

Reflection of Social Realism in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Introduction:

Aravind Adiga is one of the prominent Indian novelists. He was born in Chennai and completed his early education in Mangalore. He was born in a very rich family which provided him all the facilities and luxury required for the well upbringing of the child. He continued his education in Australia when his family shifted there. When he completed his education, he decided to move to New York to make his career in English Literature. At New York he studied English literature and it inspired him to write novels. He also studied English literature at renowned Columbia and Oxford University. In short, Adiga pursued good education that could enable him to understand the depth and art of fiction.

Aravind Adiga is a writer who is appreciated by those who read serious literature. He is not famous or popular writer or has a massive fan following like Chetan Bhagat, Amish Tripathi and a few others but Adiga has won the Booker Prize for his very first novel. Adiga's vision is different from many his contemporary writers. However, Adiga is not appreciated by the masses because most of the Indian readers love to read about sensation and not about sensibility. The *White Tiger* has limited itself to the literary scholars and due to its deep imagery and boring script the common readers kept themselves away from this novel.

Aravind Adiga as a Novelist:

Adiga, through his novels, tries to present his political and cultural understanding too severely. The tone of his books is mocking which highlights India's aspiration to grow globally. His novels have one thing in common, that is – ambition. Balram has to be rich and come to the light. His books generally include common social practices, cultural issues, religious references, political principles and a lot of

other things related to the psychology of Indian people, to make his novel surge with more speed and draw the attention of readers from various fields of life. In this regard Dr. Harleen Ruprah writes, "Amongst the current generation writers, Chetan Bhagat and Aravind Adiga have projected not only to challenge the persisting social issues but also addressed the major interests and conceptions of the youths of India" (Ruprah, 2023).

English Language is not an issue in modern Indian English writings because the language has become widespread. Common readers can understand what Adiga writes and could get the general meaning easily. The plots in the novels by Adiga are uncomplicated and trouble-free. Though he does not do something extraordinary with his plots, it the power of his writing that when the reader begins the reading, her reads up to the last line of the book. Adiga, for the ordinary readers, will be a one-book wonder because there are no more titles that could carry his fame he earned with the publication of *The White Tiger* in 2008.

Social Realism in *The White Tiger*:

The White Tiger is the story of a village boy, Balram Halwai. Through the story of its protagonist, Adiga depicts the dark side of Indian society. The novelist is a minute observer of Indian society and he presents the problems and lives of common and downtrodden men through his characters. The author believes that there are many people in India who suffer from many problems but their voice is unheard. So the author determines to focus on these unheard voices of common and downtrodden people through his novel as well as to present the dark side of Indian society. Adiga says that India is a developing country, but only a few people are getting rich and many are poor. It means India is divided into two different parts or sections.

According to the author, most of the poor people belong to the poor states like Bihar as well as the countries like Bangladesh and Nepal. Due to poverty, they are ready to do any kind of work on low wages. Moreover, they are ready to do anything for their masters. For them, their master's comfort and luxury is more important than their lives. Regarding the devotion and sacrifice of these poor people Aravind Adiga writes, "These people were building homes for the rich, but they lived in tents covered with blue tarpaulin sheets, and partitioned into lanes by lanes of sewage. It was even worse than Laxmangarh" (Adiga, 2008).

Balam Halwai, the protagonist of the *The White Tiger* represents the dark side of India. "The novel is primarily based at the disparities of the world, the arena of the bad and underprivileged who cannot even satisfy their minimal requirements which then writer refers to "Darkness" in the novel" (Rathore & Makwana, 2022). Balam hails from Bihar and in search of work comes to Bangalore. Though he was an intelligent person, he could not pursue education due to the poor background of his family. To get a job of a driver in Delhi is a turning point in the life of Balam. He gets job but his master, Ashok is a corrupt and unethical person. The master often mistreats Balam but he had no option than working with Ashok. Once Ashok's wife Pinky was driving the car in a drunken condition and in an accident she killed a child. Balam's master forces him to sign a document declaring that he has killed a child in an accident. But he refuses to sign and to escape from this critical situation he kills his master and leaves Delhi with the huge amount stolen from his master. He then starts new business and new life at Bangalore. This action of the protagonist indicates that he is like a white tiger. It means he is different from others and also dangerous for his enemies.

Adiga also reveals one of the most relevant contemporary social problems of majority of Indians that is dowry system. To demand dowry in the form of money and other precious things is a long tradition in India. This evil tradition of dowry makes a marriage very costly, sometimes it is beyond the capacity of ordinary families. The family of the protagonist also faces the same problem in the marriage of Reena, his cousin sister. He mentions, "We had to give the boy a new bicycle, and cash, and

a silver bracelet, and arrange for a big wedding" (36). The family is forced to take a loan for the expenses of the marriage from one of the village landlords, the Stork. After the marriage, the life of the family becomes more critical due to this financial burden. Every member has to work hard to return the loan with the interest. Adiga highlights through this novel the evil social problem of dowry in Indian society and its effects on the poor families.

Adiga believes that the country is divided into two distinct parts; one for the rich and another for the poor. "Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* actually paints a contemptuous and demeaning picture of Indian society. He actually through this literary work addresses the malaise of social inequality in India" (Chakraborty & Sharma, 2023). In this novel, the author makes use of various binaries like poor/rich, slave/master, day/night, light/darkness and so on to reveal the harsh social realism. The residents of the Darkness are mostly underprivileged poor people and those who reside in large buildings in both rural and urban areas are the privileged rich people of shining India. "In this way, the author makes a clear division between the "India of Light and India of Darkness" (14). And it concludes that the most of Indian population lives in the Darkness. The protagonist's own family resides in darkness in the village of Laxmanpur; but he improves his status to the upper level that is he becomes the member of India of Light with his tough work, will-power and fiddly behavior. The protagonist himself accepts the fact, "I am in the light now, but I was born and raised in Darkness" (14). The words 'darkness' and 'light' are symbolically and deliberately used in the novel by the author to show the social disparity of Indian society. "On the one hand, globalization has paved the way for making millions and has given birth to many Indian millionaires; on the other hand, the fruits/benefits of globalization have not reached the subalterns languishing in backward parts of India, the vast land of differences" (Sakthivel & Ganesan, 2022). To be the part of the Light, Balam has to kill Ashok, his master, to give bribe to the police officers and has to do many illegitimate and disreputable activities. In this way, it becomes apparent that Balam enters the part of Light after his ethical darkness or degradation.

Conclusion:

Aravind Adiga, the winner of Man Booker Prize for his Debut novel *The White Tiger*, is a minute observer of Indian society. Through this novel he attacks on poverty, injustice and inequality prevalent in the country. Balram Halwai is the protagonist of the novel and through this character the author highlights on suppression and exploitation of the poor, downtrodden and underprivileged people. The author tries to present the realistic picture of the lives of the poor. He also criticizes the rich people like Ashok who are unethical, misuse the power of money and mistreat the poor. The author also attacks on the corrupt policemen who take bribe and do not register the case against the rich people. Being a realistic author, Adiga criticizes the tendency of the poor people also. He gives the apt example of Rooster coop. He explains that the poor people behave like the roosters who are cut one by one everyday but other roosters do not care about it. Here, the author suggests the poor people to fight for their rights. In the novel also, Balram kills his master, takes his money and arrives in Bangalore to start new business and new life. In this way, Adiga presents social realism through two sections-Darkness and Light- of Indian society and suggests fighting against injustice and inequality.

References:

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