

The depiction of the marginalised society in The White Tiger

G. Sivashanmugam

Assistant Professor of English, Indian Arts and Science College Kariyandhal-Kondam Tiruvannamalai-606801

Abstract—Aravind Adiga has successfully portrayed the under privileged and marginalised section of the society in his debut novel, “The White Tiger”. Through his writing, we can get the glimpses of the role of the marginalised section of the society in India's progress. In the novel, Balram becomes the mouthpiece of the marginalised people who have always been ignored. The characterization of Balram serves as the example of the struggle and the ultimate resistance of the marginalized class. In the portrayal of the character Balram Halwai, Adiga lends voice to the subaltern section of Indian society who always had to face struggle for their survival, their existence and true representation. The widely portrayed Canvas of the novel talks about how the Balram's voice becomes the voice of the millions of marginalised people in our society.

Index Terms—marginalised, migration, under privileged, post-colonial,

It was sociologist Robert E. Park, who has developed the concept of marginality which has evolved over the decades. However, it has developed into multifarious dimensions as different aspect of it gets recognition through various genres. On one hand, sociologists, environmentalists, geographers as well as economists have used it in terms of exclusion and peripheralisation to analyse the economic and ecological disadvantages as marginalisation. On the other hand, post colonialists have used the marginalisation to denote the subaltern reaction of society. In post-colonial studies, "marginality" is a ubiquitous term which sometimes termed as the by-product of colonial subordination in the context of Race, gender ethnicity and so on. Thus, it is evident that marginalised people are often discriminated and even suppressed and tortured on the basis of Race, gender, religion, culture, ethnicity, occupation and

language. In the narration of the character of Balram Halwai, the protagonist and his family, we have witnessed the pitiable situation of the marginalised section of our society.

The debut novel of Aravind Adiga, "The White Tiger", came into limelight for winning the prestigious Man Booker award 2008. The noble gets a positive response for its truthful picturization of marginalised society. According to Michael Portillo, the chairman of the panel of judges of this event thus praises the book the way It has highlighted, "important social issues: the division between the rich and the poor, and issues on a global scale"(Higgins, web). Actually, the novel tries to draw our attention towards the socio cultural issues and the handling of it by the lower or the marginalised section of the society in the backdrop of postcolonial India. The protagonist of the novel, 'Balram Halwai', thus represents the under privileged class or the lower class who has to go through a chain of suppression and exploitation by the economically and socially powerful section of the society.

It is very interesting to find out that the character of Balram Halwai is developed by Adiga in an epistolary form so that the readers can understand the sorrowful story of a down trodden who takes the help of illicit ways to get success in life. In the novel, we are introduced to Balram, the son of a rickshaw puller at a very tender age. His life is full of struggle as he has to leave his school and crushing coal and work as a table cleaner at a tea shop to help his family in earning their daily bread. Not only this, he has to earn money for clearing the debt that had once been taken by his parents from the village's landlord

for the wedding of Reena, is cousin sister. In that tea shop, Balram has got the ultimate lesson of life where he says, "The autobiography of a Half- Baked Indian. That's what I ought to call my life's story. Me, and thousands of others in this country like me, are half-baked, because we were never allowed to complete our schooling." (TWT, 10) in this novel, there is an episode when Balram is found to write a letter to Chinese premier Wen Jiabao as he visits the Bangalore city "to meet some Indian entrepreneurs and hear the story of their success from their own lips"(TWT, 4). For Balram, it is like an opportunity of a lifetime when he can share his journey of his life where he can narrate his truth. He has taken the metaphorical example of a rooster coop to share his experiences.

According to him, no Indian ever cheats or rebels with his master not because he is honest, rather

"No. It's because 99.9 percent of us are caught in the Rooster Coop ... Masters trust their servants with diamonds in this country! ...Why doesn't that servant take the suitcase full of diamonds? He's no Gandhi, he's human, he's you and me. But he's in the Rooster Coop. The trustworthiness of servants is the basis of the entire Indian economy... A handful of men in this country have trained the remaining 99.9 per cent - 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 course" (TWT, 175-176).

Actually, the economic distress that the under privileged section of the society faces sometimes makes it unbearable which is succinctly exemplified in Balram Halwai's life. Balram's father did not want his son to follow his profession of rickshaw pulling and that is why, he had sent his son in a school where he proved to be one of the best despite living a struggling life. Balram's good academic records were widely appreciated in his locality and even the school inspector promised him a scholarship. But, all came to be mere assurance only. Finally he had to leave school and worked in a tea shop to repay his family dept. Thus, education became a luxury for marginalized people like him. Not only education, struggle in life seemed to be a continuous process for people like him. Balram thus describes the pathetic

condition of low workers in the tea shop.

Another aspect of marginality has been highlighted in this novel is unemployment. This economic marginality plays a significant role when seasonal exodus of millions of youths from the villages happen as they come to the cities for jobs. This is eventually more of a force migration which is driven by distress whenever sustenance living is denied to the youths of the villages. To explain the situation, the narrator uses analogy when he says that 'Animals' fed on the village till there was nothing left for anyone to feed on and finally they move. As the narrator observes, "So the rest of the village left Laxmangarh for food"(TWT, 26). This marginalized people take overcrowded buses and move to Gaya first and from Gaya they further travel to various locations like Delhi, Kolkata and other big cities of India.

In the novel, Adiga has taken the help of metaphors like 'darkness' and 'light' to narrate the differences between the life of the rich and the poor, where 'darkness' refers to the miserable and gloomy life of the marginalised poor people and 'light' refers to the comfortable, happy life of the economically and socially prosperous people. Balram understands that the people of 'darkness' try to manage their family with hard earned money. On the other hand, the people in the 'light' try to increase their fortune through all means and ways. This observation of Balram is not a single out example of the society, rather he becomes the representative of all those poor and marginalised people who are the victims of class, gender, colour as well as racial discrimination full stop to explain this context Adiga observes "when talking to many men whom I met in India, I found a sense of rage, often suppressed for years and years that would burst out when they finally met someone they could talk to. But their anger was not the anger of a liberal, middle class man at a corrupt system; it was something more complex- a blend of values both liberal and reactionary - and I wanted to be true to what I'd heard. Balram's anger is not an anger that the reader should participate in entirely- it can seem at times like the rage you might feel if you were in Balram's place- but at other times you should feel troubled by it, certainly"(Nick, Web).

Here the marginalised section of society has gone through numerous kinds of exploitation in the hands of hegemonic forces and as a result a section of this group transformed into an anti-social element. In *The White Tiger* too, Adiga tries to portray that darker side of a cosmopolitan city like Delhi and how the surrounding environment of the city has transferred people like Balram, and humble oppressed poor fellow into a ruthless criminal who has no hesitation in murdering his master only to become rich and free from all the troubles that he has faced until now as a member of under privileged class. There are certain moments in life when people take some decisions that can only be explained by the person itself. Here, Balram is found struggling from the very beginning office life due to his birth in a poor family. But, he thinks that the murder has given him the opportunity to feel free from all the exploitation that that people like him has to suffer in the hands of powerful and rich people in every aspect of life.

To be precise, Adiga's "*The White Tiger*" is a large canvas where the writer tries to portray the brutal reality of the pitiable condition of the marginalised section of the society. These people are never given the equal opportunity that they deserve as the member of the society and on the contrary being subjugated in the hands of rich and powerful people. In the novel, Balram is born in a lower strata of society, but he never wants to die as a servant, driver or a fellow member of the Halwai community. Thus he decides to free himself from the cage to become "the white tiger", the rarest of rare in the jungle. But, we as a society cannot entirely blame Balram for his involvement in criminal activities because when in one accident Mrs Pinky, the wife of his master Mr Ashok kills a child in a reckless driving, Mr Ashok forces Balram to admit the crime that he has not done. This incident makes Balram revengeful and eventually led him not only to steal money from his master Mr Ashok, but even to kill him so that he can free himself from the clutches of forced exploitation.

Adiga's Man Booker Prize winning novel "*The White Tiger*" reminds that despite we are living in 21st century, where socio economic justice is a talk of the town, still we could find people like Balram Halwai who has to suffer only because of his upbringing in under privilege society. Through

Balram Adiga tries to give a profound voice to every downtrodden who has the guts to get freedom from the clutches of exploitation in the hands of rich and powerful people. In the novel, Balram becomes the ray of hope for millions of people like him who wish to live a better and comfortable life without suppression and exploitation and has the ability to chase his dream and create his own destiny. The only thing which he must have is the potential to be brave enough to fight for the equal rights. In this respect, we must say that Aravind Adiga is successful in his attempt in portraying the every colour and shades of marginalised section of the society.

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