

DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN INDIA IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER*

Sangeetha M

M.A, M Phil, Bed NET

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Peri College Of Arts and Science College

Mannivakkam Chennai

Abstract

Indian Writing in English has its own admiration throughout the world. The works of Indian English fiction reveals that their works are not an imitation of literary pattern but highly original and intensely Indian in both theme and spirit. Today, the themes of the Indian novelist writing in English are many and varied. Most of the Indian novels are portrayed about poverty, hunger, social inequality, democratic issues, and disease and wide spread social evils. Some other themes of the novel in English are inter-racial relations, examination of the survivals of the past and the both caste (upper & middle). The focus of many writers to create awareness in the mind of the people. They are socially responsible to teach the reader through their writings.

Keywords: communism, politics, humanity, love, affection.

Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* challenges definitions of Indian identity with a narrator who comes from a nameless and birthday-less past with a written fate as a member of the lower caste. In *The White Tiger* Adiga is first defined through nonidentity by the fact that he has "never been given a name" (10) nor "know[n] his exact age" (12). He has always been called "Munna," or "boy," which his teacher claims is "not a real name" and subsequently names him "Balram ... the sidekick of the god Krishna" (10-11). Although there is consideration through the novel of the narrator's place in society that is dependent on his position in India's caste system, his lack of name challenges a strict fate through its potential for mutability. The teacher already challenges the notion that we are born into identities by labeling Munna with the new name of Balram and tells Balram that his own name is Krishna, therefore placing Balram as his "sidekick" in the classroom.

The new name may be a step up from "boy" in the hierarchy, but a "sidekick" is not only below another by definition but also at the mercy of the other's fate. "Balram" is an elevated status of a name with less freedom of identity. However, Balram's father seems to have no care what his son is called: "If it's what he wants, then we'll call you that" (11). He does not attempt to design Balram's fate, and we are suddenly aware that the narrator need not be caught in the continuous cycle of father and son that dominates class definitions worldwide.

The narrator writes with directness and humor, relating himself to the premier. All conventions of careful respect for a national leader are ignored as the narrator says he "consider[s] [him]self one of your kind" to the premier (2). Perhaps this connection with a leader of a communist country is also a way to seek out political ideologies he feels may work for India. In the true definition of communism, this narrator, no matter what his caste, should be free from hierarchy

and therefore equal to the social class of the premier. However, the reader knows that even a communist premier would see himself as higher and removed from the rest of society. Adiga thereby mocks the notion that communism could be a true answer and that there is any hope the premier would even listen to the story of this young man. At the same time, Adiga has the chance to reach global recognition through his literature, while his narrator cannot. In this way, he may reach many of the world's political leaders with his strong yet fuzzy message.

We are startled time and time again by his blunt approach, as well as far-reaching statements about economics, politics, and religion. With the added confusion of knowing pieces of his story from the beginning, the narrator creates the same "murmur" or space for different understanding as Woolf's essay did eighty years ago.

Speaking on the servant-master relationship, Adiga says: The servant-master system implies two things: One is that the servants are far poorer than the rich—a servant has no possibility of ever catching up to the master. And secondly, he has access to the master—the master's money, the master's physical person. Yet crime rates in India are very low. Even though the middle class—who often have three or four servants—are paranoid about crime, the reality is a master getting killed by his servant is rare.... You need two things [for crime to occur]—a divide and a conscious ideology of resentment. We don't have resentment in India. The poor just assume that the rich are a fact of life.... But I think we're seeing what I believe is a class-based resentment for the first time. (Sawhney, 2008).

Injustice and inequality has always been around us and we get used to it. How long can it go on? Social discontent and violence has been on the rise. What Adiga highlights is the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor and the economic system that lets a small minority to prosper at the expense of the majority. "At a time when India is going through great changes and, with China, is likely to inherit the world from the west, it is important that writers like me try to highlight the brutal injustices of society... the great divide." (Raaj, 2008, p. 9).

Aravid Adiga's story of a rickshawallah's move from the "darkness" of rural India to the "light" of urban Gurgaon reminds us of the harsh facts behind the fiction (Raaj, 2008, p. 9).

Balram becomes a true professional busy handling crisis situations sitting in his office. He recall what poet Mirza Ghalib wrote about slaves: "They remain slaves because they can't see what is beautiful in the world" (TWT, 2008, p. 40). His thirst for freedom came alive when he visited his native village while Mr. Ashok and wife Pinky went on an excursion.

Balram commented that the rich men show their humanity, love and affection only towards their pets. But they do not show their sympathy and compassionate nature towards their servants. The two dogs cuddles and puddles were the central figures of his master's house and they were facilitated with good food and health. But most of the poor's are living without the very basic need like food, water, housing and sanitation. The poor people face too many hindrances in the society. They have no opportunity to gain education and they do not have any sources of income to live. These people are the victims of economical discrimination were they are working as servants to cope up with the present globalised society. The masters never understand the situations of the servant. Adiga has awakened the mind of the reader in this novel "*THE WHITE TIGER*" by pointing out the discrimination, democratic practice and inequality in the society.

Work Cited:

Adiga, Aravind *THE WHITE TIGER*. New Delhi: Harpercollins publisher, 2008.

Andrew, Holgate. "Rev. of the *The White Tiger*": June 16, 2008.