



Aravind Adiga's the White Tiger and The Democracy of India

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Abstract

U.S. president Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) defined democracy as: Government of the people, by the people, for the people. But in real sense in present scenario “of, by, for” these prepositions are lost. There are only people. The people for exploitation, for sucking so that they can satisfy their thirst. Democracy is the soul of Indian constitution and it has lost its soul. Aravind Adiga is a journalist and author and winner of the Man Booker Prize 2008 for his novel “The White Tiger”. Adiga’s novel is about rural India and urban India. Rural India is “India of darkness” and Urban India is “India of the light”. The White Tiger discusses the various evil systems like corruption, poverty, caste system, unemployment, educational system and misuse of welfare schemes. White Tiger is set in the darkness of real India the novel projects the “the haves and have not”.

Introduction

Here the novelist wants to convey a message that India is a democratic country. According to Indian constitution the essence of government is in people. It is the poison of casteism, communalism, discrimination on social, economic basis etc. which are the obstacles in the way of progress. The story revolves around Balram Halwai who lives in rural India. He is the son of a rickshaw puller. He is talented but did not have sufficient means to complete his education. He had to do petty jobs like working in hotels and mines. Balram visits various government and semi-government offices and officers with Ashok and Pinky Madam. He comes to know that legal and illegal practices are going on there. He realizes those rich people and not the elected representatives of the people that run the government. But in India it is said that majority of people rule over country. One day when Ashok was on his way to bribe a politician, Balram seizes the opportunity and murders him. He runs away with his cousin Dharam. He starts his own taxi company. Things finally become good for him when he changes his name to Ashok Sharma. He forms a taxi company known as The White Tiger Drivers. He suffered due to his lower caste as well. When he shifted to the modern commercial centre like Delhi, he found his caste less interfering. **He could save himself from dehumanizing effect of caste this village Laxmangarh is referred as the darkness in which the inhabitants are very poor.** Public and private offices are projected as the places where common man is exploited physically, mentally, economically, and psychologically.

Adiga shows the pathetic condition of Government hospitals. The government doctors take their postings in the rural areas so that they can serve in private hospitals. They maintain all false records of medicines and rural patients. Munna’s father dies in want of treatment in the government hospital, common man is cheated.

Police department refused to lodge any of their FIRs against the landlords. All laws and orders for poor people. If in case, complaint is registered, they are tortured to withdraw their cases against them. When a boy is killed by Munna's employee how case is manipulated by poice and transfer to the protagonist, by bribing the police. Now the police commissioner threatens the brother of the dead boy and tries to pressurize him to withdraw case. The police department has been given special focus where the employees are always lying in wait for a bribe:

“The assistant commissioner who sat in the station was a man whom I had lubricated often. He was the worst kind of man, who had nothing in his mind but taking money from everyone who came to his office. Scum”. (TWT 308)

He raises the finger against landlords, politician, and beaurocrates. He thinks that they are like leeches that suck the blood of a nation. They accumulate money by illegal ways and deposit it in foreign banks. There are so many cases of rape, murder, gun-smuggling and so on are pending against them even then they are in parliament and assembly. The votes are bought by the leader during election times such issues are the blots on the face of our democracy. The leader of the great socialist party has been projected as the boss of the depressed class. As the novelist writes:

“You see, a 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 ministers at the present movement. 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. (TWT 97-98)

Money is everything for contemporary men, this psyche produce a white tiger that has no friend and feelings. As the novelist declares:

“A White Tiger keeps no friends. It's too dangerous”. (TWT302)

Here Munna is the follower of his master, Ashok. So he wants to grab more and more money so that he would be able to live a royal life like his master. The politics, the media and the police agencies are always in the pockets of the rich. The protagonist is fully aware that the poor are always oppressed by the rich. As he laments his agony: **“How the rich always get the best things in their lives, and all that we get is their leftovers”. (TWT 233)** This statement indicates that the poor are exploited by the rich and are not given equal importance even in the twenty-first century. As the novelist writes:

“The country is full of people like him, I'll give you that. And we entrust our glorious parliamentary democracy'...to' characters like these. That's the whole tragedy of this country”. (TWT 10)

Ravish Kumar 2019 Ramon Magsaysay award winner comments on the people who rumours against nation, who are blots on democracy. He also condemns the fourth pillar of democracy (Journalism) and considers it the most dangerous thing for democracy as he says

“Fake news first falsified news and journalism and it is now turning the citizens fake. The robo-public is fake public. A fake public makes a fake republic, a fake consciousness, a fake democracy”. (The Free Voice 68)

All govt. and non-govt. offices are becomes a café house for rich person. All types o scia proises are only at the time of election and only in every parties election agenda only. In rural area like laxamangarh there is a lot of scarcities of water, electricity, Due to this, the Indian road to progress is blocked by the citizens of this great democratic country:

“And our nation, though it has no drinking water, electricity, sewage system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy, or punctuality”. (TWT 4)

Here Adiga indicates that the people of India are waiting for the dawn of their freedom from all of their exploitation. Now the poor have awakened:

“You stop being a slave. To hell with the Naxals and their guns shipped from China. If you taught every poor boy how to paint, that would be the end of the rich in India”. (TWT 275)

Departure of the British in 1947 marks the beginning of the new age for India, but freedom for the masses is still a far-fetched dream. They are still in the clutches of the rich and the politician because they dominate over them in many ways. The avaricious animals called men are looting the country. Due to this, our contemporary country has been divided into two classes - Big Bellies and Small Bellies. The rich have converted our country into one of jungle law. As the novelist remarks:

“The day the British left - the cage had been let open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law. Those that were the most ferocious, the hungriest, had eaten everyone else up, and grown big bellies...these days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies and Men with Small Bellies”. (TWT 64)

In *The White Tiger*, the peoples of Laxmangarh want to change their life. So they decide to move the city in order to earn money, food for their routine life. It can makes a very pathetic situation throughout the nation so even the common people tries to commits in crimes for enrich their economic disparity in the country Kiran Desai also points out the hard-hitting attack on the corrupt political system in India:

“Not one truthful politician in the whole country. Yes, our parliament is made of thieves, each one answerable to Prime Minister, who is the biggest thief of them all” (Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard, 20).

Because of poverty an innocent guy change into murderer and selfish. Due to the poverty he had no name until his teacher calls him as Balram Halwai. Before he calls Balram Halwai by his teacher, he simply called “Munna” which means a boy. In an ancient India, the people are into many castes but in two classes. They are low and high classes. In *The White Tiger* there are four landlords namely Buffalo, Stork, Wild Boar and Raven. They got their names from their peculiarities of hunger that they had seen in them. So Adiga calls them “Animals”. The Stork, who owned a river in the outside of village and also he collect money from the people those who crossed the river and to reach the village Laxmangarh the stork who has agricultural lands and orders the people to touch his dust feet for working as labors in his lands. Due to the poverty the people are agree to this pact and worked there like slaves. Prostitution also takes a great part in India. The women are forced into sexual slavery. There one can borrow the price amount of those women. The aristocratic peoples always need “golden haired women”. The person demands them in the basis of **“High class or low class and virgin or non-virgin”**.

Caste discrimination is also one of the social evils in India. Balram was born in Halwai family. The job of Halwai family is to make sweets. Balram’s father was a rickshaw puller. In *The White Tiger* when Balram works as a driver in Stork’s family, one of co-driver asked him that

“What caste you are? Stork also asks this same question “Balram, what caste is that, top or bottom”.

In India the people are not judged by their quality and talents. Nevertheless they judged by the caste. The marriage of Pinky and Ashok does not accepted by their parents and society due to the caste discrimination. *The White Tiger* is the symbol of individuality and freedom. It shows how a half-baked man becomes a successful entrepreneur by using his intellectual power. The same time *The White Tiger* means power. So Balram also identified as *The White*

Tiger. He does not want to be a slave anymore Instead of he wants to be a free man. The White Tiger sorts out the society is separated into two groups such as rich and poor, exploitation and exploited, colonizer and colonized, man with big belly and man with small belly and haves and have-nots. He supports voiceless people by his action and words. He decides to stand against oppression from the society as depicts his stand **“Let animals live like animals; Let human live like human; that’s my whole philosophy in one sentence”**.

References

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