

A Comparative Study of Human and Societal Values in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Literature is the mirror of society. Literature from time immemorial has appealed to students of all ages. From these reflections arise our codes of internal conduct are values. The values are the principles upon which we make our decisions and run our values. We get our first values from our own parents, and those values added to us by our peers, and our teachers. Even our wider community and society is also the sources of our moral values. Our moral values include truth, right conduct, non – violence, peace and love. Truth is what we speak. Indeed right conduct is what we practice, love is what we live; peace is what we give and take and of course non-violence is the fruit we obtain Truthfulness, honesty, justice, fairness and honor and integrity are the universal principles. These principles are truly essential for social and personal survival. Usually one's behavior reveals choices and these choices are based on the values they follow. From the moral values we always choose what is best for us and best for others. In this way social values come into existence and they are known to the people.

Aravind Adiga is a journalist and author and winner of the Man Booker Prize 2008 for his novel "The White Tiger". He is an Australian citizen but of Indian origin. He was fourth Indian born author to win the Booker Prize award of 2008 for his debut novel. Adiga's novel is about rural India and urban India. Rural India is "India of darkness" and Urban India is "India of the light". He pictures some reality right from one's birth to one's death. Adiga makes it very clear that his endeavor is not an easement on the country but it's about the greater process of self examination. He writes in every inch of his novel that social responsibilities of the people always depend on social values of human beings. He points out human values and social welfare and describes luxury of rich and liability of the poor.

The White Tiger discusses the various evil systems like riots in election, corruption, poverty, unemployment, educational system and misuse of welfare schemes. Adiga dares to explore the horrible reality of India, in the current years, like his contemporary Chetan Bhagat, Amita Bagchi and Swati Kushal. The White Tiger is set in the backdrop of economic boom in India that has ushered in great chasm between 'the haves and have not'. Bloody acts, opportunism, entrepreneurial success of Balram, emergence of Socialists in India alarm that the voice of the underclass cannot be ignored for long. A major focus is on India of Light with access to education, health care, transportation facilities, roads, hospitality, electricity, rapid growth of technology, running water, hope, justice, emerging entrepreneurial power in the world surpassing China. India's rapid advancement in the field of science and technology, space, real estate, yoga and meditation, hotel and tourism industry, expansion of cities and mall culture, Delhi is adulated as Young America in India.

The story revolves around Balram Halwai who lives in the suburbs of rural India. He is the son of a rickshaw puller and did not have sufficient means to complete his education in spite of being talented. He had to do petty jobs like working in hotels and mines. Balram begins to learn vehicle driving as he learns from people that drivers were paid handsomely. He finds a rich employer Ashok very soon. Ashok had returned from America and was trying to come to terms with Indian society. His personal life was in a mess as he had unhappy marriage with a girl from a different caste. Balram was quick to learn the city life. He realizes the wide gap that exists between the rich and lower classes. He breaks the barriers of caste system by not sending money to his grandmother. Balram visits various government and semi-government offices and officers with Ashok and Pinky Madam. He comes to know that legal and illegal practices going on there. He finds that money plays crucial role in business contracts. He realizes those rich commission agents and not the elected representatives of the people that run the government. He made up his mind to grab money under any circumstances.

The sequence of events drives him to more ambitions and he harbors a dream of becoming rich at any cost. Things take a vicious turn when Balram realizes that the only way to become rich and famous is to murder his master and survive the storm. He realizes that there is no point in brooding over the wretched past. Along with it, the situations began favoring Balram. His master gets involved politically. His divorce from his wife also made him lonely. One fine day when Ashok was on his way to bribe a politician, Balram seizes the opportunity and murders him. He runs away to an alien place in Bangalore with his cousin Dharam. He starts his own taxi company. Things finally become good for him when he changes his name to Ashok Sharma and becomes a wealthy industrialist. He forms a taxi company known as The White Tiger Drivers.

Though Indian villages were poverty stricken and caste ridden, there was no money madness. Balram suffered from poverty. He suffered due to his lower caste as well. He desperately wanted a change in his economic and social status. But he never thought of homicide. When he shifted to the modern commercial centre like Delhi, he found his caste less interfering. He could save himself from dehumanizing effect of caste. But he was possessed by another social evil of earning more money by hook or crook. Means did not matter; ends meant a lot.

Greed and avarice took over his personality. He saw during his journey with Ashok that money was goal. Money could make the mare go. Personal relations, human consideration did not mean much when time to gobble money comes. He found that illegal matters could be transformed into legal by paying huge amount to the government officers. Contracts involving crores of rupees are handed over to the corrupt practitioner. Power brokers run the governments in India. Balram became Ashok in the course of time. Indians were torn between two opposite realities before the advent of the era of globalization. They could not

throw the heavy yoke of traditional values away and could not resist the temptations of modern mechanical life. Thought of leaving the parents tore their hearts. At the same time they were aware that joint family system had stalled their individual progress. Our values become obscured not only by choices which violate them but also by our rationalization for it are in the nature of man that, when frustrated, he handles his discomfort through defenses. This happens in the case of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Balram, the hero handles his discomfort through defenses.

Though it was not easy to acquire identity in the face of dominant forces of the society, Balram undertakes various odd jobs like table swiper, coal crusher, servant, chauffeur, driver, murderer of his own master, Mr. Ashok. He went through the way of crime because it was needed for his freedom and betterment. India could not hold on to its past in the speedy wave of globalization. Traditional cultural values crumbled; sense of affiliation ended. Money became the only God in the changed world. Balram was quick enough to realize it. Hence he took up an extra ordinary course of action of killing Ashok coolly.

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