

SP Publications
**International Journal Of English and Studies
(IJOES)**

**An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal www.ijoes.in
Vol-1, Issue-2(July), 2019, Impact Factor: 5.379 ISSN: 2581-8333**

The White Tiger: A Real-Life Parallel of Contemporary Society

Dr. Tauseef Mohsin

Head of the Department of English, Koshi College Khagaria, Khagaria Bihar, India

tauseefjlk@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper makes the claim that *The White Tiger* (2008), the Man Booker Prize winning novel of the Arthur Andersen Foundation, by the author Aravind Adiga, can be seen as a dark satire, but more accurately as a socio-economic forecast of the nature of modern society that has been made necessary by the late-stage predatory capitalism of the developing world. The main metaphors of the novel are examined through a combination of the literary sociology, Nietzschean philosophy, and objective facts about the post-liberalization course of India. The Rooster Coop is an image of deep-seated, internalized servitude, the impotence of collective struggle of classes. The novel symbolizes the exceptionally few men who can make it to the top by the only means of radical corruption. This study shows how the novel explains a basic reality: where the legitimate avenues of success are closed out systematically, freedom has to be usurped by force, and by the results of the scholarly literature (the 'Billionaire Raj') indicated, the necessity of the anti-hero in the plutocratic state.

Keywords: Aravind Adiga, Nietzschean, Post-liberalization, Plutocratic State

Introduction

The setting of the novel Aravind Adiga takes place is one that is critical in India, as the economic liberalization reforms of 1990s take place. The economic growth was witnessed at a fast rate and this era created the story of a brighter India that would emerge as an economic powerhouse in the world. Due to greater technology and globalization, India has been able to have one of the fastest growing economies in the 21st century. Yet, *The White Tiger* gives a very dark opposite of that, revealing the harsh socioeconomic lines that spoil the official success narrative.

Adiga criticizes such a fast, disproportionate development by setting the basic separation of the country into two worlds, the Indias of Light and the Indias of Darkness. The Light represents the urban wealth, internationalization and consumerism that is experienced by the elite, whereas the Darkness is the rural destitution, the deep-rooted caste structure and slavery that surrounds the majority that is marginalized. The main aim of the novel is that this partition, which is not a transitional period of time, is the obligatory framework of the contemporary model of economy.

International Journal Of English and Studies (IJOES)

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal www.ijoes.in
Vol-1, Issue-2(July), 2019, Impact Factor: 5.379 ISSN: 2581-8333

The novel is a sharp examination of the subaltern predicament accompanied by the importance of the lower classes in defining the socio-economic story of India. The novel presents a poignant insight into the unbending class divide in the country where the poor are at the extremes of the society against the wealthy and the powerful. By depicting Balram Halwai, Adiga introduces a negative view of power, which is in a reversed fashion and defies the Indian society within a top-down hierarchy. Although India boasts of being the largest democracy in the world, the novel shows that the poor are still locked in the systemic cords which do not give them their freedom.

Adiga reveals the irony of a country which is so proud of its high rate of modernization and international acknowledgement and yet millions of people live in poverty. These are the three prime diseases of this country, sir: typhoid, cholera and election fever, says Balram. The worst is the last; it makes individuals talk and talk about things that they do not participate in. Such a statement summarizes the indictment of Adiga on the hypocrisy in politics, and the illusion of making any contribution towards democracy. Within the novel, there is a complex exploration of the various platforms of power and inequality that are perpetuated, which include the political, economic, religious and ideological. It also brings out defiance and will of the subaltern to overcome oppression. Adiga employs characters that are driven by a consuming nature to uproot deeply ingrained hierarchies, they proclaim, I am tomorrow, the new awareness that aims to challenge the social structure in place in the society. After all, *The White Tiger* makes the reader face the issues of the existing power imbalance that characterizes modern India.

Theoretical Frameworks: The Crisis of Morality and Capital

The main sociological metaphor used by Adiga is the Rooster Coop, which signifies the system of oppression in terms of both social and economic structure that oppresses the poor in India. It represents the limitations of poverty, caste, and the systematic deprivation of the opportunity, and it enslaves the marginalized in a vicious cycle of continuous servitude. Balram notes that poor people are like caged roosters, who are looking at one another as one of them is being killed, but do nothing to resist it. They are hopelessly frozen in paralysis.

This is the state of a Marxian False Consciousness, wherein the oppressed are socialized to interpret the position of the oppressors as normal and therefore to ward against internal revolution or flight. According to the traditional Marxist theory, proletariat should participate in mass struggle against the capitalists in order to seize the means of production. This possibility is however, negated specifically in the Rooster Coop. The Indian family is the most important authority that plays the most crucial role in the control process. Adiga depicts family loyalty as not a sign of strength but a weakness, which the elite take advantage of. When a servant tries to run or be disobedient, the family of the superior will either punish or kill the family of the servitude, and kinship ties are replaced with a means of control and stopping uprising. Once the collective (the family and community) is turned into the instrument of oppression, the avenue of freedom through solidarity is simply destroyed structurally. It is this

International Journal Of English and Studies (IJOES)

**An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal www.ijoes.in
Vol-1, Issue-2(July), 2019, Impact Factor: 5.379 ISSN: 2581-8333**

organized defeat of the proletariat in the form of the passive waiting, as observed by Balram, that is the collective action failure, which necessitates the radical, individualistic reaction of Balram.

The internalized servitude of the Rooster Coop denying the traditional, collective way to revolution makes Balram enter a course of radical individualism to liberate himself. He considers himself as the White Tiger, a kind of freak, a pervert by birth- only once a generation can he be born, and he can escape the cage. This is the rare and ambition that comes in line with the *Urbemensch* (Superman or Over Human) as introduced by Friedrich Nietzsche to describe an ideal man who new moral values necessary to his own evolution.

Balram is also motivated to get ahead of his competition by all means, and this corresponds to the ideas of Nietzsche where he believed that the will to power is the force that drives human beings into action. Avoidance of the traditional morality that is dictated by the society, or what Nietzsche called slave morality, is the essential of his success. Balram justifies his act of killing his boss, Mr. Ashok not as a mere criminality, but as an essential and reasonable action to rise above the society and get to the top position in the shadowy social structure. He invents his own master morality, in which crime is a logical instrument of emancipation, showing the impossibility of motive and absence of guilt which are the features of *Urbemensch*. Such a change is an indication that in a system that strictly seals all valid access points, violence and transgression is the sole reasonable method of attaining liberation.

The ecosystem that the story by Adiga depicts resembles the circumstances that Predatory Capitalism produces, the system of financialization, globalization, and neoliberal policies actively undermining regulatory frameworks and creating the environment conducive to exploitation. To the poor, globalization does not mean universal liberation but the modernized servitude and helps to develop the two Indias: the India of Light and India of Darkness in which the poor are removed and pushed to the fringe.

This paradigm of intensive growth is part of an extensive postcolonial criticism. The liberalization of markets and ideologies promoted by International Financial Institutions commonly in the name of enhancing development and progress are proved to lead to socially crippling economic policies. The system establishes an environment in which the economic elites seek to advance their interests through political networks, which attests to the existence of predatory economics. The world that Balram inhabits is characterized by the accumulation of capital by the elite who must exploit the many people brutally to ensure that the anti-hero needs to respond amorally in order to gain a portion of that capital.

The Justification of Transgression

The novel is an excellent indicator and reflection of the modern Indian society and the brutality of class inequality and social injustice. The subaltern predicament is well illustrated in the novel, and the author lays stress on the fact that the lower class played a significant role in the creation of the story of the Indian progress. Adiga, through the metamorphosis of Balram Halwai, who becomes a wannabe entrepreneur after being a meek servant, reveals the

International Journal Of English and Studies (IJOES)

**An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal www.ijoes.in
Vol-1, Issue-2(July), 2019, Impact Factor: 5.379 ISSN: 2581-8333**

inculcated issue of class division, which is prevalent in the contemporary India, where the powerless poor are opposed to the privileged elite.

Balram is an uprising against the conventional hierarchies, since he is going against the system with an inward challenge and the renegotiation of his identity in an unconventional interpretation of power. Despite the fact that India boasts of the largest democracy in the world, Adiga reveals the irony of the fact that, the poor are left to continue in circles of oppression and deprivation and their liberty is curtailed due to the social and economic limitations. The novel highlights the hypocrisy of a country that is technologically advanced, has reputation all over the world and yet millions of people continue to live in poverty and disenfranchisement.

The satirical point that Adiga makes can be described in the following way: These are the three chief illnesses of this country, sir-typhoid, cholera, and election fever. The latter is the most malicious; it causes people to speak and speak about things they do not have a vote in"--seizes the ineffectiveness of engaging in politics when one is on the margins. In this definite comment, the author explores the way that the systems of political, economic, religious, and ideological power are interlocked to perpetuate inequality.

Social disruption and social disparity

The White Tiger setting covers some of the key Indian localities like Laxmangarh, Dhanbad, Delhi, and Bangalore. These sites make Aravind Adiga provide the description of two opposite pictures of India - the India of Light and the India of Darkness. Rural India, or the dark India is depicted as the land of poverty, injustice and suppression under the dominance of the landlords, greedy politicians and others. The India of light on the other hand is the urban and privileged sector of the country where wealth and modernity appear to prosper. Adiga however, lifts the lid on this shimmering facade to paint the ugly reality of it all: even in the India of Light, disparity exists and the poor are oppressed and still denied their fundamental rights.

Adiga splits the country into these two symbolic parts the wealthy and the poor to reveal the hypocrisy rooted in democratic India. The affluent are ashamed of having the poor around and they seek to conceal them. As Adiga states, rickshaws cannot be within the upscale areas of Delhi, which can easily be spotted by foreigners and stared at (The White Tiger 27). This attitude does not only reinforce the social injustice but also enhances the plight of the lower classes. Their right to voice in the society is denied and the caste system encourages the poor to be excluded in education, work and health care. This ranks as a system of inequality which is passed through birth and continues to generate inequality. Every caste is linked with certain jobs and financial positions, where the more advanced caste thrives, whereas the inferior caste lives in poverty.

Children in poor families in the villages such as Laxmangarh are in extreme disadvantages in terms of education. As the children of the rich fly to foreign countries in pursuit of better education, students in poor countries cannot even get access to basic education. Although there are government programs of offering them free meals, they are not received due to corruption. Adiga reveals this corruption with the help of an event where "students never

International Journal Of English and Studies (IJOES)

**An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal www.ijoes.in
Vol-1, Issue-2(July), 2019, Impact Factor: 5.379 ISSN: 2581-8333**

got rotis, or yellow daal, or pickles” because the schoolteacher embezzled the funds (Adiga 33). Students are sold school uniforms by teachers, and this is yet another indication of the decay of moral that is on all levels of the system.

In the same way, healthcare in India is virtually negligible in the rural areas. Laxmangarh people have to pass a long way to the medical centre and doctors who are hired by the government are usually indifferent to their work as they would like to earn more money at their own clinics. So, the welfare schemes which are created to benefit the poor are what attorneys of authority are utilizing at an organized exploitation. To make it worse, dowry is still ruining the poor families in terms of finances. His cousin Reena marrying changes his family in to debt and Balram is forced to drop out of school and become a tea-shop cleaner along with his brother, Kishan.

Balram, on the other hand, is propelled by an unrelenting desire to get out of the vise-grip of poverty and caste. Even though his job as a cleaner implies menial duty such as breaking coal and wiping tables, he does not want to accept his social destiny. Being the owner, Adiga explains that the owner believed, oh, they are Halwais and sweets and tea are their blood (The White Tiger 63). Balram does not accept this predestined fate, and he hopes to be able to become something better than a driver, a chauffeur. Nevertheless, it is difficult to escape the social regulations, and he ends up experiencing bias even when getting to know how to drive. Adiga uses the journey of Balram because the story is a brilliant piece of writing that reveals the harshness of the reality of class, corruption, and inequality in contemporary India, with two sides of the country; one side is the brilliance of progress and the other, the darkness of deprivation. The following lines bear the testimony:

That’s what you people do. You make sweets. How can you learn to drive? You need aggression in your blood. Muslims, Rajputs, Sikhs—they’re fighters, they can become drivers. You think sweet-makers can last long in fourth gear? Why don’t you stick to sweets and tea?” (56).

These lines clearly depict the way the caste determines occupation and social identity in India. The sweet-makers, the minors, or Halwais, are not to be permitted to have their vocation altered, or to attempt to follow other occupations, merely because the caste system does not allow it.

Balance eventually goes against this strict order of things and ends up driving Ashok, the son of the landlord. However, even when employed as a driver, he does some menial work that is not his responsibility, cleaning the courtyards, massage the feet of the Stork in warm water, bringing them first-class whisky, and looking after the two Pomeranian dogs, Cuddles and Puddles. It is ironical that Balram is instructed to treat the dogs as human beings due to the wealthy “expect their dogs to be pampered, and walked, and petted, and even washed!” (78). The rich thus invert the natural order—treating servants as beasts of burden while giving animals human-like privilege. When Balram is scolded, “Don’t pull the chain so hard! They’re

International Journal Of English and Studies (IJOES)

**An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal www.ijoes.in
Vol-1, Issue-2(July), 2019, Impact Factor: 5.379 ISSN: 2581-8333**

worth more than you are!” (78), Adiga exposes the deep dehumanization that defines the master-servant relationship in Indian society.

It is through this dynamic that Adiga brings into the spotlight a greater reality that is, the relationship between the master/servant is that of domination and subjugation. The rich see their servants not as people, but as things, as the natural extensions of their power and privilege. Adiga attacks a social set up in which servility and exploitation are exalted, through the eye of Balram. Balram finds out that his status in society does not change even after he relocates to Delhi, though. He is no longer an inhabitant of his village and a driver in a large city, but he is the same slave of the same invisible chains of class and caste. As he bitterly remarks, “We have left the villages, but the masters still own us, body, soul, and arse... Yes, that’s right: we all live in the world’s greatest democracy. What a fucking joke.” (96).

In the course of his trip, Balram sees the harsh conditions of poverty, corruption, and exploitation. It toughened his life and he became rebellious to his innocence. He finally kills his master, Mr. Ashok - a symbolic gesture of escaping the rooster coop of servitude. The very hands that were used to scrub tea tables and smash coal are now used to commit a crime not made out of hatred, but out of desperation and the desire to be free. The story about the ethical decline of Balram by Adiga highlights a terrifying fact: in a world where the poverty destroys human dignity even the virtue may become the violence. Using the story of Balram, Adiga reveals the evils of inequality system and passes the message of the fact that poverty in its most persistent form is a curse and can corrupt even the soul.

Conclusion

The novel is a strong social reflection of the very brutal reality of the modern India, where the dawn of the new era of progress is living with the dark side of inequality, corruption, and degradation. The story of the rise of the underprivileged Balram Halwai, to self-liberation through the character of Adiga, reveals the gulf between the disadvantaged and the advantaged, the privileged and the oppressed. The novel reveals the fact that systematic corruption, caste suppression, and the pretence of democracy still characterize contemporary society. The way Balram has changed into an innocent villager and a ruthless businessman can be associated with the fight of the marginalized to escape centuries of exploitation. The story by Adiga is not only the story of a personal rebellion, but it is also the story of a critique towards the country of light and darkness in which sometimes to succeed, one has to compromise his or her moral values. In the end, the novel challenges the reader to find a way of dealing with the unpleasant reality that even with all the development, the modern society remains bound with the yoke of greed, injustice and the specter of inequality.

SP Publications
**International Journal Of English and Studies
(IJOES)**

**An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal www.ijoes.in
Vol-1, Issue-2(July), 2019, Impact Factor: 5.379 ISSN: 2581-8333**

Works Cited

- Adiga, Aravind. *The White Tiger*. New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2010.
- Choudhury, Monir A. "Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* as a Re-etching of Modern India." *International Journal of Language and Literature*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2015.
- Jadhav, Prashant. "Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*: A Search for Identity." *New Man International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2015.
- Mendes, Ana Cristina. "Exciting Tales of Exotic Dark India: Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2010, pp. 275–293. *Web*. Accessed 3 Mar. 2017.
- Saini, Ashok. *Perspective on Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger*. Jaipur: Adi Publications, 2013.
- Sebastian, A. J. "Poor-Rich Divide in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*." *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2010.
- Shagufta, Iqra. "Class Stratification in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*." *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, vol. 4, no. 2.
- Wankhede, M. S. "Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*: A Historiography of Indian Culture and Society."
- "Aravind Adiga." *Alchetron*, <https://alchetron.com/Aravind-Adiga>.