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**(INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ONLINE OF SCIENCE)**

**ARVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER*: REPRESENTING INDIA****DR. SUDARSAN SAHOO****ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH****PARALA MAHARAJA ENGINEERING COLLEGE****SITALAPALLI, BERHMAPUR****ODISHA****INDIA****Abstract**

Aravind Adiga, an Indian born , Australian educated writer ,shot to fame with his very first work, 'The White Tiger', which went on to win the Man Booker Prize in 2008, defeating stiff competition from the likes of Salman Rushdie. It is an artistic story of a man named Balram Halwai and his journey from regression and suppression. The writer paints **two contrasting visions of India-Mirror of India and Bleak Description of India**. India, as a nation, has encountered the fair share of adversities, whether they be in the form of invasions, slavery or famines and so on. Each part of the history of India is unique. The writer has raised many pertinent issues of this glorious history of India. The consciousness of the nation has always found an effective medium to express itself through the writers of the age. Same is the case with the modern-day India in which Chetan Bhagat, Vikram Seth and Mulk Raj Anand have become the voice of the nation. The new age writers of India will probably find the task more difficult than their predecessors, primarily because India's diversity and divisions exist in its social, economic and cultural areas. India, one of the most diverse nations of the world, is almost incomprehensible. Its facets are just too many. That is why, Chetan Bhagwat has more or less focused on college students' life, mainly that of Engineering students in his novels. In a different manner, a far too dangerous endeavor is undertaken by Arvind Adiga voicing the voice of the poor, the downtrodden and the colossal underclass of the World's biggest democracy in his prolific work, *The White Tiger*.

**Key Words: Underclass, Bleak, Darkness, Rampant and Elites****An Epistolary Fiction**

Written in a series of seven letters over seven nights, addressed to the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, the writer paints a cynical, supercilious and romanticized picture of India where education system is defunct, elections are rigged , poverty is rampant and ubiquitous . The poor persons have to confront the appalling regression at the hands of the elites .The writer divides the nation in two distinct zones:

'India is two countries in one: an India of light and India of darkness. The ocean brings light to my country. But (Ganges) river brings darkness to India-the black river.' (14, *The White Tiger*)

India has entrepreneurs. In spite of difficulties faced by the Indians, the country has convincing picture in the world. The writer has a graphic presentation:

‘You Chinese are far ahead of us in every respect, except that you do not have entrepreneurs. 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.’(4, *The White Tiger*)

### Two contrasting Visions of India-Mirror of India versus Bleak Description of India

India, as a concept, has always intrigued the west. Many consider it to be the library of ancient knowledge as depicted in Robin Sharma’s *The Monk who sold his Ferrari*, while others consider it as floundering in poverty, hunger, naked bodies and hungry bodies. Some believe it to be the storehouse of knowledge while others can view Adiga’s ‘glistening lines of sewage’. With these contradictions, one thing is pretty certain- India will always continue to be an intricate puzzle for the west because it is probably none of these and even more possibly both of these. This, in fact, is a matter which needs its deep and detailed exposition. However, the question here is how realistic is Adiga’s representation of India.

### **I am Tomorrow**

In the very initial stage of the story, Balram Halwai declares: *I am tomorrow*(4)Here , the writer represents not just himself but Adiga’s ‘colossal underclass’. He is the rickshaw puller, coolie, beggar, worker, and each one in India who has a small belly. The writer propounds that it is a country with only two castes:

*Men with big bellies and men with small bellies (64, The White Tiger)*

### **A picture of Distinct Zones of Darkness and Light**

A glaring picture of in Adiga’s novel is that he has divided India into two distinct zones-Darkness and light. As the protagonist initially informs the Premier:

*I am light now, but I was born and raised in darkness.(14, The White Tiger)*

The writer has tried to draw a distinct line between darkness and light. When Balram is in Laxmangarh, he is residing in darkness, but he comes to light in Bangalore and Delhi. Everything is supposed to be perfect just like mini America, with its big hotels, cloud reaching buildings, call centers, malls, and high tech areas. *A small bit of America in India.* (204)But Adiga’s own description of city diminishes the thin line between the two. As he consciously begins to find out his self-identity, he stumbles upon a slum in Delhi and finds himself facing a line of men defecating, trying to construct a wall between darkness and light. He also witnesses thousands of people living on the side of roads in the city with their thin bodies and filthy faces, becoming problem for the drivers.

### **Co-existence of Darkness and Light**

We can witness the co-existence of 'Darkness' and 'Light' in Delhi, living harmoniously and moving step by step, hand in hand for the progress of the propagators of 'India Shining'. The division between the two classes is definitely not regional as reproduced but economic and may possibly social. Adiga's protagonist is the living example in this story of the fact that you can be in light and still be enduring the same condition as darkness. So, India probably the most diverse nation in the world just cannot be divided on the basis of economic disparity. The conception of division of India and have-nots on regional basis seems to be impractical.

### **Elites verses Poor**

Arvind Adiga's visualization of India's masses confines the boundaries of his work up to the elites and poor .He has completely ignored India's burgeoning middle class which does not find an iota of mention in it. Although it is the artistic liberty of the writer, whether he wishes to deal with other aspects of society or not, but if Adiga takes his novel to be a vivid representation of India, then the bridge between Darkness and Light filled with middle class cannot be avoided.

### **The Central Thrust of the Writer**

The central thrust of the writer while writing this masterpiece is to present the unbridled corruption and confront the society of servitude existing in our society. He seems to have succeeded remarkably through the exquisite and almost unique employment of animal imagery. Balram views the whole nation as a kind of zoo, in which everyone has his own boundaries and limitations. Eventually, these boundaries which kept our nation civilized. Our nation did not become independent but become a jungle.

The whole nation was not being ruled by leaders but the ferocious embodiments of corruption when Balram was himself nicknamed the whole tiger by an inspecting officer, who was impressed by his knowledge. The stock collected taxes (without any legal powers) from the fishermen and boaters. The wild Boar ruled (without any kingship) over agricultural lands, the buffalo owns (without buying) the rickshaws and raven charges (without right) the goatherds. And his master Ashok was tagged by him as the lamb only because he returned from America a humble and sensitive human. It must be acknowledged that Adiga remains true to the jungle law in his as ultimately the tiger (Balram) devours the lamb (Ashok).Indeed through the mouthpiece of Balram, he eloquently puts forth his philosophy:

'Let animals live like animals, let human live like humans. That's my whole philosophy in a sentence'. (237, *The white Tiger*)But this philosophy is rarely practiced in reality in this nation where animals are worshipped god-like. As we see how the dogs cuddle and puddle are leading a luxurious life while the simple villagers are being ruthlessly exploited.

### **Indian Education System-Another Jungle**

The writer has piercingly exposed the corrupt roots of India through the animal imagery. He has exposed the frailties of the Indian Education system which is defunct. It seems to be a jungle –another jungle, probably a smaller analogy to the nation. Our education system in the ‘Darkness’ is made up of schools where a teacher’s primary focus is not to teach but earn money through dishonest means. Balram’s teacher, a paan chew and throw man spits in the class room, drinks, and dozes off and sells uniform and food meant for the students in the market. The teacher has answers ready for all these kinds of illegal activities. He expresses in the voice of justice and legal rights:

‘The teacher had a legitimate excuse to steal the money. He said he had not been paid his salary in six months’. (33, *The White Tiger*)

### **Elections as Another Feature of Darkness**

Apart from the educational system, Arvind Adiga has viewed the elections in ‘Darkness’ with bigoted eyes as a disease inflicted upon the nation. It were elections that actually gave Balram his birth date, because his employer had sold off his vote to the great socialist. He was supposed to turn eighteen immaturely to be able practice adult franchise. The writer expresses:

‘Elections in the ‘Darkness’ have been prayed as a kind of nostalgia, a favor where everyone was discussing them but they only resembled eunuchs discussing Kamasutra.’ (98, *The White Tiger*)

The elections were a time to celebrate not the democracy but its elimination from the nation as we witness biryani (a traditional Indian food, rice cooked with meat or vegetables) being distributed in the front of the temple and free booze in abundance for all. Actually, a primary difference between ‘light’ and ‘Darkness’ is that in light, people are free, cast their own vote and in darkness, people are again free to cast their own vote, but not by themselves as Balram declares:

‘I am India’s most faithful voter and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth’. (102, *The White Tiger*)

### **Living in the Light but Taking Decisions in the Darkness**

A more severe division existing in India is not based on religious or social structure, but on economic lines. Men with small bellies are born to get ‘eaten up’ by those possessing big bellies. A rich man can easily get his own way by twisting the rules with his financial muscle power. The Stork has nothing to fear about his illegal mining activity, because he has the capacity to bribe the politicians living in light and taking decisions of darkness. In a similar way, when Balram had money power in Bangalore, he had an easy access to police, who in collaboration with him caught all the drivers of company who used to take call centers workers to their homes at night. He was able to set himself as an entrepreneur. Indian political system, judiciary,

police, administrative officers and political leaders have different standards for the elite and different ones for economically deprived.

### **Indian Marriage System: A Picture of Darkness**

Aravind Adiga has also depicted the social life of India. Even the social life of India has not escaped Adiga's sting. He has explicitly and truthfully portrayed how caste and religion can be immensely important factors in shaping the life an individual in 'Darkness'. When Balram was asked about his caste before being employed as a driver, he instantly knew it would bias the decisions of his master. He quickly responded by saying that he was a halwai by caste and was capable of making sweets and got the job. Similarly, he grasped the opportunity to go Delhi as the driver of Honda city by unearthing the fact that the other driver was a Muslim not a Hindu.

In the eyes of the writer, the institution of marriage is also ridiculed. This is the most critical aspect of the society, beautifully analyzed with imperfections. The meaning of marriage is the performance of celebration for Indians. It does not mean the unity, the bond and the blend of two souls. Marriage is a union which has transformed into a social stigma. The spiritual harmony of two souls has lost in present marital happenings. The conflicts, the crisis, the turbulence and violence are the elements of contemporary marriages. When Balram's cousin Reena got engaged, his family arranged a big weddings by their standards and also gave a huge dowry. For all these expenses, they had taken a loan from the Stork .The Stork owned them as his slaves due to the inability to pay it back. Balram have to leave school and labor for him. An able and talented student was deprived of his education and a whole family became slaves because of marriage. The gorgeous and luxurious celebrations of marriage have become the order of the day.

### **Conclusion**

The representation of India in speculation of the writer is true and faithful for Indians. He pleads for reformation and rectification. His dreams and visions of India are encouraging and prosperous. As a writer of high order and caliber, he presents the facts and figures of our motherland in an artistic manner. His artistic presentation is really a source of immense inspiration for the readers of the fiction.

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