



CULTURE OF INDIA IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S 'THE WHITE TIGER'

Nilesh N. Sarjare, Assistant Professor (CHB), Department of Linguistics,
Foreign and Indian Languages, RTMNU, Nagpur, Maharashtra

Abstract

The whole story of *The White Tiger* is written in an epistolary form in which Balram writes to the Chinese Premier Mr. Wen Jiabao about his life and how he became one of the most successful entrepreneurs in Bangalore. Prashant Jadhav notes, "The identity is the prime concern in the novel through which the writer highlights most of the evils in the Indian societies" (36). Therefore the first ever description in the novel about Balram's early life is written thus: "He's half-baked.... That's the whole tragedy of this country" (Adiga 10). While introducing oneself one usually mentions the name first – the name with which he is identified. But for Balram, he didn't get even a name from his parents or grandparents: "I'd never been given a name" (Adiga 13), neither he had any idea of his age – "...when I was six or seven or eight years old..." (Adiga 15). His first social identification, his name Balram, he got from the teacher when registering his name in the school. So we find the picture of a poverty ridden India where the people do not bother even to name their children. However Balram had something different in his mind: "I was destined not to stay a slave" (Adiga 41). It was his father who inspired him to be a true man with his own esteem and true identity. His father used to say, "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 30). Balram had been a bright student in school. One day a school inspector came to visit the school and he was very impressed by the talent of Balram. He promised to arrange Balram a scholarship and from him Balram gets a new name, a new identity, "the white tiger". This name is very symbolic in this novel because Balram, unlike his father who had compared himself to donkey, in future will prove himself to be the rarest and fearless of all creatures – a white tiger in true sense. D. R. Paramita Roy comments upon this, "He kept his distinctiveness as the white tiger till the end of the novel, by being an individual with rare tenacity" (203).

Key Words: cultural, darkness, identity, individual, society, inequality, injustice, prism

Introduction

It is a well known fact that India is a fast developing country and in this economic pursuit it has to encounter a series of cultural encounters. Besides, in the process there is a large part of India that has been ignored and these ignorant people have been compelled towards a conflict with the richer section of the society. In fact, the encounters, between the 'have' and 'have not' unfold many questions in the minds of the knowledgeable readers of the novel in question. Cultural encounters hint at the cultural homogeneity of our society. Tradition, customs, conventions, rituals etc. have been exposed to modern day prism. Cultural encounters are always associated with identity. The novelist primarily presents cultural encounters between two societies: Urban and Rural by saying an India of Light and an India of Darkness. The novel under study also portrays Indian society that is changing owing to the influence of Western society. It also highlights the inability of the rural society that cannot keep pace with Indian urban society. The rural India finds itself neglected and deprived and this has prompted the central character of the novel to indulge in revolt causing various cultural conflicts.



Adiga's novel "The white Tiger" is replete with various cultural encounters within India and through this the novelist has presented inequality and injustice meted out to the poor and the oppressed by the richer section of the society. The principal character, Balram Halwi encounters a lot of cultural conflicts right from his childhood and this has caused immense change in his personality from psychological, social and economic point of view. The plotline of the novel has been designed so artistically that it can instantly attract the attention of the readers regarding social inequality and injustice heaped on the underprivileged vis-à-vis cultural diversity prevailing in our country. The author has lucidly portrayed both rural and urban society and its varied aspects. The settings of the novel rest on both rural and urban society. A number of Indian places have found mention here: Laxmangarh, Gaya, Bihar, Dhanbad, Gurgaoan, Delhi, Bangalore, etc. The issues like unemployment, poverty, corruption, rotten health and education system, caste system, cultural conflicts, dowry system, zamindari system, superstition, illiteracy, economic disparity, justice system, prostitution, daily wage earners, unorganized labour section of the society etc. are the prime issues that attract the novelist for discussion in the novel "The White Tiger".

A contrasting and striking scenario we could visualize once we compare and contrast urban society with that of rural society in India. In the novel "The White Tiger" Adiga mentions that in rural India there is no electricity, sewage system, pure drinking water facility, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy, good schools and colleges, public transportation, health and family welfare system; while in urban India we do have all the facilities like – good roads, huge palaces, towering buildings, shopping malls, restaurants and so on. Things have changed but not in rural India. Development is there but it has not been able to touch the larger section of the society living in darkness. The change has not taken place equally all over the country. The poor work for their masters but they have not paid their due. A handful of men in this country have ruled the remaining larger section of the society.

An impact of western culture is evident in Indian cities like Delhi and Bangalore. Balram is stunned to see the behavior and costume of Pinky madam and Mr. Ashok as he has witnessed such a situation for the first time in life. Though Balram does not endorse such behavior and costume, yet he keeps silent and observant. Balram hails from Laxmangarh and he is born and brought up in rural background where tradition, custom, convention and ritual matter most. Though Balram is shocked, yet he manages to cop up with the prevailing environment as he is exceptional and not like other oppressed people. Right from the childhood he has planned to come out of the rooster coop methodically hatched and nurtured by the richer section of the society against the poor. He has gone through acculturation. He is the white tiger among the thugs and idiots. He plans to outshine and outsmart the so called rich in the society. He believes that experience teaches men. He had to quit his schooling for lack of money. He works like a spider in the teashop for earning money. He could learn that the drivers are paid handsome amount and accordingly he becomes ambitious and eventually he becomes a servant cum driver of Mr. Ashok. Balram is the representative of all those inspirational rural Indians who have ambition to raise their economic status in the society but they cannot come out of the situation as they have been perpetually tied to the rooster coop by a certain section of the society.

However, Balram is a versatile figure. He is humble and submissive but he is also desperate and committed to outshine the so-called rich and smart people in the society. Eventually he does not hesitate to murder his master, Mr. Ashok and becomes a successful



entrepreneur. Here, we witness that Adiga has portrayed two types of India: an India of Light and an India of Darkness so that the readers find themselves under the cover of the confrontation of these two different Indian societies.

An India of Darkness refers to not so great India in this piece of writing. Economic prosperity frequently claimed is not based on facts. Millions of people of this country live below poverty line. They live in perpetual servitude. Balram Halwi, the central character of this novel represents the entire working class people. He is basically from Laxmangarh, Gaya, Bihar. In his journey of lifeline, he witnesses numerous social system, corrupt political system, cultural conflicts, religious biasness, rotten education and health system, unemployment, mall culture and so on. The author wants to hint at the situation which has been created for long in order to deprive a section of the society and this situation has been described as a great Rooster Coop. The poor and the oppressed have been trapped and tied down to the rooster coop. They never think of running away because they think that they belong to the great Indian family, they are the pride and glory of our nation, the repository of all our love and sacrifice. The desire to be a servant had been bred in them and they accept it as gift of God. In order to portray such a picture under his canvas of creation, Adiga states:

“Everyday millions walk up at dawn stand in dirty, crowded buses- get off at their masters’ posh houses and then clean the floors, wash the dishes, weed the gardens, feed their children, press their feet all for the pittance.” [Ref(1)-Pp-176]

No doubt, Balram is exceptional here. It is a fact that Balram is born and raised in a humble background. He belongs to an India of Darkness but he is determined and resolute from the very beginning to come out of the rooster coop. He is not like others who are not willing to break the shackle of slavery; rather he has been always planning to climb on the ladder of success in life. He even wants to outshine the so called rich people in the society and as a result he faces various cultural encounters in his journey towards the India of Light. People living in India of Light are rich, developed and smart. They enjoy all the modern amenities of life. Their culture has been influenced by the Western and European culture; whereas in India of Darkness people live in utter poverty and devoid of basic amenities. In this novel Delhi and Bangalore represent India of Light; on the other hand, Laxmangarh represents India of Darkness.

“The White Tiger” anatomises the fantastic cravings of the rich, it evokes too, with startling accuracy, the no less desperate struggles of the oppressed but in the process all the things like morality, ethics, relationship, trustworthiness, tradition, customs, conventions, etc. have totally been undermined. Almost all the characters have run after material progress, vanity and false name and fame. The richer section represented by Mr. Ashok, Mongoose, Pinky madam or the Stork (Thakur Ramdev) have indulged in corruption, debauchery, larceny, sexual pleasure and depravity. Morality and kindness have nothing to do with them. They have always shown false sympathy towards Balram. In return Balram has also turned into a civilized fellow full of debauchery, depravity and wickedness. Though he does not endorse the immoral things initially but later on he is enticed to do all the immoral and unethical things throughout his life. Even he forgets his family, his granny Kusum and stops sending money to them in Laxmangarh. The society and the environment to a large extent are instrumental in shaping his character besides his craze for outshining and outsmarting the so-called rich in the society.



He serves not only as a driver but also as a close aid and a servant. He also emulates them and their way of life.

In a meeting Adiga's comment about Indian legislative issues is as per the following: "The way that a great deal of Indians have almost no political opportunity, particularly in the north of India. That decisions are manipulated in huge pieces of the north Indian condition of Bihar, and they're likewise joined by brutality. There resembles thirtyfive killings during each political race. In the event that you were a helpless man you'd need to pick China over India any day on the grounds that your children have a superior possibility of being supported in case you're poor. Your better half is bound to endure labor. You're probably going to live more. There are endless manners by which India's framework bombs horrendously" This spellbinding work assaults unfairness, neediness and imbalance without being wistful.

Conclusion

The White Tiger conveys a clouded side of India's group battle through the portrayal of Balram Halwai, a town kid. Adiga says his novel endeavors to hear the voice of the men you meet in every single corner you travel through India - the voice of the discouraged. As per Adiga, the requirement for The White Tiger was to get the unheard voice of individuals from "the Darkness". India's monetary development is persistently expanding step by step. Yet, the circumstances of destitute individuals are only the equivalent. This is the principle topic of Aravind Adiga's epic The White Tiger which has won the Man Booker Prize in the year 2008. As per Adiga the majority of the needy individuals hail from Bihar, Bangladesh and Nepal. They land low paid positions like drivers, homegrown assistance, cook, development laborers, landscapers and as all day workers and continuously deal with all the requirements of their lords. Adiga's The White Tiger mostly accentuations on the challenges looked by destitute individuals who are living under extreme neediness condition. As Adiga clarified in The White Tiger, "These individuals were building homes for the rich, however they lived in tents covered Balram Halwai, a town kid. Adiga says his novel endeavors to hear the voice of the men you meet in every single corner you travel through India - the voice of the discouraged. As per Adiga, the requirement for The White Tiger was to get the unheard voice of individuals from "the Darkness". India's monetary development is constantly expanding step by step. Be that as it may, the circumstances of needy individuals are only the equivalent. This is the principle topic of Aravind Adiga's epic The White Tiger which has won the Man Booker Prize in the year 2008.

References

1. Adiga, Arvind. The White Tiger. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2018. Print.
2. Bhabha, Homi K. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis* 28.10 (1984): 125-133. JSTOR. Print.
3. Fearon, James D. "What is Identity (as we now use the word)." Unpublished Manuscript. Stanford University, Stanford, Calif (1999).
4. Jadhav, Prashant. "Arvind Adiga's The White Tiger: A Search for Identity." *New Man International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 1.4 (2014):36-41.
5. Kaharudin, Irawan, Fabiola D. Kurnia. "Postcolonialism as Spatial Politics in Arvind Adiga's The White Tiger." *Litera-Kultura* 3.1 (2015): 96-102. jurnalmahasiswa.unesa.ac.id. Web. 16 Aug. 2020.
6. Kumar, Sanjiv. "Bhabha's Notion of Mimicry and Ambivalence in V. S. Naipaul's A Bend in the River." *Researcher's World – Journal of Arts, Science and Commerce* 2.4



(2011): 118-122. Print.

7. Lacan, Jacques. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Alen Sheridan. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981. Print.
8. Mandyclark. "The White Tiger, Arvind Adiga." Web blog post. *Postcolonial Literature*. Mandyclark, 5 Dec. 2012. Web. 17 Aug. 2020.
9. Roy, D. R. Pratima. "Issues of Identity in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*."