

Chapter 1

Adiga's *The White Tiger*

Background of the Study

This thesis focuses on the subversion of traditional Indian social hierarchy and ideals as depicted in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. It explores that the situation of subaltern people in India is very bad. There is a great hierarchical difference between the rich and the poor. It is very difficult for the poor to get good opportunity due to social hierarchy and the deterioration of ideals. However, the protagonist, Balram, struggles against poverty, illiteracy, political corruption, and finally gets his goal. He suffers a lot during his efforts to achieve his objective of life in the so-called modern society. The primary objective of the study is to explain the situation of traditional as well as modern hierarchy in Indian society and how it has been tried to deconstruct as reflected in Adiga's novel. Formerly, hierarchy was established by caste system and later by economic and political power.

Adiga is an Indian writer of the twentieth century. In this novel, he concentrates on the ambition, corruption, crime and injustice and want of protest against them in India. He is from the upper class but his intention is to present the problem of the poor or the subaltern people and the loss of morality in India. This novel is a most radical or deconstructionist work of art. It reveals the depressed voice of those people, who cannot raise their voice against injustice, corruption, poverty, and bad politicians, and who cannot think of their right because of pessimism. They think that they are born out of clay and have to go into clay with empty hand. However, Balram fights against poverty and traditional ideals and, finally becomes successful Indian entrepreneur by applying tricks and even crime. The idea of identity arises in the nameless boy when a teacher names him Balram

and when the school inspector calls Balram the “White Tiger.”

Balram and his elder brother, Kishan, are different from each other. Balram is a man of ambition, who does not want to adjust with the status quo, whereas Kishan is traditional and dominated by tyrannical Mr. Stork, who lends money to poor people at a very high interest. He wants to support his family adjusting himself with the situation. However, both of them love each other and Balram respects his brother.

The novel begins with a scenario of Balram writing a long letter to Chinese premier Wen Jiabao. Balram writes about his past life to present his struggle to become an Indian entrepreneur. He mentions how he was compelled to leave his study to fulfill their debt taken from Stork, the landlord of his village, Laxmangarh. The novel reveals the poignant condition of the subaltern people who are victimized and subjected to psychological and physical suffering through a series of poverty, humiliations, corruptions and over burden. After leaving school, Balram is compelled to work for money as suggested by his grandmother Kusum, a woman of narrow-mindedness. He starts his career in a tea shop with his brother. He is reluctant to stop his study to earn money but the family constraints force him to work for money and leave his study. However, he uses opportunities to become a successful entrepreneur.

Adiga depicts the tyrannical hierarchical system in India and Balram’s struggle, determination and murderous attitude. The novel figures out the personal sufferings and struggle to get rid of the hardships in the hierarchical system. It mirrors out the impecunious and low caste people as well as the rich and the powerful rupturing the traditional norms in Indian society.

The novel opens up with the problematic concept of language. The narrator, an Indian from remote village, says that he cannot speak and write English properly. Likewise, the person who is receiving the letter is the Chinese Premier who also

cannot understand English properly but there is something that would be easier to explain only in English. Then it describes how the marginalized and downtrodden people are forced to do cheap and lowest work for the ruling class people.

Commenting on the miserable condition and struggle of subaltern people, Sankha Maji says,

The unprivileged section of this country has been relegated to the fringes. They are exposed to various forms of exploitation by myriad forms of hegemonic forces. But unfortunately they are either not aware of that or if aware not dare to rise in protest against it. (352)

Maji asserts that the unprivileged people are not willing to fight for their right.

However, Balram loves and admires individual liberty, which makes him appreciate Chinese people and culture.

In his letter to Premier Wen Jiabao, Balram says, “It is said that you Chinese are great lovers of freedom and individual liberty. The British tried to make you their servants, but you never let them to do it” (5). Balram presents his inner feeling that raises the issues about freedom, individual liberty, and domination in India. Balram is trying to show the reality of India, which is veiled by corrupt politicians, high class people and great businessman to maintain their position in the capitalist society and to show themselves as a modern people, being helpful and civilized citizen in front of the world.

Tolerating so many difficulties in the way of successful entrepreneur, Balram rethinks only dark aspect of his life. In the letter, he expresses that he was born and raised in Darkness but his struggle lifted him in the Light now. He points out India as two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness. Finally, he concludes that, to overcome from darkness, one should fight with it; otherwise it will

take you in its claw and grinds you like a juice and drinks like a blood of goat.

Brought up in a poor family and having pathetic condition, Balram determines that he should do something great in his life. He is a son of a rickshaw puller but he never laments for that. In India, to become the son of a poor man is a weakness. For all that, he turns his weakness into his strength and starts his struggle being a driver and finally becomes the owner and the richest self-made entrepreneur of India. He chooses a murderous way to achieve a bag of money and does not regret for that. The struggle for money, lack of power, mental pressure, corrupt political situation and psychological disturbance create negative thinking, murderous attitude and robbing sense in Balram. Such attitude and practice is against the traditional ideals put forward by Indian philosophers, great leaders and martyrs of India.

This novel is told from the first person point of view of narrator, who tells the condition of social hierarchy, poverty, marginalization, domination, lack of mutual understanding, and corruption. Through the letter it also presents a confession of the protagonist: what he did to his master. Balram suggests that all those weak and poor people should struggle for themselves. Only bowing down their head does not bring chance for them. They should cut the root of the problem if they get opportunity. It means if a man gets chance through his master's blood, it should be accepted for them. To grasp a chance, one should even be ready to kill one's master. This is what Balram does and suggests. Adiga criticizes such a practice of subverting the hierarchy.

The novel shows the gap between traditional Indian ideals and modern practices, between masters and servants, and leaders and citizens. In other words, it highlights the worst condition of the subaltern, corruption, degradation of morality and inversion of traditional ideals and hierarchy. It suggests that the way Indian

society is moving is heading towards anarchy and destruction, which has to be changed.

Critics on *The White Tiger*

After the publication of the novel, different critics have analyzed it from different perspective drawing upon multiple interpretations. It has elicited a lot of critical attention and massive arguments from a large number of critics and scholars. Critics have dealt it with the issues like poverty, education, politics, class, caste, religious prejudice, occupational difference, and so on. Some critics have paid attention to the thematic analysis of the novel whereas others have gone through the experimental aspects of the novel. Some of the interpretations are cited in the following paragraphs.

Kevin Rushby argues that Balram is a poor and uneducated Indian who, for his ambition, breaks the rules and regulations:

Balram Halwai, narrator of *The White Tiger*, is not going to let a lack of education keep him in the dark. He is heading for glory in India's bright future. He will be one of those who stuff cash into brown envelopes for policemen and politicians, and not just another victim.

(par. 1)

Rushby appreciates the bravery of Balram because, despite his uneducated condition, he tries to rise from the darkness and becomes able to bribe leaders and officials for his success.

Talking about the method of progressing or liberating oneself that the novel suggests, Peter Robins postulates,

Advancement can be achieved only by patronage- if you make friends with the local political thugs, you might get a job as a bus conductor-

or by Balram's eventual method: stepping outside the "coop" of conventional morality. *The White Tiger* is a furious and brutality effective counterblast to smug "India is shining" rhetoric- that particular slogan is never mentioned, but the election it lost is crucial to the plot- which also direct hard, well- aimed kicks at hypocrisy and thuggery on the traditionalist Indian Left. (par. 6-11)

Robins explores the message of the novel that one of the methods for one's progress is to be a friend of thug politician. It is the way to be humiliated to get lower class job without any respect. Another way is to break the rules and act as Balram does. Both ways are wrong. Similarly, he points out that the phrase "India is shining" is futile where election votes have been sold by some corrupt businessmen to bad politicians.

Aamera Jiwaji finds this novel as a harsh and realistic novel, which exposes the rude truth of the Indian culture:

The White Tiger is not a book that indulges in any soft or tender moments. It is harsh and realistic- and as stark as the binary of Light and Dark that the book develops its narrative, one which examines the culture of servitude in India, which pits the rich against poor... And yet told by the protagonist, Balram, a self made man in all senses- from his first job in the city as a driver to a rich family, all the way to his new life as an entrepreneur in the city of Bangalore- it is an open and honest examination of his character's development vis a vis that of the creation of contemporary Indian society... There is dark humour, open laughter, wryness and moments of insight into the human condition. (par. 3-5)

Jiwaji interprets this novel as depicting real human condition in India. She explores

that this book comprises the combination of binary composition of light and darkness. She adds that it examines the culture of servitude in India and tells the story of Balram, a product of Indian society that leads one to wrong way. For instance, the protagonist kills his own master, a corrupt man, and grasps all the money in a bag and then starts a new life as an entrepreneur.

Akash Kapur expresses his reaction about the quality of the novel in *The New York Times* as follows:

The White Tiger is a penetrating piece of social commentary, attuned to the inequalities that persist despite India's prosperity. It correctly identifies- and deflates- middle-class India's collective euphoria. But Adiga, a former correspondent for Time magazine who lives in Mumbai, is less successful as a novelist. His detailed descriptions of various vile aspects of Indian life are relentless- and ultimately a little monotonous. (par. 1)

Kapur refuses to accept Adiga as a good novelist. He blames Adiga that he has only presented the dark aspect of India, while there are so many bright side of it. Whatever is shown in this novel about India is only partial truth.

About the theme of the novel David Mattin writes,

It's a thrilling ride through a rising global power; a place where, we learn, the brutality of the modern city is compounded by that of age-old tradition. "In the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India," says Balram. "These days there are two castes: Men with Big Bellies and Men with Small Bellis." (par. 5)

Mattin emphasizes on the economic disparity, old tradition, new castes and global power as the focal point of the novel.

Many critics have observed and interpreted the novel from different critical perspectives, but not from the issue of deconstruction. This thesis centers on to figure out the deconstructive issues. So, the objective raised by this research is new and fresh which is left untouched.

Outline of the Study

This study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter, introductory discussion, highlights on the hierarchical perspective of the novel drawing upon the protagonist and his attempts to rise above his social status. It also includes the thesis statement or the major argument of analysis and the major problems explored in the study. The critical review of this Man Booker Prize 2008 winner novel is very rare except for a few articles in noted magazines and newspapers. Related literature review regarding the novel has also been incorporated in this chapter. It also includes the outline of the study as well.

The second chapter deals with the theoretical background of hierarchical caste system practiced in India and its impacts on Indian social hierarchy. It also traces the attempts of the leaders and the Indian government to change the hierarchical system. It discusses the formation of social hierarchy and process of change in Indian society.

The third chapter makes textual analysis that portrays the corrupt ways of the Big Bellies and Balram's tricks and violence, highlighting the effects of globalization and loss of morality in Indian society. It presents the subversion of traditional hierarchical system and ideals of the great leaders of India.

Finally, the fourth chapter makes the concluding note that postulates the deconstruction of traditional social hierarchy, formation of new ones and consequences. It focuses on the message of the novel that there is want of equity and morality in India.

Chapter 2

Caste Hierarchy and Subversion

This study discusses the transformation of the caste structure and the loss of morality in India as depicted in Adiga's *The White Tiger*. It analyses the old tradition, class structure, hierarchy and new perception of modern class structure, hierarchical system and change in society. Therefore, this chapter traces the history of caste system, its practice and the attempts to change it in India.

Caste System: Origin and Practice in India

The caste system of India has divided people into different social groups according to their occupation and birth. Researchers say that it started about 3000 years ago. Hindus are divided into four sections based on the principle of 'varna' (meaning 'color'): the Brahmins- the priestly and academic class, teachers or intellectuals, at the top of hierarchy believed to have come from Brahma's head. Then the Kshatriyas- the ruling, administrative and warrior class, supposedly from Brahma's arms. Then the Vaishyas- the class of artisans, tradesmen, farmers and merchants, supposedly come from Brahma's thighs. Fourth one is the Shudras- manual workers, come from Brahma's feet. Last but not in the list, the Untouchables- fall outside from the system or outcastes known as street sweepers and latrine cleaners or menial workers.

Describing Indian caste system, Kallie Szczepansk writes,

The origin of the caste system in India and Nepal are shrouded, but it seems to have originated more than two thousand years ago. Under this system, which is associated with Hinduism, people were categorized by their occupations. Although originally caste depended upon a person's work, it soon became hereditary. Each person was born into a

unalterable social status. The four primary castes are: Brahmin, the priests; Kshatriya, warriors and nobility; Vaisya, farmers, traders and artisans; and Shudra, tenant farmers, and servants. Some people were born outside of (and below) the caste system. They were called “untouchables.” (par. 1-4)

Szczepansk describes the origin of Indian caste system, and how they were formed and practiced in the society. According to him Brahmins are known as higher caste and Shudras are known as lower class. And those people who were born outside of the caste system were known as untouchables, or the lowest class.

The orthodox Indian caste system was practiced from time immemorial. When British people started to rule in India in 1757, they also exploited the caste system as a means of social control. But when India became independent on August 15, 1947, the new government made new laws to protect the scheduled castes and tribes. The new laws included quota system for lower class people to ensure their right or access to education, government posts, etc. About the change in the Indian caste system as written in the constitution, the BBC mentions,

Independent India’s constitution banned discrimination on the basis of caste, and, in an attempt to correct historical injustices and provide a level playing field to the traditionally disadvantaged, the authorities announced quotas in government jobs and educational institutions for scheduled caste and tribes, the lowest in caste hierarchy, in 1950. In 1989, quotas were extended to include a grouping called the OBCs (Other Backward Classes) which fall between the traditional upper castes and the lowest. In recent decades, with the spread of secular education and growing urbanization, the influence of caste has

somewhat declined, especially in cities where different castes live side-by-side and inter-caste marriages are becoming more common. (par. 1-3)

The BBC traces the developing condition of Indian caste system. It explains a new strategy of Indian government, which tried to bring equity in Indian society. Not only the government, the people are also changing their attitude. In the past one could marry only within one's caste but now people have started inter-caste marriage.

Indian society is getting changed, leaving old tradition and rigid caste system but there is still strong impact in the society. Ramandeep Kaur reveals the condition of caste system in India in the following words:

An intricate caste system in India influences life to great extent. Castes or jatis (as they are called in India) are actually the hereditary grouping of people defining their social status. Even after so many years of Independence, caste-based demarcation is still there; though with time, it is changing. In urban areas, this separation is not that obvious but the difference between various castes becomes obvious in rural areas. Sometimes the caste-based gap takes a violent turn and leads to clashes between various groups segregated on the basis of their castes. Moreover anti-social elements use the caste system to promote their vested interest. (par. 1)

Kaur concludes that urban area is converting itself into new one but the condition of rural area is still much traditional.

Efforts to Reform the Tradition

Deconstruction postulates that social hierarchy is also changeable. It is difficult to change social stratification but not impossible. A strong feeling can

subvert the system.

Father of Indian constitution, a Dalit, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (Babasaheb) contributed a lot to support the lower caste people. He initiated a significant Dalit movement between 1920s and 1930s. He also created a system of reservation in India to mobilize the status of Dalits in India. Now lower caste people are enjoying their right. Jules Naudet writes what Ambedkar did for lower class people:

In 1936, Ambedkar created his first political party, the Independent Labour Party (ILP), meant to be a party going beyond simple class affiliations, and defending the interests of all Indian workers, conscious of the need to broaden his social base, Ambedkar tried to set himself up as leader of the “working masses.” (par. 1)

Naudet writes that Ambedkar tried to make lower class people equal to others. He stood himself as the leader of the working masses.

Now untouchables have got their rights reserved and they became Dalits. Kaur further writes about the efforts to change in the Indian caste system:

In pre- as well as post- Independence era, many movements and governmental actions took place to eradicate caste- based inequalities in India. In order to develop a positive attitude toward lower castes, Gandhiji had started using a word ‘harijan’ (God’s people) for lower-caste people. But this term was not universally accepted. He also encouraged incorporating lower caste persons into reforms rather than creating a separate groups for the same purpose. The British government also came up with a list of 400 groups that were regarded as untouchables. Later on these groups were known as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In 1970s, the untouchables started to be

called Dalits. (par. 2)

Kaur points out the new improvement about the inequalities in Indian caste system. Lower caste people have got a new name in Indian caste system. To encourage the untouchables M.K. Gandhi gave a new name, 'harijan', to the untouchables and initiated reforms. In the process of improvement, the British government listed them into 400 groups. From 1970s, the untouchables are called Dalits. This is a new achievement in Indian caste system.

The social status of the subalterns has been improved. The new laws have caused subversion of caste system and given high position to the lower caste people.

Timothy Jones postulates,

After India attained independence in 1947, the country introduced laws to make discrimination against lower castes and to improve their socioeconomic positions. Quotas were introduced for college admissions and jobs. As a result, some Dalits have made it to leading positions, such as BR Ambedkar, who wrote the Indian constitution, and KR Narayan, who was elected president in 1997. (par. 1-2)

Jones explains the present condition of Dalits, who are getting chance in college and jobs. He gives example of Ambedkar and KR Narayan who have got respected position in India.

Chapter 3

Subversion of Hierarchy and Norms in *The White Tiger*

This study primarily focuses on the changing social hierarchy and traditional ideals in Indian society. The protagonist Balram has obsession for power, position, and social status as he is from poor background. He tries to enjoy the privileges of the filthy rich and powerful, by applying tricks and even by killing his own master. This study discusses how the novel presents destitution of the rural areas, corruption and immoral activities in Indian societies.

Social Stigma in India: Destitution, Caste System and Balram

The novel is set in a remote village of India, Laxmangarh with many problems. Introducing his village to Chinese premier, Balram describes the condition of Laxmangarh as follows:

Laxmangarh is your typical Indian village... to match up to the minimum height and weight standards set by the United Nations and other organizations whose treaties our prime minister has signed and whose forums he so regularly and pompously attends.

Ha!

Electricity poles- defunct.

Water tap- broken.

Children- too lean and short for their age and with oversized heads from which vivid eyes shine, like the guilty conscience of the government of India. (19-20)

The novel critiques Indian government for the poor condition of Indian villages. Socialist political leaders take a huge amount of money for the development of village but they are corrupt liars and forget promises.

India became free in 1947 from British rule but still it is under corrupt political leaders, prejudiced feeling and unjust practice. Adiga shows how caste matters in the career of driving. When Balram and his brother Kishan go to an old driver for learning driving, the old driver tells them the following:

‘Mastering a car’- he removed the stick of an invisible gearbox – ‘it’s like taming a wild stallion - only a boy from the warrior castes can manage that. You need to have aggression in your blood. Muslims, Rajputs, Sikhs - they’re fighters, they can become drivers. You think sweet- makers can last long in fourth gear?’ (56)

The mindset of the people is fixed about driving in India. The driving power is supposed to have only with Muslims, Rajputs, and Sikhs. These three groups of people are regarded as strong and warrior castes.

Referring to the social stigma and destitution that the novel depicts, Sangeeta writes, “*The White Tiger* deals with the social exclusion of the persona who carries with himself incorrigible wounds of social stigma and destitution. The actions and reactions of Balram Halwai result from his plight. He suffers endless existential crisis from which there is no escape” (par1). She means to say that Balram’s actions are compelled by stigma of exclusion.

As to the nameless condition of the boy Munna, Sangeeta further states,

While referring to his name, ‘Balram Halwai’ alias Munna, the narrator takes the readers back to his first day school and narrates the incident when the teacher named him Balram for Munna just means a boy. He tells the reality dialogically:

‘Didn’t your mother name you?’

‘She’s very ill Sir. She lies in bed and spews blood. She’s got no time

to name me.'

'And your father?'

'He is a rickshaw-puller, Sir. He's got no time to name me.'

'Don't you have granny? Aunts? Uncles?'

'They have got no time either.'(par. 2)

This extract shows the nameless condition of the narrator because he is from extremely poor family. He gets his name by a teacher, not from his family. He was given a name according to compulsion and his innocence as 'Balram' and later on, as 'White Tiger' due to his extra talent or his rare potentials.

K.C. Reyes writes that the novel concerns the injustice and disparity in Indian society:

Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* portrays the harsh realities of class struggle. It shows the two faces of Indian society, the Light and the Darkness- the truest binary opposition that every society has.

Indeed, the novel captures a universal picture of every nation's injustices. While the very few who sit in the offices inside skyscrapers enjoy the comforts of light the sun brings them, the Darkness cast by the shadows of such towering edifices shelters the poor people. (par. 2)

Class struggle and hierarchical system is the harsh realities of Indian society. This system creates two opposite aspect in India- Light and Dark. Light for the rich and Dark for the poor.

The landlords of Laxmangarh stole the money of almost of every family, leaving them to die of starvation and compelling their young children to work in their coal mine factories and other big companies to pay off their debt, with high interest. When Balram's father died because of insufficient health facilities, he comes to know

about the doctors: as long as the doctors are paid by the rich people, they do private practice and avoid stepping foot in government hospitals.

Subversion of Traditional Indian Norms in the Novel

Traditionally Indian population is divided into higher and lower social classes. A person in India is born into a caste, and the caste one belongs to determines his/her occupation. Balram's caste is Halwai, so he is supposed to be a sweet-maker according to the traditional caste system but he works as a driver and finally becomes a successful self-entrepreneur. His father also a Halwai by birth was not a sweet-maker, but a poor rickshaw puller, because in that society someone with power and position stole his birth right of being a sweet-maker from him. Balram and his family struggle to overcome the burden of debt which they borrowed from their village landlord, Stork. So, they change their profession against the caste system in India. The time is changing. Caste system and social hierarchy is in the process of being deconstructed in India and now there are only two castes - the haves and the have nots.

Balram disregards the orthodox opinion and becomes a driver. He proves that, the established traditional thinking of people is not right, and that sweet-makers also can do driving as religion and castes should not matter for driving. Later, he earns much money and establishes himself as a business tycoon, Ashok Sharma. The unnamed boy Munna becomes Balram. His struggle makes him reach at the top level of the Indian society.

The novel portrays the disruption of the social, political and caste hierarchy in a remote village Laxmangarh as well as developed cities, like Delhi and Bangalore. Vijay, a low caste conductor of bus from Laxmangath, becomes a politician. He was used as a slave when he was the conductor but now, as he holds power, rich people go

and bow down to him. About it, Balram writes in his letter to Wen Jiabao, “I waited by the gate and watched. The Stork himself came out to see Vijay, and bowed down before him- a landlord bowing before a pigherd’s son! The marvels of democracy!” (103). Time is the strongest power in this world which Balram and Vijay represent.

Adiga shows subversion of political ideals in India; one of them is the voting system in India. Voting is a civil right given by the constitution of India, but now it has become a business of power and money. The political leaders buy the votes of poor citizen with a small amount of money. If the poor reject to give their vote, then they show their political power and destroy them. The independence is not for the poor, but only for the rich tycoons who are powerful financially and politically.

This novel shows the deconstruction of social hierarchy. Nobody could think that a bus conductor from a remote village could be a high class politician but it happens. Indian society has history of social status of different groups. It has been stratified as: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. After being democratic country, India has changed its rules. According to the Indian Constitution, disparity of the caste system has been made illegal. This means that discrimination against the Untouchables and the Adivasi has been abolished. There is no barrier in entering temples or holy places or marrying people from higher castes. But in Indian societies, there is still the problem of social hierarchy due to economic class.

Balram, a poor, low caste boy snatched from education and pulled to a coal mine and tea shop shows a great ambition to become a rich man. Through the portrayal of this character, Adiga lends voice to the marginalized section of Indian population, who are subjected to multiple forms of exploitation. To achieve success he even hides the crime of his master’s wife Pinky Madam, who driving a car full drunk collides with a street girl child. Balram narrates how he veils her crime:

Without a word between us, Mr. Ashok and I acted as a team. He grabbed her, put a hand on her mouth, and pulled her out of the driver's seat; I rushed out of the back. We slammed the doors together; I turned the ignition key and drove the car at full speed all the way back to Gurgaon. (163)

Pinky tries to shout help the victim as she is not an Indian but from America, married to Ashok. But Ashok, son of a landlord, would not let her do so. He shows the blood of cruel landlord or master. He stops his wife and later makes Balram to confess his undone crime in front of the judge. The bourgeoisie use the proletariat as the means of security. Balram also hides Pinky's crime; he does so because he thinks that if he hides this secret crime he will get a great opportunity in his life.

The novel shows the bitter fact of corruption in India and the change of situation for the subalterns as well. Balram, a poor driver, is supposed to confess the crime committed by Pinky, wife of landlord Ashok, because there was no one to save him. But Balram bribes the inspector and saves himself. This shows how a subaltern has started to 'speak' by using tricks and thrifts.

Adiga presents the inner feelings of downtrodden and unprivileged class through Balram. He shows that subaltern people also have a feeling of being great master, living luxurious life and so on. Mostly innocent poor people become criminal or a bad man, by compulsion, by force or by circumstance. Balram writes about how he was influenced by the environment to be a corrupt man: "All these changes happened in me because they happened first in Mr. Ashok. He returned from America an innocent man, but life in Delhi corrupted him- and once the master of the Honda City corrupted, how can the driver stay innocent?" (197). Bad things affect more easily than good things to human beings. Balram compares himself with his master

and describes himself as a corrupt human being. According to him, the damaged political instability and corrupted Indian atmosphere corrupted Ashok. Likewise, the surroundings of vulgar driver friends and alcohol made him corrupt.

The novel is a socio- political-hierarchical critique of modern India. It also encapsulates the complexities of identity formation in a milieu affected by neo-capitalism. The voice of subaltern Balram, the boy from darkness, moves up the ladder of crime to become Ashok Sharma, the self- entrepreneur. And the process of Balram turning into Ashok Sharma is also a neo- capitalist triumph. It points to the inversion of traditional Indian norms and ideals. Krishna Singh writes about the bitter scenario of Indian society which makes the poor suffer and how Balram gets rid of the rooster coop:

In Banglore, Balram became a successful businessman because he had gone through the bitter experiences of life. He was in midst of ‘the rooster coop’ of the downtrodden people and saw how the illiteracy, unemployment, Zamindari practice, social taboos, rigid caste discrimination, caste and culture conflict, corrupt politicians and bureaucrats, economic disparity, superstitions, corrupt education system and health services, shrewd entrepreneurs, flood, mall culture etc contribute to the sufferings of underclass. (par. 104)

Balram is dragged into a coal mine leaving his school then to work at a tea shop where he nurtures a hope of release from the imprisonment he is plunged into. He always feels he is not born to live that sort of rooster life. Balram’s father, in his whole life, gets treated like a donkey so Balram wants to overcome from that bitter reality. His inner heart strongly shouts that he was destined not to stay as a slave. So, he collects all the information about the social system by eavesdropping the people

who come to the tea shop and he starts to exploit the loopholes of the society to become a successful businessman.

Wendy Singer asserts, "*The White Tiger* is the story of Balram Halwai, the son of rickshawalla, who through wiles and determination becomes the driver to the hated village landlord" (Par. 2). A poor man shows his so called respect to his landlord but Balram totally hates his landlord Stork. It is inversion of the traditional ideals and norms.

Talking about the inversion of traditional norms in Indian society which the novel depicts, Amrit Dhillon states,

The White Tiger makes a new departure in India by portraying the emotions, sorrows, and aspirations of the hitherto invisible poor. For Adiga, his achievement is capturing "something new" in India, a stirring a glimmer of a refusal by the poor to accept the fate ordained for them by their masters. (par. 9)

In India, many people are backward and are unable to get a simple job to sustain their life. Dhillon praises Adiga because he unveils the steps taken by the subaltern people. Rich people show cruelty to poor people and their servants but the servants are not going to tolerate their master's cruelty. These conditions are not acceptable for them. And the time is changing rapidly.

Prateek Deswal tries to explore the inversion of social hierarchy in India, which Adiga has tried to draw through the terms of darkness and light. He states, "When Balram is in Laxmangarh he is residing in Darkness but in Banglore and Delhi he comes to Light" (par. 12). In Laxmangarh Balram feels the discrimination of hierarchy and he goes to city to prove himself. Then he starts to earn and save his money. Finally, he becomes rich and touches the peak of success.

Comparing the novel with other postcolonial writers' works that show a faithful account of the eventful lives of the downtrodden, the victimized, the marginalized and the back-warded who through their struggle, hard work, and rebellious endeavors rise to success and subvert the traditional ethos, Sangeeta postulates,

Adiga's *The White Tiger* deconstructs the existing social and individual ethos of the unprivileged sections of the society and therefore presents a new interpretation of reality. We find the post-colonial writers like Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh have also re-written reality about men and their relation to society in the light of post-colonial spectrum. (par.12)

Deconstruction theory is also relevant to post-colonial theory. According to Sangeeta, many writers have shared ideas to create some new ideas in the society. This novel also deconstructs the existing social and individual values and norms.

The protagonist of this novel is from subaltern group. The subaltern people are of inferior rank in terms of race, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion. Lekha Nath Dhakal talks about how this novel concerns the issue of the subaltern people and their voice:

Adiga's *The White Tiger* expresses and exposes the issue of subaltern. By uniquely showing the protagonist, transformed from village simpleton to citified businessman through Machiavellian tricks of trade, Adiga is trying to focus on the fact that subaltern can speak at times. (par. 1)

Dhakal shows that this novel exposes the issue of the subaltern people who are going to understand that time is changing and the chance for being free is near to them, if

they act trickily. But Adiga's focus is on the loss of morality, growth of corruption and violence, and they want of equity.

About the necessity of the deconstruction of hierarchy in Indian society Dhakal refers to Kathleen Waller's article, 'Redefinitions of India and Individuality in Adiga's *The White Tiger*':

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga challenges Indian culture to create a society, in which individuals are truly free. Waller argues that the relevance of Adiga's novel is that it is social structure and practices of hierarchy keep many people in the lower classes of Indian society and that this state of affairs is counterproductive. Instead, Adiga's novel suggests that the situation of India's social structure and its entrenched hierarchy would have to be looked at and that through the erasure of constraint by society's class hierarchy Indian society could transform. (par. 4)

Waller argues that the traditional practices of Indian society are counterproductive and that they are to be changed or deconstructed in order to transform it. This is suggested by *The White Tiger*.

Referring to the change from nameless (non-identity) situation to identity formation Waller mentions the importance of literary writing as follows:

Nonidentities in literature, especially through nameless or multiply named characters, have been precursors to actual social changes in the past. Ralph Ellison's nameless narrator in *Invisible Man* preceded the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. (par. 7)

In India there are so many subalterns, who do not have time to name their children, like the narrator's mother in the novel. However, they have time to make many

children, giving birth to children year by year. This is an irony. Adiga suggests change in this situation- by showing that the narrator's mother cannot name him but he proves himself for being named as Balram and The White Tiger. The value of this novel is that it may work as the precursor to change in the Indian society.

Balram speaks and gives voice to the voiceless through his act of self-actualization. He is from poor background but no one can control his mind. He is a man of ambitions, which can be connected to postmodern theory. Postmodernism is a style and concept in the arts and literature characterized by deconstruction of theories and ideologies, traditional culture and morality, etc. Balram's ambition is to be a self-entrepreneur, not a home servant. He makes a ladder to reach his wealthy master Ashok and shows a radical change in a poor boy. This involves a radical reappraisal of modern assumptions about culture, identity and social pyramid. His master Ashok is not cruel as other traditional masters but he has also same mindset as others. Balram is able to know slowly about his master's real character and attempts to break down the distinctions between high and low class, culture and chain of command.

Kusum, Balram's grandmother is from very strict class culture. She controls her grandson Kishan and makes him marry for dowry. She treats her daughter-in-law in a very cruel way because she cannot earn money. Kusum wants Balram to marry for dowry but he disobeys her. When he starts to earn money she starts to love him. This behavior is the result of power of money in Indian family. By disobeying his grandmother for marriage, Balram subverts the traditional culture of his family.

Balram wants to escape from the darkness of life to enter the light. In order to do that he makes himself ready to enter the corrupt system. He does not care morality to be successful in improving his social position. In order to get to the top, Balram follows corruption. He wants to become a rich man. Jasmine Kaur Bhinder writes

about corrupt Balram, “The corruption led Balram to change himself, and destroy his past (darkness). Balram started thinking he could overcome corruption but ended up becoming a part of it” (par. 7). Balram’s new identity covers his past, full of darkness. He refuses to remember his past life that only gave him torture, pain, subjugation and darkness. The atmosphere of India’s corrupt police system gives way to Balram for corruption.

The poor background is not a big deal for Balram; he is a very optimistic human being who has courage to do something so unbelievable in his life that people stare their eyes at him and appreciate him. Ron Powers writes about paradoxical modernity in the novel:

Balram Halwai believes that “our erstwhile master, the white skinned man, has wasted himself through buggery, cell phone usage, and drug abuse,” and that in just twenty years time “it will be just the yellow men and brown men at the top of the pyramid,” and so India and China have much in common because “we’ll rule the world.” (par. 16)

Balram not only regrets about the history of his country but also believes in new modern era that there will be no other country and people to rule them. British colonizers made India captive for so many years. Therefore, he hates white skinned man and appreciates China and Chinese people as they have no history of being captive. And now he dreams of new modern India.

The novel presents many Indian norms and ideals being subverted. Balram, the protagonist of the novel, should be a sweet maker by his profession because he belongs to Halwai caste. It means that his forefathers used to make sweets but his caste is subverted because of his poverty and some corrupt political leaders and officers. Now, his father becomes a rickshaw puller for the sake of livelihood instead

of becoming a sweet maker. Balram is forced to work in a tea shop, then in coal mine and after that he becomes a driver and servant of Stork and his family. Finally, he becomes a self-entrepreneur or businessman. In this way, the caste system has been subverted by Balram and his father refusing the fate ordained by tradition.

Vijay, a pigherd's son from the lowest of the caste, becomes a bus conductor, banging the caste system. People used to say that he let the politicians dip his back in his backside; it was not his job but a compulsion and a ladder to get position in the politics. Previously, Vijay used to be servile to all political leaders but now time has been changed and he has become a great politician and rich people bow down their heads to him. It proves that a person from subaltern group is speaking and applying tricks to be free from Darkness and get to Light.

In Laxmangarh, there was a nameless situation of Balram. Firstly, he was called Munna, which means only a boy, and then his school teacher gave him a name Balram. A school inspector came to inspect the school who gave him a name White Tiger and finally he named himself Ashok Sharma after becoming a successful entrepreneur. In Indian culture and tradition, name-giving ceremony is observed in the family and a priest gives the name for the baby only once but here this rigidity in identity subverts and the narrator gets multiple identity against his nameless situation. Similarly, marriage of sons and daughters is decided by parents or grandparents but here this tradition is broken by Balram. He does not marry as suggested by his granny Kusum. She tells her grandson to marry but he denies and does not care about the family but thinks of himself.

Moreover, Balram knows that if he kills Ashok, the Stork would kill his family but he does not care that and works at the cost of his family. It shows that the recent Indian situation is very bad: people have become very selfish and

individualistic. Each person thinks only about self-interest. This is a subversion of traditional responsibility towards the family.

Masters were respected and obeyed by their servants in traditional India. This culture is also subverted by Balram. He hates his master Stork but works as a fake loyal servant. Next thing he takes Pinky, Ashok's wife, to airport without permission or informing Ashok. Even he kicks Ashok on being punished and finally kills his master, Ashok only for money. He knows that if he kills his master Ashok, Stork will not let his family live anymore, he also will kill all of his family members in retaliation. But he sacrifices all those things and damn cares about his own family. Indian people are family lovers and patriotic; they can die for their family and country but Balram represents the subversive situation of family love and responsibility.

Likewise, he is writing a letter to Chinese Premier, informing him about the corruption, immoral ways of Indians, caste system and economic disparity of India. He subverts the feeling of patriotism and gives internal matters or information to enemy country China. India and China are enemy countries; there was a war between these two countries in 1962 about border issue and they have not yet come to terms. Without caring this fact, he writes a letter to Wen Jiabo. Pakistan and China are not very friendly to India. To disregard this fact is to invert the reality.

Indian people are assimilating western culture. There is Americanization of Gurgaon. When Pinky is not comfortable in Ashok's village and goes on asking for her own country, America, Ashok takes her to Gurgaon, where American culture and system is created to fulfill a want of foreign taste. This Indian city is even surpassing USA, making same kind of hotels, malls and cinema halls.

M.K. Gandhi, a great revolutionist, freedom fighter, a model of righteousness, truth, nonviolence, virtue and patriotic ideal of India taught Indians the right path but

his ideals have been neglected: India is progressing economically but, in the government officials, the society and the political leaders, there prevails disloyalty, corruption, immoral practices, murderous activity and bribery. Such things create only war and distance among people. Those things are worthless because they never bring peace and harmony in the country. They are against what Gandhi had thought for India and taught Indians.

Government maintains administration and progress through the tax of country. Tax helps to make infrastructure of development, but this novel shows that individuals as well as officials and big political leaders avoid tax. They involve in the illegal business of selling coal out of government mines. Ashok's family is involved in this illegal business so they bribe politicians to trick out tax of the government. Such kinds of people are like internal worm or locust, which destroy whole nation and citizens. Great Indian leaders who drove the British had envisioned fair India. But now there is no resistance against evil practices.

But the motto is changed, "If you cannot beat them, join them." It is subversion of patriotism and traditional Indian ideals. Balram spits on his own village against the tradition that Indians love their motherland more than themselves. He becomes selfish and starts unexpected journey into New Delhi. There is loss of patriotic feeling in Balram.

There used to be unity among workers and servants; they used to work together but now, the novel shows, there is cut throat competition between servants of the same position. There is no magnanimity between each other. Balram tricks to dismiss Ram Parsad, a Muslim chauffer and no.1 driver, and the Nepali watchman to become no.1 servant, by which he can take the couple- Ashok and Pinky to Delhi and can earn good money. So, there is no sense of humanity and mercy whereas India was

known as land of love, patriotism and humanity.

Indian people love their culture, traditions and gods but Balram mocks at the Indian ritual before starting his narrative. He irreverently refers to the Indian tradition of praying the Gods before beginning a story as “kissing the God’s arses” (8). Likewise, The Ganges is known as a sacred river site and tourist destination for many people but for Balram, it represents ignorance and dirtiest place in which he grew up. Thus, he is dissatisfied with his motherland and culture. Indian tradition of caste system was developed to maintain social function through people’s occupation but now the division is changed into economic condition- Big Bellies and Small Bellies. Politics and democracy of India is also perverted. Votes are civil rights but votes are being sold by shopkeepers to corrupt politicians. Morality and culture are getting corrupt.

Light gives meaning as a bright aspect of life. Light refers to good things or virtue but here, meaning of light gets subverted because in Balram’s sense it represents the life of the powerful, corrupt urban, wealthy and sophisticated people in India. And Darkness normally refers to the evil and negative aspect but here it refers to the poor and rural people of India who are innocent and live a life of rooster coop. Balram’s description of Light and Dark India reflects this upset of moral values. In this novel, neither rich people nor poor people, who follow the evil ways, are good. Adiga uses the terms Light and Dark in subverted sense in this novel.

For the Indians, family is a strong support for every person; they can get help from the family and do everything for them but for Balram, family is destructive and burdensome for the development of his individuality. Familial loyalty and love becomes weakness for him and he deserts it. It shows the subversion of family love and unity. Thus, traditional ideals, morality and humanity are disrupted by Indians.

Chapter 4

Want of Equity and Morality

This study was planned to analyze Adiga's *The White Tiger* with the hypothesis that traditional social hierarchy has been ruptured due to globalization in India, giving rise to new hierarchy and moral degradation. Traditional hierarchy was formed on the basis of the Indian caste system, as: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. It was formed according to the functions people had to do in the society. But now in the modern India there are only two castes: the haves and the have nots, or the Big Bellies and the Small Bellies who have lost sense of morality in quest of prosperity. Every society is governed by a particular socio- cultural system which has a direct impact upon the lives of the people. So is true with the Indians. Adiga presents the miserable condition of the subaltern people of India, whose voice is unheard by the government.

The novel presents the actual social hierarchy and evil practices in India. The author develops the themes and ideas in the novel as the critique of bourgeoisie by showing the struggle of the self- centered politician and landlords. He also presents the subjugated and subordinated condition of the subaltern people in India. The study finds that political election has been an evil fever of India, the most dangerous disease. Balram comes from, what Adiga calls, the Darkness and he becomes a chauffeur, the servant despite being a Halwai by birth and thus his traditional profession is subverted.

M.K. Gandhi launched the rebellion against the British rule for the independence of India and the upliftment of the lower- caste people, with his principles of Truth and Non- violence. He practiced his principles himself. He emphasized the need of ethical discipline and taught Indians to follow the ideals. His

method towards political reform was directed to educating the individuals to rise to a moral stature. While fighting for the independence of India, he was conscious of the necessity of equality and moral upliftment of the individuals who were to work after the independence. He expressed his picture of independent India as “Ram Raj”, which he meant and explained as the rule based on moral authority- truth and righteousness. But present day India is not following his ideals of truth, righteousness and non-violence but it indulges in falsity, corruption and violence. The novel presents these evil practices being prevailed in India and, thus, Gandhi’s ideals and teachings being subverted.

The protagonist is a subaltern who knows what his ambition is and waits for his best opportunity. And when he gets opportunity, he chops out his own master, takes his money, flies to Bangalore and becomes a self- entrepreneur. The study finds that the novel expresses the need of new ideas and changes in the social system to upgrade and lift up the condition and to maintain the balance between the rich and the poor. For that, discrimination of the caste system and politico- economic corruption should be erased. Disparity due to caste system has been reformed by law and the constitution but economic disparity and corruption prevails. Equity and morality have to be maintained.

Otherwise, India is sure to sink in the quicksand of illegal and immoral activities. If Indians follow the status quo and the footsteps of the corrupt politicians and officials as well as Balram, there will be the rule of anarchy and no one will be secure. Too much of suppression and oppression may cause to take a deviated course as in the novel. Therefore, India has to think over financial upliftment of the poor, change in the socio- political scenario of the present time and work for giving security to all if it has to establish peace, order and prosperity in the country.

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