

## A STUDY OF ARAVIND ADIGA'S THE WHITE TIGER WITHIN THE APPARATUS OF *RASA THEORY*

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Poetics has been a very relevant and interesting field of the mankind from a very primitive period. India in comparison to other countries is considered to have a long and famous literary heritage. Sanskrit *kavyas* were composed at the time of composition of the *Ramayana* which marked the beginning of a glorious literary tradition. The *Rgveda*, is one of the finest composition of the world which holds a great amount of the poetic element in a great degree. It covers all the varieties and types of fine arts based on words and meanings.

Kavya is explained as having a special association of word and meaning which owe their specialty to three factors, viz., attribute a function and a suggested sense. The first course of specialty has two varieties, viz., *alamkara* (figure of speech) or a *guna* (quality). The second course has two varieties, viz., and appropriateness of speech whose function is called *bhoga-krti*. Of these five alternatives the first one is followed by *Udbhata* and others, the second one is followed by *Vamana*, the third is followed by the author of *Vakroktijivita*, the fourth by Bhattanayaka and the fifth by Anandavardhana. Samundrabandha here recognizes the (i) *alamkara* school (ii) the *gunaschool* (iii) the *vakrokti* school (iv) the *bhoga-katva* school and the (v) *dhvanischool*.

The paper is an attempt to analyze Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* within the framework of *Rasa* theory and explore various aspects of *Karuna Rasa* in the fictional work. *The White Tiger* is a moving exposition of the victimization of the marginalized in the Indian society.

### **Rasa Theory: An Overview**

*Rasa* is a great concept of Indian Poetics. It is, in fact, the impression created on the mind of the reader/spectator by the expression of the *bhavas*. "*Rasa* is created when the *bhava* is determined which is guided by the glance which follows the *hasta* movement." (2003,47). *Bhava* is the emotion that creates a sense experience and this experience in turn creates *rasa*. We can consider *bhava* as the body and *rasa* as the soul.

*Rasa* and *bhava* are supported elements of a particular work of art. *Rasa* is not generated if a *bhava* is not being properly promoted or expressed and if a *bhava* does not promote the corresponding *rasa*, *bhava* has no sensible existence. Both are dependent upon each other. Normally, our actual life consists of incidents which are stored in our unconscious mind but when the same incidents are described in a particular work of art or presented on the stage through expressions, our conscious becomes active and an inexplicable pleasure is derived by us and that is *rasa*. When the pleasures and the pains of the world are described by a competent author, the

appeal is universal irrespective of place and time. When such a work of art which is imbued with pains and experiences and with proper expression, is performed on the stage, it creates a deep impression on the minds of people and also develops the same feeling in them which at last becomes a source of great pleasure. The imagery created on the stage with the expression of *bhava*, is helpful in the production of *rasa*. Thus, it is a great experience shared not only by the actor and the audience but also by the author. The feelings and reactions in our mind are generally latent; the immediate reaction that activates the latent emotion is *vibhava*. So, the basic element which led to the generation of *bhava* is called *vibhava*. The expression which is created by the effect of situation or *vibhava* is called *anubhava* or the consequent. *Vibhava*, *anubhava* and *bhava* are thus intimately connected with one another.

According to Bharata, there are forty- nine emotions which are classified into three categories, *Sthaayi* or the static, *Sanchari* or *vybhicaari* or the transitory and *Saatvika* or the responsive. The emotions which are permanent and are retained in the minds of the audience till *rasa* is created are called *sthayibhavas* or static emotions. According to his classification the eight permanent emotions are: -*Rati* or love, *Haasa* or mirth, *Sooka* or grief, *Krodha* or anger, *Utsaha* or enthusiasm, *Bhaya* or fear, *Jugupsa* or disgust and *Vismaya* or surprise. The temporary emotions which contribute to the creation of *rasa* are classified as *sanchari* bhavas. They are thirty- three in number: - *Niveeda* or aversion, *Glaani* or depression, *Sankaa* or doubt, *Asuyaa* or Envy, *Mada* or intoxication, *Srama* or weariness, *Aalasaya* or indolence, *Dainya* or piteousness, *Cintaa* or sorrow, *Mooha* or passion, *Smriti* or recollection, *Dhriti* or courage, *Vridaa* or shame, *Capalataa* or waywardness, *Harsha* or joy, *Aavega* or agitation, *Jadataa* or stupor, *Garva* or arrogance, *Vishada* or despair, *Autasukya* or inquisitiveness, *Nidraa* or sleep, *Apasmaara* or epilepsy, *Stupa* or dream, *Viboodha* or awakening, *Amarsha* or indignation, *Avahitta* or concealment, *Ugrataa* or ferocity, *Mati* or knowledge, *Vyaadhi* or sickness, *Unmaada* or insanity, *Marana* or death, *Traasa* or fright and *Vitarka* or deliberation.

The physical involuntary expressions that develop according to the situation are called *saatvika bhavas* or responsive emotions. They are eight in number are: -*Sveeda* or perspiration, *Stambha* or torpidity, *Roomaanca* or horripilation, *Svarabhanga* (*svarabheeda*) or change in tone, *Veebhati* (*kampa*) or trembling, *Vaivarnya* or discoloration, *Asru* or tears, *Pralaya* or swoon.

Further, Bharata has classified eight *rasas*: - *Sringara* or amorous, *Haasya* or humorous, *Karuna* or pathetic, *Raudra* or furious, *Vira* or valorous, *Bhayanaka* or horrific, *Bhibhatsa* or repugnant *Adbuta* or wondrous. The ninth *rasa* had been added later which is *Santa rasa*. The static emotions that are responsible for these eight *rasas* in order are: - Love, Mirth, Grief, Anger, Enthusiasm, Fear, Disgust, Surprise and Peace.

*Karunarasa* refers to pathos, sadness, sympathy and kindness. It is found very markedly both in the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. According to the *Natyasastra*, *Karuna*, the compassionate or the pathetic *rasa*, comes from the primary *rasa* of *Rudra* or the Furious. *Bhavas* which are involved in *karuna rasa* are: - separation from beloved ones, destruction of assets, murder, imprisonment, experience of grief etc. It has three sub divisions based on sorrow, destruction of established order and reduction of wealth. The expressions or the gestures which are involved in the generation of *karuna rasa* are the following:-

*Vibhava*: - cursing, distress, downfall, calamity, separation from beloved ones, loss of wealth, murder imprisonment flight, serious accident and misfortune etc.

*Anubhava*: - shedding tears, lamentation, choked throat and mouth, pale face, drooping of limbs, deep breathing and loss of memory etc.

*Vyabhicharibhava*: - *nerved, glani, chinta, autusukya, aavega, bharma, moha, Sharma, bhaya, vishada, dainya, vyaadhi, jayada, unmade, apasmaara, tarsa, aalsya, marana* etc.  
*Satvikabhava*:- *stambha, vepathu, vaivarnya, ashru and swarabheda*.  
*Mukharaga*: - *prassana* (pleased), *rakhta* (red).  
*Varna*: - *kapota* (dove).  
*Swaras*: - *gandhara, nishada*.  
Presiding diety: - *yama*  
Hasta: - *pataka*

### **Exposition and Experiencing Karuna Rasa in *The White Tiger***

*The White Tiger* is the Man Booker prize winner novel, written by the Indian author Aravind Adiga. It was first published in 2008 and won the prize in the same year. The novel provides a dark glimpse of modern life in India through the narration of protagonist Balram Halwai. The protagonist of the novel narrates the novel in the form of a letter to the Chinese premier, Wen Jiabao. In his letter, he reveals his journey from a slave to a business man. Balram commences his novel by giving the description of his family and home town. He is a smart child of his family but forced to quit his studies due to financial problem and also he has to work in his brother's tea shop in order to pay his sister's dowry. During this tenure he decides to become a driver. Balram takes driving lesson and somehow gets job in Mr. Ashok's house, the son of the stork, the local landlord. During a trip back to his village with Mr. Ashok and Pinki Madam he quarrels with his grandmother and provide a clue to the reader and the Chinese premier about the murder of Mr. Ashok. Balram moves to New Delhi with Mr. Ashok and Pinki Madam where he comes across the corruption and the poverty which are prevailing extensively in the Indian society. One night Pinki Madam decides to drive the car and did an accident. In order to save Pinki madam Mr. Ashok puts blame on Balram for the hit and run case. But luckily no one came to enquire about the dead child so the case is closed.

One day Balram decides to kill his boss and on rainy day he murders Ashok by slitting his neck with a broken bottle of liquor. After killing his boss he flees with his young nephew and with the looted money he manages to settle down his business of Taxi Company.

The *vibhava* of *karuna rasa* 'distress' can be depicted in many scenes of the novel. For instance, he belongs to a very poor and large family. His father was a rickshaw puller and his mother remains sick. The pain arouses when Balram in the novel discusses the funeral of his mother "my mother's body has been wrapped from head to toe in saffron silk cloth, which was covered in rose petals and jasmine garlands. I don't think she had ever had such a fine thing to wear in her life." (2008,16)

Another *vibhava* of *Karuna rasa* can be experienced in the 'murder scene' which is a sudden and an unexpected twist in the narrative and overturns the expectations of readers who are not prepared for such ending, "I rammed the bottle down. The glass ate his bone. I rammed it three times into the crown of his skull, smashing through his brains. It's a good, strong bottle, Johnnie Walker Black – well worth its resale value" (2008, 285). *Anubhava* of *Karuna rasas* surfaces very prominently when there is description of 'choked throat and mouth' in the murder scene of Ashok.

The dominating personality of Balram's home was his grandmother who took decisions for everyone in the family. His parents couldn't even be bothered to give him a name, just calling him 'Munna'.

‘Munna’? That’s not a real name.’  
He was right: it just means ‘boy’.  
‘That’s all I’ve got sir, I said.  
It was true. I’d never been given a name.  
‘Didn’t your mother name you?’  
‘She is very ill, sir. She lies in bed and spews blood. She’s got no time to name me.’  
‘And your father?’  
‘He’s a rickshaw- puller, sir. He’s got no time to name me.’  
‘Don’t you have a granny? Aunts?Uncles?’  
‘They’ve got no time either.’(13)

Balram calls himself; “half- baked”, like many others in the country— he was not allowed to complete school but he knows to read and write, “The thing is, he probably has.... What, two, three years of schooling in him? He can read and write, but he doesn’t get what he’s read. He is half- baked. The country is full of people like him....” (2008, 10). In fact, Balram was a smart child among all the children in his school and he was even praised by the school inspector, who gave him a name called ‘White Tiger’, “the rarest of animals--- the creature that only comes along once in generation?” (2008, 35). I thought about it and said: ‘The White Tiger’. That’s what you are, in this jungle.” (2008, 35) The school inspector was impressed by this white tiger and even promises to arrange a scholarship and proper schooling for him. Instead of this great help provided by the school inspector to Balram, his family members took him out from school and compel him to work in a tea shop.

The description of the government hospital in the novel by Adiga again evokes *Karunayasa* in the readers. Balram’s father was suffering from tuberculosis. The condition of the government hospital was miserable. The hospital was in fact inaugurated by the great socialist. It was a proof that he has kept his promise of building hospital in the village. Kishan and Balram saw sign on the gate “Lohia Universal Free Hospital, Proudly Inaugurated by the Great Socialist, a Holy Proof that He Keeps his Promises” (2008, 48). The hospital was lack of doctors and other medical facilities. Only a ward boy was present in the hospital. Not a single doctor was present there to treat the patients. Before Balram, many others were waiting for the doctor but there was no sign of doctor. At last, Balram’s father died waiting for the treatment. “When Kishan put some food into father’s mouth, he spat it out with blood. His lean black body began to convulse, spewing blood this way and that. The girls with the yellow eyes began to wail. The other patients moved away from my father.” (2008, 50)

Balram’s father and mother were dead. Now he becomes an orphan. So, slowly he manages to distance himself from his family. His granny provides him money to learn driving but on the bet that he would give all his salary to his family in future. Balram manages to get away from his family but it was not the end of his miseries. Servants are like the puppets in the hands of affluent class. The life of the animals is far better than man in the houses of rich people. Balram was given the duty of taking care of cuddles and puddles, “by the time I was done with cuddles and puddles, I walked back, sniffing my hands- the only thing that can take the skin of dog skin off a servants hands is the smell of his master’s skin” (2008, 78). Eventually, he got a chance to drive Honda city to Delhi with Mr. Ashok and Pinky Madam. Sitting in the egg shaped shell he could see the miserable conditions of the poor living in the pavement cooking rice gruel for the dinner, and getting ready to lie down and sleep under a street lamp. “These people were

building homes for the rich, but they lived in tents covered with the blue tarpaulin sheets, and partitioned into lanes by lines of sewage. It was even worse than Laxmangarh” (2008, 260)

The winters of Delhi are not that easy to bear for the poor people. It is well explained by Adiga in his novel. “When the homeless or the servants like night watchmen and drivers who are forced to spend time outside in winter, want to keep warm, they burn whatever they found on the ground” (2008, 157).

The incident which alone is enough to stir the soul of readers is when pinky madam hit a poor fellow for her mere pleasure of driving when she was drunk. Instead of taking that person to the hospital they just ran off from the spot. Balram who was an innocent person forced to sign on the papers which show that he was the murderer who killed that fellow during driving. His only mistake was that he was a servant and a poor fellow who was too weak to raise his voice against upper class.

“I Balram Halwai, son of Vikram Halwai, of Laxmangarh village in the district of Gaya, do make the following statement of my own free will and intention:

that I drove the car that hit an un identified person, or persons, or person and objects, on the night of January 23<sup>rd</sup> this year.....that I was alone in the car, and alone responsible for all that happened” ( 168).

The narrative took a sharp turn when Balram killed his master and ran with red bag. Arvinda Adiga really made readers shock with his great twist.

The episode in the novel is soaked in *Karuna, as well as Vibhatsa rasas*. With this money he became the business man of Bangalore and changed his name from Balram to Ashok. On the whole, the image of contemporary India can be seen well in this novel of Adiga. It is the society who influenced him and at last made him a criminal. After becoming the master of the company ‘The White Tiger Drivers’ he does the something what his master did offering bribes to officers in order to save his collar. This is what happening in today’s India. The riches are taking advantage of poor and indirectly giving them opportunity to become a criminal. Our whole system is working like this only.

### **Conclusion**

Aravind Adiga’s fictional work *The White Tiger* is rich enough to stir the souls and minds of the readers and compels them to think about the plight of the marginalized, exploited, victimized and voiceless. The scarred life of Balram Halwai, the burning fire of vengeance in him, his transformation into a murderer, offers a moving spectacle embodying *Karuna and vibhatsa Rasas*. The narrative also raises several questions about modern India where, underneath the crust of wealth, industrial expansion and glory, is buried the tale of shambles.

### **Works cited**

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