



SYMBOL OF DARKNESS IN ARVINDA ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER*

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ABSTRACT

In the novel, The White Tiger, the novelist, Arvinda Adiga uses the symbol 'darkness'. Through the image darkness he unfolds the world before us which is visualised more prominently in a contrast world of light. The village life is symbolised as darkness where the narrator grows up. The darkness world is a complete world and people never feel awkward unless and until they experience the world of light, i.e., the amenities of the modern urban world. V.S Naipaul also writes a non-fiction book entitled as, 'India: An Area of Darkness'.

KEY WORDS: *Darkness, light, image, village life, urban life.*

Darkness is referred in the novel about the village life area where people live with minimum advantages. They do not get education-facility. The narrator's father was a rikshaw puller and was a poor man. In spite of his poverty, he sent his son to school. But his son could not pursue his studies not because he was dull but because of his father's demise and consequent poverty. After the death of his father, he had to work in hotel as a waiter. Darkness does not only refer to the poor economic condition of the downtrodden people but, the corruption, lawlessness of the rich people in the rural areas is also darkness. Darkness is also referred to ignorance. Knowledge is light. Darkness is not only village it also in some parts of metro cities like in Old Delhi as the author mentioned in *TWT*.

Many-a-times, the author refers to the word 'darkness' which shows the sharp contrast of the Delhi, Bangalore like big cities grandeur, light and education. The street lights, the lights from the shopping malls, cinema halls, in metro trains, buses, etc enlighten the city in the literary sense. The economic conditions of the people, the health facilities, the high living style, the freedom they get, the road-transport condition which they get in Delhi and in Bangalore etc., all are light in other sense. But crime is also there in the so called 'enlighten' area. For example, Balram, the narrator hides himself after the murder of his employer, Mr Mukesh. He The following lines are from the novel,

'The police searched for me in darkness: but I hid myself in light

In Bangalore!

(*The White Tiger*, P-118)

In village, most of the poor people are ignorant, easy-going type, but in Delhi or in Bangalore, the narrator finds brightness in terms of big buildings, broad road, parks, malls, hotels, flats, cars etc. In village people like with nature; they keep their animals with them.

The darkness can also be seen in city life also. Amidst the pompousness of city life, we find hollow life of some people, whose wise leave them, who stay with prostitute and bribe people. There are hard-hardened criminals like murderers, who like in a luxuriant home.

The reference of the word 'Darkness' always shows the plight or negative remark of the particular rural region. In such a reference we find about the unemployment problem of the backward region. In such areas unemployed youths search their job daily. Sometimes they get and sometimes they do not get. Their numbers are in thousands. They are unable utilize their time because of lack of opportunities, better work place. The following excerpt will show it:

'...young men sit in the tea shops, reading the newspaper, ...or sit in their rooms talking to a photo of a film actress.' (*TWT*, P-54)

This is the feature of darkness or rural areas. Youths remain jobless. They while away their time. They waste their productive energy with doing anything. This is one reason for which youths migrate to urban areas.

In many places the word 'Darkness' is written with capital 'D'. As if it is specific area or the writer tries to emphasise that area. In other example we find about the darkness and the dwellers of it when Mukesh, the employer of the narrator, Balram. When he makes mistake his employer scolds him as 'stupid' and tells that the reason of stupidity that he has come from the 'Darkness'.

(*TWT*, P-267)

Here, in the remark the condition or the circumstance is not blamed, the people come from that area are termed as stupid. As if it is because of their stupidity, they could not improve their lot so they dwell in the darkness.

As the name symbolically suggests as darkness so the dweller try to come out of the darkness in search of light. They



have their ambition. So, they come to the urban areas to improve their conditions.

In the following lines we find that the narrator's condition is improved and he meets one man who is also trying to improve his condition. When someone from his birth place or in the same type 'dark' place meets him then they both feel happy. He feels proud. They come to the city to become rich, great. Their ambition leads them to the city.

"...you feel proud when you see one of your own kind showing some ambition in life." (TWT, P-231)

In the many places we find the reference of 'darkness' in the novel. There are numerous examples. When the narrator drives his car, he meets some people from the darkness. The narrator describes the conditions of the people who live in 'darkness' in the city like Delhi. He describes that such people have come from 'darkness' and their physical appearances, their 'thin bodies', 'filthy faces', show their pathetic conditions. They are resembled with animals. They live under bridges, they make fires there, in their hair there are lice. (TWT, Pp-119,120)

They come to Delhi from Darkness to change their lot, to meet their minimum opportunity to survive. Some of them succeed in their lives but many remain the same in the new places. So, in the city also there are such dark places as the village. Even in Delhi the whole places are not bright places. The narrator says that both 'light and darkness flow in Delhi'. To him the Old Delhi area is a dark area. The New Delhi is a bright place. His employer Mr Mukesh lives in the New Delhi area, which is a modern place. (TWT, p-251)

We cannot say that all of them come from darkness. They may be the original inhabitant of the places, but they also live in darkness. So, the word darkness has multiple meanings. It may mean the backward places of any locality, be it a village or a town or city area. The common characteristics of darkness is that such people and places are backward places where poor people live without any modern facilities to improve their lives.

In the novel, 'The White Tiger', the narrator, Balram calls his birth place, i.e., village area as 'Darkness'. Whatever he learnt there he remembered even in the bright places like in Delhi and in Bangalore. Although he left his birth place at an early age he has learnt a lot about many things. He learnt about how to keep himself in a pleasant mood in the 'darkness' only. (The White Tiger-P-250)

In a different book, viz., 'An Area of Darkness', written by V.S. Naipaul the whole country India is called an area of Darkness in comparison with other developed countries of the world. He writes about India; about the places he visited and remarks that the places are dark places for many reasons, the way of thinking, uncleanliness, and in that context he praises Gandhiji who worked for sanitation. The following line as the following:

"I have travelled lucidly over that area which was to me the area of darkness"... (An Area of Darkness' p-24)

However, in such backward areas spirituality and genuine human compassion can be found. Although people's economic conditions are not improved, new developed amenities are not there, yet in the village or dark areas people live nature, with animal very peacefully. According to the author the whole area near the bank of holy river Ganga is the area of darkness. But we see spirituality in the area. To the author the banks of the

ocean are brighter place in India than the bank of the rivers. So, the dark area is not confined only to the narrator's locality, Laxmangarh, but the whole river side of India.

Thus, we can say that although many poets, nature lover may praise village, but because of lack of various modern facilities, job scarcities, lacking of health- facilities, lacking of advance study opportunities, travelling facilities etc., such places are termed as 'darkness'. We hope at the progress of time such darkness will be wiped out without compromising with nature and humanity. Because where there are darkness people hanker after light. For instance, the narrator's father, Vikram Halwai, was a rickshaw- puller but he wanted his son to be an educated man. Halwai means a sweet-maker. The narrator says that everyone knows about the title in the 'darkness'. He sent his son to the school. In school he could show his talent. But unfortunately, the death of the narrator's father changed his fate.

Such areas remain as dark areas because of people's dishonesty also. The headmaster of Balram's school does not utilize all the money given to the children's mid-day meal by government. He dishonestly took money by depriving the food of the school children. Moreover, in such place the laws are not observed. For example, Mr. Mukesh of Balram's employer's relative once warns him that he should not think he is in 'darkness'. He should keep in mind that he is living in Delhi. (TWT, P-141)

There are CCTV cameras in many places in Delhi. So, in such places, laws are strictly observed than in darkness i.e., the rural areas. All the darkness will be eliminated if people will become honest, not like the head master, which is just an example and if there will be strict laws for the corrupted ones. However, there is a remark of the narrator while he stood beneath the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, he makes the following remark:

"...Gandhi leading his followers from darkness to the light." (TWT, p-281)

From the above remark we can derive that if people from darkness will follow the path of Mahatma Gandhi, then they can get light. Such paths are obviously non-violence, following truth, having faith in spirituality, emphasize upon the local work, industries, cleanliness, education etc.

The End

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