

Review Paper

The Study of Marginalized Section & its Representation in the Story of Adiga's White Tiger



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Abstract

Arvind Adiga, an Indian writer and a famous journalist, came into spotlight when his famous novel called as "The White Tiger" came into English Literature World and won Man Booker Prize in the year of 2008. The novel sketch Indian society and provides a darkly humorous perspective of class struggles i.e the struggle between rich and poor through 'Balram Halwai' who is the main hero and story teller of the novel. The novel starts from the Gaya district of Bihar where the hero of novel belongs and meets its end when the hero reaches Delhi as a part of his driving job. Through this novel Adiga has attempted to introduce commonness of debasement and insatiability in the public eye and aspiration of individuals. This paper is an attempt to track dark India and shining India with the help of poor-rich concept manifested in the novel 'The White Tiger.' The study revealed a fact that class struggle is inevitable in nature and lies in each and every society and every place and due to which there is a big ditch created between rich and poor and which is increasing by leaps and bound. The study also revealed a fact that due to class struggles the problems of misconception among the various stakeholders of Indian society arise or many more.

Keywords: Class Struggle, Servants, Caste, Masters, Corrupt, rich & poor

Introduction

Arvind Adiga, a famous Indian writer and journalist, was born in Madras currently known as Chennai on Oct 23 1974 in the family Dr. K. Madhava Adiga and Usha Adiga. His life, began from Mangalore to Sydney and then came to back to India and working as a financial journalist at 'Financial Times', provided a sense to perceive the gap between rich and poor people in the society and which resulted the drafting & publication of world famous novel 'The White Tiger' in the year of 2008. The novel was one of the most famous literary evidence of the gap of rich and poor people due to which the book was awarded 40th Man Booker Prize in the same year i.e. 2008.

The novel 'The White Tiger' is an effort to portray the conflicts between the caste and class structure of 21st century's Indian Society. The novel also tried to portray poverty through an imaginary village Laxmangarh near Bodhgaya at Bihar where poor people belonging to lower caste live in their 'kache-pakke' huts while the rich people live a little far from the village in their mansions. The gap between rich and poor people can be best perceived by their standard living where poor people need to work hard on daily basis to earn their livelihood & mostly depend on the landlords while the second, the richer, enjoy the luxury of life and exploit poor people. The White Tiger conveys a dark side of India's social structure, i.e. the struggle between rich and poor through an imaginary character called as Balram Halwai who belong to Laxmangarh. Adiga says that his novel endeavors to hear the voice of the common men whom you meet in every single corner you travel through India- that is 'the voice of the discouraged'. According to Adiga, 'The White Tiger' is an attempt to catch unheard voice of individuals from "the Darkness". Adiga says that India's economic growth & position are continuously increasing day by day but the gap between rich and poor, instead of decreasing, increased very rapidly. People from Bihar, Bangladesh, Nepal & other poor area migrate to urban area or cities or metropolitan cities for the sake of better life but they get low paid jobs like drivers, domestic help, cook, construction workers, gardeners and as fulltime servants and always take care of all the needs of their masters. The main theme of the novel 'The White Tiger' is to highlight dark India & shining India moreover the novel also emphasizes the difficulties faced by poor people who are living under severe poverty condition.

As Adiga explained in 'The White Tiger', "These people were building homes for the rich, but they lived in tents covered with blue tarpaulin sheets, and partitioned into lanes by lines of sewage. It was even worse than Laxmangarh...The slum ended in an open sewer a small river of black water went sluggishly past me, bubbles sparkling in it and ...Two children were splashing about in the black water" (Adiga 260). Balram Halwai, the main hero of the novel portrays the real image of Indian culture and he narrates his experience he had during his journey from a little town named Laxmangarh in Bihar to the IT city Bangalore. In Adiga's novel, Balram, nick named as "The White Tiger" by a school inspector, is an intelligent but poor boy who had to discontinue his study due to poverty and family circumstances gets a job as a driver for a corrupted business man Ashok at Delhi where he was

humiliated by his master and his family many a times. Moreover once the corrupted family tried to frame Balram as a murderer and compelled Balram to sign a declaration declaring that he has killed a child while driving while Pinki Ashok's wife killed a child during drunk and drive case. Balram tried to manage the situation anyhow and left Delhi and later started a taxi business at Bangalore and became a successful prosperous entrepreneur. Here the author describes the attitude of 'Balram' like 'The White Tiger', an animal who is not only different from other but dangerous too. Balram wants to live an independent life, like The White Tiger, but this is not possible in India, despite being a largest democratic country in the world, the problem of rich and poor still remain same even after we are entering into 21st century and this is the main focus of the novel too. As he puts in *The White Tiger*, "These are the three main diseases of this country, sir: typhoid, cholera, and election fever. The last one is the worst; it makes people talk and talk about things that they have no say in" (Adiga 99). In an interview Adiga remarks about Indian politics and its role to determine the problem of rich and poor or dark India & shining India and says "The fact that a lot of Indians have very little political freedom, especially in the north of India. Those elections are rigged in large parts of the north Indian state of Bihar, and they're also accompanied by violence. There's like thirty five killings during every election. If you were a poor man you'd have to pick China over India any day because your kids have a better chance of being nourished if you're poor. Your wife is more likely to survive childbirth. You're likely to live longer. There are so many ways in which India's system fails horribly" (Sawhney 2008).

The novel is a captivating work that attacks on injustice, poverty and inequality without being sentimental and epitomizes the spreading void between rich and poor or the reality of dark India & shining India. According to the author the difference between dark India & shining India can be track by analyzing the social setting where on the one side, the rich shop in malls, stay in extravagant apartments while on the other side, the poor shop in grimy areas, reside in basements, live in slums moreover the shining India we see in cinema or in metropolitan cities is not the real India. The narration made by the protagonist is a real voice of slum dwellers, poor peasants and exploited class.

'Rooster Coop' a terminology, used in the novel, is a real description of India society moreover the author used chicken market behind Jama Masjid market, New Delhi where hundreds of roosters are mercilessly killed every day while those alive can see that they will be the next yet they don't rebel. They accept their fortune the way it's designed for them. It exposes their vulnerability and helplessness. The same is done to the humans. In the same way poor peasants have to suffer the depravities of feudal lords. The narrator sarcastically portrays this rich and poor divide, in these lines: "In this country, we have two kinds of men: Indian liquor men and English liquor men. 'Indian' liquor is for village boys like me- toddy, arrack, country hooch. 'English' liquor, naturally, is for the rich. Rum, whisky, beer, gin-anything the English left behind." (Adiga 73)

Similarly Balram states the devotion of servants and their controlled perception to explain the term 'Rooster Coop' & says: "Every day, on the roads of Delhi, some chauffer is driving an empty car with a black suitcase sitting on the backseat. Inside the suitcase is a million, two million rupees; more money than the chauffer will see in his lifetime. If he took the money he could go to America, Australia, anywhere, & start a new life ... Yet he takes that suitcase where his master wants." (Adiga 174)

Moreover, Balram highlights the common behavior of all the rich or upper class people who exploit the poor and misbehave with them he, furthermore, has a sharp urge to break out the traditional boundaries to fill the gap of rich and poor and thus the goal of shining India can be achieved in real where people irrespective of their caste, creed, colour, gender or religion etc can enjoy the fruits of respectful life and follow the principle of live and let live. Moreover he believes that one has to take risk in his life to achieve and fulfill the dream and to break this Coop: "...only a man who is prepared to see his family destroyed –hunted, beaten, and burned alive by masters – can break out of the coop. That would take no normal human being, but a freak, a pervert of nature (Adiga 175).

According to Balram the whole country is like a zoo where we, as an animal, have our own limitations and boundaries and due to these boundaries we behave like a social animal sometime also called as civilized. Furthermore, Balram says that before independence we were united, socially and psychologically but as we became independence or as we started thinking to become an independent economic state our social behavior once again converted into animal behavior and the zoo became a jungle. According to Balram "15 Aug 1947 was not an independence day perhaps it was a day when British Indian Government opened the cages let the animals to attack ripped each other and thus jungle law was replaced zoo law". (Adiga 63)

According to Balram the concept of dark India & shining India is a mirage or a day dream because the rich people take poor people as an instrument for this he share the experience he had with Pinki who killed a child during drunk and drive case and Balram was trapped and compelled to own the crime. Balram was pressured to sign a statement accepting the responsibility for the accident: "TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, I, Balram Hawai, son of Vikram Halwai, of Laxmangarh village in the district of Gaya, do make the following statement of my own free will and intention: That I drove the car that hit an unidentified person, or persons, or person and objects, on the night of January 23rd of this year...I swear by almighty God that I make this statement under no duress and under instruction from no one" (Adiga 168).

The employer's family forced him to sign the statement and said "You're part of the family. "My heart filled up with pride. I crouched on the floor, happy as a dog, and waited for him to say it again" (Adiga 166). Masters mean behavior continue when they order the servants about does and don'ts. Balram is told never to play music and switch on the AC when he is alone. Ashok and Pinky Madam used to taunt Balram for his lack of an English education. When he mispronounced "Maal" for "mall", PiZZa for piJJA.

The novel *'The White Tiger'* critically comments on the economic disparities, class struggle, injustice, poverty & inequalities. The White Tiger follows a darkly comic Bangalore driver through the poverty & corruption of modern India's caste society—a narrative genius with a mischief & personality all its own. Amoral, irreverent, deeply endearing, & utterly contemporary, this novel is an international publishing sensation & a startling, provocative debut. (Amazon.com review)

Author of the novel, Arvind Adiga in an interview with the BBC, said: "The White Tiger is the story of a poor man in today's India, one of the many hundreds of millions who belong to the vast Indian under class; people who live as labourers, as servants, as chauffeurs and who by and large do not get represented in Indian entertainment, in Indian films, in Indian books. My hero—or rather my Protagonist-Balram Halwai is one of these faceless millions of poor Indians". (2008, Arvind Adiga in an interview with BBC)

Similarly talking with Tehelka Magazine, Arvind Adiga shared his views about the hero of the novel and said that "In 2006, I quit my job with TIME magazine, and spent the first few weeks of the year trying to finish a novel that was tentatively called The White Tiger. I gave up by March. The novel was going nowhere; I was restless. I went to Kolkata by train. It was meant to be a holiday, but I knew no one in the city and after a day, I was bored. I was too used to being a journalist: I called an NGO and asked if there was anything to cover. "The government wants to ban the hand pulled rickshaws of the city so that industrialists will feel comfortable investing here," the spokesperson said. "Would you meet one of the rickshaw-pullers and present their point of view in an article?" The man from the NGO took me to meet a group of rickshaw pullers. There were nearly 20 of them, all from Bihar, living in a large, dingy shed.

One rickshaw-puller, as if reading my thoughts, seized me by the wrist and took me around the shed, showing me the brooms, and explaining that there was a twice a-day schedule of sweeping and mopping. "We are clean people, Sir," he said. "And good people. I am a Muslim, but I live here with Hindus, and there is no trouble. We have separate kitchens, and we respect each other". (From Tehelka Magazine, Vol 5, Issue 38, Dated Sept 27, 2008)

Conclusion

The White Tiger is a debut novel written by Arvind Adiga that provided him not only the name and fame but also won 40th Man Booker Prize in the year 2008. In this novel the author successfully painted subaltern issues of the Indian society. The author tried to convey the idea that a sustainable development can't be achieved by ignoring the development of a particular group/class of the society and these isolated groups may be from downtrodden groups or from the poor families as in India poor and downtrodden are used as synonyms. Moreover it is also believed that these downtrodden and people are the obstacle in the country's overall development which is a big myth. The novel is an outstanding social commentary on the poor rich divide in India. Balram, an imaginary character of the novel, depicts the downtrodden, oppressed sections of our society against the rich. He, furthermore, opens the reality of dark and shining India and according to Balram class struggle is inevitable in nature and lies in each and every society and every place and due to which there is a big ditch created between rich and poor and which is increasing by leaps and bounds. Deirdre Donahue labels *'The White Tiger'* an angry novel about injustice and power which creates merciless thugs among whom only the ruthless can survive (Donahue, 2008). We can draw the conclusion that *The White Tiger* mirrors the realistic picture of contemporary India. In which issues of subaltern, downtrodden are still untouched. Arvind Adiga's *'The White Tiger'* is really a story that attacks on poverty, injustice and inequality and dark and shining India.

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