



The White Tiger and Indian Diaspora

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Abstract

An Indian Anglophone writing up to about 1990s, a romantic narrative strand, working in parallel with a metafictional 'encyclopaedic' form in other texts of the period, reflects a more hopeful and positive attitude towards Indian society, and an implicit confidence in its potential redemption. Many later works by Indian diasporic writers show a much more negative and critical attitude to India, catalysed by persisting social-political problems such as corruption and communal violence. This "dark turn" in Indian Anglophone writing is very clearly seen in works of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. To allow little or no possibility for India's social problems to be resolved, and indeed make that irresolvable violence and confusion their particular theme.

Key words: religious, poverty, diasporic writers, homeland, tension

The Diaspora Indian is "like a banyan tree, traditional symbol of the Indian style of life he spreads out its roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he/she has several homes, and that is the only way he has increasingly come to feel the home in the world" (Indian Diaspora 10). Aravind Adiga was born in Chennai in 1994. He had completed his schooling partly from Karnataka and partly from Sydney, Australia. He went to Columbia University, New York, to pursue higher education in English literature. He began his career as a financial journalist with the financial times. Later he was hired by Time where he remained as a South Asian correspondent for 3 years before going into freelance. This is the time when he wrote *The White Tiger* the book which won him the Man Booker prize 2008. He is also the fourth Indian to receive this honor. Currently he lives in Mumbai. *The White Tiger* is the debut novel written by Indian author Aravind Adiga. It was published in 2008 and won the Man Booker prize for the same year. The novel studies the

contrast crushing rural poverty. Other themes include corruption endemic to Indian society and politics, familiar loyalty versus independence, a religious tension between Hindus and Muslim, the experience of returning to India after living in America and the tensions between India and China as Asian superpowers. The novel takes the form of a series of letters where late at night Balram Halwai writes to Wen Jiabao, the premier of the state council of the people's republic of China, on his eve of visiting India. In the letters, Balram describes his rise from downtrodden origin to his current position as an entrepreneur in Bangalore; he has also stated his views on India's caste system and its political corruption. The protagonist Balram lives in the village of Laxmangarh, a fictional village in Bihar, a community deep in the "Darkness" of rural India. The son of a rickshaw-puller; his family is too poor for him to be able to finish school, and he has to work in a tea shop, breaking coals and wiping tables. Balram's society taught him life and other things that deal with it. This education helps him to gain

knowledge on various aspects. After learning how to drive, Balram gets his break when he meets a rich man from his village. The stork, hires him as a chauffeur, allowing him to live in Delhi and these experiences act as a Light in his dark life that help him to move towards revelation. As he drives his master and his family to shopping malls and call centers, Balram becomes increasingly aware of human wealth and opportunity all around him. As Balram broods over his situation he is misguided. His situation makes him feel that there is only one way for him to face and walk along this glamorous world, that concentrates on wealth and fame, is to murder his master's son Ashok. Having recently returned from a stint in America Ashok is conflicted by the corruption and harshness of life in India. His complicity in corruption leads to his demise and Balram's chance to become an entrepreneur. The language is full of satiric overtones and high sarcasm. The novel manages to put forth some of the serious issues in apparently lighter mode. One can also trace irony and mockery through the tone of language. Terms like "Darkness", describing the rural villages, and "Light" for the city life are significant in putting forth the nature and condition of the two places. The book not only makes the readers laugh at its dark humour but also the issues behind. The literary work attempts a thematic study of Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger*. It aims to look into the issues in the Indian society as presented by Aravind Adiga. The literary work on the whole tries to consolidate the views of the writer about the contemporary Indian Society.

It is precisely for the factors such as cross-cultural breeding and third eye views even on native life that the diasporic writing in native tongues will enrich the local literatures. However, what should be born in mind is that the experiences of diasporic writers even on native life such as those of Aravind Adiga, Michael Ondaatje Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai are as much as authentic as they could be of a native writer. Adiga's debut novel, *The White Tiger*, extensively deals with India's rise as a modern global economy. The lead character Balram Halwa belongs to the lowest strata of population and comes from the impoverished rural background. Adiga narrates the story of Balram through letters he

writes, which were never posted to the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao. Wen had planned to visit India to learn why and how the country was good at producing entrepreneurs. The focus of, Balram's unsent correspondence is to advise the Chinese Premier explaining how to win power and influence people in India. Balram's story consists of a series of incidents of bribery, corruption, toxic traffic jams, murder and theft which he commits at the end for his own freedom. Adiga with his gifted narrative prose use Balram's character to tell the reader that the yellow and the brown men will take over the world from the white man soon.

Halwai represents a class of India that Adiga calls the 'Darkness - the heart of rural India' - and manages to escape his family and poverty by working to be a chauffeur to a landlord from his village, who goes to Delhi. Why did he make Halwai a chauffeur? Giving an interview to *The Guardian* Adiga explains: "Because of the whole active-passive thing. The chauffeur is the servant but he is, at least while he's driving, in charge, so the whole relationship is subverted."

With publication of *The White Tiger* in 2008, Arvind Adiga shot in prominence as a novelist of high stature in the tradition of Indian Writing in English. The novel has become memorable. It brought to his credit the world's prestigious Booker Prize for literature. The jury in the panel remarked, "the novel undertakes the extraordinarily difficult task of gaining and holding the reader's sympathy for a thorough-going villain and the book gains from dealing with pressing social issues and significant global developments with astonishing humour" (Bookerprize.com). From thematic point of view it is an attack on capitalist move of the Indian society in disguise. The society which is governed by the materialistic greed of the entrepreneur becomes slave before the money power. The main character, Balram Halwai, whose father's name is Vikram Halwai, the rickshaw puller by profession in the village Laxmangarh had a plan. The novelist, Adiga writes, Balram his son was a plan- the rarest of the rare- the white tiger. As the novelist unfolds the story, the story of the rise of an Indian entrepreneur (Balram Halwai) through the letters of Balram himself, the readers are confronted with the

demonstration of the spirit of quest for freedom from what the writer said, Indian rooster coop-an ideology governing Indian society.

The delineation of the protagonist's early life as a background has suggestive meaning. The sense of financial hardship, the shame of the deprivation facing the underclass, is strongly expressed in Balram Halwai 's story. His father didn't want him to follow as a Rickshaw puller in his footsteps and thus had him put in a school. He was undoubtedly the best of all the students considering his studies in difficult circumstances, as his school experiences prove. A scholarship from the visiting school inspector was also offered, but all this came to nothing. The family burden caused by a loan for his sister's marriage resulted in his quiet departure from the school to choose job in a tea shop where he cut coal for the fire to pay the indebtedness on time. Education is thus a privilege ripped from him in childhood. There is no rest from a life as long after his father's death he continues the menial work of a tea shop. The wretched state of life is tragic. In his reaction to the boys who work in the tea shop, Balram remarks that "men, I say; but rather to call it human spiders who rattle between and under the tables with their hands rags; crushed people in crushed uniforms, sluggish, unshaven, thirty or forty or fifty, yet still kids" (WT, 51). The village is characterized by the seasonal migration to the cities seeking employment.

The exodus of the Balrams is mostly due to terror, although the villagers do not stay. Bloram leaves his life in a village he called a rooster coop in search of his dream power world, which he will make use of his potential. Thus the novelist writes that no one had left enough to feed on animals that relied on the food of the region, and this resulted in a shift: "Laxmangarh left the remainder of the region to survive" (WT, 26). The buses were filled with people going to Gaya to Delhi, Kolkatta or Dhanbad. The plurality of India is the destiny of such an economic misery career. As a businessman, Balram sums up the class divide: "The history of the world is a battle of 10-1000 years between rich and poor. Either side wants to cap the other side forever, and that is how it has been since the dawn of time . The idea that class disparities are inherent is a Marxist principle

which is further expressed in a" rooster coop "analogy used by Balram.

Which is because 99.9 per cent of us at Rooster Coop are stuck.... Masters have trustworthy diamond servants in their country! How would the servant not take a diamond lined sitcase? No Gandhi, you and me. He's not human Gandhi. He's not human, though, in the Rooster Coop. The servants' faith is the foundation in the Indian economy as a whole.

Having made this grand study of the rationale for the subjugation of rich people to the poor, Balram is also promising to provide reasons for continuing Coop. He implies that in India a man is so tied up with his family that his conscience doesn't permit him to risk his family in an effort to revolt, to come out of his coop.

His childhood has been a long tale of suffering and injustice caused by conditions outside his influence. He left school and started work for a tea-shop to pay off the debt accrued for Kusum 's wedding. After the father died, he left for Dhanbad and worked in a tea-shop until he learnt how to drive.

The Balram of Adiga is the embodiment of a very true fable of the underclass malaise. A moral repugnance may seem as the only solution of suggested redemption through murder. But it is a terrible possibility, because the underclass really tries to survive. Where upward mobility opportunities are not open, it is in effect unnoticeable to resort to illegal means in an atmosphere of corruption. Therefore, with regard to the moral nature of his act, Balram argues that one has the choice to be good in Bangalore, but in Laxmangarh, he doesn't have the choice either. That is the contrast between Bangladesh, the weak, and Pakistan. "An Indian revolution?" Balram says again of the possibility that one would expect the revolution to happen. Yeah, no, no. That will not happen. This will not happen. People in this country are still searching for their independence fight from elsewhere. ... Each person must make his own Benares never happen "(WT 304). Lastly, he justified his actions with words that reflect the unrest and the ennu of the subclass that causes their rebellion. He

reacts: if I chaos, any poor man will fight no to take the picks your father has taken, and not get into a mound of bodies that are invisible and that rot in Mother Ganga 's Black Mud. (Toronto 318)

Nevertheless, Vikram Halwai had staged a small-scale rebellion. It consisted in the fact that he chose to pull rickshaw and earn money, while his brothers would go to the landlords begging for work. Vikram had to labour a lot for seeking his freedom from the clutches of the local masters. He was a man with a plan; Balram was the plan of Vikram Halwai. Although Balram's father fought the world outside bravely, he was a literal slave of the women in the house, especially the Granny. Balram looked at the bare body of his father, emaciated and lean, revealing all the skeletal reality. He would play with it; he loved the pit under the neck of his father. This was a favourite part his, and of course it was going to be a sure shot route for Balram to enter into the India of light!

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