ABSTRACT

The present paper is a valid attempt in highlighting how Metamorphosis plays a predominant role in Aravind Adiga’s popular novel, The White Tiger, published in 2008. Through the powerful characterization of Balram Halwai in The White Tiger, Aravind Adiga picturises the corrupted Indian society of the 21st century which exists in both the upper and lower class societies. The novel brings out the transformation of the protagonist, Balram Halwai, from sweet maker to tea shop worker, car driver, murderer and a successful entrepreneur.

KEY WORDS: Metamorphosis, transformation, Indian society, poverty, identity, upper and lower class

Aravind Adiga is an Indo- Australian writer and journalist. His debut novel, The White Tiger, has won the Man Booker Prize for the year 2008. He was born to Madhava Adiga. He has started his career as a journalist in Financial Times. He has interviewed Donald Trump. He has reviewed Peter Carey’s Oscar and Lucinda, winner of the Booker Prize. He was hired by Time as a correspondent. During his freelance period, he wrote The White Tiger. He is the fourth Indian born author to win the Booker Prize.

Balram Halwai is a son of Vikram Halwai. Their traditional business is to make sweets. To break the tradition, Vikram Halwai becomes as a rickshaw man instead of a sweet maker. Usually, father is a hero and a role model for the children. As his father, Balram Halwai has also broken the tradition. Balram, at first, with his brother Kishaan, works in a tea shop as a slave where the poor has no right to stand straight equal to the rich and upper caste. He has broken the barrier and hurdles after hurdles, he has learnt driving. He has begged his job as a driver in Stork’s family, one of the richest families in Laxmangarh. They treat poor as slaves and also like animals not even as a being.

Being a driver in rich families mean, Balram has to do all the household works that include sweeping house, cleaning their garden, washing their dishes, cleaning their dogs, massaging the toes of their masters, buying English drinks and to serve it and no end to the kind of work he does.

The first metamorphosis in the life of Balram Halwai is from a tea shop worker to a car driver. It is not that much easy to get a driver job in a rich family at Laxmangarh. Even though Balram gets the job, the Stork’s family won’t believe him. The master of the rich family is Stork, Mr. Ashok, elder son and Mukesh, younger son. Stork and Mukesh, from the beginning of the plot to the end, treat Balram as a slave but on one occasion when Pinky, wife of Mr. Ashok, has drunk fully and hit a child on the road and later the child was found to be dead. On that crisis, the treatment given to Balram by Stork and Mukesh is indifferent and unexpected. Then, the protagonist Balram realizes that he has to accept the murder for Pinky. Balram is circumscribed and forced to accept because they will threaten Balram’s family to kill everyone, leaving none alive. When everyone in Stork’s family is working on that accident case, Stork needs Balram to massage...
his toes in the warm water. It shows us, the people of dark, the poor people, though they have sacrificed their own lives, rich never let them to think of poor's sacrifice. Balram’s view of life is very simple: human wanted to live like human and animals can live like animals despite their own horizon. But his life in the dark, the life of the poor, leads the life of an animal, that’s the main hatred for him to kill Mr. Ashok who wanted his servant to accept the murder. Unconsciously, the anger and hatred for Stork’s family is increased in Balram’s heart and that has led him to become a murderer.

The second metamorphosis is from being a car driver to a murderer. There is no proper evidence for Pinky’s car accident. So, the life of Balram is saved from imprisonment. Mr. Ashok has married Pinky from different religion. Their marriage has not been celebrated by their parents and his brothers. Pinky and Mr. Ashok is not a happy couple. She is an angry wife and also not a perfect daughter-in-law to Stork’s family. She wants them to settle in America. But Mr. Ashok loves to live with his parents. This slowly leads to be the reason for their divorce. The life of a driver in Laxmangarh is entirely different from the life of a driver in Delhi. Balram has become little closer to Mr. Ashok. Mr. Ashok is a soft person and treats alike. But his family member, his friends and rich people around him, has turned him to act accordingly. He will never act on his own senses. Alone, Mr. Ashok has become a drunkard. He is touring with his ex-lover, Uma. But Balram’s idea of marriage is different. He wants Mr. Ashok and Pinky to be re-united. They treat Balram, an illiterate. But he knows to read and write. His aesthetic sense is being mocked by Mr. Ashok and Pinky. He has no room in Delhi. He has to stay in the dormitory. Then he finally finds a room with the fall of dust, dirt and cockroaches. Somehow he manages his life in Delhi.

Along with Balram, there are many drivers of the Light (Rich people). Other drivers arrange women, drinks, hotel, food, cigarette, etc, according to their master's wish. When others gossip about their
masters, Balram is unique and never articulates a word against his master. That shows his loyalty.

The final metamorphosis is from being a murderer to an entrepreneur. He has become a successful entrepreneur in Mumbai. He initially struggles in Mumbai. He finds job everywhere, but finds nothing. He has done some outsourcing job but benefitted nothing. Then he remains of the red bag he has stolen from Mr. Ashok during the murder. He gives more money for information. With the collaboration, he has started White Tiger-Technology drivers. He has become a great personality in Mumbai. He wants to be in the light than in the dark. He wants to live like humans and animals to live like animals despite the present. This is the recurrent vision in the mind of Balram.

“The White Tiger” is the title given to Balram by a school inspector for his academic excellence. “The inspector pointed his cane straight at me. ‘You, young man, are an intelligent, honest, vivacious fellow in the crowd of thugs and idiots. In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals- the creature that comes along only once in a generation?”

The school inspector says: The White Tiger. That’s what you are, in this jungle. (WT.p.22)

The metamorphosis in the life of Balram Halwai is entirely based on the society and the way we classify people as rich and poor; and as light and dark. The title is peculiar The White Tiger and also unique in portraying the character Balram Halwai. He has broken his own barriers to prove his tigritude. Tiger doesn’t proclaim its tigritude. This is to say that the tiger will not prove his power the sake of others. In simple statement, a tiger does not stand in the forest and say, “I am a tiger”. The White Tiger is a rare person in the Dark (poor) who has gone ahead of his masters and has proved his individuality.
REFERENCES

