



UNEMBELLISHED EXPOSURE OF CONTEMPORARY ISSUES OF MODERN INDIA THROUGH ARAVIND ADIGA'S SELECT NOVELS

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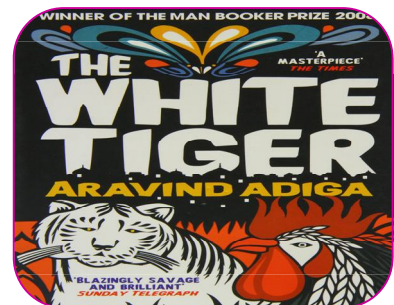
ABSTRACT

Aravind Adiga, one of the pioneering writers in modern India was born in India and had his education in three nations namely, Australia, America and England. His experience as a journalist added fuel in depicting the other side of the nation in his literary creations. Aravind Adiga's fictions cover almost every aspect of social life. Adiga is very sharp and deliberate in casting the absolute and stark realities that the new India witnesses. The pertinent issues prevalent in Modern India are well brought out by Adiga. Holding the pride and glory of winning the Man Booker prize for "The White Tiger" in 2008 which portrays India with all her complexities attributed due to globalization, Adiga's third work "Last Man in Tower" (2011) also brings to lime light the real estate scandals in Mumbai. The writer condemns and satirises the false notions that is conceived in the minds of many as a new transformed India. The main issue addressed by Adiga in both the novels is the contrast between India's economical growth and the real condition of middle and deprived people who live in juxtaposed conditions. This paper presents an unembellished exposure of contemporary issues like corruption, the weird politics, the poor medical treatments, the lust and greed for acquisition of money, the poverty experienced by the deprived, the loss of human values, caste and class unfairness etc., through Aravind Adiga's "The White Tiger" and "Last Man in Tower".

KEYWORDS: Contemporary issues, Globalization, Corruption, Politics, Human values.

INTRODUCTION

Aravind Adiga, a pioneering personality in modern English writings was born at Madras in 1974 and raised in Australia. He studied at Columbia and Oxford Universities. Aravind Adiga's fictions cover almost every aspect of social life. Taking the pride and glory of winning the Man Booker prize for "The White Tiger" in 2008 which portrays India with all her complexities attributed due to globalization, Adiga's third work "Last Man in Tower" (2011) also brings to lime light the real estate scandals in Mumbai. The writer discusses the real face of the nation amidst developments during the twenty first century. He condemns and satirises the false notions that is conceived in the minds of many as a new transformed India. The main issue addressed by Adiga in both the novels is the contrast between India's economical growth and the real condition of middle and deprived people who live in juxtaposed conditions. Aravind Adiga is an ardent observer of life around him. He is explicit in articulating the complexities of prevalent issues of India in his own way. Modern India progresses at a very faster rate bereft of values, ethics and culture. This paper is an attempt to bring out the contemporary issues like the impact of globalization, corruption, the weird politics, the poor medical treatments, the lust and greed for acquisition of money, the poverty experienced by the deprived, the loss



of human values, caste and class unfairness etc., through Aravind Adiga's "The White Tiger" and "Last Man in Tower".

'Globalization' has its origin from the word 'globalize' which indicates an advent of network of economic structures globally. Globalization can be defined as "a process in which more and more people become connected in more different ways across larger distances" (Lechner, 2009, 15). Globalization has brought many changes in almost every aspect of Indian life. It has induced an unprecedented level of growth in many nations specially in India, with great decline in poverty, blooming of many start-ups in the nation, accessibility of innovative latest technological advancements etc., It cannot also be denied that many challenges like sustainability in agriculture, inadequate attention in education and health, lack of access of resources to the have-nots, etc., have remain unaddressed. It has also led to the change in life, culture, and economy in a westernized fashion in India as one can find it common to see multinational companies and malls adorn Indian cities and western celebrations galore Indian people. Aply, Globalization has changed our current social conditions and contributed to the deteriorating of nationality and the creation of globality (Ritzer, 2009)

The drastic economic changes and policies brought about by the Globalization in India have created two countries: the India of Light and the India of Dark. The India of Light is represented by the sophisticated rich, while the majority lives in the India of Dark, amidst poverty, class discriminations and denial. The impact of such changes is well depicted in Aravind Adiga's novels.

"And our nation, though it has no drinking water, electricity, sewage system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy or punctuality, does have entrepreneurs. Thousands and thousands of them. Especially in the field of technology. And these entrepreneurs – we entrepreneurs – have set up all these outsourcing companies that virtually run America now" (Adiga, *The White Tiger*, 2&3). These words of Balram, the protagonist in *The White Tiger* clearly elucidate the establishment of many start ups as an offshoot of globalization, despite the lack of basic amenities to the people. "Life in Bangalore is good – rich food, beer, nightclubs..." (Adiga, *The White Tiger*, 10) depicts the westernized way of life led by the people of Bangalore impacting the cultures and values of the nation preserved for ages and ages. The entry of IT giants into India is yet another evidence that globalization has made India, an ideal destination for these companies like the American Express, Microsoft to have their offices which offered solace for Pinky Madam. "So, if Pinky Madam missed America, this was the best place to bring her" (Adiga, *The White Tiger*, 101)

Last Man in Tower brings the real condition of apartments and the urging necessity to have an apartment in the pucca locality of Mumbai. Shah, the builder in the novel is the alter ego of Balram in *The White Tiger*. He runs away from his village with nothing, but continues to survive in Mumbai indulging in all sorts of works to crave his livelihood and thereby, he becomes a notable builder. After completion of the high-rise apartments like Fountainhead and Excelsior, Shah wants to take up his dream project Confidence Shanghai in Vakola. This place is considered as the golden line of the city: a line that makes the people rich. Shah says: "Why is this line golden? Air travel is booming. More planes, more visitors....the financial centre at Bandra-Kurla is expanding by the hour. Then the government is starting redevelopment in Dharavi. Asia's biggest slum will become Asia's richest slum. This area is boiling with money. People arrive daily and have nowhere to live. Except...here. Vakola." (Adiga, *Last Man in Tower*, 54-55)

Vishram Society apartment buildings are the target for fulfilling Shah's dreams. The builder finds no problem in making the residents of Tower B, filled with young executives and IT professionals who readily accept his proposal. However, a few of the residents in Tower A refuses to agree for the redevelopment, but finally, they agree to the offers of Shah, while the lone Masterji remains to be the last man in the tower. Shah offers each family more than 1.50 crore rupees which is beyond their imagination in order to materialize his overzealous determination. This is the result that globalization has brought into the nation – money for anything and everything that you desire. The subject matter of this work is the huge developments that globalization has brought to India. Even the location of the building embodies the progression of India amidst the poor slums which ridicules the dream of Developed nation. Eventually, people prefer money than human values and relationships which is the ultimate result of globalization.

Adiga exposes corruption in India in each and every aspect of the government through his protagonist Balram in *The White Tiger*. Corruption is ubiquitous, providing Balram a belief that money could make anything possible anywhere. In their search and pursuit of money, people are unaffected by any personal relations and values. Balram finds that illegal matters could be transformed into legal by paying huge amount to the government officers. Corrupt contractors are offered contracts involving huge amounts of money. Power brokers run the governments in India. Balram became Ashok in the course of time. The fact that the politicians having open auction to fill the post of Government Medical Superintendent well explicates the corruption prevalent in the society. "Stories of rottenness and corruption are always the best stories" (Adiga, *The White Tiger*, 41).

The builder Dharmen Shah, in *Last Man in Tower* is a perfect example of how the big developers rose to higher levels in their lives. "If I had to kiss the politician's arse, I did it; If I had to give that one bags of money for his elections, so be it. I climbed. Like a lizard I went up walls that were not mine to go up" (Adiga, *Last Man in Tower*, 87).

The construction industry witnesses a huge corruption in itself. Shah who comes from a village background and nothing rises to an unprecedented level in his field through corruptive ways for self enhancement and money gaining. "Terrorism and corruption are linked. A corrupt system that fails to provide justice or to reduce poverty is one of the causes of terrorism. Terrorist in India are often middle class, but one of the things that gets them worked up" (*The White Tiger*).

Politics has a big role to play in the modern society. The current scenario of politics provides men to reach the pinnacle within a very short duration creating a bitter feel among the common men.

Balram evinces his interest in listening to a program on the great leader Castro, who threw the rich men out of his country and freed his people. He ridicules the Great socialists who shakes hands with the poor just for the sake of publicity and ninety three cases for murder, rape, gun running, are being pending against this great leader. Such politicians squander the money from the people in darkness and metamorphose it into small beautiful country in Europe. Balram tells the Chinese Prime minister about election: "These are the three main diseases of this country, sir: typhoid, cholera and election fever. This last one is the worst; it makes people talk and talk about things they have no say in" (*The White Tiger*). People tend to cast their votes on bribes that they never feel of sense of guilt or shame in their doings.

The condition of Government hospitals in India is bitterly disgusting. "There were three black goats sitting on the steps to the large, faded white building; the stench of goat feces wafted out from the open door. The glass in most of the windows was broken; a cat was staring out at us from one cracked window" (Adiga, *The White Tiger*, 40). It is very ironical that this Lohia Universal Free Hospital was proudly inaugurated by the Great Socialist, which stands as a Holy Proof that he keeps his promises. Adiga points out the bribery given to ward boys to utter a word for treatment. People are made to lie down on a newspaper. The doctors never attend the patients on time to save the lives of men in darkness.

Class and caste discrimination is yet another factor which discriminates people in the modern nation. Balram belongs to Halwai category which means "sweet maker". It becomes natural instinct for people that these sections of people are readily offered jobs at sweet shops. "The untouchable cleaned feces. Landlords were kind to their serfs" (Adiga, *The White Tiger*, 53). The author opines that in olden days they might have been thousand castes and destinies in India, while in the present days, there are only two castes – "Men with Big bellies and Men with Small Bellies" (Adiga, *The White Tiger*, 54) and two classes of men - "Indian Liquor men and English Liquor men" (Adiga, *The White Tiger*, 62).

The class discrimination reaches its zenith where the rich treat the dogs as humans and vice versa. The loyalty of the men in darkness transcends in a way that these men become victims of crime committed by their masters and must be ready to occupy the jail on their masters' behalf. Adiga believes that caste discrimination is more prevalent in villages rather in cities.

CONCLUSION

Adiga takes pride in depicting the real India of the twenty first century with all its vices and flaws. This paper has presented many contemporary issues prevalent in the day to day lives of people which are exposed in a stern and terrifying perspective by Aravind Adiga in his two works. Many writers tend to concentrate in a polished way that the ground reality of the nation remains unknown to many, while Adiga is otherwise in his ruthless exposure of the dark side of the nation, which rouses the readers into an awakening of its poor standards, thus espousing only self-examination.

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