

## The Servitudes Studied in Aravind Adiga's '*The White Tiger*'

Most. Rojina Afroj

Lecturer in English, Shailokupa City College  
Shailokupa, Jhenaidah, Bangladesh

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**Abstract:** In '*The White Tiger*', Aravind Adiga introduces an epistolary form to recount the oppressive situations of a lower caste servant, Balram, who tried to get rid of his physical and mental captivations that falsify his fortune all through his misdeeds. Balram Halwai inscribes a series of letters to the visiting Chinese Premier, Mr Wen Jiabao, to disclose a playfully expoundation and reinforce the points of Indian social circumstances that uphold the matter of servitudes and the consequences created from it. This study will simply try to demonstrate those points of extreme servitudes found in every social state of affairs and how the malcontent, Balram, has to accomplish his all immoral acts towards the way of successful entrepreneurship. But, all he wants to do up to the last time is to be free from servitudes, becoming a master from a servant.

**Keywords:** Poverty, Servitude, Dissatisfaction, Illegalities, Tendencies, Success

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The slavery and the servitude rooted in human society is the key fact of this discussion. Aravind Adiga has presented the detail aspects of servitude found in 21<sup>st</sup> century social phenomenon. The socio-economical conditions have the powerful changes under the bad impacts of the any corrupted activity and the servitudes are being created from it. The very hard working people are running for their survivals into the society but the capitalist rich people are treating very badly to the neglected poor people and these situations are getting bitter and bitter gradually. Adiga has successfully tried to uphold some of these issues in his wonderful fiction- *The White Tiger* and for this reason, he achieved the Man Booker Prize in 2008. In fact, Adiga, tries to indicate that people are trying to survive in the society comfortably with peace and happiness but the rich people are exploiting them much and that treatments towards the poor are creating so many servants and those servants are confining themselves into their own made world of servitudes. Someone tries to stay into this and someone like Balram, the central figure of this novel, tries to get back and break the so-called tendencies in order to have a social order. But unfortunately, he killed his master, Mr. Ashok and snatching all money, he becomes a great businessman. Truly, all his social activities get darkened though; he becomes the foster child of success. He is the foster child of servitude and Balram has got the triumph in his life struggle, but in wrong and totally illegal way, he has to make his journey.

Indeed, servitude is mixed up with the existence of the poor Indian people because they think that betraying to a master brings misfortune to fate and it begets sin. They never leave their masters in the hours of despairs rather stay with them until their last breathes. (Muzifar Yousuf). So, this beginning word obviously exposes the lower level scenario of modern India where economic stability comes from the very toilsome works of the poor people.

In his initial description, Balram started with a very short history of some countries that were never ruled by the mastery of the dominated countries and in this list, India is not presented. He brought these examples because he very much wished to see India as a free country where there will have no clashes among several groups or castes. Besides, Adiga may have represented India as a servile nation like Balram is a "servant" apprehended by a serving attitude- "I was a servant once, you see" [WT-p.5]. Adiga described one thing that all other nations except China, Afghanistan and Abyssinia have been ruled by the foreign masters- 'I was a servant once, you see. Only three nations have never let themselves be ruled by the foreigners: China, Afghanistan, and Abyssinia. These are the only three nations I admire.' [WT-p.22] So, it is clear that he wants to see his motherland as a free nation where there will have no clash or class discrimination and also, the servitude of humanity that unrest every situation of a civilized society.

Adiga witnessed the miseries of the poor people and they have been expressed again and again in this story. "What is sport to the cat is death to the rat"- there goes another proverb and there is a great similarities here, in this post colonial Indian fiction. He found that the rich people play with the lives of the poor by making them as their servants. Most of the times, they become the substance of entertainment to the wealthy people

because they look at them just to be experienced but not to help them in danger. For example, the rich class people go to market to shop and ride on the vehicles of the poor- the Rickshaw pullers. With the pains in the bodies, "middle-class fleshes" never try to stop doing hard works rather; they are to go for their masters' betterments. So, they remain burden to the society being always in the poor class. But, each of them has a very small plan in the society with which, they just go ahead. Balram felt everything from his own existence as 'a human beast of burden'. It is to be noted here-- there you'll see the road full of them -- thin, sticklike men, leaning forward from the seat of a bicycle, as they pedal along a carriage bearing a pyramid of middle-class flesh -- some fat man with his fat wife and all their shopping bags and groceries.

And when you see these stick-men, think of my father.

Rickshaw-puller he may have been -- a human beast of burden -- but my father was a man with a plan.

*I was his plan.*" [WT-p.27]

Balram, the central character of this fiction, always wanted to live in the society like a real man, not as a servant. For this, he struggled a lot but has to be successful in evil way. He is to run all through his life just like a mule until he becomes an unbeaten entrepreneur in Indian business world what his father once wished to be like. But, for the bad luck, he could not show his triumph to his father who was also a servant of a nasty, wealthy and a filthy man. Before the death, his poor father uttered:

"My whole life, I have been treated like a donkey. All I want is that one son of mine -- at least one -- should live like a man." [WT-p.30]

In fact, Balram's father once wanted to break the silence of the Darkness. He wished to see Balram as a person of Light being free from the grueling time of manual effort and servitude. So, Balram adopts his objectives and dedicates his life towards attaining them.

Anyway, the form of mockery just opens up when Balram speaks of the Hindu god- Hanuman who was a faithful servant of god-Rama. In Hinduism, god Hanuman is much respected for mightiness and faithfulness towards his, master Rama. Balram compared himself as god Hanuman here because he has guided his masters- Stork, Mr. Ashok, Pinky Madam- as like as Hanuman. So, this comparison can be a matter of laughter and ridicule because being a human being, he is acting as god Hanuman who was driving the chariot of Ram and Sita in the ancient time or it may be a tradition in Hinduism to serve the gods and goddesses. So, here we find the servitude heavenly and earthly which was imposed on the servants. It is satirical because Balram has compared him with the servant god-Hanuman thinking that it is a loss of once own freedom to be a servant.

He condemns Hinduism for the dominations over the poor and the retardation of collective progress in India. He also made the insurrection against the principles of servitude he got enshrined in Hinduism and its sequences of events: (Sharma p.184) "I would drive them wherever they wanted, as faithfully as the servant god Hanuman carried about his master and mistress, Ram and Sita." [WT-p.46] "Do you know about Hanuman, sir? He was the faithful servant of the god Rama, and we worship him in our temples because he is a shining example of how to serve your masters with absolute fidelity, love, and devotion. These are the kinds of gods they have foisted on us, Mr. Jiabao. Understand, now, how hard it is for a man to win his freedom in India." [WT-p.19]

Killing seems to be very simple to Balram which is a sarcastic thought to the readers. He killed Mr. Ashok for his money and he possessed all his qualities later. It is really mockery that he is showing respect for late Ashok. Balram believes that he will never stop protecting his good name and fame because he has been a master now from a faithful servant. It is a matter of proud to him. How sarcastic it is to think that a man boasts of his mastery after killing his own master. It sounds like the English proverb- "To rob Peter to pay Paul". Balram says: "Now, even though I killed him, you won't find me saying one bad thing about him. I protected his good name when I was his servant, and now that I am (WT-in a sense) his master, I won't stop protecting his good name." [WT-p.47]

Balram was to accomplish all other works as a servant. He would wash the body of the dogs with expensive shampoos, cook foods and cleaning the cars and so on and so forth. That is why; he liked to address the deprived Indian people as 'servants'. So, it is a big instance of class discrimination profoundly rooted into the core of Indian nation as well as into the caste system. Balram cannot but do this kind of jobs. "What is not cured must be endured"- the situation is like this proverb here. Balram absorbs everything because he is a loyal servant, not an office worker:

"But in India -or, at least, in the Darkness-the rich don't have drivers, cooks, barbers, and tailors. They simply have servants. [WT-p.68]

I absorbed everything-that's the amazing thing about entrepreneurs. We are like sponges-we absorb and grow. [WT-p.71]

Once, Balram's school teacher gave him a name as 'Balram' instead of 'Munna'. The name of that teacher was 'Krishna'. Indeed god Balrama was the sidekick of 'Lord Krishna'. A caricature might have found here because Balram believes that "he was born and raised in darkness" and being a servant and trying to remove poverty from his life have been the very intensions of them to be free. However, it is archetypal to Hindu religion here. Adiga might have compared Balram with the Hindu god- Balrama, the elder brother of

Krishna and that teacher with the "Lord Krishna" who served all humanity with his heavenly power. To say more, that lord would destroy the sinner to establish truth and religion so that people can live in human society with peace and happiness. It is satirical here because Balram thinks that he is in the role of lord 'Balrama' and that teacher of 'Krishna'. Indeed, Balram thinks that he is serving the poor Indian people to make them free from extreme hardships- "The Rooster Coop"- a social jail- "We are made mysteries to ourselves by the Rooster Coop we are locked in." [WT-p.187] But, in this narration, he speaks as if he were doing his religious job by stealing money and killing the rich man-Ashok. It is nothing but an interesting comparison of a man's work with the work of a heavenly gods- 'Balaram' or 'Krishna' regarding the servants and the servitudes. This comparison is indirectly found in page no 10-11 of this novel.

Next, the matter of dogs has come here because the poor people have been compared here with loyal dogs. The servants are represented here as dogs because they work for their masters very loyally. Even, they are not as much important as dogs to the rich persons. The rich keeps dogs and spend lots of money for the dogs. On the other hand, working hard, the servants are not treated well. In fact, it has been the nasty traditions of the rich people and Balram is very much influenced by this scenario. He thinks himself as very loyal dogs. Adiga's presentation of those dogs creates laughter in the readers' minds as well as make sad to their conditions because dogs are much valuable to the masters than that of the poor persons in the society. Here, the picture of servitude gets clear with the expression:

"Do you like dogs, village boy?" he asked with a big smile. [WT-p.78]

There were two white Pomeranians in the house-Cuddles and Puddles. The rich expect their dogs to be treated like humans...Then I took them around the compound on a chain while the king of Nepal sat in a corner and shouted, "Don't pull the chain so hard! They're worth more than you are!" [WT-p.78]

Keeping pain in his mind, Balram pretends to be happy being a servant, like that dogs, just to show fake respect to all of his masters and this narration may bear a satirical tone also. He said, "They were convinced I was the most religious servant on earth." (WT-p.78). Anna Nguyen, a critic, states that Mr. Ashok and Pinky Madam once, were patronizing Balram for his faithfulness. But, Balram overstated his beliefs and pretended to make signs of admiration to all kinds of features of the landscape. Balram uses such dark dubious humors to come to words with both the affronts of the rich and the morally wrong choices he himself has made.

However, according to the old testaments of Muslims and Christians, Satan was the servant of almighty God. Once, Satan stood against the God because the Almighty did not accept his (Satan's) proposal that he (Satan) will be the Supreme Being to human kind. So, the Almighty just gets angry and banishes him from the heaven but Satan still tries to master over the human senses and activities. Adiga might have compared the rich people with the role God and the poor with Satan. Balram, like Satan, tries to break the social barrier though it is in the wrong way. He tries to be like that God in his sense; means to be a rich and very powerful man- "Isn't it all wonderful? Isn't it all grand? Aren't you grateful to be my servant? God says: I am powerful. I am huge. Become my servant again." Devil says: Ha!" [WT-p.87-88] Felling like the devil-Satan, he nicely imagines the activities of God (Figuring out from Iqbal's poems by Adiga).

Once, Balram was praised by Mr. Ashok for his regularly good jobs. At that moment Balram pretends to be very much respectful to all religious gods and earthly creatures made by Him. However, being a servant, he keeps on thinking untruly that he is the believer of God and His creatures. Satirically, an expression of servitude is made here: "They were convinced I was the most religious servant on earth. (Take that, Ram Persad!) [WT-p.91]. Actually, Balram is not a much believer of God because poverty and the treatments of the rich towards the poor have made him think so.

In addition, it seems that servants are the enemies of other servants- "That's the driver's fate. Every other servant thinks he can boss over us" [WT-p.200] - and it is a very common picture everywhere. A servant reacts too much when he or she finds other servant guilty. Likewise, there is a guard of that house where Balram works as a driver. Another driver works there and his name is Ram Persad who is in a disguised name. Actually, Ram Persad is not a Hindu but a Muslim. He has been in disguise as a Hindu man just to manage a job in Hindu family. Being a Muslim, it is very tough to get a job in India. So, he took this disguise. Eventually, Balram has discovered this matter and immediately, informed his master that Ram Persad is a fraud. He disclosed this to his master so that he can drive the best car which was under the control of Ram Persad at that time. Here, he is like a cunning fox to grab the opportunity and replace himself in the position of Persad. So, a servant is vindictive towards another servant here. On the other hand, Nepali, the guard of his master's house also hid this matter that Ram Persad is a Muslim. Balram also takes this chance to treat Nepali a good lesson because he has insulted him (Balram) a number of times while doing the house works. Balram were too much angry at Nepali and getting the chance to insult him, he just slapped Nepali hardly and disclosed the truth also to his master- "Before he could run, I caught him by the collar. Technically, in these servant-versus-servant affairs, that is all you need to do to indicate: "I have won." But if you're going to do these things, it's better to do them in style, right? So I slapped him too." [WT-p.109] Now, very satirically, Balram says that he is the main servant of that house and it is prestigious to him for that moment- "I was servant number one from now on in this household." [WT-p.109]

'Servant Number One' has become a very satirical phrase here because Balram has been able to knock down two other servants in that house. To Balram, a servant needs to be scolded by other servant for any mistake and it is his or her very inherent characteristic to rule one another. Balram made the simile or analogy that the pet dogs bark if that see any stranger before them and these poor servants are like those dogs who quarrel against other- "Servants need to abuse other servants. It's been bred into us, the way Alsatian dogs are bred to attack strangers. We attack anyone who's familiar." [WT-p.130] So, this way, the servants are the enemies of other servants.

Anyway, a poor servant becomes corrupted when a rich man scolds him for no reason. The rich provide huge amount of hush money to the corrupted leaders in order to get privileges. But, sometimes, they become unwilling to help the poor in a critical time. In capitalist society, the rich become rich and the poor remain poor. The rich capitalized more money absorbing the labors of the poor workers. Adiga has brought this matter into light because in this way, a poor man can commit a wrongdoing for not having money enough to lead his or her life comfortably. So, Adiga specified the reason here: "That's how you corrupt servants. It starts with one rupee. Don't bring your American ways here." [WT-p.139]

Balram was born in the Darkness and now, he is to live as a man of Light "You see, I am in the Light now, but I was born and raised in Darkness". (WT-p.14) He recalled his father who died in the hospital without any proper treatment. The doctors were not regular in the hospital and the environment of that hospital was terribly bad. In fact, his father was a rickshaw puller. So, he would earn a very little amount of money, not enough to run a family. Yet, Balram blames his father because he thinks that his poor father is responsible to make his life darkened. He regrets why life is very painful to him and all the poor- "...has raised me to live like an animal". "Why do all the poor live amid such filth, such ugliness?" (WT-p.128). So, it is obvious that Balram's poor family condition has made his life very uncomfortable.

In addition, there are so many servants in the world. They are very much loyal to their duties and most of the time; they do not break the faith of their masters- "The trustworthiness of servants is the basis of the entire Indian economy."(WT-p.175). This way, for ages, the servants are serving their masters with great faithfulness. The drivers of India are just like this. They have been carrying lots of things including money and others. Interestingly, they steal money from the other sources but not from the masters' money. With great faithfulness, they are doing their rightful jobs.

On the other hand, because of their honest duties, they are falling in dangerous situations too. For example, Balram falls into a great trap created by the Stork's family. Here, Mrs. Pinky Madam, the wife of Mr. Ashok was driving their car just removing Balram. She started driving the car very fast listening no word from Ashok and Balram. Abruptly, she knocks down something and it was nothing but a little child, probably coming from the nearby poor family. But, fortunately, nobody sees this accident. So, after this, the stork family emphasizes Balram to confess to police that that accident was not done by Pinky but by him, Balram. So, after listening this request, Balram gets too much afraid that he will have to go to jail for no reason. Though he did not kill that innocent child in the Delhi road, he has been charged for that. He is to listen their words because he is a faithful servant of them, has been working as like as dog. In the need of them, they are considering Balram as their family member. Well, suddenly, a news came that Balram needs not give confession to police because nobody has seen who has committed this accident. Balram gets relief and keeps on to thinking that he is the foster child of the consequence.

In fact, this is the condition of almost all drivers in Delhi. Many drivers are counting their days in the jails just to protect their beloved and most respected masters. So, they become the perfect servants in the eyes of Adiga- "The jails of Delhi are full of drivers who are there behind bars because they are taking the blame for their good, solid, middle-class masters. We have left the villages, but the masters still own us, body, soul, and arse ... Doesn't the driver's family protest? Far from it. They would actually go about bragging. Their boy Balram had taken the fall, gone to Tihar Jail for his employer. He was loyal as a dog. He was the perfect servant. (WT-p.170)

The servants are really neglected in a society. They bear uncountable pains in their minds but never rebel because they are trapped in 'Rooster Coop', the social jail. To Adiga, the poor are captured into this coop means cage. They see that their fellow beings are being slaughtered but never revolt against because, they are feeble animals. Likewise, the servants are trapped into this rooster coop and respecting to what their masters do, they never rebel against them- "The greatest thing to come out of this country in the ten thousand years of its history is the Rooster Coop. 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-Page 173)".

In Indian social regulation, servitude is completely got merged with the blood of the solid and hard working poor people. They continue to be faithful but unfortunately, their masters do not show a least kindheartedness to them as well as pay them the worthy money they need.

“Watch the roads in the evenings in Delhi; sooner or later you will see a man on a cycle-rickshaw, pedaling down the road, with a giant bed, or a table, tied to the cart that is attached to his cycle. . . . . He puts it into his pocket, or into his shirt, or into his underwear, and cycles back to his boss and hands it over without touching a single rupee of it! A year's salary, two years' salary, in his hands, and he never takes a rupee of it.” [WT-p.174]

It is interesting to say that a poor person makes much fun with another rich man if he or she gets that chance. He may make so many insulting activities to fulfill his or her desire. It is called the entertainment of the working class which becomes some serious humor. “(A time-honored servants' tradition. Slapping the master when he's asleep. Like jumping on pillows when masters are not around. Or urinating into their plants. Or beating or kicking their pet dogs. Innocent servants' pleasures.)” [WT-p.183-184] Actually, this may be the poor and rich relationships. Both of them try to punish each other whenever there is an opportunity.

Now, a different matter may be discussed here. To Adiga, the poor remain poor because of nobody but because of they themselves. They have the tendencies always to remain like servants and behave like that every so often. Ultimately, they can understand this fact but cannot avoid in the long run. To be like always as a servant also hurts their own mentalities and there has nothing to remove this tendency but to be self-restrained in not thinking so- “Why did I feel that I had to go close to his feet, touch them and press them and make them feel good-why? Because the desire to be a servant had been bred into me: hammered into my skull, nail after nail, and poured into my blood, the way sewage and industrial poison are poured into Mother Ganga.”[WT-p.193] So, there needs a redemption from this slavery and this should be brought into the society to alter the old inclinations of the past and bring the modern free time to best suit an individual.

## II. CONCLUSION

In fine, we may state that poverty is always a curse to the poor people and it creates the servitude among them in a great extent. It is not a duty for one man only in a society to lessen this curse rather, everyone should come forward to feel this and finish. Truly, most of the persons who are living under the silent penetrations of servitude can break this mental restriction initially. But, there go a few people ahead and some to back, making that even more malicious with curse- “servitude so strong that you can put the key of his emancipation in a man's hands and he will throw it back at you with a curse” (WT-149) Actually, Balram did everything illegal avoiding the social norms and above all, his own family. He rationalized his actions that are full of immoralities (killing the person, snatching the money, giving bribes etc.), at the end of the novel so that the reader can decide what he should do to be free from extreme servitudes. He is successful in doing so. So, Adiga has some good touches in this fiction and the study of servitudes has been done extraordinarily.

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