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A Portrayal of Class Conflict in Aravind Adiga's Works, *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in Tower*

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Abstract:

The most significant Man Booker Prize-winning author of Indian literature in English is Aravind Adiga. His writings cover some serious issues like terrorism, poverty, corruption, political unrest, caste and class discrimination etc. He portrays in the struggles faced by regular people in their daily lives in his writings. Adiga tells the story of a man's quest for independence in his first book, *The White Tiger*. The goal of his second book, *Last Man in Tower* is to examine people's avaricious desire for wealth. This paper explores the social issues of contemporary India portrayed in these novels. His works provide a clear picture of contemporary India. It highlights the struggles and exploitation faced by India's lower and standard classes.

Keywords: corruption, greed, poverty, injustice, globalisation.

Introduction

The novels written before independence deal with issues such as social evils, rites and rituals, poverty, and illiteracy. The post-Independence novels tackle social issues like poverty, terrorism, caste and class discrimination that are brought about by industrialisation, modernisation, globalisation, and world war.

The term "class struggle," "class conflict," or "class discrimination" describes the political unrest and economic hostility that arise between social classes as a result of power imbalances in the socioeconomic hierarchy, competing interests, and scarce resources. Class conflict is simply the continuous struggle between the rich and the poor. Property, not status or money, determines class. These are dictated by distribution and consumption, which in turn represent

class relations of power and production. Thus, class is a formal and theoretical relationship between people.

Class conflict refers to the struggle for control over society. Marxism is where the concept of class conflict appears most prominently. Marxism recognizes two major social classes: the 'proletariat' provides labour, while the 'bourgeoisie' controls capital and means of production. According to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, there has been conflict between these two classes for most of human history. The term "class struggle" refers to this conflict. This idea gained popularity following the publication of *Das Kapital* and *The Communist Manifesto*. Henri de Saint-Simon, a French theorist, had previously discussed the concept, but it was Marx who took it and used it as a catalyst for political struggle and social revolution. Marx, who was born and raised in the middle of the nineteenth century, required a method of explaining the how and why of revolutions in order to develop a more comprehensive theory of how society could overcome the adverse effects of capitalism. Marx's theory can be understood primarily in terms of two classes: the 'bourgeoisie' and the 'proletariat'. The proletariat is a class of people who sell their labour for a wage. A bourgeoisie is defined as someone who buys and profits from the labour of others. In other words, the bourgeoisie is the group of people who own the means of production used by labour. For example, they own factories and employ workers there. The factory's owner receives the profits. As a result, the bourgeoisie makes money and can afford to live their own lives, primarily through real estate investments.

Proletarian literature emerged early in the twentieth century in countries such as Britain, the Soviet Union, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, China, and India. One of the distinguishing features of this movement was that it included writing by and for the masses. The diversity of topics covered demonstrates the significance of this trend. "Proletarian literature" examined almost every aspect of society through the eyes of the working class, painting a complete picture of the class struggle, its participants, and their goals. A group of workers and intellectuals dedicated to raising awareness of labour issues through a variety of artistic mediums, including plays, poems, songs, agitprop skits, sketches, short stories, and novels about the class struggle.

The upper and lower classes were the primary class systems established in India due to the country's economic disparities. To reassure readers that this is India's main issue, this began to appear frequently in writings. India's current confidence in its path to a brighter future is depicted, along with a positive commitment and a hidden moral purpose. V.S. Naipaul, Anita

Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya, and Arundhati Roy are among the prominent novelists who have depicted the disorder to reflect the current situation in India. They have shed light on their communities' hardships and provided us with a foundation for understanding the complex relationships between caste, class, and gender in Indian society.

Aravind Adiga is a shining example of Indian English literature. He was born on October 23, 1974, in Madras, now known as Chennai. He is a journalist and an Indo-Australian writer. His first book, *The White Tiger*, was published and earned him the Man Booker Prize in 2008. The other three Booker Prize winners are Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and Kiran Desai. Adiga has won numerous other awards, including the British Book Awards Author of the Year, the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize, and the Commonwealth Writers Prize. In his book *Last Man in Tower*, he writes about Mumbai, the largest city in India, and its essence. His observational skills as a writer are excellent. All of his novels were written after he collected opinions and information from people nationwide. He enjoys conversing with and learning from the general public while riding public transportation. He is writing about the dark side of India. He speaks for the working class. People asked him why he only discussed the negative aspects of India in his book. He told them that writers from the nineteenth century, such as Flaubert, Balzac and Charles Dickens, had a significant influence on him. Arvind Adiga started his career at the Financial Times as an intern financial journalist, covering stock markets and investment procedures. After that, he spent three years as Time Magazine's South Asia correspondent. Shortly before leaving Time Magazine to become a freelancer. This was the time he wrote this novel. His three most important works are *Between the Assassinations*, *The White Tiger*, and *Last Man in Tower*. His characters in these novels are real people at the bottom of the social and political ladder. His four collections of short stories are *The Elephant*, *Smack*, *Last Christmas*, and *The Sultan's Battery*.

Aravind Adiga is an astute observer of social ills, corruption, and the widening wealth and poverty disparities in his community. We get a glimpse of modern India through his novels. His books clarify what he thinks about the growing wealth gap and the police's inability to apprehend criminals. His books also cover important topics such as terrorism, poverty, corruption, political unrest, caste and class discrimination etc. Balram, the protagonist of the novel *The White Tiger*, writes a series of seven-night epistolary letters to Chinese businessman Wen Jiabao, in which he tells him his story. 'The White Tiger' is a brilliant and thought-provoking novel from India that is truly revolutionary. Adiga discusses how certain aspects of

Indian society are exploited and suppressed. Its primary concerns include Indian crime, corruption, and injustice.

Throughout the text, Adiga emphasizes the complexity and dynamic nature of India's class stratification. In rural India, caste and economic status are the most important factors influencing class stratification, whereas in urban India, education, material success, and access to political power are the most important. Marx argues that ongoing historical processes determine the category of class. Throughout Indian history, the lower class has been consistently pushed to the margins, establishing a perceived boundary that they are expected to maintain indefinitely.

Balam is a metaphor for all of our country's impoverished people who yearn for better lives. A terrifying new India can be compared to Balam's story. Balam is a skilled businessman who knows how to defend himself. He works under the guise of injustice, corruption, and poverty. Anger and bitterness are always on the rise as the gap between those who have and those who do not widens. Adiga claims that the growing economic disparity between the rich and the poor is the reason why the wealthy benefit at the expense of others. The impoverished work for their masters and their prosperity, just as farmers do for their landlords. The book follows Balam's entire journey from the IT hub of Bangalore to the sleepy Bihar village of Laxmangarh. Balam was a gifted young man whose difficult family circumstances forced him to give up his studies. Being an intelligent Balam who, according to a school inspector, went by the nickname "white tiger." Balam got a job as a driver for Ashok, a dishonest businessman from Delhi. Balam's master, Ashok, and his family subjected him to torture and constant humiliation. His master and family never allow him to feel ashamed of himself; instead, they treat him with fake kindness. Pinky, Ashok's wife, killed a child while driving after drinking. Following that, they began accusing Balam of killing the child and forced him to sign a statement admitting his guilt. Balam developed cynicism and dishonesty as he became more exposed to corruption in Delhi. When he realized how much he had been duped by corruption, he began to resent the upper class and sought revenge. He was determined to keep himself free from both mindless obedience and servitude. Because of these pressures, Balam murdered his boss, stole his money (which he had secretly kept in order to bribe a politician), and fled. Balam desired self-sufficiency because he was equally dangerous as the "White Tiger."

Balram had no other way out of this situation. He fled to Bangalore and used the stolen money to start a taxi business. After a few years, he became a successful businessman. Adiga discusses how he created the character of Balram in an interview. He says that:

"Balram Halwai is a composite of various men I have met when traveling through India. I spend a lot of time loitering about train stations or bus stands, or kind of continuous murmur or growl beneath middle-class life in India. And this noise never gets recorded. Balram is what you would hear if one day the drain and faucets on your house started talking."(BookBrowse.com)

With Balram's arrival, the narrative shifts from the shadows to the light, from the village to the city, and Adiga emphasizes the ongoing hardships and mistreatment of servants. To highlight aspects of class differences, the text emphasizes the masters' colonizing attitude toward their servants. As Adiga puts it, "the light," or urban India, thrives on the splendor of capitalist material prosperity, while the oppressed class remains colonized by modern-day Indian elites. For generations, the oppressed have been kept in their positions by the village's landlords while the English-speaking elites in the city have taken their place. The servants' resistance to the class divide is visible as they are colonized by globalized India's English-speaking elites. As stated by Bhaba in his "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition," to Fanon's *Black Skin: White Masks*:

"It is true for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place. it is always in relation to the place of the other that colonial desire is articulated; that is, in part, the fantasmatic space of possession that no one subject can singly occupy which permits the dream of the inversion of roles (Bhaba XXVIII)."

The White Tiger represents the social and economic divide that exists in modern India. It is a provocative piece of social commentary, with a keen awareness of the disparities that exist in India despite its recent prosperity. As a result, the novel contrasts India's rise to prominence as a significant global economic power with the plight of the socially marginalized, who live in extreme rural and urban poverty. The text provides a compelling analysis of the growing wealth disparity that has engulfed India in the twenty-first century.

Adiga has worked hard to capture both the essence of the location he mentioned in the city and Mumbai's topography. Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* contains many location-specific details.

Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* is set in Mumbai, the centre of civilization, much like his novel *The White Tiger*, which explores life in Delhi and Bangalore. Adiga attempted to depict the reality of Mumbai residents, whose dreams and ambitions are supported by their earnings. Those individuals are willing to give up their goals and interpersonal relationships in exchange for money. In a city like Mumbai, real estate development is a significant industry. Sometimes people become entirely lost in their memories of the past. Land becomes more expensive, while life becomes less expensive. *Last Man in Tower* is a novel about Shah's struggle with Masterji.

This story about human nature and the tension between ethics and pragmatism is fascinating. Real estate development is a lucrative industry in Mumbai. There are times when it gets severe. Life is cheap, but land is expensive. The novel follows the middle-class Indian residents of Vakola, Mumbai's Vishram cooperative housing society, specifically Tower A. Dharmesh Shah, a ruthless real estate developer, has replaced the Vishram society with his luxurious "Shanghai" skyscraper. Shah gives the prisoners of the Vishram Society a chance at rehabilitation. A few families refuse to leave the building, so Shah bribes the opposition through Shanmugham, his left-hand man. Everyone else eventually accepts the proposal except Murthy, also known as Master Ji. People in the community boycotted and threatened Masterji because he refused to accept the deal. The final chapter of the book discusses Masterji's disagreements with the real estate developer. Throughout his struggle, Masterji is rejected by his neighbours and son, and he eventually dies at the hands of people who are only interested in making money. Shah does not give away much because he is a philanthropist, but rather because of the growing financial centre.

“You have Santa Cruz airport there, you have the Bandra-Kurla Complex there and you have the Dharavi slums there. Why is this line golden? Air travel is booming. More planes, more visitors. Then’ - he moved his finger- ‘the financial centre at Bandra-Kurla is expanding by the hour. The government is starting redevelopment in Dharavi. Asia’s biggest slum will become Asia’s richest slum. This area is boiling with money. People arrive daily and have nowhere to live. Except’ - he donated his golden line in the centre – ‘here. Vakola. (LMT 54-55)”

Adiga has nailed the modern Mumbai real estate scene, where the unfortunate and impoverished middle class has no choice but to leave financially, and builders are desperate to buy old, dilapidated buildings to transform into luxurious, modern apartments for the wealthy,

resulting in a significant increase in their bank account. The novel's protagonist, Masterji, declines the generous offer to honour his late wife and daughter's memories. Adiga narrates:

“Though the men and women around him dreamed of bigger homes and cars, his joys were those of the expanding square footage of his inner life. The more he looked at his daughter’s sketches, the more certain places within Vishram - the stairwell where she ran up, the garden that she walked around, the gate that she liked to swing on - became more beautiful and intimate. . . Sometimes he felt as if Sandhya and Purnima were watching the rain with him, and there was a sense of feminine fullness inside the dim flat. (Last Man in Tower 150)”

Adiga reveals the truths about a city in transition. He emphasizes the effects of the millions of people who are crammed onto commuter trains daily. The novel brutally exposes the horrors and harsh realities of the mighty city's redevelopment industry. Adiga investigates the land developers' harsh and violent tactics for seizing the property. They arrive with sweets and smiles in an attempt to persuade the landowners. However there were lies and knives "behind the smiles." This is the day-to-day reality of Mumbai's property market. Mumbai is the city where land costs more than gold. Last Man in Tower focuses on the dismal reality of the restless city.

contemporary society is threatened by a schism between the strong and the weak, or the privileged and the underprivileged. Nobody can misuse the wealth or use it for personal gain because of the wealthy and influential community. They clearly benefit from their wealth because they were raised in a wealthy family from birth. Their newly acquired or inherited wealth is primarily spent on materialistic comforts, personal accomplishments, and possessions. Despite their severe and circumspect outlook, the impoverished are forced to live stressful lives. In this case, the disadvantaged circumstances will remain unchanged, while the privileged will enjoy increasing prosperity. This writer's work has concentrated on the frequency of this disparity.

Conclusions:

The books *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in the Tower* both expose the ignorance of their Indian counterparts and the blind acceptance of Western culture without challenging its applicability or validity. The books *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in the Tower* awaken the masses in India from their delusional perspective of Western societies. The novels highlight

the issues surrounding the factors contributing to Indian culture's decline in the face of the West. It also shows the dominance of foreign cultures. It focuses on the thoughts of people from the East. The most concerning factors contributing to Indian society's cultural decline are the influence of Western languages, fashion, and lifestyle. It also shows how foreign cultures have a powerful influence on Easterners' minds. The most concerning factors contributing to Indian society's cultural degradation are the influence of Western languages, widespread corruption, the breakdown of the caste system, the rise of materialism, technological advancement, modernization, social mobility, law and legislators, Western-style clothing and lifestyle, competition, and disloyalty. People nowadays want to follow their financial trail; they do not care about the trails and memories they leave behind; they only want to make money. Wealth is a common goal for the rich and the poor, even if it means taking a life.

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