

Idea of selling Indian ideas in postcolonial Indian English fiction focusing Arvind Adiga's *white Tiger*

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Abstract

We have a rich tradition of literature. But the dominance of the English language took away the richness along with the impact of some postcolonial writers in Indian English. Many of the students of literature are in a prejudice that when an Indian writes a novel, she or he is expected to write about India. In fact most of these writers are here to sell India through literature. It is good that majority of Indians do not know what is happening in the influential, English dominated literary scene. We do not know that we have become a commodity, a hot selling product in the literary market. It may be hard to believe that a particular idea of India on sells. Thus through this paper I would look into the so called booker prize winners of India who are so prominent in this respect especially Arvind Adiga.

Keywords: idea, selling, Indian ideas, Indian English fiction

1. Introduction

Adiga focuses on one thing in common and that is the unveiling of the dark side of India. Though it has fetched him name and fame, this paper only tries to bring out the inadequacy of optimistic theme. It is thoroughly understood that the effect of globalization is seen in the field of marketing and today people have focus on global markets. Global marketing strategy leads to adjustment and compromise in commodity. When it is books and work of art, we are able to witness a fine line between negative portrayal and rare portrayals. The reception once given to rare portrayal has been subdued and today the global market, especially the publishing market demands negative portrayal. Arvind Adiga has stuck to the latter and has constructed his plot so as to Market Indian Corruption, Caste system and project a wounded civilization of India in western world. He succeeds in Exhibiting poverty and corruption for pleasing western readers who take joy in knowing the common yet dark side of the Indian nation

Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* speaks about the rich, politicians, policemen and the upper class society enjoying their lives at the cost of with the help of the helpless and vulnerable poor who still are under the crux of poverty. They live like pale hens and roosters trapped in wire mesh cages. Adiga says:

Hundreds of pale hens and brightly coloured roosters, stuffed tightly into wire-mesh cages, packed as tightly as worms in a belly, pecking each other and shitting in each other, jostling just for breathing space; the whole cage giving off a horrible stench –the stench of terrified, feathered flesh. (The White Tiger 167)

It is evident from the narrative that, not only poverty becomes the theme of ridicule in Adiga's novel but also illiteracy. Kishan, the protagonist Balram's brother fetches him to go to tea shop to do menial jobs instead of School. School and education becomes a question of luxury to Balram from his childhood. His dream of education is curtailed within a flash and Balram is thrown into the clutches of hard, dark and stark reality.

Adiga also demoralises the poor side of Indian lives through Balram's mail to the shortly visiting Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. Balram gives a vivid yet dirty picture of Laxmangarh and also questions the sanctity of the holy Ganges. He writes to the Chinese Premier that India is divided into two parts; the "Darkness" and the "Light". People in the "Darkness" are poor and live under bad conditions while the "Light" is for people who have brought it to something. He sarcastically remarks:

Please understand, Your Excellency, that India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness. You see, I am in the Light now, but I was born and raised in Darkness (p. 14)

Balram writes this sentence to Mr. Jiabao and exaggerates in order to demonstrate in a more detailed way the true situation of India. For example it is said India possessed the biggest parliamentary democracy. But according to Balram it's the exact contrary:

One fact about India is that you can take almost anything you hear about the country from the prime minister and turn it upside down and then you will have the truth about that thing." (p.13)

He also portrays the Indian working men, who have to do very hard work which is physical exhausting which leaves behind scars and cuts on their bodies. Balram refers especially to the work of his father as a rickshawpuller. He describes his thin, powerless and scar filled body. He says: "*The story of a poor man's life is written on his body, in a sharp pen.*" (27)

The poor state of India is also pictured in the form of scarcity in electricity and water supply. Balram's home hasn't got electricity or a water tap but a buffalo which is better fed by the women than their men. "For the first time I can remember, I got more attention than the water buffalo." (83)

The corrupt political system and the lethargic governance is sardonically captured. Balram says that a uniform clad man

comes to his school for the upcoming election to write down the pupils' ages. Due to the fact that Balram does not know his age the man says he is eighteen and ready to vote from now on and that particular day becomes his birthday. Balram retorts: "*I had to be eighteen. All of us in the tea shop had to be eighteen, the legal age to vote.*" (97)

In Delhi, in front of a mall as Balram was waiting for his master he notices a magazine called "Murder Weekly" that features violent stories about fictional murders in detail that seem to fascinate most of the servants. He figures that he has to buy proper clothing in order to get into the mall himself, which he does later on after having bought new shoes, clothes and toothpaste. This epitomizes the ironic yet harsh situation of the present state of India and its society that is so filled with murder and mall cultures. Although Delhi is described as the city of light it still can be the darkness to people who have no money and no political status. Balram remarks: "*These poor bastards had come from the Darkness to Delhi to find some light – but they were still in the darkness.*" (138)

In Balram's opinion, 99.9 % of the Indians, the servants, are imprisoned in a Rooster Coop by the rich. Although these men have the same abilities as the rich, they were taught to be slaves so well that they don't make any attempt to break out of the Coop. "*It's because 99.9 per cent of us are caught in the Rooster Coop just like those poor guys in the poultry market.*" (168)

Balram's master spends the evening with a political assistant whose minister he bribes. The two passengers drink whisky in the car and then go to pick up a blond whore from Ukraine who looks like the famous actress Kim Basinger. Balram is willing to be a good servant to an honest man; but he doesn't want to serve a man who sleeps with whores while he has a lover and while he is still married. Balram says there are four ways for a servant to betray his master to get extra cash. First he can sell petrol from the car, secondly he can go to a corrupt mechanic and inflate the price that is to pay and keep the rest for him and third, he can sell the empty whisky bottles and finally he can use the car as a freelance taxi. The narrative states that: "*What if one day, for instance, a driver took his employers money and ran? What would his life be like?*" (169)

Beggary being a prime disturbance in India, Adiga has captured it in his novel yet again to show the starkness of the country. Some beggars come along the road in a traffic signal. Without thinking about it Balram gives them one rupee. Similarly a red bag travels in the due course of the narrative and the red bag is a symbol of bribe that is paid to the politicians and officials in power.

Between the White Tiger and Balram there is shown the parallel again and again in the course of the novel. As like the White Tiger is caught in a cage, Balram is kind of caught, too. Like the tiger Balram accepts his destiny for a long time. He does his job every day and does yoga to calm down: "*He (the white tiger in the zoo) was hypnotizing himself by walking like this - that was the way he could tolerate this cage.*" (259) Seeing the white tiger, Balram is so overwhelmed that he faints. "*The moment you recognize the beautiful in the world, you stop being a slave.*" (275)

After Killing Mr. Ashok, Balram comes to Bangalore and calms his nerves down and tries to forget about the murder. Dharam and he stay together at a hotel which offers good food. Balram also remarks that Bangalore is full of strangers and outsiders. Also Balram has doubts whether Bangalore is the right city to

live in. Still he rents a flat and he wonders how to fit into the city. Like he has heard the voice of Delhi he tries to notice the voice of Bangalore. Balram's process of changing from village boy to a social entrepreneur connects with his self-disdain for what he's become: '*(The) tale of how I was corrupted from a sweet, innocent village fool into a citified fellow full of debauchery, depravity, and wickedness.*' (189)

At first he doesn't get a chance to start with his business because every company already had an organisation. But then he tries to think about what Mr. Ashok would do. Finally he goes to the police and bribes the inspector with more than ten thousand rupees. Even the wanted poster of Balram is in the station, but he succeeds. Two days later a company calls because they want to have a taxi service.

Balram changes his previous mind of golden-coloured hair girls like they always are in the shampoo advertisement. He doesn't trust the TV and the posters anymore and thinks it's not healthy. Also he believes that the Nepali and Indian girls are the best prostitutes. The novel ends with the statement of Balram in which he declares that the yellow and brown men will rein the world in about twenty years.

2. Conclusion

Throughout the novel, Adiga focuses on one thing in common and that is the unveiling of the dark side of India. Though it has fetched him name and fame, this paper only tries to bring out the inadequacy of optimistic theme. The question of reception is also significant, because the dark side of the portrayal of Indian nation has been welcomed in the west. May it be the Oscar winning *Slum Dog Millionaire* or *The White Tiger*. It is thoroughly understood that the effect of globalization is seen in the field of marketing and today people have focus on global markets. Global marketing strategy leads to adjustment and compromise in commodity. When it is books and work of art, we are able to witness a fine line between negative portrayal and rare portrayals. The reception once given to rare portrayal has been subdued and today the global market, especially the publishing market demands negative portrayal. Aravin Adiga has stuck to the latter and has constructed his plot so as to Market Indian Corruption, Caste system and project a wounded civilization of India in western world. He succeeds in Exhibiting poverty and corruption for pleasing western readers who take joy in knowing the common yet dark side of the Indian nation.

3. References

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