

CHAPTER - II

POVERTY: AN INCURABLE DISEASE?

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Poverty is a condition in which people do not have the means to afford basic human needs such as nutrition, health care, education, food, clothing and shelter. Poverty is one of the biggest problems that India faces today. In spite of all the progress that India has made during the years, the problem of poverty has not been eliminated. A great segment of the country lives below the poverty line. Even after sixty two years of independence from the British rule, large scale poverty remains the most shameful spot on the face of India.

India is horribly gripped with poverty. About one-third of the world's poor live in India. Poverty is widely seen here. The reasons for the high level of poverty in India are its history under British rule, large population, low literacy, lack of individual responsibility, bad government policies, exploitation of people, the social structure of India and India's caste system.

India's most distressing feature in its social system is the great disparities in incomes and lifestyles. On the one hand India has millionaires and billionaires and on the other hand it has millions of people who struggle to have their daily bread. They are weak in economic condition. They cannot bear with the rising prices of essential commodities, and their incomes further shrink.

One of the biggest reasons for this poverty is illiteracy. Education is a fundamental human right and a major element of human and economic development. It strengthens personal integrity and shapes the societies in which one lives. India has moved fast, during the last few years but still the illiterates are unable to keep pace with the world as they are not able to find

jobs. Even if they are able to find jobs, their earnings are not enough for their survival and for their families. They are not able to feed their children properly. Poverty gives pain to them in multiple dimensions. These poor people live in the slum areas where they have no clean water and hygienic environment. So these poor groups are much more affected by illness and congenial diseases. This causes health, disease and disability which prevent them from working full time, thereby limiting their income and their ability to work to move out of poverty. The illness in the family ruins an entire household. Not only is the income lost, but expenses go up due to the need for medicines and health care and the need for family members to care for the sick. They have to lead a marginal and a miserable life.

Literacy can reduce their poverty, but in some rural areas, people are still superstitious. They do not allow their children to learn new art and services. This is all because of ignorance and lack of knowledge and education. There is an urgent need to end poverty and find all the possible solutions to eradicate poverty. It weakens the strong pillar of our country. Poverty is a silent killer. To save India, it should be eliminated. Necessary steps should be taken to eradicate it.

Aravind Adiga has clearly portrayed poverty, which is one of the dreadful social issues in his novels *The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassinations*. Deepika Srivastava in the article “*The White Tiger : The Anti Hero’s Journey from Darkness to Light and Beyond*” quotes the words of Adiga who explains that :

The White tiger grew out of a couple of vignettes or stories that I had set down from the *Between the Assassinations*. The two played off each other as I was writing them. I always had an idea for two related books on India which would be set on either side of the great divide in modern Indian history, which was 1991

when India opened up its socialist economy to the world. That's created what's called "New India", the India of rapid economic growth and great disparities of wealth, which is the India of *The White Tiger*. (89)

When Adiga returns from Australia to India, everything has been changed except poverty. Adiga vehemently opposes poverty. He considers poverty is the first pitfall in India for its development. His novels deal with poverty in an elaborate style. Today's economic opportunities have expanded the avenues for entrepreneurship and have exploded some sophisticated sectors in business and trades. With this development millions in the urban, middle and the lower middle classes can aspire for better life. Poverty is being a dreadful disease in India. Every citizen is in need to analyze about the status of India's poverty history. Incidentally, death due to poverty considerably has been rising. India is held in the hands of drought and what is the reason that lies behind this drought is what Adiga analyses in his works.

Adiga's novels *The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassinations* have been written with different and effective techniques to bring the pain and real picture of poverty. With the focus of the downtrodden, in India, these novels attract a wide audience. *The White Tiger* takes the form of series of letters written by the protagonist, Balram to the Chinese premier Wen Jiabao who comes to India. In these letters, he narrates his rebellious life against poverty. These letters express the pathetic condition of the poor. This novel centres on Balram Halwai, son of a rickshaw man from a poor family, who becomes a great entrepreneur.

The protagonist Balram Halwai is the representative of the underclass people. Adiga draws the miserable picture of poverty in the life of Balram Halwai. Through his valid character he gives an awakening call to the society and brings out the negative impacts of poverty. The extreme poverty creates darkness in the life of rural as well as the urban people. Adiga's works

reflect the condition of the poverty stricken areas in India. He makes an attempt to realize the cause and consequences of the poverty. His works vividly portray the neglected class of India. The narrative throws ample light on the plight and the problems of the poor in India. Totally these novels are a satire on the contemporary India.

Balram Halwai who hails from the village Laxmangarh in Bihar, is severely affected by poverty. This poverty forces Balram to move to city. Balram Halwai's social mobility from the village Laxmangarh to the city Delhi scrutinizes the poverty of India. Balram and his family status and their pathetic conditions are quite enough to understand their slavery and poverty life. Adiga uses some heart breaking words to explore the pathetic issues of India.

Poverty makes the poor to feel that they are destined to remain poor forever and so are their children. It is after death that, this society lifts their living conditions by spraying the perfumes, covering their body with silk or cotton clothes and with rose garlands, which actually goes vain. Balram says about his mother's death, "My mother's body had been wrapped from head to toe in a saffron silk cloth, which was covered in rose petals and jasmine garlands. I don't think she had ever had such a fine thing to wear in her life. Her death was so grand that I knew, all at once that her life must have been miserable" (16).

The village Laxmangarh is a representative of the Indian villages. The status of village youth is so miserable, they struggle to earn their daily wages for their families. In Laxmangarh there is a migration of jobless youths to big cities to earn; and the protagonist Balram Halwai is not an exception from this migration. He narrates "The rest of the village wanted in a big group our side the shop – when the buses came, they got on – packing the inside, hanging from the railings – climbing on to the roofs – and went to Gaya, there they went to the station and rushed

into the train – packing the inside, hanging from the railing climbing on to the roofs – and went to Delhi, Calcutta and Dhanbad to find work (26).

In Balram's life, poverty restricts all his developments. First poverty shatters his education even though he is a brilliant student in his school. Balram is a distinguished student much above the others. His intelligence is found out by the inspector of schools who asked Balram several questions and the educational inspector says:

You young man, are intelligent, honest vivacious fellow in this crowd of thugs and idiots. In any jungle what is the rarest animals that comes along only once in a generation?

I thought about it and said:

The White Tiger.

That's what you are, in this jungle. (35)

The inspector is so delighted by Balram's intelligence and determination. However, the death of his parents and the poverty compel him to leave the school and work in a tea stall to do some menial jobs. Adiga's protagonist is not an ordinary man. He is a brave man 'the white tiger' as the inspector says. Balram encounters poverty and finds solution to escape from this bondage life.

The name Balram has a hidden and pathetic story. Initially he does not have any proper name to call. In the poverty-stricken society young kids are given no formal names. Balram is simply called 'munna'. Neither the mother nor the father is concerned about his name. The education inspector asks "Didn't your mother name you?" Balram reports: "she's very ill sir. She lies in bed and spews blood. She's got no time to name me (13). Then he asks about his father. Balram says "He's a rickshaw puller . He's got no time to name me" (13).

It is the school teacher who names him Balram and marks his age in the school ledger. Vikram Halwai Balram's father is hit by poverty and has tough manual work. His weak body speaks of his poverty and sufferings. Adiga through Balram conveys the reality of poverty.

Balram says:

A rich man's body is like a premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank. Ours are different. My father's spine was a knotted rope, the kind that women use in villages to pull water from wells; the clavicle curved around his neck in high relief, like a dog's collar cuts and nicks and scars, like little whip marks in his flesh ran down his chest and waist reaching down below his hip bones in to his buttocks. The story of a poor man's life is written on his body, in a sharp pen.

(26)

Exploitation is one of the root causes of poverty. Zamindari practice is a dangerous power to suppress the underclass. Wages are delayed for the workers. But these landlords and masters suck their blood and leave their body as dross. The craze of money makes them act as a ruthless being. Balram narrates clearly, how the village people are trapped in the exploitation by the landlords. Due to their exploitative tendencies, Balram calls landlords as 'Animals'. Balram gives the names of the exploiting land lords in his own village. 'Buffalo', 'stork', 'wild boar', and 'raven' are the four landlords who got their names from the particularities of money appetite that has been detected in them. He says:

The Stork was a fat man with a fat moustache, thick and curved and pointy at the tips. 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 to toll from every boat man who crossed the river to come to our village. His brother was called 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 his feet, and touch the dust under his slippers and agree to swallow his day wages . . . The Raven owned the worst land, which was the dry rocky hill side around the fort, and took a cut from the goat herds that went up there to graze with their flocks. If they didn't have their money; he liked to dip his beak in to their backsides, so they called him the Raven. The Buffalo was the 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. (24-25)

Places that are destitute and are left undeveloped by government are other miserable areas. These places are ruled by some landlords. The bloody fighting between the landlords and the naxals create the anxious life among the downtrodden. Naxals quench their hostile on landlords by killing the innocents. So these unprotected human beings lead a weary life. But landlords send their sons and daughter to some other states for protection.

Poor become the victims in these battlefields. Adiga brings out the pathetic condition of these destitute villages. These villages are left unconcerned about the basic needs of villages that have not been fulfilled by this sluggish government. Most of the villages are stuck with poverty. Money is the glistening power of government employees. Hence, this government hesitates to provide comfort to the poverty-stricken people.

Aravind Adiga gives an outlook to the infrastructure of the destitute villages: Balram says "Ha! Electricity poles – defunct. Water tap – broken . Children – too lean and short for their age, and with oversized heads from which vivid eyes shine, like the guilty conscience of the government of India" (19-20). Poverty causes malnutrition among children. These symbols are

prevalent in every village to prove the inability of the government to help the poor children. Normally government says villages are the spinal cords for a country's growth. But this spinal cord has been broken by this fake government.

Adiga switches over to city to talk how the poverty infiltrates in to the city as well. Balram moves from Laxmangarh to Delhi as a driver to get rid of poverty. Adiga provides a clear picture of the city downtrodden and servant class people who are the victims of poverty. Balram's journey from Laxmangarh to Dhanbad and then to Delhi and finally to Bangalore endorses that the socio-psychological condition of the underclass remains unchanged. Though the cities provide ample job opportunities, but the social behavior and psyche of the upper class is identical everywhere, whether it is a landlord, politician, bureaucrat, upper caste people, rich man, industrialist or entrepreneur. Everywhere the underclass is trapped in slavery is well observed.

India is shown as an emerging entrepreneurial power in the world. Advancement in the field of science and technology, space, transportation, hotel industry, tourism, real estate expansion of the cities, mall culture industries and outsourcing etc, characterize the best image of India. The narrator Balram explains the reasons for entrepreneurial success. He says "My country is the kind where it pays to play it both ways: the India entrepreneur has to be straight and crooked, mocking and believing, sly and sincere, at the same time"(8-9). When there is a thought that the world is raving about the economic miracle of India, a brutal confession by *The White Tiger* protagonist exposes the rot in three pillars of modern India-democracy, enterprise and justice reducing them to the tired clichés of the faltering nation. But all these developmental activities depend on the underclass because they are the ladders of these entrepreneurs to reach

their destinations. They are being left as unconcerned. Balram says of the lifestyle of the poverty stricken in the city as.

Thousands of people live on the sides of the road in Delhi. They have come from the Darkness too – you can tell by their thin bodies, filthy faces, by the animal – like way they live under the huge bridges and overpasses, making fires and washing and taking lice out of their hair while the cars roar past them (119).

The poor people are in search of better life and so migrate from the village to the city, but they remain the same. Balram reports: “These poor bastards had come from the Darkness to Delhi to find some light – but they were still in the darkness” (138). Adiga feels, the migration of these people gives only disappointments. So he equalizes this hopeless survival to death. Balram quotes: “To live under some concrete bridge, begging for their food and without a hope for the future, that’s not much better than being died” (214).

Among the poverty-stricken people in the city, the auto and taxi drivers life condition is also miserable. Balram is a true example of these miseries of their life like humiliation, struggles, dreams and involvement in criminal and illegal activities. Adiga portrays the restless life of servants in the city. Apart from their work, drivers also carry out the work of a servant – washing utensils, brooming the floors, cooking, massaging, scrubbing lathering and drying the skin of pet dogs. This exploitation exhibits the restless life of servants. Balram says about the master’s unconcern about the drivers. He says about the ill-treating and unconcerning nature of their master’s on drivers. He reports:

What blindness you people are capable of here. You are sitting in glass buildings and talking on the phone night after night to Americans who are thousands of miles away, but you don’t have the faintest idea what’s happening to the man

who's driving the car". To earn money they should tolerate all. He says the agony of their masters they have no stamina to raise questions against them. They must repress their feeling and thoughts. (257)

Other horrible sights in servant's life are so tearful. Drivers and servants are forced to confess the crime that their masters have committed. They earn some extra income by doing this. But Balram becomes very abominable about slavery life. He wants to quit from the bondage life. He wants to be a free man. He records "Just for a day, just an hour, Just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant" (321). This is the panic voice of city servants. In the village Balram's father, Vickram Halwai's longing, is the panic voice of a village man. He says "my whole life, I have been treated like donkey. All I want is that one son of mine – at least one – should live like a man" (30).

Adiga talks about the dowry system, and analyses how this custom suppresses the poor. When Balram's cousin becomes engaged, his family gets screwed with a large dowry, which they cannot afford. To save their reputation and the marriage, the family has to take a loan from the village landlord. Hence they are turned into slaves to the landlord. Balram is forced to drop out of school and work in a teashop to earn money to pay back the debt. This is the preset condition of Indian villages.

The practice of dowry is another social stigma in Laxmangarh. The marriage of Balram's cousin, Reena pushed the whole family into a world of misery. Balram says how his brother Kishan's marriage also brings huge dowry to his family. Balram reports:

It was one of the good marriages. We had the boy, and we screwed the girl's family hard. I remember exactly what we got in dowry from the girl's side, and thinking about it now makes my mouth fill up with water: five thousand rupees in

cash, all crisp new unsoiled notes fresh from the bank, plus a Hero bicycle, plus a thick gold necklace for Kishan, After the wedding, Kusum Granny took the five thousand rupees and the Hero cycle and the thick Gold necklace. (51)

Thus a huge amount of money and precious jewels are being snatched in the name of dowry from the bride's family. In cities, educated people also commit this sin. Legally, dowry is a banned practice in India but still happens all over the place.

Dowry actually is a cultural system where the parents of the bride give some money and some expensive gifts to her so that in case of lack of resources she can lead a comfortable life ahead after marriage. Historically, this system is willingly followed by the bride's parents. But now at many places especially in India it is being forcefully asked for. Earlier the system was prevalent only in the wealthier families but now unfortunately the greed of dowry has struck to most ordinary families and has become an unspoken demand for marriages. This dowry system also ruins the poor's blissful life. Their marriage life becomes a mystery for them. They remain as spinsters or involve themselves into the illegal activities like prostitution.

There are many instances when a wife commits suicide, because of her helplessness to tolerate the harassment for dowry. The dowry system is a social evil prevalent in India till date which every citizen has to fight against. Each one has to take up this fight by creating awareness in the family, communities and society at large. Constant and alert actions against this evil people will slowly help in getting rid of this dowry system.

No blame game is going to help at this crisis. The problems are identified and solutions have to be worked upon positively. Dowry system is one of the social evils that prevail in the Indian Society. To eradicate this evil dowry system from India, it requires sustained and concrete efforts in the right direction. The dowry system plays the most devastating role. It has spread out

its poison far and wide affecting almost every section of the society. The dowry system has grown into a greedy monster, which is constantly looking out for hapless preys especially from feminine gender.

The dowry system has the monstrous growth now a days. It has become a part of the institution of marriage. In other words, without dowry no marriage is solemnized. When the agreed amount of dowry is not paid or it is partly paid it means that sometimes the marriage is not solemnized. When the bride's family is not able to fulfill the promise of dowry due to poverty, the conflict begins at the marital home, in which the entire family members of the bridegroom turns against the bride. Going further, the bride for no fault of hers, is verbally abused in a vulgar language, assaulted or violently beaten by her husband. In extreme cases the bride is strangled to death or put to flame using petrol or kerosene. The bride is not spared even when she is pregnant or a mother of a baby.

Unable to fulfill the dowry demands of the marital home, the bride is mostly driven back to her parent's home. Somehow or other, the bride's parents should fulfill the demands for dowry, so as to ensure a better future for their daughters at their marital homes. As a result, the bride's parents become heavily indebted and plunge in poverty or struggle to have their both ends meet throughout their life.

In the modern days the dowry prohibition act, specifically makes the act of demanding or taking as well as giving dowry during the marriage is a crime. But the laws created by men are always weak. There are many loopholes to escape from a crime. So consequently, there is a long queue of hapless women standing before the women police stations as well as the courts to prefer a complaint against the members of their marital home. In some cases, harassment for dowry results in death of women leading to a protracted trail against the members of the marital home.

Thus the dowry system creates a chaos in society, by promoting violence and bitter conflicts among the members of the families and thereby dismembers the families. This dowry system and their poverty compel them to involve themselves into prostitution.

Prostitution becomes another serious issue in India. In the big cities, most of the poverty stricken and destitute women are forced to adopt prostitution as their profession. Adiga feels prostitutes zones are created by poverty. He indicates the places like Dhanbad, Delhi, and Bangalore which have the red light areas due to poverty. One can negotiate a price with these women. The price depends on, "High class or low class? Virgin or non virgin?" (228). In Delhi rich people like 'Golden hair women' to quench their lust.

Adiga particularizes in the novel *The White Tiger* the Nepali girls, Ukrainian students involve themselves into prostitution. Also Adiga indicates the pathetic condition in this profession when the poor labourers from the village work in construction of malls allow their woman for prostitution. Exploring the causes of prostitution, the first and foremost factor is poverty which brings helpless and destitute women to the doors of prostitution. In some places girls are ill treated by parents or seduced by boyfriends who later on turns out to be prostitutes. Hence poverty is the root cause of their degradation and encourages their flesh trades to encounter their poverty.

There are many organizations to save such girls women who are indulged in prostitution due to poverty. Government also propagates some safety methods for them to avoid epidemic diseases. These women should be saved and provided vocational training and education and their products should be marketed so that they do not face the same trouble all over again.

Poverty makes them to live like an animal without conscience. Somehow they want to fulfill their needs. It is harmful to the humanity. Balram reports: "Let animals live like animals,

let human live like human. That's my whole philosophy in a sentence" (276). Balram's life is an example of the loss of humanity. The bitter experiences in his life turn him to be a murderer.

Adiga uses the phrase rooster coop to compare India's poverty and its consequences. The rooster coop is used to keep the chickens in the butcher shop. Balram says:

Go to Delhi behind the Jama Masjid and loot at the way they keep chickens there in the market. Hundreds of pale hens and brightly coloured roosters, stuffed tightly into wire – mesh cages, packed as tightly as worms in a belly, pecking each other and shitting, on each other. Jostling just for breathing space ; the whole cage giving off a horrible stench – the stench of terrified, feathered flesh. On the wooden desk above this coop sits a grinning young butcher, showing off the flesh and organs of a recently chopped-up chicken, still oleaginous with a coating of dark blood. The roosters in the coop smell the blood from above. They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they're next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with human beings in this country. (173)

The unadorned portrait of this country is done well by Adiga through the phrase 'rooster coop, where the chickens are kept in the butchers shop. It gives the exact condition of the life style of the poor. Adiga compares the life style of the poor and their poverty, to a rooster coop where the chickens are stuffed tightly in the wire mesh cages where they suffocate for breath. All the poor and downtrodden are stuffed in the cage like Roosters. But no one has the thought of getting freedom from the bondage life because they are under the hegemonial power. These victims do not have the power to break this deadlock. They lead their life like a rooster in a cage.

Adiga mentions in 'The Great Indian Rooster Coop' (173) that all the victims are searching for a safer region in the suffocated area instead of breaking the cage. They lack the courage. Balram is one such example who is affected by this social structure and the rooster coop. But he wants to change his future and destiny. He has not accustomed himself to live in the rooster coop. He makes bold efforts to cross the boundary marks which are drawn by the ruling class. The consequence of poverty is, a rustic and an innocent person turns into a murderer. Poverty thus creates monsters in the society.

Balram Halwai says that a poor Indian can never get rid of this psychology of slavery. This feel of slavery is sowed in them from childhood. He writes in his email:

Do you know about Hanuman sir? He was the faithful servant of the god Rama, and we worship him in our temples. Because he is a shining example of how to serve your master with absolute fidelity love and devotion. These are the kinds of Gods they have foisted on us. Mr. Jiaboa understands now, how hard it is for a man to win his freedom in India. (197)

The poor people are abused by the rich. For instance, when Balram absent-mindedly scratches his groin while washing ginger in Pinky Madam's kitchen, she screams at him. She says "You're so filthy! Look at you, look at your teeth, look at your clothes! There's red pann all over your teeth, and there are red spots on your shirt. It's disgusting! (146). Balram takes serious notice of Pinky Madam's objections. He thinks:

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?

Brush ,brush, spit.

Brush,brush ,spit.

If only a man could spit his past out so easily (151).

It is disconcerting that things have changed so little for the Indian poor in the space of so many years. The poor are deprived, abused and hated for their low status.

Balram wants to change this slave psychology by breaking this rooster coop. He realizes by breaking the rooster coop, he can put an end to poverty. According to philosophy individual action is the key to break out of the rooster coop. At the same time, if anyone thinks about breaking the rooster coop, they should also think about the consequences. They must prepare themselves to tolerate all this breaking repercussions.

Balram says “can man breaks out of the coop? The answer . . . Is only a man who is prepared to see his family destroyed – hunted beaten, and burned alive by the masters – can break out of the coop. That would take no normal human being, but a freak, a pervert of nature” (176). Balram is not a normal human being. He has been named as a white tiger. A white tiger can break the coop. He says “I think the Rooster Coop needs people like me to break out of it” (320). Beena Agarwal in the article “Adiga’s *The White Tiger*: The Twilight of Two Indias” quotes the words of H.Hatterr, who comments “All impossible are probable in India”(56). It gives the necessity of the revolution and also brings the courage that nothing is impossible in India. This is the way Balram selects to achieve his goal.

At last by killing his master, Balram breaks the rooster coop and becomes free from poverty and slavery. Balram declares “ I’ve made it! – I’ve broken the Coop!”(320). This is a dangerous consequence of atrocities. The unbearable misery life changes a man who is a rustic innocent as an opportunist, selfish being and finally as a murderer. Adiga writes“To sum up – in the olden days there are one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just

two castes. Men with big bellies, and men with small bellies . . . And only two destinies eat – or get eaten up” (64).

Aravind Adiga again explores and exposes the multi-facets of poverty in his second novel *Between the Assassinations*. He deals how poverty creates child labour and alcoholism heightens poverty and paves the way for their weary life. He also deals how poor are suppressed by injustice.

Child labour is the repercussion of poverty. Government has taken more steps to eradicate the child labour. In India millions of children are forced to work in order to survive. These children work as domestic help, on streets, in factories and farmlands and silently they suffer. Poverty is undoubtedly a dominant factor in the use of child labour. The families who are below the poverty line force their children into work to supplement their household's meager income.

Millions of children in India do not go to schools. Instead, they become subject to untold misery. They live the lives of drudgery, uncared system, unprotected and unnoticed. It is their long hours of work, under conditions of total submission and servility, without any support, fear of abuse, insults and humiliation and risks to health. Small children work under scorching heat, with blistering sore feet dug into the miry land. They do the sowing, weeding and harvesting of vegetables etc. When they are not working in the fields they are burdened with the monotony of work at home like cooking, fetching water, taking care of siblings and doing all the domestic works. Children are also engaged in tending to cattle, sheep, goats, fishing and working in the poultry.

Hundreds and thousands of children work in production of hybrid cotton seeds. The cotton ginning mills, handloom weaving looms as well as the spinning machines and power

looms too employ children. The process of sericulture has an abundance of children working in damp, dark, poorly ventilated, have loud, deafening noise of machines. In, brick kilns children are used to load the bricks under the blazing sun; they are also involved in the building construction work. They suffer from by many physical problems like, nausea, knocking headaches, giddiness and mental depression.

The homes of most middle and upper classes too depend on young girls and boys who work as domestic servants. They are either full time or part time workers. Poverty forces them to work as a child labour. Child labour is a pathetic and condemned one. An underage child cannot bear the burdens of a family. Most of the poor parents are ready to send their children under a contract basis. These pathetic young ones undergo many ruthless activities by their masters; particularly the female children undergo sexual harassments.

Immature and inexperienced child labourers may be completely unaware of the short and long term risks involved in their work. Working long hours, child labourers are often denied a basic school education, normal social interaction, personal development and emotional support from their family. Beside these problems, children face many physical dangers and death from their masters. So poverty perishes the child's colourful life. Their childhood is stolen.

In the novel *Between the Assassinations* a Muslim boy namely Ziauddin who is twelve years old comes from a farm labouring family and works in a tea stall in a railway station. Below the age of twelve years only a child can reap the joy of childhood. But as a child labourer, Ziauddin develops a sense of isolation from the society. He has to struggle like an adult for survival. He works for their family. In the words of Adiga "He was the sixth of eleven children in a farm-labouring family up in the north of the state" (5). Their poverty compels the small boy also to work. Adiga says that

“He (Ziauddin) was going to do his duty to his family and work alongside his father and mother and brothers. Weeding or sowing or harvesting some rich man’s field for a few rupees a day” (6).

Children can be described as living in poverty if their parents are addicted to drugs or alcohol. Adiga weaves a truly a great story about how children suffer by their addicted father. Adiga portrays the life of the pitiable children and the unlucky kids, Soumya and her brother Raju in the novel *Between the Assassinations*. The ten year old Soumya undertakes the difficult task of procuring smack for her addicted father. Her father gives no money. So Soumya is practiced to beg. She takes her small brother out on the roads to beg.

She went from auto rickshaw to auto rickshaw, opening and closing her fingers

“Uncle, have pity, I am starving ...

Mother, I am hungry (rubbing her tummy), ‘give me food’ ...

Big Brother, I’m hungry’.

‘Grandpa, even a small coin would _’. (145)

To escape from this pain they are being addicted and loss their life.

Adiga gives an incident in his second novel *Between the Assassinations* to show how the poor suffer by the injustice. A rich engineer who drives the car hits a poor man who dies. The merciless man immediately flees from there. The honest journalist Guru Raj comes to know of all the facts of the accident from an honest security guard, Bahadur Gurkha who is the eye witness. The journalist asks the guard, “You have lived here long enough, Sir. You know it can be, Engineer was drunk; he was coming back from his mistress’ home; he hit the fellow like some stray dog, and drove away , leaving him there ,with his guts out on the street (123). But the rich man makes another poor man who works in his concern as his scapegoat in the police

case. Even though there is a clear eye witness, police were not able to arrest him, because he is the richest man in that area. The eye witness Gurkha says:

He is the richest man in this town. He owns the tallest building in this town. He cannot be arrested. He gets one of the employees in his factory to say he was driving the car when it happened. The guy gives the police a sworn affidavit. I was driving under the influence of alcohol on the night of 12 May when I hit the victim. (123)

When a master is trapped in crimes, they easily use their servants as a substitute. Here their poverty plays a major role to change them as evil doers. So, poverty has multi-facets to get into a family and ruin them. Although India's image is portrayed as incredible across the globe, but the country has failed to address the concerns of the poor. India is still a country where rich are getting richer and the poor are growing poorer.

The large gap between the rich and the poor creates insatiability that often leads to morality being compromised for individual gain. The poor are so desperate that they are willing to do almost anything to lead their life. Poverty compels the downtrodden to deviate from the moral life. Poverty and unemployment should be weeded out first in order to tackle the menace of naxalism, regionalism, terrorism, separatism, extremism, communalism, casteism etc. Thus, these novels are a social commentary on the effects of the huge gap between the wealthy and the poor in India.

Adiga gives the true picture of poverty and its consequences. Everyone in the globe wants to put an end to poverty. He brilliantly presents his characters to show the real life of the downtrodden. It makes the readers to think the living condition of the poor and its dreadful

consequences in India and also gives the awakening call to the society to take necessary steps to efface.

Adiga in his novels *The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassinations* gives a detailed account of Indian society and its various facets like poverty, unemployment, economic disparity, exploitation of the poor, embittered master-servant relationship form the dark image of India. These factors perpetuate the suffering of the underclass. Though Balram finds that the social circumstances of his life are not of his own making or in accordance to his will. He confronts them every day which helps to change. His stand is a symbol of many aspiring young men in the socially changing scenario of India. Adiga's novels are fascinating portrayal of the divisions between the world of rich and the poor of new India. Towards the end in *The White Tiger*, Balram puts up a hope "will they destroy the Rooster Coop? Ha! May be once in a hundred years there is a revolution that frees the poor" (303).

Between the Assassinations is a triumph of the voice of the downtrodden. The stories focus the power struggle between the poor and rich. The characters depict the ironies and intricacies of human life, which is actually Adiga's triumph of realism. Through this novel, Adiga brings limelight to the ever-widening gap between the poor and the rich and between the haves and the have-nots. Thus, both the novels *The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassinations* explore and reveal the realities of India.