

RHETORICAL DEVICES IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER*

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Abstract

The primary aim of this paper is to examine how the author has effectively used rhetorical devices in this Booker prize-winning novel. The paper highlights the issues prevailing in India such as corruption, prostitution, unemployment, ill-state education, filthy political system and illegal businesses. The author has used rhetorical devices for emphasizing the issues vibrantly and also to bring an awareness among the people about afore-mentioned issues. The paper will also excavate the cruel Zamindari system depicted in this novel. The rhetorical devices cope with the author's language for efficaciously showing the burning problems of the society.

Keywords: Rhetorical devices, Problems, Political system, Awareness, Zamindari system.

Aristotle defined rhetoric discourse as the art of discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given case, and focusing his/her discussion on the means and devices that an orator uses in order to achieve the intellectual and emotional effects on an audience, an orator uses these devices. It will persuade them to accede to the orator's point of view' (Abrams, 265). Later most of the rhetoricians of classical era acceded to the point of view of Aristotle.

In rhetoric, the primary aim is to persuade an audience think and make them feel in a particular way. A notable exception is major Roman rhetorician Quintilian, who gave a moral basis to rhetoric defining it as the art "of a good man skilled in speaking." (Abrams 265). Taken in a broader sense, rhetoric can be described as the study of language for its practical purposes that focuses on the effects of handling language in various fields.

Aravind Adiga is extremely good at using the art of rhetoric. Style is the way in which discourses are being made, stated and performed. Here, the style can be interpreted as a figure of speech. Adiga has employed the different stylistic device in this novel.

Repetition:

Adiga frequently uses repetition in the novel. It is used for the purpose of emphasis or emotional effect. He describes the servants who clear the teashop as follows. "They are the human spiders that go crawling in between and under the tables with rags in their hands, crushed humans in crushed uniforms." (Adiga, 51) He uses repetition when the protagonist searches for a job. He portrays his pathetic situation: "So I went looking from house to house, house to house,

house to house.”(Adiga, 59). Adiga often uses the ‘past’ in the following paragraph for showing effectiveness. Adiga ,

I drove through the greenery, through the bushes and the trees and the water buffaloes lazing in muddy ponds; past the coconut palms; past the bananas; past the neems and banyans; past the wild grass with the faces of water buffaloes peeping through. (Adiga, 88).

Hyperbole:

Hyperbole is ‘a bold overstatement, the extravagant, exaggeration of fact or of possibility’ (Abrams, 166). Adiga uses it in an interesting way. It is used for emphasis when Balram, a boy, is allowed to approach the wealthy man that he dived straightly at his feet without any hesitation. “As soon as the gate was open, I dived straight at Stork’s feet. No Olympic runner could have gone in as fast as I did through those gates.” (Adiga, 61).

Again, hyperbole is used to emphasize and mark the mental condition of servants. “Just because drivers and cooks in Delhi are reading ‘Murder Weekly’ it doesn’t mean that they are all about to slit their master’s necks. Of course, they’d like to. Of course, a billion servants are secretly fantasizing about strangling their bosses.” (Adiga, 125).

Personification:

Adiga makes use of personification which means ‘either an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings’ (Abrams, 132). Here, in this example, the glass has been considered as a man or a beast. “I rammmed the bottle down. The glass ate his bone.” (Adiga, 61).

Interrogative Statement:

Adiga raises a series of interrogative statements through the rhetorical for polishing the work. The point is that people live like animals. “Why had my father never told me not to scratch my groin? Why had my father never taught me to brush my teeth in milky foam? Why had he raised me to live like an animal? Why do all the poor live such filth, such ugliness?” (Adiga, 151).

Humour:

Adiga expresses humour in an attractive way. Kishan brings a gunny sack which is full of coal. He asks Balram to break the coal against the brick. He asked, “You hate the idea of having to break coals in his hand and squeezed it. Imagine that each coal is my skull: they will get much easier to break.” (Adiga, 38).At a later stage, after murdering his master, Balram throws all the stickers of goddess on Ashok’s body’s believing that it will help to send his soul to heaven. Here, Adiga humorously says, “I pulled out all the stickers of the goddess, and threw them on Mr.Ashok’s body – just in the case they help his soul to go heaven.” (Adiga, 286).While, Balram is driving the car, his master would tap him at his back, which would be a signal for something. “Mr Ashok tapped me on the shoulder. From the start, sir there was a way in which I could understand what he wanted to say, the way dogs understand their master.” (Adiga, 111). Adiga uses, the names of the streets in Delhi for the main reason that nobody knows the names of the places even though s/he dwells in the same area.

Every road in the Delhi has a name like Aurangazab Road, or Humyan Road, or Archbishop Makarios Road. And no one masters or servants,

knows the name of the road. You ask someone, where's Nikolai Copernicus Marg? And he could be a man who lived on Nikolai Copernicus Marg his whole life, and he will open his mouth and say; Hahn? Or he'll say straight ahead, then turn left even though he has no idea. (*Adiga*, 119).

The word 'Mosquito Menace' refers to the politicians of India as they rule the common people in the name of parties and, throughout, they suck the blood of people as the mosquitoes do. Here, the author combines personification and humour in his writing. "You sleep in the car, and the mosquitoes eat you alive. If they are malaria mosquitoes it's all right you'll just be raving for a couple of weeks but if it's dengue mosquitoes, then you're in deep shit and you will die for sure." (*Adiga*, 124).

Adiga compares men covering their faces by handkerchief to save from the effects of pollution in Delhi to bank robbers.

The pollution is so bad that the men on the motorbikes and scooters have a handkerchief wrapped around their faces- each times you stop at a red light, you see a row of men with black glass and masks on their faces, as if the whole city were out on a bank heist that morning. (*Adiga*, 133).

When his master Mr Ashok was knocked out of consciousness, Balram approached his master and gave a humorous description and narration.

Sir, I said, but he didn't wake up. I gave him a push. I slapped him on the face. He licked his lips, sucked his teeth. He was waking up, but I slapped him a second time-honoured servants' tradition. Slapping the master when he's asleep. Like jumping on pillows when masters are not around. Or urinating into their plants. Or beating or kicking dogs. Innocent servants' pleasure. (*Adiga*, 184).

When Balram saw his own poster on the wall, he comments about it with a sarcastic humour. "The large piece of paper on the wall was a police poster- my police poster. If had already arrived here. I looked at it with a smile of pride." (*Adiga*, 293).

Antithesis:

Antithesis refers to 'a contrast or opposition in the meanings of contiguous phrases or clauses that manifest parallelism, that is, a similar word order and structure in their syntax' (*Abrams*, 15). Adiga uses antithesis while referring to murder: "Here is a strange fact: murder a man, you feel responsible for his life- possessive, even – you know more about him than his father and mother; they know his foetus but you know his corpse" (*Adiga*, 46).

Euphemism:

Euphemism refers to 'an inoffensive expression used in place of a blunt one that is felt to be disagreeable or embarrassing' (*Abrams*, 115). In *The White Tiger*, Adiga described how Balram's father was suffering from tuberculosis. The protagonist visited the hospital but in vain there was on doctor. "He did not. Around six o'clock that day, as the government ledger no doubt accurately reported, my father was personally cured of his tuberculosis." (*Adiga*, 50).

Sarcasm:

Adiga has used sarcasm effectively in the novel. Sarcasm refers to in 'common parlance which is sometimes used as an equivalent for irony, but it is far more useful to restrict it only to

the crude and taunting use of apparent praise for disperse' (*Abrams*, 186). Adiga made use of sarcastic statement when he was talking about the business men. He remarks, "He's into coal, then probably here to bribe ministers. It's a rotten business, coal. He yawned again. 'I used to drive a man who sold coal. Bad, bad business. But my current boss is into steel. And he makes the coal men look like saints, where does he live?'" (*Adiga*, 126).

When the Mongoose ordered Balram to fetch a dosa for him, Balram took away the potatoes, throwing them on the tracks. He gave the dosa to the Mongoose and then he made a sarcastic remark there. "He chomped on the dosa in his seat; down below on the tracks a mouse nibbled on the discarded potatoes." (*Adiga*, 191).

Adiga uses sarcasm when he talks about the state of the drivers in the following lines. "We have left the villages, but the masters still own us, body, soul, and arse. Yes. That is right: we all live in the world's greatest democracy here." (*Adiga*, 169).

Here, Adiga was censuring the rich community and their positions. Once again, he was criticizing the servitude of the Indian poor in these passages.

A handful of men in the country have trained the remaining 99.9 percent – as strong, as talented, as intelligent in every way to exist in perpetual servitude, a servitude so strong that you can put the key of his emancipation in a man's hands and he will throw it back at you with a curse. (*Adiga*, 175).

The servants nowadays are conscious of the task of his master. Adiga examines in a critical manner. "A servant gets to know his master's intestinal tract from and to end from lips to anus." (*Adiga*, 141).

Paradox:

Paradox refers to 'a statement which seems on its face to be logically contrasting or absurd, yet turns out to be interpretable in a way that makes sense' (*Abrams*, 267). When Adiga talks about the black money, he makes a social satire. "The great socialist himself is said to have embezzled one billion rupees from Darkness, and transferred that money into a bank account in a small, beautiful country in Europe full of white people and black money." (*Adiga*, 98).

Balram describes how he killed his master in a detailed way. From that moment he becomes a free man. Here, Adiga uses paradox, "Just as I pierced his neck and his life blood spurted into my eyes – I was a free man." (*Adiga*, 285).

Adiga uses paradox to describe the relationship between the master and the slave, especially, when there is a role reversal. "The stork himself come out to see Vijay, and bowed down before him- a land lord bowing before a pig herd's son! The marvels of democracy!" (*Adiga*, 103). Adiga uses paradox in the following lines. "Do we loathe our masters behind a façade of love or do we love them behind a façade of loathing?" (*Adiga*, 187).

In quite an interesting way, Adiga uses literary repetition with comparison to make his point very strong and effective by using the word 'remember' repetitively.

Remember, Mr. Premier, the first, perhaps as a boy, when you opened the bonnet of a car and looked into its entrails? Remember the coloured wires twisting from one part of the engine to the other, the black box full of yellow caps, enigmatic tubes hissing out steam and oil and grease everywhere – remember how mysterious and magical everything seemed? When I peer into the partition of my story that unfolds in New Delhi, I feel the same way. (*Adiga*, 112).

At many places, Adiga uses comparisons in the novel. He even compares himself to a school. “The school still, like a schoolboy caught out by his teacher.” (*Adiga*, 284).

Simile:

Adiga uses simile effectively in his novel. Simile means ‘a comparison between two distinctly different things, explicitly indicated by the word ‘like’ or ‘as’” (*Abrams*, 130). When Balram’s cheek touched his master’s face, the stubble on his master’s reminded him of the shaving brush. “Our bodies were so close that the stubble on his face scraped my cheeks like sharing brush that I use every morning.” (*Adiga*, 112).

When Adiga describes how the drivers were rushing quickly to collect the magazine ‘Murder Weekly’, he compares them to dogs. “After showing it to me, Vitoligo Lips closed the magazine and threw it into the circle where they were sitting; they made a great rush for it, like a bunch of dogs rushing after a bone.” (*Adiga*, 126). Adiga compares Balram’s habit of scratching his groin with the movement of lizard. “I noticed what my left hand was doing: it had crawled up to my groin without my noticing – the way a lizard goes stealthily up a wall and was about to scratch.” (*Adiga*, 150).

Adiga depicts the condition and state of servants by using similes. “Seeing I was like that ass now, and all I would do if I had children was teach them to be asses like me, and carry rubble around for the rich.” (*Adiga*, 193).

Balram compares the desire to be a servant to a rich person to the sewage and industrial poison being poured into Mother Ganga. “Because the desire to be a servant had been bred into me: hammered into my skull, nail after nail, and poured blood; the way sewage and industrial poison are poured into Mother Ganga.” (*Adiga*, 193).

Adiga compares the red drop of blood on Balram’s palm to a row of ladybirds on a leaf. “There was still some blood on my palm; three small red drops had formed on my flesh, like a row of ladybirds on a leaf. Sucking my palm like a boy, I went to sleep.” (*Adiga*, 273).

Balram’s shivering hand has been compared with the movement of a lizard’s tail that has fallen off. “I kept my hand on Dharam’s head the whole time- he must have thought it was out of affection, but it was only to stop my hand from trembling – it had been shaking all morning like a lizard’s tail that has fallen off.” (*Adiga*, 274). Adiga makes a severe criticism about the vendor who sells helmets on the road. The pyramid of motorbike helmets appeared to be a pile of heads. “Outside on the road, a street side vendor was sitting next to a pyramid of motorbike helmets that were wrapped in plastic and looked like a pile of severed heads.” (*Adiga*, 268).

Balram sitting patiently waiting for his master’s call is compared to Buddha’s famous posture. “I don’t know how long I sat like the Buddha, but it lasted until one of the servants shouted out that I was wanted at the front door.” (*Adiga*, 279). The habit of open defecation by the slum dwellers has been described by Adiga. “The men were defecating in the open like a defensive wall in front of the slum: making a line that no respectable human should cross. The wind wafted the stench towards me. They squatted there like stone statues.” (*Adiga*, 260).

When his master said that Balram was one of the members of the family, he instantaneously became very happy. He felt happy like a dog. “My heart filled up with pride. I crouched on the floor happy as a dog and waited for him to say it again.” (*Adiga*, 165).

Balram is also compared to a pig in an amusing manner.

For every hour I spent in the car, he made me spend two or three under it – I was made a free repair mechanic for all taxis in the stand; late every evening, I emerged from under a taxi like a pig from sewage, my face

black with grease, my hands shiny with engine oil. I dipped into Ganga of black –and came out a driver. (*Adiga*, 56).

Balram compared the goat turds to the constellation of black stars. “Kishan and I carried our father in, stamping the goats turds which had spread like a constellation of the black stars on the ground.” (*Adiga*, 48).

Metaphor:

Much like similes, metaphors aid in comparisons, the only difference being the absence of comparison markers like ‘as’ or ‘like’. In *The White Tiger*, Adiga uses metaphors effectively. While discussing India’s freedom in 1947, he feels that Indians behaved like animals and fought with one another after getting freedom. “And then, thanks to all those politicians in Delhi, on the fifteenth of August, 1947- the day they left –the cages had been let open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law.” (*Adiga*, 63).

He ridiculed human beings calling them using animal names like mongoose, stork, and buffalo. “The Stork and his son could count on my loyalty” “The Buffalo did not believe him and got four of his hired gunmen to torture the servants.” (*Adiga*, 66-67).

“Mukesh sir was small and dark and ugly and very shrewd. We should have called him, ‘the Mongoose’ back at home.” (*Adiga*, 75).

“The Wild Boar came to have lunch with Mr. Ashok and Pinky Madam.” (*Adiga*, 82).

“The Mongoose leaned forward and put his hand on my shoulder. Country-Mouse! Get out of the car and come here!” (*Adiga*, 147).

The novel *The White Tiger* is totally a pack of rhetorical devices. One can find a plentiful of rhetorical devices in the novel. Rhetoric is the art of discourse. The rhetoric has brought out the writer’s style. Every writer should have the capability of writing of their own style. This style used in the novel typically furnishes the minutiae comprehending, discovering and improving argument for particular situations and works. Rhetorical analysis makes use of rhetorical concepts to describe the social or epistemological functions of the object of study. The aim of rhetoric analysis is not simply to describe the claims and argument advanced within the discourse, but more important to identify the specific strategies employed by the writer to achieve specific persuasive goals.

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga employs a lot of rhetorical devices, which explore the relationship between the text and context. Adiga has practised literary devices for drawing the attention of people in the novel. Adiga employs repetition, hyperbole, humour, simile, metaphor, and personification to perfection to bring out the best effect on the readers. Adiga uses repetition for awakening the consciousness about the poor people’s terrible life in the rich cities. The protagonist is an innocent fellow living at a village, who changed himself when he entered into the city. Adiga used hyperbole deliberately in *The White Tiger* for the sake of creating effect. One can find a limitless use of hyperbole in Adiga’s writing.

Adiga also used metaphor to show how power has played a significant role in the society. The upper class people are always very close to the powerful positions of the political government whereas the poor people are condemned to strive with poverty. As a ‘tiger’ metaphorically Balram will have to attack and tear to pieces his enemies, cunningly searching the environment. *The White Tiger* can be undoubtedly considered an imaginative map of rhetoric in the process of culling out the corruption of the society.

In brief, it can be said that the subjective emotions of the poor people and the poverty stricken state of India are well-emphasized in a rich manner of the exploration of ideas with the use of rhetoric in *The White Tiger*.

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