

CHANGING VALUES: A POSTMODERN POLITY OF GLOBALIZATION IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S THE WHITE TIGER

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ABSTRACT

Globalization is dissolving the physical boundaries across the nations of the world. People are moving to a unified culture with alterations and altercations on behavioural, moral, ethical, spatial and cultural grounds. Aravind Adiga, a promising postmodern writer of Indian-Australian dual citizenship from India, has envisioned the global force on the local heritage with the village and city social life as the backdrop. The global culture is fluid with the convergence of all rigid custom and practices of all the nations. The after-effect of it is the non-lineage of the people with regard to the concrete beliefs and practices. Human values are changing with changing experiences and have become individualistic rather than a social phenomenon. At the societal level, there a radical shift from the priorities of early industrialisation and growing tendency for emphasis in individual success and happiness. With the advent of globalization, the shift in value system is from the better to worse in spite of the growing economy and material affluence. So the trend setters have to give priority to the ethical values and moral responsibility paving way for conquering the limitless terrains for peaceful coexistence.

KEY WORDS: Core Values, Consumerist Culture, Globalization, Liberalism, Postmodern

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization is dissolving the physical boundaries across the nations of the world paving way for openness, integration and flow of information, ideas, technologies, goods, services, capital, finance and people across the topographical borders. This current characteristic of the contemporary world is a necessary and uninvited change in a developing nation like India. The to and fro exchange has brought about profound changes in the established culture, values and institution of the age-old tradition bound society. As Ashcroft et al say, "in the context of globalization, analyses of local cultural production and specific social and historical developments are becoming more and more important" (210). With the virtual destruction of borders, people are moving to a unified culture with alterations and altercations on behavioural, moral, ethical, spatial and cultural grounds.

Aravind Adiga, a promising postmodern writer of Indian-Australian dual citizenship from India, has envisioned the global force on the local heritage with the village and city social life as the backdrop in his Man Booker *The White Tiger* and the subsequent *Last Man in Tower*. Impact of globalization and liberalisation is intense on consumerism, international elitism, multicultural practices and free individual choices. Globalization signals the fragmentation of the common identity concept based on the nationality, religion, caste, class, language, occupation, etc leading to drastic changes in the individual identity. The disruption in the identity leads to cultural

transfer, religious disbelief and social disintegration image making the society to have new social groups and relationships.

The global culture is fluid with the convergence of all rigid custom and practices of all the nations which has resulted in a postmodern condition of accepting the world view which is for an open knowledge drive. It makes the people accept anything and everything under the sun without any inhibitions. The after-effect of it is the non-lineage of the people with regard to the concrete beliefs and practices. The postmodern concept, according to Featherstone, gives importance to “fragmentation against unity, disorder against order, individualism against universalism, syncretism against holism, popular culture against high culture and localism against globalism” (74). It is an approach developed due to the insurgency of globalization.

The story of entrepreneurial success and class mobility in the era of globalization is promising with technological start-ups and call centres. But the transformational shift from ethical culture to information culture is unyieldingly challenging. Adiga mirrors the reality of the social orders in the society replicating the life, attitude and values of the current generation. Anything western is superior, if it be attitude, culture or materials. Globalization has replaced the traditional culture by consumerist culture which is a move away from values. “Culture ... is often seen as a fall from nature, ... against which the history of culture can be seen as a process of deterioration” (Currie 88).

Consumerist culture aims in the stratification of the people and their identity based on money. The culturally devastating elements like liquor and girls of the developed country speak on the status of the people who use them. Balram says that, “in this country we have two kinds of men: ‘Indian’ liquor men and ‘English’ liquor men. ‘Indian’ liquor was for village boys like me - toddy, arrack, country hooch. ‘English’ liquor, naturally, is for the rich. Rum, whisky, beer, gin - anything the English left behind” (TWT 73).

Globalization has helped in the creation of an American atmosphere in India in terms of mall culture, pop culture and party culture influencing the life style, language and dressing of the Indians who mimic to merge with the sophisticated faction. In order to satisfy Pinky’s desire for American life, Ashok takes her to Gurgaon, which is a replica of American locale, instead of back to America.

Ten years ago, they say, there was nothing in Gurgaon, just water buffaloes and fat Punjabi farmers. Today it’s the *modernest* suburb of Delhi. American Express, Microsoft, all the big American companies have offices there. The main road is full of shopping malls—each mall has a cinema inside! So if Pinky Madam missed America, this was the best place to bring her. (TWT 121-122)

In an Indian family, a father is an ideal hero of the son. But the hierarchy is eroded by the postmodern global scenario. The father and son join to drink like the western countries. Balram depicts a story of the father and sons sharing whisky:

As I was massaging, the two sons pulled up chairs and sat down by their father to talk. Ram Prasad would bring about a bottle full of a golden liquid, and pour it into three glasses, and drop ice cubes in their glasses, and hand one glass to each of them. The sons would wait the father to take the first sip, 'Ah....whisky. How would we survive this country without it ,' and then the talking would start. (TWT 70-71)

Human values are changing with changing experiences and have become individualistic rather than a social phenomenon. “meaning is generated by socially encoded and constructed discursive practices that mediate reality so much that they effectively close off direct access to it”(Butler 33). As a child, even the killing of a lizard is a cruel thing for

Balram, but it changes when he sees the ghastly killing of the lizard by his father instilling in him the courage to do away with things. It is a negative value that goes into his mind, knowingly or unknowingly. When he is interrupted in his travel of materialising the dreams, he takes an indication from it to murder Ashok Sharma. He is so much disgusted of the life of a slave that he never feels guilty of becoming a slayer. He wants to experience "... just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant" (TWT 321). It is suggestive that personal satisfaction is more important than social justice.

All relationships are determined by the money factor. The relationship between Balram and his grandmother is based on money. His father's death leaves him drop out from school and joins the tea shop. A good student becomes a half-baked person due to the material needs of his family members. Thus he sacrifices his education for his people when he was in his village. But after getting access to the various prospects in the globalised city, he is corrupt like all the others and slits his master to become a master himself.

Religion and morality are interconnected from the olden days. But drastic advancement in science and technology has led to devastating changes in the people. Faith has been replaced by doubt. The quest for God has slithered away and the question of God crept in due to global knowledge. Balram prays to the goddess Kali for her assistance but he removes the picture of Kali so that the deadly act remains a hidden to God. "I yawned, closed my eyes, and slithered down my seat. With one eye open, I look at the magnetic sticker of the goddess kali- who is very fierce black-skinned goddess, holding a scimitar, and a garland of skulls. I made a note myself to change that sticker. She looked too much like Granny" (TWT 135).

The legal system has faith in religious oath but is manipulated and faked. Balram is forced to sign a confessed document to take the accident by Pinky madam on himself. The confession includes "I swear by almighty God that I make this statement under no duress and under instruction from now on" (TWT 167). Thus the truthlessness is made true in the name of God, and no religion offers the right way. Thus both belief and disbelief depends on the individual's point of view and situation.

In the postmodern condition, values that played a key role in the emergence of culture have altered. With cosmopolitanism, the situation worsened and the world is moving away from values, ethics and morale which are the basics of human life, love, concern and human considerations. As Das says, "Moral and ethical considerations are never easy: they are the greatest challenge to the humanity and the intellect" (106). At the societal level, there a radical shift from the priorities of early industrialisation and growing tendency for emphasis in individual success and happiness. People develop their lives in many ways despite the basic problems like rural poverty, corruption and political instability remain unsolved. In the process of globalization, the meaning of the word liberation has changed and is based on individual experience.

Adiga suggests that morality is a fluid and unfixed concept leading to the formation of valueless generation. So even in the process of liberation and individual success, people should lead the moral life and forgetting the the evil influence of globalization. Krishna Singh criticizes the novel *The White Tiger* and says, "The secrets of success in a modern globalized world are summed up in the last section of the novel. Murder, manipulation, malpractices, opportunism, bribery, absconding police and judicial proceedings all are justified for success" (3).

With the emergence of alien cultures in the name of liberalism and globalization, obsessions towards material

prospects, filial relationships and trivial knowledge hunt are prioritized against the core values. Growing material wealth gives power either to change or ignore the value systems. The rise of a knowledge based economy makes people intellectually independent, widening the areas in which people have to rely on their own choices. Adiga attacks the changing morals values and ethics in the society through elaborating the positive and negative impacts of globalization. Garner agrees that, “ The call to abolish morality is rarely heard but often rejected, which is not surprising because, ... abolishing morality seems like a horrible idea, one that would lead to massive suffering and disaster” (217).

CONCLUSIONS

Both the author and work are postmodern in approach and presentation without humanism, realism or romanticism which directly influence and transform the individuals and society. In the end, “...literature remains postmodern in its assumptions about the culture and world from which it arises and uses this postmodernism and post-structuralism to humanists ends of generating empathy, communal bonds, ethical and political questions and most basically, communicable meaning” (Holland 1). With the advent of globalization, the shift in value system is from the better to worse in spite of the growing economy and material affluence. So the trend setters have to give priority to the ethical values and moral responsibility paving way for conquering the limitless terrains for peaceful coexistence.

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