Arvind Adiga’s ‘The White Tiger’
Rise of Subaltern : A postcolonial Discourse.

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Abstract:
Postcolonial writings have invoked the notion of social Justice, resistance, freedom and egalitarianism in its attempt to counter dictatorial structures of racial discrimination, prejudice and ill treatment. Subaltern studies ‘occupied a prominent place in post colonial writings. The land owners, the industrialists and the upper classes have always dominated and oppressed the poor, servants and other unprivileged class. Their voices have been silenced and are subjected to exploitation and humiliation.

Adiga’s The White tiger (2008) records the story of an oppressed, Balaram Halwai and his big fabricated events that structure the novel. The novel throws light on the darkenss of India articulating voice to the voiceless and induces hopes in the life of hopeless. Balram Halwai, the protagonist, a strong voice of the underdogs resistas to get a respectable place in life and shakes the very foundation of the system. His struggle for identity and aspiration to be from periphery to centre is warning of underclass to the “Men with big bellies”. His transformation from Munna to Ashok Sharma indicates the rise of subaltern and suggests that the voice of subaltern can not be suppressed for long. Balram reveals the secret of success and awakens hopes and awarenss in the life of half baked that subaltern can illuminate his life. Balram’s protest, resistance ad act of breaking system is a blowng a trumpet for the rise of underdogs and subversion of social structure of India.

Introduction:
Postcolonial writings have invoked the notion of social Justice, resistance, freedom and egalitarianism in its attempt to counter dictatorial structures of racial discrimination prejudice and ill-treatment. Subaltern studies occupied a prominent place in postcolonial literature. Subaltern group is constituted by women and widows, untouchables, landless peasants, workers, craftsmen, and other under privileged people.

They pursue how subalterns are represented in official documents and elite writing. They also argue how the nation, state inherited colonial systems of hierarchy, triggering new forms of oppression. The landowners, the industrialists and the upper classes have always exercised control over the poor peasants, labourers and the working classes. The lack and deprivation, loneliness and alienation, subjugation and subordination, the resignation and silence, the resilience and neglect mark the lives of subaltern, even when they resist and rise up, they feel bounded and defeated by their
subject positions. They have neither representatives nor spokesperson in the society they live in and so helplessly suffer and occupy marginal or subordinate place or no place at all in the history and culture of which they are the essential part as human beings. The subaltern groups are actually oppressed and their oppression is legitimized by the democratic system. This repressive and stiffening system can not be exterminated unless the world remains divided into two stratas, the powerful and the powerless.

*The White Tiger* (2008) as its title symbolically indicates the subversion of oppressed, dominated into oppressor/dominator records the story of an oppressed, Balram Halwai and his big fabricated events that make up the fabric structure of the novel in the small village of Laxmangarh situated in the darkness of India, Jharkhand and consequently moving to Delhi and Bangalore. In *The White Tiger* Adiga portrayed two different Indias in one, “an India of light and an India of Darkness”(14). He throws light on the darkness of India articulating voice to the subaltern and tries to abolish the discrimination between the rich and poor, by creating a society in which the principles of equality and Justice should be governed. Balram Halwai, the protagonist is a strong voice of unprivileged struggles to get rid of age-old slavery and constant exploitation. His anger, Protest, indulgence in crime, and emergence of businessman alarm the world of oppressor that the voice of subaltern cannot be suppressed for long. The paper attempts to explore the condition of subalterns, their struggle for identity, their aspiration from periphery to centre, causes of emergence, ways of subjugation and exploitation and reactions against the structure of the society. The novel centers around Balram Halwai, a son of a rickshaw puller, destined to be a sweet maker, becomes a successful businessman, Ashok Sharma. His transformation from Munna – Balram Halwai – White Tiger – Ashok Sharma is the indication of the rise of subaltern. Balram Halwai represents the Dark India which is constituted by servants, untouchables, Jobless youths, marginal farmers, poor, destitute, drivers, prostitutes, beggars and other unprivileged groups. The Dark India is the creation of our democratic policy, bureaucratic set-up, poverty, illiteracy, unemployement caste and culture conflict, dowry system and our social structure.

The novel is structured in the epistolary form and for this Adiga gives the reason below.

“It is a story he can never tell any one because it involves murder in the real life, now he tells it when no one is around. Like all Indians, who are obsessed (A colonial legacy, probably) with the outsider’s gaze he is stimulated to think-about his country and society by the imminent arrival of a foreigner and an important one. So he talks about himself and his country in the solitude of his room. (The Sunday Times, April 6, 2008).
However, *The White Tiger*, Magnus Opus, attempts to highlight the issue of subalterns and their miserable conditions before the world audience. Adiga explains why Balram Halwai writes to the Chinese premier. Balram acknowledges “The future of the world lies with the yellow man and the brown man now that our erstwhile master, the white skinned man has wasted himself through buggery, mobile phone usage and drug abuse” (5-6), and he admires “It said that you Chinese are great lovers of freedom and individual liberty. The British tried to make you their servants, but you never let them do it”(5)

*The White Tiger* comments upon the social disparities in India. The fate of the subalterns is shaped and fashioned by the oppressor. People who live in the darkness of India are destined to serve their masters. People in Laxamangarh worship Hanuman because, “He is shining example of how to serve your master with absolute fidelity, love and devotion.”(19). Balram’s father is hit by poverty and tough manual work. He is always treated as “Donkey and has no respectable place in his life. He is subjected to humiliation and torture by the affluent. He wishes that his son should live at least like a human being.” 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.”(30)

The novel exposes the perils of socio-economic inequality in India. The rich people have no respect for their servants. They treat them almost like Slaves. While boasting about India, Ashok tells his wife, “We have got people to take care of us here-our drivers, our watchmen, our masseurs, and where in New York will you find some one to bring tea and sweets biscuits while you are still lying in the bed, the way Ram Bhadur does for us?”(89)

Adiga has used the metaphor of ‘Rooster coop’ to present the inherited slavery of underdogs. “The roosters in the coop smell the blood from. They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they’re the next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop”. (173-74).

The ‘rooster coop’ symbolises Balram’s conscious expression to describe the oppressed, confined and helpless condition of the average Indian people. He realizes that he cannot survive unless rebels against the conventional mode of life. But Balram does not want to be a ‘rooster’ in a coop, he wishes to be a member of eaters.

The novel encapsulates the resistance of the unprivileged class. Balram experiences the terrible pangs of life which makes him a man of action. He wants to feel like a master “just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute what it means not to be a servant”.(321)

He murders his master, Ashok not for the sake of some amount of money but his identity. Though a murder cannot be justified and murders cannot be pardoned, through Balram’s mobility Adiga shows the easy and shortcut way to success that can
be obtained only through corruption and illegal patronage. He has violated the trust reposed in him by his master, but that is the way to get out of the Jungle”.

Balram acts as an agent to uplift the subalterns by retrieving their voices, spaces and identities suppressed by colonial surrogates in the post colonial environment. His protest against the prevalent dominant ideology and cultural supremacy is a warning for the rise of the underclass.

To conclude every man has a right to live like a human being and can improve his social and economic condition if given equal right and opportunities. The disparities between rich and poor, caste discrimination, exploitation of the underclass should be abolished so that we can stop a man like Balram from committing a heinous crime.

Balram paves the way to those who are ready to commit even more heinous crimes because they are to survive on any account. He voices to the voiceless and hopes to the hopeless people. He induces optimism in the life of half baked that they can illuminate their life. He reveals the key of success that through underhand means a subaltern too can become a successful businessman overnight. His act of breaking the system is a trumpet for the subversion of social structure of India.

References:
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