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**Poverty in Aravind Adiga's
'The White Tiger' and 'Last Man In Tower'**

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ABSTRACT : Poverty is a state in which the people cannot survive without the basic requirements. Many Indian writers voice for the suffering of poor people, who are living in the crushing poverty. Among them, Charles Dickens, Mulk Raj Anand and Aravind Adiga's novels are the eye-openers to the society and express the pathos in the realistic manner. Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* is the debut novel, who received the Man Booker Prize in 2008. In *The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga expresses the struggle of poor people who live in the crushing poverty. The novel is a powerful attack poverty and inequality with haves and have-nots. The novel reflects the modernized society where the corruption plays the major role. He narrates the story through the protagonist Balram Halwai. In Adiga's second novel is *Last Man in Tower*, he narrates the story through Masterji, who lives in the dominating society called Mumbai. The problem arises between two community people for the Tower A and Tower B. From these novels we can see the uniqueness of Adiga. Thus the aim of this paper is to analyse the poverty which paves way to corruption and human discrimination in India.

Keywords: *poverty, injustice, corruption*

The following abbreviations are used after quotations:

WT – *The White Tiger* and LMT – *Last Man in Tower*

Poverty is a state in which the people cannot survive without the basic requirements. Many Indian writers voice for the suffering of poor people who are living in the crushing poverty. Among them, Charles Dickens, Mulk Raj Anand and Aravind Adiga's novels are the eye-openers to the society and express the pathos in the realistic manner. Charles Dickens voices out against poverty, class mobility and injustices. Mulk Raj Anand discusses the strong message of poverty through some powerful characters. In such a way, Adiga follows their views and exhibiting in the unique manner.

Aravind Adiga, the contemporary writer, discusses the major topics like poverty, corruption, caste and class discrimination. The main theme of the novels is based on the contrast between India's rise of modern society and people who live in crushing poverty. His writings are famously classified as Dickensian. Adiga follows Charles Dickens' views which creates the characters of cruelties and completes the novel with a happy ending. He has brought out the problems of corruption facing by the people in India. There are some common similarities found in Adiga's *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in Tower*. The two novels depict the power of rich people and their domination to the poor. The novels state that there is no change between the rich and the poor.

Adiga narrates the story from the first person point of view of Balram Halwai. This narration makes the readers to get connected with Balram who expresses the suffering directly to the readers. He lives in the extreme poverty in a rural village of India where the streets are "glistening lines of sewage". He is a chaffer to the rich man Ashok in New Delhi. So he can easily be exposed to the both circumstance of extreme poverty and wealth.

In his second novel, *Last Man in Tower*, he brings out domination of rich, conflict between the two community, corruption and money plays the major role in Mumbai. Mumbai is the city of extraordinary rich and poor. It's a city with diversity. The great glittering towers are built only for the rich and slums for the poor.

In the novel *The White Tiger* and *Last man in Tower*, he voices out the corruption which plays the vital role in Government of India. He states that "any issue can be settled with government because this is India, not America" (WT 121). He creates two different India of Light and Darkness. He brings out the gap between the rich and poor in the evils of new modern society.

In *The White Tiger*, the novelist reveals the poverty of people who find difficult to earn money. Balram mentions in the pathetic mood that a poor man is just a body of without soul. Using his physical strength, he can make some money which is not sufficient to meet his family. Adiga rightly says, "The story of a poor man's life is written on his body, in a sharp pen" (WT 27).

In *Last Man in Tower*, Adiga brings out the materialistic society through the character of Shah, a person of greed who states, "You should look around you, at people. Rich people. Successful people. You should always be thinking, what does he have that I don't have? That way you go up in life." (LMT 230).

Poverty is also viewed as a disease in the society. The people cannot mingle with each other in the contemporary society. Balram who cannot tolerate this difference bursts out. At last, it leads him to murder his boss Ashok. Masterji cannot fight alone in the corrupted society where nobody stands with him. Finally, he remains the last man in tower. Through this theme, Adiga symbolically reviews the poverty and injustice which double every situation through the characters of Balram, Ashok, Masterji and Shah. Through these situations they travel in both the place of 'Dark and Light'.

Balram is picturized as the white tiger by the Inspection Officer. He says that he is a rare man. Balram, who tries to break the discrimination of people and the cycle of poverty, says, "Can a man a man break out of the coop? What if one day, for instance, a driver took his employer's money and ran...Only a man who is prepared to see his family destroyed—hunted, beaten...can break out of the coop" (WT 150). Poverty leads the poor people to live a life of slavery. Adiga expresses the poor who lives in the pathetic condition without leading the proper life as their wish. Their dreams and happiness are dumped like the roosters in the coop. In the following passage, it is said how poor people survive in the modern society.

On the wooden desk above this coop sits a grinning young butcher, showing off the flesh and organs of a recently chopped-up chicken, still oleaginous with a coating a dark blood. The roosters in the coop smell the blood from above. They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they're next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. the very same thing is done with human beings in this country. (WT 173-174)

Rich people lead their life happily whereas the exploited poor remain as the rooster coops forever. With the good qualities of Masterji, he stands against Shah in the legal way and becomes nightmare to Shah. So he thinks brutally against Masterji to get away of making pressure to him. The efforts of Shah fail to convince Masterji to accept his ideas and decisions. At last Shah decides to kill him. Adiga vibrantly narrated the life-death of Masterji. Even though Masterji is good to the society but the cunningness of Shah makes his (Masterji's) life tragic.

Even in the interview with Sawhney, he says about the political system which plays its typical role in the upcoming lines:

The fact that a lot of Indians have very little political freedom, especially in the north of India. That elections are rigged in large parts of the north Indian state of Bihar, and they're also accompanied by violence. There's like thirty five killings during every election. If you were a poor man you'd have to pick China over India any day because your kids have a better chance of being nourished if you're poor. Your wife is more likely to survive childbirth. You're likely to live longer. There are so many ways in which India's system fails horribly. (Sawheny 2008).

The effect of money completely changes the lives of the rich and the poor. The necessity and the greed of money which makes Balram murder Ashok, changes his character. The greed of money leads to wickedness when a person gives much importance to money instead of valuing God's gifted life. Poverty results in immoral behaviour, corruption and dishonesty. The money makes everyone think in the negative aspects. The two protagonists are the representatives of poor longing for 'tomorrow'. It sounds very ridiculous that animals are treated as human beings and vice versa.

Adiga is strongly believes that each and every common people need to get their basic necessities, but he gets shocked about how in reality they are treated by the upper castes. The white tiger symbolizes the power and individualism and tower symbolizes Domination. Adiga uses names of the animals as nicknames to the human beings. Animals name are the best metaphors in *The White Tiger*. The name of certain characters like Stork, Mongoose, Wild Boar, Raven and Buffalo allow the readers to imagine and recollect character easily. These novels reveal shocking aspect of corrupted system and it has sudden twist and turn, finally it ends with the thought provoking message. To Some extent, Adiga tries to bring out the true picture of 'Poverty'. He portrays in the realistic way of poor people and their poverty which readers never forget.

Thus these novels are the depiction of poverty, social injustice and economic inequalities in the contemporary India. From the above study, it is apparent that Aravind Adiga focus on the poverty and misery of India, one who makes difference in his writings and makes all his novels unique from others.

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