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### Impacts of Globalization on morality and Ethics

Introduction:-

This Paper deals with two contemporary English novels from India, *The White Tiger* (2008) by Arvind Adiga and *One Night at the Call Center* (2005) by Chetan Bhagat. Both are the product of the post-liberalization era. Both the writers have witnessed the industrialization, internationalization, liberalization, privatization and globalization in India. It will be no wrong to say that their novels are the product of their experience and understanding of the changes that took place after the 1991's New Economic Policy.

India has great tradition of values, ethics and morality. These values, ethics and morality are deeply instituted in Indian cultures and religions. The great Indian religious texts like, the *Vedas and the Upanishads*, the *Bhagwad Geeta*, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the *Koran*, the *Dhammapada*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are treasures of humanistic values, morals, and ethics. But unfortunately, at the present time the greatness of Indian culture, and its value system, its morality and ethics are degenerating. There are many factors which are responsible for the degeneration of morals but, Globalization as post-modern phenomenon fired up the process of changing morality.

## Globalization and India

Globalization is multifaceted, multidimensional and complex phenomenon of the past and the present. In the last decades of twentieth century the term globalization became popular in the various fields of human knowledge including economic, social, political, culture, and in cultural and literary studies. Initially the term globalization was associated with economic changes, which refers to the international integration of the world economy and spread of free market exchanges of goods and capitals. “In popular discourse, Globalization is often related to the Internet revolution, the neo-liberal or free-market economies and the predominantly western political, economic and cultural style” (Questia, Globalization) David Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Patterton describe globalization as “the connection between different region of the world from cultural to criminal, the financial to environmental- and the ways in which they change and increase over time”. (Held, McGrew and Greenblatt)

However, the process of globalization in India started with the introduction of The New Economic Policy (1991) by Manmohansingh government. This economic and political change revolutionized the Indian life style and cultural aspects of the society. This brought change in the tradition, culture, morality, ethics, values and life styles as well. Soon after the introduction of New Economic policy India became the center of interest for multinational companies because of its large demography and population. With that begin the marketing of the culture, where the cultural products of the first world countries are marketed in third world country, thus began the homogenization of the traditional Indian culture.

Though, globalization has created economic boom in India, it has also changed the living standard of the people. India emerged as developing country with well transportation services, technological advancement, communication media, and call centers and malls in metropolis cities. Rather than globalization it is an *Americanization*, where American culture, work culture, food products (pizza, burger, Macdonald, coco cola), goods, and ideologies have been fostered and Indians are seen as consumers only. Thus, the traditional Indian culture- which is multi-culture in itself, its values, morality, traditions, and customs are looked down. With space of time they are begin to neglect by the new generation of India and this is great threat to local Indian culture.

Thus, globalization has its positive as well as negative aspects on Indian society, culture and life style. As an economic process globalization has boomed the country with economic development where multinational companies arrived in India and provided employment to

hundreds and thousands of poor people. However, this means “further job displacement in industrialized nations where top-quality jobs are retained, while low-pay work is shifted to poorer countries.” (Questia, Globalization)

Further, the globalization has brought together different cultures of the world. And, each and every culture has ethics and morality of their own, and they are contrary to each other in most of the cases. Technological advancement in communication system- radio, TV, Internet, Mobiles, satellites, played vital roles in exposing to the cultural values and morals of other culture. This exposure influences cultural values and sometimes traditional system of ethics and morality are challenged.

Thus, Globalization has not only changed the economic, political and the social structure of the society, but with the change in almost every aspect of life, the concept of morality has also been changed. Makrand Paranjape also shares the same views, he claims forces of capital “are not only penetrating even the most insulated aspects of culture, but creating new patterns of behavior, supplanting older value-systems with habits of thought and consumption.” (Paranjape)

Now, let's have a brief overview of morality,

‘The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy’ states the word ethics is commonly used interchangeably with ‘Morality’. (Audi, Ethics 284) But, etymologically the word Moral is derived from Greek word “Mos” which means character. On the other hand, Ethics is derived from Greek word “Ethikos” which means custom. (Wikipedia) Ethics is considered as moral philosophy.

Since, ‘Morality’ is used in two broad senses: a descriptive and a normative sense. Descriptive morality denotes certain behavior accepted and advocated by a group or society or received by a being for ones’ behavior. Normatively it means a code of conduct that would be put forward by all rational persons in particular condition. (Gert and Gert).

Further, morality can be divided into two types, the social and the individual morality. Robert Audi observes that “social moralities, different societies can have somewhat different moralities, although this difference has limits. Also, within each society, a person may have his own view about when it is justified to break one of the rules.” “Further Audi argues that morality includes both moral rules that no one should transgress and moral ideals that all are

encouraged to follow, but much of what one does will not be governed by morality.” (Audi, Morality 586)

Traditional morality or social morality is a set of norms and rules to be followed by members of the society. Traditional morality is deeply rooted in the religion and culture of a particular society. It is a set of norms to be followed by members of the society. Traditional morality is one in which there is a concept of morality and immorality. But since the morality is always at flux, traditional morality will be changed over a period of time. So, what was traditionally considered a morality can be immorality of the present time and what was immoral now may not be immoral at all in future.

Modern morality or the new morality, which is different from the traditional morality but not always opposite to the traditional one. New morality may be the result of cultural encounter, social and economic phenomenon. Modern morality is rather individual morality which later on may be accepted as social morality.

Traditional Indian social morality is deeply rooted in the religions and cultures, since India is multicultural and multi-religion country. So, it may happen that what is considered morality in one culture and religion it may not be considered morality in another. But, still there are some common moralities among them. Indian society gives importance to a set of values to be followed by a man in order to lead a happy life. Traditional Indian moralities are as below

Traditional Indian morality includes, respect for elders, love and obligation towards family, respect for family members and relatives, loyalty and faithfulness, performing duty with honest, sympathy and love for even animals, keeping our promises, and chastity of characters, etc. but somehow at the present time because of cultural influences from outside these moralities are degenerating. Habib noticed that after the independence many changes have been witnessed in Indian society, “some of these changes are for better, and these have overturned the traditional hierarchy and the old security of life.” (Habib 15-16)

The great Indian religious texts like, *the Vedas and the Upanishads, Bhagwad Geeta, the Guru Granth Sahib, The Koran, the Dhammapada, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata* are treasures of humanistic values, morals, and ethics. We have enough myths to convey the morality and ethics to people and we have *Upanishads* and Vedanta which still can lead people to live their life with morality. So, is the message of *Upnishada*, (AITAREYA BRAHMANA) Da, da, da' these letters signify that you must control, give and be kind. These three things are

to be learnt: Self-control, munificence and compassion. (BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD) Truth alone wins, and not untruth. (MUNDAKA UPANISHAD) Speak the truth. Practice *righteousness*. But unfortunately, at the present time the greatness of Indian culture, and its value system, its morality and ethics are degenerating.

Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, and Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ the Call Center*, presents the moral and ethical corruption in the various institutions of Indian society, like, family, marriage, business, idea of duty, virginity, and compassion for the fellow human being etc.

Arvind Adiga's '*The white Tiger*' in Sarita Veerangana's views "tells pathetic tale of two eras, one still clings to the old decaying moral values and another that is anxious to accept the fast changing new moral values." (veerangana 254-55) Adiga respectively calls them the India of Darkness which clings to the old morality and the India of Light which is eager to embrace the new morality.

Balram a protagonist of the novel considers all kinds of traditional morality, values and ethics as rooster coop and obstacles on his way to success in the postmodern era. Thus, to climb the ladder of success all these traditional morality, and ethics must be broken. The impact of economic development and lust for luxurious life has changed morality, ethics, family relations, idea of duty, and very conscience of the human being; who after committing crime do not feel guilty or anything.

In Indian school of philosophy, desire is considered as source of evil or more evil than good. Frustration an obvious evil has its source in desire; therefore, no desire, no frustration. The way to free life appears as perfectly desire-less state which, because completely freed frustration is called Ananda. Once Gautam Buddha declared "desire for what will not be attained ends in frustration; therefore, to avoid frustration, avoid desiring what will not be attained." (Panjvani 74)

As the saying goes, no one is born criminal but the circumstances and society force one to commit crime. The same case is with Balram, he was innocent village boy from Laxmangarh. Traditional morality is inherent in him but his re-education in the city and new morality learned by him radically transform him. Balram says "I was corrupted from sweet, innocent village fool into citified fellow full of debauchery, depravity, and wickedness." (Adiga 197)

But all these changes happened in Balram derived from his master; first the degradation of morality took place in America returned Mr. Ashok. Until that Balram was innocent and illiterate driver, he became aware about the global realities through Mr. Ashok and people around him. He argues that

“All these changes happened in me because they happened first in Mr. Ashok. He returned from America an innocent man, but life in Delhi corrupted him—and once the master of the Honda City becomes corrupted, how can the driver stay innocent?”

(Adiga 197)

Before Balram Ashok confesses "My way of living is all wrong, Balram. I know it, but I don't have the courage to change it." (Adiga 238) This is how globalization operates it compels one to live accordingly, in a way you cannot live and even you cannot leave.

The growth of Balram from a sweet innocent boy to tea shop servant, then to chauffeur of the Honda city car, and from driver to entrepreneur in the Bangalore is the record of his learning of new morality and degradation of traditional morality.

In Delhi he learns the lesson of new ways of living from people around him, like Ashok, Pinki, Mukesh, and his fellow drivers, especially (Viligo-Lips). His morality changes according to his interaction with the urbanity of the Delhi. He observed all the ways of the rich in city, their daily affairs, the corrupt practices of his masters, bribing ministers, and especially the way Ashok compels him to accept the responsibility of the accident which he never did. But the real degradation took place in Ashok when Pinki leaves him, Ashok start using the services of white skinned call girls, his extra marital affairs and sex with golden haired girls. Finally, Balram loses respect for Ashok for his debauchery, depravity, and wickedness. Following the steps of his masters Balram deteriorated from Edenic innocence to satanic corruption. These changes in morality transform Balram from an innocent, polite, and obedient illiterate man from a mild person to hardcore criminal. He neglects all sets of morality and ethics inherent in him.

### **Rooster Coops**

Balram considers all types of social and individual morality, values, and ethics as rooster coop to keep people in control and never allow them to be successful. It keeps one where one is. Rooster coops are ideologies of the society constructed by rich and powerful people. Society is a prison where one has to live according to power and not the way one wants.

Breaking the shackles of the morality is the only way to success, is Balram's message. The traditional virtue like, respect for family and obligation, servitude, honesty, dedication, hard work, and idea of duty, trustworthiness, all are rooster coops for him.

According to Balram, servitude is one of the rooster coops among India as it perpetuates servitude and never allows one to free oneself, he says

“A handful of men in this country have trained the remaining 99.9 percent—as strong, as talented, as intelligent in every way—to exist in perpetual servitude; a servitude so strong that you can put the key of his emancipation in a man's hands and he will throw it back at you with a curse.” (Adiga 175- 176)

Mocking at the Gandhian philosophy of duty and honesty Balram describes the tea shops at the bank of the river Ganga

“.... men, I say, but better to call them human spiders that go crawling in between and under the tables with rags in their hands, crushed humans in crushed uniforms, sluggish, unshaven, in their thirties or forties or fifties but still "boys." But that is your fate if you do your job well—with honesty, dedication, and sincerity, the way Gandhi would have done it, no doubt.” Being different from them he says “I did my job with near total dishonesty, lack of dedication, and insincerity”. (Adiga 51)

Next, he comes to family. Family is the backbone of any society. It is primary and most essential unit of the society. After the individual it is the family which together forms the society. In India family remains the most important institution of the society. The values and morals which are associated with family are, love and respect for the members, togetherness, devotion to family, to serve and save are the first and foremost duty, obligations and responsibility etc. but in the post liberal era of globalization it has been realized that traditional Indian families are breaking, the members are becoming more liberal, and economic constrain compelling to break away with the family. Families are turning into nuclear from joint family.

But, globalization advocates liberty and individuality. Globalization gives more importance to individual, where development and freedom of an individual became important, and traditional values and morals are looked over by the new generation. Balram manages to

free himself from the shackles his family wanted to impose over him. He is the representative of the new generation of the globalized India who put self against the family. Balram feels, Kishan's family obligations are eating him alive, different from his brother Balram decides his own fate and stop sending money to home back. He was aware that the expectations of family enforce limitations that can quash individual ambition. For him family is rooster coop and unless he breaks away he cannot achieve success. Thus, "in order to break free and live the life of a successful entrepreneur in Bangalore, a city representing a new India, Balram must sacrifice his family. This conundrum seems to suggest that in order to thrive in the modern world and embrace the potentials of a New India, this traditional attachment to the family must be relinquished in favor of a newfound emphasis on individualism." (Godina)

Even, there is contrast in opinion for family between the character of Ashok and Balram. For Balram family is a rooster coop, a burden, imposition and he has no love for his family. It is an obstacle on his way to success. This rooster coop can only be broken by men like Balram, he says

".... who is prepared to see his family destroyed—hunted, beaten, and burned alive by the masters—can break out of the coop. That would take no normal human being, but a freak, a pervert of nature." (Adiga 176)

Contrary to Balram's view, Ashok has regret for his decision against the wish of his family. When Pinki left him, he longs for family. When Mukesh comes to see him, he confesses:

"When I was in America, I thought family was a burden, I don't deny it. When you and Father tried to stop me from marrying Pinky because she wasn't a Hindu I was furious with you, I don't deny it. But without family, a man is nothing. Absolutely nothing. I had nothing but this driver in front of me for five nights. Now at last I have someone real by my side: you." (Adiga 188)

Then, Balram mocks at marriage. Marriage in India is a sacred bond between the two souls. Generally, bride is searched by the family members. A traditional Indian marriage is based on the consideration of religion, caste and the social status of the family. The qualities sought in a girl are virginity and good behavior. She should be able to fit in the customs and norms of the family. She must know cooking, and traditional occupation ascribed to women. But under the effect of globalization new generation of the middle and upper class are

becoming more liberal. Ashok returned from America is also undergoing transformation and becoming more liberal. Ashok has married Pinki madam knowing the fact that she is Christian, and against the wish of his family. A minister to whom Ashok went to give bribe worries over the increasing divorce in the society, he says “Marriage is good institution. Everything is coming apart in this country. Families marriages- everything” (Adiga 214)

Adiga highlights the trend of inclination of love marriages to arranged marriages among the globalized youth of India. Adiga also portrays the divorces are increasing. Even though Ashok was faithful to Pinki, she leaves him after the accident. Another trend among the new generation is to remain single, like Balram, for whom success and career are most important things in life. Both divorce and single life are harmful for the healthy development of the society. Then how far these both trends which are opposite to the traditional Indian morality, can lead to a better society?

Another novel, *One Night at the Call Center* also presents the issues related to morality. Here, the moral degradation is the results of the globalized life of youth. The globalization and technological advancement changed the way of living; it has not only affected the way of living life but also generated the idea that money is the only way to live a luxurious and comfortable life. These changes have taken place not only in quality of life but also in the social norms of society from traditional to global. Due to liberalization and globalization cultural values are changing. In fact, Globalization has affected our cultural and moral values in a severe manner and shall continue to do so, until our Indian culture does not transform into globalized one. As a result of this global culture is emerging. The effect of all these change is on the traditional morality and values, as result of it family relations, responsibility, and duty towards family are changed. Individuals become more liberal in their attitudes and in their family relations. For the young generation earn money and be successful is becoming the chief aim of their life. They believe in to be successful anyhow and at any cost, whether it as alter of family or by compromising morality and ethics.

*One Night @ the Call Center* presents a group of six characters from globalized India. These six characters can be divided into two groups those who represents traditional morality and those who represent global morality/new morality. Shyam, Varun, Priyanka and Esha represent the youth with new morality, whereas Military uncle and Radhika represents traditional morality.

Military uncle is an aged man living alone, because he didn't like the behavior of his daughter in-law- “she went for parties, got a job when I wanted her to stay at home.” (Bhagat

205). Thus, he fought with them and moved out. Radhika is a typical Indian housewife who after doing household things works in night shift at call center. Her in-laws are bit traditional and she tried her best to adjust with them. She loves her husband Anuj faithfully.

Shyam is a confused fellow loves Priyanka, but his too compromising attitude becomes the reason for break up. Vroom or Varun frustrated by divorce and fight between his parents. Shyam is ex-boyfriend of Priyanka but, her mother wants her to marry a well settled boy of her choice. But at the end she chose Shyam over NRI Ganesh against the wish of her mother. Esha is pretty girl who left her parents for modeling and came to Delhi from Chandigarh. To set a career in modeling she made compromise by sleeping with forty years old man, this dark truth resulted into guilt.

Thus, we see that the character with old morality accept the new way of living the life or global Morality. Military uncle before the god confesses “I was wrong. It is their life, and I have no right to judge them by my outdated values.” (Bhagat 205) Radhika on the other hand accept before God “I want to divorce Anuj....I have to accept that I made a wrong decision when I married Anuj.” (Bhagat 205)

Rejecting the materialistic life Vroom made decision before God that he wants to live a life with meaning and for that “even if it means a life without Bed or daily trips to Pizza-Hut.” (Bhagat 205) But, at the end he and Shyam and Vroom blackmail Bakshi to get startup money. This is not a fair way of becoming rich. That stat up money is blood money.

Priyanka rejects the family values for individual happiness she says “I want my mother to be happy. But I cannot kill myself for it. My mother needs to realize a family is a great support to have.... My focus should be on my own life and what I want” (Bhagat 205)

Contrasting to the wish of Priyanka, Esha realized her mistake and longs for family. She says “I want my parents to love me again.... I do not want to become the dumb model.” (Bhagat 205) Even she realized that any career that makes one to compromise on morals and values is not worthy.

We find dualism in the process of values and morals in *One Night @ the Call Center*. On one hand characters with modern/global morality embracing the traditional morality and on the other hand characters with traditional morality accept the new way of living and try to assimilate with the new global generation. The negative impact of the globalization is more visible in family relations, as individualism is given prime importance. Family is considered a

hurdle for success in postmodern era. All call center workers are alienated from their family by their late nights working hours and globalized outlook to life. They are freer in making choice in their life, love, sex and love marriage, and divorce becoming a common thing in metropolis.

#### Materialism vs spiritualism

One Night @ the Call Center represents a materialistic world where characters give more importance to material things than spiritualism. Whether it is job, love, things, or life partner characters chose them on terms of money. Vroom though presented as immune from the material world, chose call center job only because it pays more than the job in journalist. Esha to get break in modeling and success sleeps with forty years old man. Priyanka's mother on the other hand chooses NRI Ganesh because he is well set. Even Priyanka though loves Shyam prefers Ganesh over him because he is earning more than Shyam. Anuj married Radhika only because of her good salary and has affair with Payal. Bakshi for the personal welfare submits the website assignment prepared by Shyam and Vroom and doesn't care about thousands of call center workers. But whatever they do is some or other way compelled by globalization.

Chetan Bhagat presents the spiritual connotation by intervening a God's call at the very crucial time in the life of all six characters. God suggests the solution to their personal and professional problems and motivate them to lead a spiritual life over materialistic. God suggests four important things to be successful in life they are "One, a medium amount of intelligence, and two, a bit of imagination....self-confidence....failure." (Bhagat 207) Bhagat wants to give message to young generation that materialistic success should not be at the cost of our values, morality and spirituality.

In fact, Balram's or Shyam and Varun's act is amoral in the sense that it falls outside the domain of morality. They never had remorse or guilty of his act. Dr. Ketki Dutta in her article that "India is a global nation now, no respect for values can stop being avaricious over ambitious. If India still is run by its old sets of values, it is sure to lose the neck to neck competition in today's "go-getter" world. Hence, committing one or two cold-blooded murders is no such unforgivable sin these days." (Dutta 152)

But, opposite to her views, in 'What Young India Wants' Chetan Bhagat writes about success he writes "Becoming rich by unfair means is bad but you can also create wealth by hard work, innovation by creativity that should be celebrates that is my ethos and I think young India wants that kind of message." Adding in the same discussion he further writes "what is

important is to earn that living honestly, with integrity and excellence and without compromising the core values that build our society.” (Bhagat, *What Young India Wants* 15)

However, *One Night @ the Call Center* and *The White Tiger* both novels record positive as well as negative aspects of globalization. On one hand *The White Tiger* presents the violent and destructive role played by globalization over traditional Indian morality- turning a sweet innocent boy into a hardcore murderer. On the other hand, *One Night @ the Call Center* presents a constructive role played by globalization, but not without cost of social and moral values. In fact, this new morality is threat to Indian culture, its morality and ethics. Any society cannot sustain for long without morality and ethics. India’s cultural values, its morality and its ethics are the very essence of Indianness.

But we need to understand that this new morality is the product of capitalism in disguise of globalization. In fact, India do not need to cut off itself from the traditional morality and ethics to thrive in the globalized world. Because, globalization has its own morality and ethics which can create a world better place for living. The ethics of globalization like, interdependency, integration of the world for common purpose, development of civilization, global village, freedom, equal opportunity, sympathy for fellow human being, universal humanism and brotherhood, can obviously lead to a better human society.

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