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## *Prey or Predator: Probing the Undercurrents of Class in Adiga's *The White Tiger**

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### **Abstract**

The current study is an endeavor to investigate the undercurrents of the class by keeping in its center the lines of social stratification which pervade through the general and specific levels of society. The core of this research is to analyze the nature of class permeating Adiga's fiction. It takes into account the trends of modern capitalism which can aptly be illustrated by seeking guidance from the theoretical framework of Marxist critical theory. Additionally, it tends to inquire whether the level of consciousness attained by working class members makes them eligible for wheeling an organized movement or not. The current elucidation confirms to the parameters of qualitative research and encompasses Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) as its primary source of data. The selected text has been subjected to close textual analysis. Extensive reading of the novel brings forth the outcomes which have been interpreted in the light of much-celebrated Marxist concepts. The results vividly indicate that class segregation and class consciousness thrive in Adiga's fictional expedition. It seems as if the characters gradually develop class consciousness and exercise it within their social circle. The contemporary period is under the spell of capitalism and



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globalization which certifies the segmentation of human societies on the basis of social class. This work can undoubtedly assist cultural studies. It can also lend a helping hand to the social theorists attempting to comprehend the pros and cons of social stratification in society at large.

**Keywords:** Marxism, *The White Tiger*, Development of Class Structure, Class Consciousness

## 1. Introduction

This world, since the dawn of human history, has been bifurcated into haves and have-nots and it seems more pertinent to the conditions of the modern-day world than anything else. The wave of global capitalism which revolves around the basis of transnational corporations supplemented by the World Bank, World Trade Organization and International Monetary Fund aims only at accumulating resources and wealth in a few hands and drags the rest of the world into the quagmire of destitution. These notions are not drawn by the opponents of the capitalist system, but they can be verified with the help of statistics published by renowned research institutions and by the work of people who have remained an important part of the system like John Perkins who brought forward a groundbreaking work entitled as *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (2006) which speaks of the global web of capitalism and its role in installing more subtle and efficient kind of imperialism.

In *The White Tiger* Adiga presents a society which is segmented into several socio-economic classes. On the basis of material conditions of existence, acts of class consciousness are present which manifest his works. So, the researcher intends to explore the under-current of class and class consciousness in *The White Tiger* (2008) by scrutinizing it with the aid of Marxist literary thought.

The most conspicuous reason for the researcher to study Adiga's *The White Tiger* in the light of Marxism is that the selected work not only depicts the personal life of the characters and events which go on in shaping up the plot of the text but on economic and political happenings which are playing a crucial role in determining the outlook of the present day world. For instance, the world is buzzing with the democratic system of government to efficiently operate the state functioning and the phenomenon of globalization has played a significant part in shaping the future course of the world as it has created global information economy which is coming out to be an alternative of industrial economy.

In the current world scenario capitalism has entangled the entire world in its web. Due to shifting dimensions of capitalism the outlook of class system is simultaneously undergoing a change. The entire state apparatus is paving the way for creating class divisions. Eagleton (2003) addresses this issue and posits that multinational

corporations are playing a dominant role in creating divisions and bifurcations and they also capitalize on the already existing incongruities to crush majority of people away from the center, they also assign people the status lingering on the peripheries and a great deal of people are unable to work and perform their function in such situation. To overcome this predicament people migrate from their homeland, shift elsewhere and there they are termed as second rate citizens (p. 18-20). The researcher intends to probe the alternation in class system with the development of capitalism which has casted its shadow especially over the developing nations. The Marxist lens will enable the researcher to investigate deep into the lives of the characters whose life is eventually being shaped by the class relations and the researcher attempts to record whether the characters are conscious of events transpiring around them or not.

### **1.1. Research Questions:**

This study aims to answer the following questions;

- 1) To what extent has the concept of class evolved with the development in Capitalism?
- 2) Does class consciousness of the characters exist at personal level or at collective level?

## **2. Literature Review**

Falth (2013) in his study on *The Great Gatsby* uses Marxist analysis to interpret various episodes in the text and points out the changing circumstances and values in the American society. The text manifests characters that belong to several socioeconomic classes and his work intends to study the relationship among those characters. The theory which Falth exercises is Max Weber's conception of social class. Weber's opinion is similar to that of Marx and he believes that social class adheres to wealth. But nevertheless, he makes a distinction between status and class in his theory according to which status cannot be strictly linked with wealth. He enlists four social classes which are: "a) the working class as a whole... b) the petty bourgeoisie c) the propertiless intelligentsia and specialists... d) the classes privileged through property and education" (p. 305). In Weber's opinion groups a and b can easily make their way into group c (white-collar workers, technicians). In the affairs of civil bureaucracy and corporations, the members of group c can manage to reach up to group d. This clearly points out that the person does not always stay in one class as the concept of class relies on factors such as wealth, property, and education. Keeping in view Weber's definition of class, characters in fiction can be categorized into different social classes.

Rahayu (2013) probes the depiction of social class in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* by employing the Marxist lens proposed by George Lukacs. His study highlights the biased class bifurcation in Igbo society. The class conflict emerges between the oppressed class and the class which occupies religious ranks. Someone who manages to attain huge barns of yams, and title and is also a warrior by default becomes a member of the ruling elite and earns respect from society. Women lie at the lowest pedestal of the hierarchy and then there is Osu i.e., social outcasts whose status is that of slaves in the society. In the researcher's opinion, the privileged social class of Igbo society is an amalgam of material possessions and religious position. In Igbo society, the accumulation of yams and the number of wives along with title play a pivotal role in determining one's social class.

Pourqoli (2018) has interpreted the rags to riches story of Balram Halwai by applying the performativity conception of Judith Butler. He looks for identity construction as something which is not innate but is shaped by the repetitive acts termed normal by society. Emphasis is primarily laid on the protagonist and his process of acquiring identity. Furthermore, another horizon is added to this analysis when disruption occurs in the flow of repetitive performative acts. New performative acts find their way hence lending a leveraged agency to the characters. He initiates his journey from Laxmangarh and travels from darkness to light in quest of his identity formation. The focus was laid on the fact that Balram's identity is an absolute product of socio-cultural factors and in the realm of identity construction, he subverts the current discourse prevalent at that time.

Goh (2011) views *The White Tiger* as a dark comedy and aligns this angle of analysis with diasporic response concerning India. Balram with a tone of frankness illustrated his journey from the darkness of poverty towards the light of entrepreneurial life. Balram explains that the areas situated near ocean gather beacons of light whereas the areas situated near Ganges river are restricted to the boundary of impoverishment. Diasporic response comes in guise of Pinky who renounces aura of India because probably after the hit and run incident when she kills a person and wants to compensate but Ashok insists that Balram will take the charge and suffer for her misdeed, glaringly indicates that the diasporic community of India is not contented with the symphonies of nostalgia and they are critiquing the current values of Indian society.

Kaya (2018) describes the ambivalence of identity rooted in *The White Tiger*. Balram in the earlier phase admires his master and goes to the point of even copying him but then eventually he ends up murdering his master. As the novel progresses and simultaneously the ambiguity and fluidity of identity also progresses. A point comes when metaphorically speaking Ashok becomes a chauffeur and Balram takes a seat at rear. Ashok wants to sleep with a whore and Balram intends to shop from the same

malls which are visited by Ashok, wants to drink the same whisky and the violence of Balram ultimately erupts when Ashok's girlfriend wants to get rid of Balram. The choices which Ashok makes and things to which Balram clings seem to determine their fate and at the end an act of violence sets the tiger free and this act of aggression/violence is the only way for self-expression of colonized in Frantz Fanon's opinion.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

Marxism is extracted from the conception of Karl Marx who in *The German Ideology* (1846), *The Manifesto of Communist Party* (1848) and *Capital* (1867), gave expression to his thoughts about socialist ideals such as the impartial distribution of wealth, abolition of class differences and society's duty of imparting everyone with necessary means of subsistence etc. were presenting a glaring contrast to the harsh realities of industrial capitalism prevalent in his era.

In Marxian tradition, the concept of class occupies a primary position and class has been the driving force of Marx's writings. He did not explicate the concept of class in a systematic fashion, but his works are manifested with it at regular intervals for instance *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) begins by illustrating the fact that history has progressed with a tug-of-war between classes of people. Marx perceived human history as strife between classes. Marx's concept of class may be interpreted in terms of peoples' relationship with the means of production and by refuting the rural and urban divide Marx opines that in a capitalist era, "the distinction between capitalist and land-renter, like that between the tiller of the soil and the factory-worker, disappears and...the whole of society must fall into two classes – the property owners and the property-less workers" (p. 70).

In Marxist sphere, class consciousness is closely associated with the concept of class. It may be defined within two dimensions. Firstly, class consciousness can be defined as a set of attributes imputed which derive the members of a single class to act in pursuit of their own specified ends. Secondly, some other theorists interpret it as the characteristics of the individuals who constitute a class, and this consciousness regulates and directs the lives of individuals of one particular class. The phenomenon of class consciousness can aptly be summed up in the five characteristics as illustrated by Ollman (1993). Firstly, people must have subjective and objective identities as they are a part of a specific class. Secondly, they must develop an understanding of the mechanics of capitalism. Thirdly, they must be conscious of their own role in the class struggle. Fourthly, they must show solidarity with their fellow workers and lastly, their animosity against their opposite class should be based on rational grounds. This study attempts to probe different manifestations of class manifested in the selected text and further investigates whether the consciousness attained on the level of the individual

amplifies into supra consciousness or the consciousness of characters fails to be transmuted into an organized movement.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

The research under discussion adheres to the parameters of qualitative research and is descriptive study in nature as it describes the phenomenon of class consciousness. The selected text which has been analyzed for explicating the current class situation is Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008). This text serves as the primary source of data. The data has been accumulated by making use of commentaries available in the press. The book reviews and the interviews of Aravind Adiga imprinted in magazines and available on the web have been considered in order to draw a logical conclusion. The study is based on thorough reading and interpretation of the text. The text has been subjected to close reading and textual evidence scrutinized in the light of core Marxist concept to formulate the discussion and analysis of the study.

#### **5. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

##### **5.1. Increasing Globalization and Persisting Marginalization**

The segment is a critique of Indian society which is being transformed into a New India but is still poisoned with social, political and economic corruption. The New India is emerging under the spell of globalization and this ever-growing phenomenon has led to widening the gulf between the poor and the rich. The text under consideration unravels the myth of globalization by narrating the tale of the creatures of light and the creatures of darkness. It is the latter kind that spends their entire life seeking the reward of light which is piercing out through the chandelier of globalization. India opened up its markets in the early 1990s to settle the payment crisis and this was a big leap forward towards globalization. In 2000 India started constructing and promoting cities like Bangalore, New Delhi etc. these cities are becoming a hub for technology and have played a crucial part in linking India with the rest of the world. While India is paying emphasis to these regions, it may be noticed that less attention is being paid to the agriculture sector.

The phantom of shining India is embedded with the harsh realities of capitalism, shades of Neo-Colonialism and the offensive behavior of the elite class. The people breathing on the verge of civilization are suffering from unemployment, unavailability of food, and shortage of resources and most importantly they are not being imparted with a respectable place in New India. Due to these deprivations, they adopt every means possible to occupy a space in the centre of society without paying heed to moral and ethical standards. *The White Tiger* urges the ones in command of the Indian government to strategize their society. So that future disaster may be avoided and by

an extension of this instance, the world at large should try to devise its projects in which the people who are downtrodden are provided with sufficient space to excel.

Balram sheds light on the bleak aspects of globalization and the servitude which comes with it. He recalls that people in the darkness are not even allowed to cast their votes. Balram's father was kept aloof from the voting process throughout his entire wretched life. He further enlarges on the subject by reporting that if in a fit of madness someone persists in his legal voting right, he is silenced, and his death or injustice done to him goes unmentioned because he's someone who is other, and it is only at the expense of their darkness that a small number of people will keep on living in the light. As a chauffeur, Balram realizes that people who have come from darkness to the so-called India of light carry shades of darkness even here because they are alienated from the facilities which they strive to construct like shining towers and luxury malls etc. They have adopted animal-like ways and they are forced to live under overhead bridges. Their consciousness is covered in the curtains of servitude, their feet are bound in chains of slavery, and they are being herded like animals because they are not aware of the beauty of life. Balram explicitly discusses the nature of Indian society entangled in the web of caste and class system which serves as a means to sustain the stratification of the poor. He remarks "See: Halwai, my name, means 'sweet maker'. That's my caste – my destiny" (p. 63). People evaluate a person only by his caste and do not look for his real credentials and this is why most people do not unlock the cage of slavery despite the fact they are having its key.

The insult of the poor is a psychological relaxation for the landlords who are required to pay a bribe to politicians and play a dark role while enjoying the fruits of India of light. Balram gains consciousness that if he has to progress in the world of globalization, he will have to raise his voice whether by moral standards or by immoral means is another question. He knows that if he breaks out of the coop his family will have to suffer but he chooses to become a freak of nature and sacrifices his own family. It is because he wants to live like a man, but the exploitative system is lethal for the marginalized classes. Alarm has been raised and people not imparted with equal opportunities to thrive will take law into their own hands and pose a serious threat to the social fabric.

## **5.2 Widening Gyre of Entrepreneurship**

*The White Tiger* (2008) is a novel by Aravind Adiga who illustrates the tedious journey of an entrepreneur who finally manages to attain a place in the technologically progressive society of Bangalore and whose success pops out at the cost of many lives - people who are sacrificed to pave the way for Bangalore's new entrepreneur. This section deals with the criticism directed towards entrepreneurial acts and poses challenges and bars the commonly held notions of entrepreneurship as Balram states:

I confess. About three years ago, when I became, a person of national importance owing to an act of entrepreneurship, a poster with my face on it found its way to every post office, railway station, and police station in this country (p. 11).

Napoleon Hills (1937) organized his research in a book known as *Think and Grow Rich* and in it he described the primary steps necessary to be taken by someone who wants to rise to the ranks of entrepreneurship. He writes a complete chapter emphasizing the importance of desire in a person who wishes to progress - in Balram's phraseology if someone intends to break free from the rooster coop, Hills has enlisted six steps to materialize the desire into practical form. Firstly, one should know the exact amount of wealth that a person wants to accumulate. In Balram's case, he is definite and precise in his idea. He wants to seek freedom and wants to enlighten himself. Secondly, one should be ready to pay the price for his desire and as discussed earlier Balram does not even hesitate to put his family at stake. Thirdly, one has to think of a definite time scheme to which he should stick. Balram knows that his master can dismiss him soon and he has to act within this short time span. Fourthly, a person has to carry out a specific plan for attaining his results. Balram has the plan to murder his master by using a solid bottle of English liquor and he even examines Dharam's head for this end. The fifth and the sixth steps taken together imply that a person must keep on reminding himself of his ultimate end and Balram does so by constantly speaking of the key, the key to unlocking freedom, near the end of the book. He keeps on speaking of the good things and of the beauty and the people who are not able to see that beauty remain servants for their whole life. It is fairly obvious that Balram has learnt a lot from his surroundings. He is having all the necessary ingredients needed to be an entrepreneur with reference to Indian society. It seems as if nature is also trying to impart him with signs to bless him on his journey. Balram shows skills in hearing the voice of Bangalore. He observes that people in the city work till late at night. He realizes that he needs an outsourcing company "Which meant doing things in India for Americans over the police. Everything flowed from it - real estate, wealth, power, sex. So, I would have to join this outsourcing thing, one way or the other" (p. 298). He has already gained good interpersonal skills by now and from here onwards he decides to make his mark in business. He calls different companies only to find out they already have signed contracts with taxi companies. He ponders for a while and hits upon a plan to utilize his entrepreneurial skills. He takes the red bag along with him to offer his gratitude in advance to the head of that police station. Definitely he understands Balram's message on seeing the red bag. Police does its job for Balram and he has his group of White Tiger taxi drivers on the way to make him an entrepreneur. He then goes on to boast of his twenty-six luxury cars. He seems to thrive well on this path. In his early days he was a petty driver to his master but here in Bangalore he became the master of drivers. A test of his management skills soon arrives when Asif, one of the drivers of his company, kills a person on the bicycle. Balram arrives at the scene to handle the situation. He appeals to the logical faculty of

the dead boy's brother and asks him to register a case at the police station. There on seeing the attitude of police the brother of deceased boy realizes the mischief going on and threatens to involve the press, but this aggression leads eventually to nowhere. Balram goes to the home of deceased person and offers them cash as compensation to the causality. The flipside of our entrepreneur can be observed in this incident as he wanted to be different from the landlords of darkness that is why he hands cash to the family and says, "that is the way of this jungle we live in" (p. 312).

### **5.3. Indian Nation in Jeopardy**

Dennis Judd in defining Colonialism argues in his book *Empire: The British Imperial Experience* from 1765 to the Present (cited in McLeod, 2000, p.7) that to attain trade yielding profit, plunder and enrichment of one nation by seizing the resources of other nations was the main objective of colonialism. In this regard, he complements the phenomenon of colonialism by relating it to capitalism. To prevent this commercial exploitation was the ultimate aim of decolonizing venture and the concept of nation was an important tool to serve this purpose. After gaining independence the phenomenon of commercial exploitation is far from over in nations like India and this transpiration has led the researcher to ponder the split in India as a nation. It is due to this split that the present research aims to raise questions about India as a single, coherent and unified nation and finds the myth of nationhood in jeopardy.

Chatterjee presents the concept of the nation particularly in the Indian context by deriving it from Frantz Fanon's three phases of decolonization but transforming the conceptualization with reference to the Indian community. In the first phase, anti-colonial nationalist movement emerges to the surface and promotes the idea that the European culture which is seemingly modernized possesses attributes which make them fit to rule, this is why they exceed the Eastern culture in progress. Eastern culture lacks such attributes, and it is easily subjugated by the West. These dominant attributes are technological advancement. He further points out that the East is spiritually ahead of the West and the objective of this phase namely "movement of departure" tends to "marry the technological greatness of the West with the spiritual greatness of the East" (McLeod, 2000, p. 106). The people belonging to the group of colonized elites formulate this plan. In designing such a plan, the elite class makes sure the ordinary masses remain far away from the centers of power and it also creates a gap between itself and the common masses to perpetuate its control. In the second phase which is "movement of maneuver" the colonized elite adopts anti-modern methods to refute the modernized stances of colonial nations. In this process the members of the elite approach closer to the point where they can establish and administer modern institutions "the elite appropriate the forms and functions of popular or folk culture" (McLeod, 2000, p. 107).

On considering the above-mentioned theoretical construct one may recall Balram's contemplation on the debate of caste. He alludes to the past and claims that India was once prosperous. Everything was following its proper course. India was a zoo which was well looked after and then he mockingly pays gratitude "to all those politicians in Delhi, on fifteenth of August 1947- the day the British left- the cages had been let open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law" (p. 63). He clearly points the day when India was emancipated from British rule. The local/colonized elite, the politicians of India had used the support of common masses to attain throne for themselves. The local politicians by this time had grown big bellies and were ready to devour everything. The country was like a jungle where animals preyed on other animals to maintain the trappings of power only for themselves. People who did not belong to mainstream government were cornered. The post-colonial aftermath had installed new masters for the commoners but with the worse form of exploitation. Balram in his first letter addressed the Chinese Premier and described the nationalist elite, the four feudal landlords who owned the place and seemingly everyone who resided in that locality, he named the landlords after the names of animals. The Stork was a fat man with thick moustaches, "He owned the river that flowed outside the village, and he took a cut of every catch of fish caught by fisherman in the river" (p.24). He was in a habit of receiving a toll tax from every single boat which came to Laxmangarh. The second landlord namely Wild Boar "owned good agricultural land around Laxmangarh. "If you wanted to work on those lands you had to bow down his feet" (p. 25). The third feudal lord was Raven who collected a toll from goatherds and if someone was not able to comply with his demands, he could exploit him sexually. The fourth animal lord (feudal lord) was the Buffalo who had the biggest belly. "He had eaten up rickshaws and the roads. So, if you ran a rickshaw, or used the road, you had to pay him his feed" (p. 25).

As mentioned earlier the nationalist elite combine technological development with spiritual greatness. It can be observed that the elite used this spiritual enchantment to its own advantage by justifying its rule with reference to religious customs. Balram describes that Hanuman is the favorite god of people who reside in darkness. They have been programmed to worship Hanuman because he served god Rama and he is the glaring example of how servants should serve their masters. Balram's school is a shining example which vividly highlights the kind of institutions the elite has established for the general public after decolonization. The miserable condition of his school depicts that the nationalist elite does not want the people to attain consciousness. It desires to limit the people's abilities by administering schools, where teachers are paid no salary where only dirt prevails, where there is insufficient furniture and most importantly where students are not motivated to attain new heights by raising the level of their consciousness.

In the third phase as illustrated earlier the nationalist elite claims to have the support of the people and also proclaims to have struck equilibrium among different strata of society. But the text under consideration portrays a picture coloured with the unequal relationship when Balram drives Mukesh and Mr. Ashok to their residence. Mukesh pretends to have lost one rupee. He makes Balram search for the floor of the car. Balram in this disgraceful act imagines himself as a dog. Mukesh further calls him a thief in an implicit tone, and he lectures him not to steal from his master. Ashok's words, "We've just paid half a million rupees in a bribe, Mukesh, and now we're screwing this man over for a single rupee" (p. 139) mark the discriminatory attitude of the elite towards the poor.

#### **5.4. Democracy- A System of Government of the Capitalists**

Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as a system of government of the people, for the people and by the people. The claim put forward by Lincoln is subjected to scrutiny in this section and this dismantling of the well-spoken concept of democracy will help us in grasping the real form of government in India which is internally bifurcated into two halves of light and darkness. Balram begins to shed light more explicitly on the phantom of democracy when he sits to write a letter on the fourth night to the Chinese Premier. He begins by quoting Fidel Castro a Cuban who threw Batista's dictatorial regime backed by the United States. Castro is the one who even aligned with the Leftist movements outside his own country to serve the cause of freedom. The mentioning of Castro may mean that Balram is the one who intends to seek liberty and the people of India want to attain freedom, but they are trapped in the cage of democracy to maintain the interests of a few perhaps the ones who run this entire chain of democracy and seize the throne of government. He gives way to his expression by narrating, when Mr. Wen Jiabo visits India he will be told that India is the world's largest democracy where approximately one billion people exercise their right to vote but then he goes on to add that India is the country where one may have democracy but no sewage pipes and electricity. He satirically remarks that if he were having power over national affairs, he would get the sewage pipes first and then the democracy. He recalls that he is deeply indebted to the democratic process because it enabled him to have his own birthday which he was not of course entitled to in his own home somewhere in the darkness. He recounts that one day while he was busy working at a coal shop the owner of the shop commanded the men to stop whatever they were doing and head towards a government school. There the man with a book was registering people's names and ages. Balram was not aware of his age. He was not even given a name because his family was too busy in their wretched lives. The man who was collecting the information to strengthen the voting process assigned Balram the figure eighteen as a number of his age. He answered the question about the number eighteen as, "I had to be eighteen. All of us in the tea shop had to be eighteen, the legal age to vote" (p. 97). The question of why the government machinery represented by

the man with the book and tea shop owner was proactive is fairly simple, an election was heading their way and they were in need of votes to have their piece of the pie.

Balram says that he had overheard these facts; the shopkeeper had sold their votes to the Great Socialist. In giving an account of the affairs related to Great Socialist, Balram describes “His party’s symbol, a pair of hands breaking through the handcuffs – symbolizing the poor shaking off the rich” (p. 97). The Great Socialist has been a monarch of darkness for ten years and it seems as if his grip on the issues has begun to dwindle. He further elaborates on the gossip of customers at the tea shop. They are of the view that he has smuggled one billion rupees from the darkness and transferred the amount to an enchanted country in Europe where people are white, but money is black; the shades of democratic governments are facing the cases of smuggling of guns, pimping, murders and rape. His ministers are also facing charges similar to these.

### **5.5. Caste System as a Perennial coop**

The text under discussion deals with the rebellious character who finds himself entrapped and experiences a bifurcation between the rich and the poor. This section will shed light upon the aspects of Indian politics which is firmly ingrained in the feudal system and the mechanism of the caste system which serves to maintain and prolong the two classes one having big bellies and the others having small bellies. It is the latter class which is subjected to perpetual discrimination and exploitation at the hands of the ones who are at the top of the social hierarchy. Dr. Ambedkar analyzes the caste system in India and points out that according to mythology, god Manu introduced class in the society for the smooth running of affairs, this class system led towards a caste system and with the passage of time this segregation was linked with the feudal hierarchy. Brahmins (priests) were at the top according to this model, next come Kastriyas (warriors) then Vaishyas (merchants) then Shudras and at the bottom were the untouchables. This concept soon encompassed the whole scenario and the people started using this segregation system for their own purposes. Halwai made sweets. The lords treated their peasants generously. Everything was following a smooth path. The role of religion has been crucial in strengthening the caste systems. If the abstraction of caste and feudalism was only attached to the economy, it might have been reduced to rubbles but the caste divide and feudal exploitative system is guarded by religion which even promotes this discriminatory system. One may find it difficult to comprehend in a modern democratic country that people emphasize upon the stereotypes of caste and establish their evaluation of others on the basis of their caste. Balram when finally manages to take driving classes finds a driver and requests him to impart driving lessons. The driver at once asks Balram, “what caste are you” (p. 56). Balram says that he is halwai and in response the driver says, “you make sweets” (p. 56).

Balram knows that his future prospects of securing this job depend on his caste. He then ponders on a thought-provoking question if he is *halwai* and *halwai* makes sweets, why his father used to pull a rickshaw then? Why he used to break coals and clean tables at a tea shop? Why did he not have access to the pastries? Why was he thin and dark and not bulky and creamy? As discussed, earlier Balram then contemplates on the nature of the Indian society and its laws which resemble the laws of a jungle. Only the people with big bellies are able to thrive well in such societies. In the context of caste, people of higher castes consider it prerogative to everything. It is the reason that Balram was robbed off his destiny to eat sweets. Perhaps Balram's grandfather would have been the owner of a sweet shop, but a person of high caste had robbed him of his fortune with the aid of police thus darkening or more appropriately as the events unfold, enlightening Balram's future.

### **5.6. Hope is in proletariat**

Hope can only be discerned in the swarming existence of the proletariat as they constitute the majority of the population, and it is only their wretched existence that favours a minority, and it is only their submissiveness and blindfoldedness that allows the minority to capitalize and seize the resources and exploit the ordinary masses. If the proletariat becomes conscious of their actual strength, they can blast away the discriminatory system with ease. Their existence resembles a strong horse that can shake off flies whenever he wants to. Balram whose destiny is to become the white tiger initiates his entrepreneurial journey after being dropped out of school by succumbing to family's pressure and starts working at a tea shop. Then turns the chauffeur into a rich landlord's son. His enlightened view leads him to transgress all class boundaries and step beyond his horizon as he realizes the fact that class segregation is not eternal. Balram comments on the realization of consciousness in his first letter addressed to the Chinese Premier. When he says that the university graduates after being highly educated "wear nice suits, join companies, and take order from other men for the rest of their lives" (p. 11). This observation can be contrasted with Balram's admiration for the three nations of the world at the onset of the text. Balram regards China, Afghanistan and Abyssinia with utmost devotion. The reason that seems most probable is that they remained unconquered by a foreign power and maintained their sovereignty. People of the nations had rooted their faith in the liberty of the individual. They must have achieved consciousness at a larger level which enabled them to repulse the dominant powers. He comprehends how are people divided along class boundaries, but he is not able to "understand why" (Orwell, 1949, p. 101). The answer to this "why" is fairly simple which is described above, to accumulate more and more wealth, to assert domination over others and to serve the ends of a few chosen ones. Balram's father Vikram Halwai, who is a poor rickshaw puller, has spent his life destitute and proclaims to have been treated like a donkey. He loses his temper and starts yelling at Kusam after learning that Balram has not been

attending school. On learning Balram's fear of a big lizard, he personally accompanies his son and squashes that lizard so that his son may continue his studies with ease. His only purpose is to see one of his sons rise to the stature of a complete man and the essence of his turbulent life makes him conscious of the worth of education. He realizes Balram is not an ordinary type and hollers "how many times have I told you: Munna must read and write" (p. 28).

Balram's brother Kishan as Balram would have termed him resembles a human spider. He is a paragon of residents inhabiting dark India. He remains entrapped in a coop and strictly adheres to his grandmother's directions. Balram speaks of Kishan's role in his success but at the same time mentions that if he would not gain consciousness Kishan had taken him down to the mud. Kishan continues to work at a tea shop for his entire life and the members of his family exploit him for his wages. As noted, Balram that he felt as if his grandmother had prepared the chicken dish from Kishan's flesh and blood when he pays his family a visit after being employed as a chauffeur by Ashok. The intricate net of seizing power continues throughout the text which nourishes Balram with a deeper sense of consciousness.

The Great socialist was the sole ruler of darkness for almost a decade now and this time a neck-to-neck competition was being expected, the conscious brave man makes his way to the polling booth. He sees Vijay hammering a banner, congratulating the Great Socialist on his sweeping victory in Laxamangarh. Probably a deal has been struck between the landlords and the party of Great Socialists, and Laxmangarh had remained under the Great Socialist's control. The brave man demanded to cast his vote as he had sensed the rottenness of the democratic election system. What happened next was not certain, but Balram heard the customers at the tea shop discussing the affair. The brave man was taught a lesson to mind his own class by having been beaten, "and after a while, the body of rickshaw puller stopped wriggling and fighting back, but they kept stamping on him until he had been stamped back into earth" (p. 102). He was relieved of his wretched life, thanks to Vijay and the policemen. This incident brings forth a strong message for the proletariat that individual consciousness will be silenced by coercion. If they want to break the coop, they must work in collaboration with one another. They cannot rebel until they become aware, and it is only after the rebellion that they will become fully conscious.

The character who is a shining example of consciousness and who also intrigues and imbues Balram with consciousness is Vijay; he belongs to a pig herd family. He is from the lowest class and caste, yet he manages to swing his destiny around. He somehow becomes a bus conductor with his attire, but he instils Balram with the hope of success. Balram in his boyhood thinks that to look like Vijay is to be a complete man. People said he befriended a politician who exploited him and then made him what he was. Whatever the case was the fact which is conspicuous is that he had made

it in life. He becomes a politician and a staunch supporter of the Great Socialist which makes the landlord Stork bow before him. Public service holds him in good stead as he wears gold rings and fine clothes. Later in the text when Mr. Ashok is struggling to get rid of tax returns, he seeks Vijay's help and asks Balram to drive Vijay and another politician to wherever they want. At that time Vijay had assumed the aura of a businessman and everything about him seemed to echo "how important he looks" (p. 31). Vijay was the first ever entrepreneur that Balram observed, and his notion made Balram conscious of his worth and the beauty of the world. His life story as it seems prompted Balram to deny the limitations installed by society and his success story drove Balram to craft a success story of his own.

After murdering Ashok, Balram makes his way to a train station to depart for his destiny. There is an illiterate person, a figure from the darkness approaches Balram and requests him to read the poster aloud. Balram sees his picture on the poster and the picture of two other men who blew up the train. Balram relates to the man pointing towards his picture that he is a hero, and the other two men are villains. Balram desperately manages to escape the coop and attains the beauty of life. He goes on to address the ordinary population in terms, "I have woken up, and the rest of you are still sleeping" (p. 315). To organize a full-fledged movement Balram plans to architect a school which will enable poor children of Bangalore to seek education and instill in them the spirit of individualism and turn these young ones into white tigers, who will be unleashed on the society to harness a revolution.

## **6. Conclusion**

The study under consideration is formulated on Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008). This study after applying the Marxist lens to the selected text concludes that Adiga has portrayed a world which is polarized to a great extent. The division in society is evident and it is based on socioeconomic factors rather than the issues of race, nationality, sexuality and gender.

It is noticeable that a number of characters share class consciousness, and it influences their life in one way or the other. Owing to their subjective nature the characters use class consciousness to make sense of their world and it may also be kept in mind that the happenings of various kinds related to the characters play a dominant part in ripening up their consciousness. For instance, the season of elections plays a pivotal role in constructing the consciousness of characters concerning the world around them. Balram's father knows that this is the way of the world in which they happen to exist and some other person will cast his vote for him to elect or more precisely select the ruler with whom the darkness will prevail and on the other hand, an old rickshaw puller having gained consciousness tries to exercise his constitutional right of casting his own vote but this does not last long as he is beaten by Vijay and others who are

trying to manoeuvre the situation in their own favour. It can be analyzed that the class consciousness of working class may still be in the developing phase and for the time being if the poor class manages to gain consciousness it will not pose a threat to the current social fabric.

India has been swayed by a tide of globalization on a fast pace but there is no denying the fact that the poor are still living a life of deprivation and destitution. Adiga has explicitly manifested his work with the exploitation prevalent in the society and he bemoans the discrimination of one particular class at the hands of another class. This study can prove helpful in a way that it opens up new avenues concerning the array of narrative and in literature in general.

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