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ARAVIND ADIGA'S "THE WHITE TIGER": A CONTENT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Aravind Adiga has contributed four internationally recognized works such as: *The White Tiger*, *Between the Assassinations*, *Last Man in Tower* and *Selection Day* which have dealt with different aspects of life, economy, society, politics and culture in India in the age of globalization. *The White Tiger* is indeed a compelling, angry and darkly humorous novel which anatomizes the fantastic cravings of the rich in India. The work has been rated as an excoriating piece of work by the scholars. It is a penetrating piece of social commentary. It is a missionary endeavor which pursues it with an undeviating determination and commitment. It has both social and political implications which really warrant the attention of the state, civil society, media, judiciary and other stakeholders of governance in India.

Preamble

Scholars have examined the regional, national and international literature and focused the attention on the intellectuals and researchers on the contributions of various literary personalities. Aravind Adiga's interest is not merely in the story but more in the context in which it is set. A significant feature of the narrative technique in the works of Aravind Adiga is his aversion to telling a story in isolation, as though entire unto itself, but wanting rather to justify it with a cogent foundation in a meaningful social, economic, political and cultural contexts. Adiga's works speak not of societies nor individuals or womankind but the various associations of their connectivity with the modern Indian society.

The White Tiger Content Centered Analysis

Aravind Adiga published his first novel *The White Tiger* in 2008 which won the Man Booker Prize for fiction. The novel explores with wit and insight into the realities of two Indias – light India and dark India. It makes the readers think about different aspects of life in India and presents both aspirations and frustrations experienced by the people. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in the novel are the product of the author's imagination. The novel has opened a Pandora's box, unleashing several aspects of Indian realism.

Adiga has stated with pride that China, Afghanistan and Abyssinia had not let themselves be ruled by foreigners. India was ruled by foreigners for about one thousand years because of lack of unity due to the caste system and conspiracy of the communal and casteist forces who played a notorious role in the imposition of slavery upon the indigenous people of India (Adiga, 2008:01).

Adiga has also lamented that India has thousands of half-baked people who were never allowed to complete schooling. 'Entrepreneurs are made from half-baked clay' (Adiga, 2008:02). 'Many Indian youngsters

are born and raised in darkness. The river Ganga smells like a decaying flesh. Nothing would get liberated here (Adiga, 2008:03). Adiga has portrayed the difference between the rich and poor people thus: "A rich man's body is like a premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank. The story of a poor man's life is written on his body, in a sharp pen (Adiga, 2008:04)." The painful experience of the father of a student finds space in the novel. It reads: "My whole life, I have been treated like a donkey. All I want is that one son of mine – at least one – should live like a man" (Adiga, 2008:05). The Indian villages do not look like a paradise in the absence of civic amenities, infrastructural facilities and livelihood opportunities for the poor people. The schools in the villages also look like the hell on the earth (Adiga, 2008:06).

"The Great Socialist's enemies would try and steal the election from us, the poor, and take the power away from us, the poor, and put those shackles back on our hands that he, the Great Socialist, had so lovingly taken of our hands" (Adiga, 2008:07). Adiga also wants the young Indians working in abroad to come back and build India into a super power (Adiga, 2008:08).

Adiga notes that in India religion and caste are the biggest impediments to livelihood opportunities and development of the country. India has not become a super power since the virtues and qualities of people are buried under the caste system by the vested interests (Adiga, 2008:09).

Adiga has presented the pathetic lives of the people who live on either side of the road in Delhi due to the negligence of the state. "The rich of Delhi, to survive the winter, keep electrical heaters, or gas heaters, or even burn logs of wood in their fireplaces. When the homeless, or servants like night watchman and drivers who are forced to spend time outside in winter, want to keep warm, they burn whatever they find on the ground" (Adiga, 2008:10).

The novel primarily deals with the agonies of a car driver in Delhi suffered at the behest of his master and wife. "I saw the silhouettes of the slum dwellers close to one another inside the tents; you could make out one family – a husband, a wife, a child – all huddled around a stove inside one tent, lit up by a golden lamp. The intimacy seemed so complete – so crushingly complete (Adiga, 2008:11).

The novel contains certain interesting details about the life of aristocrats and bureaucrats in Delhi.

Adiga also presents the frustration of rich people in modern society in the novel. "I let people exploit me, Balram. I've never done what I've wanted, my whole life. I am sick of hotels. I'm sick of the food I eat. I'm sick of the life I lead. We rich people, we've lost our way" (Adiga, 2008:12).

Adiga provides a realistic contrast between the light and dark India thus: "The Light and the Darkness both flow into Delhi. Gurgaon, where Mr.Ashok lived, is the bright, modern end of the city, and this place, Old Delhi, is the other end. Full of things that the modern world forgot all about rickshaws, old stone building and Muslims" (Adiga, 2008:13).

The novel provides the views of the author about the elections in India. "The elections show that the poor will not be ignored. The Darkness will not be silent. There is no water in our taps, and what do you people in Delhi give us? You give us mobile phones" (Adiga, 2008:14). The author poses a serious question to the stakeholders of governance and highlights their irresponsibility towards fulfilling the basic needs of the people even after seven decades of national independence in India.

"The south is full of Tamils. You know who the Tamils are? Negroes. We are the sons of the Aryans who came to India. We made them our slaves" (Adiga, 2008:15). Adiga expresses his full concern for the neglected South Indians who are the representatives of Dravidian culture and indigenous people of India.

"This is the kind of news they feed us on All India Radio, night after night: and tomorrow at dawn it'll be in the papers too. People just swallow this crap. Night after night, morning after morning. Amazing, isn't it?" (Adiga, 2008:16). The novel offers serious political criticism which speaks about the contemporary politics in India. "I am not a politician or a parliamentarian. Not one of those extraordinary men who can kill to move on, as if nothing had happened" (Adiga, 2008:17). Today India is ruled by a bunch of politicians who are self-centered, family oriented, caste oriented, power orient and profit oriented.

Adiga rightly cautions that India should never have a leader like Hitler who killed civil society, democracy, humanity and fraternity and found his place in the history of dustbin. "And God save everyone else" (Adiga, 2008:18). The novel also tells about the historical accomplishment of Buddha. "One day a cunning

Brahmin, trying to trick the Buddha, asked him, 'Master, do you consider yourself a man or a god? The Buddha smiled and said 'Neither. I am just one who has woken up while the rest of you are sleeping" (Adiga, 2008:19).

The novel ends with the incident of the servant Balram killing his master Ashok out of sheer anger and frustration against the exploitative tendency that prevails in the contemporary India. "I'll never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master's throat. I'll say it was all worthwhile to know, just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant" (Adiga, 2008:20). The novelist does not defend criminality as a means of solution to slavery and exploitation. But, he has emphasized the ultimate cost one has to pay for perpetuation of slavery and exploitation against the Constitution and law of nature.

This incisive, engrossing book attacks poverty and disparity without being sentimental or condescending, and for this reason it is a groundbreaking Indian novel. The lifestyles of domestic workers have only improved marginally in recent years but their working conditions remain unregulated (Rail, 2008:26). Adiga has emphatically underlined that the West is the judge and the jury of every facets of third world behavior.

The work, as a whole, presents the crude, dark and naked facts about India (Khan, 2009:23). The author strengthens the brash voice that echoed through his debate. The characters in these stories are paralyzed by their powerlessness. The work offers a purportedly long-awaited creative departure from Salman Rushdie's; on the other hand, that the characterization strategies followed by the novelist result in what critics have perceived as class ventriloquism (Mendes, 2010:25). The work portrays the darkness in the form of corruption, violence, dishonesty, unemployment and other evils.

The novel shows that the subaltern have no representative or spokesperson in the society they live in and so helplessly suffer and get marginal place or no place at all in the history and culture of which they are the essential part as human being. Adiga presents a contrast between India's rise as a global economy and the plight of the marginalized class of society living in devastating rural and urban poverty (Rana, 2011:28). The novel can easily be placed in the gamut of cultural studies since it shares most of the features of this school.

The novel represents one version of a subaltern righting the wrongs of underdevelopment and class inequality in postcolonial India (Khor, 2012:24). The novel also recognizes the problem of underdevelopment and proposes modernization as the solution even though it comes at a high cost. His assertion of the emergence of the new India as an economic power certainly lends a modern relevance to the novel.

The novel clearly displays the use of English as matter of esteem and utmost need of the hour through the vivacious narration by Balram (Singh, 2013:31). The quest for freedom made him to face the nastiest situation that involves murder, cheating, bribery and stealing is the major theme of the book. The novel is the narration of a journey of the protagonist Balram from rags to riches amid fierce class war, exploitation, amorality and expanding globalization.

Adiga tells the shocking, apparently amoral story of a young man who brutally murders his employer and gets away with it (Agrawal, 2014:21). The real, although subtle, conservatism of the novel lies elsewhere. It is evident that the modern society is inescapably in the grip of the menace of divide between the marginalized and the privileged, the mighty and the weak. The novel presents the ever-widening gap between the rich and poor, rural and urban, and the brutal reality of an economic system that allows a small minority to prosper at the expense of the silent majority. The novel presents the corruption and brutality of upper class people in India (Shraddha, 2015:30). The novel reflected the contemporary India which reveals a great divide between the haves and have nots with moral implications. The author provides certain ground realities which lead to introspection by the stakeholders of development in India.

The author has created a new consciousness among the people about the ill-effects of prosperity on the poor people in India (Fai, 2016:22). The issues of sectionalism, division, discrimination, selfishness, marginalization, and hegemony are examined by the novelist. The novel sheds light on the social, cultural, and economic impact of globalization on the people of India (Ravan, 2017:29). It has dealt with the main theme of the novel that is the contrast between India's rise as modern global economy and its working class people who live in crushing poverty.

In the novel, Adiga sees India as being messed with thralldom and swath. He has swelled the extent of the issues complex, all together that they seem, by all accounts, to be the prevailing considers Indian culture

(Rajest and Suresh, 2017:27, Solomon, 2018:32). The novel is a part of post-modernist literary work which has the traces of a particular ideology. It reveals the Marxist idiom and pleads for the creation of an egalitarian society in India.

Conclusion

Aravind Adiga occupies a prominent place in the Common Wealth English literature by virtue of his quest for social justice in the wake of economic prosperity. His works are regarded as master pieces set in contemporary times. He is a prominent advocate of the social justice and economic equity in Indian society under the changed circumstances. His writings reveal that social inequality and economic backwardness keep accelerating between the haves and have not's divide in Indian society leading to escalation of evils of all magnitudes. Adiga has provided powerful social and political perspectives in his works and raised critical questions for introspection and action on the part of the state, civil society, judiciary and media to empower the subaltern people from social and economic disparity. Adiga has made sincere efforts to show to the world the other side of India in the age of globalization. His works remain powerful subaltern portrayal of rapidly growing planet of the poor with ever increasing poor-rich divide.

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