



Research Paper

Arvind Adiga's Picture of Everyday life of India in his novel 'The White Tiger'

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Abstract: Through this novel the author wants to through some light on the life of the poor and downtrodden dwelling both in the cities and the remote corner of the Indian villages and through his naturalistic technique shows how they are crushed under the heels of the illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, exploitation and social injustice.

Keywords: monologue, penury, upliftment of the poor, self-taught entrepreneur, splendour of democracy.

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Today Arvind Adiga is the great name in the galaxy of the modern English fiction. His greatness is acknowledged throughout the English speaking world through his conspicuous recognition by the Booker's Prize which he received in 2008 for his premier work "The White Tiger". This was the masterpiece which created a great sensation in the domain of the whole Indian English fiction through its brutal freshness and brilliant exposure of the hidden ugliness of the present day democracy behind its claimed glory and glamour. As a social realist, Adiga pin points the exploitation and oppression of the poor by the rich moneyed class and capitalists pampering on their blood sucking in the metropolitan tours. With this shrewd insight he surveys the life of the poor and downtrodden dwelling both in the cities and the remote corner of the Indian villages of such backward states like Bihar and Bengal and through his naturalistic technique shows how they are crushed under the heels of the illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, exploitation and social injustice.

"The White Tiger" an explosive novel is developed through a plot containing a series of letters written by the protagonist, Balram Halwai an entrepreneur from Bangalore to Chinese premier Wen Jiabao who on a state visit to India. With the help of these images letters the novelist has tried to show the confession of the murderer which is infact a brutal satire on new India. In the world of Robbiegoh, Balram Halwai recounts with chilling frankness, his fall of poverty and crime, of a business yokel who turns into a savvy businessman through his ruthless ambition. He is blunt spokesman of Indian everyman.

The plot of "The White Tiger" has been divided into seven parts corresponding with seven nights the protagonist, Balram Halwai writes the Chinese premier (with third night missing and the fourth and the sixth night cleft into morning and night)

The novel begins with the monologue of the main character Balram Halwai who offers his help to the visiting Chinese Prime Minister, Mr Wen Jiabao. Balram describes the success of entrepreneur in Bangalore-the Mecca of information technology .He opines that his success in being the successful businessman of the Bangalore is the success story of the whole country. Balram is self-made or self-taught entrepreneur who declares himself to be fatare.

He thinks himself better than all those other educated maroons in ties and suits who take order all their lives. Balram Halwai, a dominative car driver, son of a rickshaw-puller had begun his journey from murdering his employer and fleeing with seven lakh rupees.

After this Balram starts to describe the story of his life. He comes from the poor village of Lakshmanpur in Bihar and wants to run away from the darkness which was prevailing in there. He recalls the cremation of his mother who died after leading a very miserable life. His father Vikram Halwai lived in utter wretchedness

In spite of this life of utter penury, he dared to do a dignified life. Though he himself led a hand to move of begging, instead he fought his fate with rickshaw pulling. The only desire or dream of Balram's father was to educate his son:

"My whole life, I was been treated like a donkey. All I want is that one son of mine – at least-one should live like man. "1

Balram, an intelligent student is named by the inspector of school as 'rare White Tiger'.

But before this rare white tiger could shine as a brilliant scholar at his school, the head to face the hard blown of fortune, He was taken out of school and put to work in a teashop to repay the debt taken for his sister's marriage. Being too much fed up of this vicious exploitation, he swears not to remain a slave, but he would like to live a comfortable, rich life of luxury. He in no time learns the skills of getting success in new India – the ability to break the law and to do anything to reach the top.

On the second night, in his letter he has confessed that he has murdered his master. He fears that his entire family would be killed by the relatives of his master. He becomes very emotional thinking about his master, Mr Ashok and his beautiful wife Pinky Madam.

Balram once again goes to his life story as after the death of his father, he works in the teashop in his village in Laxmangarh. He avoids to be a 'crushed human spider' like other teashop boys, by eaves dropping on customers who dream of being 'car drivers' for rich men. After much begging or borrowing he learns how to drive a car, means driving. Anyhow he becomes the driver of Mr Ashok, the son of Thakur Ramdev alias 'The Stork' Balram knows that master owns servants and centred and enslave them by terroring their families but is glad to get what so many eave for – food, shelter and uniform.

Thakur Ramdev and his elder son Mukesh alias Mongoose represent a deeply casteist communal bias and feudal culture while Mr Ashok American educated young son of Ramdev, brings home an Indo American wife, represents modern liberal ideas. He fancies India but is socked to see the way in which servants are treated. He is completely opposite to the Mongoose –Mukesh who sucks the blood of his servant Balram often gets excited listening to his master's talking about money. For fulfilling his ambition he is involved in a cut throat competition with the other servants in the house of his master – Ramdev. He ever remains to do something better than processing the smelly feet of his master's pampering their dogs or gazing longingly at the foreign liquor they drink.

Once get the chance to drive Mr Ashok to his ancestral village Laxmangarh he receives a hero's welcome as he is a driver of a rich man he is envied by all the suffocated by demands of his family, he decided never to return to the rich wretched family. He is the rebellious dark who hates the creator for creating an unfair world and praises the dark forces that always win.

On the fourth morning, Balram describes to the Chinese Premier the picture of Indian democracy, Indian leader believe that India will be able to beat China in progress and prosperity because of glorious democracy. On the other hand Fidel Castro who through the rich out of Cuba to empower the poor is admired by Balram. He thinks that instead of self-raising India should have worked to provide the common men their basic and fundamental needs to facilitate them to live their life with comfort and ease.

After describing the ugly reality of India the protagonist returns to his own story and explains how election are conducted in his village. False /fictions voters' list are proposed and the greedy things like liquor and free food are distributed by the agents of the candidate contesting the elections to coerce and cajole the voters. Even cash and jewellery is also supplied to better the prospects of the election.

Doing his job of driving in Dhanabad, he comes to realize that the same story of voting is repeated and the same underhand methods and means are supplied means and applied in the cities to win the elections. The politicians, the guest socialists, ask Balram's master to steal coals from government mines so that he could give donations to them for their electioneering when his master with his sons is humiliated by those so called socialist politicians, his master decides to go in the shelter politicians in Delhi for seeking their help in his illegal missing business. Mr Ashok and his wife Pinky shift to Delhi along with their Honda car and their driver Balram. Balram becomes very happy as he gets success in leaving the darkness of Bihar and enters Delhi the capital of the country, bustling with new life of hectic activities, full of light and new unspeakable glamour.

On the fourth night, Balram writes to the Chinese Premier about the luxurious life of Delhi. Here he comes across the extreme pathetic conditions of the poors and sees the corrupt master bribes the beaurocrates and politicians in the power to get the profitable contracts and grab the money from different schemes of the welfare meant for the upliftment of the poor. One day Balram drives his master Ashok and his elder brother Mongoose to the congress office at Rising Hill where they bribe minister to seek the blessing for illegal mining business.

As the lifestyle of Delhi is not as simple for a driver like Balram as it was at Laxmangarh. Therefore he gets some tips from the fellow drivers how to cheat money from the cruel masters and how to deal with the policemen. At Delhi Balram notices that the masters live in the ultra-modern skyscraper and drivers like his stay in uninhabitable doing every odd task and even minor lapse they are subject to great humiliation and insult seeing the brutalities of the cruel masters Balram decides not to remain slave so he started to plan for a better life. He wants to forget his past. Even he is timid, he refuses to spoil or debase himself like drivers, and therefore he starts dreaming big.

By chance the relation between Mr Ashok and Pinky Madam deteriorates. One day Pinky drinks too much and runs over the street but Balram is forced to plead guilty for this accident. He is terrified until he learns that his sacrifice is not needed as no one has seen the accident. The case makes him realise that his master is in no ways different from other master and would not hesitate to kill for his own interest.

Balram starts his story from where he had dropped on the fourth night when Mr Ashok comes to know that his wife is departing to America, he almost throws him down from his thirteenth floor apartment for driving the car to airport. Balram pleads for innocence and looks after his heartbroken master.

On the next i.e. sixth morning Balram writes of his own transformation as Ashoka's wife Pinky leaves him and goes to America, Ashoka starts mingling with the call girls and conserupulous politicians. A tremendous change comes to Balram as he sees debauchery to the rich .he goes wild and wreck less .his thought turns revengeful towards the rich. On the sixth night Balram tell the Chinese premiere how he had become a criminal. He starts grabbing money by cheating his landlord. He starts doing all bad things which are generally done by rich persons like his master as drinking expensive liquor, betting with foreign whore etc. . . To manage money for these extra vagent things, he begins to cheat his master. His big chance comes when he sees Mr Ashok's collecting loads of cash to bribe some politician. Now, he is totally tempted to murder his master, take money and step into a great future .he is fearful of the consequences. The fear of being caught and the aftermaths of it .he could jail and his might also be ruined due to his ill-fated action done by him. But a book of Urdu poetry helps Balram to resolve his dilemma and inspire courage in him. The following lines of the poet make him bold and resolute:

"You were looking for the key for years
But the door was always open."2

In this way he led to victory in his war against his master Ashok, therefore, he puts :

"...the history of the world is the history of ten thousand years war of brains between the rich and the poor ...the poor win a few battle...of course the rich have won the war for thousand yearsone day some wise men , out of compassion for the poor , left them signs and symbols in poems ..." 3

When Balram comes to know that his master is about to dismiss him, his determination to kill his master becomes strong. His accidental visit to a disty slum gives him the premonition that if he shrinks from his resolve, the horrible future of dogs life is awaiting for him. Besides this, other things related to Balram's life like wazning of his family, bright prospects at Bangalore visit of Delhi zoo makes him ready for this crime of killing his master and leaving Delhi, therefore he writes a final letter to his granny that he can never spend his life like a cage white tiger which was a languishing in a cage. On the D-Day, he meditates and prays for courage. After it he takes his master on his rounds of gathering money from banks and ATMs.on a deserted road, Balram request Ashok to get down and help him in lifting a tier stock in the mud. Ashok does so then Balram hits his head with the jagged glass bottle and selects his throat and runs away with cash and his little nephew Dharma to the railway station.

On the arrival of seventeenth night Balram happily writes about his great escape from Delhi. After killing his master Balram cleverly dodges the law and lands in Banglore.relising the outsourcing is a biggest business in Bangalore Balram decides to get a foothold in his business by running taxi service to call centre employee. For being a successful businessman and running his business uninterrupted he bribes the police. After some time Balram become the owner of a huge firm with fleet of SUVs and dozens of drivers. He assumes the new identity 'Ashok Sharma' 'north India's entrepreneur'. He becomes the master of the art of success in Bangalore- the future of India.

The very step which is taken by Balram is to take administration into confidence by greasing the palm of the officials.as he points out:

"I wasn't alone ...I had thousands on my side! You'll see my friends when you visit Bangalore –bat paunchy men swinging there canes.. Harassing vendors and shaking down for money. I'm talking of the people, of course." 4

The second approach of Balram is to be the biggest successful businessman. For this purpose he adopts purely practical approach for getting all ethics and morns of morality. He has before him the model of a boom of foreignness and native rulers who were plundering the country as they do not follow the rule of law. That is why; Balram is convincing that he is far better than the landlords of his village. He treats his drivers politely and does not think of either insulting them or exploiting them as he was insulted and exploited when he was a poor driver

Balram tells the Chinese premier that he is an enlighten slave who has got freedom and success in the 21st century India. He points out:

"...a few hundred thousand rupees of someone else's money, and a lot of hard work can make magic happen in this country. I'm worth fifteen times the sum I borrowed from Mr Ashok. See for yourself at my website. See my motto: 'We Drive Technology Forward.' In English! See the photos of my Fleet: twenty six shinning new Toyota qualises." 5

The Balram desires that his employees would learn how to be successful from his lifestyle. He describes himself as one who has wakened while other one is still sleeping. He claims to be one of the builders of the new India and ask: "Am I not part of all that changing in this country? Haven't I succeeded in struggle with every poor man here should be making..? true there was the matter of murder it has darkened my soul...but isn't it likely that everyone who counts in this world including a prime minister (including you, Mr Jiabao) has killed someone or the other on the way of the top ?.." 6

Balram thinks of plans to enter a profitable real estate business and that the education sector where he thinks to teach kids in English, not about Gandhi; but about real life :

"A school full of white tiger unleashed on Bangalore! We'd have this city at our knees, I tell you , I could become the boss of Bangalore." 7

Balram comes to conclusion that he is proud to be man of power. Though haunted by fear of punishment for his crime, he assaults:

"I will never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master's throat. I'll say it was worthwhile to know just for a day just for an hour just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant." 8

Telling about the sum total of his life experience Balram says that there are two castes in modern India –the rich and the poor. He describes the rural India which is absolutely devoid of health and hygiene, education and awareness, employment and a means to live a dignified life. Balram's village has no government hospital though the foundation stone were held by three politicians before three elections .The government hospital in the neighbourhood has no facilities and no post of superintendent is auctioned off. False records are made by the superintendent and doctors get paid without visiting to the hospital .Balram's father dies waiting for the doctor, splitting blood in the corridor. Illiteracy and unemployment plagues the youth who waste their time in empty dreams .Politician gets success in engineering class wars between Naxals and landlords resulting in untold misery to the villagers. Balram too speaks of the 'half-baked cities' full of 'half-baked man'. The glory of urbanisation is lost in polluted, crowded and unplanned cities and towns .It can be said that the traditional importance of the caste in free India has been changed by the class of Balram .In the words of Balram:

".... This country in its days of greatness...was like a zooeveryone in his place ,everyone happy ...on the 15th of august , 1947...the cages had been led open ;and the animals has attacked and ripped each other part ..Those that ere more ferocious ...has eaten everyone else up... that was all that counted now, the size of your belly... anyone with a belly could rise up ...in the old days there were one thousand castes in India .These days there just two caste: Men with Big Bellies and the Men with small Bellies .And only two destinies : eat or get eaten up." 9

The other imported field which has been described by the novelist is the actual practice of the democracy at the grass roots level. Balram points out that foreign leader who come to visit our country are told a lot about:

"The splendour of democracy in India- the awe inspiring spectacle of one billion people casting their votes to determine their own future. " 10

But the fact is that the reality is totally different .Balram's father who had seen twelve elections never votes for himself .what Balram thinks about the powerless can be understood by his following utterance:

"These are the main diseases of this country- typhoid, cholera and election fever. The last one is the worst: it makes the people talk and talk about the things they have to say in...like eunuchs discussing the Kamasutra, the voters discuss elections in laxamangarh." 11

Anybody who dares to question the gross malpractices is annihilated as Balram sums up: "I am India's most faithful voter, and I still have not seen inside of a voting booth." 12

Whether it is a story of town or cities the covert type relationship between the rich and the politicians is found. They cooperate to each other very much. Balram's master is part of a mining mafia in the coal rich town of Dhanabad. To top of this, the achievement of popularly elected chief minister of Bihar is listed as follow:

".... A total ninety three cases –for murder, rape, grand larceny , guns smuggling, pimping , any many such minor offenses are pending against the great socialist and his ministersnot easy to get conviction when the judges are judging in darkness yet ... three of the ministers are currently in jail , between continued to be ministers . The great socialist himself is said to be embezzled one billion rupees ...and transferred that money into a bank account in a small, beautiful country in Europe full of white people and black money." 13

As the story of Balram shifts from Bangalore and laxamangarh village to Delhi, the capital of India the novelist again focuses on economic divides. He national capital, Delhi is viewed very closely by Balram a rustic driver. Globalization and urbanisation Have arrived big time but this progress is cultivated by the hard labour and exploitation of the poor. The congested metropolitan city is full of many polluted black dog numerous starring people live on pavement on the other hand the rich have all the luxury of life like air conditioners and the other sophisticated modern amenities while the poor labouring in the various real estate project building sky kissing towers are homeless and shivering in street in freezing cold. Many innocent servants are jailed for the crime of their rich master and live a hand to mouth life with half naked and half fed ugly bodies

The protagonist of the novel is disgusted with these ugly uncouth living conditions of the poor, therefore he keenly desire to shake off his poverty and dreams to be rich which provokes him to commit the murder of his corrupt master who has amassed a huge wealth from different illegal sources and exploiting the honest labour of the poor.

Thus, in his novel 'The White Tiger' Arvind Adiga gives a very graphic, realistic minute analysis of the Indian society and working on the democracy in the present setup. His analysis leads to the conclusion that in today's India, there are only two castes in India: rich and poor and only one destiny-might is right. Adiga puts India of poverty against India of wealth. The protagonist Balram rages against the gross inequality and injustice in the so called democratic welfare state. He gets satisfaction in exposing India's hidden ugliness before foreign leader and shows utter nakedness that how millions starve, illiteracy is still rampant in 21st century of enlightenment, the huge gap between haves and have not; the lives of the slum dwellers and the lives of the glamouring and glittering lives of the capitalists enjoying all the power, pelf and luxuries of the lives, To quote the words of Arvind Adiga:

"I always had an idea for two related books on either side of the greatest divide in the Modern Indian History, which was 1991 when India opened up its socialist economy to the world. That created what is called "The New India", the India of rapid economy growth, disparities of wealth, which is India of 'The White Tiger'...it just seemed that the most interesting story ...was the story of the people who were invisible in Indian cinema and literature today, which is the servants and the poor who still make up the bulk of our country even after all these years of economic growth." 14

Arvind Adiga's analysis of Indian situation described by him is realistic and close to the truth because it is based on his actual life experience as he himself points out:

"Balram Halwai is a composite of various men I have met when travelling through India. I spend a lot of time loitering about train stations, bus stands, servant's quarters and slums and I listen and talk to the people around me. There is a kind of continuous murmur and growth beneath middle class life in India, and this noise never gets recorded, Balram is what you'd hear of one day the train and for set in your house start talking." 15

Thus, Adiga not only analyses everyday life of Indians but he also focuses on the politely of India due to shattering the grand narrative of Indian Democracy, he has emphasised on the elections of Laxamangarh. He shows how elections are conducted in our country. They are marked by rigging and bartering of votes, unholy deals between elite elites and politicians and bribing or coercion of voters. An ordinary, honesty man cannot contest in such type of elections. Only those who have lots of black money and muscle power can contest or win the elections, through his picture he underlines the rampant criminalization of politics and shows clearly that plutocracy dominates democracy.

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