

Realistic Representation of Contemporary India in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Abstract

Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, vividly exhibits the darker as well as the brighter portions of India in its economical, cultural, political and psychological realism. Writing about one's own nation is not the real novelty in literature. The novel expresses the lives of India's unfortunate in a realistic and sympathetic manner. His novel attempted to illustrate the multifarious and the impact of realistic approaches in contemporary India. This paper in and out of Adiga's perspectives poor are more invisible than ever before; the novel penetrates a startling contrast between India's rise as a global economy and the plight of the marginalized class of society living in rural and urban poverty through, Balram Halwai, the narrator and protagonist.

KEYWORDS: Cultural, economical, realistic, psychological, protagonist.

Introduction

Arvind Adiga was born at Chennai in 1974. He completed his education at Oxford and Columbai University. He worked for a editor in Time magazine. His novels are *The White Tiger* (2008), *Last Man In The Tower* (2011), *Between the Assassinations* (2008). He also wrote short story : *The Sultan's Battery*, *Smack*, *Last christen in Bandra*, *The Elephant*. His latest novel *Selection Day* appeared in 2014. He got Booker prize for *The White Tiger* in 2008. In *The White Tiger* discussed about social inequalities and powerful feelings of oppressed person. His most of his characterization from everyday struggle of life. It creates him as a great writer that of Charles Dickenson and R.K. Narayan. His novel mainly discussed with simplicity and complexity of common man of India. Adiga is mostly important to the betterment of Indian society. His works focused on woman's place in Indian society, poverty and hypocrisy.

Realistic Representation in *The White Tiger*

Writers across the globe have written about their nations and complexities in the contemporary society. They create an image of their nations in respect to the culture and manners that dominated the society. Detmers (2011) demonstrated that the urban domains primarily function as contested imaginary and/or imagined sites for the fashioning of the entrepreneur as a new, precarious key figure, shaping what has been felicitously labelled the "condition-of-India novel". Mendes (2010) described that *The White Tiger* as an ironic uncovering of the subsumption of a Dark India into the global literary marketplace at a time of a perceived shift in re-orientalist representational practices and their western reception. Goh (2011) also portrays that 'dark' India ironically becomes the means of a distinct cultural focus, a narrative mode of engagement with the homeland that,

irrespective of its negative social view, is a means of sustaining cultural identity within the homogenizing and deterritorializing forces of globalization.

The White Tiger is a genius portrayal of two extremes of India in its economical reality that has certainly shocked the Western minds. Balram, from Bihar, is a son of Rickshaw puller. In spite of being intelligent and a promised child, he is forced to leave the school at an early age and works on a small tea-shop. He has to break coal in the shop in order to support his family. He learns driving in order to earn more money. He has chance to meet the rich land lord and powerbroker, named 'The Stork' due to his long nose, of the village and is appointed as a driver. He is the chauffeur to drive a luring care of his U.S.A returned son, Ashok, settled in New Delhi. He often drives for his master and is seldom put to witness his master's immense wealth, corruption and opportunity all around him; realizing at the same time that he would never able to reach the height that his master has achieved. He contemplates over his situation and realizes that there is only one way in which he can achieve his target, and that is to join the band wagon of the affluent class and be a part of this glamorized world for which he has to murder his employer Ashok and get away from this bitterly dark life.

Balram takes advantage of Ashok's trust in him. He kills his master with an empty whisky bottle and at once escapes along with his cousin Dharam to Bangalore. He changes his name to Ashok Sharma, owns a taxi company and becomes a wealthy entrepreneur in Indian's most technologically advanced metropolitan city. Adiga focuses on the notion of universalization of education in the contemporary India. He finds his teacher sleeping in the class room, which shows how much lethargic our teachers are in the village schools. The free amenities and garments given to the students are deprived of and speculated by the school teachers in the name of taking revenge against their superiors who have not provided them six months' salary. The life of underclass darkens when corrupt and defunct education system operates in the society. In Laxmangarh, there is a typical schoolteacher called, "big Paan-and spit Man,"(Adiga 2009:29) goes to sleep by noon, and drinks toddy in the school. Supply of free food to the school was stopped for which the teacher gives legitimate excuse: "He hadn't been paid his salary in six months "(33). Truck full of uniform the government had send to school is not issued to the children, "But a week later they turned up for sale in the neighboring village" (33). The whole education system is governed by the "crowd of thugs and idiots", which Adiga calls 'Jungle' (35).

The unsympathetic attitude of the village teachers is an apparent truth that one can witness in almost all the villages in India. On the other hand, India is shown as an emerging entrepreneurial power in the world. Advancement in the field of science and technology, space research, transportation, hotel, tourism, real-estate and expansion of industries and outsourcing companies characterize the image of India but all these developmental activities depend on underclass with distinct identity. Thousands of people live on the sides of the road in Delhi. They have come from the Darkness too- you can tell their bodies, multi faces, by the animal like by the like way they line under the huge bridges and over passes, making fires and washing and the cars roar past them. These homeless people never wait for a red-light. "These poor bastards had come from the darkness to Delhi to find same light-but they were still in the darkness" (Adiga 2009:138).

To live under some concrete bridge, begging for their food and without a hope for the future. That's not much better than being dead (Adiga 2009:314).

But Delhi is a city where civilization can appear and disappear within five minutes. On either side of us right now there was just wilderness and rubbish (Adiga 2009:281)

The plight of the poor people in Delhi has been portrayed realistically in this work. Ever widening gap between the rich and the poor, rural and urban; and the brutal reality of an economic system that allows a small majority; political culture of India, voting behavior, social milieu, caste, cultural conflict, superstitions, social taboos, exploitation of underclass, Zamindari practice, emergency of nationalism, unemployment problem in rural India, master-servant relationship, nexus among the politicians, criminals and the police, mockery of education system, hollowness of Government welfare schemes, poor medical service, harmful impact of scientific, technological and industrial development constitute the darker phenomena of independent India in the novel.

Adiga's exposure of the dark areas of India can be taken positively the areas which require a good deal of attention. In this respect, Adiga could rightly be compared to Charles Dickens. If Dickens' realism brought a revolution in the contemporary England, Adiga's realism merely attempts to transform the complex individual's psyche in India. Political system and bureaucratic set up, according to the novel refer to the darkest areas of our country which breed, "Rottenness and corruption" (Adiga 2009:50) in our society and hamper all progress and welfare schemes. It restricts half of this country from achieving its potential. Most of the politicians are Half-baked. "That's the whole tragedy of this country" (Adiga 2009:10). The story of Balram's emergency is the story of how a half-baked fellow is produced.

Politics is the last refuge for scoundrels. Government doctors, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, industrialists all have to befriend a minister and his side kicks to full fill their vested interests. Mukesh and Ashok also bribe the minister to settle income tax accounts. Election, though the field proud off glorious democracy of ours, are manipulated; power transfers from one hand to another but the common man's fate remains unchanged. Adiga considers, these are three main diseases of this, sir: typhoid, cholera and election fever. This last one is the worst; (Adiga 2009:98). Voters discuss the election helplessly as "Eunuchs discussing the Kama sutra" (98) is a vehement attack on the current democratic demoralization. Money-bags, muscle power, strategic alignment of various factions and power to woo the underclass assure the victory in the political game. Balram reports: I am India's most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth (Adiga 2009:102).

Adiga observes that we are lagging behind China because of "This fucked up system called parliamentary democracy. Otherwise, we'd be just like China (Adiga 2009:156). This rotten system has created new distinctions and classes. In the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India now just two castes:

Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies.

And only two destinies: eat-or get eaten up (Adiga 2009:64).

Poor health services and non-implementation of government policies expose the malpractices which collectively enhance the miseries of the poor. In Laxmangarh there

were three different foundation stones for hospitals, laid by three different politicians before three different elections. Balram's father died due to the lack of hospitals and absence of pharmacy. Medical service is shown as an object of political mockery and social stigma. The great socialist inaugurated Lohia Universal Free Hospital in view of election result. There is no doctor in the hospital, doctor occasionally calls on the hospital; even the rooms are not safe, Balram reports:

"Cat has tasted blood. A couple of Muslim men had spread a news paper on the ground and sitting on it. One of them had an open wound on his leg. He invited us to sit with him and his friend. Kishan and I lowered father onto the news paper sheets. We waited there....the Muslim men kept adding newspapers the ground, and the line of diseased eyes, raw wounds, and delirious mouths kept growing" (Adiga 2009:48-49).

The post of doctor is auctioned because there is considerable money derived out of the public service and doctor's bribe touching the feet of the great Socialist-the employer. Subsequently, "you can keep the rest of your government salary and go work in some private hospital for the rest of the week. Forget the village. Because according to this ledger you've been there. You've *treated* my wounded leg. You've *healed* that girl's jaundice" (Adiga 2009:50).

Balram does not consider any other reality of the history than the war and conflict between the rich and the poor. The theory of Dialectical materialism opposes philosophical idealism as well as the theological concepts of religion. Philosophical idealism and religious theology believe that ideas are the ultimate reality and in imagining that the development of the world, as they put it, takes place apart from matter, or took place at least in the beginning apart from matter, and is the result of the action of spirit, God, or divine forces. Balram does not show any respect for non-material things such as religion, values, beliefs and morals. He satirizes the Hindu religious rituals and practices from the beginning to the end of the narrative. The satirical tone of post modern spirit is obvious in these lines from the novel: "See, the Muslims have one god. The Christians have three gods. And we Hindus have 36,000,000 gods. Making a grand total of 36,000,004 divine arises for me to choose from" (Adiga 2009:8).

This expresses Adiga's desperate zeal to reform the awkward condition of sanitation in the post colonial landscape of India. We don't have drinking water, sewage system, light facility, but we have democracy. Adiga's eyes dropped and dipped on the rivers and thus wet with their mystical ideal and unhygienic sight. India is well known for its Holy River, Ganges. Thousands of the tourists come every year to the Mystical city Banaras to witness to many rituals, which they consider exotic. It is popular belief of the majority of the community that taking a Dip in the scared river of Ganges washes the sins committed by an individual. The ancientness of Vedas, Holiness of Haridwar and the Mysteries of Banaras, the Curiosity of watching naked Sadhus in his description: "...Talking of mother Ganga, daughter of the Vedas, river of illumination, protector of as all, breaker of the chain of birth and rebirth. Everywhere this river flows, that area is the darkness... Hundreds of American tourists come each year to take Photographs of naked sadhus at Hardwar or Bannaras, " Adiga's said "people across the world visit Banaras to take a dip in the River Ganges to get rid of the cycle of birth and rebirth". His cautioned the Chinese P.M "not to take a dip in the sacred river as your mouth full of faces, straw, soggy parts of human bodies, buffalo carrion, and seven different kinds of industrial acids" (Adiga 2009:15). In this context, Adiga expresses the current shabby

environment of the Ganges. It is polluted by the people in many ways and Adiga expresses his deep insight on the real situation of the river with his profound sociological and ecological concern. Thus, the novel is also a real picture of ecological manifestation of India. “After three or four years in real estate I think I might sell everything, take the money, and start a school”“I mean – and head into new line. I’m thinking of real estate next. You see, I’m always a man who sees ‘tomorrow’ when others see ‘today’”(Adiga 2009:319).

Adiga presents another burning contemporary social issue that the real-estate business which has made a drastic economical change and negatively not an economical growth in the nation, which has produced thousands of Millionaires in the country. The realistic depiction in art of contemporary life as a means of social or political comment is present in the fiction. Secrets of success in modern globalised world had been summed up in the last section of the novel. Murders, exploitation, malpractices, opportunism, absconding of criminals, irresponsible police and judicial proceedings are all justified for successful living for the post modern men.

Conclusion

The realistic idea observed carefully in Adiga’s novel is that the modern world is known for its globalization; competitiveness and thus becomes tainted in its very nature. One who is ferocious like the protagonist, the white tiger will succeed and sustain in life, which could be the real scenario of contemporary life and the notion is observed in the words from Adiga, It is in the jungle law where might is right. Most of the Indians have now become practitioners of jungle law and persevere to preserve themselves as social animals. The secret success of some of the entrepreneurs has been unfolded here in this novel as open secret. Thus, with the above justifications, Adiga could be rightly placed among the writers on realism and his novel, *The White Tiger*, is undoubtedly a magnificent manifestation of realistic India in its twenty first century social spirit. Materialism swallows the mankind and the mankind, in turn, instead of spitting it, chews it well to be well digested. Adiga advocates the realism that this materialism has become an essential thing to survive in this tarnished world.

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