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VICTIMISATION OF THE PROTAGONIST IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER*

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the victimisation of the protagonist, Balram through Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. The external situation which led him to be a victim is examined from different positions. *The White Tiger* portrays the reality of Indian society and Adiga exhibits the major issue of corruption in Indian society. He specifies about major problems in every corner of India faced by poor people. The treatment of the poor by the rich becomes responsible for criminal activity. Balram Halwai, the protagonist of the novel narrates his whole story how he emerges as a businessman from poverty through the letter to Jiabao, the Chinese premier and also he wishes to share about the new India to the Chinese premier.

Keywords: Vicitimisation, reality, society, rich, poor.

A Brief Review

According to Ramesh Babu and Deepa Caroline, "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 propriety. According to Rajesha H.K "Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* (TWT), a post- colonial novel, deals with the burning issues like religious, caste system, class struggle, loyalty, politics and corruption, poverty, current education system, pollution, condition of landless working class, and women in the post - colonial or independent India.

Victimisation of Balram

In this novel, corruption of the society begins from school environment. The government scheme provides every school boy rotis, yellow daal, or pickles at afternoon. But the school teacher steals students' lunch money. In this first incident, corruption is made by the school teacher at school level or child level. Adiga wants to state that corruption starts right from the school. Balram tells:

"The teacher had a legitimate excuse to steal the money- he said he hadn't paid his salary in six month. Once, a truck came in the school with uniforms that the government had sent for us; we never saw them, but a week later they turned up for sale in neighboring village"(TWT,33).

Corruption is everywhere in the society, one can see all over India. Balram loses his father by corrupted hospital. There are no proper rooms, medicine, staff, and doctors in the hospital. But, it is made by different people in different years. Balram differentiates two different century people, he says:

"In the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are two castes - Men with Big Bellies and men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat or get eaten up"(TWT,64).

The novel throws light on the victimisation of Balram. In the beginning of the novel, Balram is born and starts his life in darkness without the help of his parents. Susan Joshi has quoted that, "Being a victim of servitude for long he now wants to be a predator, one among the rich and embrace a new identity. He feels no pangs of conscience in exploiting the situation and acting in a coldblooded way to reach the top (39). Balram is victimised in many ways in his childhood. He has countless uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, and nephews but he was not an important person and unloved by his family members even no one wishes to give him a name. One day, the school inspector visits his school. He answers all the questions which were asked by the school inspector, who praised him as a 'White Tiger'. The school inspector says:

"You, young man, are an intelligent, honest, vivacious fellow in this crowd of thugs and idiots. In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals - the creature that comes along only once in a generation?" "The White Tiger" That is what you are, in this jungle"(TWT,35).

Victimisation in family

Even though Balram belongs to the poor class, he proves himself to be intelligent and honest. The school inspector calls him the rarest of the rare, "The White Tiger"(TWT,35). He gains a new identity. The division between the rich and the poor leads to impoverished lives. Balram also represents the backlash of the underdogs. His father, Vikram Halwai, a rickshaw - puller dies of tuberculosis on the floor of a government hospital. Before his death, he says "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" (TWT,30).

In India, it is not an easy thing to live without the help of parents. Balram loses his parents during his childhood. After the big loss in his life, he is taken care of by his brother, Kishan. He leaves the school because he has to work in a tea shop to repay the money he has got from The Stork for dowry for his cousin's wedding. So, he was forced to discontinue the school. Balram calls himself, "Half-baked", like many others in India. Poverty has changed human life even when they are children. They must sacrifice all their desires even in childhood for family issues. He lives in a joint family and his grandmother, Kusum controls the entire family. She attempts to use her power on Balram. Kusum is cunning because she made Balram to learn driving. Hence, Balram gets a driver job. Kusum conveys her message to Balram by Kishan:

"Pinch your neck and swear- you will send every rupee you make every month to granny"(TWT,56).A few month later, Kusum writes a letter again, but this time she conveys her need to Balram's cousin, Dharam. She asks money, directly and indirectly threatens him:

"A total of eleven months and two days, since you last sent us any money. The city has corrupted your soul and made you selfish, vain-glorious, and evil. You must send us money again. If you do not, we will tell your master"(TWT,262).

In the family and village, Balram was called 'Munna.' Everyone used to call him Munna which means boy. His first day in school, teacher asks his name for register. Finally, teacher decides to give name:

"Munna? That is not a real name" "It just means boy "

"Well, He passed his hand through his hair and said, We will call you... Ram.

wait - do not we have a Ram in this class? I do not want any confusion.

It will be Balram. You know who Balram was, do not you?

No, sir. He was the sidekick of the God Krishna”(TWT,13).

After he changed his name Munna to Balram, he becomes good and smartest student to his school teacher. When the school inspector visits Balram's class the teacher said

"Try Balram, sir, He is the smartest of the lot"(TWT,34).

The inspector gives a few tests to Balram like read and asking questions

"Who was the Lord Buddha?

"An enlightened man" "An enlightened God"(TWT,34).

The school inspector told that he would write letter to Panta for Balram's scholarship and Balram has to go to real school, real uniform, and real education.

Soon Balram's good news changed into bad news because he has been taken to the tea shop to repay the dowry bought from the Stork. When Balram was working in a tea shop, two of his classmates humiliate him. They say, "What is the creature that comes along only once in a generation?"(TWT,37).

Even though Balram gets good name from school teacher and school inspector, till the end of the novel he is humiliated by people who surround him. He comes to know about people who get good salary as truck drivers. He wants to get a driver's job, again people refuse him to offer the job. Kishan and cousin Dilip comes to find him, they said, "White Tiger! There you are! (TWT,55). After the bitter experience in the village of Laxmangrah, he moves to Delhi, he drives Ashok and Pinky Madam to different malls. There, other drivers called Balram as Country-Mouse."Country-Mouse! Get out of the car and come here!"(TWT,147). The drivers badly treat him. Even though his real identity is there in his mind, the drivers try to nullify his identity.

Victimisation by the rich

Most of the domestic servants are illiterate and they are unaware of their rights. The relationship is not easy to catch up with two unknown people. Particularly masters - servants' relationship is too hard to understand. It is difficult to get faith from masters. In India masters victimize their servants and it is not easy thing to get masters' attention because they see servants as slaves. Kaliyaperumal quotes that,

"Social discontent and violence has been on to rise. What Adiga highlights is the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor and the economic system that lets a small minority to prosper at the expense of the majority"(476). Especially a person comes to the city for the first time from the village the master could easily cheat because they do not know how to react to masters and how to speak properly. Workers from rural areas find it difficult to manage themselves to new environment, culture and language. Even the servant has to hide his identity to get job. Servants are the victims by class, discrimination, religion, caste, and culture.

Once Balram gets a driver job in the Stork house, his own masters victimize him many times. They differentiate Balram's class and label him as illiterate. Balram is a driver, but he has to work all kinds of work like cleaning the house, vessel, and bathing dogs. If they call for play game he has to play. This is not only for Balram, it is also for all servants in India. Pinky Madam mocks at Balram's bad English and his manner of scratching his crotch while working in the kitchen. Once Pinky madam calls Balram to play shuttle, he has never played this game ever before, so he is unable to give accompany to Pinky madam. Pinky madam humiliates Balram, she says, "Oh, you are useless" (TWT,77).In the society after getting a job, servants should not do their personal work. Even they do not go to their homes, which is nearby. Masters think servants are slaves for them, they should not do any work or should not go anywhere without informing. Society needs slaves not a servant because masters never consider servants' feeling and emotions. Balram forgets ways to home, because he is new to Delhi and it is hard to remember the exact place. He is in a confused state when Pinky scolds Ashok by saying, "I told you not to bring this yokel from the village"(TWT, 119). Mr. Ashok and Pinky madam use Balram for their entertainment, like, on Pinky Madam's birthday Ashok comes with maharaja costume, red turban, and dark cooling glass. Ashok asks him to dress up Balram with that costume and serves them their food and

sometimes they call him as maharaja for fun. But they never think he is also a human being. "She laughed and laughed and laughed when she saw me in my costume" (TWT,154).

According to AmlanjyotiPatra , "Adiga plays another trick, inducing his readers to get identifies with Mr. Ashok who maintains double standards and is sadly lacking in strength of mind that helps one make a choice. Adiga's intention is to criticize the middle class mentality" (166). In India, according to Press Trust India, people use more than 19,500 languages or dialects are spoken as mother tongue. Languages vary from place to place and their pronunciation also changes. Once Balram mispronounces the word pizza and mall, Mr. Ashok and Pinky madam criticise and make fun of him,

"It is not maal, it is mall, he said. 'Say it again'"(TWT,146)

"Two of them burst into giggles . Say it again, Balram They laughed again" (TWT,154)

During night, Pinky madam too becomes drunk and drives the car and hits someone whom she does not know. Suddenly Balram is asked to change the seat and he is brought by them into their house. The next day everyone is concerned about Balram and talks cunning words. He has to agree that an accident was caused by himself. They arranged everything for Pinky Madam to get out this issue. Aravind Adiga quotes through the words of The White Tiger:

" TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN,

I, BalramHalwai, son of VikramHalwai, of Laxmangarh village in the district of Gaya, do make the following statement of my own free will and intention:

That I drove the car that hit an unidentified person, or persons, or person and objects,

on the night of January 23rd this year. That I then panicked and refused to fulfill

my obligations to the injured party or parties by taking them to the nearest hospital emergency ward.

That there were no other occupants of the car at the time of the accident. That I was alone in the car, and alone responsible for all that happened.

I swear by almighty God that I make this statement under no duress and under

Instruction from no one" (TWT,167).

Balram's master is never kind to him. When massaging Mongoose foot, Balram just sees the warm water, it turns into totally dirty. Both Mongoose and Pinky Madam never care about Balram. When Balram sees Pinky madam "Pinky Madam watched; her face changed. She ran into her room and slammed the door"(TWT,180).

If the servant is too honest to master, they could not earn more or the servant cannot get what he expects. Balram talks to another driver, he said one of the guys in market sells all used magazines for sixty rupees. It was a bit big amount for that magazine, but only the rich people can buy that kind of stuff. He thinks why people are not giving more money instead of buying used magazines. Balram talks to himself "And yet they treat us like animals"(TWT,207). Adiga tells how poor people are trapped by class, culture, discrimination, caste, and society in their whole lifetime. The politician or landlords, rich people, or entrepreneurs use the poverty of their servants to light up their own darkness, but servants are the same at the rest of their lives. All over the country, poor class people are trapped in Rooster Coop and they try hard to come out the cage. Balram feels caged like the chicken and very few people are able to escape and start to live their own way. Balram Halwai is one of the people who escape from the trap. In the novel, The Rooster Coop is a metaphor used to describe the condition of the poor people. Rooster in the coop is killed one by one, it is unable to escape from coop. The rooster knows they are the next, but do not try to get out of the coop. Balram Halwai says:

"The greatest thing to come out of this country in the ten thousand years of its history is the Rooster Coop. The rooster, the coop smell the blood from above. They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they are next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with human beings in the country"(TWT,173).

The Rooster Coop symbolizes the weak people those who can do nothing to free themselves from their cage. Balram Halwai depicts how he gets into the rooster coop, when he signs that document what he had not done. This way the poor people get into the coop. He ever thinks to have been looked bound in his country like a white tiger in the zoo. Balram feels that he is trapped in the Rooster Coop. Balram Halwai wants to convey a message to those who are in a Coop. At the end, he gets out of the Rooster Coop and comes to light from darkness. He says, "I have made it! I have broken out of the Coop!"(TWT,320).

Victimisation in Delhi

The novel portrays the corruption and discord of Indian society. This society is changed by huge apartments and surfaces. Adiga's society is ruling the main part of every human's life because everyone is affected by the society. Some people become poor and some become rich. Poor people are victims of social imbalance in Delhi.

Throughout the novel, Balram is victimised by the society. But, at the end he overcomes those problems. He differentiates people in the society with their appearance. The first thing in society, people are judged by their appearances. People want soft skin and white colour. Otherwise people may think wrong about them. It is the nightmare of all poor class people that they have to eat and look like upper-class people. "A rich man's body is like a premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank. Ours are different"(TWT,26).

In India, wherever they go, they ask one thing in up and bottom of India - 'what caste you are?' It starts from when the birth of an infant until death. The upper people have contempt to servants, In India people ask the caste of others. The old driver asked, "What caste are you?"(TWT,56).

The Stork asked Balram directly, "Are you from a top caste or bottom caste, boy?"(TWT,64)

The poor people come from the 'Darkness to Delhi to find some light - but they were still in the darkness"(TWT,138). Balram squatted near the railway carriage and Mongoose says, "Balram, you are not in the Darkness any longer"(TWT,141).

When Balram moves from Laxmangarh to Delhi, he sees many small towns that have traffic of a big city and pollution. This transfer from Laxmangarh to Delhi is a surprise for Balram Halwai. After coming to Delhi, he starts to know how this place was corrupted through his own master. While driving in city, he saw many people living on roadsides. They do not have houses and own land, they do all the things on roadsides. In India everything is possible with money, no need to be panic and he thought everything can be fixed. He is pure and innocent when he was in village, later Delhi changes him. Balram says, "This is India, not America. There is always a way out here"(TWT,121).

Once Balram crosses the Gandhi statue in Delhi, few people followed Gandhi which seems lead us to light and people need them to lead to freedom, light, etc. But after they crossed that statue, they give a bribe to minister. Here Adiga portrays that even people do not like to change after seeing that statue:

"which you will no doubt see in Delhi: at the head is Mahatma Gandhi, with his walking stick, and behind him follow the people of India. being led from darkness to light. We are driving past Gandhi, After just having given a bribe to a minister"(TWT136).

After given a huge amount of bribe to some unknown, they humiliate Balram. They are not willing to give up one rupee, ask Balram to find that single coin. This is the way of upper class people's behaviour that humiliates Balram. They do not worry about huge amount of bribe, but they worry about one rupee coin. Ashok tries to help Balram but Mongoose, father of Ashok orders him and said that in India life is like that. He explains that situation to Mr. Premier finally what he has done for a rupee coin and says "I took a rupee coin out of my shirt pocket, dropped it on the floor of the car, picked it up, and gave it to the Mongoose"(TWT,139).

Balram goes to the mall, waiting out for his master's return meanwhile he meets many drivers like him, they started to talk what really masters need and try to corrupt him. Society did not let Balram live in light. People always teach bad thing to people. One of the drivers said to Balram, "He is raw from the village, still pure. Let city life corrupt him first" (TWT,147).

This society always corrupts first, it teaches that we cannot live pure. If one does same thing in life he can never come to light from darkness. First his purity has changed and he has bad intention on Pinky Madam's appearance, her high class perfumes, skirts and low-cut tops. Balram realizes that he is cheating his master. But he does not provide proper room and bed, at night he lays in mosquito net, he sees many cockroaches. Its flies over his head and he crushes them. Moreover, once servant enters the house, he has to do all work like washing vessels and massaging legs. Balram starts to steal money by cheating like a corrupt car mechanic, fuels and starts to use master's car for his personal while he is driving alone. He cheats his master, instead of guilt he feels "The more I stole from him, the more I realized how much he had stolen from me"(TWT,231).

Balram lives in the city of Delhi and earns more money. There are both good and bad things available to him. Balram and Vitoligo - Lips become friends, both come from same culture. Both people have some ambitions in their lives to earn and to drink. Balram Halwai says, "He was from the Darkness too - and you feel proud when you see one of your own kind showing some ambition in life"(TWT,232).

Through masters, servants watched and learned everything all good and bad things. If people live in very big and famous city like Delhi, servants admire the way of master's life. Sometimes they think servants want to live in the same way. Rich people's life style triggers poor people's desire. Balram gets permission from Mr. Ashok, he goes to the exact place that he heard from his master. Balram was driving those things lead them into deep darkness."This, Mr. Premier, is the famous 'red-light district' (as they say in English) of Delhi"(TWT,250). Balram goes to second hand book shop of Darya Ganj. He is acting like reading book until the shop owner shouts him and the shop owner comes to Balram asks him to read that little of the book, that book was Urdu poetry. He somehow copes with it, but it is a bit wrong. The shop owner calls him a liar. He also tells that he does not understand poetry. Balram wishes to read and understands poetry but the shopkeeper insults him. He is insulted by that shop owner, Balram says to shopkeeper:

"Please, Muslim Uncle, I begged. I am just a rickshaw puller's son from the darkness. Tell me all about poetry, who wrote that poem?"(TWT,253).

Balram Halwai tries to describe the real lives of the poor people who work for rich people. The poor people and their servants suffer so much in many places. Rich people want to complete their work. They do not think about those who work for them and how they suffer and rich people do not help poor people. In city people are treated worse than village. Simply they are not considered as human beings. Balram tells:

"These people were building homes for the rich, but they lived in tents covered with tarpaulin sheets, and partitioned into lanes by lines of sewage"(TWT,260).

Servants are always servants no matter how long they have been working for their masters. Masters always see them as servants because without master's permission servants should not do anything even in small things which they liked the most. Balram is taking Mr. Ashok and Ms. Uma to Lodi Gardens, music is playing in car that is romantic, and he likes to increase volume and thought Mr. Ashok like too instead he says,

"Balram, why the hell haven't you turned the music down? Sometimes these people from the Darkness are so stupid"(TWT,267).

Throughout the novel, Aravind Adiga deeply focuses on politics in direct and indirect manner. During election time parties are offering many things to people to get vote but in reality many things which are given in offers from parties, in fact, that is not necessary for people. The politician never thinks what basically people need. Balram says one of the party interviews by radio reporter:

"There is no water in our tap, and what do you people in Delhi give us? You give us mobile phones. Can you drink a phone when he is thirsty? Women walk for miles every morning to find a bucket of clean" (TWT,269).

CONCLUSION

Balam Halwai, the white tiger, servant, philosopher, entrepreneur and the murderer tells his story in the form of the series of letters written to the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao. Being a son of a rickshaw-puller, he is caught up in darkness. He is employed as a driver in Delhi. He has to live amidst the cockroaches, the slums, the shopping malls and the crippling traffic jam to learn about modern India. His shift to Delhi is a revelation for him. Balam is not successful to fulfill his dream of earning a lot of money successfully. Even though, he is faithful to his master, he fails to understand him. He also holds a mirror to the present shape of Indian society. Politicians misuse good and religion. Religion is used to subjugate the poor and women.

Adiga also showcases the corruption of the politicians and policemen. The post-independence Indian situation also brings out the decay of moral values. It had opened an era of dishonesty and hypocrisy. The psychological dilemmas of unprivileged underclass are beautifully portrayed by Adiga. It also shows the socio-political scenario of contemporary era. It brings out the value systems in India society.

Aravind Adiga portrays the Indian youth, Balam Halwai, who is caught up in the global wave. He interrogates contemporary reality of the average Indian as tangible. It also explores the resilient Indian psyche, learning all tricks in this world. It also depicts how the protagonist and the minor characters are victimisation in this society. The novel describes the materialistic lifestyle of the rich. The homeless servants suffer like anything. Materialism has blinded the souls of the rich people. It also depicts the corrupt culture and the social reality. The malls in metropolitan cities has made the division between the haves and have-nots.

Victimisation of Balam takes place in different phases. His grandmother, Kusum always expects money from him. Her love is conditional. She is willing to serve him good dishes. She sends letter through Dharam, asking only for money. She is very cunning and she victimizes Balam.

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