

# Socio-critical Analysis of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger,* *Between the Assassination and Last Man in* *Tower*

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## Abstract

The present paper presents an analysis of Aravind Adiga's second book *Between the Assassinations*. The novels of Aravind Adiga, fall into two categories, namely social and autobiographical. The fiction depicts the journey of Indian society from aspirations to disillusionment by focusing on vital socio-cultural issues of national importance such as poverty, hunger, corruption, violence, fanaticism, terrorism, child-labour and so on. It also deals with economic, political and social exploitation and discrimination of the weaker, marginalized sections on the basis of caste, class, gender and religion. These issues are deep-rooted in our psyche and are highly resistant to change. Though class and religious pride, thrust into the dismal outskirts of society, Adiga's characters are victims of this system. Somehow they feel an immense connectivity to realities of passion for the subtleties in the world around them and they long for the dignity which they never attain. He focuses his attention on the sufferings, misery and dejection of the downtrodden, destitute and voiceless citizens, which arise out of the exploitations that exist in the Indian psyche and society. The present paper analyzes the ways in which the lives of India's marginalized sections are portrayed by Adiga in his fiction in a realistic and sympathetic manner. It also depicts the survival struggle of such poverty stricken, ostracized people who are hardly noticed but at the same time coexist with us in the same society.

In the recent decades, a new age of young, enthusiastic writers are rapidly growing in Indian literary horizons. With the writings in English language these authors are able to present their true and unconventional images of India, to readers beyond their national borders. One can easily notice a remarkable change in contemporary writings on English novels written by Indians. Writers like Adiga, have dealt with basic issues pertaining to creative and critical

activity in the Indian English situation. Issues like post-colonial, multi-culturalism, nativism, the social and political agendas of criticism etc are being treated with great importance. The Indian novelists face and depict the reality around them with greater dexterity and responsibility. As is well written, ‘The novel is essentially a social form; it explores the condition of human beings through the mental struggle and body language quite before they get into action. “Social issues directly or indirectly affect the members of society<sup>3</sup>”.

Aravind Adiga is one of the notable writers in the field of modern Indian English fiction. Aravind Adiga was born in Madras in 1974 and was raised partly, in Australia. He studied at Columbia and Oxford Universities. As former Correspondent for five Indian magazines, his articles have also appeared in publication in the Financial Times, The Independent and the Sunday Times. His works includes the following, *The White Tiger* (2008), *Between the Assassination* (2008) and *Last Man in Tower* (2011) 4-6.

Adiga’s fictions cover almost every aspect of social life. *The White Tiger* won the Man Booker Prize in 2008, which portrays ‘The Real India’ and it was Adiga’s aggressive rebuke on the cheerful and false notions of a new transformed India. The novel sets up a background of a darkly comical viewpoint of the modern day life in India. The main theme of the novel is based on the contrast between India’s rise as modern global economy and its middle-class working citizens who live in extremely pathetic conditions. Other themes discussed also include issues of bribery and corruption which are inherent to Indian society and politics, rivalry between India and other neighbouring countries, transformation in the education system, inequality and poverty, along with modern issues like suppression and violence on women, terrorism, gambling, etc. Aravind Adiga highlighted these current social taboos in his novel. In the modern epoch, psychological issues like quest for identity, loneliness, alienation, sense of non-belonging and existential crisis also form the themes of his various novels.

Adiga has made enormous contribution to the modern Indian fiction by offering various methods for portraying the complexities and issues of concerns in the modern Indian society. Rehabilitation is one of the most upcoming social issues in the modern era. The writings of Aravind Adiga revolve around the social life of simple and common men. The pathetic condition of underdogs is sensitively presented by Adiga and he discusses the factors that compel a common man to commit murders, rob people and force people to go in off-beam paths. He explores the authenticity of life and presents extensive views of the social life of common people. In these modern Indian English fiction, social affairs are analyzed by many novelists like Shashi Deshpande, Rabindranath Tagore, Aravind Adiga and others. They not only explore the

variance in the society but they further suggested that the proper treatment of such evils should be also taken up seriously.

The prime motives of his novels are to make people realize their misconception associated to the social evils. People give more significance to the social stigmas rather than solutions. Communal issues and problems are prominent but the right treatment for these kinds of issues is more important. Because the treatments of the social faux pas are not to be forgotten, to face and find solutions to these social issues is a herculean task. Awareness is the important remedy for such social issues. The novel's depiction of social realism has exceedingly closed time of linear history which is apparent in its larger perspective as well. Although the novel is set on the backdrop in which India and China are shown as new global leaders, it also presents the rearrangement of the world system as a new order that has yet to be realized, as far as Adiga is concerned.

Being a recipient of the prestigious Man Booker Prize, *The White Tiger* remained critical interest of research for the English Literature community<sup>7-10</sup>. The characters drawn from the various walks of life have been discussed in detail. Further comparison with other state-of-the-art literary characters of Arundhati Roy etc. has also been cited, which clearly depicts not only the popularity of the text but also the intrigue nature of the manuscript and its characters. *The White Tiger*, deals with the social structure and relationships, evolution of social changes and the various lacunas in it. He also condemns various evils which are deep-rooted in our society. The novel provides samples of various malpractices in Indian democracy and society at a large. The book provides a social criticism focusing on the poverty and misery of India and its religious, socio-political conflicts, presented through an intelligent blend of humor and irony. The paper attempts an in-depth analysis of the social and political interventions of the novel.

*The White Tiger* is the story of a man named Balram Halwai and his journey of varied human emotions ranging from regression to suppression. The writer focuses on a dark picture of India to bring out the truth behind the representation of the nation. Adiga's views on India are infested with servitude and wrath, where a man who is born in a poor family finds his opportunities of progress being limited and the conditions prevailing in the country are such that propel him to justify crimes like murder and thefts as legal, has been portrayed. Adiga raises various issues in this work and it is a fact beyond contradiction that India confronts by most of the issues put forward by him. But from his works one cannot deny his viewpoints about India, which increase the magnitude of the problems manifold, so that they seem to be dominant factors in Indian society.

Binod Mishra credibly draws similarity in characters through their article, Balram Halwai: “A re-creation of Mulk Raj Anand’s Bakha and Arundhati Roy’s Velutha”, Re-markings, Vol.9, Number 2, September 2010. This paper is an attempt to show that Adiga’s Balram Halwai in *The White Tiger* is a re-creation of Anand’s Bakha and Arundhati Roy’s Velutha. The paper unveils the roots of Malaise that germinated in Bakha, aggravated in Velutha re-created in Balram Halwai<sup>11</sup>. Similarly, Shrikant Singh in his article “Social Criticism in Adiga’s *The White Tiger*”, Re-markings, Volume 10, Number 1, March 2011 provides samples of gross malpractices in Indian democracy.

Adiga challenges Indian culture and customs to create a society in which individuals are truly free. The same has been projected in Rabindranath Tagore’s poem *Where the mind is without fear*. It is also argued that the relevance of Aravind’s novel is that it is the societal genesis and practices of hierarchy of keeping people in the lower class of Indian society. He also states that these affairs are counterproductive<sup>12</sup>. Although the novel is set within the contemporary time of India and China competing to establish themselves as new global leaders it presents the rearrangement of the world system as a new order that is yet to be realized. Amongst this race and competition to establish as global leaders, India also needs to relook into its home affairs to emancipate the quality of life of its iron people.

*The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassinations* (2008), both written by Aravind Adiga are about two different perspectives of India: India, before and after globalization. The story is set in a specific time frame in pre-liberalized, socialist India, between the Assassinations of Mrs. Indra Gandhi, the former Prime Minister of the country and her son Rajiv Gandhi. The series of such events took place around middle of eighties and beginning of nineties when the Indian mindset was undergoing a major change.

Adiga’s latest novel, *Last Man in Tower* (2011) focuses on the ongoing real estate issues in Mumbai, particularly on an epic struggle between changes of the past and the present. It has also been depicted that colonialism and imperialism are not at all obsolete even after their formal termination. Further, globalization has affected the social as well as cultural ethics. The novel also analyses how globalization as a form of neocolonialism in the post-colonial period influences the English literature in the ever-changing modern trends. In this latest novel, Adiga has presented Mumbai as a commercial and financial hub which has emerged as place of splendid opportunities. To have a well-built house constructed in Mumbai is a farfetched dream of middle class people because of the corrupt politicians and their intimate relations with the real-estate developers. The inhabitants of *Tower* represent the middle class psyche of Mumbai trying to share the rapid economic expansion, sudden fortune and amazingly glorious riches on

account of neo-globalization. The novel revolves around two forces: the retired school teacher who signifies a post-colonial resistance and the greedy real-estate developer who stands for neo-colonial paradigm.

*Between the Assassinations* is a collection of short stories set in Kittur, on India's south-west coast, which represents one of the hundreds of small Indian towns, out of which the skilled and educated move out whereas the despondent remains. Each of the stories circulates around an incidence of violence or corruption. Example, a street-side bookseller who is attacked for selling a pirated copy of the satanic verses, a disgruntled student who sets off a bomb in his chemistry class, a girl who is forced to beg to support her father's drug addiction, and so on. Through this mechanism, Adiga again draws attention to a series of wide known injustices – including “the disparities between the poor and the rich, communal disharmony, corruption, violence and hypocrisy”<sup>5</sup> and their impact on human relationships. *Between the Assassinations* is divided by days, ranging from “Day One” to “Day Seven”, with each distinguished by a landmark in the town and headed by a short blurb in the style of a tourist guidebook, addressed in the second person to a potential or imagined tourist.

Adiga's advice to the nation regarding preservation of the power of the youth is highly admirable. He articulates through his narration, penetrating and discerning analysis of what troubles Indian politics, society and the economy and advises what needs to be done to set it right. The characters and the situations of Aravind Adiga are extremely realistic, rather than being supernatural. Aravind Adiga has carved a niche for himself in the mind of readers worldwide with his unique Indian style of writing characterized by satirical description of his and, Indian social milieu, fluidity of language and melancholy vibes and no wonder he as a writer is definitely adored by critics and common popular alike.

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