

Aravind Adiga's the White Tiger: A Study of Depiction of Social Evils in Indian Society in the Novel

Komalben Arvindbhai Bhatt^{1*} Dr. R. K. Mandalia²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Science, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Anand

² Head of Department, Department of English, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Anand

Abstract – Aravind Adiga's Man Booker Prize-winning debut novel *The White Tiger* is a high-pitched and captivating novel that actually attacks poverty and inequality without being sentimental. That is the reason why this novel is a ground breaking novel in India. This novel is written totally from the outlook of a servant. In order to explain the current Indian conditions in which poor people attempt to meet both ends, the narrator uses the word 'the darkness'.

In the novel, the narrator expressed the lives of poor people of India in a realistic and understanding manner. Adiga's *The White Tiger* is the best fictional writing which actually went outside the organized onset of the natives and endeavored to exemplify the diverse and most violent impact of the majestic rule in modern India. In this paper, it is attempted to analyse the view of Adiga's point about the present scenario of the poor people of India. *The White Tiger* is a story which depicted about the quest of a man for the freedom.

Balam is the main character of this novel and he is the victim of poverty and injustice. Balam being the victim worked his way out of his low caste and overcame all the problems of the society which had reduced his family in the past and accomplished his objective by murdering his master, stealing his money, and becoming a successful entrepreneur. This is how the hurting and truthful picture of modern India is depicted in Adiga's novel.

Keywords: *White Tiger*, Social Evils, Poverty, Injustice

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I. INTRODUCTION

The English novel in India is generally classified into two periods: pre-independence and post-independence. It is mostly seen that the novelists of pre-independence used to write mainly on such topics that were basically under the influence of Gandhism and nationalism. In their novel, it is mostly found that they mainly wrote about various social evils, customs, and traditions, rites, and rituals, poverty, and illiteracy (Adiga, 2008). Apart from that, some novelists also worked on highlighting the east-west meetings and also in spreading the patriotic ideas. The main concern of pre-independence English novels was to promote the theme of the freedom struggle.

The post-independence novels were produced during the period 1950-1980. It was in this period the main emphasis of writing was shifted from the external to

internal. In the post-independence novel, it is seen that various socio-political issues such as the individual problems, industrialization, urbanization, globalization, and modernization constitute the minor themes recurrently and consistently.

Many renowned novelists like Naipaul, Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Shahsi Deshpande, Kamla Markandaya and Aravind Adiga represented the present scenario of urban life of India by depicting the disorder, raised voices and teasing tempers, grimes and honkers (Waman, 2006).

A. The White Tiger

It is seen that the economic growth of India has been increasing constantly and it is now at par with America. But if you observe the situations of poor people of India, you will find that they remain in the

same position. The wages of the workers has increased a little bit only. This is the main theme of Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* for which he was awarded the Man Booker Prize in 2008. This novel was his debut novel.

As stated by Adiga in his novel *The White Tiger* the poor people mainly belong from the state Bihar in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. These poor people work as drivers, cook, domestic helper, gardeners, and construction workers as well as the full-time servants who need to accomplish all the requirements of their masters (Matz, 2004). Adiga's *The White Tiger* put a major emphasis on the various types of problems that the poor people of India who are living under devastating poverty has to face in their day-to-day life.

Adiga in his novel *The White Tiger* stated that these poor people build the home for the rich poor, but it is so unfortunate that they have to live in tents which are covered with blue tarpaulin sheets, and divided into lanes by lines of dirt.

The main hero in Adiga's novel, Balram Halwai was a servant who held from Bihar. In the novel, his entire journey from a small village in Bihar called Laxmangarh to the IT city Bangalore is narrated. Balram was an intelligent boy but held from a poor family (Adiga, 2008). He was forced to discontinue his studies because of his poor family circumstances. Being intelligent Balram was named as *The White Tiger* by a school inspector. Balram got a job as a driver at the home of a corrupted businessman Ashok who held from Delhi. Balram's master Ashok and his family used to humiliate him many times and being tortured by them one day Balram adopted a frightful way to become an entrepreneur. His master Ashok and his family always use to show false kindness to him but never leave a chance to embarrass him.

One day Ashok's wife Pinky killed a child while she was driving in a drunken stage. After that incident, they started to frame Balram as a murderer and asked him to sign a statement stating that it was he who killed the child while driving. These stresses made Balram kill his master and run away with the money of his master which was actually kept for bribing a politician.

Balram had no other way to escape his life. Then he flew away in Bangalore with the stolen money and started a taxi company and within a couple of years, he became a successful entrepreneur.

This is how the author showed that the mindset of the protagonist is like the *White Tiger* which is totally different from other animals and is very dangerous. Balram wanted to lead an independent life just like *The White Tiger* and he is as dangerous as the *White Tiger*.

India is the world's greatest democracy but it is seen that the poor people remain in their same condition

that have no liberty and authority to do anything (Desai, 1998). This is what was focused on Adiga's novel. Though India is a developing economy the poor people of India are still remaining under the poverty line. These poor people especially those who belonged to Bihar have very little political freedom.

Adiga had shown a true picture during the election period and also about the political power of poor people of India and the real reason behind the failure of India's election system. It is seen that fingerprints of all the poor people are taken by the stork no matter whether they have attended the age of eighteen or not and are being sold to the social activists for earning huge amount of money.

The poor people are then forced to work for this social activist until the election period is over. The poor people used to vote for the social activist dreaming of some better life which is never fulfilled.

As such Adiga stated in *The White Tiger* that there are the three main diseases in India. They are typhoid, cholera, and election fever. The last one election fever is the worst disease in India as it is a disease that makes people talk much about it but have no say in it (Naipaul, 1995).

Adiga through his novel stated all the problems of the poor people of India in the modern economy. In his novel, he showed the sufferings of the poor people through the character of Balram. Balram though was an intelligent student had to discontinue his studies in the childhood due to poverty. He also lost his father as he did not have enough money for the treatment of his father who was suffering from tuberculosis. In his novel, Adiga explains it beautifully how poor people are actually treated at the Government Hospital and how most of the poor people of the country die without proper treatment and lack of doctors. He showed how the doctors are appointed at Government Hospitals under the influence of social activists who take a bribe and appoint the unqualified doctors at the Government hospitals. This is the reason why the condition of Government hospital is getting worse day by day. The scenario of Government hospital is truly depicted by Adiga as follows:

Kishan and I carried our father in, stamping on the goat turds which had spread like a constellation of black stars on the ground. There was no doctor in the hospital. The ward boy, after we bribed him ten rupees, said that a doctor might come in the evening...It's not safe, in the rooms-that cat has tasted blood... There's a Government medical superintendent who's meant to check the doctor's visit village hospitals like this. Now each time this post falls vacant, the Great socialist let's all the big doctors know that he's having an open auction for

that post. The going rate for this post is about four hundred thousand rupees these days (Singh, 2009).

Rich people in our country often hire couple servants to do their chores such as driving, security, cooking, etc. and there are also the cases where just one person does all of the above. Rich people do not have mercy and they consider their drivers as servants. Adiga has stated in *The White Tiger*,

If I say they hired as a driver and I have no idea how the people in China treat their servants but, in our country, in the Darkness – there are no drivers, cooks, laundrymen, tailors, etc. All are just servants in the eyes of rich people.

They are handed some carry bags from their bosses and carry the goods inside them which their bosses bought from shopping malls. The drivers, though, do not get to step foot in big malls. Adiga has stated conversing with Mr. Premier about one of the incidents which were usually seen in the initial period of shopping malls (Rana, 2008). Those incidents were often seen in the reports of daily newspapers of India with the title, 'Is There No space for the Poor in the Malls of New India?

If the bosses do something and mistakenly get involved in an accident, their drivers are blamed and they are sacrificed and sent to jail. A certain passage in *The White Tiger* has stated,

In Delhi, almost every if not all jails are filled with drivers in the jails only because they were blamed by their rich bosses. We have left the villages but the masters still own us, bodies, souls, and arse. Yes, that's right: we all live in one of the world's greatest democracies.

"The darkness" is a term used by narrator to define situations in our country where poor people make efforts to make ends meet. At the time when author was staying in Calcutta, he stayed with people who were hand-rickshaw pullers and almost all of them were Muslims coming from Bihar. Author asked them the reason they do this and what is the reason that they do not work in fields because that is certainly better than this (Holgate, 2008). Out of those men, one pointed to a shed where they all stayed and he said. "This may seem to you like a dirty dark place, but for us, this is a city of light. Back home is the darkness".

II. DEPICTION OF SOCIAL EVILS IN INDIAN SOCIETY IN THE NOVEL

The White Tiger talks about the vicious disparity prevailing in today's Indian Society, mostly an adopted culture from western part of the world. This book is building a strong wave of perception about the bold

portrayal of the not so great India & also defeats the economic progress claims being made. Without patronizing or being emotional about the whole situation *The White Tiger* tries to make justice in depiction of the social injustice & dearth prevailing in India. On this strong basis, this is one of the revolutionary literary work & a modern day *Slumdog Millionaire*. The Book generates a genuine curiosity in understanding the part of the society who is below ordinary & also hateful.

The writer appears to be oblivious of the love or misery of the people he is portraying. A collective review can be framed in the language of Shashi Deshpande Apty's statement in *The Hindu* "Being ignored is definitely worse than hostility; it is like your work falling into the abyss. A bad review is better than no review"

This book represents the issues of the democratic environment & the imperfect administrative approach. The people of the nation are kept away from true independence & social parity. There is widespread discrimination & corruption prevailing in most parts. This imperfect mechanism has given birth to unique separations & classes. India used to have numerous castes in old times. However now it seems divided in just two parts "Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat or get eaten up". Post-independence the British have made space for the politicians to take over. Here the metaphor is used in the name of Animals & suggest that they fought with each other. The more powerful & hungry were successful in eating all the other around & become the set-of people carrying Big Bellies.

Now this was the only prevailing fact, the size of your belly. "That was all that counted now, the size of your bellies. It didn't matter whether you were women, or a Muslim, or an untouchable anyone with a belly could rise up"

This book is a story of the underprivileged society on India. They are compelled to struggle for basic necessities like food & home. In this century also their struggle is still going on for the basic hygiene & access to decent facilities. V.S.Naipaul also make an attempt to showcase the severe caste segregation, English mimicry, the horrific visits to Indian toilets & kitchens, unreasonable reservation policy giving opportunity to those who are not competent Under the Darkness of India.

The severe dearth of money has aggravated the issues & misery of the rural & urban underprivileged society & has created Darkness in their life. Lack of education, ill access to employment, Colonial practices in the name of Zamindari, Societal

reservation, extreme caste segregation, cultural clashes, Bureaucratic system, corruption prevailing in politics, financial inequality, superstitions, rotten education & health systems & services, entrepreneurial shrewdness, natural calamities like flood, mall culture & many such things add up to the misery of the poor class of the country. The dearth of money prevailing in Laxmangarh has resulted that the central character of the book Balram Halwai & his brothers affected by the same turn towards the big cities to run away from unemployment.

The essence of succeeding in the modern times lies in the things like killings, exploitation, being opportunist, entertaining corruption, evading the justice system. A fact summarized as: "A school where you won't be allowed to corrupt anyone's head with prayers and stories about God and Gandhi nothing but the facts of life for these kids. A school full of White Tigers".

The White Tiger of Adiga is entirely a servant's point of view. In The White Tiger, Balram was disgraced by his each and every boss and he wanted to take vengeance which resulted into the murder. Balram did not want to stay into the rooster coop anymore due to which he robbed and killed his master in order to be rich.

In a programme 'You ask the question', Adiga was asked a question regarding poverty, internal conflict and terrorism in India. Adiga replied that all such issues are developing since a long time and there are many complicated reasons but there is one common reason which is prolonged tension in India which is because of increasing gap between poor and rich. Religious protests can usually lead to outbreaks and outbursts but the original protests are usually due to economic reasons. There should be reformation and modernization of the intelligence and police agencies immediately because at present, they are far from catching terrorists.

Quite possibly, Adiga is the greatest promote of Indian Writing in English as his literary work was instilled with a political devotion which told about the lives of poor people in India in a truthful and understanding way. The White Tiger novel of Adiga comprised of the work of inception of natives and made efforts to show the influences of regal rule on India which were diverse, contradictory and hostile which might be the reason that The White Tiger was considered best fictional writing in India. Adiga tried to write regarding the day-to-day life of the ordinary Indians, and not the rich ones. When The White Tiger was publicized, Adiga strongly connected himself with brand of writers considering political, social and human reasons as an actual tendency for novel (Desai, 1998). Adiga explained the truth of people's lives in the novels and short stories he wrote so he can provide a message to common people and they must understand the things going on in the modern world. The White Tiger of Adiga has revealed the separation between rich and

the poor which is ruling our country even though it is in the process of being an economically forward nation. Prasannarajan has reviewed in India Today:

As a debut, it marks the arrival of a storyteller who strikes a fine balance between the sociology of the wretched place he has chosen as home and the twisted humanism of the outcast. With detached, scatological precision, he surveys the grey remoteness of an India where the disposed and the privileged are not steeped in the stereotypes of struggle and domination. The ruthlessness of power and survival assumes a million moral ambiguities in this novel powered by an India where Bangalore is built on Bihar (Naipaul, 1995).

Balram is a character which stands for every poor people in our country craving for a better future. Story of Balram is a symbol of new India with a frightening incident. Along with being an entrepreneur, Balram is also a deceitful criminal, who is also able to make self-justifications. He works in the background of corruption, inequality and poverty (Kapur, 2008). Gaps between haves and have notes are constantly increasing and therefore the aggression and displeasure are increasing too. It was purported by Adiga that the increasing gap between rich and the poor people and economic system is the reason for rich people to make money at poor people's expense. Poor work for their masters and their prosperity in the same way as farmers work for their landlord.

In our country, the development schemes, immense privatization and labor reforms are the reason for poor getting poorer. According to Adiga, India is now a globalized nation even though the poor are going through same conditions like they were before. Indian Literature is on the rise of huge changes due to which there are the increase caste, class and gender problems along with social issues and they have become huge problems in Literature which is being produced in English and other languages (Adiga, 2008).

Untouchables of India are escalating a rebellion in oppose of the fortunate upper caste. Silence of the past thousand years is being increasingly broken and the society is being alerted by them. Education along with exposure to literature is the reasons for untouchables being able to go forward from their thoughts of uncleanness and pollution which were put on them by upper castes. Mulk Raj Andnad's Untouchable, Arundati Roy's The God of Small Things and Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger have recognized the social history of poor people in post-colonial period.

Their work provides a multi-colored picture of modern India. Pain, disgrace and poverty of untouchables have been summarized in social novels as they remained at the bottom of social

pyramid of our country for thousands of years. There are a lot of encouraging novels which show the expedition of untouchables for self-esteem and acknowledgment of their human worth instead of progression of India eliminating the negatives of caste system (Matz, 2004). Such novels can be an indicator about the change which is a possibility in our country and a change which is making developments, steadily.

Adiga is a renowned writer and he stays at the top of Indian writing in English as he is a thorough person in representing his characters. There is no doubt about him being the greatest artist of Indian Writing in English. Focal theme of Adiga is intensely deep-rooted in social situations of modern India. Socio-economic inequality of our country is a huge problem and the characters truly describe the outlines of Indian society. Adiga stands for a society which is full of negatives regarding untouchability, caste discrimination and social injustice. He is a practical person and his practicality is something which differentiates him from the partiality and the capacity to have a stable opinion of man and society. Adiga speaks for the essential feelings of a man whose life is a blend of weakness, irritation, protest anguish and anxiety. It is a combination of usual Indian lives and life of numerous layers and all of the layers are intimately related with the others. Poverty is a layer among them and it is also quite essential for Adiga. Through his practicality, Adiga has been able to show the society where the corruption factor functions with ease.

In the time when the India is facing several problems of bribery, Adiga is in such stage in his career that he is writing novels & short stories. He is portraying the class of people in the actual society of India whose financial status has always defined their place in civilization. Adiga says in his epic creation *The White Tiger*, where he is facing disgrace in the situation where he is restrained from entering the mall.

The guard stopped the person at the door. Even with the open glass door the guy waiting to go in could not enter inside. A person with sandal in his feet was stopped by the guard. He felt sharp pain of dishonor in the situation. Only the people with shoes in their feet were being allowed to go in & a person wearing sandals burst out saying "am I not a human being too?" (Adiga, 2008).

A firm believer in self-respect & fairness, Adiga was obviously stunned to witness the brutal way the financially strong & upper caste set of the people from the society were ill-treating the other set from deprived background. Adiga is a writer covering the oppressed set of people's reality. He tried to cover the realistic picture of the culture covering social synchronization & social morals. Adiga intend to depict the issues being faced by the deprived people using example of mobile

phone. Talking about the essential of water the central character in the Novel of Adiga 'The White Tiger' named as Balram said "There is no water in our taps, and what do you people in Delhi give us? You give us cell phones.

He also explained in one of the discussion, India is a country of approx 240 million mobile phone users. Mobile phones hold a strong position in the perception of the people that this is the parameter of development. The lower economical class also holds mobile phones. However, the clean drinking water accessibility has decreased in recent 10 years of time. Majority of the economic analyzers has the say that the lack of accessibility to drinking water is a big reason behind the dearth. For an example a construction worker will get fired after two days of sick leave on account of typhoid on account of dirty water. This guy also does not have insurance. His economical class will never change because of such situation. On account of declined water supplies, agriculture is also adversely affected. Water accessibility is a big issue. The access to water segregates two division in society, the with access to clean water is wealthy & other one is the deprived. Technological advancements are just a part of the progress but not a single parameter itself. Progress is holistic—it's water and cell phones (Desai, 1998).

It is obvious that the contemporary society is inevitably in the hold of the menace of split between the deprived and the privileged, the powerful and the feeble. The higher class community leaves no opportunity to use & enjoy the wealth & exercise their power to use it to their advantage. The obviously get to use the wealth by the virtue of their birth in such upper class set-up. Mostly they use the acquired or inherited fortune on their own bodily possessions, materialistic comfort & individual achievements. On the other hand the poor is compelled to spend their life in a stressed situation always, despite their rigor & careful attitude. Here the situation will remain that the fortunate will be more n more fortunate & there is no change in the situation of the underprivileged. Prevalence of such disparity has been the focus area in the works of this writer. Mulk Raj Anand was a pioneer of such approach in British India Era. Adiga (2008) have worked in details to address the social hierarchy disparities & have been successful in achieving immense acceptance & recognition for their literary contribution in the world (Adiga, 2008).

III. CONCLUSION

This book focuses on the ill practices & social exploitations prevailing in India. It criticizes the social justice violations & religio-socio-political conflicts.

This attempts to use humor to portray misery. It also touches upon the social menaces like Untouchability.

In India 300 million approximately are compelled to live in poor conditions & are being suppressed by the sheer system. Their belief that by serving the middle class society in domestic chores their fortune will change, they are wrong. The increasing inflation will eat away their earnings easily. The prices for eatables & petrol are also increasing & will keep happening. Even the optimistic set of people seems to have a dilemma in their mind of actual situation, but they are still hopeful. Inflation is playing its part in increasing the gap between the fortunate & underprivileged. It seems like India's destiny is divided in two parts rosy & grim. Still we have decades to come on a common platform for all the people of the society for actual growth & success. However, the high pace of growth on account of globalization has given boost to increase the resources for the same. To conclude The White Tiger is an awesome depiction of the disparities prevailing in the name of rich & poor. Also this book misses the opportunity to understand & portray the spiritual part of the country. I do not cover up on the angle of tenderness & love every Indian possess irrespective of the socio-economical class. This book focuses on the portrayal of the poverty, British era, population issue, and literacy rate problem & caste system. Adiga narrates the failure of putting a break to the population explosion. However the progress of the middle class shows the impressive growth of India post-Independence. Still the wealth distribution is an issue. His work is a blend of an economic, social & writer's angle & thus this novel has varied issues covered under one umbrella.

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Corresponding Author

Komalben Arvindbhai Bhatt*

Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Science, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Anand

E-Mail – komal3789@yahoo.com