

An Exposition of the Real Darkness in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Abstract:

Aravind Adiga's novel, *The White Tiger* offers a picturesque presentation of the pitiable plight of the Indians. The author through the protagonist of the novel explains to the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao about the dark realities that encircled the poor in India and in general, Balram the protagonist in particular. He also narrates the yearning and the aspiration of the protagonist to overcome such hurdles in his context. The protagonist does not dwell in the horrible experience of his past life rather devices new avenues to overcome.

Key words: Darkness, Education, Master-Servant relationship

India has produced many literary giants who have contributed a lot to the growth of Indian literature. Aravind Adiga adds an additional feather to India's literary study through his prestigious novel *The White Tiger*, which won the Man Booker Prize in the year 2008. Having been born in India and having traveled across the world, he carries within him rich experience and he does not forget to explore the predicaments of the ordinary poor people in India. He also unfolds the contradiction in India, where the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. The novel *The White Tiger* gives a glimpse of the multifaceted problems that India is faced with today such as; religious hatred, caste system and pollution condition, landless working men and women etc. *The White Tiger* questions the false claims made by the hierarchy. It also doubts the ruling class for its erroneous propaganda of proclaiming India as 'Shining India' 'Incredible India' 'Rising India' the 'future super power' and 'the fastest growing country in the world'.

The protagonist Balram Halwai, who is inhabitant of the darkness, always sees the dream of living like a man. This was the dream, which his father had seen for his son. The novel describes about the journey he undertakes from darkness to light and from Laxmangarth to Delhi and finally to Bangalore. Balram is recognized as an untouchable, marginalized, dehumanized and oppressed person in this novel. However, when he is complimented for his intelligence by the inspector of school he considers himself as a white tiger, which for him represents supreme power. It serves as a first turning point in his life because it propelled him to rise above the subservient mindset, which was created by

colonization. This proves that decolonization mindset penetrated the grassroots and highlighted the need to move from darkness to light, and poverty to richness.

The author also narrates the unjust suffering of the bonded labourers especially the members of Balram's family under the four Landlords, who possess animal attributes and own almost everything and they make laborers' life miserable due to their heavy debts. The Landlords also shackled Balram's family through the repayment of heavy debts. In spite of all the difficulties Balram's father had nurtured a dream to educate his son. He wanted his son to climb up the ladder of life and become educated in the society. His dream was initially not fulfilled, as Balram was forced to quit the school and work at a tea stall. His work in the teashop indicates the continuation of slavery system in India.

Balram although he was left to work in a slavish condition yet a spark of a fire was igniting his heart and mind to propel himself in life. Education was one of the best means, which could help him to rise above. However, he was suspicious because educational institutions were not in good standard. *The White Tiger* while talking about the book titled *The depiction of real India in Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger* says that:

Education is the only tool that can empower suppressed people socially politically and economically. But the kind of education that has been given especially in the government schools that too in the rural area is very bad and useless. The schools are without basic amenities such as drinking water, toilets and proper learning materials etc. to mention the teachers have to be role models to the students and a good value to the students for their better future. Nobody is worried about this bad condition of school and education. The higher officials do not take any action because they get bribe. (Rajेश, p.114)

Adiga continues to bring out the dark realities, which are rampant in India. He tells through his protagonist Balram Halwai suggests the Chinese Premier not to take in the bath in the river Ganga because of the pollution. The river seems to be full of dead bodies, and it seems that the industrial as it's have been poured in the river knowingly. Adiga ironically deals Ganga calling as Mother Ganga, However at the next moment he declares that, "Everywhere this river flows, that area is the darkness" (WT, p. 15).

The author constantly condemns the corrupt politicians and ministers of India, who maintain their black money in Swiss bank accounts. The novelist calls the people of Europe as in nature, since the white people possess the black money of Indian politicians. Although the people of India are proud about their glories democracy, yet it is painful to know that their basic right of exercising the franchise has been bought by the rich. As a result, the ordinary people continue to live in perpetual suffering. The shocking reality of the Indian society is that the hardcore criminals and rich occupy the position and enjoy all the

privileges. In order to validate the above said argument the novelist further echoes his ideas in the following:

You see, as total of ninety three criminal cases – for murder, rape, grand larceny, gun-smuggling, pimping, and many other such minor offences-are pending against the Great Socialist and his masters at the present moment. Not easy to get convictions when the judges are judging in Darkness, yet three convictions have been delivered, and three of the ministers are currently in jail, but continue to be ministers. The Great Socialist himself is said to have embezzled one billion rupees from the Darkness, and transferred that money into a bank account in a small, beautiful country in Europe full of White people and black money. (*The White Tiger*, pp. 97-98)

Balram having been employed at a teashop came to know that the drivers earn more than him and therefore he opts for the driving profession which would fetch him a salary of Rs. 1700 per month. It is said that the fortune favors the brave. Similarly, Stork employed Balram who was bold to become a driver for his son Mr. Ashok, who has returned from America. His ambition to grow up in ladder of life becomes obvious when he moves to Delhi along with Mr. Ashok. As he becomes familiar with city way of life, he realizes that poor drivers in the city adopt and practice a number of ways and means to cheat and deceive their employers. They imitate their masters in speaking lies and stealing things. In order to get monetary gains Balram involves in corrupt activities. The immoral behavior of his master led him to get involved in consuming alcoholic drinks and in prostitution. However, Balram in the company of his clever master gets lessons on the practical way to survive in today's world. He confesses that his master Ashok was a corrupt man, and therefore he is indulged in activities such as debauchery, depravity, and wickedness.

The dark reality that unfolded in Balram's life moved beyond to the entire India where every poor citizen is affected. For instance, the poor have been victimized by malnutrition. There are more than 80% of the school going children who suffer from this problem. On the one hand, we have a large number of poor people, landless labourers, who cannot afford to buy healthy food. Adiga validates further in his novel that the unequal distribution of wealth have created gab between the rich and the poor and denigrated the poor people's lives. In his attempt to explain the reality of India's prosperity and poverty the author said,

I am talking of a place in India, at least a third of the country, a fertile place full of rice fields and wheat fields and ponds in the middle of those fields choked with lotuses and water lilies and water buffaloes wading through ponds and chewing on the lotuses and lilies. Those who live in this place call it the darkness "please understand your Excellency", that India is two countries in one: an India of light, and an India of darkness. (WT, p. 14)

The novelist has also captured the plights of the poor people who have migrated from village to city in order to fulfill their dreams becoming rich. Unfortunately, their hope turns out to be despair and their living condition is worsened day after day. It is ironic to see the contradiction prevailing between the haves and have not's is exposed by the writer. He brings out the reality of the poor finding their resting places on the side of the road while the rich find their resting places in big mansions. Thousands of people live on the side of road in Delhi (WT, p. 119).

Adiga culls out in his novel titled *The White Tiger* the reality of darkness that surrounds the people of India, especially the poor. He offers a vivid presentation of pathetic plight of the ruling rich people who subjugate the ordinary mass and how they systematically attempt to deprive the basic and the legal rights of the poor. He further enumerates how democracy has been put under threat where the safety and security of the ordinary citizens are in danger. Through the protagonist of the novel he narrates the problem of poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, lack of education, pollution and the right to vote etc. He condemns the danger of bad examples of rich and the ruling class, which had resulted in severe consequences leading the ordinary to choose immoral activities. He desires for the annihilation of all the dark forces in India by which every citizen's rights could be safeguarded and where everyone could live independently.

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