



Selection Day

Aravind Adiga

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From Aravind Adiga, the bestselling, Booker Prize-winning author of *The White Tiger*, a dazzling new novel about two brothers in a Mumbai slum who are raised by their obsessive father to become cricket stars, and whose coming of age threatens their relationship, future, and sense of themselves.

Manjunath Kumar is fourteen and living in a slum in Mumbai. He knows he is good at cricket—if not as good as his older brother, Radha. He knows that he fears and resents his domineering and cricket-obsessed father, admires his brilliantly talented sibling, and is fascinated by curious scientific facts and the world of *CSI*. But there are many things, about himself and about the world, that he doesn't know. Sometimes it even seems as though everyone has a clear idea of who Manju should be, except Manju himself. When Manju meets Radha's great rival, a mysterious Muslim boy privileged and confident in all the ways Manju is not, everything in Manju's world begins to change, and he is faced by decisions that will challenge his understanding of it, as well as his own self.

Filled with unforgettable characters from across India's social strata—the old scout everyone calls Tommy Sir; Anand Mehta, the big-dreaming investor; Sofia, a wealthy, beautiful girl and the boys' biggest fan—this book combines the best of *The Art of Fielding* and *Slumdog Millionaire* for a compulsive, moving story of adolescence and ambition, fathers, sons, and brothers. *Selection Day* is Adiga's most absorbing, big-hearted novel to date, and proves why “with his gripping, amusing glimpse into the contradictions and perils of modern India, Aravind Adiga has cemented his reputation as the preeminent chronicler of his country's messy present” (*Newsweek*).

Selection Day Details

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From Reader Review Selection Day for online ebook

Archit Ojha says

I NEED TO READ THIS SOON!

This is like that recipe you are so sure of working that it salivates your mouth even before putting it in the oven.

Before the summer is over, I should get my hands on this work of Arvind Adiga for certain.

Gorab Jain says

This was such a nightmare. Literally struggled to reach the finish line.

Had picked this for the love of cricket. But each and every character is so much convoluted!

Read this during a reading slump, and this only contributed more to it...

Why I hated it?

- Abstract narration. The booker kind!
- Twisted characters could have been fun. But somehow these became depressing.

Mandy says

I very much enjoyed Adiga's previous novels, The White Tiger and Last Man in Tower. They seemed to open up India to me in a compelling and inclusive way. But this one, unfortunately I found more problematic. The story of two brothers with exceptional cricketing skill urged on by their ambitious father is a compelling enough story in itself, but I found the characters hard to relate to. The father in particular seemed a stereotype and his foibles and frailties simply laughable rather than empathetic. The boys themselves didn't come alive for me either. I can see that the book is supposed to present a picture of contemporary India, and up to a point I could relate to that, but the approach didn't seem as subtle as in the author's previous books and the human elements seems to have been sacrificed for the political and societal points he is making. It just didn't work for me, unfortunately. And I did get bored with all the cricket.

Ron Charles says

Americans know more about Quidditch than they do about cricket, but there must be magic in both games. Although the British import struck out against baseball on these shores sometime in the 19th century, readers here have shown themselves willing to tolerate wickets and stumps if the writing is good enough. After all, Joseph O'Neill's "Netherland" attracted an appreciative audience in his adopted United States and went on to win the PEN/Faulkner Award in 2009. And now Americans should venture onto the field again for Aravind Adiga's tragicomic novel "Selection Day."

Adiga is an Indo-Australian writer who won the Man Booker Prize in 2008 for his debut novel, "The White Tiger." Its Bangalore setting may have felt remote, but the story of an ambitious chauffeur resonated with people around the world.

Although "Selection Day" explores a different species of ambition, Adiga's wit and raw sympathy will carry uninitiated readers beyond their ignorance of cricket — ignorance that. . . .

To read the rest of this review, go to The Washington Post:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/reviews/selection-day-by-aravind-adiga-review-a-witty-look-at-the-world-of-cricket/2014/09/10/1333333e-3a20-11e4-933a-0e09a09a8d33_story.html

Girish says

Aravind Adiga is an author who knocks on the door of an Indian at 2 am and present them as they open it disoriented, with bad hair, in their (probably torn) nightclothes without any makeup. Not the best way to present - but then there is an element of honesty in it.

"..what we Indians want in literature, at least the kind written in English, is not literature at all but flattery. We want to see ourselves depicted as soulful, sensitive, profound, valorous, wounded, tolerant and funny beings. All that Jhumpa Lahiri stuff"

Adiaga's book starts out as a sensitive unflattering portrayal of lives in contemporary Mumbai that revolve around Cricket. A stringent father pushing his children for career in cricket, coaches and talent hunters who hope to discover the next Sachin Tendulkar. One look at the Shivaji park on a weekend and you know every one of the character is real.

However towards the end, the book becomes a muddled of ideas, lives and chaos which makes you wonder what happened to Mr. Adiga. Mohan Kumar has a secret contract with his God to raise his sons Radha Kumar and Manju Kumar to be the No 1 and No 2 batsmen respectively in the world. Little Manju has a natural gift for cricket, a mind bent on science, passion for CSI and discovering sexuality as a confusion. But when he starts bonding with Radha's arch rival Javed Ansari, the entire world goes for a toss.

The book's exploration of the business of cricket, the nation's obsession for its cricketing heroes (adoring neighbors) and the despair when dreams come crashing are sensitively observed. The fear and shame felt by the adolescent boy around homosexuality is a bit confused. Manju's character stays as an extremely confused teenager. The entire world of characters around him are over the top crazy - just like real people!

If only the book hadn't lost its way..

Prem Kumar says

Exploring the great nastiness

In the middle of the novel Tommy Sir, the talent scout scouring the maidans of Bombay "who was given to the truth as some men are to drink" ruefully says this about the game he loves:

"How did this thing, our shield and chivalry, our Roncesvalles and Excalibur, go over to the other side and become part of the great nastiness?"

Tommy Sir is the puritan fan who believes in old-world virtues of principles and righteousness hence does not fit into the modern world and is definitely setup to fail. The above lines capture the wretched transformation in a game "invented by medieval shepherds" which has been corrupted beyond recognition from the gentleman's game it used to be.

Having said that this is not just a cricket book but the story of modern India told through its most popular game. Since the game now cuts across classes and reaches new audiences and participants alike it is a great lens through which to look at the country as a whole. Hence the corruption in the game is a mirror to the corruption that infects the body-politic of the nation at large.

Aravind Adiga as in his master piece 'The White Tiger' manages to capture the voice of the aspirational underclass of the country who have migrated to the big city and demand their share of the prosperity pie. This time though this happens through the agency of two brothers who have migrated from a village in the Karnataka coast along with their father who amidst selling chutney in Bombay spots the natural talent of his boys for Cricket and then pushes them into the game. So unlike 'The White Tiger' the aspiration here of the two boys is forced by the obsessive father.

The father Mohan Kumar wants to develop his elder son Radha into the 'best batsman in the world' and the younger and more complex son Manju the 'second best batsman in the world' using his home-grown eccentric techniques ("No shaving until Twenty-one"). In steps Tommy Sir who has a lifelong dream to uncover one real talent who will make it to the Indian national team before he dies. Tommy Sir also introduces the family to the visionary entrepreneur Anand Mehta whose vision is to support young cricketers with a monthly stipend in return for a portion of their marketing revenue when they make it to the big stage. Anand Mehta is himself the son of a wealthy stock broker who has rebelled against his father and gone to the US and on his return spends his time squandering the family wealth by investing in flop schemes. But with this new vision of sponsoring budding cricketers he thinks he can fulfil his lifelong ambition of gaining entry into the exclusive business club of Bombay. He is also given to spouting insightful social commentary on modern India. Sample this:

"Indians, my dear are basically a sentimental race with high cholesterol levels. Now that the hunger for social realist melodrama is no longer satisfied by the Hindi cinema, the Indian public is turning to cricket."

At one point Mehta says that Cricket is essentially 'state-sponsored lobotomy' and its chivalrous ways are ideally suited for male social control especially in a country where the sex ratio is so skewed. So the only way to maintain the sanity of the nation wrecked by this crisis of masculinity and to keep the "rogue Hindu testosterone" in check is "Bread and Tendulkar" and hence a steady dose of live cricket. Such observations make you realize the social impact of the game on the country which might be bigger than even Football's impact on Brazil.

The elder boy Radha is indeed the protégé but soon Manju overtakes him much to the displeasure of the elder brother. But what everyone fails to notice is to ask whether Manju himself wants to play the game. Manju himself is much more interested in Science and forensic science at that in the mould of TV series CSI. So he halfheartedly takes to the game and perhaps for this reason does not feel any stress and this ironically makes him excel in the game.

Manju also has his growth pangs as he is ambivalent about his sexuality and this reaches a head when he

meets an equally talented but disinterested in the game cricketer, Javed Ansari. J.A. as he is fondly called makes Manju question whether he loves the game at all or he plays it in fear of his maniacal father. He tethers between the poles while answering this question and in the end his indecision leads to his tragic fall to mediocrity. Radha on the other hand feels fate has been unkind to him and blames Manju for usurping his space. The father in the end feels if the God of cricket Subramanya he trusts "gave one boy the talent and the other the desire". This adds up to a tragic climax for each of the protagonists and the boys themselves realize all too late that they have "martyred ourselves to mediocrity".

If anger marked 'The White Tiger' then fear marks this novel. As Manju's father is driven not just by the desire of the riches but also from fear of what will happen if his sons do not succeed and as the end shows this can lead to nothing but tragedy.

Adiga also revels in biting satire as in when he says:

'Nothing is illegal in India. Because, technically, everything is illegal in India... See how it works?'

Or

'Revenge is the capitalism of the poor: conserve the original wound, defer immediate gratification, fatten the first insult with new insults, invest and reinvest spite, and keep waiting for the perfect moment to strike back'

Or when he describes the boys' father :

"Because Kumar's eyes had in them what Anand Mehta called a 'pre-liberalization stare', an intensity of gaze common in people of the lower class before 1991, when the old socialist economy was in place"

This is genius in one line!

There is also a rejoinder from the man to his critics who panned his first novel for bashing the dreamy eyed Indian middle class:

'What we Indians want in literature, at least the kind written in English, is not literature at all, but flattery. We want to see ourselves depicted as soulful, sensitive, profound, valorous, wounded, tolerant and funny beings. All that Jhumpa Lahiri stuff. But the truth is, we are absolutely nothing of that kind. What are we, then? We are animals of the jungle, who will eat our neighbor's children in five minutes, and our own in ten. Keep this in mind before you do any business in the country'

Personally for me this novel is also a depiction of millions of Indian kids who lose their childhood in pursuit of the goals set by their over-ambitious parents who do not care about their real ambitions and in the process manage to push them into a life they do not want but who still labor on courageously knowing well that they might end up as tragedies.

So in the end this is the work of a genius, our own Flaubert who dissects the hypocrisies and ironies of modern Indian life like no other!

Blaine DeSantis says

The word I would use to describe this book is Disappointing. I have enjoyed Adiga's books in the past but this one just does not measure up. While the book allegedly is about Selection Day in the sport of cricket in India, it appears to really be a story about sexual identity, with the antagonist being a truly horrible person named Javed, whose sole purpose in life is to tempt the protagonist Manju away from Cricket, his family and draw him into a gay relationship. The first part of the book is pretty good as we see Manju growing up in the shadow of his big brother and eventually surpassing him as an athlete. There is a ton of Indian cultural references in the book that are interesting, along with the family dynamic and some other characters who are there to profit from Manju's cricket prowess and that is a fascinating look at the game and the country, but the book falls completely apart as Javed (also a fine Muslim cricket player) comes into Manju's life and plays head games with him. I have no idea what the author was trying to get at by the end of the book and this would be no more than a 2** for me if it were not for a fine first 75 to 100 pages of the book.

Sherwood Smith says

For about a hundred-fifty years—a little before 1800 to the middle of the twentieth century—the British Empire militarily got the drop on most of India, and while they systematically looted it while the looting was good, India, as had been its very long habit, absorbed what it liked of English culture and language, and discarded the rest.

One of the things it absorbed was the sport cricket.

This novel's elevator pitch is: poor Indian father is obsessed with making his two sons into cricket stars. But that's like saying that War and Peace is about ballroom dancing and Borodino.

Put it this way. Out of all the billions of people on earth right now, it would be difficult to find anyone less interested in any kind of team sports than I. Yet I found this novel absorbing, vivid, often rough and painful, in spite of the cricket.

Sports-obsessive parent-zillas are well known in America. Indian's version, according to author Aravind Adiga, share some of the same traits, including what under pretty much any other context would be rampant child abuse.

Radha and Manju are the two sons. The father has followed his own crackpot philosophy in raising them, then negotiates hard to in effect sell them, with a mind to commercials and merchandizing.

With such lines as "Revenge is the capitalism of the poor," and "[Anand Mehta talked superman to superman with Mohan Kumar, suffering the others, mere humans, to stand around them eavesdropping," Adiga offers pitiless insights into human nature that we all share, while illustrating with vividness the details of life of rich, middle class, and poor in India—among its varieties of languages and cultures. Dramatic tension, for me, rises between what I recognize as universals (not always admirable—far from it) and fascinating differences.

And because this is not American sports drama, which tends to have one ending, you really don't know where it's going as you watch the group madness of sports do its best to consume these two—and what eventually happens.

Copy provided by NetGalley

Shreya Vaid says

There's beauty in cricket, which we Indians understand deeply. Even though our national game is hockey, we live and breathe cricket. And Aravind Adiga's new novel Selection Day is centered around this passionate sport only. A mix of beating class hierarchy, rags to riches dreams, jealousies and parental pressure, Selection Day makes up for a brilliant read.

The story of Selection day is about Mohan Kumar, a father who believes that his sons, Radha and Manju will one day become either Bradman or Tendulkar. He believes that both his sons, especially Radha, who Mohan has observed to possess a skill with the bat, can transform their life forever. Mohan uproots his family from Karnataka and moves to the city where cricketers are made, Mumbai. He starts studying about cricket and developing alternate theories of every aspect of cricket-mental, technical and physical. After learning and devising new theories, he would apply the theories on the lives of Manju and Radha.

In Mumbai, Mohan's wife leaves him, which hardens his stance more on making his sons into successful cricketers. He feels that Radha is the chosen one, tall and having a secret contract with "God Subramanya", guaranteeing his success in the field. But Manju is somewhat different. He does have the skills that every upcoming cricketer requires, but is time to time distracted by science and its mysteries, a subject he loves. And if given a chance, would love to get into forensic science, rather than cricket. But somehow Manju is unaware, that he is better than his brother in this game. It's like everybody knows who Manju should be, but does Manju know himself?

Their hard work and technique draws the attention of N.S. Kulkarni, aka "Tommy sir", a well-known journalist and cricket scout in Mumbai. He senses Mohan Kumar's poverty and control freak nature and devises a plan that can help both him and Kumar out of their misery. He gets in touch with Anand Mehta, a US return son of a rich stockbroker, and Mehta purchases the right to one-third of boys earning for the life in return for Rs 5,000 a month. A venture capital that will lead to a web of jealousies, competitions, and broken spirits, creating a novel so deep and pure that it will leave you mesmerized until the end.

Selection Day is a story that has many aspects to it, special one being that Adiga appears to be the only writer who has created a story around the post-1983 phenomenon of cricket. Another notable thing is that a sport of passion is shown as a sport of necessity in Selection Day, where Manju is playing to keep up with his father's dreams.

If we speak of characters of Selection Day, each character has come out of our daily lives only. Mohan Kumar, a combination of a father who wants his kids to march towards success and a control freak who doesn't want them to falter. Fondly known as "Chutney King", he subjects them to daily humiliating body checks that he does himself, making both Manju and Radha uncomfortable. A control freak father who spends his time observing his sons practice on the field and even correct them when required, and fight for them when necessary.

Radha and Manju are both obedient sons, but time to time indulge in going against their father's wishes. Radha is the one who is to be made into Tendulkar, and Mohan's all hopes lie on him. But Manju is the one who overpowers Radha's talent one day, leaving jealousy and bad competition thriving in the family. A day comes when Manju shares his wishes with the world, a passion for forensic sciencea thirst for college degree, and his new found homo friendship with another competitor in the field Javed, but can all these wishes come

true? That's left with the reader to decide.

When you read Selection day, you will instantly fall in love with it. The plot defining how heroes are made in India and how they are dropped at a single mistake is something that we come across in our daily lives. We have seen too many stars being made and broken down from time to time, but Adiga's writing skill and research for the plot makes it much more alluring when you read Selection Day. However, if you are reading Adiga for the first time, you might feel a little lost in narration and writing style.

All in all, Selection Day is a book that is commendable and beautiful in its own way. Adiga has outdone himself by writing a book so detailed and passionate, a book that you should not miss.

Stephen Clynes says

From the slums of Mumbai, a father strongly encourages his two sons to excel at cricket and become selected for the team.

Aravind puts the reader in the picture about modern day life in India and you get the feel of Mumbai with the contrasts between the slums and the flash wealthy parts. I enjoyed the local colour and the reflections of the father who had moved from a rural Indian village to the vibrant city of Mumbai.

But this story is a drag and very ordinary. It has your usual hopes of the father, sibling rivalry between two brothers, the challenges of teenage years, growing up, finding your way into adulthood and your sexuality. Yes folks, I found Selection Day to be regular soap opera fodder. Think EastEnders moves to Mumbai to see the relatives on an extended holiday. Don't be put off by the boring sport of cricket as this is as relevant as one character having a stall on Walford Market.

Aravind won the Man Booker Prize in 2008 for his novel The White Tiger which I thought was an okay 3 star read. But I found Selection Day to be a POOR read and a big disappointment. I did not get pleasure from reading this novel. I did not find it entertaining. Okay it did not bore the pants off me about cricket as this was only a tiny bit of this sorry novel. I did not develop an empathy for the father or his two sons. There wasn't even some spicy sex to liven things up. Even the handling of the differences between the Hindu and Muslim faiths was tame. So sorry Aravind, Selection Day only gets 2 stars from me.

Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher Scribner for giving me a copy of this book on the understanding that I provide an honest review.

Lorilin says

Selection Day is a coming-of-age story about two talented young brothers, Radha and Manju Kumar, as they train to become professional cricket players. Living in the slums of India with their legit crazy and domineering father, they are desperate to get out. Their cricket skills eventually get noticed by scouters--and then by a rich businessman who offers to sponsor them if they agree to train with a renowned coach (in the hopes that at least one of them will be selected to play on a professional team).

With a little extra cash from the sponsor, life gets better for the family. Their father finally moves them out of the ghetto, and they all begin to live a more middle class lifestyle. But things also get...complicated. Their father gets crazier. The boys's relationship with each other gets extremely competitive and destructive. Plus, the brothers begin to forge new friendships with others that make them question their devotion to their father, cricket, and each other. In the end, they are forced to decide which relationships are worth fighting for--and if they even want to play cricket at all.

This is a weird book, not gonna lie. I've never read anything else by Aravind Adiga, but my understanding is that all of his books are like this: crazy characters, hard to follow dialogue, and confusing storytelling. Reading this book is definitely an "experience," but it's an experience you kind of just have to let happen to you. I struggled to get through those first 100 pages, and only once I stopped obsessing about actually understanding what was going on did I begin to like the book.

Despite my struggle reading it, I probably would have still given the book four stars, but the ending was so disappointing. I don't know if Adiga was intentionally trying to make this a "road-less-traveled cautionary tale" or something, but it fell so, so flat. I could not have been more disappointed with where the story ended up.

So three stars it is, and no, I won't read another one by Adiga--Booker Prize winner or not. (Hmmm, I've said that before. Maybe Booker Prize winners aren't for me...)

ARC provided by publisher through Net Galley.

See more of my reviews at www.BugBugBooks.com.

Usman Hickmath says

Novel started off with two brothers from Mumbai trying hard to become the best batsman in the world. But somewhere in the middle it changed direction for no reason and went on to describe the sexual identity crisis of one of them. In the end, it neither had detailing about cricket nor about sexual identity issues. I am still confused what this novel is about.

I had high expectation of this book as it was marketed as a novel about two brothers in Mumbai trying to make big in cricket -which is a very interesting setting. But very disappointed with the outcome of The Selection Day.

Adiga is a good writer. I liked his Last Man in Tower. Hope he will give a better novel next time.

Mike says

Adiga, the 2008 Man Booker Prize winner, centres his latest novel around the cult of cricket in the nation of India. When the game was first introduced to the country, the Indians despised it. Now it has a powerful hold on millions of lives.

It is this power that causes upheavals for the various male characters in the book. At its centre is Manju, the

younger brother of a talented teenage batsman called Radha Kumar. Unfortunately for Radha, Manju appears to have even more talent for the game.

The boys' father, an unsuccessful chutney seller in the slums of Mumbai, is full of nonsensical theories as to what they should and shouldn't do in order to maintain their potency as cricket players. Unsurprisingly, his wife has long since left. Although she never physically appears in the book, she continues to exert considerable influence on her sons.

As the two boys head towards probable stardom, various other self-centred characters take over their lives, for good or ill. A few are wiser than they know, and see through the falsity of the cricket mania. Others see only gain or prestige for themselves. Manju, even more than his brother, has to make difficult choices about handling his life. Whether he decides wisely in the end is left to the reader.

The book's themes are serious, but the writing is full of wit, humour, and absurdity. There's an abundance of striking and hilarious detail describing a world that's both foreign and familiar. The main adult characters have a kind of loony self-assurance that's at odds with the down-to-earth attitudes of the two boys, and there are times when Monty Python or The Goons seem to have had a hand in the storytelling.

Cricket may be the focus of this book, but you don't need to be a cricket fan to enjoy it.

Krista says

What we Indians want in literature, at least the kind written in English, is not literature at all, but flattery. We want to see ourselves depicted as soulful, sensitive, profound, valorous, wounded, tolerant and funny beings. All that Jhumpa Lahiri stuff. But the truth is, we are absolutely nothing of that kind. What are we, then? We are animals of the jungle, who will eat our neighbor's children in five minutes, and our own in ten.

I've long been a fan of Indian literature – shaped by a long and complicated history, exotic religious practises, the lingering caste system – and as today's Indian middle-class grows and more of the very poorest citizens appear to be improving their own situations, it's been interesting to watch a shift in the country's literature as well: whereas Rohinton Mistry and Vikram Seth may have told me in the 90s that your average starving country bumpkin is satisfied to make it to Bombay and cobble together a shack in the slums, today's social climber sees the slums as a mere stepping-stone to an even better life. In Selection Day, when former starving country bumpkin Mohan Kumar discovers that his elder son is a cricket-playing prodigy, he can already imagine himself moving from their mud-brick hut to an air-conditioned flat. I came to this book knowing nothing about cricket, but it wasn't necessary when this is really about striving and want and being true to yourself in the face of the desires of others. In the end, the locale and details may have been exotic to me, but the themes are universal. A fine read.

The "selection day" of the title refers to the annual event at which cricket scouts recruit talent for the pro teams. The book begins with a section called "Three Years Before Selection Day" and introduces us to the Kumar brothers – Radha (destined to be "the best batsman in India") and the younger Madhu (wishing only to be "second best" behind the brother he admires and adores) – and their father Mohan: a chutney-peddlar

and self-taught cricket expert whose questionable edicts on the proper nutrition, exercise, and hygiene for young athletes has nonetheless propelled both of his sons into public notice. When a well-known coach desires to take over the boys' training, he puts the father in touch with an investor who agrees to pay a monthly stipend to the family in exchange for a share in future pro salaries and endorsements. Cue *The Jefferson's* theme song as they're moving on up to that de-luxe apartment in the sky-y-y.

Selection Day is primarily told from the younger brother's, Madhu's, point-of-view, and in the beginning, his position as the second best cricket player in the family protects him from most of his father's abuse and expectations – Madhu is able to dream that once Radha makes the big leagues, he'll be able to go to college and pursue his own goal of becoming a *CSI*-style forensic scientist. But as the years pass and the selection day that they will qualify for comes closer, and as Radha hits puberty and begins to have "weight transference" issues that allow Madhu to surpass his brother's batting records, the father's hopes to climb even higher on the social ladder fall heavier onto Madhu's reluctant shoulders. How much responsibility does Madhu have to repay the mortgage that Mohan took out on his boys' future? What responsibility does Madhu have to his own dreams, career, and love life? Doesn't he also have a responsibility to protect his older brother's ego and reputation? That's a lot of pressure to put on a sixteen-year-old.

Looking at class issues through the lens of a sporting family is an interesting idea – and especially as I've seen my share of crazy dance moms and hockey dads. And as little as I know about cricket, this British-transplant seems the perfect vehicle for exploring post-colonial Indian values.

Cricket is the triumph of civilization over instinct. As he left the showers by the swimming pool, and dried his hair with his towel, Tommy Sir remembered that wonderful little essay of his. American sports, baseball or basketball, made crude measurements of athletic endowments: height, shoulder strength, bat speed, anaerobic capacity. Cricket, on the other hand, measures the extent to which you can harness these raw endowments. You have to curb your right hand, your bottom hand, the animal hand, giving sovereignty to the left, the elegant, the restrained, top hand. When the short-pitched ball comes screaming, and every instinct of panic tells you, close your eyes and turn your face, you must do what does not come naturally to you or to any man: stay calm. Master your nature, play cricket. Because a man's body, when all is said and done, is a loathsome thing – Tommy Sir slapped his underarms with Johnson and Johnson Baby Powder, his favorite deodorant – loath-some loath-some loath-some. More baby powder. Much more. Mumbai is a hot city even at night.

Yet there was something kind of shallow about *Selection Day*: it was full of a lot of ideas, but not much heart. Author Aravind Adiga squeezed in plenty of commentary on modern day Mumbai – female infanticide has led to a gender imbalance, fundamentalist Muslims are reproducing faster than the majority Hindu population, homosexuality is still punishable by a life sentence – but most of these facts had little to do with the characters in the story. Unsurprisingly, rich people have more options than do the poor and the police and bureaucrats are still corrupt; but I do appreciate how this book helped to evolve my ideas about modern Mumbai. The writing was fine and the plot was interesting and maybe I'm just a little disappointed because it's not *The White Tiger* again. I'm wavering between three and four stars, but as I can't say I "loved" this, I'm settling on three.

Stephen says

novel based in bombay and using the background of cricket its about sibling relationships and those with their cricket mad father and relationships with others as hint of homosexuality with one of the other cricketers.
