

## **Impact of Socio-economic Condition in *The White Tiger* of Aravind Adiga**

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**Mr. Vinod Manoharrao Kukade**, Assistant Professor in English, Fule-Ambedkar College of Social Work, Gadchiroli

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**Article Received:** 08/03/2023

**Article Revised:** 09/04/2023

**Article Accepted:** 10/04/2023

**Published Online:** 14/04/2023

**DOI:** 10.47311/IJOES.2023.5.04.167

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### **Abstract**

The Booker Prize-winning novel of Aravind Adiga entitled *The White Tiger* presents a realistic picture of the society of India. The story reflects naturalism, which unveils the impact of the socio-economic condition on the people, the existence of the "rooster coop" concept, the master-slave relationship, and the scientific portrayal of the characters. The writer realistically presents the hazardous effects of social evils. This paper attempts to find out the impersonal image of contemporary society, the socio-economic condition of India, and its negative impact on the people. The protagonist Balram Halwai is shown to have a change in his character as he is fed up with seeing the oppression of the poor, the growing crime, and the corruption. The negative change, like Balram, shows the depth of contemporary human beings' social evils and mentality. An adverse impact of the socio-economic condition on Balram's psyche indicates the need for proper guidance and good accompany. Balram comes into the clutch of social evils and adheres to crime and corruption. It is shown that in the modern era, it has become easy to adopt the wrong sides of life.

**Keywords:** Socio-economic, Change, Corruption, Oppression, Realistic.

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### **Introduction**

The novels of Aravind Adiga chalk out the social structure with the depth of the realistic elements of the life of poor people. The book *The White Tiger* won the 40<sup>th</sup> Booker Prize in 2008. The delineation of the narrator's character, Balram Halwai, exposes the making of man and the changing thoughts. Aravind Adiga reveals natural elements of life. This paper focuses on unveiling the changing nature of Balram Halwai. The change in Balram Halwai's attributes resulted from the established corrupt and oppressive minds of particular groups of people. Balram talks about life in light and light in the darkness. He refers to light the prosperity and night to the miserable life of poor people and the poverty. The novel is written

in epistolary form. Balram Halwai writes about his life in letters, and he hands over these letters to Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao. Balram reveals the facts of his life in the letters without hiding any secret. Being the son of a poor Rikshaw driver and having a meager family income, Balram faced the ill effects of his poverty. The massive difference between the rich and the poor in leading life splits human beings into two categories. The inhuman side of human beings in several forms is exposed in the novel.

Naturalism focuses on presenting reality impersonally. The realistic portrayal of the fictional character is one of the significant traits of naturalism. Aravind Adiga's characters are fictional, but he gives them as if they are actual, and their lives seem to be perfectly matched with real contemporary lives. He highlights social evils such as impoverished people's oppression, corruption, bribes reciprocation, the slavery system, and the exploitation of enslaved people. Aravind Adiga goes critically while depicting contemporary ill issues. He unveils the hidden minds of the people and gives an outlet to his critical thoughts.

The novel describes the concept of "darkness" and "light," indicating poverty and richness, respectively. Poor people's lives are called "dark," and rich people's lives are called "light". The tracks of the transportation from dark to light are shown to be intensely thorny. The corrupt system and unmeasurable disparity made these tracks prickly. Hiding illegal activities by giving bribes has become easy. Corruption has become general. The naturalistic depiction of life mirrors the fact of contemporary society.

However, Balram, owing to the irrational kind of social circumstances, broods over overcoming the problems of his life and society. He does not want to be the slave of anybody. His thoughts change his current social status; though they become fruitful to prosper in his life, they become worthless in the eyes of morality -the based world as he accepts a life of crime and corruption. The past and present of Balram are different. He is seen to be making efforts to change his future. But the question is, what does Balram achieve in his later life? Which kind of change society accepts? Balram, though, could successfully travel from darkness to light, but such light achieved by doing crime and corruption has no value.

Aravind Adiga presents the incidents of corruption in India. Pinky Madam, the wife of Mr. Ashok hits one child with her car, and that child dies. Pinky madam quickly gets out of that case when the bribe is offered to particular officers. Aravind Adiga goes further to say that even there was another plan ready to free Pinky madam from this case. His boss, Mr. Ashok, told Balram to tell the police that he was driving the car and hit the child. Before the bribe, everything was managed there. The life of the child has become valueless. The consideration of Mr. Ashok regarding the dead child that the dead child was homeless and so no harm happened looks against ethical values.

Balram has seen the politician by receiving the bribe from Mr. Ashok to seek exemption from the coal taxes. This kind of evading of taxes and corruption gradually converted mind of Balram towards bribery. Balram also observed that when his school teacher did not get a salary for nearly six months, the school teacher did not teach the students during that period. Aravind Adiga also talks about corruption in the medical field. Balram's father died because of a corrupt system. The doctor was not present in the hospital because he

had given a considerable amount of money as a bribe to higher officials to get that job. If he had paid cash for this job, he might have thought there was no need to fulfill his responsibility as a doctor. Aravind Adiga exposes the business mentality in the service sector. Service sectors are made on a non-profit basis, but the corrupt, greedy, and inhuman thinking of the people turned this sector into a profit-based sector. Arvind Adiga writes,

"There was no doctor in the hospital. After we bribed him ten rupees, the ward boy said that a doctor might come in the evening."(TWT, p. 48).

The thought of not doing work because of the bribe given for that job seems unnatural and inhuman. The ward boy also reveals this fact when he receives a fix. The hollowness of the corrupt people destroyed the moral values and damaged the atmosphere of society. Arvind Adiga vehemently condemns the inhuman behavior of such evil people.

Aravind Adiga brings forward how the votes are bought to win the election. This corrupt system of buying the votes made democracy poor. Aravind Adiga calls ironically to the corrupt politician a "Great Socialist". The hypocrisy of politicians is exposed by unveiling the truth. The outer show of helping people experiencing poverty is told here. The exploitation of the poor people by the corrupt politician but presentation as if the politician is serving the poor people is depicted by Aravind Adiga in a naturalistic manner.

The novelist depicts imagery of the white tiger. Balram goes with Dharam to the zoo, where he sees the white tiger in the cage. Aravind Adiga presents here the similar gazing of the tiger and Mr. Ashok, the boss of Balram. When Balram looks into the eyes of the white tiger, he experiences it as if he is looking into the eyes of his boss Mr. Ashok. This shows that the tiger's terror is seen in Mr. Ashok's eyes. This terror in the eyes of Mr. Ashok must be due to being the boss of Balram, and Balram as his slave.

This kind of corruption, exploitation of people with low incomes, and the hypocrisy of the politicians have adversely impacted Balaram's mind. His thoughts started getting changed and turned towards availing the advantage of corruption. He kills his boss Mr. Ashok for the sake of money. He becomes rich. In the novel, Aravind Adiga shows how Balram started giving bribes to several officers to escape from illegal actions and successfully complete his various works. This kind of adverse change in the thoughts of Balram shows the depth of the social evils, which quickly cast a detrimental impact on the people. However, Balram considers his actions rational and does not regret doing wrong acts.

Thus, this novel brings the quest of the protagonist Balram for freedom, the longing for transformation from darkness to light. However, being an underprivileged person, he felt inferior to all. The treatment that he receives from society causes an inferiority complex within him. He says, "All I want is that one son of mine-at least one should live like a man."(TWT, p. 30). He wanted to be treated like a man. But it took work for him to fulfill his wish. However, Balram's success and the fulfillment of his longing for light in his life and, finally, Balram's consideration of wrong act as rational indicate that the compromise with the moral and ethical values that Balaram does changes his life. However, Aravind Adiga

criticizes this kind of hazardous compromise. He has shown how corruption and social evils grow with this kind of mentality.

Here, it is seen that Aravind Adiga wants to avoid a conversion of poverty into richness which is occurred by making a compromise with human values. Aravind Adiga values that prosperity which is gained by doing honest work. The negative impact of the socio-economic condition on Balram shows the growth in social evils.

### **Conclusion**

Socio-economic conditions cast an impact on the people. But it is significant how the people face the occurring situation. *The White Tiger* shows that the people like Balram, instead of facing the problems of adverse socio-economic conditions, surrender to the difficulties and turn towards the wrong ways of life. Instead of talking or going against growing corruption, Balram accepts these wrong ways to prosper in his life. Balram, by doing a breakdown and murdering Mr. Ashok, does not feel any regret in his heart, but he rationalizes his wrong act. Demoralization is hazardous. The novel conveys the message that prosperity obtained from wrongdoings has no value in the world. It destroys the whole world. Wealth obtained in honest, moral, and ethical ways can survive long.

### **References:**

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