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Abstract

Globalization brings communities in close proximity both economically and culturally. This proximity leads to a fusion of ideas, beliefs, world-view and culture. Globalization has facilitated the higher standard of living of people across world. The world is transforming into one global village. But everything, good or profitable, comes at some cost and globalization is not an exception. The unwanted consequences of globalisation are more fatal than the goodness of its advantages. This led to many scholars to critique it on many grounds. Challenges posed by globalization are even more acute in the case of India where globalization cannot be seen divorced from colonialism. The colonial history of India forces us to see the shades of neo-colonialism in the forms of globalization. In India, globalisation seems to have widened the gap between the rich and poor.

The present paper is an attempt to look into the complex challenges of the globalisation in the form of erosion of moral values, decreased level of humanity, suffocating competition and gruelling life of poor which have been addressed in the novels of Aravind Adiga. His novels explore the lives of common man in India in the process of development and tell a tale of avarice and its consequences. The novels show the poverty and deprivation of the class that have limited access over the resources which results into a rather wider gap between rich and poor. This disparity, accentuated so, has made the lives of people miserable. This paper will look for those serious consequences that have been resulted from globalization.

Keywords: Globalization, free trade, corruption, rich-poor divide, morality, equilibrium

The word globalization, according to Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary, means ‘the fact that different cultures and economic system around the world are becoming connected and similar to each other because of the influence of large ‘multinational’ companies and improved communication.’ When we analyse the first part of the definition, globalization implies connection among various cultures and economic trends. The tendency of expanding the empire as well as culture and trade is certainly not new. So the roots of the idea and process of globalization (though not much as the present day fashion) began to emerge and evolve during the era of enlightenment. After renaissance, it was for the second time that ‘mankind’ became the vantage point for practices and thought. Enlightenment acknowledged the worth of every individual and presupposed that the need and requirements of every person is same. It believed in the equality of man. This idea was supported by the modern and postmodern thinkers and prepared a ground for advent of globalization. Globalization took its origin with new historical and social configuration after the fall of Soviet Union. The amount and intensity of change (at social, economic, cultural and political level) was so undeniable that it made way for globalization. We cannot set a particular date for the advent of this culture but in nineteenth century it emerged as a powerful system at all levels of human life.

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In later centuries the incessant growth in science and trade along with a better communication system has nurtured globalization. The world economy has gone under the trans-national corporations, power and networks of communication that regulated and still regulates the economy of the world.

Globalization spread its wings fast and affectively, that along with WTO, which looks after international trade policies among its 160 member countries, there emerged a number of regional economic groups. Their sole purpose is to promote fluid and smooth trade opportunities and easy access to the markets outside their geographical territories. The European Union (EU), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), The Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), The Central American Common Market (CACM) and The Andean Community (CAN) are only to name a few. All these cooperative organizations are the supporters of free trade across borders. They advocate in favour of globalised economy because it engenders competitive atmosphere to increase better jobs, products, new market and better consumer experience. Apart from economic motives, there has been the idea of global peace and unity too that supports growth and development nationwide for making world a better place to live. But a strict scrutiny of the purposes of globalization reveals its true nature and effects. E. San Juan defines it as:

...a recently retooled programme of universal commodification, imperialism for twenty-first century. It functions as the paradigm of a supranational process of homogenizing the world under the political and ideological hegemony of monopoly capitalist states through multilateral agencies (World Bank/IMF, WTO, United Nations) and transnational banks and firms. (Juan 198-199)

The issue of globalization has been a topic of heated discussion among socialists, economists and political thinkers. Some favour globalization because it prepares a ground of exposure for local trade into global market, brings various cultures on same front, supports competitive atmosphere and generates new possibilities. On the other hand, globalization has been criticised on the same grounds for which it has been appreciated. It is true that it opens the global market for everyone but these markets are monopolised by the wealthier and powerful group of nations. It is seen as capitalist logic of Imperialism where the sovereignty, power and dominance have been restored to the developed countries. They are the decision makers and developing countries voluntary or involuntary have to follow the codes. The confrontation of cultures most often results into cultural shock. In such condition, individuals are either not able to adjust themselves in new cultural change or are strongly preoccupied by the new culture that they underestimate their indigenous culture. This cultural clash is prone to bring mental disequilibrium.

Clear, soothing and ideal picture of globalization is merely an illusion. There is no denying of the fact that free trade and regionalism serves their policy maker countries first. When we are under the state of globalization we need to assess its pros and cons. Since assessment is a kind of process that helps in forming an opinion, it cannot be one and final. The surge of globalization might have started with the view of development for one and all but its dark side cannot be overlooked. If developing countries found an opportunity of trade and cultural exposure in front of developed countries it must be accepted, at the same time, that these countries face the dangers of globalization on its local trade and culture too. Infant domestic trades receive unfavourable attention and care due to free trade and other policies. One other notable thing is that the policy makers for global trade are the developed countries who exercise their economic hegemony over less developed countries. It is just a new form of

colonial subjugation and this new state may otherwise be called imperialist globalization where the metropolitan west countries exploit the countries at periphery.

The present paper intends to portray the effects of globalized economy in developing countries like India. It undertakes to analyze the economic, political and social situation of India through Adiga's novels, *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in Tower*.

The White Tiger is the first novel of an Indian-Australian writer and journalist. The novel depicts the story of a common man in a developing country under the shades of globalization. The story of the narrator turns to be the story of majority of people in India who is struggling to get out of the reeking, rotten and unendurable darkness at any cost. The tale of the life of Balram Halwai is the saga of poor, disadvantaged and suppressed people who idealize the darkness of wealthy, powerful and successful group as to be the brighter side that is more attractive and worthy to achieve. This intensified gap between two ways of life stimulates a world of high and low culture where the citizen of one world is almost an alien for the citizen of other. Both parties are not at ease with the other yet destined to be together. It results into a kind of tension and ambivalence where both are yoked together in a relation of fetish/phobia. The life of Balram Halwai elucidates this relation very precisely. He himself says while addressing the Chinese Premier that,

Those who live in this place call it the Darkness. Please understand, Your Excellency, that India is two countries in one: an India of light, and an India of darkness. The ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near the ocean is well-off. But the river brings darkness to India- the black river. (*TWT*, 14)

The inhabitants of one world are enjoying a lavish and luxurious life that they accept as their birth right and maintain the hold of capital up to them. The rich don't allow the distribution of wealth because it will minimize their share in capital. The inhabitants of other world are under the perennial pressure of getting into that world of light. Both are doomed to a state of constant struggle and competition. This competition begets the sick mechanism of corruption that easily helps them in their intensions. *The White Tiger*, throughout, performs as a good critique of corruption prevalent in Indian society and politics. In the very first introduction of his village Laxmangarh, the narrator says that one can find everything here, "when examine with tape measure and scale, to match up to minimum height and weight standard set by the United Nations and other organizations whose treaties our prime minister has signed..." (*TWT* 19) Balram's exposure to corruption was so close that, for him, it was not at all unethical to be corrupt. He has seen it at his school, hospitals, bureaucratic departments and even in markets and tea stalls. He describes about the Buffalo, the Stork, the Wild Boar and the Revan who were the most powerful people of his village and were utterly corrupted. They not only manipulate the grants, given to village by government, for their own interest but they also impose different kinds of self-invented revenues over the villagers. The narrator tells about the selling of votes at one place in the novel which is very much true in context of India. The corruption and greed are so rampant that even nature is being exploited and natural resources are being drained for personal gain. We come to know that Dhanbad is a city of money. The sophistication of glass and gold that this city enjoys has come from coal mines of the area where these resources are completely exhausted. In the capitalist economic system these dirty games are not dirty or unethical since they help individuals to grow up. Very same kind of picture is shown in Adiga's other novel *Last Man in Tower* where we are informed that:

...a famous politician had had phoned the Confidence office, and quoted a figure, in cash, that would have to be transported that evening to the election headquarters. Shah and Shanmugham had driven to a warehouse in Parel

where five-hundred-rupees notes were counted by machines....Safely delivered. The politician won the election.’ (*LMT* 239)

Corruption is only one of the many side-effects of globalization and Americanization and the novel narrates its direct consequences. The major events in the novel take place in Gurgaon which is more or less like America. We are informed, “Ten years ago, they say, there was nothing in Gurgaon, just water buffalos and fat Panjabi farmers. Today it is the most modern suburb of Delhi. American Express, Microsoft, all big American Companies have offices there...So if Pinky Madam missed America, this was the best place to bring her.”(*TWT*122) We can see that globalization has spread its clutches so fast that the places like this have turned into a miniature of western cities. The culture of these cities is a complex one. They have their own indigenous culture as well as a psychological pressure of adopting western culture. These industrially and financially fast growing cities have nothing to offer than a rat race. Only those are capable to compete here who have money or are smart enough to make their place in the world by hook or by crook. These metropolitan cities are dream cities for everyone who aspires to grow but unfortunately ‘half-baked’ Indians are destined to suffer here because they are alienated from their ‘dark’ India and are not welcomed in this India of ‘light’. Globalization has widened the gap between two cultures. We are informed at one place that Balram was allowed to enter a mall only after he secretly dresses himself as a rich man.

It is necessary, for maintaining one’s privileged position, to suppress the downtrodden incessantly. The powerful try to make the powerless believe in their state of perpetual servitude. They are so strongly conditioned for it that they are unable to break the chains of servitude; all they can do is to wait. This imposition is so subtle that it is not easily recognizable. A careful examination of economic, political, social and cultural changes is helpful in providing a better view of the situations. Balram explains the image of a caged society and psychology of rooster coop in a great detail. Caged within, we only see others (who are more or less like us) being chopped up from outside the coop and waiting for our turn. The powerless people are stuffed in the cage where they cannot even breathe easily. They show all their honesty which according to the novelist, ‘is the basis of entire Indian economy’ (*TWT* 175). As a reward of this trustworthiness, they receive only a small amount of salary and betrayal from their masters. The novel thus portrays the real picture of shining India with its shabby realities where one individual is used only as a tool by other individual to materialize his/her success.

Globalization and its blind advancements are responsible to place people in an atmosphere of constant upward mobility. The passion to lead a lavish life and greed for money, power and position are weakening the emotional bond of individuals. In the novel when Balram drives his master Ashok and Pinky Madam to his village Laxamangarh, he feels no sense of attachment with his family because he knows that he is not one of them, neither does he want to be one. He wants to be like his master, a rich personality. Since Balram belongs to the ‘darkness’ he feels a natural thirst for freedom. He is ridiculed, humiliated and blackmailed by his masters. He feels as if he is not even a human being and then he decides to be like his master, a rich man, even at the expense of his master’s life. Detached from any emotional bondage, people are treated as commodity. This commodification of individuals is very clear in the novel at many places. Marriage of a girl is depicted as an event of achieving or losing capital. Balram says about his cousin-sister, ‘because we were the girl’s family, we were screwed’ (*TWT* 36) and when talking about his brother’s marriage, he was happy that they had the boy and they screwed the girl’s family hard. The condition of the prostitutes, as presented in the novel, is even more miserable. They are treated as absolute commodity where no transformation is possible in their state.

In such a competitive atmosphere, it is rather foolish to expect any level of morality from modern wo/man. Right from the beginning, we find the narrator skeptic and cynical who wants to grow rich either by manipulation or criminality. He kills his master and justifies it on the grounds of his own exploitation at the hands of his master. He is not a criminal from his point of view rather it is just a little sacrifice on his road to success where he has acted as an entrepreneur. The act of murdering was just a start of degradation. After being established as an entrepreneur, he continues to be the most corrupt businessman and keeps on manipulating situations and people. It was now comparatively easier for him since he has now money as well as position. Balram doesn't feel guilty for what he has done or what he is doing. He knows his reality very well. He considers himself neither as a man nor as a demon and says, "I have woken up, and the rest of you are still sleeping, and that is the only difference between us" (*TWT* 315). He knows that for the world he is a ghastly murderer, his soul has got darkened and 'all the skin-whitening creams sold in the market of India won't clean' his hands again (*TWT* 318). But he argues that for leading a life of a man, 'one murder' is forgivable. Thus the novel depicts, if not reality then at least a possibility, what globalization and craze for money can do to a person.

The clutches of globalization is not restricted to economic aspect of a person. Economy is the basic element in shaping the life of its people. The endemic of getting economically well-off has affected the lives of individuals in all spheres, be it cultural, social or political. The personal and social lives of people are full of clashes, contradictions and instability where the emotional bond has been sacrificed in the favor of a world of personal gains. This instinct of personal gain has overpowered the sense of moral and immoral, valid and invalid, what matters more is to grasp the commercial and financial opportunity to become wealthy, as Adiga rightly points out in his novel:

When those people who are left behind see their neighbours getting the money, it will turn them mad with envy. I am talking about us. He is turning good people into bad people. Changing our nature. Because he wants us to do it to Masterji ourselves, what other builders do to men like him in situations like this. (*LMT* 319)

These lines describe very precisely and clearly the effect of commerce and trade in today's globalized world. People are so busy in giving and taking that they don't have any mental and spiritual equilibrium. Men, in such conditions, are vulnerable and they can be manipulated very easily by shrewd people. The present system of economy is really changing our nature, we are more self-centered and less human. Dharman Shah, the builder of the novel *Last Man in the Tower*, symbolizes the process and effects of globalization culture and the city Mumbai is much like an individual that goes under the process and the changes manifest itself through various channels.

After the grand success of his first novel, *The White Tiger*, which won Man Booker Prize of 2008 for him, Adiga published his book *Last Man in Tower* in 2011. The novel is set in the present day Mumbai, a city growing in terms of capital and skyscrapers. Mumbai is one of the most crowded cities of the world. It is a city of dreams where everyone comes to grow rich. Real estate is one of such businesses that could provide wings to fly in a sky of material success. It is an achievement in a place like Mumbai, the most crowded city, to find a place for accommodation. One's wealth is measured here in terms of square foot of the place one lives in. People are so obsessed about the place they live in, that they can spend any amount of money over it.

The story of the novel depicts the struggle of the common middle-class families of Vishram Society in Vakola Santa Cruz (East). The inhabitants of Vishram Society live together with all those malice and goodness that one can easily find in a middle-class individual. They are together as a society with a weak or no human bondage. They all

havedesire to grow wealthy, they all are jealous of each other's success, they help each other unless they are adversely affected. The writer says about the inhabitants of Vishram society:

Mrs. Puri felt lighter. She envied Kudwa his happy family life- just as she knew he in secret envied Ajwani for owing a Toyota Qualis; just as Ajwani probably envied someone else; and this chain of envy linked them, showing each what was lacking in life, but offering also the consolation that happiness was present right next door, in the life of neighbor, an element of same Society. (LMT 74)

All these people have something miserable in their lives for which they are shameful. It is a picture of a society in a metropolitan city under globalization, but the picture grows horrible, deformed and unbearable when their greed was fired by their ambition of getting money at almost no cost. It seemed that humanity cried out 'come, all of you: and protect me from human beings' (LMT 346).

As the novel proceeds, we find that there are two versions of modern man personified by Masterji (Yogesh Murthy) and the developer (Dharman Shah). Masterji is a man of morals and democratic values who also knows his rights. For him, Vishram Society is very important because it is the place where his children spent their childhood and where his dear wife took her last breath. His flat meant more for him than any monetary gain. On the contrary, Dharman Shah is a man of low morals and high ambitions. Vishram Society was important to him also because it is a place that can lay golden eggs for him. He cannot leave it for any other developer to acquire it and seize the opportunity. Dharman Shah is clever enough to know his ways. He knows that 'In a socialist economy, a small businessman has to be a thief to prosper' (LMT 88). He is a good reader of human greed and works like Satan in the novel. Starting as a smuggler, 'he found out; the real money in this world lies on the legitimate side of things...he soon realized that much as he loved cement and steel, he loved people more. The human being was his clay to squeeze. Poorer human beings, to begin with' (LMT 88). The novel develops as the tussle between the two intensifies. But meanwhile we feel that it is neither Masterji nor Dharman Shah who is the protagonist of the novel. The main character of the novel is Mumbai. The novel tells the story of a city that is developing in the age of globalization. The kind of growth, this city achieves in this course, is manifested by its inhabitants.

We have already seen in the novel, *The White Tiger* that the present mode of economy and exchange has drawn a line between the rich and poor but what we find in the *Last Man in Tower* is that the line exist even among the rich, the not so poor and the poor also. The middle class wants to overlook the economically disabled strata of the society and the elites don't want to mingle with any one low than them. "There were two ways in which the residents of Vishram Society had, historically, dealt with the existence of slum in Vakola. One was to leave the gate of Vishram every morning, process to the main road, and pretend that there was no other world nearby"(LMT 36). The middle-class looks with disgust at lower classes and this is the reality of a capitalist/consumerist society that functions on the basis of class. The unbridgeable gap between two worlds has been described by the builder Dharman Shah that, 'Because in this world, there is a line: on one side are the men who cannot get things done, and on the other side are the men who can. And not one in a hundred will cross that line. Will you?'"(LMT 229). The novel not only depicts the clash among the classes but also among individuals of the same class because of their urgency to become rich. The whole drama of the novel shows a progression of envy, jealousy and hatred among the neighbors of Vishram Society. This hatred is satisfied only after the murder of Masterji at the end of the novel.

Globalization, thus, surely affects the quality of life of people. In the favor of some materialistic achievements, people are losing mental and emotional stability. No doubt that a 'creative destruction' is the ideal notion behind the idea of globalization. It aims at a better

standard of living for all the people around the world. But none can deny that its good results are not free from its byproducts. This creative destruction is a potential ‘destructive destruction’ too. Globalization seems to have brought us on the verge of losing all that considered valuable for human. We live in a world where humanity, peace, sympathy and brotherhood are discussed more than they are followed.

Globalization seems to producing creating the hollow men. However, globalization is not the real problem. The real worry lies in becoming its blind follower without critically analyzing its processes, products and problem. Both the novels present lives of people from the perspective of a common man. They appropriately elucidate how the erosion of values can degrade one’s life. The world is becoming more and more complicated as a consequence of the onslaughts of globalization. The evils of globalization must be fought wisely, and it is not possible without a united struggle.

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