

The Elements of Globalization in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Abstract

*Globalization is the process by which the whole world becomes a single market. It describes the way countries and people of the world interact and integrate. Arvind Adiga's first novel **The White Tiger**, is a modern Indian hero. The novel identifies and deflates middle class India's collective euphoria. It explains about the economic status and financial struggles through the character Balram Halwai in the novel. The novel studies the contrast between India's rise as a modern global economy and the main character comes from the rural power. Throughout the novel, Adiga comments about the first world influence on the third world countries. He has emphatically underlined that the West is the judge and the jury of every facets of third world behaviour. This paper focuses on the Elements of Globalization in Arvind Adiga's **The White Tiger** (2008).*

Key Words: Globalization, West, Global Economy

Introduction

The White Tiger is the first novel published in 2008 by the Indian author Arvind Adiga. The novel offers an inauspicious comical perception of India's class struggle in a globalized world as told through a reflective recitation from Balram Halwai, a village boy. In detailing Balram's journey first to Delhi, where he works as a chauffeur to a rich land lord, and then to Bangalore, the place to which he flees after killing his master and stealing his money, the novel examines issues of religion, caste, loyalty, corruption and poverty in India. Ultimately, Balram transcends his sweet-maker caste and becomes a successful entrepreneur, establishing his own taxi service. In a nation proudly shedding a history of poverty and underdevelopment, he represents, as he himself says, 'tomorrow'.

The pursuit of wealth that began in the name of civilizing the barbarous has now culminated in a new concept, namely the concept of free trade. The trade is only as free and fair as the dominating European nations and USA choose it to be Edward said wrote:

Domination and inequalities of power and wealth are perennial facts of human society but in today's global setting they are also interpretable as having to do something with imperialism, its new forms. The nations of contemporary Asia, Latin America and Africa are politically independent but in many ways are as dominated and dependent as they were when ruled directly by European powers. (53)

The influence of Imperialism was visible not only in the colonial Raj but has its repercussions even today. Today's globalized world is overwhelmingly

dominated by ravenous greed to the utter disregard of ethical, philosophical, environmental and more values. Arvind Adiga indicts the capitalist consumerist culture and points to the growing disparities between the poor. The novel registers the saga of subjugated man, the protagonist of the novel Balram Halwai and his big fabricated events that make up the structure of the novel, the small village of Laxmangarh. Balram Halwai is a self-styled Bangalore entrepreneur who is representative of the rags to riches tycoon of new India. His transformation from Munna- Balram Halwa- Ashok Sharma is the blue print for the rise of underclass. Balram, the fellow drivers, Balram's brother Kishan, his father, nephew and all the others from the underprivileged class are referred to as 'The Darkness'. The marginalised and the downtrodden people from the darkness have been double displaced towards periphery once by the mighty historical forces of pre-independence India and secondly by the higher class to whom the power had been transferred by the departing British. The *White Tiger* is a literary endeavour which attempts to bring into notice the concerns of subaltern, the voice of the troubled and their subjugated histories in India. Balram is the anti- hero who represents the downtrodden sections of the Indian society and is juxtaposed against the rich.

Adiga depicts both the downtrodden, unpleasant deprived place and the highly developed critics like Delhi and Bangalore. As usual the marginal are kept at the ridge or periphery of the power centre. They always suffer for their daily bread and butter. In the present context marginality is used to analyse socio-cultural, political, economic spheres, where deprived people struggle to gain access to resources and

full participation in the social life. International Geographical Union defines marginality: as the temporary state having been put aside of living in relative isolation at the edge of system, in mind, when one excludes certain domains or phenomena from once thinking because they don't correspond to the main stream philosophy.

Marginalized people are usually discriminated, ignored and often suppressed on the basis of race, gender, culture, religion, ethnicity, occupation, education and economy by the main stream. This order results in the paralysis of one side of the society as Balram, his family and community paralysed in *The White Tiger*. So through the whole novel these marginal aspects hunt for identity, social value and economic balance. Through this novel the paralyzed part of society is struggling for the socio-economic equality.

Discussion

The plot of the novel lingers around Balram Halwai and Laxmangarh where the villagers, family are subjected to exploitation, torture and torment by the village landlord Balram by nature is aspiring and he takes great pains to advance his societal position. Balram moves to Delhi as the driver of one of the landlord's of the westernised son, Ashok. Delhi is the place where Balram senses the great fissure between the rich and the poor. Adiga responds deeply, recursively and obsessively to the post-colonial situations. Adiga is disenchanted with the ways of decolonisation taking place in India. Adiga has a clinical vision of India – a vision comprising of poverty, abjectness and shame. Balram frequently mentions the rooster coop, while describing the characteristics of the servant class in India

and he also defends himself for murdering his master by giving the anthology of the rooster coop:

Hundreds of pale hens are brightly coloured roosters stuffed tightly into wire meshed cages, packed as tightly as worms in a belly, pecking each other and shitting on each other, jostling just for breathe space.. The roosters in the coop smell the blood from above. They see the organs of their brothers lying around them (Adiga 14)

Dharma is an elastic concept which can be creative or crippling and hides with it class or caste interests'. V.S. Naipaul too, points out to this deep cultural ambivalence in his famous novel 'India: A Wounded Civilization: "Hindu speculation can soar high; but Hindu religious are elemental and spirituality for most people is a tangible good magic"' (Naipaul 166).

As a result of this ambivalence, ideas in India remain separate from beliefs and practices and democracy is a little more than caste and power politics. Very subtly, Arvind Adiga points out to this curious mixture of caste, class, religion and politics .The novel portrays Indian society as very negative towards the lower social caste.

The White Tiger definitely takes place in a globalized world which is increasingly dominated by technology. American culture has had a crucial impact on Indian culture and society and the novel too reflects it in great depth. Balram's master Ashok recognises the presence of an America atmosphere in India. Ashok's wife Pinky yeans for an American atmosphere and for her sake Ashok, Balram, and Pinky move to Gurgaon. Ashok justifies this move by explaining that Gurgaon is the modern suburb of

Delhi. American Express Microsoft, all the big companies have their offices there. Adiga is not interested in portraying the influence of Globalization on the educated middle class. Adiga keenly underlines the reactions and adjustment pangs of the underprivileged class to the growing phenomenon of globalisation.

The discussion of the Indian caste system is a key issue in *The White Tiger*. Indian population is divided into higher and lower classes. Although said to be disappearing in urban India, the caste system still persists in rural India. Reservation has created another havoc. Balram gives his own break down of the caste system in India, describing that it was a "... Clean well – kept orderly zoo"(67). The caste system broke down in India. Now there are only two castes in India the haves and have not. Balram was born to the Halwai that is the 'sweet maker', and was the son of the rickshaw puller not a sweet maker because someone stole his destiny of being sweet maker from him. Adiga brings awareness to the corrupt caste system of India by having Balram work the country's system to get what he wants and to become an entrepreneur by any means necessary, including murdering his boss. Balram educates the Chinese premier throughout his letters by about the corruption and immoral ways of Indian caste system and its economic gap.

Balram passé through two different India's on his journey from the darkness of village life to the life of entrepreneurial success. Balram begins to realise how the tiger might finally escape his cage, and he is not afraid to spill a little blood along the way. *The White Tiger* is a tale of two India's India of light and India of darkness. Balram's journey from darkness of village

life to the light of the material success is utterly amoral and deeply endearing.

The consequences of globalization reflected in languages. Nowadays people are at verge of forgetting their mother tongue and they get infatuated with English, especially, Indians are obsessed with the English language. Due to this obsession, they don't have any interest to learn their mother tongue. But countries like china never obsessed with English. They give importance to their own language and through that develop their nation. But in India it is a mania.

In cities, people move to foreign countries to earn and settle there. They fall in love with someone there, and bring him/her here. But they cannot adapt to our culture and our age old believes. Hence they bring their culture here and it affects our system. In 'White Tiger' Mr. Ashok, went to America, and there he married a lady named Pinky. In the evenings, they would play badminton into the compound of the house. At that time Pinky wore trousers. This paves way for cultural damages. Our culture is unique one, it is very precious. Polygamy and living together are not common in India and mostly it is not accepted here. Getting divorce and marrying another guy is ease and common in all around the world except India. But slowly this culture is spreading here. But we do not spread our culture to foreign countries. We could not persuade others. This is the consequence of globalisation. In 'White Tiger' Balram Halwai, says about the current situation. "No it's not. Really it's not. The way things are changing in India now, this place is going to be like America in ten years" (*The White Tiger* 89).

Being born and brought up in America, Pinky couldn't adopt Indian culture and life style. She longs for America. Though Ashok provided her American way of life, She couldn't live Indian way of life. Ashok found America within India.

Now, Mr Ashok's thinking was smart. Ten years ago, they say, there was nothing in Gurgaon, just water buffaloes and fat Punjabi farmers. Today it's the modernist suburb of Delhi. Microsoft, all the big American offices have company there. The main road is full of shopping malls each mall has a cinema inside! So if Pinky madam missed America, this was the best place to bring her. That's not a mal, country mouse. That's not an office building. They make calls from there to America. People try to create America here itself and work for America, and London (*The White Tiger* 122).

Unable to adopt the situation, Indian family system and life style, Pinky madam left for America, without any information to her husband Ashok. Thus their marriage came to an end.

When we compare failures in marriages with ancient days, it is highly increasing now. The main reason is Globalisation. In such a way it, spoils our life, our culture, marriage life family and everything. In 'White Tiger' Balram says, 'No respect for god, for marriage, family- nothing. Slowly people loses everything, they become hopeless and make their own way. These failures of marriages reflect in our culture. Our future generation will be jeopardized. We cannot segregate, channelize and tend our own generation with our unique culture. That's why, our generation is totally different from us, day by day this society slowly moves towards multiculturalism like America, and here

also many rows of malls are there in I.T cities. There is a flashing red light on the top floor and it is disco. Lines of young men and women are standing outside the mall, waiting to go up to that red light. It jeopardizes our dress code also. Instead of wearing Sarees, women start to wear jeans and light T-shirt, leggings and trousers. It exposes their physical structure. Others are tempted by this dress. Instead of covering their body, some are exposed. Balram has aptly said,

I had stopped the car at a traffic signal; a girl began crossing a road in a tight T-shirt, her chest bobbing up and down like three kilogram's of brinjals in a bag. I glanced at the year rear-view mirror and there was Mr Ashok, his eyes also bobbing up and down. I thought, Aha! Caught you, you rascal! And his eyes shone, for he had seen my eyes, and he was thinking the exact same thing, Aha! Caught you, you rascal! We had caught each other out (*The White Tiger* 122)

In India uneducated deprived people either joins the tea shop or becomes porters in the big cities as Balram joins tea shop with his brother, Kishan and used to sleep on the road with him in the night. He undertake jib like coal crusher and table sweeper, but never been satisfied with his earnings. The prime concern of their life was food, shelter, and identity. Balram faced so many calamities in his life therefore decide not to die like his father in the government hospital waiting for the doctor. He decides to earn driving to earn more money for his and family's betterment. Now even in the present it is not easy for a low born to get job in India easily. Being born in low caste, Balram expelled from various land lords and employers. His big chance comes when a rich land lord hires him as a chauffeur for his son, daughter-in-law and

their two Pomeranian dogs. Balram gets a chance to be free from the shackle of tradition, caste and cultural inferiority. Mr. Ashok who is also the offspring of the same soil where Balram was born and raised, but both becomes two opposite poles of the same society. Mr. Ashok, rich, educated and important person of in the society and opposite to him, Balram, poor, least educated and less – important. Once Mr. Ashok thinks:

“His eyes seemed full of wonder!

How could two such contrasting specimens of humanity be produced by the

Same soil, sunlight and water?” (*The White Tiger* 80)

The deprived people never been treated as human being since ages in India. Only because of their low birth, Balram also treated as animal since his childhood to his grand success as entrepreneur in Bangalore. Mostly such treatment is given him by Mr. Mukesh and stork, the land lords. The rich expects their pets to be treated as humans, they expects their dogs to be pampered, walked, petted, and even washed, but they never treat their servants as human beings. Repressed are always deviant in front of their masters and their pets. Balram describes how he takes dogs for walk.

“Then I took them around the compound on chain, while the king of Nepal

(Watchman) sat in a corner and shouted. ‘Don’t pull the chain so hard! They

Are worth more than you are!’” (*The White Tiger* 78)

The White Tiger projects to evaluate dichotomies within society- one rich, prosperous and other slums of early free Indian villages where common rights divest from inhabitants. The right to vote is also divest:

“My father told me that night,

I’ve seen twelve elections- five general, five states, two local-and someone else

Voted for me twelve times.” (*The White Tiger* 100)

If anybody asks about his rights, people like Vijay kills them with the help of policeman but that never had been called a murder because murderer belongs to the ruling party.

Balam escapes from darkness and drive his master to Delhi, where he sees that in the developed cities also there are slum areas where slum dogs

like Balam lives. There are some people from darkness too, who came Delhi to survive with the light but they are still away from the equal rights for which Balam is struggling. One day, a child dies in the accident by Pinky madam but they force Balam to take this accident on his part just to save Pinky madam getting trapped in the case. Fortunately, no one registers the case otherwise he should undergo the punishment for the crime which he didn’t perpetrate.

“We have left the villages, but the masters still own us, body, soul, and Ares.” (*The White Tiger* 170)

In the novel Adiga boldly pictures the internal affairs of political parties, bribe, black-mailing and corruption etc. Mr. Ashok visits Delhi for the same purpose, to solve his tax problem regarding coal

mines. The rich people always visit to Delhi to settle their black money but the deprived goes in the search of light for better life. Adiga rightly describes the conditions of slum dogs.

“The poor bastards had come from Darkness to Delhi to find some

Light- but they were still in darkness.” (*The White Tiger* 138)

Pinky madam becomes bore of Delhi’s atmosphere and asks Ashok to return to New York but he delays. So Pinky leaves for New York, her native, to acquire her own identity and status in the society. Feminists may happy with the female character in *The White Tiger* that Pinky and Balam’s Grandmother have their own set of rules and life styles. They do not compromise their values and livings for anything. On the one hand Pinky leaves Mr. Ashok in search of her own life and on the other hand Kusum, Balam’s Granny dominates her family. Balam speaks about his grandmother:

“She had granted her way in to control of the house:

Every son and daughter-in-law lived in fear for her.” (*The White Tiger* 16)

The corruption in the Indian capital and *The Murder Weekly* corrupts Balam. He observes the politicians, who received bribe from Mr. Ashok to exempt from the taxes of Coal Mines, which is obviously the wealth of nation. Whenever he finds Ashok making corruption and not paying taxes, he becomes furious and it leads him to think about the story in the *Murder weekly* titled ‘Rape, Murder and Money’. Balam come to conclusion:

“The history of the world is the history of ten-thousand-year war

Brains between the rich and the poor.
Each side is eternally trying to

Hoodwink the other side....” (*The White Tiger* 254)

The masters administrate their power through their language. Here language is a means of subordination. In the master-servant relationship, the dominant group imposes their will on the subordinate group through the help of language. Through the words of greetings, insults, counsel, promises, threats, seduction and professions of love the dominant masters subordinate their servants. Throughout the novel English is represented as the language of masters in India. There are many instances in the novel which highlight the position of English language. The beginning of the novel itself suggests the superiority of English.

The working class of India is more suppressed in the name of globalization. On the one side people stand still without a penny and on the other side people stand still not knowing the way to spend their pennies. Globalisation has embraced the developing nations like India, the result of which is that the rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer. Humanitarian approach has lost its way in the jungle of materialism. Mall culture welcomes a rich man, and not a poor man. Politicians, the so-called people’s representatives welcome the rich who bribe them inside their offices and make their poor people, who voted them, stand outside.

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Amlan Jyotipatra in the article ‘Holding the mirror to the middle-class Indian elite: A study of The White Tiger’ says,

If the effect of globalization is shared by a few and the rest is thrown to the pit

Of poverty, the country cannot escape tensions between the haves and the

Have - not’, and it is likely that anytime these tensions may burst up. The only

Way out of this impasse is not to block the globalization, but to spread its effect to all the corners in the society. Instead of competing with the rich

Through ignoble means, the poor are expected to be aware of the problems of the poor and take serious steps to remove corruption.

Conclusion:

Throughout the novel *The White Tiger*, Arvind Adiga has portrayed the effects of globalisation in the Indian scenario. It has made quite drastic changes in every sphere of Indian sphere of Indian life. Globalization has provided a social world whose boundaries have become fluid. It has imposed universal culture by degrading local individualistic culture. In the Indian political arena too, globalization has made its unique impact which has been felt by every sensitive soul all over the world. It can be courageously concluded the first world countries are trying to impose their rules and laws upon the third world countries in the guise of leading out a helping hand.

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