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Moral Implications of Globalization: A Critical Study of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Abstract:

This paper highlights the negative impacts of globalization on Indian value system among the younger generation. It focuses how globalisation corrodes the traditional moral values among the young people. It corrupts the mind and soul of an individual and groups in a society. Globalization has turned the world a small place and reachable and all its resources accessible. Liberalization of economy, free entry and exit in global market has brought massive changes in the society including standards of living, ways of thinking and in culture. It cannot be denied Globalization put a huge impact on all aspects of the society. It has brought good at the same time it has also come with an ugly face. The Indian society has been largely affected by the global force. People can dream off things and better life and people's dreams can also be shattered by the force. The existence of the global force is everywhere. Hedonistic and apathetic lifestyle, the consequences of globalization which are becoming common in Indian youngsters. The lifestyle Indian youth prefers is a materialistic and self-centred. Besides basic values, other aspects of Indian tradition were displaced and replaced by the Western culture. Globalization also contributed to the decline in nationalism and patriotism and ultimately caused the moral degradation in the youth and corrupted the youth of the nation. Moral values are the great principles of life that one follows to differentiate between right and wrong. Moral values include honesty, truthfulness, integrity, kindness, compassion, respectfulness, and forgiveness etc. The nation depends upon the young mass but during the contemporary era young people were corrupted by the global force and forget the moral values and its importance. In this novel Balram Halwai, Ashok Sharma and Pinky represent the younger generation and through them the degradation of moral values in the time of

globalization has been portrayed. Balram Halwai is changing his fate from being poor to rich at the cost of losing all moral values.

Keywords: Globalization, Moral Values, Crime, Corruption, Indian Culture.

Introduction:

Aravind Adiga is a brilliant author of fictions, short stories, and editorials. He always wanted to be a writer and, in the beginning, he took journalism and observed India. He represented the middle class of India and succeeded in dealing with poverty, corruption, caste system, servitude and the struggle and socio-economic upliftment of middle-class people. In most of his fictions the true condition Indian middle class and their voices are recorded appropriately. '*The White Tiger*' is a brilliant piece of work which took the literary world with a storm and he won the 2008 Man Booker Prize. His extensive portrayal of heinous caste system and the corruption in Indian politics have been thought provoking irrespective of national boundaries. In this work of fiction, the protagonist Balram Halwai has left footprints in the minds of the readers for his thoughts, philosophy, debate on democracy. For his authentic portrayal of post-liberalised India, he has been widely acclaimed. Commenting on Adiga's '*The White Tiger*' Sudeep Paul said- "It is an intelligent and ruthless portrait of the India in the making-shining or rising, but always sinking-shot through with wit and black humour that match the author's economy with words...But the real power of this book comes from its total lack of sentimentality and the consequent realism it thus manages...In the course of the narrative, a vivid India breaks through." (Paul 1).

Analysis:

Marfleet and Kiely (1998) defined globalisation in reference to a world in which societies, cultures, politics, and economics have in some sense come closer together. In buttressing their conception of globalisation, they refer to Giddens (1964) who took the conception as intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. Globalization process, in different ways, has great effect on moral values. Everyone was a kind of convinced that Globalisation would bring prosperity into everyone's life. But after globalisation and post globalisation period nothing such happened rather the gap between rich and poor widened at an alarming rate. The rich became richer and the poor became the poorest and even starved to death.

Globalization has filled everyone's minds with dreams. But it is a question whether people have enough sources to fulfil their dreams and to what extent their goals are achieved. Globalization has brought massive changes in the Indian society and disorganized the prevailing order and filled the society with chaos. The minds of the youth were corrupted by the global force. With globalization every rich and powerful man got the access to finance and man power. They used people in their own way. Globalization has disorganized, disoriented, and confused and failed to play a vital role in the world. Globalisation has disrupted community living and broke down family life and put too much importance on individuality. It has been noticed that the contemporary society is marked by violence, theft, greed and terrorism, inequality, and injustice. The young generation has been self-centred and never care about the elders. Education in true sense has lost its importance in modern days and money mindedness and money madness has replaced it. Thus, it has disapproved the Indian saying.

This novel captures the post liberalised society of India. Balram Halwai the protagonist of the novel is an illuminating example of a Globalized society. Aravind Adiga through his character shows us an Individual born out of globalization by taking the reference of his thoughts, actions, behaviours, and dynamics of violence. He is an individual completely influenced by globalization and the outcomes of globalization. Indian society is rich with its diversity, multiple languages, and religions. But all these multiculturalism were replaced by the neoliberal culture." The first-person narrative of *'The White Tiger'* does not merely keep the author invisible, it constructs a sociological discourse without once ever sounding or being didactic. Adiga's narrator Balram Halwai's story is a sad, almost tragic one, of how the victim becomes the victimiser because he has no second choice" (Paul 2).

Disrespect of Senior Family Members

After the advent of globalization Indian family life has been greatly disrupted. There had been severe disturbances in the family since then. There was a head of the family and everyone respected him and his decisions. "Members of the family shower enormous respect on the elders, their age and wisdom acquired during their life period." (Chadha 2).

After globalization that culture has been endangered and went to the verge of extinction. People from a family has been self-centred and failed to respect elders. Balram Halwai as a child was growing in a joint family where there were many people who adjusted in a room. But after the

death of his father and mother he never listened to his granny who was the head of his family. He was the one who has seen the globalized society where any man from any background can do a decent job. So, he did not obey his granny who continuously pressurized him to work for his family so they can repay the loan of a landlord. When all his family members who stayed together while the men worked outside and women took care of the family. But Balram was different who always wanted to stay away from family. "Joint families are like microcosms of an entire world. They are the first training grounds where people learn interpersonal skills. People in joint families learn lessons of patience, tolerance, cooperation, and adjustment. They also learn to take collective responsibility" (Chadha 1). Even after globalisation villages never changed but villagers shifted from villages to towns which weakened their family bonding. That exactly happened with Balram. The younger generation never believed in complete surrender of their personal interests to the family interest. His granny was writing letters after letters to him but he did not respond to them. Ashok the younger son Stork never respected his father's decision or his brother's. They had warned him not to marry Pinky because she was a Christian.

Forgetting Duty and Responsibility Towards Family:

The younger generation was greatly influenced by the globalization. They have become self-centred and their individuality has grown more in comparison to the family bonding and togetherness. Balram Halwai when he started working in the tea shop, he was sending money to his family. But when he grew little older, he joined as a driver and gradually he avoided to send money to his family. And when he went to Delhi, he completely forgot his granny and all his responsibility for the upliftment of his family.

"It has been a long time since you came to visit us and an even longer time, a total of eleven months and two days, since you last sent us any money" (Adiga 262).

Once there was a time when he sacrificed his education to work at a shop to repay the loans that were taken for a lavish wedding of one of his family members. After murdering Ashok Sharma, he realized that either he would be caught or his family would be killed. But he forgot about them. He took a zigzagging route to Bangalore and settled there. He never cared about his family. He never thought of his family members who could be killed for his act of murder. He never looked back at them. Although he felt sympathy for his brother who was growing leaner

after working hard but he could not do anything for him. Ashok Sharma who had lived in US told his brother about his negligence of his duties and responsibilities towards his family.

“When I was in America, I thought family was a burden, I do not deny it. When you and Father tried to stop me from marrying Pinky because she was not a Hindu, I was furious with you, I do not deny it. But without family, a man is nothing. Absolutely nothing” (Adiga 188).

Premarital sex and Extramarital affairs:

Globalization has brought changes in people’s attitude towards marriage. Marriage was no longer considered as a sacred bond. The youth like Balram Halwai spent his leisure reading the adult magazines and fantasy. He even spent money to spend one night with a white skinned girl.

“Seven thousand sweet rupees for twenty minutes! Time to get started” (Adiga 235).

He never cared to send money to the family rather spends his money in indulgences. He even fantasises Pinky madam when he sees protruding breasts. He was thinking that Kishan was married only to have sex.

“After the wedding, Kusum Granny took the five thousand rupees and the Hero cycle and the thick gold neck-lace; Kishan got two weeks to dip his beak into his wife, and then he was packed off to Dhanbad” (Adiga 51).

He never showed any interest in marriage after repeated requests from his granny. Even he resisted the temptation of dowry and necklace and of course a young virgin. He just hated marriage. When he was still not convinced his granny sent him a letter through Mukesh. She has requested him to marry and send her money.

“So, I do not order you to marry: But I tempt you with the joys of married life. It is good for community. Everytime there is a marriage there is more rain in the village.” (Adiga 190).

After the departure of Pinky from India to US Ashok had started having an extra marital affair. A friend of Ashok offered him the contact number of a girl so they can hook up. Marriage has lost its sanctity and lost its importance as a crucial social institution. It is more evident from the number of increasing cases of divorce and extra-marital affairs.

Materialistic Attitude Towards Life:

The all-encompassing globalization has enhanced the significance of material possessions in one's life. The impression of growing influence of materialism in life reflects from the pride one finds in possessing and owning material goods. (Manchanda, Abidi, Mishra 19)

The youth are more vulnerable to the materialistic attitude towards life. When people attach more importance to things rather than fellow people then it is evident that all the moral values have been corroded in them. "The economic progress of the country and financial prosperity of the people often provokes changes in the normative values. It is often seen that the middle-class of the developing nations such as Bangladesh and India, during the period of rapid economic progression, tend to spend money for more both for their purpose of living and devouring of pleasure, leading toward forming the materialistic values" (Manchanda, Abidi, Mishra 29).

"Materialism is growing at global level. The developing countries being enthusiastic of the western world are expected to experience the effect more severely" (Ghadrian 15).

Balram never showed interest towards a spiritual life or a life to help others. He was attracted towards the material objects and he can go to any extent to achieve all those in life. The Honda City car was the centre of attraction, the big mansion was the centre of his attraction. He could never see the life beyond all these materialistic things. He could never realize that there was a greater life ahead. He loved the materials so much that in every sentence he referred to those things and he loved to talk about them. He has attached highest importance to these things in life. He talks about his Switzerland made Macintosh laptop and about chandeliers. He even thought that even if he had no one with him he never felt lonely as he was surrounded by the chandeliers and he just loved them more than anything.

"Why not? I have got no family any more. All I have got is chandeliers." (Adiga, 117).

He always talked about his 150 square feet room and the attraction of chandeliers and about a midget fan. They gave him delight and he was satisfied with a life among chandeliers. He was mad for money that he cheated his master to earn some extra cash.

Self-centredness and Manipulative Nature:

After globalisation man has become very selfish. He wanted everything for himself only. He did not care about others. He was full of hatred with Ram Persad the number one servant and he wanted to let him down and get rid of him at any cost.

“Is there any hatred on earth like the hatred of the number two servant for the number one?” (Adiga 77).

He spied on him and found out some secrets about him. He knew until and unless Ram Persad was not out of the house, he would not get a good place in the house. He found out that he was a Muslim living here with the name of a Hindu. He wanted to earn money and nobody gives a Muslim job there. Now Balram has turned red with jealousy. But when the Nepali gate keeper informed him that his masters were going to Delhi and a driver must go. And if Balram wanted his name to be recommended then he must pay him five thousand rupees. But Balram found out the secret and the other man left the place without having a word. The man was a Muslim. The young generation no longer interested to help others rather they can manipulate people for their own benefits. They can tell lies and gain access to the trust of the master. Balram is a great manipulator who has complete idea where to do what. At first, he was very simple and honest. But after going to Delhi, he has completely changed. He also wanted to possess all the riches of the world. He never wanted his master to leave Delhi. Because he could earn good money in Delhi and dreamt of having a good life.

“When the master’s life is in chaos, so is the servants. I thought, Maybe he is sick of Delhi now. Will he go back to Dhanbad? What happens to me then?” (Adiga 185).

When he came to Delhi as a driver, he was thinking about providing good service to his master. But gradually he started thinking about himself and only about himself.

“I mean what will happen to me a few years from now? Do I make enough money to buy a house and then set up a business of my own?” (Adiga 202).

Balram had an uneven wish to be rich for which he can do anything. When he was searching for a job in Dhanbad the Stork gave him the job of a driver. He could flatter and he had learned how to flatter the landlords.

“Our father is gone, Thakur Ramdev is gone, the best of the landlords is gone, who will protect us now?” (Adiga 61).

When he was appointed as the driver his employer asked him about his caste being top or bottom. He said bottom. He belonged to the Halwai caste. He knew if someone knows caste, he can tell you everything about you.

“And I knew that my future depended on the answer to this question” (Adiga 62).

When he was offered his salary, he was so cunning to answer so that he can win their trust. He can easily flatter. He can talk good about them despite of his anger on them. At last, he was appointed with a handsome salary. When he was asked how much he wanted he would say.

“Absolutely nothing, sir. You are like a father and mother to me, and how can I ask for money from my parents?” (Adiga 63).

When Pinky madam, the wife of Ashok hit a child then ran away and later the stork and his son Mukesh tried to frame him in that hit and run case. They manipulated him and said that he was their family member. So that Balram would think of helping them.

“Balram, you are part of the family” (Adiga 165).

He was made to sign on the confession letter.

“That I drove the car that hit an unidentified person or persons or persons and objects, on the night of January 23rd this year.” (Adiga 167).

When Balram Halwai got to the position of an entrepreneur he knew how the whole India works. He knew the manipulative behaviour can help him to be a proper entrepreneur.

“... the Indian entrepreneur has to be straight and crooked, mocking and believing, sly and sincere, at the same time” (Adiga 9).

Even Ashok and Pinky were fighting because of their self-centredness. Pinky never wanted to stay in Dhanbad. She has grown in America and she just cannot live with her father-in-law and other family members.

Criminal Mentality:

Criminogenic effects of globalisation outlining those crimes where people are forced to "migrate into illegality" due to economic reasons (impoverishment and marginalisation), political conflicts and socio-cultural change. Corruption constitutes a significant trait of global crime. (Eduardo 23)

Neo-liberalisation has turned man into an animal. Man has become so filthy that for one's benefits one is ready to kill others. Balram murdered his employer Mr. Ashok. He took all his money and shifted to Bangalore where he could do his business. He is just not a murderer but considered himself as a mass murderer because for this action his own family members were killed. He has reached to the top position by killing his master. He has become wicked and diabolical.

“..... I was corrupted from a sweet, innocent village fool into a citified fellow full of debauchery, depravity, and wickedness” (Adiga 197).

Financial crime was so high. Ashok and his father wanted to bribe ministers so they can evade tax to the government. They were criminals who are illegally selling coal and never paid any tax to the government.

Balram Halwai took the opportunity to steal money from his master after killing him and went to Bangalore. There he found out that the business he has intended to do was already occupied. But he thought something and met the police man and bribed him. The next day every call centre company called him and gave him the contract. This was his way to have a better life.

Vengefulness:

In the modern time after the globalisation people have lost the ways how to live. People live on impulses. Balram has killed his master for two reasons. One is that he always made fun of him and his schooling and his half-baked talks and thoughts. Even he had framed him in the charge of careless driving and accident which his wife had done. He was so furious that he slit his master's neck.

Conclusion:

Globalization affected India and the Indian Culture. It has brought a tremendous impact upon human civilization. Indians have a deep yearning for their past, when their country strived so heroically to define the terms of morality for itself, and yet this attachment does not necessarily inspire them to uphold those time-honoured values. Globalization can bring prosperity and wealth and it depends upon how one use it to shape the society. Hence one needs to be more careful with the globalization process pressing nation's pride and maintain Indian value system. Thus, the writer discusses the issues of globalization especially the degradation of moral values among younger people of India in this work.

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