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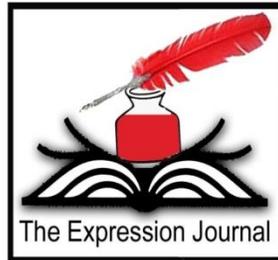


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MODERN INDIA IN ARVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER*: ANALYSIS FROM SOCIO-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES

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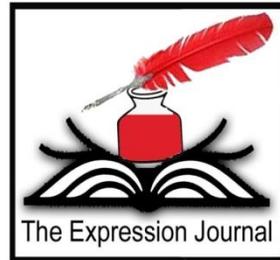
Abstract

Arvind Adiga is one of the prominent writers of India. He was born at Chennai on 23 October, 1974. He completed his school education from Mangaluru and moved to Sydney with his family where he took admission in James Ruse Agricultural High School. Later he studied in Columbia University and Magdalen College, Oxford. He started his career as a financial journalist at the Financial Times where he would give his views on the stock market. He had also got the privilege to interview the American president Donald Trump also. He has published five novels *The White Tiger* (2008), *Between the Assassinations* (2008), *Last Man in Tower* (2011), *Selection Day* (2016) and *Amnesty* (2020). He has received the Booker Prize in 2008 for his novel *The White Tiger*. It is an epistolary novel in seven parts with shocking fictional narrative. This novel opens dark surface of India; basically, India divides into, 'India of light' and 'India of Darkness' (14) in *The White Tiger*. Balram's act is the product of age old resentment of marginalised generations; exhibit revenge therapy. This work advocates wild justice. This novel is well stuffed with paradox and irony. Balram is an anti-hero, cleverly escapes from his crime; his innocence gone with the taste of fugitive life and become a white collared criminal; boosted never to be catch by police.

Keywords

Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger*, India, Caste Discrimination, Class Differences, Poverty, Illiteracy, Struggle, Exploitation.

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The White Tiger is a socio-political fiction, exposes the naked reality of modern India. Arvind Adiga's debut novel stormed the simple narrative and won Man Booker Price in 2008. It is an epistolary novel; letters are addressed to Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao from the desk of *The White Tiger*- A Thinking Man and an Entrepreneur, in seven parts, who is supposed to visit India from Beijing; especially to know how entrepreneurship is so successful in India. The narrator Balram Halwai explains how from Munna to Balram to White tiger and finally, he becomes Ashok Sharma the entrepreneur. Balram's journey starts from Laxmangarh (Gaya district, Bihar) to Delhi and to Bangalore. Balram's parents were poor; his mother was ill and died; his father was a rickshaw puller struggling on roads to earn, he also died of tuberculosis in government hospital. His parent had no time to name him so, he is called 'Munna' means a boy; his school teacher gave him name 'Balram' belong to Halwai family. In school, the inspection officer asked some question to Balram and he answered correctly so, he gave him another name "*The White Tiger* - born alone once in every generation". Because of loan taken to give dowry in Reena's (cousin) marriage, his schooling ceased and his practical erudition started from tea shop to driver-cum-cook-cum servant then after slitting his master Mr. Ashok, snatched red bag with 700,000 rupees and became successful business tycoon of Bangalore; he calls himself Ashok Sharma.

Adiga highlighted both sides, 'India in light' and 'India in darkness', balram is a link between two worlds. 'india in light' includes mall culture, fugitive life, industries, fully equipped school and colleges, IT sector, posh and well constructed apartments, hotel and tourism, political and judicial tie ups, slums, red light area, call centres, transportations, prostitutes, taxi services, murder weekly magazines. While 'India in Darkness' consists of poverty, landless labourers, zamindari and dowry practice, illiterate and unemployed youth,

joint families, child labourer, half-baked Indians, etc. Adiga explores that 'India in Darkness' is the base of 'India in Light' but is fully neglected. Although, India is progressing economically but nobody cares for the base of the labourers foremost resource for success; the makers of modern India whose hands build the roads, Posh apartments, Malls, Schools, Colleges, Industries, Trade, Agriculture, Infrastructure. It is a fact that only "Darkness fetches light in the world". Gap between the Rich and Poor is widening rapidly. It's a tragedy that rich person could come, hit and run their children, even there is no FIR in any police station of this murder. Nobody have a time to think about their welfare. Within the Shinning India dwells deep darkness. Village people come with a hope of light from the darkness but still darkness is reserved in their fate in cities. "Paid labourers are like candles, they spoil themselves and their future (children) to bring light or to build their country's future". V. S. Naipaul has also highlighted the Darkness of India in his '*Area of Darkness*' (1964)

In Rural India, Landlord practises squeezing poor's blood and in Urban India corruption swallows development. There are four Landlord in Laxmangarh, each have got his name from the peculiarities of their appetite, 'The Stork' owned the village river; fisherman and boatman are charged by him. His brother 'Wild Boar' owned agricultural land, peasants are in trouble, he swallows their day wages and keeps bad eye on their women. 'The Raven' owned the dry rock hillside land who charged for grazing goatherd. If they didn't pay him, he likes to molest their women. 'The Buffalo' was the greediest of all owned roads, Rickshaw puller had to pay him one third of their earning. All four Animals lived in high walled mansions just outside Laxmangarh (the landlords' quarters); had their own temples inside the mansions; their own wells and ponds; did not need to come out into the village except to feed.

Balram believes "Mother Ganga' a black river. Everywhere this river flows that area turn into dark." (15) There is no fertility only hunger, poverty, unemployment around it. That's why youth from Bihar, Patna, and Kolkata are bound to drive out in search of work and scattered in whole country; they come back before the rains, "The men came back from Dhanbad and Delhi and Calcutta, leaner, darker, angrier, but with money in their pockets. The women were waiting for them. They had behind the door, and as soon as the men walked in, they pounced, like wildcat one a slab or flesh" (26).

Adiga faithfully presented the poignant state of poor. Balram is the mouthpiece of Adiga, he says, "A rich man's body is like a premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank. Ours are different. My father's spine was a knotted rope, the kind that women use in villages to pull water from wells; the clavicle cured around his neck in high relief, like a dog's collar; cuts and nicks and scars like little whip marks in his flesh, ran down his chest and waist, reaching down below his hip bones into his buttocks. The story of a poor man's life is written on his body, in a sharp pen" (26-27). Same is the condition of his cousin Kishan, the family is squeezing his body to feed them. The mutton curry prepared by Kusum (his granny) seems like Kishan's blood and Balram in anger refuses to have it.

Hunger and Poverty is a root cause for all crime. Every second child of the poor becomes Balram. Balram is a Halwai destined to make sweets but he rebels against his fate and choose to

become a driver. Balram starts his job from 800 – 1500 – 4000 as driver-cum-cook- cum-servant. Again he determined not to be a driver or servant anymore and becomes owner of an outsource business to America, provides Taxi service to call centre employees; owned 26 Toyota Qualise and 16 employees under him. Balram justify his act of killing Mr. Ashok without the trace of guilt feeling, he says although Mr. Ashok is a good man but he has a blood of landlords. Mr. Ashok was silent when Stork and Moongoose (Mukesh) was preparing to put him in jail on behalf of Pinky Madam's (an American) crime who had killed a child while driving. They compelled Balram to take blame on his head and sacrifice his life for them. Further, he tells when Mr. Ashok came from America, he was innocent but Delhi's fugitive life corrupted his soul. After Pinky Madam's departure Mr. Ashok was in trauma but his brother boosted him to get another wife but this time an Indian Hindu girl. He started dating Uma his ex-lover to avoid loneliness and prostitutes also. So, Balram also opted corrupt ways in the company of other dishonest driver; he also started going for prostitutes specially fascinated for golden hair girl as Mr. Ashok do. He became greedy to earn extra money without hesitation, he cheats his master by "Siphon petrol from the car, with the funnel and set it; if car repairing is needed, go to corrupt mechanic and inflate repairing price; encash his master's ignorance by selling empty whisky bottles to the bootleggers; three times while driving back to Buckingham B, he picked up a paying customer" (230). Balram is replica of Mr. Ashok only think make a difference is, Mr. Ashok was weak unable to break 'the Rooster Coop' and Balram was succeeded in it. The philosophy behind that is, "Life is a jungle if one small animal want to survive he should learn to kill the big one, otherwise ready to die".

Balram explains Mr. Premier about election sarcastically that "there are three main diseases in India: Typhoid, Cholera and Election fever. This last one is the worst; it makes people talk and talk about things that they have no say in. Like eunuchs discussing the Kama Sutra, the voters discuss the election in Laxmangarh" (98). Poor person is deprived off to vote for themselves in villages, their voting right is purchased by the politician from their employers and masters. Balram's father told him one night, "I've seen twelve elections – five general, five state, two local – and someone else has voted for me twelve times. I've heard that people in the other India get to vote for themselves – isn't that something?" (100) Balram also tells, "I am India's most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth." (102) Although we think that Election is democratic act, it will benefit all of us but it proved to be only a power game; power is a ball passing from one hand to another and the fate of common man is unaffected. Even though we have modern thought but it is still unmatched with the West thinking. Mr. Ashok is unable to convince Pinky, his wife, an American to stay in India and she left India secretly, finally their marriage is on the edge of divorce. All men are basically fixed to their roots and if they try to uproot it merge in another root they will feel alienated. Same thing happen with Ashok and Pinky both were unable to cope up with each other's culture and got separated. Pinky left because she doesn't like Indian way of thinking and she also has a guilt feeling of killing a child while driving in a drunken state.

Adiga observed that corrupt ways of Political and Bureaucracy swollen India. Mr. Ashok says, “Most of Politicians are half baked. That’s the whole tragedy of this country.” (10) Kiran Desai also makes hard hitting attack on the corrupt political system in India. “Not one truthful politician in the whole country. Yes, our parliament is made of thieves, each one answerable to the prime minister, who is the biggest thief of them all” (*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, 20). Further, Adiga says that we are lagging behind china “because of this Fucked up system call parliamentary democracy. Otherwise, we’d be just like China’ (156). ‘The Partition of India’ according to Desai is ‘the result of wrong policies of our Government, which she calls the first heart attack to our country....that has never been healed.” (129 – Inheritance of Loss)

The White Tiger got a mixed remark of course who got disappoint with this work have a parliamentary outlook and said this book presents the dark image of our country and will affect our tourism. Adiga through this novel, emphasises that before go forward Indian government should search country’s dark areas, analysis it, make a faithful research, in every sphere of it, make the recoveries in it than only genuine development of the whole country is possible. In fact, it’s not the work of one or two days but, if every government will work faithfully towards the progress of the country and within 10-20 years change will be visible.

This novel made an enquiry that, who is the creator of these criminals? Who germinated the seed of resentment? Who provoked the humble person to choose the path of crime? - Our society is responsible for creating criminals. From village, poor people come in search of work and become the victim of inhuman, partial, prejudiced, biased, humiliation, insult, unequal behaviour by their employers and masters, and annoyance sprouted in them slowly. Sensitive person enrages soon, the rich hammers their self-respect; Balram being sensitive, is also been humiliated by Stork –compels him to do his leg massage; Mongoose insults him when his one rupee coin was missing and threatens not to used A/c of car and music when drive out alone; Ashok and Pinky makes fun of his mispronunciation, the word Mall as Maal and Pizza as Pijja. The novel conceals message that the master’s behavior should be moderate to their servants and make them feel to be equal as human being. Balram’s humanity is still alive in his heart, before living Delhi after his crime; he thinks of Dharam and takes a risk to accompany him. Although, he has chosen wrong path to uplift forward; he is humble with his employees, respects them and understands their problem because his own roots belong to them. He gave compensation to the dead boy’s family who is unintentionally killed by his taxi driver. But he is practical in his life; not let the staff gossip in his office and becoming so intimate; after their duty, immediately, they should leave the office. He says he is a white tiger and tigers don’t like to become anybody’s friend; he is The King, likes to be alone. At last, he plans to turn out to other business as Real Estate Business for American people; then opens a English Language School for poor children to teach them facts of life and prepare more ‘White Tigers’ and wants to became the ‘Don’ of Bangalore. Balram assures that he will never be catch by police due to this corruption prevails in the society; later he says ‘Indian is a land of uncertainties’. He says if I will catch also I don’t have any guilt feeling for my crime.

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