



MATRIX OF POWER POLITICS IN NOVELS OF ARAVIND ADIGA

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Abstract

*Aravind Adiga, a Man Booker Prize winner, aims at depicting a realistic picture of Indian society along with its root cause of evil. He attempts to bring the dark side of India over the 'shining India'. He criticised the moral decadence and lack of basic principles among Indians. In *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in Tower* he portrays the power game in metropolis like; Delhi and Mumbai. This paper studies the socio-political realities of Indian society through the lens of power politics. Adiga makes an effort to showcase the experiences which underprivileged Indian people go through their entire lives. This paper also describes how Adiga depicts socio-cultural encounters in India; especially in power-politics, the Caste system, and master-servant society. It demonstrates the colossal fight between the common man and the dominating political issues such as the caste system, democracy and justice. The research depicts the miscarriage of justice, corruption and other alarming issues of contemporary Indian society. Adiga spotlights modern India by comparing India of darkness and India of light. Adiga's work of fiction unveils the dark web of politics behind the frame of globalisation and development.*

Keywords: Bureaucracy, Corruption, Politics, Poverty, Power

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Introduction

Aravind Adiga was born in India and completed his study in India and Australia. He studied English literature at Magdalen College in Oxford to study. He worked as a journalist in India for TIME magazine from 2003 to 2005. And he also worked as a journalist in British media such as the Financial Times. His masterpiece *The White Tiger* won the Booker Prize in 2008. In his novels, Adiga highlights the binary dichotomies of Indian society like; the India of Light and the India of Darkness, men with big bellies and men with thin bellies, the haves and the haves not's, etc. He showed how the wealthy people are enjoying their legacy and have all the pleasures and treasures in their life whereas the poor are living their life in misery, starvation, and bone-crushing labour. Adiga also talks about the alarming issues of Indian society such as; poor medical facilities in Govt. hospitals, dowry system, open prostitution, environmental pollution, and monolithic corruption in all spheres of life/society, including corruption in public sectors, trades, media, and election process. A few of them will be discussed as follows.

India: Land of Religions

The culture of a society is thoroughly influenced by religion. Religion can be identified as a technique to instil faith and beliefs among people to believe in God. People of India are taking religion very seriously and also do respect it. With the advancement of science and technology resulted in the evaporation of religious quotient among people. Indians are deeply

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religious; people even do practice a variety of religions here which is the beauty of India. Everyone has their own set of beliefs and people do worship. Rivers are worshipped and have the nomenclatures of deities.

Rivers such as the Yamuna and Ganga are heavily polluted by open gutters and industrial waste and floating dead bodies are also found in them. In *The White Tiger*, the protagonist Balram narrates the present scenario of Indian holy rivers to Mr Jiabao, Chinese Premier

“I am talking of Mother Ganga, daughter of the Vedas, a river of illumination, protector of us all, breaker of the chain of birth and rebirth,” The Darkness can be found wherever this river flows. I urge you not to dive in the Ganga unless you want your mouth full of dung, straw, soggy pieces of human bodies, buffalo carrion, and seven different kinds of industrial acids
“(The White Tiger, 15)

Nowadays river Ganga witnessed many floating dead bodies. The importance of Ganga is that the departed soul would be saved from the cycle of birth and death. Sadly, many people do not even go through the traditional cremation process because of poverty. Adiga satirizes religions through the hero Balram Halwai in *The White Tiger*. He is very much suffocated in admitting India as a “saint country” and that the people are “decent and moral”. Balram is an atheist and a malicious critic of religion. He believes religion brings disparity in society. Even God is divided as per the roles and status of individuals in society. In order to instil a sense of

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servitude in the minds of poor people they are further advised to worship Hanuman and treat him as their ideal. He convicts Hanuman by saying

“This is Hanuman, everyone's favorite god in the Darkness,” he says, blaming Hindu gods and goddesses for constructing a master and servant system. Sir, do you know who Hanuman is? We honor him in our temples because he was the deity Rama's faithful servant, and he is a brilliant example of how to serve your masters with utmost fidelity, love, and devotion.” (*The White Tiger*, 19)

The importance of the caste system can be noticed through the lens of religious practices in our Indian society. Caste System disrupts society and discriminates against people by assigning roles and responsibilities to their caste. Lower caste people are prohibited to enter temples, mosques and other religious places. The prevailing caste system of India is compared to Zoo, where everyone is segregated according to their caste like animals are kept in different cages in a zoo. Further political prerogatives facilitate people to come out of zoo cages and attack and rip each other. Balram himself is the victim of the caste system. Before his joining as a driver he is asked by his master

“What caste are you?” 'Halwai,' he says.

“What caste is that, top or bottom?” Stork inquires of Balram. (*The White Tiger*, 56)

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Driver Ram Prasad the victim of the so-called caste system portrays as the glaring example in *The White Tiger*. He was Stork's former servant. He is a Muslim in real life but to get a job he had to conceal his identity. He did so due to the discrimination and fear of society. It tells how people are hiding their real identities to get a job in urban Indian society. Balram discovered Ram Prasad's identity and took advantage of this. Finally, he was promoted to No.1 driver after Ram Prasad's termination and come to Delhi as Mr Ashok's driver. He is also embarrassed many times because of his teeth, outfits and practices.

Corruption in Government Sectors

Adiga portrays the corrupt and deceitful bureaucrats in the novels. Corruption becomes a malady in every sector of society ranging from bureaucracy to the judiciary, political, religious, and medical organisations. People are concerned about their advancement and growth. In the novel people like Stork, Buffalo, Mongoose and Mr Ashok get the Zamindar (lord) title under the patronage of great socialists to rule in Laxmangarh. For their illegal coal business, they are asked to pay one million and a half rupees as a bribe to the great socialist. She told

“You've got a solid scheme going here, extracting coal from government mines for nothing. Because I allowed it to happen, you've got it going... You are what you are today because I created you, and by God, you have crossed me.” (*The White Tiger*, 104)

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The nexus between corrupt politicians and bureaucrats further hampers the development of society. They are not utilising Government money for the betterment of society rather they exploit normal people. Adiga highlights corruption in his work to bring awareness and reformation to society. Bribery is the ultimate thread of connecting all the facilities in India which encompasses every sector of Indian society. In *The White Tiger* Balram's father died because of adequate treatment in Government Hospitals. The conditions of the hospitals are so miserable that patients are not getting beds and lying on the floor. The concerned govt. doctors are not available for their duty and prefer to work in private hospitals for more money. Whereas they appointed juniors doctors to perform their duty in Govt. hospitals.

“The Great Socialist informs the great doctors that the position is up for grabs in an open auction.” These days, the going rate for this position is around four hundred thousand rupees.” (*The White Tiger*, 49)

Painful part for a country like India where millions of people are deprived of basic facilities free of cost in the health sector. Many government-funded schemes and programs are launched to help poor people but all went in vain. Our country is going through a serious problem because of corruption in every sphere. Money is widely offered in offices to give promotions. So the system demands a change which can only be possible by eradicating the disease of corruption from politics and bureaucracy.

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India of Light and Darkness

Adiga pointed out two sides of India, India of light and India of darkness. This binary dichotomy continues in justice also. Where justice has a different meaning to men with big bellies and thin bellies. Rich controls judiciary and police under their control to enjoy the sip of foreign liquor in India of light. And the poor ended their life in crushing poverty in India of darkness. Poor has to face embarrassment in all spheres of society. Despite being a driver to his Boss, Balram is also doing all the household work including; bringing alcohol, kneading his master's legs, carrying their bags, washing utensils, cleaning floors and also taking care of pets. In his letter to Wen Jibao, he wrote,

“Your Excellency, India is two countries in one: a Light-filled India and a Dark-filled India. My country is illuminated by the sea. Everywhere near the ocean on the map of India is prosperous. However, the black river spreads gloom to India.”(*The White Tiger*, 14)

Law favours only the rich in India as they are capable of having legal representation. Even after many forms of corruption still the rich are basking in fame and enjoying the legacy forever. Adiga has presented an apt example of rich in society through characters like Dharmen shah in *The Last Man in Tower*. Dharmen, a modern builder of Mumbai who in order to fulfil his dormant wish practised unethical deeds. He even entraps people from the Vishram Society to fulfil his greed. He does not even hesitate to become a conspirator and cold-blooded villain behind the death of Masterji. Innocent neighbours like; Pairs, Pintu and Kotharii's are also fallen into greed and become the murderer of their dearest neighbour, Master Ji. Adiga depicts

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the picture of Dharmen Shah's early days in Mumbai when he was a struggler who used to travel in public buses. Over time, he turns himself into a smuggler of imported watches and clocks. "When his chappals wore out, he tied leaves over his feet and continued walking" (*Last Man in Tower*, 62). Dharmesh later becomes a builder and started employing people to fulfil his work. He practised four principles namely; Sam, Dam, Dand and Bhed to get his work done. He entices people with lucrative deals to fulfil his work. He becomes the master of manipulation of things around him. He is only doing business and minting profit. Being in the India of Lightness he oppresses the poor. Dharmen address Kothari ,
"The builder is the one man in Bombay who never loses a fight," (*Last Man in Tower*, 115)
Ashok, the younger son of Stork, has returned from America with his wife Pinky. He belongs to an affluent family but he shows a mild gentle disposition in his behaviour. Unlike other members of his family, he is somehow sympathetic towards servants. he is not in favour of bribes but still negotiating bribery with the minister to save his family business through illegal means. With time he also develops indifferent attitudes towards corruption and immoral practices. And he is also enjoying his legacy on the four wheels of the Honda city car by representing the India of Brightness.

Adiga is a brilliant writer who pens down a realistic yet painful picture of Indian society along with dichotomies. He presents the inexorable pain and suffering of the poor, especially the servant class. Poor people are doing all sorts of work to please their landlords/ masters but

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still, they are the most neglected and found in deplorable situations. Adiga shows the degradation of human attributes among affluent people in society.

Adiga's Perception of Indian Democracy

Though India is a democratic country but the rich, bureaucrats and the people of 'India of light' do not possess democratic sensibility in their actions and life. India after seventy years of its Independence still going through anarchy, oppression, rampant corruption, sufferings of common people and many more. Adiga criticises the so-called system prevailing in our country where all the fundamentals are inclined towards the affluent class. There are multiple shortcomings are there in our society and that is prevailing like a pandemic. Things need to be changed, with this tone Adiga vehemently satirise the democracy, and bureaucracy of India to bring sanity back to its normal state so that the system acquires equilibrium. Democracy is acquired at the cost of sacrifices but it got contaminated by factors like; typhoid, cholera, and election fever. In the novel *Balram* asserts,

“For political leaders, an election is an enormous business. The Great Socialist admits to embezzling one billion rupees from the Darkness and depositing it in a bank account in a little, lovely country in Europe populated by white people with black money.” (*The White Tiger*, 98)

Adiga compares the election process to a fatal epidemic like typhoid and cholera. The people of India cast votes to showcase their democratic sense of responsibility. Most of the

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poor voters never get a chance to see the booth but yet their votes are registered. Election contenders with criminal records and a lack of education are still selected for politics. And later using corruption and power they own the seat and rule the rest. All sorts of affluent people give their contributions to ministers to run their corrupt, illegal businesses under their political patronage. Ministers do lots of fake promises to poor people before the election. But they forget everything after coming to the power. Dualism in words and actions is highly noticeable among ministers. Landlords, businessman gives out money to great Socialist during the election time. So that that they will be benefited later with their political affiliation. And it happens too.

Adiga advocates qualitative life over materialistic life. He does not believe in democracy or any defined system. He believes in individual awareness that leads to collective success. Politicians, bureaucrats, business tycoons, industrialists, and Landlords are involved in unethical practices to make their fortune and ultimately dragging the country towards poverty and ignorance. Democracy should not be politicised for individual profit. The majority portions of society are roosters who are waiting for their turn inside the coop. Money plays a superior role in association with power. People in the top hierarchy are regulating everything. As a result, the landlord of Laxmangarh even asked to hold the spittoon of Great Socialists.

“Son, won't you hold the spittoon for me?” It was taken by the Moongoose. The Great Socialist then spat three times into the spittoon.” (*The White Tiger*, 105)

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In *The White Tiger*, Adiga gives voice to Balram Halwai to bring the unpalatable truth of the prevailing society before the world. Balram's entire journey in the novel unveils many curtains of corruption and discrimination in Indian society. Simultaneously many loopholes of society are projected before the readers. And the flaws gradually spread like a fire and it needs to be controlled on time before it's too late. The education system in India is so corrupt that teachers even steal money from the mid-day meals given in the government schools. As per the government program, students are supposed to get free meals at school but the poor children never get "rotis, or yellow daal, or pickles" (*The White Tiger* 33) simply because the school teacher embezzled students' money. The poor children of Laxmangarh are also deeply affected by the poor education system as their teacher practices corrupt activities that serve as glaring examples from the beginning of their careers. Teachers even sell students' uniforms in the neighbouring village which are meant for school students. Balram was deprived of formal education but he tried to compete so far with the educated class through his determination. But he could speak some broken English terms, and he could recognise the English alphabet. While revealing the secrets of success he validated himself by saying:

“Don't waste your money on those American books. They're so yesterday. I am tomorrow. In terms of formal education, I may be somewhat lacking. I never finished school, to put it bluntly. Who cares! I haven't read many books, but I've read all the ones that count.” (*The White Tiger*, 5)

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The nexus among bureaucrats, top officials, politicians and police create an unhealthy atmosphere in society. Balram realised that nothing is impossible for an ingenious man, there is always a scope for escape is there for a way out. He observed how criminals got exonerated from charges at the cost of illegal gratifications. In the novel, he murdered his master, Mr Ashok to become a man of substance and subsequently Balram, "rooster coop" and "the half-baked fellow" comes out to be a successful entrepreneur who creates his own identity in 'India of light'. In his letters to Wen Jibao he writes;

“The story of my upbringing is the story of how a half-baked fellow is produced. But pay attention, Mr. Premier! Fully formed fellows, after twelve years of school and three years of university, wear nice suits, join companies, and take orders from other men for the rest of their lives. Entrepreneurs are made from half-baked clay”. (*The White Tiger*, 8)

He discovered that everything is possible in India if you have money with them; He gave money to the police and lives a happy life in the business city of Bangalore, India. In the Novel, the wife of Mr Ashok made an accident and killed people on road. But she got escaped by assigning the legal affidavit in her driver's name. In *The Last Man in Tower*, Mr Puri, Kothari and Kudwa also killed masterji whereas the murder turned out to be suicide by the police.

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“Many people in Vishram and the surrounding area testified that the teacher had been becoming increasingly senile and erratic for some time. He was depressed as a result of his wife's death and his diabetes. As a result, Nagarker, the investigating officer, thinks that Masterji was “the major suspect in his assassination.” (*Last Man in Tower*, 400)

Government Policies in India

After Independence, many policies are undertaken by the Government of India for the betterment of society and mostly for the upliftment of the downtrodden class. But those policies only exist on paper and they are even not properly implemented because of the lack of civic responsibility of Bureaucrats. Adiga criticises the entire system in his writings. He portrays a realistic picture of our society where many evil elements are putting the bridle on the mouse of success. Adiga gives many instances where policy fails because of corrupted peoples' involvement. Handful people of fortune are ruling the entire society. Poor people are struggling throughout their entire life to get their basic needs of life. The root cause of their suffering is ignorance. Wealthy people do take advantage of their ignorance. Many policies and schemes are there but common people are not aware of them. They don't even aware of their basic rights. Lack of proper education and awareness drag them to live miserable life under the shroud of ignorance. Many things are intentionally being done in society to have the disparity between the poor and the rich. So that the so-called middle person In between Government and common people can get a chance to make their fortune. Law is very much there but it is blind enough to dispense justice to the poor and neglected ones.

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Conclusion

To conclude, the present research paper assesses the polarization of Indian society between poor and rich and the failures of Government systems. Adiga's painful description of disparity, dichotomy, discrimination, dishonesty, exploitation, poverty and sufferings of society are very much realistic and alarming. The degradation of morals, ethics and values in people is perfectly projected by Adiga. The life of both sides of India, namely India of Light and India of Darkness is nicely explained by Adiga. Adiga tries to bring reformation in the socio-economic and poor-rich system by eradicating existing sociocultural problems in Indian society. The White Tiger and The Last Man in Tower give a sardonic picture of the moral, social and political degradation of Indian society. "The White Tiger", that was to become the voice of the poor, downtrodden, the colossal underclass of the world's biggest democracy.

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