

MATERIALISM IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S THE WHITE TIGER

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Abstract - Literature and Society are always connected with each other. Literature is echo of economic, cultural and political scene of society. Sometimes society is influenced by literature and sometimes society influences literature. Earlier Indian novels dealt with national social and domestic issues. With the globalisation there has been number of changes. Globalization has both negative and positive issues. In developing countries negative issues are more than positive as compared to developed nations. Materialism and Marxism are inter-connected with each other. Materialism believes in classless society, based on shift of means of production, distributions and exchange. Aravind Adiga's novel, "The White Tiger" highlights the effects of globalizations on human beings, particularly the ones who want to become rich. The novel traces the development of the protagonist from accidently named Munna to Ashok Sharma, a journey of innocent, poor village boy to the most corrupt man of money and power.

Keywords: Materialism, Globalization, Degradation

Aravind Adiga has carved his name in the galaxy of eminent modern Indian writers as a versatile writer by winning the coveted man Booker Prize for his debut novel, 'The White Tiger' (2008). He has also 'Between the Assassinations', a collection of short stories, and 'Last Man in Tower', a novel and number of articles, to his credit. Adiga's 'The White Tiger' is Balram's confession of his murdering the master. "The novel tells the story of a bitter and disenchanted chauffeur in Delhi who slits his employer's throat."¹ It is also an unflattering portrait of India as a society racked by corruption and servitude on the other. "This debut novel is an evocative piece of work, relentless in it's stripping away of the superficial appearance of a modern India to expose the core of it's rotting heart - corruption, injustice of the caste system, debauchery....."² As Aravind Adiga admits in one of the interviews 'he wants to expose the country's dark side.'³

The present paper is an honest attempt to highlights the aspects of materialism in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. The novel shows how the desire to become rich makes people corrupt and dehumanised through the physical, moral, existential and material transformation of Balram Halwai from poor, innocent to highly corrupt. In this novel Adiga reveals impacts of materialism on human being in the age of globalisation. He also shows that all the cultural forms depend on socio-economic situation prevailing in specific society. Major contemporary issue like law, administration and impact of materialism are boldly discussed by the novelist in the novel.

Balram Halwai, born in Laxmigarh, remote village in Bihar, somehow manages and comes to Delhi. He has to wander much, pleading here and there to get the job as a driver. Finally he gets a chance at Mr. Ashok as his chauffeur. The humiliating journey of Balram from his village to Delhi, his experience at Mr. Ashok Sharma's household and outside in Delhi makes Balram realize that money can't solve all the problems but can certainly help one to take the leap from darkness into light. Innocent and rustic Balram becomes totally changed person, a person filled with selfishness and greed. Balram, a self made man develops from nobody to somebody. He reveals realities of his life through letter to a Chinese primer Wen Jiabao who is about to visit India. In this letter he confesses his crime also. Balram confesses 'the story of my upbringing is the story of how a half-baked fellow is produced, Balram, turned into fat and potbellied from thin and small.'

Balram's father registers his name in school but from first day at the school there is transformation of Munna to Balram (name of Lord Krishna's Brothers). When he was in school he was fascinated with Vijay, a bus conductor. Vijay belong to lowest caste but he created Fortune for himself. Balram looks back "I wants to be like Vijay with a payee cheque, shiny whistle with a piercing sound and people looking at me with the eyes of that say "How important he looks." As Balram become older, he understands the way of the world. In order to get more money he kills his own master Mr Ashok and run away. A person afraid of lizard commits murder. He always blames to Delhi for his moral degradation. He thinks Delhi system is 'fucked up system.' The atmosphere of Delhi corrupts him. Balram criticize Hindu gods just to get material prosperity. He disrespects Hindu Gods because he thinks that without bribe God does not bless us. The suspicion toward God is clearly evident in the lines "don't you pray? What are you, Naxal? ("The white Tiger")

Mr. Ashok gives bribe to Indian politician to get exemption from taxes of coal mines, which is obviously the wealth of nation. When Balram sees such scenario, he become furious and is led to think about the story in murder weekly, titled 'rapes, murder and money'. Though born in poor family and lowest caste but he does not want to die as a poor. He struggles for his identity and material prosperity. He believes in Martin Luther King's point of view, so he will not be satisfied "until the justice role down like water and righteousness like a mighty system."

The Great Socialist party comes to power and it creates headache to Mr. Ashok because the great socialist party demands seven hundred thousand rupees from him to veil the tax case. Already whole city was corrupted. Balram becomes furious and decides to steal money of his master. He waits for an opportunity, as he describes "*I was looking for the key for year but the door was always open.*" After murder of his master he settles down in Banglore as a successful businessman with the stolen money. Balram was Machiavellian figure because throughout his life he was not satisfied who wants to go up in the ladder of society. Poor people remain poor because they can't see the beauty in the world according to Adiga. "The moment you realised what is beautiful in this world, you stop being slave."

Balram becomes totally corrupt who thinks everything and everyone is managed by bribe. "It's amazing the moment you show cash, everyone know your language." Balram believes that it is very difficult to come out of Rooster coop. "Go to Delhi and look at the way they keep chicken there in the market. Hundreds of pale hens and brightly coloured rooster, stuffed tightly into wire, mesh, cage. They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they are next, yet they cannot rebel they do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with human in this country.

Before killing Mr. Ashok, Balram tries to control his instinct. But at last he imagines himself as 'The White Tiger' who sheds his shell and come out of cocoon. In search of light for bright future he commits the crime of murder. And he becomes Macbeth who kills his own master, king Duncan to be king. Balram become entrepreneur who own cars and has drivers who work for him. He starts his business with fake name. When police inquire him about his business he adds pseudonym of 'The White Tiger.' He thinks that because of money Prime Minister of China also pays attention to his words. He considers murder as "Real Nightmare". But on the other hand he justifies his own crime because without murder he does not realise his being.

Balram wants to open English language school for downtrodden children. He wants to use money for noble cause like Raskolnikov. But he changes his plan as he knows that Indian government may not allow him to do something altruistic. Despite of moral degradation Balram becomes successful entrepreneur and succeeds in accumulating material prosperity. Journey of Balram is just like Cristian journey from "City of destructions" to the "celestial city" (John Bunyan's the pilgrim's progress). He also travels from mental depression to spiritual enlightenment.

As such Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* attracts the reader's attention to the evils of materialism and various social evils in the contemporary India. Adiga succeeds in pointing out that_it is Balram's realization of the place of money and power which pushes him ahead on the path of rebellion which ends

up with the murder of his master by him. They are eye-openers to law makers and administrators who have political will to deliver justice to the poor and marginalized, rooting out corruption in all forms. Balram brings the message that weak and partial administration may flare up in the form of violence and corruption.

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