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Critique of Capitalism in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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By

Devendra Kumar Khadka

Symbol No.: 280671

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Central Department of English

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Critique of Capitalism in Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur by Devendra Kumar Khadka has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

Mr. Dinesh Kumar Bhandari

Internal Examiner

Prof. Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma

External Examiner

Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota

Head

Central Department of English

Date:.....

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Devendra Kumar

Khadka

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Abstract

This paper examines the critique of capitalism in Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger from a Marxist perspective. The novel revolves around the story of the protagonist, Balaram Halwai, who initially works in a tea stall, later becomes a servant of Ashok, and ultimately kills Ashok, turning out to be a businessman. Balaram confronts challenges on the way to his success; he is demoralized and instrumentalized by Ashok and his wife, pinky, to name a few, asking him to take responsibility for the road accident encountered by Pinky because of her carelessness. However, the suppressed character: Balaram, in the novel, has turned out to be revolutionary. The rise of Balaram at the end of the novel has altered the story, making the threat of the bourgeois, Ashok, alive. Holding the pattern of alteration, Adiga has satirized the prevailing concept of capitalism. Through the novel, he projects the triumph of the suppressed group and also tries to claim that even common people have the power to change social assets. This research paper, therefore, focuses on three specific questions: why did Adiga portray a sinful character as the protagonist of the novel? Why the novel ultimately shows the victory of the insane protagonist? And what does the triumph of the protagonist symbolize? To analyze the issues, this research paper uses the concept of the class structure of classical Marxists Karl Marx and Fredrich Engles dominantly and Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. The paper claims that the novel is a critique of capitalism and argues that capitalism is an instrumental feature of human society that makes an individual morally degraded and mentally impaired because of the economy. Moreover, it is the economy that determines ethics rather than moral principles.

Keywords: Capitalism, Class-Struggle, Bourgeoise, Proletariat, and Communism

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* is a complete narration of an individual in a capitalist society where success is observed from the vantage point of Capitalism. As Alan Davis reviews, ". . . *The White Tiger* uses its posturing narrator to write an instruction manual that teaches everything there is to know about how entrepreneurship is born, and nurtured, and developed in this, the glorious twenty-first century of man" (169). Davis' assessment elucidates the entrepreneurship quality of the character in connection to contemporary society. Understanding the novel from a different analogical observation, in his review, Merritt Moseley writes, "This is still another story of India — in fact, though the term may not be a familiar one, this is certainly a "condition of India", novel, self-consciously and aggressively so, with plenty of observations by the main character about what Indian is like, how Indians behave, how Indians are like and unlike Chinese and Americans" (159). This indicates that the novel has portrayed the fact of India, accumulating the consciousness under which Indian people live and how the country is distinct from that of China and America.

The novel has been researched from different perspectives by different writers. For instance, Ana Cristina Mendes, in her article, *Exciting Tales of Exotic Dark India: Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger*, examines Adiga's staging of a Dark India as a new-fangled object of exoticist discourses and claims that ". . . the novel's revamped spectacle of India is achieved through representational strategies that conflate an Exotic India with a Dark India" (277). Mendes' argument is right if we comparatively study the social structure of India in association with the picturization of Indian society in the novel. But, if we consider the global economy and booming capitalism as major instances, then Adiga's literary world seems to be its replica. My point is

that *The White Tiger* is not merely a picture of dark India but also a canvas of a dark world where capitalism dances in multiple colors.

Unlike Ana Cristina Mendes, Lena Khor, in the article, *Can the Subaltern Right Wrongs?: Human Rights and Development in Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger* discusses from the subaltern perspective and claims, “The ruthless from which Halwai’s thoughts and action take are but the logical outcome of a world where undevelopment, modernization, and neo-liberal globalization reign” (42). Khor’s argument exposes that Halwai’s condition is a compelling circumstance that is a repercussion of capitalist society. In this sense, accepting Lena Khor’s argument, I additionally argue that till a capitalist society exists the birth of compelling people like Halwai continues. Because the capitalist society has forced humans to build their recognition by locating themselves in the position of animals so that they function as per society’s demands. In a similar light, Sundhya Walther’s *fables of the tiger economy: species and subalternity in Aravind Adiga's the white tiger*, “*The White Tiger* . . . presents two different ways of appropriating an animal world in fiction—becoming-animalized and becoming-animal—that contest one another within the text itself” (580). Walther’s argument is quite relevant if we take Ashok and Halwai as becoming-animalized and becoming-animal respectively in the fiction. Moreover, the process of plunging into the reign of capitalism suitably fits the word ‘becoming’. Capitalist society has distorted the humanistic principles of people, pushing them to embrace animalistic tendencies to accommodate society's inhumanity.

Moreover, the novel has also been researched from the aesthetic dimensions. For instance, Ines Detmers, in the article, *New India? New Metropolis? Reading Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger as a “condition-of-India novel”*, focuses on:

. . . Adiga’s fresh attempt to aesthetically represent an alternative concept of

ethnic identity formation. The following analysis will thus proceed on the assumption that the novel's conflicted urban domains primarily function as contested imaginary and/or imagined sites for the fashioning of the entrepreneur as a new, precarious key figure, shaping what has been felicitously labelled the "condition-of-India novel". (535)

Detmers' proposition illuminates that *The White Tiger* is an alternative mode of representing the struggle of the marginal groups for recognition. In a deep sense, Detmer is satirizing the modern Indian society where capitalism commonly acts as a permanent actor that constantly deteriorates the marginal people. Her analysis may be metaphorically valid if we acknowledge Balaram as an ethnic group; however, the most noticeable thing is that he performs as an individual and fights against the owner. It reflects that the struggle is actually between individuals from two different class statuses. Therefore, this research paper, unlike other research, observes the novel from a Marxist perspective and claims that the novel is a harsh critique of capitalism. As the narrative plot of the novel narrates the story of a common man to a successful entrepreneur, it exposes the dark secret of the way to a successful businessman.

The White Tiger begins with a writing of a letter to Premier Wen Jiabao, Premier of China, by Balram Halwai, where he narrates his journey from a common man to a business tycoon. As the novel narrates, Halwai goes through miserable economic conditions and desires to improve. When his father is unable to pay off the village landlord 'the Stork', Balram is forced by his grandmother to work in the village's tea stall. Eventually, Balram's father dies from tuberculosis, with no doctor to treat him due to the lack of money. Later, when he knows about the job as a taxi driver, he desires to be a taxi driver. He learns to drive a taxi and finds a driving job at the home of The Stork, a landlord of Laxmangahr.

Though Balaram is appointed as a driver, he also has to do manual household tasks. The Stroke earns a huge amount of money from the illegal selling of coal out of government mines. He provides generous bribes to political officials who turn a blind eye to his fraudulent dealings and allow him to evade income tax. Sons of The Strok, Mukes, and Ashok, are also involved in the business of coal that is run by their father. As the story continues, Balaram is often exploited and mistreated by the family of The Strok. When Pinky, Ashok's wife, hits and kills a child, The Stork family forces Balram to confess that he is responsible for the accident. He signs a confession letter, later; however, no one is charged. But, as the story forwards, Balram murders Ashok and flees to Baglore with his nephew due to The Strok family's extremely exploitative and corrupted activities. As he reaches Bangalore, he gives a few amounts of stolen cash to the police to establish a taxi company and becomes a wealthy person.

The changes in the status of Balaram are the dynamics of modern people who constantly confront the swiftness of time and the fleeting position of an individual. No person can fly out from the palm of the modern world that grips an individual in the nexus of power and money relationship. Although, according to Christian Fuchs, "Class is a social and power relation in which the exploited class is forced to produce, with means that it does not own, goods that it does not own. The dominant class owns the means of production and the produced outputs. Class is defined by production and ownership" (111), these dominant and subordinated classes are not a fixed location of people. As the paper argues, modern society has given a chance to relocate the position of every person and to change their social class, redefining the conventional comprehension of fixed class identity. To be more precise, a capitalistic society has opened multifarious avenues through which every individual or social class can either change or alternate their class identity.

However, it is not to argue that capitalism must be celebrated without acknowledging its consequences; nor is it to assure capitalism as an antidote for class society. But rather than comprehend there will ultimately be a class society with alternate modes of representation. The change of social class or the change in an individual's class identity restlessly creates a new form of class society again. Subtly, my point is, that although there are chances to change the social structure in terms of class, the grammar of society remains the same, merely changing the outer fabric. Because creating social discrepancies, this capitalistic structure reproduces its original, substituting the prior with surplus features. As Elke Pirgmaier claims, "Capitalism is a pyramid system that rests on the systemic reproduction of inequalities" (276). And this capitalistic economy, according to Zakir Husain, is persistent "[R]uled by three central ideas, by the earning and acquisition, by the idea of individualism and competition and the idea of rationalism" (30-31). Moreover, these ideas are inoculated in the mind of every individual, in a capitalistic society, who reluctantly observes society from a materialistic acquaintance.

The present paper explores the shift in the status of an individual in a capitalistic society, followed by the consequences, by focusing on the literary depiction of the social domain. Capitalism has become a repercussion or in a literal sense, an undeniable entity of human society and these realities have become a provoking essence for literary production. With the booming of modernity, Capitalism has accelerated its pace to capture the global society with formidable forces. But simultaneously changing man into a machine that functions through the robotization of capitalistic thoughts. More importantly, as the paper claims, human beings are monitored by the materialistic notion of capitalism, progress in terms of acquired material goods, and rationalized in terms of entrepreneurship.

In these connections, the paper argues Aravind Adiga's *The White tiger* subtly represents the happenstance and social prevalence of the capitalistic world. In so doing, it discusses how an individual in a society, with the influence of the economy, gradually camouflages humanity and becomes a murderer, a business tycoon, and a successful entrepreneur. *The White Tiger* revolves around the life story of a common man, Balaram Halwai: the antihero of the story or the narrator, and his gradual development in economic status. Although the novel persistently uses the flashback technique, continuously bringing the past and the present together in course of writing a letter, the story is linear and transparent. Because there is no secret; all the truths are gradually exposed by the writer himself, where the storyline reveals the tussle between Balaram and the force of capitalism. But one may wonder why Adiga portrayed such a scornful picture of an individual in society. What message does the novel aspire to? What is the politics behind reflecting such a moving plot to dramatize the story of an individual? What images are underneath the shift of the plot?

To answer these questions, the present research uses the Marxist notion of class struggle and politico economy, because social dichotomy and the transition of individual countenance can be best observed, as far as we are concerned, from these two paradigms. According to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Society as a whole is splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes, directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat" (6). These two classes are the fundamental aspects of social constitutes with the ultimate graph of social formation. However, the intricate conjunction of these classes has constantly offered a grandiloquent effect even in minimal social facets. As Bertell Ollman asserts:

The secret of class in Marxism lies hidden in the socialist philosopher's conceptualization of it as a complex rather than a simple relation. In "class"

Marx conflates a number of social ties (relations between groups based on various standards) which are generally treated separately. He views them as interacting parts of an organic whole, the society in question, such that development in any one necessarily affects (more or less, sooner or later) the others. (578)

Ollman's light upon the Marxian notion suggests that despite interaction and exchange between classes, Marx conceives these two groups as separate entities. Bourgeoisies are the haves who overwhelmingly dominated society through the economic discourses, compelling the Proletariat to abide by the rules formed by them. In contrast, Proletariat are have not's or laborers, persistently oppressed by the dominant forces.

The historical moves of society have ever disrobed the outer fabric of social status. In doing so, the changes that occurred over time directed the path of social development and shifted social position into a new regime. However, the changes did not come across in the form of equality but rather with constant domination, inequality, and class struggle. In this regard, Marx and Engels opine that "[t]he history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles" (5). It suggests that human beings are continuously making change and progress, but this progress is merely the byproduct of class struggle.

The continuous transition of society came across different historical situations: the feudal system to the modern capitalistic world. In these historical scenarios, the bourgeois played a significant role in revolutionizing social structure. Nevertheless, they always made assertions that favor them accordingly. To cite Marx and Engels, "The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions

of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old one” (6). It means the domination of feudal lords has ended with the emergence of modern capitalism; however, it is not against the class structure of society. The changes have occurred in the ruling elite but not in the situation of being ruled. With the change of ruling tycoon, the system of oppression has changed, but these changes still favor class distinction in a new way. These changing scenarios have molded social harmony with new relations, facilitating individual stand contrary to the communal whole. It is to say that individual priority is the key to capitalism where progress is the defining feature to articulate oneself in social strata. The wealth of an individual, monitoring the ethical domain, becomes the prominent factor to judge and the economy itself becomes the line of demarcation with that of others, who are economically deteriorated. In this sense, to quote Joseph A. Schumpeter, “Marx defines capitalism sociologically, i.e., be the institution of private control over means of production (20)” To be more precise, individualistic society collaborates with the individual bourgeoisie of society and deliberately alienates the proletariat from their own production, controlling all the mechanisms that govern society.

Modern society has changed the structure of human society and its playfulness of ruling attention. The assimilation of social diversity with economic indication has blurred the social convention, transforming primordial unity into capitalism. According to Sarwat Jahan and Ahmed Saber Mahmud, “Capitalism is often thought of as an economic system in which private actors own and control property in accord with their interests, and demand and supply freely set prices in markets in a way that can serve the best interests of society.” The system celebrates prosperity in terms of one’s success to generate interest and accumulate voluminous wealth. As Cosimo Perrotta argues, “The foundations of capitalism lie precisely in investment, both being

used to produce goods and services and sell them” (8), the major actors of capitalistic society are producer and consumer. With a profit motive, the owner invests money, processes it, and retains surplus. The process is accompanied by the investors and the laborers; nevertheless, the investors are the only group who enormously absorb the highest profit, alienating laborers from their rights and their price. Merely profiting one group vehemently raises the economic status of investors that conversely neutralizes the poorer.

Ultimately, the demarcation between two groups more strongly segregates them and nefariously troubles laborers. But, the demarcation between two distinct groups compels with the change. It, in particular, forces the psychological development of the economic condition. It emerges the thought in a dominated group that to be in a respectful position in a society one must rely on capital or one will be treated as a slave. This scenario can be found in the novel when Balaram says, “No matter how much you wash your hands after you have massaged a men’s foot, the smell of his old, flaky skin will stay on your skin for an entire day” (72). If poor people continue to do the poor task thinking they are born to do so they will never be able to rise themselves from the hole the society has purposefully inserted them in. Through resistive behavior, the condition of being poor must be changed or else society will continuously make one go down in the flames.

In this theoretical background, this research adopts similar ideas and presents a distinctive picture of the novel. The research takes Balaram Halwai as a representative of the Proletariat and Ashok as a member of the dominant group: Bourgeoise. The difference between Balaram and Ashok is the distinction between the two social structures. And the tussle between Ashok and Balaram is the implicit conflict between

the two classes. More importantly, Ashok resembles a capitalist actor, Balaram as an individual, and the family as a trait of capitalism.

As the novel initially breaks the attention of the reader and presents Balaram as an antagonist, the gradual development of the plot discloses the dark corner of Ashok and the ruthless environment of capitalistic society that ultimately turns the novel upside down and imparts Balaram as a character bound by the rules of capitalistic circumstances. This is a picture of the modern world where capitalism functions as a significant role to change the status of an individual to sustain one's life. As the novel portrays a moving picture of Balaram in terms of his economic status, Ashok remains constant in his position although he keeps confronting different rational problems. These dynamics are the articulation of capitalist society where the dominant groups of the ruling elite work as the leading mechanism of society. With the deployment of economic laws and necessities, the capitalist actors take individuals as commodities and recount them as material objects rather than social beings.

The novel even foregrounds similar instances depicting the relationship between Balaram and Ashok. For instance, when Pinky knows that Ashok lied to her that they are returning to America they are not, she screams at Ashok. Meanwhile, Ashok suggests Pinky not to shout in front of the driver, but she says, "Oh, what does he matter! He's only the driver" (81). The utterances of Pinky reflect the notion of capitalistic people and how they judge an individual, particularly labor. In addition, while addressing Jiabao, Balaram says, "I don't exactly know how you organize your servants in China. But in India – or, at least, in Darkness — the rich don't have drivers, cooks, barbers, and tailors. They simply have servants" (68). The line shows the distinction between owner and workers. Adiga is trying to articulate the

homogenous form of diverse laborers who are treated as servants rather than professionals.

Adiga in featuring the social domain of India implicitly replicates the overall scenario of the capitalistic world. Depicting the dark corner of India, he is trying to resemble the worldly phenomena where humans are subdivided into two class systems, obliterating the conventional pattern of differences. For instance, to quote Balaram's words, "[I]n the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat – or get eaten up" (64). The lines profoundly picture the diabolical differences in a society where there are merely owners and slaves. The picture of India, here, is a microcosm of a capitalistic world where the elite are the hunters and laborers are the prey.

The prevalence of social dichotomy, as far as the novel is concerned, is one of the dominant features that constantly come across the novel. The differences between the two social groups are highlighted so often that they are visible unobstructedly. For instance, as Balaram says, "A rich man's body is like a premium cotton pillow white and soft and blank. Ours are different The story of a poor man's life is written on his body, in a sharp pen" (26-27). The definition shows the discrepancies between rich men and poor people. The sophisticated outlook of the rich is not merely pretty from the outside but also comfortable in its interior prevalence. They have a comfortable soul and they always have a way to go. Contrarily, the poor's life can be analyzed from the body structure itself. The imprint of ribs, thin-rope body, and restless countenance are exemplary definitions that precisely fit them.

The sterility of modern society, indulged and infused by capitalism, has negotiated human value and turned it into a new shape. The material goods are more

valuable than the human soul and money is the exchange value of every lively thing. Adiga, in this context, has tried subtly to depict this devastating scenario through the characters of the novel. As Balaram tries to pull the chain of the dog, Ram Persad—the gatekeeper of the house—says, “Don’t pull the chain so hard! They’re worth more than you are!” (78). The lines expose that humans, despite being the producer of goods, as soon as an object regains market value, are more important than humans. To be more precise, in a capitalistic world, workers are worth less than the commodity itself. Therefore, labor does not determine objects but rather vice-versa. It is a bitter pill; however, one is bound to accept that. In this sense, the transcendence of capitalistic tendencies has deteriorated the humanistic values and ethical paradigm, subverting the real existence of sensible humans. There are merely robotic creatures and money is remote to control them. According to Alessandro Russo:

Yet the relations of authority dominant in the modern world differ from all previous others because they are based on a singular tenet of capitalism—the buying and selling of labour power as commodity. Labor power as a commodity—and the subsequent freedom of the capitalist to buy it or not depending on the self-valorising demands of capital—is the foundation of the relationship between command and obedience in the modern world. (30-31)

The authority of society solely depends on the will of capitalist tycoons, and the marginal groups are the apparatuses who merely function as a material body or labor force for the dominant circle. Instead of counting labor as a human being, the modern capitalistic world valorizes them merely as a commodity with changing labor wages. Their relationship is fixed and has a dichotomy relationship as ruler and ruled. In this connection, Ashok, being the owner, takes every advantage of Balaram and compels him to perform actions based on his desired value in the novel. Balaram is reckoned

with derogatory remarks and is forced to perform according to his owner's motif. For instance, Ashok remarks to Balaram as "He's half-baked" (10) when Balaram was not able to give appropriate answers to the question asked to him. Because of this, Ashok, talking to Pinky, labels Balaram ". . . to characters like these. *That's* the whole tragedy of this country" (10). Instead of correcting the answers, Ashok chooses to make fun of Balaram.

Moreover, when Pinky accidentally hits a child with the car, Balaram was expected to take over the action and accept the event as his deed. Aravind Adiga, in this context, has succinctly strived to reciprocate Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. As Walter L. Adamson addresses, ". . . hegemony is an overcoming of the "economic-corporative." The hegemonic level represents the advance to a "class consciousness," where class is understood not only economically but also in terms of a common intellectual and moral awareness, a common culture" (171). In this sense, Ashok is intellectually captivating the autonomy of Balaram and depriving him of his freedom. In the words of Hyug Baeg Im, "Hegemony as "intellectual and moral leadership" is understood as an economic compromise in the fundamental relations of production, actualized, and made explicit at political and ideological level" (125). In a similar light, Joseph A. Woolcock writes, ". . . the moment of a struggle for hegemony of this class to acquire control over the state apparatuses, to reshape the political structure of domination and to use it in its own interests" (204-205). This practice is artistically portrayed in the novel when Ashok familiarizes Balaram to accept the crime. As he says, "Sit, sit, make yourself comfortable, Balaram. You're part of the family" (165). To make Balaram do the work, Ashok hegemonized Balaram and took his consent. The unnatural behavior of Ashok might be persuasive; however, his words were full of conspiracy.

Although when Balaram reads the consent paper and becomes aware of what is going to happen, he is ready to accept the crime. As the document asserted, “. . . there were no other occupants of the car at the time of the accident. That I was alone in the car, and alone responsible for all that happened. I swear by almighty God that I make this statement under no duress and under instruction from no one” (167).

Balaram was not driving the car and the accident was the result of Pinky's negligence; however, Balaram was consoled to agree he was the culprit. To make him more comfortable, as a knave owner, Ashok even says, “She says she's so proud of you for doing this. She's agreed to be a witness to the confession as well” (168). It is peculiar that the one who was the criminal was ready to be the witness and who is innocent is ready to accept the crime. Adiga, in this situation, is trying to show the reality of the capitalistic world. He is elucidating the nature of hegemony and how the capitalist tycoon practices it to get rid of their crime. The dark secret and the logic to purify their crime have been succinctly articulated to critique capitalism.

The role of the dominant group is to control the marginal forces through the process of neutralizing. And this process may adopt several apparatuses; among these, one is undoubtedly hegemony. Because as Joseph A. Woolcock writes, “When social integration is achieved the dominant class forges an ideological link between the economic, political, intellectual and moral aims. It becomes the hegemonic class and the social formation constitutes an "historical bloc" (205). In this stand, the formation of new historical blocks works as traditional normalcy and it goes through naturalization. Society gradually essentializes it and becomes a necessity. In this sense, hegemony gradually becomes the norms of society that persistently rule over the marginalized group. To be more precise, the continuous practice of hegemonic

propensity or the historical necessity of the practices impel people to accept hegemony as normalcy that ultimately serves the elite and subordinates the laborers.

In this connection, it is even rational to comprehend Ashok and Balaram as what Gramsci calls 'civil society' where Ashok is the non-coercive force and Balaram is the marginalized group of the state. Joseph A. Buttigieg writes, "Gramsci regarded civil society as an integral part of the state; in his view, civil society, far from being inimical to the state, is, in fact, its most resilient constitutive element, even though the most immediately visible aspect of the state is political society, with which it is all too often mistakenly identified" (4). But this civil society is governed by private and non-government organizations that use non-coercive force to hegemonize the common people. In this regard, Ashok is forcefully compelling Balaram to accept the crime but rather happily taking his consent which is a form of hegemony. This scenario resembles the tendency of capitalism, defining how private and non-government institutions hegemonize common people. Without forcing common people, it makes them do what they desire. Gramsci even considers this non-coercive force more dangerous than coercive force because subalterns never take non-coercive as domination but rather take it as a responsibility. To portray such a reality in the novel, Adiga has certain motives. He is articulating the reality of the modern world where business tycoons hegemonize common people to accept the crime that they have not committed.

Moreover, Adiga, in a critical sense, is not merely depicting a picture of India nor is he only fictionalizing the story, instead, he is satirizing the nature of the modern world which is vehemently celebrating capitalism as the antidote to global deprivation. In doing so, Adiga brings characters like Balaram and Ashok to exemplify the naked picture of capitalism and the social structure formed by its

practices. The ill-treatment of Ashok has made Balaram starve to experience an economically stable life. We can even witness the triumph of Balaram at the end of the story which can be described in the words of Joseph A. Woolcock as, “. . . when this class (hegemonic class) becomes economically revolutionary, that is to say, capable of transforming the economic base and establishing new productive relations that permit a new development of the productive forces themselves and also able to shape their future development” (204). The victory of Balaram symbolizes the triumph of the hegemonic class where Balaram’s action can be taken as a revolutionary moment through which he succeeds in annihilating the bourgeois and consolidating the position of the proletariat.

The ending of the novel indeed valorizes the triumph of margin; however, the process that the protagonist goes through reflects the pathetic situation that the proletariat goes through. The social conjunction and the atmosphere that the novel creates thrive to resemble the relationship between the dominant and subordinate groups of the capitalistic society. In this connection, the relationship between Ashok and Balaram is a master-slave relationship. Balaram, a sweet seller, who, in course of time, becomes a permanent driver of Ashok is a slave, though at last, the relationship reverses. This apprenticeship is a feature of modern capitalistic society where the position of an individual is never static but rather is in continuous flux. It is a matter of entrepreneurship that works as a pivotal apparatus to transform one’s state of being. According to Sander Wennekers and Roy Thurik, “. . . entrepreneurship plays a more general innovative role in economic life. . .” (33). It works as an independent firm in bringing economic and social prosperity to one’s life. However, before the transmutation of Balaram, he was treated as a commodity which in particular stimulated a passion in him to higher his living standard. He used ideas and

technicalities as his weapon to subdue the increasing sense of subordination.

Harnessing the rising consciousness of inferiority, he emphasized his desire for economic superiority and marked it as a revolutionary change. As Marta Harnecker writes:

In capitalist society, this struggle is a struggle between *bourgeois ideology* in all its manifest forms and *proletarian ideology* based on marxist theory of history. This struggle, to be successful, must, in contrast to the other forms of struggle, attack the enemy where he is strongest, that is, where the best exponents of ruling class ideology are to be found. (32)

When society gets polluted with encroachment, it is essential to take control of the heightening violation to bring it to a state of equilibrium. The enslavement of Ashok on Balaram had been making him psychologically fragile. And as Balaram, in the novel, was aware of the strength and inadequacy of Ashok, he attacked to burn him to the ground.

Balaram's struggle to get a job and become a familiar companion itself is a distinction between the two classes. Had Balaram been equivalent to Ashok, he would not have to strive to relegate his position as he meant to be. It means there is always a dichotomy of social classes and the powerless group ever tries to absorb the position of the powerful. As Salar Mohandesi asserts:

The notion of class is inseparable from that of relationality. A class, whether understood as an economic category or as a political subject, can exist only in relation to another class. The proletariat does not emerge independently only to be subsequently placed into a relationship with the bourgeoisie; the two, almost like conjoined twins, came into existence together at the same moment

in history. The one has no meaning outside of its relationship with the other.

(74)

Mohandesi clarifies that there is an intricate relationship between the classes and one is visible because of the other. They cannot exist if they are separated. In a deeper sense, it is to say, Ashok and Balaram are from different economic as well as cultural classes; however, they are interconnected. Moreover, Ashok has become a master only because servants like Balaram and Ram Persad were there to serve him. But the tragedy is that the master never accepts the necessity of servants and nor do they valorize them as an indispensable part of their existence.

Moreover, an economic determination is the most significant aspect that determines the relationship among the people. And if it is not considered to be the pivotal aspect of society, the dysfunction of social harmony emerges. As

Edward Andrew writes:

[C]lasses are constituted in the socioeconomic realm, prior to political or cultural engagements, and that political struggle and forms of culture and consciousness are not constitutive or definitive of class structure but rather are symptoms, expressions, perhaps even necessary effects, of the socioeconomic class structure, or relations of production. (578)

The economic classes are the determinant of social construction that works as the key to produce social aspects. The other factors like cultural engagements and political struggles are secondary to the economy. To be more precise, the economy is the dominant factor that shapes the cultural and political dimension of modern capitalistic society. The wealth of an individual determines his/her position and location, valorizing the essence of money rather than the ethical dynamic. This reality is embedded in the novel through the story of Balaram. As the dynamic of life, at the

beginning of the story, he is a tea seller, gradually he becomes a driver, a private assistant of Ashok, the only companion of his owner, and the Murderer of his master. Astonishingly, a normal man becomes the master of his owner, but this estrangement was possible only because he valorized the economy. He became a driver because he was informed that the driver owns more money; he kills his master for the money, bribes the policeman, and becomes a businessman whom no one can accuse of his crime. It is to say the economy is a tarpaulin to cover the naked body where hundreds of scars remain afresh of brutality.

The tussle between Ashok and Balaram is about economics and class and because of this, one of them is in a dominant position and the other in subordination. It seems that Balaram is living a suppressive life but we can see a change in him. He is not living a static life rather the moments of his life are revolutionary. The fleeting position of Balaram in the novel suggests that class is not fixed in modern society or it is not merely a fixed deposit but also bears a certain amount of interest. John O'Neill asserts:

The category of action never results in a simple deposit. As an expression of human personality, an action, while dependent upon its past determinations, remains open to the future in terms of its nature as a project, an approximation to ethical values. The creativity of personality results in a dialectical tension between the objective and projective determinations of its activity. It is the maintenance of this tension which furnishes the criterion of a non-alienated or socialist society. (469)

John illuminates that the future of any particular class is open and free to change. The rational entrepreneurship of an individual can be the form of an agent through which the class structure can be restructured in course of time. In this sense, Balaram, a

metaphor for the proletariat, resonates with the sense that any individual from the deteriorated social structure can reverse the situation and change the dynamic of social formation. Adiga, in this regard, is posing a threat to capitalism and also warning its fecundity that opposing class groups even can be the ruler of the next generation.

Adiga, while satirizing and critiquing capitalism, predicts the future of capitalism as well. How the modern society can be or will be annihilated, and who will be the next ruler have been answered by Adiga. The rationality of Balaram and the dullness of Ashok are the strategic picture of capitalism that imparts the robustness of the proletariat and fragility of the bourgeois. Ashok never could understand the politics of Balaram, nor could he infer Balaram's next step. Balaram's deliberate attempt to isolate Ashok moderately works and gradually he becomes the closest individual to him. When Pinky leaves Ashok, Balaram says, "Now that she was gone, I knew that it was my duty to be like a wife to him. I had to make sure he ate well, and slept well, and did not get thin. I made lunch, I served him, cleaned up." (184). With each process through which Ashok was isolated, Balaram was closer to his dream. But, Ashok took it naturally or as it happened. This is a dark secret of the modern world that capitalists are unaware of their vulnerability and they never could speculate on the future on their own. They take subordinated groups for granted and ever try to examine themselves as the superior category with profound quality.

The ability, as the novel depicts, of Balaram implicitly marks the invincible quality of the proletariat. Although the capitalist does not value the lower class, there is a tremendous possibility of unpredicted revolutionary changes in the proletariat. Because, since the classes of the society are always in an indispensable state, they share common ground to sustain their position. The interconnection between them

always relegates their position in similar strata through the valuation differences in terms of the degree they pose. In this situation, one should not forget that since they are interlinked, they do share some common features or both the classes are always in the state of being and learning. In doing so, they adopt some essential attributes as well. As Pierre Bourdieu asserts:

[T]he agents who occupy neighboring positions in this space are placed in similar condition and are therefore subject to similar conditioning factors: consequently they have every chance of having similar dispositions, and interest and in thus of producing practices and representations of a similar kind. Those who occupy the same positions have every chance the same habitus, at least insofar as the trajectories which have brought them to these positions are themselves similar. (5)

Bourdieu is clear that the environment certainly facilitates changing the habits of an individual. The one who closely relates oneself to the compounding surrounding happens to resemble the situation. This reality has been one of the dominant features of the novel that changes the direction and becomes the key grammar to alter the position of the proletariat. Balaram, spending time with Ashok, adopts the nature of his master and gradually changes his behavior to the surroundings he was living. And at the end he kills his own master and becomes the owner, reversing his position.

A significant thing to notice is why did Adiga impose such a character in the novel? There might be two possible answers. The first reason might be to show the cruelty of capitalism or the violent nature of capitalism through which a social environment can change a human into a beast, and the second reason might be to show the changing dynamic of the proletariat through which the rule of capitalism comes to an end. The stand of this research takes the first possibility as the

consequence of the capitalistic encroachment and accepts it as a natural phenomenon because what a proletariat does has a significant link with the act of the elite group. Therefore, it would not be wrong if the act of Balaram is taken as the replica of Ashok. And more importantly, the second possibility could be Adiga's hypothesis of the end of Capitalism and the rise of the proletariat.

The second possibility is more thought-provoking and inculcating even in the case that Adiga negates the tendency of Ashok who is a metaphor for a capitalistic tycoon. For instance, when Pink leaves Ahok he becomes fragile and careless, when Balaram asks him to eat something he says, " Yes, I wanted to eat. But I don't want to go to another hotel, Balaram. I'm sick of hotels. Take me to the kind of place you go to eat, Balaram" (238). Ashok's words embark on the exhaustion of elite people. Their property, their lifestyle, their relationship, and their capitalistic atmosphere itself make them fatigued. Moreover, as Ashok further says, "I'm sick of the food I eat, Balaram. I'm sick of the life I lead. We rich people, we've lost our way, Balaram. I want to be a simple man like you, Balaram" (238), his lines disclose the cover of confusion that Adiga is critiquing capitalism and professing the restless end of modern capitalistic society.

Adiga has subtly represented the will of the ruling elite; however, not failed to picture the will of common people as well. When Ashok expresses his desire to get rid of his living style, Balaram smiles and contemplates, "I like eating your kind of food too" (239). This symbolizes that the marginal groups are starving for freedom. Certainly, aristocrats are tired of their activities because they have enjoyed their freedom a lot, but commoners are yet to be in a position where they can enjoy their freedom. As Balaram says, "Free people don't know the value of freedom, that's the problem" (117-118), the line exposes that aristocrats never know what it is to be like

them for the poor. The elite group has always enjoyed their liberty, but they never understand the aspirations and desires of the commoners and that is the biggest problem of the aristocrats. Since they are familiarized with autonomy, they never empathetically position themselves in subordinated conditions, therefore they happen to misunderstand the condition of the proletariat.

However, proletariats are aware of their situations and they know the consequences as well. More importantly, they are in a constant form of revolution and need for change. Balaram Halwai is an exemplary character of modern capitalistic society who exactly resembles common people and has thought of revolutionary changes. The way Balaram changes his social status may seem unethical; however, Adiga is not, as far as the class society is concerned, in the ethical discussion of an individual but is vehemently concerned about social welfare. In this sense, Adiga's *The White Tiger* is an articulation of a critical assessment of capitalism where Adiga professes the fecundity of capitalistic society followed by the rise of the proletariat.

The triumph of Balaram should not be taken as the victory of capitalism again because Adiga is metaphorically suggesting the exhaustion of capitalistic society. The victory of Balaram is not similar to the overwhelming triumph of Ashok because Balaram is a proletariat and Ashok is a bourgeois. As Lars-Henrik Schmidt in his review of *Cinq etudes de materialisme Historique* by Etienne Balibar: *Sur la dictature du prolétariat*, writes:

According to the Marxist-Leninist theory of state every democracy is a dictatorship. Capitalism is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and socialism will be the dictatorship of the proletariat; but they cannot be equated: The bourgeois democracy is the dictatorship of a minority of exploiters, but the

proletarian democracy will be the dictatorship of a majority of workers and exploited; moreover, their goals are not the same. (389)

Schmidt's assessment shows that there is a difference between the victory of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Therefore, in a deep sense, as far as the novel is concerned, depicting the victory of Balaram metaphorically suggests that Adiga is opposed to capitalism and in favor of Socialism. As the novel ultimately settled the conflict between Ashok and Balaram, Adiga is depicting the frame as Schmidt suggests, "The bourgeois democracy combats to maintain its positions, while the proletarian democracy fights only for its further transformation, and in these combats the state is used as a means but again in different ways" (389). In this sense, he is even right as he asserts, "The dictatorship of the proletariat is the period of transformation from capitalism to communism. It is not one way to socialism but socialism itself - socialism, as a historical period of permanent revolution and sharpening of class struggle all the way to communism" (389). It means the triumph of the proletariat is the process of transmogrification of a capitalistic society to a communist society.

In this connection, Adiga's proposition to illustrate the rise of Balaram is to end capitalism and endorse communal society. Balaram's act is a revolution through which Adiga is manifesting a call for revolution. To mute the oppositional viewpoint as the rise of Balaram might be the rise of capitalism, Adiga carefully impels Balaram to speak, "Now, even though I killed him, you won't find me saying one bad thing about him. I protected his good name when I was his servant, and now that I am (in a sense) his master, I won't stop protecting his good name. I owe him so much" (47). The lines offer a conciliatory remark upon capitalism. The rise of the proletariat is merely possible because there was a domination of the bourgeoisie, and it would not

be wrong to say the bourgeois themselves paved the way for the revolutionary action of the Proletariat. One might argue that Balaram had committed a crime, murdering his boss can lead to a criminal act rather than a revolution. However, Balaram's act should not be defined as physical activity in terms of social morality but rather as a social demand. The death of Ashok, at least from a revolutionary perspective, should not be considered the physical death of an individual as such but rather a fall of aristocracy. In other words, Balaram's struggle to get success is a symbolic articulation of a struggle of the proletariat and his act of insensitive behavior is the call for the collaboration of middle-class people to overthrow the despotism of the bourgeoisie and to establish, as Joseph Stalin says, 'the dictatorship of the proletariat.' Adiga, therefore, is positively advocating for the annihilation of capitalism and welcoming communism to provide equality in society. The revolutionary changes, as Adiga suggests, made by the laborer are more democratic than capitalistic society, and they always have harmonic relationships between the different groups of people in society.

To sum up, Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* narrates a progressive story of a common man, Balaram Halwai. The changes that Balaram goes through, from a sweet seller to an entrepreneur, are a depiction of revolutionary change which is a demand of modern capitalistic society. In reflecting the changes, Adiga subtly exposes the dark secret of capitalism and cunningly presents the appropriate alternative to annihilate the domination of aristocrats. The novel revolves around the story of Balaram which is a metaphoric representation of class society and a close analysis of the proletariat. Adiga suggests that the common people are no less rational than the aristocrats; if they desire they can bring revolutionary changes to society.

The economic status or class is not a fixed identity, it can be altered; however, the alteration will bring gigantic transformation in society which turns upside down the prevalent social forms and structures. To resemble the idea, the novel portrays Balaram Halwai as a murderer and relegates him as the owner ultimately but his victory is not to be understood as the rebirth of capitalism, it is the dramatic change where the proletariat rules society. Through the conclusion, Adiga is professing the end of capitalism and fantasizes about a better society where there remains a classless society. Reflecting the possible threat to capitalistic society, Adiga is visualizing a social domain where an individual is not judged based on the economy but in terms of the communal whole. In a deep sense, Adiga's novel is critiquing capitalism—shows its dark secret— and celebrates the ultimate solution which is communism.

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