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## Analysis of social discourse in Arvind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger*

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### Abstract:

Literature is the integral and tremendously shaping the mindsets of all ways, it is the source of knowledge, information, experiences, and incidents and so on. Literature in the period of globalization is changing rapidly, as its outcome, we can see the various forms, theories, and ideologies etc. social discourse is the core part of literature. Discourse, according to Michel Foucault “it is the ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledge and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning”. The present paper tries to analyses the social discourse, changes in the novel of *The White Tiger* by Arvind Adiga which is categorized in the form of Epistolary novel.

**Keywords:** Mindset, globalization, discourse, subjectivity, epistolary etc.

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### Introduction:

*The White Tiger* is a wonderful artistic creation written by Arvind Adiga who won Man Booker Prize in 2008, who is known as contemporary prolific author in India. He has projected modern Indian culture and the essence of Indianness, as there are other so many Indian authors like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Salman Rushdie, and Kiran Desai who depicts the real and modern picture India. Their work represents Indian culture under the changing values of modernity and effects. In the present flow of writing, Adiga has brought a fresh insight into the psychology of modern Indian society; most of the works of art for Adiga is based on his own observation of the Indian life.

The present novel explains the contrast between India's rise as a global economy and the main character, who comes from rural area. It deals with the realities of two faces of India. This novel is developed in the form of epistolary novel; it reminds us the paston letters or stories based on series of letters as Balram Halwai writes letter to Wen Jiabao, the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, on the eve of his visit to India. In those letters Balram Halwai (the protagonist) talks about his misery from richness. The major characters in the novel are Balram Halwai, Mr.Ashok, Pinky Madam, Mr. Krishna, Vikram, Balram's mother, Kusum, etc. Each character signifies the meaning of various kinds of behavior and strategy in Indian society.

The Outline story of the novel: The novel depicts the life of Balram Halwai as a rickshaw driver's son who skillfully and fortunately climbs social ladder to become a chauffeur and later a

successful businessman. The protagonist writes from his luxurious office of Bangalore, but the story begins in his rural ancestral village of Laxmangarh. Throughout his childhood, Balram's poor family lived at the mercy of four cruel exploitative landlords. Despite the difficult life he is born into, he excels in school. his academic potential and personal integrity distinguish him from his classmates, bringing him to the attention of a visiting school inspector who nicknames him *The White Tiger* after the most rare and intelligent animal in the forest. Balram was born in the rural village of Laxmangarh where he lived with his grandmother, parents, brother and extended family. He is a smart child but is forced to leave school in order to help pay for his cousin's dowry and begins to work in a teashop with his brother in Dhanbad. While working there he begins to learn about India's government and economy from the customers' conversations. Balram decides to become a driver and considers himself as a bad servant but a good listener. Balram finds work chauffeuring Ashok, the son of one of Laxmangarh's landlords, after learning to drive. He takes over the job of the main driver, from a small car to a heavy-luxury described Honda City. On a visit back to his village, he stops giving money to his family and insults his grandma. Along with Ashok and his wife Pinky Madam, Balram relocates to New Delhi. Balram is continually exposed to widespread corruption in Delhi, notably in the government. In Delhi, the contrast between the poor and the wealthy is made even more evident by their proximity to one another. One night Pinky Madam takes the wheel from Balram, while drunk, hits something in the road and drives away; we are left to assume that she has killed a child. Balram is

under pressure from Ashok's family to admit that he had been driving alone. For the sake of the family coal business, Ashok starts to bribe more and more government officials. Balram then comes to the conclusion that killing Ashok is the only way he may leave the Rooster Coop in India. Balram comes to Bangalore where, after beating Ashok with a bottle and stealing a sizable bribe, he pays the police to assist him in starting his own cab company. Ashok is portrayed as being imprisoned in the allegoric Rooster Coop, where his family and society influence what he does. Balram, like Ashok, compensates the family whose son was killed by one of his cab drivers. Balram explains that his own family was almost certainly killed by Ashok's relatives as retribution for his murder. At the end of the novel, Balram rationalizes his actions and considers that his freedom is worth the lives of his family and of Ashok. And thus ends the letter to Jiabao, letting the reader think of the dark humor of the tale, as well as the idea of life as a trap introduced by the writer. Major themes of the novel are Globalization, individualism, freedom, Social class/classism.

Social themes on Class and freedom: The novel projects a modern day, capitalist Indian society with free market and free business. It also shows how it can create economic divisions. There are no social classes in India, there are social castes. The novel portrays Indian society as highly negative towards lower social castes. This novel is based on the difference between two worlds. Darkness inhabited by poor and disadvantaged people who cannot afford even the bare necessities. And the enlightened world, inhabited by zamindars, politicians, businessmen, etc., is shamelessly exploiting the dark, impoverishing them and exalting their own greatness. Balram calls it "Darkness". When asked which caste he belonged to, Balram knew that it could ultimately lead to biased attitudes on the part of employers and determine his future employment. There is no doubt that there are significant differences in lifestyle, customs and standard of living between the lower caste homes of Balram and the present day upper castes. This novel shows how today's economic system creates socio-economic gaps that cause great divisions in society. It limits opportunities, social mobility, health, and other rights and pleasures that should be given to everyone. There is a huge difference in the amount of money in circulation in today's society, and this book alludes to that fact.

*The White Tiger* presents the story of Balram Halwai who seeks a life in the light a life of freedom and financial prosperity. Balram, a man of many names and of strong conviction, is one of the few who are able to escape the Darkness. Unlike the majority of the poor in India, eternally blocked in the Coop, he is willing to sacrifice his family for his

own self gain. His ambition and inner urges drive him to commit murder in order to gain freedom. To be one's own man, one must break free from the darkness and live life being able to choose his own path. When Balram says, "All I wanted was the chance to be a man and for that, one murder was enough," he is technically correct. Killing Ashok leads to the murder of his family, but just one kill is enough to get him out of the darkness, liberated and finally able to control their own destinies. According to Balram, there are two different types of people in India. There are those in the light politicians, businessmen, entrepreneurs, to name a few, who prosper financially and sit at the top of society and there are those in the Darkness, trapped in lives of poverty and subservience. He explains, "Please understand, your Excellency, that India is two countries in one: an India of Light and an India of Darkness". To explain this division he uses the metaphor of the Coop: "Go to Old Delhi Hundreds of pale hens and brightly colored roosters, stuffed tightly into wire-mesh cages they know they are next, yet they cannot rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with humans in this country". The Coop represents life in the Darkness: a life where the "roosters" or people, cannot choose their own fate, where they live in poverty, where they see their family decimated around them and are unable to intervene, and in which they inevitably will live and die without ever the possibility of escape. Balram's family is in the Darkness. While they are supposed to be sweet makers, or Halweis, they live in poverty. His father works tenuously as a rickshaw puller, and his brother works in the local tea shop.

Balram's father implants in him early on this idea of breaking away from the Darkness, and of becoming his own man. He instates in Balram the goal of becoming one of those men who are in the light. He says, "My whole life, I have been treated like a donkey. All I want is that one son of mine at least one should live like a man". In the eyes of Balram's father, a man should live in the light, free from the grueling life of manual labor and servitude. Balram adopts this goal, and devotes his life towards attaining it. Later, Balram uses the metaphor: "There are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat or get eaten up". Balram has a big belly, filled with the lust of freedom and of riches the same belly which will eventually propel him to murder Ashok and give up his family for the sake of becoming a man. In his childhood, Balram recognizes that he is special. Balram is the only student who can read and write, so when a representative from the government comes to inspect his school, he picks him out. He remarks, "Young man, you are an intellectual, honest, energetic fellow in this throng of bullies and idiots. I see huge promise in you. You must attend a

real school. The remaining kids are relegated to the demeaning category of "thugs and idiots" since they will always be in the shadows. They do not have the ambition, drive or intelligence that is needed to escape the same characteristics which the inspector sees in Balram.

The inspector is aware of Balram's superiority over everyone else in his small town and school, or the "jungle." He says, "In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals the creature that comes along only once in a generation? After this incident, Balram calls himself as *"The White Tiger."* He completely adopts and lives the life of a white tiger. "[Slaves] remain slaves because they cannot see what is beautiful in this world," says Balram. "White Tiger" can never be a slave, because it can see and pursue beauty. In this context, "beauty" refers to Balram's desire for a life of financial security and personal independence. Amidst the other animals in the darkness, amidst the other children in his school and the rest of India trapped in lives of Darkness, all who are unable to see beauty, and who carry with them small bellies, Balram, the "White Tiger," knows that he must escape any means possible.

Balram only faints twice in his life. Each time he faints it is because he realizes that the Darkness is inescapable without some form of resistance. When he first sees his mother's dead body by the Ganges, he collapses and says, "Soon she would become part of the black mound." Then I realized that the black mud of the Ganga, into which everything died, disintegrated, gave birth to, and then died again, was the true god of Banaras. The same would happen to me when I died and they brought me here. Nothing would be freed in this place. Balram is unable to comprehend the idea of living forever in the Darkness. He sees the overwhelming power that being in the Darkness has on the ones in it: that when surrounded by others marked by a lack of ambition, leading lives of destitute servitude, unable to choose the paths of their own lives, one inevitably surrenders to that same life. Balram faints thinking that this could happen to him.

Balram faints for a second time when he goes to the zoo. He sees The White Tiger trapped in the cage and realizes that he sees himself: "[The tiger] was hypnotizing himself by walking like this - that was the way he could tolerate this cage". Balram's current predicament of servitude serves as his own cage. Balram was "hypnotizing himself" by buying into his life of servitude. He wholeheartedly embraced his master, with whom he treated with great love, to distract himself from the fact that he was living in a life that he and his father wanted so desperately for him to break free of. "All at once, the tiger vanished". When Balram sees himself in that cage, he has an epiphany. Up to this point, he

had never seriously considered rebelling against or killing Ashok. But the tiger vanishes from the cage because, at that moment, the caged version of Balram ceased to exist. A changed man, he realizes that he must kill Ashok to become his own man and enter into a life of Light.

After this epiphany, Balram quickly and deliberately frees himself from the Darkness by killing Ashok. Despite the fact that his family may be murdered, Balram commits this act because it will transport him to the life he has dreamed of and therefore make him a man. Balram has so much disdain for his family, since he sees the harsh ways by which they drain the life out of his father that they no longer remain a relevant part of his life. Therefore, he is justified in sacrificing them, at least in his eyes. His epiphany at the zoo puts in context that life is not worth living if it is lived in the Darkness. After killing Ashok with the glass shards of a broken liquor bottle, he says, "I've made it! I've broken out of the coop!" in this India of Light and Darkness, Balram is now in the light. By resisting the life of Darkness and by killing Ashok, he now leads a life in which he can choose his own fate. The difference between "this India," Laxmangarh, and "that India," Bangalore, is that in "this India" Balram is a free independent man who can finally control his own destiny literally; it represents the materialistic success which he has encountered in his entrepreneurial ventures as an independent businessman. Symbolically, it sheds light on him, amidst the Darkness still prevalent in the everyday life of India. It represents Balram's escape from the presence of Darkness which used to dominate his life. By killing Ashok, Balram becomes his own man, freeing himself from servitude and entering a life of independence.

To sum up, although Adiga has claimed that he was inspired in the writing of the novel by the examples of writers like Flaubert, Balzac, and Dickens, who 'helped England and France become better societies', the novel presents a one sided approach to rural life and rehearses the fears of middle-class metropolitan Indians. The narrative shows the flexibility of stereotypes of the village, this time from a new vantage-point of India's transnational presence where the tale of a 'Slumdog Millionaire' on 'India Shining' shows up the grim underbelly of national development. The novel depicts the rise of Balram Halwai from acute rural poverty to becoming a chauffeur to a rich man in the city, to running, finally, his own enterprise in Bangalore, the way for which is paved by Halwai murdering his master.

Arvind Adiga is the writer of downtrodden because of his realistic portrayal of Indian society, includes the social harmony and social values. In India we can see the rich people hiring many servants for all their work like drivers, watchman,

cook, laundryman etc. The drivers are treated like servants. They used to carry shopping bags of their masters who have purchased goods from the shopping Mall but these drivers are not allowed to enter the big Malls. The White Tiger is sharp, fascinating, attacks poverty and inequality without being sentimental. He describes the problems of poor people in present scenario that they get cell phones, but lacks in basic necessity such as water, shelter and education. *The White Tiger* symbolically suggests subversion of oppressed or colonized into oppressor or dominator.

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