

# TREMORING JOLTS OF A FORCED MIGRATION: A STUDY OF A MARGINALISED COMMUNITY

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## Abstract

*As we all know Diaspora depicts those people who have left their country and migrated to another country where they become the victim of homesickness, alienation, isolation and abuse. Yes, to some extent it sounds normal for the people who are not in their mother land, but what about those dislodged people who get insulted and disrespected even in their hometown and so they are being obliged to live a life of expellee, traveler and refugee. Over 160 million people in India are considered 'Untouchable'—people polluted by their birth into a caste system that deems them tainted, less than human. In the same regard, some of the recent incidents which has exposed the fake humanity of the world like: flogging Dalits publicly by vigilantes, suicide committed by a Keralian Dalit teenager boy due to custodial torture and harassment; and due to extreme untouchability 27 Dalit families who were forced to move to another village as refugee, 25 km away from their native land. As a result of forced displacement and constant oppression some of the Dalits have to live a life of a mere traveler and migrant for their entire life in their homeland. Now and then so-called societal customs have been foisted on them which forced them to live a life on the edge and marginalized. The Indian Diaspora represents some of the similar matter in many of its literature time and again. This paper narrates the versions of pathetic dislodgment that the poor subalterns have to undergo. This study shows various versions of dislocation of Dalits as shown through characters like Ishwar and Omprakash Darji in A Fine Balance, Fokir and Kusum in The Hungry Tide by Amitav Ghosh and Balram Halwai in The White Tiger by Arvind Adiga. This paper incorporates the study of Dalits who do not have any permanent identity as well as a place to live.*

**Keywords:** Diaspora, subaltern, dislodgement, displacement, exclusion

## INTRODUCTION

The Indian English writing has been blessed with so many incredible writers which has made this genre the most radical and sound with their way of describing and expressing the human life in its all colours. The keen objective of the writers of this genre is to underline the actuality of the society through their writings as literature has the ability to give power to powerless and to become the voice of voiceless. As Said by Tamil writer R.N. Joe D'Cruz "Literature doesn't become literature unless it becomes the voice of the voiceless. We have a great responsibility of bringing forth the voices of marginalised and deprived community". Thus it suggests that literature has to stand for those who cannot stand for themselves. However, in addition to this well-known Dalit writer J.V. Pawar added that "the irony of today's time is even though the constitution seeks removal of untouchability, the practice is very much prevalent in today's time. It is unfortunate but because of poverty we see discrimination in our society. While we aspire for social and political justice, they (Dalits) need freedom from oppression" (DH News Services).

Along with this, writers must have tried to incorporate all the subjects and topics in their writing instead of sticking to only one genre. It is the need of time that the readers must get variety of readings to fulfil their requirement of understanding different point of view related to Dalit psyche and life. According to the recent scenario, writers shouldn't peep only inside their society and community but should also try to comprehend the troubles of other people and write about it. The popular literature has been stood as the platform for all those voiceless people and community since long where this people who are living in margins and periphery gets the base to speak something about their woeful lives. Now-a-days the issues regarding caste discrimination, social bias and caste oppression have been done in almost every region and corner of the India. The caste evil has still prevailed in the society in different manner; prohibited from eating with upper cast members, prohibited from marrying with other cast members, separate glasses for Dalits in village tea stalls, discriminatory seating arrangements and separate utensils in restaurants, segregation in seating and food arrangements in village functions and festivals, prohibited from entering into village temples, prohibited from wearing sandals or holding umbrellas in front of dominant caste members, Devadasi system - the ritualized temple prostitution of Dalit women, prohibited from entering dominant caste homes, prohibited from riding a bicycle inside the village, prohibited from using common village path, separate burial grounds, no access to village's common/public properties and resources (wells, ponds, temples, etc.), segregation (separate seating area) of Dalit children in schools, prohibited from contesting in elections and exercising their right to vote, forced to vote or not to vote for certain candidates during the elections, prohibiting from hoisting the national flag during Independence or

Republic days, sub-standard wages, bonded labour, face social boycotts by dominant castes for refusing to perform their 'duties' and forced to live a life as an exilic, refugee and traveller. As per the recent incidents happened in one of the regions in India where Dalits have been forced to migrate by the upper caste men 15 km away from their hometown. Due to the age-old custom this community has to live a life of refugee as they do not have a permanent place to live because now or then they might get thrown out of the society by the upper caste community in the name of caste system custom. Not only this, this community has been labelled to socially excluded/exilic/traveller so they have been treated as mere negligible object, as in one of the incidents where a 17-year-old Dalit was stabbed in a Limbodara village near Gandhinagar allegedly for sporting moustache. Thus, being a Dalit in India has been counted as not human but stray cattle.

### **FORCED TO FLEE IN THE TIDE COUNTRY: KUSUM AND FOKIR MONDOL**

In today's era India as country is progressing towards a status of developed nation with a lot of changes in society as well as in economy like demonetisation, digitalization, industrialisation and human equality. But recent incidents rather we say accidents which have been proved a blot on humanity like: flogging of Dalits in Una, Dalit riot in Maharashtra in the matter of ceremony by the lower caste of Battle of Koregaon and the most extreme the 27 Dalit families who were forced to move to Sodapur from Ghada, both villages in the Deesa taluka of Banaskantha. This is the irony of India that even today, people believe in untouchability and that is why we are unable to progress. As suggest above that among all these aristocracies done to Dalit the most acute and awful is of being refugee in one's own country. Amitav Ghosh, in *The Hungry Tide*, has beautifully narrated lives of such people who have been living a life of a refugee with status of citizen of India. As we all know that the partition has been occurred in 1947 but its aftermath has been recorded even couple of years after especially in east Bengal where the most affected people were Namasudra or Dalit peasants who were forced to leave their home and shift to west Bangal sundarban and other suburb areas.

This novel is about two major Dalit refugee characters, Kusum and her son Fokir, who have spent their entire life with a status of refugee. This novel is an account of troubles and misery of the refugees from East Bengal Kusum and others who left homes after partition due to probable massacre. After being the soft target to the army and being killed in large numbers they started living in India where they were treated as refugees. After the creation of independent Bangladesh, majority of them were unwilling to return and sought to dwell in India permanently. Thus, people like Kusum made this place as their habitant. Thus, this is the struggle between the settlers and locals of survival.

The voices of the voiceless refugee have been wonderfully narrated in the novel *The Hungry Tide* in the form of letters written by Nirmal who was accidentally started feeling for Kusum, one of the refugees who died in brutal Morichjhapi incident of 1979. The life of a refugee has been personified through the character of Kusum as she was the major character who had seen and gone through the torment of being torture as refugee. As the history recorded, this incident relates to the forceful expulsion of Bangladeshi Hindu lower caste refugees from Morichjhapi island of Sundarbans who were happened to settle here after the Bangladesh war of 1971. It was the irony that these people who are extremely poor and also coming from the lowest caste community do not have any life and right to live a peaceful life here. It was their bad luck that the Left Parties came into power in 1977 and demanded that these refugees are the burden on state and they get evicted from the area. The Morichjhapi Island dwells in the Sundarban area which comes under the Reserve Forest Act, which also plays role in the eviction of refugee as that area is prohibitive for human habitant and agricultural activity. All the meetings and resolving talks between the settlers and the government came to no result and as a result of this finally government-imposed section 144-economic blocked with the stoppage of daily commodity to this people. At the end the ruling government starts eviction as reaction to the attack lead by settlers on police camp which resulted in blooded massacre. Lot people viciously murdered under the act of eviction and their dead bodies were thrown and dumped into water. Those who tried to flee from this place to save their lives were being caught and forcefully drowned in the water, as media were not allowed to cover this eviction, so till date the world do not have any visible proof of this.

Kusum, a refugee, is basically from one of islands of Sundarban- Sateleja. She has been facing the pitiable sufferings since her childhood as her father was preyed by a Tiger and her mother was being sold to brothel house under the fake promise of giving a job. After marrying to Rajen, she had one son but soon after the death of Rajen again she becomes alone and then with the help of Horen-a fisher man again she settled in Morichjhapi. A novel *The Hungry Tide* is the story of struggle of Kusum, Fokir, Moyna and Tutul to find their place in the tide country. Kusum is the personification of all homeless refugees in *The Hungry Tide*. All belong to subaltern community where later Kusum become a victim of the Morichjhapi massacre. The novel weaves together numerous, frequently tangled stories: the difficulty of the expatriated people that is seen in the Morichjhapi event, the fight for soil, the steady fight for existence in an unsafe ecology, and mass killing. The ruling government believes that these settlers are a burden and so they get evicted from the region but settlers do not want to leave the place as there is no other home left for them. Thus, government took an illegal action by declaring the place where the refugee dwells as the Forest Reservation and then started evicting them viciously. Kusum being a brave lady gave an altered viewpoint. She says that Morichjhapi was not actually a forest even before the refugees arrived and

that division of it were being utilized by the government for farming, etc. “What’s been said about the danger to the environment is just a sham, in order to evict these people who have nowhere else to go” (214). Once the settlers deny leaving the Island, the government started harsh action as the cops came on motor boats yelling on loudspeakers instructing the settlers to depart. But with a great zeal all the settlers united as a group and gesturing the police party to start their torture on them: “Amra kara? Bastuhara. Who are we? We are the dispossessed.” and “Morichjhapi charbona. We’ll not leave Morichjhapi, do what you may” (254). Kusum as great worrier coming forward with brilliant summary: The worst part was not the hunger or the thirst. It was to sit here, helpless, and listen to the policemen making their announcements, hearing them say that our lives, our existence, was worth less than dirt or dust. “This island has to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals, it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all around the world” (261). Kusum after watching her fellow refugees dying at the hand of police said: “Who are these people, I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? Do they know what is being done in their names?” (262). This shows the irony of a woman who is stunned to see the killing of human by the hand of the humans, who are being called the saviours of that region, guarding the tigers.

### **SOCIAL EXCLUSION: NARAYAN DARJI, ISHWAR DARJI AND OMPRAKASH DARJI**

Since ancient time Dalit community has been living a sorrowful life under the oppression of upper caste community in the name of caste system. Dalits have faced tortures in various forms as being marginalised, banned from vote, excluded from participating any social activity as well as caste-based discrimination. In modern times too we see such oppression and cruel mindset in some of the community in various upper caste communities towards these people. Both Dalit and non-Dalit writers have witnessed, seen and beautifully woven the pain experienced by Dalit in their radical works. Rohinton Mistry one of the eminent Indian English writers has wonderfully stated the persecution of two Dalit lives who have been expelled from their village and society just because they are Dalit. A Fine Balance has sixteen chapters revolving around the life incidents of two major Chammar characters Omprakash Darji and his uncle Ishwar Darji over a time of 10 years. “City by the sea” and “Village by a river” is the two places which incorporate the brutal life incidents happened to both of these Dalits. Ishwar Darji and Omprakash turns out to be a Darji from a lowest community of leather workers which dwell in the lowest footstep of the ladder in the cruel caste system in the village by a river. As we all know that the lower caste community never has the place in the central of the civilised society. Due to age old caste customs, they are being marginalised, expelled and thrown at the edge of the society. In the rural area it is an untold rule of the Panchayat that Dalits are allowed to live and build their homes outside of the village territory. Ishwar and Omprakash are also coming from the same kind of community which has been socially excluded in the village by a river. Not only this, Ishwar and his elder brother Narayan, father of Omprakash, have also kicked out from the school and beaten up viciously by the teacher due to touching and entering the school premises. This is the very common injustice which happens with any downtrodden that they are being forcefully expelled from their own homeland and place. Dukhi, the father of Ishwar and Narayan has already gone through the torments of caste system and now he does not want that his own two Childs should have to go through the same kind of torture. Keeping this in mind, he sends both of his son to Ashraf in town to learn some other profession which is far better and respectful than their family profession of being tanner. This was Ishwar’s first realisation of how it is to be a member of lowest community in the village.

After returning back to their home village with a new skills and professions of tailoring, both Ishwar and Narayan started assuming that this is the end of their social exclusion being untouchables and now they can see dreams of having a good life with a fresh start. But within very few days all these dreams of them shattered like a castle of cards due to the rebellious nature of Narayan who wanted to cast his vote without surrendering to the threats of village Thakur. “Government passes new laws says no more untouchability, yet everything is the same. The upper caste bastards still treat us worse than animals. ‘Those kinds of things take time to change.’ ‘More than twenty years have passed since Independence. How much longer? I want to be able to drink from the village well, worship in the temple, walk where I like” (142). First Narayan was being roughly treated and cruelly flogged by the Thakur’s followers and then he was taken to the village at his home in a very horrific condition. Entire family of Dukhi, along with Narayan dead body, are burnt alive at the order of the Thakur.

Immensely jolted and frightened by this awful incident Ishwar decided to, with his nephew, leave this place and to take his nephew to some other safer place. So, the shift gets started from ‘village by a river’ to ‘city by the sea’ by both of them with a hope that they might get a respectful place their which they will never going to get in village. But useless to say that their shifting is not going to give them any ease as now they are categorised to the community of not lower caste but of lower class. Their poverty and lack of money do not allow them to live and have a good central place in the urban habitant. In the beginning they do not get any place to dwell as it is the city by the sea-Bombay. Bombay is the city where u can easily get the bread to eat but impossible to get the place to sit. Somehow, they get the cottage in one of the biggest and dirtiest jhopadpatti of Bombay and started living there with other people who are commonly categorised as below poverty line. But their bad fortune has not let them live peacefully they are being captured and forced to live in one of the camps in the out skirts of the city under the beautification programme started by the current government. After losing a good safer place of

jhoadpatti again there thrown on to the footpath. As the fate of an expelled they bribed the security man to live and spent every night on the pavement front of the shop. So 'moving' has become an inevitable situation in the life of Om and Ishwar, sometimes due to caste system and sometimes due to government policies. All their dreams went shatter when they find that it isn't too easy even in the city: "what kind of life, what kind of country is this, where we cannot come and go as we please" (541). In outrage Om declared that poor people like Ishwar and him do not have a right to live as he said that we are "less than animals" to the government. Not only this, in discussion both have shown the cruel face of caste system when they discuss about what happened with their fellow caste people in the village if they break any of the rule set by the upper caste community: 'For walking on the upper-caste side of the street, Sita was stoned, though not to death – the stones had ceased at first blood. Gambhir was less fortunate; he had molten lead poured into his ears because he ventured within hearing range of the temple while prayers were in progress. Dayaram, reneging on an agreement to plough a landlord's field, had been forced to eat the landlord's excrement in the village square. Dhiraj tried to negotiate in advance with Pandit Ghanshyam the wages for chopping wood, instead of settling for the few sticks he could expect at the end of the day; the Pandit got upset, accused Dhiraj of poisoning his cows, and had him hanged'. After facing all the torment successfully in the city, Ishwar and Om decided to return to the village, form where they started their long journey for the marriage of Om. This was proved the fatal decision for both them as Thakur Dharamsi, who killed the entire family of Om, a leader of mass sterilising programme governed by the Indian government, caught both of them forced illegal castration. The last chance of happiness which has come in the life of both of them was being snatched by the evil of Casteism and again they are being forcefully excluded and started living their life in the city as Beggars.

Om and Ishwar tried to maintain a fine balance in their Dalit life by facing all the challenges and sufferings put in front of them, sometimes naturally and sometimes artificially. Their struggle for living a life of an expelled gave us the message that a man has to keep fighting against the force of troubles. Both of them with a status of Dalit had and fight enormous blockages in the path of their life. Sailing their life boat through the cyclone of caste hierarchy both Om and Ishwar faced all the tortures of being expelled. They keep fighting against the force of caste biased and persecution but at the end they lose their faith in awaited good fortune and at last surrender themselves to the fate their destiny. Thus, through the character of both we can find the ugly side of the society that the oppressed do not have right retaliate and if they do so then they have to vigorously confined themselves in lifelong gloominess.

### **BALRAM HALVAI: ON A NEVER-ENDING VOYAGE**

'The White Tiger' by Arvind Adiga is one of the sharp pieces of work of arts which incorporates social remarks and the inequality that persist among the citizen of 21<sup>st</sup> century digital India which claims the status of secular country. This piece of writing wonderfully describes and remarks the social evil which is damaging the national progress and national unity- Caste system. The metaphor which has used by the writer-The white tiger, stands to one of the rarest creatures on the earth and which also symbolises great amount of power and individuality. The character of Balram Halvai, a poor son of a very poor rickshaw puller, represents an account of Dalit life which is full of oppression, marginalisation, persecution, and sufferings. Here from the very beginning in the novel, Balram stands out as traveller who does not have any permanent place to live and to get settled. The story of the white tiger Balram Halvai is not only the tale of how he becomes a successful entrepreneur but also a journey of being Dalit where he has to shift every time as he does not have any permanent place to dwell. Balram's voyage starts in the 'Darkness', where he is born into a marginalised caste family and accordingly being thrown into the heartless vortex of forever servitude. The by birth enslavement which has foisted on his head made his life so suffering in the very young age of his life. From this point the real story starts, from his home town to the city of Bangalore, of how he is constantly shifting from one place to another as a mere traveller, sometimes in the name of caste system, sometimes in the name of breaking from enslavement, sometimes in the name of searching for better life and at last to save from the crime which he has committed due to live a wealthy life. In the aimless life of traveller finally at one stage he gets settled as one the successful businessman in the field of taxi service. With a title of a dark novel, The White Tiger gives a modern voice to the India that is very far from the title of economically progressed country and lives in the hearts of the downtrodden.

This novel starts with the confession of Balram Halvai with the Chinese Premier in form of series of letters where Balram spoke about his life of being the member of low caste at his village. The character of Balram has beautifully justified the title of being traveller in this novel. Yes, it is a bitter reality of this country that the person belongs to Dalit community has no place to live a blissful life in the society. Many a times they are being thrown at the edge of the village or town where they live a dreadful life and die an unknown death. It clarifies that India has double standard characteristics, one with a bright sunshine and other with darkness. Whatever the person from outside sees in the city of India is just a half-truth but the real truth lies in the village which are far away from the lights of the city. Balram's image of two India figures the essential picture around which the novel is structured. The most noteworthy of the many dualities explored in the text, the bias between the Light and the Darkness frames Balram's flight. His keen aspiration to live a life in one of the urban cities of India near the sea shore is the most radical inspiration for him which serves the purpose of direction in his trip.

For Balram it is very sure that it's a sin to take a birth as an inferior caste in poor family and there is only one way to get rid from this is to kill rich and become rich. As he knows very clearly that he does not have ever a proper place in the hierarchy of the society which follow Manusmriti, he has to do something for removing the tag of traveller which has foisted upon him just because he had taken birth in low caste. A simple ambitious boy becomes a gritty narrator of Adiga's well acclaimed novel due to the avoidance of the upper caste people. A poor person from a very poor and low caste wants to break the caste shackles which do not allow him to live a life of an independent citizen. He is anxious to rupture out of the "Village/caste Darkness," and move to the large metropolitan city. Being a downtrodden Halwai determines in the very beginning that his life has no right to live as a free bird but to live a life of torment as forever servant. Thus, to free himself from this barrier he first took a travel to Delhi where he started working for his master Ashok. It was his first successful flee from the darkness of his caste. His job gave him immense sort of evil knowledge where he saw his master dealing with other corrupted politicians, builders, businessman and other crooks by money and other illegitimate offerings. But again, the dark shadow of his caste didn't let him go and soon he murders his master and again took flee to another city where he can again take a temporary shelter. This time he chose Bangalore for his hiding where he started his career a cab service provider with the robbed money. His nephew who knows his past is a kind of threat to him as he thinks that he may also do the same kind of brutality to him which he has done to Mr. Ashok. Thus, Balram is also ready to take any brutal action on his nephew if he does so. Thus, this city is also not a permanent home for him.

## CONCLUSION

Forced migration and forced displacement of Dalits have become much common now-a-days as many of such kind of atrocities have been took place in some of the rural area on regular places as well as in urban area randomly. Dalits have been already fighting and suffering from poverty and powerlessness since ages which do not allow them to create a concrete place for them as well as for their families. The only choice for them is to live at that place where nobody can ever wish and want to live: in dirty slum areas, far away from upper caste habitants. Their economic weakness also plays a serious role in their unstable stay as they are not in the position to buy and own a land for their own family and so as their agricultural activity is chiefly depending on the rain, they are not able to produce enough of corps and so their monitory limitation remains same as the previous. So along with the caste-based discrimination, this also serves the purpose of the responsible factors for their migration, sometimes forced sometimes due to such disabilities. All characters which we find in the above discussed novels, Omprakash and Ishwar Darji, Balram Halvai, Kusum and Fokir Mondol, are in one or other ways became victim for their unstable economical condition. Ishwar and Omprakash Darji, who are Tanners by birth and transformed to Tailors just to lift their economic and social background from insult to respect, remains unsuccessful at the end as the solid wicked grudges of caste evil do not allow them to live a peaceful life. The right of freedom and to live at any place given by the Indian constitution to the citizens of India is not applicable to those who are coming from this lower downtrodden community. The caste-based violence and attack on Dalits as recorded in the history with reference to Indo-Pak partition or during emergency as well as Bangladesh partition as described in The Hungry Tide, gave an acute account of the misery and despair experienced by them. Refugees Kusum and Fokir attacked and assaulted by the government, undoubtedly upper caste groups, as their houses and belongings is being looted and destroyed, are the visible victims of this hidden apartheid finds in India. Kusum with the status of settler languished for months in impermanent and poor home along with other fellow refugees as they do not get any aid from the government. Rather they are being accused of illegally dwelling on government property and so police came into an action for evacuating all Dalit refugees as they are all seem as the burden to ruling government. Thus, to conclude we can say that such heartfelt atrocities and humiliations to this downtrodden people have become so much deeply rooted in to the psyche of other fellow people that they have forgotten that humanity is the most important caste in this world. In dark fog of caste system people have forgotten the fact that we are all the children of one God and so we must not get divided into the names of caste, class, gender and religion.

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