

DARK POLITICS OF DARK INDIA PORTRAYED IN *THE WHITE TIGER* (2008) BY ARAVIND ADIGA

Chetan Trivedi¹, Ph. D. & Pareshgiri Dhanarajgiri Gauswami²

¹Vice Chancellor, Bhakta Kavi Narsinh Mehta University (BKNMU),
Junagadh. cntrivedi@gmail.com

²Research Scholar, Department of Languages (English), Bhakta Kavi Narsinh Mehta
University, Junagadh. pareshgauswami@gmail.com

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Abstract

*Politics is an essential component of any culture. There is no such thing as a society without politics. Politics exists in the same way that society does. To have a deeper understanding of any civilization, one must study its politics. In a country like India, where so many cultures, languages, faiths, and customs coexist, studying political situations is required to have a comprehensive understanding of Indian society. Literature is always been a window to observe any social aspect as it mirrors society and politics is one of the social aspects. Many Indian English writers have depicted the political environment and political problems in their works. Aravind Adiga is one of them who has gracefully and bravely portrayed India of darkness and evils of politics in his debut picaresque novel *The White Tiger* (2008). This paper aims to reveal the menaces of Indian politics. The research paper probes the political facts and the facts which have been depicted in the novel. Adiga has portrayed dark India which does not mean that there is only darkness in India but he indicates the menaces of the society which can be improvised by adopting good practices. He has depicted the same picture of the politics of the nation which is the prime concern of this research paper.*

Keywords: Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger*, India of darkness, politics, Indian politics, society.



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Dark Politics of Dark India portrayed in *The White Tiger* (2008) by Aravind Adiga

Aravind Adiga(1974) is an Indian English writer whose *The White Tiger* (2008) is a picaresque tale that deals with numerous societal demons and the ground realities of India for which he has won Man's Booker Prize. Houses of middle-class and wealthy Indians are staffed by teams of servants who attend to their bosses' every need. These live-in drivers, chefs, and

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cleaners, who are mostly from poor states such as Bihar or countries such as Nepal and Bangladesh, regularly work 12-hour days and seven-day weeks. Domestic staff' lifestyles have only improved little in recent years, despite the economic growth that has enabled their bosses to adorn their homes with plasma screens and purchase European vehicles. Their workplace environments continue to be unregulated, and while India's population continues to grow at an exponential rate, their pay remains poor, varying from Rs. 5000 to Rs. 15000 each month.

The storyteller and protagonist of Aravind Adiga's dramatic debut novel is one such domestic servant, a driver named Balram Halwai. Balram's roots are reminiscent of a popular Indian folktale. Balram, a witty, contemplative villager, ends himself working as a driver for a shady businessman in Gurgaon, a densely packed Delhi satellite city heavily filled with shops and IT complexes. His employer sends him misleading messages of sympathy and hope before framing him for a crime committed by his wife. With little hope of engaging in the new Indian dream, the driver attempts to change his fate in bizarre and awful ways. He murders his boss and takes money meant for a government bribe. Balram submits a formal apology to the Premier of another Asian economic success storey, China, after establishing a thriving company that provides transportation to call centre employees in Bangalore. Adiga expresses his dissatisfaction with Indian politics. In an interview, Adiga displays his political beliefs as follows:

The fact that a lot of Indians have very little political freedom, especially in the north of India. That elections are rigged in large parts of the north Indian state of Bihar, and they're also accompanied by violence. There's like thirty-five killings during every election. If you were a poor man you'd have to pick China over India any day because your kids have a better chance of being nourished if you're poor. Your wife is more likely to survive childbirth. You're likely to live longer. There are so many ways in which India's system fails horribly.
(Sawhney)

Several times in the novel, *The White Tiger* discusses religion and politics. When Balram informs the Chinese premier about religion in India in the opening chapter, he remarks about politicians:

Now, there are some, and I don't just mean Communists like you, but thinking men of all political parties, who think that not many of these gods actually exist.

Some believe that none of them exists. There's just us and an ocean of darkness around us. I'm no philosopher or poet, how would I know the truth? It's true that all these gods seem to do awfully little work—much like our politicians—and yet keep winning reelection to their golden thrones in heaven, year after year.

(8)

Adiga has mentioned the presence of thirty-three crore Gods in Hinduism. Then he tells readers that Gods appear to do very little work yet are re-elected to their golden thrones in heaven for all eternity. He does not reject God's existence, nor does he wish to reveal the rationales for God's existence and other faiths. Through this illustration, he creates satires on Indian politicians. He likens Indian politicians to God. Politicians would enjoy the pleasures of paradise after getting elected in India. According to Adiga, the perks of winning elections in India are comparable to heavenly delight. Heaven is a fantasy shared by people of all faiths. Heaven is a location that can only be reached after death. Hindus refer to it as 'Swarg,' Christians refer to it as 'Heaven,' while Muslims refer to it as 'Zannat.' It is the greatest spiritual position that may be attained by good acts. Politicians, on the other hand, feel the same way after winning elections. Adiga also offers another declaration for politicians, claiming that they will remain on their thrones in perpetuity, just as Gods would remain in heaven for all eternity. Year after year, they are re-elected. In India, the representative of the assembly or parliament seldom changes after the death of a representative politician who is unable to serve in that capacity due to medical reasons or retirement. There is no need to provide additional evidence for the statement that MPs or MLAs in India retire from their careers after death. It is not a stretch to say that one of Nation's leading publications speaks about the dominance in politics that, “Oldest MP retires after seven decades in politics”(Laithangbam)

As per a news report published by the Deccan Herald, a list of the 10 oldest continuously members of parliament is provided, along with the number of terms they have served.

Table no. 1.1(source from Sridharan, Deccan Herald)

Sr no.	Name of Member of Parliament	Number of terms
1	Indrajit Gupta	11
2	Atal Bihari Vajpayee	10
3	Somnath Chatterjee	10
4	P M Sayeed	10
5	Kamal Nath	9
6	George Fernandes	9
7	Giridhar Gamanth	9
8	Khagapati Pradhani	9
9	Madhavrao Scindia	9
10	Ram Vilas Paswan	8

This article depicts the reality of Indian politics, in which relatively few changes occur in the candidate list or the representative of any single constituency.

Many Indian leaders have a reputation for ignoring unfinished tasks throughout their reign. Many politicians establish social amenities but then do nothing after being elected. During the ensuing election campaign, they continue the project with a new foundation stone, but once they win, they cease working on it. This is an unforgiving truth of Indian politics. Adiga acknowledges and emphasises this episode in the novel, when he states, “I came to Dhanbad after my father's death. He had been ill for some time, but there is no hospital in Laxmangarh, although there are three different foundation stones for a hospital, laid by three different politicians before three different elections.”(Adiga, 47) Balram discusses political conditions in rural India. Politicians making false promises to increase their vote bank is a frequent practice in India.

Adiga satirises Indian politics and discusses the worst aspects of democracy. He demonstrates the paradox of democracy. He claims:

I gather you yellow-skinned men, despite your triumphs in sewage, drinking water, and Olympic gold medals, still don't have democracy. Some politician on the radio was saying that that's why we Indians are going to beat you: we may not have sewage, drinking water, and Olympic gold medals, but we do have democracy. (Adiga,95-96)

Democratic nations aim to improve the standard of living and meet the fundamental requirements of the common man. What is the use of democracy if fundamental necessities are not supplied to society? As a result, the novel employs political satire. Adiga contrasts India's predicament with that of China. Both countries have nearly identical populations. Furthermore, both countries are located on the same continent. However, due to the political ideologies in which both countries believe, China is a faster-growing country in every facet of development than India. India is a modern democracy, while China is a communist participatory democratic country, yet China's economy is quicker than India. As a result, Adiga wishes to express that democracy has never been a blessing to India, if not a scourge. Politicians will go to any length to ensure their electoral victory. Adiga writes:

A man in a government uniform sat at the teacher's desk in the schoolroom, with a long book and a black pen, and he was asking everyone two questions.

'Name.'

'Balram Halwai.'

'Age.'

'No age.'

'No date of birth?'

'No, sir, my parents didn't make note of it.'

He looked at me and said, 'I think you're eighteen. I think you turned eighteen today. You just forgot, didn't you?'

I bowed to him. 'That's correct, sir. I forgot. It was my birthday today.'

'Good boy.' (Adiga, 96)

Politicians direct such personnel to issue as many election cards or voter identity cards as possible. They only want one more voter by engaging in criminal activity. They do so because they can further register illegitimate votes. Adiga further adds that:

Lots of dust and policemen came into the village next morning. One officer read out voting instructions in the marketplace.

Whatever was being done, was being done for our own good. The Great Socialist's enemies would try and steal the election from us, the poor, and take the power away from us, the poor, and put those shackles back on our hands

that he, the Great Socialist, had so lovingly taken off our hands. Did we understand? And then, in a cloud of dust, the police drove off.

'It's the way it always is,' my father told me that night. 'I've seen twelve elections—five general, five state, two local—and someone else has voted for me twelve times. I've heard that people in the other India get to vote for themselves—isn't that something?' (Adiga, 100)

Controlling the polling station, bogus elections, riots against voting stations, and other such incidents are common in India and maybe observed on repeated occasions in a number of places. Balram's father has seen twelve elections yet has never voted, an irony in Indian politics.

Videos shared by the Telugu Desam Party and the BJP suggested people from other areas were mobilised and brought in vehicles to cast fake votes by impersonating others.

A large number of women were allegedly mobilised, according to the BJP candidate Ratnaprabha, who was former chief secretary of Karnataka and joined the party recently. (Sudhir)

Another article from India Today magazine tells the same topic concerning illegitimate voting in India. Fake voter IDs and lists are not a farce in the United States. A massive controversy surrounds these actions, which are carried out by voter mafias around the country. According to the report:

There are around 15,000 to 20,000 bogus voters registered in every assembly segment and around 1.25 lakh to 1.5 lakh bogus voters in every Parliamentary constituency. With around 8-9 lakh bogus voters in Mumbai, there is a voter mafia operating in the city who are in the process of making fake voter IDs to benefit some political parties. A fraud of this order cannot take place without the support from the collector's office. The voters are only present on paper and not in real. (Ganapatye)

These are some of the information that may be gleaned from this report. In India, it is a widespread practice to cast a fictitious vote. It is an inescapable component of each Indian election. Fake votes are rampant, however, the Indian government has various restrictions on booth capture. Though it is not eradicated in the country, it has been reduced to a small scale by the use of technology. Each election, the use of computerised voting machines becomes

nearly mandatory. In India, the use of ballot papers was marked by booth-capturing, in which party supporters would forcefully enter a polling booth and load the ballot box with counterfeit ballots. EVM(Electronic Voting Machine)s were designed to discourage such manipulation by limiting the number of votes cast each minute to five. This feature increased the amount of time it required to cast a bogus ballot. Here's a report that discusses the same topics:

A serious concern with the use of paper ballots in India was booth-capturing where party loyalists would occupy a polling booth by force and stuff the ballot box with fake ballots. EVMs were designed to discourage such fraud by limiting the rate of casting votes to five per minute. This feature increased the time required to cast false ballots, providing a larger time-frame for security forces to arrive and intervene. (Somanathan)

Voting machines have also resulted in a considerable decrease in the number of ballots rejected. While an ambiguous marking on a ballot paper may lead to the ballot being invalidated, voting on an EVM needs only one click of a key. The introduction of EVMs, according to the research, resulted in the elimination of virtually all rejected ballots, resulting in a 2.7% growth in the number of legal votes at the foundation. Such a breakthrough might have an impact on the outcome of a close election.

Representing only the dark sides of Indian politics in this novel does not mean that Indian politics is full of evils. Adiga suggests improving these political situations. He advises to work for the betterment of these areas of politics. Though these menaces are the parts of Indian politics, Indian politics has so many positive aspects too. India has witnessed a stable political situation since independence. Moreover, the development of the nation is the foremost political agenda of any ruling party besides the personal benefits. The novel is published in 2008 so the facts which are discussed in the novel are of 2008 or before that period. Today's India is a new India. This India has improved a lot in each field which includes politically too. Adiga's dark India has been improved a lot still there are so many political issues which need to be sorted out soon for the betterment of the country.

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