

Social glitches and the Excruciating Validities in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

¹Vijayalakshmi.K, ²Dr. Sreeja Balakrishnan

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women

²Assistant Professor of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women

Abstract: The art and literature of an era reflects the social consciousness of the period. The moment and milieu of the period gets reflected in the works of literature of the period. Aravind Adiga's novel '*The White Tiger*' deals with sociological perspective of Indian classes which highlights the struggle and exploitation of poor and the vulnerable in the globalized world. The research paper attempts to evaluate prominent social problems like corruption, poverty and discrimination. The novelist portrays the reality behind the social scenario which prevails in various levels in the social class.

Keywords: corruption, poverty and discrimination.

The novel *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga which was published in 2008 has been well-received and it won the 40th Man Booker prize in the same year. The novel made Adiga the New York Times bestseller. He was the youngest writer and the 4th debut writer to win the prize in 2008. Balram Halwai, the protagonist of the novel is a unique personality who overcomes social problems and transforms himself as an entrepreneur from a simple driver. Adiga also highlights the invisible gap that prevails between the poor and wealthy by portraying characters from two extreme classes in the novel.

The White Tiger takes place in modern India, the protagonist Balram Halwai is born in Laxmanangarh a rural village in Bihar. Balram narrates the events of his life through a letter to the Chinese premier, Wen Jiabao. He writes the letter in seven consecutive nights. The character Balram, narrates his ancestral background and also the events in his life that leads him to take up a job as a driver. He becomes the driver of Ashok, son of the local landlord. Balram who disrespects his grandmother's words and moves to New Delhi with his boss Ashok and his wife, Pinky madam. During their stay in New Delhi, Balram witnesses various form of corruption in the Indian society.

The discrimination of poor and high becomes more evident by comparing the wealthy people with low people, in the city of New Delhi. One day, when Pinky madam and Ashok return from shopping, Pinky madam decides to drive the car by herself and she hits somewhere and a child die. She is worried that it was a child and the family decide to frame Balram as the convict. Luckily no future inquiry is done because the police were corrupt and lazy, they told that no one reported that a child is missing.

Ashok is involved in the corrupt government. Balram then decides that the only way to escape New Delhi is by killing and robbing Ashok. Balram plans to kill Ashok and finally kills him with a broken liquor bottle. He then decides to move to Bangalore. In Bangalore, he bribes the police to help him to start new driving business. At the end of the novel, Balram says that his freedom is worth more than the life of Ashok because he became a successful entrepreneur and started a new company.

Adiga throws light on the corrupt Indian system by having Balram as an example. He manipulates the norms and prospers. He becomes an entrepreneur by murdering his boss. Balram narrates his events of his life to the Chinese premier, throughout his letter he mentions about the corruption in the Indian society. Corruption is one of the major themes in the novel. *The White Tiger* takes place in the modern world where technology development has paved way for a corrupted world and India is no expectation.

Balram Halwai is a servant, philosopher, entrepreneur and murderer rolled into one. Born in the dark heart of India, the protagonist finds freedom when he is appointed as a driver by the village landlord. Balram's family is so poor that they cannot afford to send him to school, and so he put to work in a tea shop. Balram was born in a low caste, which means that he couldn't enjoy any privilege. He was an intelligent boy, but the condition of his family dragged him to worse experiences and he had a pathetic childhood. His mother had a lot of ambition for Balram, but she could not live to fulfill her wishes. When she was being burned and it looked as though her foot was resisting the fire. Balram had the same ambition to achieve and prosper in life but he failed to find the right path due to the lack of guidance. He became corrupt and involved in immoral behavior. Balram ends up doing anything to fulfill his aim. Balram takes up odd jobs to survive, to fulfill his basic needs and the same applies to all the other members of his family. After he attains his basic requirements, he tries to establish his stand and prosper.

"You, young man, are an intelligent, honest, vivacious fellow in this crowd of thugs and idiots. In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals- the creature that comes along only once in a generation?"

I thought about it and said:

'The white Tiger.'

That's what you are, in this jungle."(Adiga,35)

The inspector speaks to Balram Halwai.

The novelist is passionately concerned with extreme poverty and the personal sufferings of the poor and the misery induced by severe economic disparity.

The novelist attends to the plight of the "boys" working in a typical tea shop along the bank of the ganga. "Look the men, working in the tea shop(men), I say, but better to call them human spiders that go crawling in between and under the tables with rags in their hands, crushed humans in crushed uniforms, sluggish, unshaven, in their thirties or forties or fifties but still "boys." But that is your fate if you do your job well- with honesty, dedication and sincerity the way Gandhi would have done it, no doubt"(Adiga, 51).

Adiga shows poverty as a theme in the novel that exists in India. Balram narrates his mother's death and funeral as, "My mother's body had been wrapped from head to toe in a saffron silk cloth, which was covered in rose petals and jasmine garlands. I don't think she had ever had such a fine thing to wear in her life. her death was a grand that I knew, all at once, that her life must have been miserable. My family was guilty about something"(Adiga, 16).

A key component in *The White Tiger* is the discussion of the discrimination. The discrimination in India is a social system that divides the Indian population into higher and lower social classes. Although said to be disappearing in urban India, the discrimination of poor and wealthy still remains in rural India. The people are discriminated based on their caste and occupation. By birth Balram belongs to the 'Halwai' caste which means sweet maker, but he was the son of rickshaw puller not a sweet maker, because the sweet shop was stolen by some powerful and influential person from his family.

The novelist again shows the contrast in the lifestyle of the rich and poor though big cinema complex where rich people spend lavishly on entertainment, drinks, dance and have pleasure. He shows:

"The beautiful big glass building. Doctors walked in and out with long white coats, and stethoscope in their pocket. . . the hospital lobby looked clean as the inside of a five-star hotel!" (Adiga, 180).

The financial situation is also worth exploring between the two classes, the circumstances are different in the Darkness. Young ones are unemployed. They have no job to do and have gathered in a field in the center of the town. They outstretch their hands to climb on a truck to earn money in city. After getting informed about the salary of driver, Balram decides to learn driving and looks for the job.

"I was walking from house to house, knocking on the gates, and on front doors of the rich, asking if anyone wanted a driver. Everyone said no" (Adiga, 59).

This line indicates that there is a great struggle to earn money, the whole family waits with a hope that he would get something to spend by the end of the month. Balram was a very important person as far as his family's financial condition was concerned.

The Scene of a big cinema. . . charges over hundred and fifty rupees per film...that's not all you've also got plenty of places to drink beer, dance, pick up girls... Beyond the last shop begins the second PVR. . .this is the market for the servant... the men work in cinema and who sweep then clean, come here to eat. The beggars have their home here,(Adiga, 203-204).

She laughed and laughed when she saw me in my costume, bowing how to her with the cardboard box. I served them and then as Mr. Ashok had instructed stood near the portrait of cuddles and puddles with folded hands and waited.

'Ashok, she said 'Now hear this Balram, what it is we are eating?'

I knew it was a trap, but what could I do? – I answered. The two of them burst into giggles.

'Say it again, Balram'.

They laughed again.

'It's not pijja. It's pizza. Say it properly' (Adiga, 154).

The above line dealt with the lack of education and Balram's inability to communicate in English creates a sort of inferiority complex in his mind. Later when he becomes rich, he educates his nephew in a public school and takes pride when he communicates in proper English. He particularly mentions that his nephew can eat pizza and pronounce it properly. The common layman like Balram can only afford tea and vada. This shows the discrimination of poor and wealthy. The dreams of rich and poor are highlighted. The poor lacks basic needs like food and shelter, clothing and education while the rich have a luxurious lifestyle.

"The trustworthiness of the servants is the basis of the entire Indian economy" (Adiga, 175). The paradox is that it is the proletarians who are suffering in the economic cries. The protagonist in the novel decides to break the rooster coop and raise himself to be the higher class. But he admits himself as, "Social entrepreneur". He utters the voice of socialism; he wants to serve the nation.

"I have no ambitions for myself. I am simply the voice of the poor and the disfranchised" (Adiga, 269). "The rich are always one step ahead of us...For every step he'd take two"(Adiga, 268). "I just love to see a rich man roughed up" (Adiga, 271).

In the above line the protagonist desires to see the nation to be replaced by their ideology of democracy by socialism, because it has inclusive view of developing people together rather than only a privileged class. His philosophy is to let all human should live in harmony with respect. The society is prejudicial, and justice does not prevail hence "Might becomes right". Beyond money power there is nothing that can hold control. Balram escapes scot-free after committing a brutal murder and walks away with the money. He becomes an entrepreneur and tries to expand his business. Despite the guilt, he survives and prospers with the aid of the corrupt society.

To conclude the paper, the novel highlights discrimination and corruption in the Indian society. The unequal distribution of the wealthy is explicitly recounted in the novel through Balram. The novel reveals the power management that operates in the Indian society.

Works cited:

Adiga Aravind. *The White Tiger*. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2008.