this episode, Tarun Kumar is at his best to produce beautiful poetic prose to describe the movement of a mountainous river and to suggest the possibilities of life itself :

A directionless river, cutting mountains, rushing through deep alleys, has fallen so deep that no trace of coming back is visible. It is forced to fall through the narrow path along the mountains. It is running like a drifter. This nascent river can be compared to a life running directionless. This forgetful life is so lost that there is no one to listen to its sound, to see its flexing, which could have given it a feeling of self-importance.

The darkness of deep water carrying forgotten shadows, the shadows carrying the memory of lost days, memories seem lovely, only when they are lost, the lost world and no echoes are heard for so long,

Such is the depth immeasurable. So desperate yet so helpless,

So zealous yet without accomplishments,

So successful yet so alone. (111-112)

Another scene described so beautifully is the scene of the union of the lovers :

They looked at each other exchanging glances, while their souls met. Suddenly the world around them grew romantic and the mountains burst with beautiful wild flowers, which appeared more vibrant on the mountaintop. He was rapturous as if he

has achieved salvation in his life, as if it was raining and he was dancing in it, as if he was at the top of the Mount Everest, as if he chose to be there for this magic. Words failed to express his feelings and when he was about to say something, she stopped him from uttering another word, as their lips were locked in a pure union. . . . The snow-clad mountains, rivers, flowers and sky watched the spectacle of their love. Far away at the horizon the earth was kissing the sky as if celebrating their romance.  
(127)

Finally, it can be said that the author has touched the chord of millions of Indian youth from the alleys of big cities and small towns and also from the far away villages who feel for their country's problems so intensely and also want to become someone from no one chasing their dreams. The book can kindle fire in them to say, in President Barrack Obama's words, '*yes we can*'.

**Reference :**

Pithore, Tarun. *IM Possible*. New Delhi: Ocean Books Pvt. Ltd., 2015. Print.