

Globalization and Hegemony, and the question of Servitude in Adiga's "The White Tiger" and Adichie's "Americanah"

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Abstract

The present article sheds light on the social, economic, and cultural impact and hegemony of globalization towards the poor people, particularly in terms of its role in widening the gap between the upper and lower classes. It's also examines the way in which Aravind Adiga's 'The White Tiger' and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's 'Americanah' act as a harsh critique of the notion of the "Modern Country" which is still claim to be plagued with a system of servitude and rampant political, economic, and social corruption. It argues that both globalization and hegemony, and the system of servitude have contributed to creating two facets in India and Nigeria: (India of Light and the India of Darkness) and (Dreams and Desperation, driving African migrants to Europe), where the poor are marginalized and kept them in their poorness, or make them criminals or push them far to be migrants. The study concludes that The White Tiger and 'Americanah' issue a stern warning that the division of society will inevitably lead to violence, destruction, and anarchy. In order to avert this, the economic and social disparities that keep millions of people living in extreme poverty should be addressed, the system of servitude and discrimination should be dismantled, and it should be ensured that all human beings are able to live with dignity and in equality.

Keywords: Globalization, 'The White Tiger', 'Americanah'

INTRODUCTION

Globalization

The term "globalization" comes from the world "globalize," which alludes to the establishment of a worldwide network of capitalist economies. Globalization is defined as "a practices in which an increasing number of individuals become increasingly connected in the more diverse ways across greater distances" (Lechner, 2009). It is a form of international integration resulting from the exchange of cultural aspects as worldviews, ideas and products. This global integration enables people to communicate, travel and international investment. Globalization increases the

thickness of human connection where the influence of this engagement on the planet also entails in reduction of the world in terms of time and space as well as converting it into a small village (Mustafa, 2010).

Globalization is a part of colonialism, and colonial rule over the colonized is usually reflected in the regulation of time and space including utilizing space as useful earth and region, using goods as raw resources, and later evolving into an independent country further than the colony's boundaries, generally with colonial-designated boundaries, which help to start a new hegemony is called globalization. Globalization also represents the cultural, political, and economic hegemony (Spivak,

2012). As a result, post-colonialism is employed as a "literal depiction of pre-colonial society" as well as a "definition of the worldwide condition following colonialism" (Achebe, 2011). The relationship between colonialism and globalization is considering as exploiting system, as well as represent the late advent of post-colonial thought.

Hegemony

The word "hegemony" refers to how regime rulers or governments leaders use their ideology to influence people's minds through multiple methods. These techniques are deceptive, and many people are unaware that they have been convinced to accept ideology. A strong leadership can also impose this on others (Grelle, 2016). Antonio Gramsci is a supporter of hegemony, and some of his concepts are based on Karl Marx and his Marxist theory. In his book "Selections from the Prison Notebook" Antonio Gramsci has elaborated on this concept, stating that hegemony occurs when space is violated. Every aspect of society strives to dominate by occupying political or economic space. When a regime or government gains power, it requires governance as well as moral and intellectual leadership (Urbinati, 2020).

Hegemony is a concept in postcolonial theory that can be used to illustrate how individuals change and experience in society as due to hegemony. The dominance of western or American culture in Third-World countries can be observed in the term of their economic, political, and cultural affairs (Viswanathan, 2014). In addition, hegemony is also a notion that deals with local cultural issues that are influenced by the arrival of a hegemonic western culture.

"The White Tiger" and "Americanah" and the Question of Servitude.

With the advent of new economic policies in the 1990s, the process of globalization began after nearly four decades of import substitution between the West and Third World countries (Desai, 2013). Globalization and hegemony are not out of touch with other cultural dimensions of society in India and Nigeria, and they exert

power over all the aspects of the society, including politics, economics, and culture. The imperial power expanded its hegemony in the world during the colonial period and after colonization, and they exported their culture to control the world's politics and economy. Aravinda Adiga's *The White Tiger* was published in 2008, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* was published in 2013. Both books made their writers famous around the world during those years. Thus, this article reviews issues in the context of modern Indian and Nigerian representations comprehensively.

"The White Tiger" which won the 2008 Booker Prize-winning novel, examines disparity the contrast between India's growth as a contemporary global economic giant and Balram, as the protagonist, who comes from a rural impoverished background. Indian society has changed dramatically during the last twenty years. Many of these changes are beneficial, upending the previous hierarchical order and the old sense of security. Many impoverished Indians are unhappy and perplexed as a new India emerges around them. Regardless of how quickly the Indian economy improves, the poor's life in rural India remains bleak. As a result, it is clear that the novel's central focus is to depict the impact of globalization toward Indian democracy.

In the novel of "The White Tiger", Adiga (2008) tells the story of Balram Halwai. He is the narrator of his own story. He was born into a poor family in a distant village and grew up in extreme misery and poverty, he was unable to complete his studies and forced to work at a local tea stall as a child. Balram's existence as a servant-driver at the old landlord's house is shown in the novel's main section, as well as the exploitation and social disparities that exist between both the rich and their poorer servants. "The White Tiger" is a critique of "Indian elite arrogance, Indian capitalism's culpability, and the prevailing neo-colonialism in gleaming India." It aims to offer a voice to the silent majority of the disenfranchised lower class, which is plagued by poverty, discrimination, unemployment, denial, and exploitation. It is worth noting that when Adiga returned to India, he was taken aback by the huge changes caused

by globalization. He noticed the effects of globalization on the Indian society that others did not see; Adiga saw elites hegemony over the economy, culture, and politics, resulting more poverty, oppressed marginalized people of Indian society to suffer, and their prospects of survival in the new India to dwindle.

In a globalized world, this story clearly portrays how corruption plays a significant part in India. Similarly, people really had no political representation, but the poor are exploited in the globalized society. Poor people's lives are wretched, and Adiga's novel "The White Tiger" effectively depicted hegemony, or the authority wielded by politicians and wealthy landowners who use the poor to buy votes during elections. Balram states:

There was an election coming up, and the tea shop owner had already sold us. He had sold our fingerprints – the inky fingers, which the illiterate person makes on the ballot paper to indicate his vote. I had overheard this from a customer. This was supposed to be a close election; he had got a good price for each one of us from the Great Socialist's party (The White Tiger p. 57)

People in the countryside abandon their families and relocate to cities in search of better opportunities. This clearly demonstrates how unemployment is a result of globalization. Furthermore, we discover that the impoverished in the increasingly globalized India have had no representation in government due to their lack of voting rights. Because of the hegemonic continuous collaboration of politicians and the wealthy, their voices are silenced. Gauri Viswanathan in her book "Masks of conquest", she discusses India during and after British control, as well as its role as an efficient kind of political hegemony that encouraged voluntary cultural integration. She shows how hegemony acted as a mirror for imperialism, as well as a mask of exploitation that concealed the conquering British government's material activity (Viswanathan, 2014). Balram describes how their votes were sold by the teashop proprietor.

"He had sold our fingerprints which the illiterate person makes on the ballot paper to indicate his vote" (81)

Balram's father opportunity to vote is also taken away by someone who voted in his village:

"My father told me that night, I've seen twelve elections — five general, five state, two local — and someone else voted for me twelve times"(84).

Poor people's votes are stolen or sold. People are sometimes threatened if they ask to utilize their voting rights, or they are forced to vote for ruling parties as slaves. People has no identity and they are not looking for because they are disappointed from Indian democracy process, there is no chance to change their situations, their life has become worse.

The impoverished are more vulnerable to corruption; in fact, many are willing to sell their votes for money. Another big issue brought on by globalization is unemployment. Spivak (2012) in her book "An aesthetic education in the era of globalization" in how does globalization effect unemployment? "Globalization has impacted unemployment by changing job patterns," Thus, wages are fluctuating in practically every location. And also migrant labor from developing nations is more easily available in affluent countries, and imports and exports have expanded significantly. Those cases have destroyed Third World economy and have increased the First World economy. Balram spoke about his personal life. He said as a villager:

"When buses came, they got on – packing the inside, hanging from the railings, climbing onto the roofs –and went to Gaya; there they went to the station and rushed into the trains- packing the inside, hanging from the railings, climbing onto the roofs- and went to Delhi, Calcutta and Dhanbad to find work" (p. 16).

Adiga embodies the transformation of globalization. Marketing is another aspect of a globalized society that is spreading rapidly. It depicts the reality of globalization in Indian society, including the rise in poverty as a result of the hegemony of big corporations, which

helped to increase the system of servitude. Says the protagonist Balram:

"The Darkness will not be silent. There is no water in our taps, and what do you people in Delhi give us? You give us cell phones. Can a man drink a phone when he is thirsty? Women walk for miles every morning to find a bucket of clean"(p. 162)

Adiga shows the suffer of people from servitude, working under the mercy of their ownership, they see them as animals not human being. Men and women are treated like items of exchange, a form of currency and also a type of commodity. Balram in the novel states "See, men and women in Bangalore live like the animals in a forest do. Sleep in the day and then work all night, until two, three, four, five o'clock, depending, because their masters are on the other side of the world, in America"Women are clearly portrayed as a commodity and slave in the workplace in some places. Globalization has taken hold all across the globe. In India, it has had both beneficial and negative consequences. This country's significant negative consequences are rather worrying "It's not right to buy and sell women who live in bird cages and get treated like animals. I only buy girls I find in five-star hotels"(p. 183) Isam Shihada (2015) comments that Globalization does indeed boost wealth and prosperity by transforming the countries into a global market. However, it will not be able to divide the gains fairly, therefore it increase the gap between classes so rich to so poor, make the poor class slaves to the rich class.

Adiga through his character Balram who observes Indians in Delhi dressed in ethnic garb and traditional codes that are mingled with American fashions. People spend more their time in malls eating westernized food, conversing on smart phones, and going to nightclubs where males and females mix for a good time. All of the events in the novel can be interpreted as examples of how globalization has influenced Indian culture. Globalization has the potential to provide prosperity and wealth, but it all depends on how it is used to change society. As a result, the globalization process

must be handled with greater caution in order to preserve national pride and cultural dignity. As a result, in the novel *The White Tiger*, the author explores globalization challenges. It is a testament to Indian culture in an increasingly globalized world.

Americanah (2013), which won the "National Book Critics Fiction Award," is a novel addressing race, cultural, and economic circumstances, which can all be linked to racism as well as the economic level of those affected by global economic developments. It shows the controlling of western countries over the world in terms of culture, economy, and politics. This novel, written from the perspective of "non-American blacks," simply conveys the suffering of immigrants, primarily Africans, in the Western countries. *Americanah* includes the Nigeria, United Kingdom and United States, and discusses how the individuals in the novel's self-realization experiences and circumstances impacted and drove them to travel to Western nations for financial and other reasons.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie through her character, Ifemelu, a Nigerian woman who immigrates towards the America in pursuit of a better life, is the primary character in *Americanah*. She tells her story using her own observations as well as those of others, and the other story of Ifemelu's boyfriend Obinze who immigrates towards the Britain. He tells his story to Ifemelu. In the novel, there are two types of migrants: those who are able to break even and eventually make a fair life despite their early resistance in the West, and those that are not so successful. The second group is either repatriated or continually seeking to gain independence from a circle of insecurity and poverty. Regardless of social status, each one of these groups is subjected to the isolation and cultural assimilation (or lack thereof) which comes with being immersed in a new cultural environment. As a consequence, people struggle to develop a sense of personal, while aspects of their society evolve as a result. Many immigrants fled their native countries to the West due to financial hardships, where they face discrimination and servitude.

Adichie believes that America's cultures started to take on significance role not just in America but throughout the world. Globalization plays a major role in the world, allowing to western countries to hegemony the world. Ifemelu made the observation that "America's mythologies began to take on meaning, America's tribalisms—race, ideology, and region—became clear" (p:139). In American society, there are four types: race, ideology, religion, and class. One is race, in America, there is indeed a racial system. White, primarily Anglo-Saxon Protestant, often referred as WASP, is already on top, while black American is always on the low, and what is inside the middle is dependent on place and time. (Or, as that marvelous rhyme goes: if you're white, you're all right; if you're brown, stick around; if you are black, better get back!). (p:184). Second ideology, there's more than one ideology in America. They don't just differ over politics, both sides believe the other is a guilty party. Racial mixing is frowned upon, and when it does occur, it is seen as exceptional. There's the issue of region. The northern and southern hemispheres. The two sides started a civil war, and the scars were still visible. While the north stares down on the south, the south resents it. Finally, we have class. It's quite simple. There are rich people and poor people.

Despite the fact that Adichie brings literary approaches into the limitations of globalization and hegemony explanations, her characterization of Obinze and Ifemelu's obstacles that face before and after their return journeys conforms significantly to the difficulties that globalization and hegemony theories believe these people are destined to face in the homeland as well as outside. As an unsuccessful or unlucky man, Obinze has immense obstacles both in the outside world and in his homeland. From a racialism standpoint, he is the black sheep who should be separated so as not to contaminate the image of the entire community; he has rejected by both his native country and the west. Before as he departs from the airplane carrying him and other deported Nigerians home, he would face his first cultural hatred and rejection:

"As the plane began its descent into Lagos, a flight attendant stood above them and said loudly, "You cannot leave. An immigration officer will come to take charge of you." Her face tight with disgust, as though they were all criminals bringing shame on upright Nigerians like her"(Americanah p. 282)

It's like that for Ifemelu, whose life in America and homecoming are both difficult. Many things have changed since Ifemelu spent so many years in the America, and she now finds her country odd and unappealing. Ifemelu discovers that her country has become a part of a global system in which the rich have dominated over the poor. Therefore, Adichie clearly portrays how America may become a source of conflict, and how home can be despised, particularly when the origin home is less developed than the diaspora home. As well as that, the terms 'being-home' and 'being-at-home' have become problematic. This domestic tension is understood since, according to globalization and hegemony theories, "it is the 'real' home, where individuals live prosperous and tranquil lives with one another, but unfortunately the global economic system gives elites the power to turn ordinary people into tools for servitude." Ginika's father had spoken to Ifemelu:

"We are not sheep. This regime is treating us like sheep and we are starting to behave as if we are sheep. I have not been able to do any real research in years, because every day I am organizing strikes and talking about unpaid salary and there is no chalk in the classrooms." (p. 68)

The characters of Americanah depart Nigeria since they have no other option in their home country. Ifemelu relocated to the America, while Obinze relocated to the England. Their travel is mostly a quest of novelty while exploring alternative pathways to upward development, more than a story of relocation because of poverty. In Americanah, the desire to move from one area to another is rife. However, it is sometimes viewed as only being relevant in situations of disaster, political strife, natural calamities, and outright oppression, more than being linked to a pent-up longing for

economic opportunity and professional growth in modern society. Many Nigerians from the lower and middle classes, such as Ifemelu and Obinze, were raised to perceive themselves as global citizens only to find themselves as slaves to global hegemony. Femelu and Obinze are two ambitious young people with the ability to construct their own futures, but they were marginalized in their own country and in the West also, where they were humiliated and discriminated against by global standards, which leading them to servitude.

"I can't send you anything until next month. My own account is empty, honestly to be a resident doctor is slave labor." (p. 154)

Uju informs Ifemelu that she had fled Nigeria in the hopes of finding a brighter future for her kid and herself in America. Uju, who fled Nigeria in search of a better life, now faces challenges in American society. Among the most common reasons for her difficulties is her inability to obtain work as a doctor in America. Her profession as a doctor was regarded as prestigious in Nigeria. Nonetheless, she quickly discovers that, in America, she is unqualified since she is a black woman and she had to face her fate to work many jobs in the same time.

"I'm tired. I am so tired. I thought by now things would be

better for me and Dike. It's not as if anybody was helping

me and I just could not believe how quickly money went. I

was studying and working three jobs. I was doing retail at

the mall, and a research assistantship, and I even did some

hours at Burger King" (p. 88)

While Ifemelu is subjected to one type of discrimination and inequality in America, her partner Obinze is subjected to a different type in the England. The story jumps back and forth between Ifemelu and Obinze to offer us a glimpse into both of their situations as well as a chance to try and compare their lifestyles in

any of these two First-World nations, which are seen as essentially sources of globalization and hegemony for the rest of the globe. The travel return to Nigeria is just as crucial to both protagonists as their desire to immerse themselves in the politics of a corrupt, materialistic, and cruel Nigeria. Adichie deliver her messages in *Americanah* that global system dominate the people, making them slave for big companies, have no choices to be. labors find themselves under mercy of big companies and then they are expelled back to their countries.

Conclusion:

One could argue that Adiga and Adichie dismantle the three suffering foundations of the Third World: globalization, hegemony, and servitude, which turn out to be mere truths, through novel characters Balram in *"The White Tiger"* and Ifemelu and Obinze in *"Americanah."* Confirm that its underpinnings are in fact corruption in the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres. They are eager to convey the message that, despite some Third World countries' economic progress and growth, the vast majority of their people live in abject poverty and misery, as well as slaves for global corporations operating within or outside of their countries. To put it another way, *The White Tiger* and *Americanah* act as a mirrors, reflecting the truth that, despite their promises of a growing economy, India and Nigeria are not "shining" and still live in the shadows.

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