



# THE INAUTHENTIC PORTRAYAL OF INDIA IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER*

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## ABSTRACT

*The White Tiger is the reflection of the mind of an Indian born outsider Aravind Adiga. It had won the Booker Prize for Literature in 2008 for its presentation of his 'Real India'. But truly it is not. It is a cynical anthropology from an outsider. Adiga may be born in India but his novel exposes himself as an outsider. The Indian critics have commended him as an outsider because of his ideas and thoughts, which represented in his novel through the mouth of the protagonist Balram Halwai. Adiga's The White Tiger is published in 2008 and the same year it had won the man of booker prize. That makes everyone to look at him. It is an attempt to reveal the inauthentic presentation of India by Aravind Adiga.*

## INTRODUCTION

*The White Tiger is a debut novel, which describes India in a different point of view. Adiga gives a picture or tale of two India's, the India of Darkness and Light, the India of Poverty. And this novel comes across an inauthentic portrait by real India, it is the comment given by the critics of India. Most of the foreign critics and others are praised Adiga for his presentation of India in a different angle. But the Indian Critics did not accept the views and presentation of such ideas.*



The protagonist Balram Halwai, a man from the Darkness, who come up in life by killing his own master Mr. Ashok and becomes an entrepreneur at Bangalore. He narrates his life story to Mr. Wan Jiabao, the Premier of China, who is interested to visit India to know about the success story of the entrepreneurs. He describes everything in letter format. The novel is divided into seven nights, which includes some morning also. Adiga exposes his views on India through the mouth of Balram. How can it be true? Because Adiga has led all his life in foreign countries, before writing the novel only he has returned to India. Within a short span of time he has written this novel. That is why this novel does not fully reveal the truth about India. Most of the things are added by the author to make the novel very interested to the readers.

Adiga speaks out his opinions through the mouth of Mr. Ashok and Balram. Balram, who betrays, kills his own Master and speaks about the truth of the 'Real India'. But he justifies his mistakes in a proper way and gives explanation for each and every actions of him. He gives the picture of India to Mr. Premier through his narration. He has critically commended the bribe, political and social structure of India. The presentation of the novel and the character are wonderfully handled by Adiga. Totally it does not say the truth but its picturisation shows that it is written by an Indian. That is the specialty of this novel. For the presentation of the 'Real India' only he has awarded the Booker Prize.

Adiga's education and his experience as a journalist in the foreign countries influence him almost, so that is well represented by him in this novel. That is why he has written this novel in such a way like an outsider from India. He has seen India with the eyes and the mentality of an Outsider. This is an attempt to bring that out. Francesca Segal, the reviewer of The Observer said about Adiga's *The White Tiger*. "His voice is engaging -- caustic and funny,... few to whom India's corruption will come as a surprise. As social commentary, it's disappointing, although as a novel it's good fun".

*The White Tiger* comes across as curiously inauthentic portrait of the 'Real' India. It is not real India but it is his 'Real' India. *The Hindu* reviewer, Amitava Kumar says about *The White Tiger*, "for a novel that is supposed to be a portrait of the 'Real' India, *The White Tiger* comes across as curiously inauthentic. Is it a novel from one more outsider, presenting cynical anthropologies to an audience that is not Indian?". This shows the unreal portrait of India by the Indian born settler. He combines his views and ideas to get succeed in his work. He shows the reality also that is certainly true. But the main story, the action of the novel and the justification of the character for his actions don't present the reality of the 'Real' India.

*The White Tiger* is a mixture of both realities with his experience in the writing career as a journalist. The main motto of the novelist is to get success as a novelist. It is his own invention, and not discovered in India. He has influenced by his experience as a journalist.

DR. S. MURUGARAJAN

Lt. S. NITHYA

2 Page



That is made him to write a wonderful story of his own India. Adiga's experience in his early childhood in India and other countries, his university education, his experience as a journalist have made him to present India differently. In his interview to Arthur J Pirs, he said about the novel,

*It came out of my experience of coming back to India. .... Then I came back and worked for time magazine in 2003. .... As a correspondent for time, I traveled a lot in places I hadn't seen before, like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar. The book is a record of a discovery of a new side of India. These were an entirely new experience of India to me.*

There are so many positive qualities in *The White Tiger* but certain negative qualities like the presentation of 'Real' India and sarcacism are also notable in this novel by Adiga. *The White Tiger* gives different views on India; Adiga describes India, not as an Indian but his presentation shows him as an outsider. Because this novel presents India as a country of utter poverty, corrupted one, the poor are not trustworthy, full of negative ideas, views and thoughts.

This novel is divided into seven nights to expose his ideas of the writer to the people. And it is written like a letter to Mr. Premier Wen Jiabao, the Premier of China about India who is going to visit India and wants to know about the entrepreneur and their true success story from their mouth. Truly, that is not 'Real' India but his real India. The narrator of the novel is balram halwai, who is the son of a rickshaw puller narrates this and his life history that is making of an entrepreneur in Bangalore. The coming of Mr. Wen Jiabao is heard by balram through air (All India Radio) and he comments that it must be true because air is reliable in these matters. So he has started to tell his story to him. The opening lines of the novel, itself harshly criticizes India very badly. He calls China as "the freedom loving – nation of china" (3). But he critically comments India for each and everything, there is no love in his words. This shows Balram as a cynical anthropologist. These words are the words of Aravind Adiga, so it is not the true portrayal of India.

Adiga's real experiences have twisted to attract the attention of the readers in this novel. The foreign critics are wondered the talent of Adiga. Mohsin Hamid, author of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* says, "Compelling, angry and darkly humourous, *The White Tiger* is an unexpected journey into a new India. Aravind Adiga is a talent to watch". Not only this and also so many writers have praised Adiga for presenting the truth. Lee Thomas, the reviewer of *San Francisco Chronicle* said,

*Adiga's training as a journalist lends the immediacy of breaking news to his writing, but it is his richly detailed storytelling that will captivate his*

DR. S. MURUGARAJAN

Lt. S. NITHYA

3 Page



*audience. ... The White Tiger contains passages of startling beauty.... Adiga never lets the precision of his language overshadow the realities at hand: No matter how potent his language one never loses sight of the men and women fighting impossible odds to survive. ... The White Tiger succeeds as a book that carefully balances fable and pure observation.*

As a novel, the readers must admire the quality of Adiga. But he says about the presentation of reality, there only, some contradictions have aroused. After getting *the Man Booker Prize* Adiga has told about his real presentation of India through the mouth of Balram. He, himself contradicts in his ideas. He said that the character was his own invention not from the real world. The story is not the presentation of real India that is said by himself in his interview. The portrayal of India is not truth but the character of Balram is purely imaginative. He has wondered India and the state of poor people and the conditions of the servants while they are poor also. He says about Balram in his interview,

*My character is someone who breaks the system and I began to wonder under what circumstances would a servant deliberately and cold-bloodedly kill his master and take his money. What kind of a man does he have to be. Increasingly, I have become convinced that the social structure in India is beginning to shake. I am not saying that it will fall apart but the potential for social disruption is growing by the day.*

*The critics of The Economist said about Balram,*

*As Balram's education expands, he grows more corrupt. Yet the reader's sympathy for the former tea boy never flags. In creating a character that is both witty and psychopathic, Mr. Adiga has produced a hero almost as memorable as Pip, proving himself the Charles Dickens of the call-centre generation.*

Balram is always criticizing about India. He calls his story as "The Autobiography of a Half Baked Indian" (10). He compares and contrasts India with China very often, this passage comments about Indian democracy,

*I gather you yellow skinned men, despite your triumphs in sewage, drinking water, and Olympic gold medals, still don't have democracy. Some politician on the radio was saying that that's why we Indian's are going to beat you: we may not have sewage, drinking water, and Olympic gold medals, but we do have democracy. (95-96)*



His comments are very sarcastic and dark humour. The same ideas of Balram are represented by Adiga also. Adiga says about India and Indians in a funny way. He says that he is not fit in India so how is it possible for him to present 'Real' India without fitting into India. Adiga says to Lee Thomas in his interview,

*I'm a complete misfit in India. I don't do anything right. I don't live the good life that a middle-class person returned from America should. I don't own a car, though I could; I don't keep servants, though I should. Through sheer incompetence and ineptitude, I've discovered what life is like for the majority of Indians. I take public transportation, which I shouldn't; I eat by the roadside, which is dangerous; I talk to prostitutes and pimps. My stories follow from my experiences—they are the stories of a fallen and alienated middle-class boy.*

It shows his mind set up in India. In this mentality only he has written this novel *The White Tiger*. Because of this only, Indian critics may not totally accept the presentation of his views, ideas, and thoughts which are presented in the novel. Each and every country has its own merits and demerits but here in this novel, the negative qualities only represented by the author. In his experience or in his touring, how can't he get any positive experiences.

*The Hindu* reviewer Amitava Kumar is the one who critically commended about Adiga's presentation of real India. Balram's character is not a perfect example of representative of the poor, so it is not possible to know the real India through the mouth of Balram. This is the argument of Kumar in his review in *The Hindu*. It is not certainly avoided, but it must be taken care of. These are the words of him,

*But even at such moments, the novel reveals its great weakness. Who is looking here? Let's remember that the village to which the car is returning is not only the employer's village but also Halwai's — he is returning to the place where he was born and grew up and has only recently left. Yet does it appear to be the account of a man who is returning home? He recognizes no landmark or person, he has no emotion, he has no relationship to the land or the people.*

*The White Tiger* presents the truth behind curtain, but the critics all over the world and India have said that the character of Balram was cynical by his words. The presentation is done by Adiga, so it is true that Adiga's *The White Tiger* is a cynical anthropology. His work exposes himself as an outsider. The presentation of the 'Real' India is also cynical and it is not the 'real' India but it is an inauthentic presentation of 'Real' India.



The division of India as rich and poor is true but the happenings in those places are not entirely as presented by Adiga in this novel. He points out about the conditions of three states alone and gives a conclusion, India is full of corruption. That is not the reality. New Delhi is given much prominence in this novel, next to Delhi Bangalore is given importance. So totally it is not about the whole India. The writer uses the story for his purpose. If it is about reality means, the merits and demerits must be focused but here the demerits are only deeply analysed by the protagonist Balram. Thus, it is mixture reality and imagination.

The critics from India do not blame Adiga's presentation of India in this manner. He has more potential than this. He may present the India in a different way and he makes to change the condition. Adiga says, "I don't want to bore my reader." Adiga is one among the greatest novelists of present India. The view of Adiga is slightly cynical because of his experience in the outer side of India. His thoughts are resembled with the ideologies of the Western people.

This is an attempt made to present the inauthentic portrait of 'Real' India and the tale of two India's. Both are true to some extent but not entirely. The 'Real' India is different from the India of Adiga's and his presentation in the novel. The White Tiger is like a milestone in the history of Indian English Novels because of its great success.

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