

The working-class struggle against capitalist oppression in Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger

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Abstract

In a capitalist society, there are two classes based on ownership of the means of production: the working class and the capitalist class. However, the emergence of this stratification sometimes leads to large disparities and differences in interests between classes that lead to oppression by the upper class and resistance from the lower class. Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* depicts class struggle as a form of lower-class resistance to upper-class oppression in India. The purpose of this study is to identify the forms of oppression of the capitalist class and explain how the working class conducts class struggle against the oppression. The method used is a qualitative study and analyzed using Marxist theory by Karl Marx. *The White Tiger* indicates that oppression occurs because of the capitalist class' desire to maintain its power and status quo. The working class are depicted as the party that is always disadvantaged. Eventually, this triggers resistance in the form of class struggle by the working class. Adiga seems to convey that the power and injustice of the capitalist class is a cause for resistance because it tends to harm the working class.

Keywords: capitalist class; class struggle; Marxist; oppression; working-class

INTRODUCTION

As a consequence of living in society, social class has emerged as the result of social interactions. Social class can be associated with a group of people in a society who have different socioeconomic status. Social class is affected by predominant economic, political, educational, racial, etc. They effortlessly do that due to their power and they later realize that those who are in lower positions will not oppose them due to their insufficiency (Meyer, 2013)

In Marxist theory, there are two classes in capitalist society based on ownership and mode of production; the capitalist (the rich) and the working class (the poor). The capitalist is those who own resources, such as wealth, factories, machines, and all the things necessary for production. The working class, on the other hand, is those who operate the company or work for the rich (Marx & Engels, 2012). Since the working class consists of the poor and only has physical strength, the capitalist exploits and oppresses this weakness by pushing the poor to work for them.

In response to the oppression and unfair treatment the capitalist commits, the working class has been engaged in battles or struggles to free themselves from captivity and restraint which they do and fight for every year on International Labor Day on May 1. There, they voice their rights and demands about welfare, wages, and exploitation to company owners (capitalists) and the government as policymakers. Radjab (2019) reports that May Day was motivated by a massive 4-day demonstration by around 400,000 workers in Chicago, United States from May 1, 1886, to May 4, 1886. They demanded 8 hours per day after previously working 10 hours per day. On the last day of the demonstration, they held a massive march, and chaos was inevitable. In this action, the police fired indiscriminately, killing hundreds of workers. The police also arrested many workers who were leaders in the action. The incident is known as Haymarket. Hundreds of workers who died were called martyrs.

Aravind Adiga illustrates the struggle of the working class against capitalist oppression in his novel entitled *The White Tiger*. The 'white tiger' itself refers to an extremely rare animal that only appears once in a generation. It can indicate that 'the white tiger' is a representation of the main character who is considered 'rare' and different from his group. The main character of this novel, Balram Halwai, was a low-caste working man from Laxmangarh village who struggled at all costs to reach a higher social class. In the story, the lives of people like Balram were oppressed and dominated by cruel landlords called 'the Animals'. From childhood, Balram was considered 'different' because of his intelligence. However, he was forced to work as a cleaner in a tea shop with his brother Kishan to

help with his family's finances. Later, he decided to take driving lessons and was hired as a chauffeur by one of the landlords, the Stork for his son Mr. Ashok.

Over time, Balram observed the realities of Delhi and recognized the disparity in the living standards of the rich and poor. He also realized that the cycle of corruption and fraud for the upper class in India is tremendous. However, that could be done one way by oppressing and dominating people like him. Balram appeared to be a good driver at first. He embodied all of the qualities of honesty and integrity. However, mall culture and its associative practices expanded his awareness. Though his master Ashok was sympathetic to Balram, others in the family humiliated him. In his mind, he developed a hatred for the master class. When Ashok's wife Pinky killed a child while driving drunk, his masters forced him to sign a legal document confessing to running over the child. This incident fueled his rage and resentment toward the master class. Afterward, Balram went through many conflicts between loyalty and disloyalty, honesty and dishonesty, eventually leading him to the peak of his ambition and anger. He wanted to be free from the bondage of the working class poor and to fulfill his vengeance on his master by killing Ashok and taking away his money to start a new better life as an entrepreneur in Bangalore.

The *White Tiger* is prominent to be analyzed using Marxist perspective. The novel perfectly portrays class struggle as seen in the main character, Balram. His struggle represents the working class who fights against the capitalist and achieves a dream of leading a better life. The author, Aravind Adiga, conveys the relevance of his novel as a portrait of the social structure and hierarchical practices that keep many people down in Indian society. The class and position stratification system based on caste is a benchmark for someone carrying out their rights and obligations in society (Jha & Jagwan, 2019). Adiga points out that the situation of Indian social structure and entrenched hierarchies must be seen through the removal of boundaries by society's class hierarchies through class struggle.

Through the Marxist approach, this study focuses on Marx's belief in the contradiction between different classes as represented in the story, which will eventually result in a rebellion from one particular class. Marxism also sees struggles among the social class to get a higher position (Barry, 2009). It means that the Marxist theory by Karl Marx discusses the struggles that class society deals with to gain a better life for the status they have; the more money someone has, the more power they can acquire in society. In Marxism, the uprising is known as class struggle, and it has become the primary focus of this study.

Furthermore, analyzing Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* from a Marxist perspective holds significant importance for society as it sheds light on various social, economic, and political issues that are relevant to the contemporary world. Marxist analysis of the novel underscores the class inequality; the glaring disparities between the rich and poor in society. By examining the exploitation and suffering of the lower classes, it draws attention to the real-world implications of economic inequality and the social divisions it creates. Aside from that, the analysis helps society become more aware of the issues surrounding class struggle, exploitation, and inequality. It encourages readers to critically assess these problems and engage in discussions about how they can be addressed.

In relation to the facts and description above, the researchers are interested in analyzing the main character's struggle toward capitalist oppression as represented in the novel through the Marxist perspective of Karl Marx which emphasizes the class struggle in society.

METHODS

The qualitative research method is used, which "focuses on description and interpretation" (Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge, 2009, p. 6). The method was chosen based on the material object, which is Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* (2008). It means that all data is analysed based on relevant concepts for examining how the novel depicts the working class's struggle against the oppression of the capitalist class.

The library research method is employed because it allows researchers to access and analyze primary and secondary sources of information. This method "involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information as well as personal/expert opinions on research issues" (George, 2008, p. 6). Using library research, relevant information from a variety of valid resources is borrowed to support the study.

To analyze the data, the researcher employs the Marxist perspective lens of working-class struggle. This viewpoint was chosen because the focus of the analysis is on the oppressed characters' efforts as a working class to achieve a better life through class struggle, as well as an explanation of the types of oppression experienced by the working class, as well as the struggles the working class faces in fighting capitalist oppression.

The data in the form of words, conversations, phrases, and sentences were identified, inventoried, and classified through a thorough reading of the novel. The data is then analyzed, evaluated, and reported in the debate. The data is interpreted using theories of social class, oppression, alienation, false consciousness, class consciousness, and class struggle to reveal the purpose and object of the study. The information was also gleaned from related books and journal articles, particularly those dealing with the theory of class conflict.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The capitalist oppressions towards the working-class character in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

Class stratification in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

In Marxism, there are two classes in society; the Capitalist class (bourgeois) and the Working class (proletariat) (Chaturvedi in Bibi et al. (2021)) The capitalist is those who own resources, such as wealth, factories, machines, and all the things necessary for production. This class controls the working class by using its power over the economy to maintain their dominance. The working class, on the other hand, is those who operate the company or work for the rich. They lack social status, finances, and means of production and so are forced to sell their labor and are controlled by the capitalist (Marx & Engels, 2012). These classes are also represented in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*.

The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga tells the story of a poor, working-class man called Balram who lived under capitalist oppression and risked everything to achieve a better life. Based on this novel, the society where Balram lived was classified as a modern capitalist and consisted of two social classes by the areas they lived in. It can be seen in the following quotation. *Please understand, Your Excellency, that India is two countries in one: an India of Light and an India of Darkness.* (Adiga, 2008, p.12)

People who lived in the section of the Darkness were classified as the working class or the working class. The name alone lent itself to the idea that it was an unpleasant place. The members of this community were very poor, and most of them worked as laborers in coal breakers, servants, and farmers. On the other hand, the people who lived in the Light were those who had everything, including wealth, position, and power. They were the owners of the means of production.

Besides living in poverty, the Darkness still had to live under the control and power of the capitalist as their landlords. They controlled the livelihoods of the poor to enrich themselves. Furthermore, the main character of the novel, Balram, a working-class man, came from a low caste. He and other poor people in Laxmangarh village were dominated by cruel landlords called The Animals who came from the capitalist class.

...but the Animals stayed and fed on the village, and everything that grew in it, until there was nothing left for anyone else to feed on. So the rest of the village left Laxmangarh for food. (Adiga, 2008, p.21)

The quotation above indicates that the Animals were the most powerful people in the region. They had the opportunity to take control of all the resources available in Laxmangarh to the point that the villagers themselves had nothing left. They had everything to maintain their wealth and get more economic benefits. As a result, many villagers chose to compete to find work in the city and leave their own village. Other controlling and domineering behaviors practiced by the Animals landlords are shown in the following passages.

The Buffalo was one of the landlords in Laxmangarh. There were three others, and each had got his name from the peculiarities of appetite that had been detected in him. (Adiga, 2008, p.20)

The Stork...He owned the river that flowed outside the village, and he took a cut of every catch of fish caught by every fisherman in the river, and a toll from every boatman who crossed the river to come to our village. (Adiga, 2008, p.20)

...the Wild Boar. This fellow owned all the good agricultural land around Laxmangarh. If you wanted to work on those lands, you had to bow down to his feet, and touch the dust under his slippers, and agree to swallow his day wages. (Adiga, 2008, p.21)

The Raven owned the worst land, which was the dry, rocky hillside around the fort, and took a cut from the goatherds who went up there to graze with their flocks. (Adiga, 2008, p. 21)

The Buffalo was greediest of the lot. He had eaten up the rickshaws and the roads. So if you ran a rickshaw, or used the road, you had to pay him his feed—one-third of whatever you earned, no less. (Adiga, 2008, p. 21)

Based on the passages above, it can be known that poor people like Balram were ruled by the rich. The rich referred to The Animals landlords who consisted of The Raven, The Water Buffalo, The Stork, and The Wild Boar. They were portrayed as avaricious and exploitative. These men owned the rivers, farms, and roads, and they lived in high-walled mansions on the edges of the village, charging excessive fees to the villagers for exploiting their resources. They ruled and dominated the poor in every aspect of their life. Thus, the entire poor population of the village lived at their mercy.

Oppressions experienced by people in Laxmangarh Village in Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger

The bad associations that occur as a result of disharmony and injustice between the working class and the capitalist class perpetuate the existence of oppression where injustice occurs as one social group is oppressed while another is privileged. It occurs when a person or group in a position of power controls the less powerful in a cruel and unjust manner (Taylor, 2016). In *The White Tiger*, the capitalist class oppressed the working class and is reflected by the Animals oppressed people in Laxmangarh village. The oppression happened in several aspects, such as social, economic, and political oppression.

In the social aspect, the Animals oppressed the villagers in several aspects of their life. In the education sector, they weren't allowed to continue their education as described in the passages below:

Me, and thousands of others in this country like me, are half-baked, because we were never allowed to complete our schooling. (Adiga, 2008, p.8)

But we never ever saw rotis, or yellow daal, or pickles, and everyone knew why: the schoolteacher had stolen our lunch money. (Adiga, 2008, p. 28)

The teacher had a legitimate excuse to steal the money—he said he hadn't been paid his salary in six months... Once, a truck came into the school with uniforms that the government had sent for us; we never saw them, but a week later they turned up for sale in the neighboring village (Adiga, 2008, p.28)

In the passages, poor people like Balram were not allowed to complete their education. Their right to formal learning was taken away due to the perceived low social class. He and others were not given the opportunity to complete their studies even at the primary school level. Although a few of them were able to experience schooling for a very short period of time, they were not even facilitated by the authorities to carry out their education. Balram himself had previously attended a small school in his village, although he was eventually forced to drop out. Balram's school was far from decent. It had no government funding or facilities. The school was also run by a single teacher who was very corrupt as he was not paid by the government.

In the health sector, Balram, his family, and the villagers also had to experience the same oppression that resulted in the death of his father. This can be seen in the following passages.

Kishan and I carried our father in... There was no doctor in the hospital. (Adiga, 2008, p.40)

Now, each time this post falls vacant, the Great Socialist lets all the big doctors know that he's having an open auction for that post. The going rate for this post is about four hundred thousand rupees these days. (Adiga, 2008, p.41)

They would do the same thing to him that they did to Father... until he got tuberculosis and died on the floor of a government hospital, waiting for some doctor to see him, spitting blood on this wall and that! (Adiga, 2008, p.74)

Balram's father died of tuberculosis, which was aggravated by the government's negligence towards the health sector. The location of the hospital where they seek treatment is very far away and difficult to reach from the village where they lived. Hospital facilities and services there were very poor and inadequate. Balram had to bribe staff only to find out that there was no doctor there. In addition, the fact that there was corruption between the Great Socialists as rulers and the doctors caused them to visit the village hospital only occasionally.

It can be seen that Adiga describes the blatant corruption and oppression destroying the country from the inside out. Adiga believes that power is everything, and that power is established through money. Poor health care and a lack of government execution encourage obvious misconduct and

worsen the predicament of humans. Moreover, the Great Socialist, who is regarded as the savior of the poor and works for their cause, yet created unfavorable publicity for themselves.

After being accepted as a personal driver for the Stork's family, Balram experienced further oppression in his social life. He experienced abusive treatment from his masters. At the peak of his oppression, he and other drivers were forced to be the single perpetrator for his masters' hit-and-run accident.

The jails of Delhi are full of drivers who are there behind bars because they are taking the blame for their good, solid middle-class masters. We have left the villages, but the masters still own us, body, soul, and arse. (Adiga, 2008, p.145)

Such incidents were common in India, especially in big cities like Delhi where workers were often blamed for the crimes committed by their masters. Instead of protesting, they just gave in and accepted because of the background intimidation. Other than continuing to serve his master, there was no incentive for Balram or any other worker for that matter.

Oppression in the economic aspect portrayed when the children in the village were forced to work. Society forced them not to allow their children to continue their education. As a result, children were forced to become underage laborers to help their families financially. This also happened to Balram and his brother as highlighted in the narration of the story as follows:

The family had taken a big loan from the Stork so they could have a lavish wedding and a lavish dowry for my cousin-sister. Now the Stork had called in his loan. He wanted all the members of the family working for him and he had seen me in school, or his collector had. So they had to hand me over too. (Adiga, 2008, p.31)

Since childhood, Balram lived in poverty, hunger, and hardship. Despite this, his parents realized his potential and wanted him to complete his education. On the other hand, his grandmother Kusum forced him to leave school at an early age so that he could work to help with the family finances. It happened because Kusum borrowed money from Stork, one of the four landlords in the village, to pay for a relative's wedding. In exchange for repayment, The Stork sent Balram away from school to work for him alongside his family members. He was forced to work in the village teahouse with his brother, Kishan.

But in India—or, at least, in the Darkness—the rich don't have drivers, cooks, barbers, and tailors. They simply have servants. What I mean is that anytime I was not driving the car, I had to sweep the floor of the courtyard, make tea, clean cobwebs with a long broom, or chase a cow out of the compound. (Adiga, 2008, p.58)

The passage above depicts how capitalists in India often hired people against their terms of employment. Balram, who was initially hired as a driver, was also required to do other household chores such as cooking, sweeping floors, and even herding cows. All the work Balram does could be categorized as excessive work and not in accordance with the previously agreed work agreement.

In the political aspect, people's rights in elections were taken away in order to fulfill the interests of the capitalist and maintain their status quo. The oppression was clearly highlighted in the story, as follows:

There was an election coming up, and the tea shop owner had already sold us. He had sold our fingerprints—the inky fingerprints which the illiterate person makes on the ballot paper to indicate his vote...he had got a good price for each one of us from the Great Socialist's party. (Adiga, 2008, p.81)

In the passage, the election was depicted as an opportunity for people with power and interests to deceive and fool the working-class people in the village of Darkness. Their illiteracy and powerlessness towards politics were used by the upper class to support one of the biggest parties there so that power could still be controlled and the people could still accept tyrannical rule, just as they accepted the Animals exploitation and oppression.

The effect of the animals oppression on people in Laxmangarh Village

In Marxism, oppression is viewed as an outcome of an unequal distribution of power and resources among social classes (Meyer, 2013). The effect is the emergence of social conditions such as alienation and false consciousness in individuals or groups who become oppressed. False consciousness is a pitiful situation that arises when a man is misled about the truth of his own intentions, beliefs, and acts (Larsson, 2011), while alienation is a situation that occurs when someone experiences and assumes that his life is meaningless or that he is worthless, or can only maintain a sense of meaning

and self-worth through illusion about himself or his situation (Tong & Botts, 2018). These conditions are also reflected in *The White Tiger* as shown in the following quotations.

Before he could run, I caught him by the collar. Technically, in these servant-versus-servant affairs, that is all you need to do to indicate: "I have won." ...I was servant number one from now on in this household. (Adiga, 2008, p.92)

The above quotation describes the moment when Ram Persaad's identity as a Muslim was revealed. It was a moment that Balram was looking forward to. Previously, Ram Persaad was the number one driver in the Stork family and Balram felt rivaled and intended to shift his position. However, this time his rivalry with Ram Persaad, his fellow coworker, was over and won by him as Ram Persaad was fired. The incident can reflect the fourth type of alienation according to Marx (2013) where workers feel alienated from other workers. They are pressured to compete for jobs, better products, and higher profits. Balram and Ram Persaad placed individual competition which can result in a hostile work environment without collaboration, trust, and companionship between workers. This can lead to feelings of alienation as they feel pitted against each other rather than working together to create a common goal.

Swoosh!—As soon as the gate was open, I dived straight at the Stork's feet. (Adiga, 2008, p.51)

And one more thing: how much do you want?" Another test.

"Absolutely nothing, sir. You're like a father and mother to me, and how can I ask for money from my parents?" (Adiga, 2008, p.55)

The passages above show a further effect of oppression called false consciousness. It was shown in the moment when Balram first met Stork as his master. As soon as he got the chance to meet him, Balram kissed Stork's feet. Moreover, when he was asked about his salary, Balram became more and more submissive to his masters and degraded himself. Balram also did the same, submitting to his master, when he was ordered by Ashok to wear the Maharaja's costume in front of him and Pinky. It can be inferred that Balram's attitude is one of the real depictions of false consciousness where the working class or subordinates see their owners as their inevitable masters. This is supported by Jameson (2013) who states that as Karl Marx noted, false consciousness is a way of thinking that is ingrained into the working class or the beliefs of the subordinates so that they may believe their existence is inevitable, and in this way, the working class views the owners as its inevitable masters.

Capitalist oppressions towards the working-class character in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

*Class struggle is defined by Bukharin & Preobrazhensky (2021) as a struggle in which one class has taken action against another class. It is a movement or effort that occurs when the oppressed class or in this case the working class, realizes that they are oppressed by the upper class at some point. The class struggle against the oppression of the upper class, the capitalist class, in the form of concrete actions found in *The White Tiger* emerges after going through a fundamental phase called class consciousness that eventually leads the working class to class struggle. Therefore, the author will discuss the class consciousness experienced by the working class before starting to discuss the class struggle as described in the following subchapters.*

Balram's class consciousness in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

In order to carry out the class struggle, class consciousness is an essential necessity. Class consciousness itself is the realization by members or groups of a class in a society that they have common interests and experience common problems (Wilczynski, 1981). They must recognize their similar interest in achieving social justice and the same issues, which is the experience of being controlled and oppressed by the capitalist class, or in this case the Animals. Meanwhile, there are two stages of class consciousness according to Marx & Engels; the class in itself and the class for itself. These stages are reflected in *The White Tiger* and are described in more detail as follows:

The first stage of class consciousness

The first stage of class consciousness shows an awareness of their concern for the capitalist class. However, in this stage, if they take action, it will be against individual employers rather than capitalists as a class (Wilczynski, 1981). In *The White Tiger*, Balram as a representation of one who comes from

the working class reached his realization that referred to Class Consciousness. As Balram tried out his new toothpaste like Ashok's, he compared and regretted his past and present life as opposed to that of the rich.

Why had my father never told me not to scratch my groin? Why had my father never taught me to brush my teeth in milky foam? Why had he raised me to live like an animal? Why do all the poor live amid such filth, such ugliness?

If only a man could spit his past out so easily. (Adiga, 2008, p.128)

The passage indicates Balram's thoughts questioning why he was uneducated and raised as a poor person full of ugliness. It was one proof that Balram had reached his class consciousness. Where he realized that he was part of the poor who had been living in concerns that were contrary to the lives of the rich. There was also Balram's desire to change his past so that it would not be like that.

Balram's thoughts could be motivated by a feeling of inequality where since he was a child the opportunity to be educated had been taken away from him. He also regretted the life experiences he should have received from his father, as simple as teaching him how to maintain personal hygiene and brush his teeth. He complained about his life and that of other poor people who lived in disrepair and contrary to the rich. This can be seen as the first stage of the development of class consciousness when one realizes their concern for the poor class, in this case the capitalist.

The second stage of class consciousness

The next stage of class consciousness shows the awareness of the working class that there are two opposing social classes. In this stage, any action they take against the capitalists is a result of their demand for social justice and is considered a one-class action against the capitalists as oppressors (Wilczynski, 1981). In the novel, the portrayal of the second stage of class consciousness were highlighted in the narration of the story as follows:

"This," I shouted at him, pulling the girl by her hair, "is not real gold."

The roots were black! It was all a dye job!

He shrugged. "What do you expect, for seven thousand? The real thing costs forty, fifty." (Adiga, 2008, p.200)

The passage indicates the moment when Balram hires a golden-haired prostitute with the help of Vitoligo Lips. She was not nearly as gorgeous as Ashok's Ukrainian girl. Balram quickly realized that the girl's hair was not naturally blonde, but had been dyed, and engaged in a battle with the manager. He was kicked out of the hotel despite not having had any intercourse. The event merely added to Balram's growing dissatisfaction with the economic gap. Even when he tried to purchase himself a pleasure that his wealthy master enjoyed, the experience fell short of expectations. On the one hand, he was exploited due to his poor social status. However, he could learn from this that the reason his "golden-haired prostitute" was inferior to Ashok's was just an issue of money. If he only had enough money, he could have everything Ashok desires. It can also be seen that Balram reaches the peak of his class consciousness because he has an understanding of his unequal position with Ashok in the social hierarchy.

Balram and other workers class struggle

Class struggle is defined as a battle in which one class takes action against another (Bukharin & Preobrazhensky, 2021). The actions of the capitalists against the working class are, undoubtedly, the source of class struggle. The capitalists will be able to manage the labor class, which has nothing but labor power because they possess the means of production. As a result, it is clear that the connection between these two classes is unavoidably exploitative because power is the primary component in perpetuating this exploitative relationship. Through power, the capitalist means the control that allows one class to abuse other classes in order to sustain economic, social, and political disparities. This control is what elevates a class to the position of governing class. As a result, a class struggle will erupt between the working class and the capitalist class (Meyer, 2013).

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga portrays the class struggle through Balram's actions. There are several actions in accordance with the way the working class struggles to achieve a better life. Balram's class struggles are manifested in his actions. The first act is a cooperation between Balram and another driver to trick and deceive the Animals. The second act is Balram's attempt to steal Ashok's money.

The final act is Balram's criminal act of killing Ashok which is marked as a revolution. These actions are described in the following subchapters:

Balram and other workers cooperation to trick and deceive the animals

Balram's plan to take up the fight against his master would be a concrete action of class struggle. The first action Balram took as a form of resistance was his desire to trick and cheat his master for more money. He sought counsel from the senior driver on how to defraud his master.

Over the next two weeks, I did things I am still ashamed to admit. I cheated my employer. I siphoned his petrol; I took his car to a corrupt mechanic who billed him for work that was not necessary; and three times, while driving back to Buckingham B, I picked up a paying customer. (Adiga, 2008, pp.195-196)

Balram started selling gasoline from the Honda City's tank, going to unscrupulous technicians who overpaid for repairs, and driving the car as a freelance taxi. He discovered that when he cheated on Ashok, he felt anger rather than guilt. Balram used to think Ashok was superior to him. As he lost his idealistic view of Ashok, he began to desire what Ashok had, believing that he deserved these things just as much as Ashok did. The more Balram stole, the more he understood how little he still had in comparison to his lord. He recognized the magnitude of the disparity between them, and his anger pushed him to desire everything.

Balram's attempt to steal ashok's money

The next action was that Balram's determination to fight and rebel against his master made him feel the urge to do everything to fight his master even if it meant breaking the law by committing an act of theft. It could be seen when he unlocked a red bag holding a large sum of money that Ashok intended to use to bribe the authorities in order to avoid paying income tax, which would have been used to benefit impoverished people like Balram if it had been paid.

Go on, just look at the red bag, Balram—that's not stealing, is it? I shook my head.

And even if you were to steal it, Balram, it wouldn't be stealing.

How so? I looked at the creature in the mirror.

See—Mr. Ashok is giving money to all these politicians in Delhi so that they will excuse him from the tax he has to pay. And who owns that tax, in the end? Who but the ordinary people of this country—you! (Adiga, 2008, p.208)

Balram was dazzled by the tremendous amount of money inside and couldn't get the thought of stealing it out of his head. He convinced himself that taking the money was not stealing, but rather recovering what was rightfully his. Balram's explanation for stealing money demonstrates how India's enormous economic gap frustrates traditional concepts of morality. Stealing, for example, appears to be acceptable when the target of the robbery belongs to a brutal and corrupt ruling class. Balram's claim here is similar to that of Robin Hood, except that Robin Hood took from the rich and donated to the poor, but Balram considers taking from the wealthy and keeping everything.

Balram's criminal act of killing Ashok

The last action Balram took as a form of class struggle was his final attempt to fight and kill Ashok. After finding the right weapon to take the fight, at the moment of Ashok's murder, Balram started by devising a trick to get Ashok out of his car. Only then, he killed him right on the head as shown in the quotations below.

"Here, let me throw it away. This is the tire, sir. Please take a look."

He got down on his knees. I rose up over him, holding the bottle held behind my back with a bent arm.

"There is a problem, sir. You should have got a replacement a long time ago."

"All right, Balram." He touched the tire. (Adiga, 2008, p.244)

The quotation shows the moment when Balram drove Ashok from one bank to another to collect the money as a final bribe from his employer. Balram claimed to have a problem with one of the wheels of the car. He asked Ashok to get out of the car and helped him to check the tire. Ashok was hesitant at first and insisted on calling a repairman, but Balram convinced him. He finally managed to get Ashok to get out of the car, kneel down, and inspect the steering wheel.

I rammed the bottle down. The glass ate his bone. I rammed it three times into the crown of his skull, smashing through to his brains. It's a good, strong bottle, Johnnie Walker Black—well worth its resale value. (Adiga, 2008, pp.244-245)

The first possible reply is that he could always recover, break out of his gag, and call the police. So I had to kill him. The second possible reply is that his family was going to do such terrible things to my family: I was just getting my revenge in advance. (Adiga, 2008, p.245)

Balram explained how he killed Ashok with just a punch. As Ashok was kneeling down and checking the tires, Balram hit Ashok right on the head with the tip of a Johnnie Walker bottle that he had sharpened earlier. He also later explained why he killed Ashok immediately. It was because he was worried that if he didn't kill him, Ashok would wake up and call the police and harm his family. Balram insisted that his criminal act was a form of self-defense and revenge against the injustice and behavior of his master who had treated him badly.

It can be seen that Balram's criminal acts are a reflection of his resistance to the capitalist class. After receiving a lot of oppression and persecution, he dared to go against his own fear and sacrificed his life to fight the injustice he received from his masters, the capitalist class. Instead of just injuring and leaving Ashok in the bushes, Balram kills him right in the skull so that Ashok has no chance to come to his senses, call the police, and harm his family. Although his crime is heinous and unjustifiable, however, for a man like Balram, killing the oppressor is the only way to make a revolution and escape from the darkness and false consciousness that the capitalist class has perpetuated.

After successfully killing and making off with all of Ashok's bribe money, Balram escaped to Bangalore. To get there he boarded one train after another in a zigzag way to avoid his arrest. Once in Bangalore he also hid himself from one hotel to another. Eventually, he learned everything about Bangalore life and decided to use the stolen money as capital for his new life. He decided to become a new entrepreneur and live with a new identity.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with the analysis of the research results in the previous chapter, the author can finally draw conclusions. Below are the main points of the conclusion. First, Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* describes an overview of the conditions of social stratification in capitalist society in India. The stratification of social classes is seen through the gap between the working class and the capitalist class. The emergence of this stratification creates great disparities and differences in interests between classes, which leads to oppression by the upper class and resistance from the lower class. This oppression occurs in the social, economic, and political sectors, which has the effect of alienation and false consciousness on the working class.

Second, the oppression by the capitalist class triggers resistance from the working class represented through Balram's actions against the Animals. This resistance is a form of class struggle that culminates in Balram killing Ashok. This action can also be characterized as a revolution. Afterward, Balram managed to realize his dream of a better life. Furthermore, although Balram's actions are unlawful and heinous, for people like him, it is the only way to break free from the bondage of oppression and false consciousness perpetuated by the capitalist class.

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