

UNVEILING SUBALTERN REALITIES IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER* AND *BETWEEN THE ASSASSINATIONS*

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Abstract:

In this research paper, subaltern themes are explored in depth in two of Aravind Adiga's critically renowned works namely *The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassinations*. Adiga's writings effectively depict the multifaceted subaltern oppression and struggles, highlighting gender-based, caste-based, social, and economic servitude within the complicated structure of Indian society. In *The White Tiger*, the journey of the protagonist, Balram Halwai, serves as a model for the growth of the underclass who raises his voice against rich landlords. This novel shows that Balram belongs to a lower caste but he is not satisfied with his position and wants to break the rooster coop for which he kills his master, Ashok, and earns the position he desires for. In this novel, a subaltern raises his voice but through violation, a way that is not acceptable in any society. In *Between the Assassinations*, various issues have been discussed through various stories. For instance, through the character, Xerox, he talks about the position of lower caste people in Indian society; religious disharmony is discussed by him through the story of Ziauddin; and through Jayamma and Reena, he deals with the women subjugation where he takes up the issue of dowry. Adiga has given a strong voice to his subaltern characters; almost every character is not happy with their lower position and they wish to change their status by every means. He shows the darker side of India in his works. Through these two works, Adiga tries to give voice to the muted.

Keywords: subaltern, caste, class, religion, subjugation, etc.

Born in Chennai and brought up in Mangalore, Aravind Adiga has carved a niche in Indian writing in English by penning important works including *The White Tiger* (2008), *Between the Assassinations* (2009), *Last Man in Tower* (2011), *Selection Day* (2016), and *Amnesty* (2020). His writings frequently explore societal problems related to India, including

the role of women in society, politics, democracy, corruption, the feudal system, poverty, starvation, and exploitation, as well as religious hypocrisy. This paper highlights the subaltern realities in Adiga's two works namely *The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassinations*. Some research work has already been carried out on Adiga's works as P. D. Nimsarkar and Shubha Mishra have written the book *Aravind Adiga: An Anthology of Critical Essay* (2010), which centres on *The White Tiger's* contribution to altering global perceptions of the current state of affairs in India. It also sheds light on Adiga's *Between the Assassinations*, a thoughtful analysis of contemporary events. Sudhir K. Arora's book *Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger: A Freakish Booker* (2011) assesses the novel *The White Tiger* in light of Indian conditions and concludes that it is completely implausible. *Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger: A Symposium of Critical Responses* (2011), a book by R.K. Dhawan, provides proof of the overwhelming response to Adiga's works. The critical analyses present here also consider India's value from a social and political standpoint. Thus, Aravind Adiga has been the subject of some research, yet there are still a lot of unanswered questions regarding his works. The theme of subalternity occupies a pivotal role in his works in general and in *The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassinations* in particular.

Marginalised and oppressed groups or individuals, based on factors such as caste, class, age, religion, and gender, are referred to as Subalterns. These subaltern people lack a voice of their own, unable to assert themselves in society in the presence of the elite or powerful groups of society. Subaltern literature reflects oppression, marginalisation, gender bias, silencing of women, and racial inequalities. This term describes marginalised individuals who lack rightful recognition, encompassing labourers, tribals, women, and peasants. Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci was the first to use this term in a non-military sense, introducing it in his *Prison Notebooks*. He applies it to societal groups lacking autonomous political agency due to factors like ethnicity, class, gender, or identity. Before him, this term primarily denoted an individual occupying a lower military position. Gramsci employs "subaltern" when discussing the dominance of ruling or colonial groups over subordinates like peasants and similarly situated workers. According to Gramsci, "The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a state: their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States and groups of States" (52). In his seminal work *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci presents a six-point project entitled "Notes on Italian History," which marks the initial usage of the term "subaltern" to refer to the proletariat. Gramsci describes these groups in any society under the hegemony of the governing classes. According to Edward Quinn, hegemony is

[a] word meaning predominance, used by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci to explain how a dominant CLASS gains and maintains its power...the ascendant class controls not only the economy but also the cultural and ideological spheres of its society. Thus, it is able to persuade the lower classes to willingly support its agenda. (193)

The peasants and labourers who oppose the socially powerful and hegemonized dominating classes in contemporary Italy are commonly believed by Gramsci to be the

“subalterns.” He uses the word to describe the oppressed Italians, particularly the workers from the South of Italy, who are pushed to the margins by the fascist party’s hegemonic politics. Later, he applies the theory to the study of colonial cultures in order to comprehend the groups that are subjected to cultural hegemony and that colonial powers control to maintain their supremacy in the region. The term “subaltern” is adopted by the Indian school of subaltern history from Gramsci. Some scholars use the phrase to refer to the oppressed, exploited, and marginalised communities. In an interview with Leon De Kock, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a prominent figure in the field of subaltern studies, states that the “[s]ubaltern is just a classy word for the oppressed, for Other, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie... everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference” (45). Ranajit Guha published a series titled *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, wherein he and his collaborators namely Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Gautam Bhadra, Dipesh Chakrabarty, David Hardiman, Gyanendra Pandey, Sumit Sarkar, and Partha Chatterjee, contribute to fill in historical gaps by exploring the perspectives of underrepresented groups in Indian society. Guha defines the subaltern as “a name for the general attribute of subordination... whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way” (SSI vii). The Subaltern Studies movement rapidly gains momentum within the realm of historical research, challenging authoritative viewpoints and striving to amplify silenced voices.

The fundamental aim of subaltern studies lies in investigating the history of peasant uprisings in colonial India and attempting to recover the history of marginalized individuals who are marginalized within the historical narrative. Ranajit Guha, the central figure in the subaltern studies group, believes that the politics of peasants and other underprivileged people belong to their category since they are distinct from the politics of the elite. He regrets that such groups are not acknowledged as legitimate historical subjects. He notes that the “peasants” are marginalized, and overlooked for their historical significance, despite their unique experiences. The “history from below” philosophy reconstructs society’s history from the periphery rather than the centre, offering a fresh perspective by examining history through the eyes of society’s powerless, such as the colonized or subalterns (Ludden 5). Sumit Sarkar uses the term “subalterns” to refer to employees in plantations, mines, and factories, as well as low-caste and tribal agricultural labourers, sharecroppers, landowner peasants, and those of intermediate caste rank.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her famous essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” puts forth the theory of subalternity, which is based on the idea that a subaltern cannot speak. She considers whether the subalterns can communicate with others, questioning why they are mute. She analyses the issue of subalterns within the framework of their status as gendered subalterns, concentrating on how women are doubly oppressed in the colonized and patriarchal world. Spivak describes the historical and ideological barriers that prevent the marginalized from being heard. She believes that as subaltern subjectivity is being rewritten, women’s identities are being obliterated. She claims:

It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as the subject

of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, subaltern as female is even deeply in shadow. (287)

Thus, Gramsci, Guha and Spivak, the stalwarts in the realm of the theory of subalternity, have made a substantial contribution to increasing our understanding of subaltern realities in India. Gramsci concentrated on cultural hegemony and intellectual intervention; Guha highlighted the agency of subaltern groups in historical contexts; and Spivak drew attention to the obstacles that subaltern voices face when it comes to representation, especially in the context of gender and postcolonial studies. Cultural hegemony, counter-hegemony, intellectuals as organic intellectuals, subaltern, history from below challenging the perception as passive recipients, strategic essentialism, subaltern's voices and resistance are the terms that are applied to analyze how Adiga engages with and represent subaltern realities in *The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassinations*. We will see how the author employs these strategies to counter hegemonic narratives, and the challenges inherent in representing marginalized voices. It is also noted how these works become a site for the negotiation and expression of subaltern experiences and resistance.

Adiga is not the only one who has presented subaltern realities there are also many others like Mahashweta Devi, Mulk Raj Anand, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, and Amitav Ghosh, who have dealt with this theme. *The White Tiger* has Balram, the main character, who is viewed as a subaltern and emerges as a symbol of all those people who are oppressed worldwide by hegemonic dominance and the way they unwittingly submit to their will while secretly fantasizing about release from this centuries-old bondage. The development of socialists in India, bloody crimes, opportunism, Balram's business success, and other factors raise the alarm that the voice of the underclass can no longer be ignored for very long. The novel is basically about "India of Light and an India of Darkness" (TWT 14). India of darkness represents the voice of the subaltern. The protagonist, who belongs to a sweet maker caste and is the son of a rickshaw puller, becomes Ashok Sharma. His transition from Munna to Balram Halwai to Ashok Sharma is the model for the growth of the underclass. Balram is a powerful voice for the underclass, which includes marginal farmers, unemployed labourers, young people without jobs, the impoverished, prostitutes, servants, auto and taxi drivers, and those from lower socioeconomic status. Silence is a powerful theme, as Spivak suggests, and it provides a good response to the question Can the subaltern speak? Adiga also poses the same question in his novel. A subaltern, Spivak believes, is a member of the underprivileged class whose voice, actions, and other forms of expression of power have been silenced, whose voice has been taken away, and whose unwavering force has been lost or washed away because representation, voice, and, most importantly, the issue of identity is crucial to their survival. In society, the downtrodden classes are unable to speak for themselves. Randhawa rightly states:

Since the marginalized have known only the language which has been handed down to them by their exploiters, they should, as Fanon would have probably suggested, use the language of violence at their disposal to give at back and at the same time to continue to deconstruct it from within. (33)

The novel is written in epistolary form to the Chinese Premier, who is on a visit to Bangalore, and Balram Halwai, now Ashok Sharma, is an entrepreneur in Bangalore. India is known for its entrepreneurial success, and the Chinese Premier's visit to Bangalore confirms China's interest in India's progress in this sector. The narrator provides the following explanation of why entrepreneurs succeed, "My country is the kind where it pays to play it both ways: the Indian entrepreneur has to be straight and crooked, mocking and believing, sly and sincere, at the same time" (*TWT* 8-9). Our political and social structures are what breed "rottenness and corruption" (50) in our society and obstruct any welfare and development programs. The capacity of fifty per cent of the people in our country is limited by this systemic dysfunction. Adiga painfully notes that many of our political leaders are "half-baked... That's the whole tragedy of this country" (10). The account of Balram's ascension mirrors the journey of an underprepared individual in this system. It is a stark revelation that in this situation politics frequently serves as the last resort for dishonest people. To protect their interests, government officials, industrialists, taxpayers, and entrepreneurs must establish connections with ministers and their supporters. For example, in the novel, Ashok Sharma and Mukesh bribe the ministers to resolve the matter of their income tax. These politicians never do anything favourable for the downtrodden; they only work for rich or upper-class people who support them and financially help during elections and after.

The pain of the underclass is due to great poverty, which brings darkness into their lives in both rural and urban areas. The underclass suffers from unemployment, illiteracy, the Zamindari practice, caste discrimination, superstitions, economic disparity, corrupt politicians and bureaucrats, ill health care and education systems, shrewd businesspeople, mall culture, etc. Balram lives in a village called Laxmangarh, representing India of darkness. In this regard, S. Monika believes, "The Darkness is Balram's term for the impoverished rural Bihar he comes from, the India that will suck a person down like the black mud of Mother Ganga" (56). The upper class dominates the village, where Balram and his poor family live on the beneficence of the landlords. The village follows the Zamindari system, which is responsible for the subjugation and exploitation of the poor. Four landlords in the village are named after animals such as the Buffalo, Stork, Wild Boar and Raven as per their appetite, and they exploit the underclass people. The villagers live on their obligation for example, when Balram's family needs money to get her cousin married, they look towards the Stork. He provides them with loans, resulting in the lifelong slavery of Balram's family. Balram drops out his school because he has to work to support his family, for which he has to do petty work in a tea stall, wipe tables in the tea shop, and break coal. Though he is a good student, he has to shun his studies and start earning money, which candidly shows the subjugation of the underprivileged at the elites' hands. The underclass children do not even have proper or formal names like the upper class. No one in the family is concerned about names. For instance, Balram is not given a formal name by his mother or father. Balram reveals how his mother and father do not have time to give him a name as they have to do menial jobs all the time. He tells about his parents:

'She's very ill, ...She lies in bed and spews blood. She's got no time to name me.'

‘And your father?’

‘He’s a rickshaw puller...He’s got no time to name me.’ (13)

Balram is also called as Munna before his teacher gives him the name Balram for the school record, which only means a boy. The teacher also provides him with a fixed date of birth. While working at the tea shop, Balram always keeps his eyes and ears open, and here he gets important life lessons. He is not satisfied with his work because he desires to achieve more, and in order to break the cage of slavery, he wants to be a free bird. He himself mentions, “I was destined not to stay a slave” (41). After working at the tea shop, Balram goes to Stork’s house to ask for a job as a driver. The Stork keeps him as a chauffeur because he belongs to the same village. At Stork’s house, Balram faces humiliation at the hands of the members of the family of the other driver, and servants. He is not only asked to drive the old car but forced to do other household work. He is given an old car to drive because he is a new driver, and the new car is driven by another chauffeur named Ram Prasad, who has been working there for many years. Here, we can witness the subjugation on the basis of religion and caste. When Balram starts working as a chauffeur the first question asked by the old driver is ““What caste are you?”” (56). The Stork also asks the same question, inquiring whether Balram’s caste, Halwai, is considered upper or lower caste. Adiga also portrays religious suppression. The old driver, Ram Prasad, is Muslim, but he hides his identity to keep his job since prejudiced landlords do not like Muslims, and revealing his identity would lead to dismissal. When Balram learns about his identity, he blackmails Ram Prasad and threatens to expose him to Stork if he does not leave his job. There is another incident where Roshan, Stork’s grandson, is playing cricket and calls himself Azharuddin. At this Stork reacts, ““Call yourself Gavaskar. Azharuddin is a Muslim”” (70). Pinky and Ashok’s marriage is also not acceptable to society and Ashok’s family because she is not Hindu, which also becomes one of the reasons for their marital dysfunction.

The poor health condition of the underprovided remains another main focus of the writer. The poor villagers do not receive any kind of medical facility as there is no hospital in Laxmangarh, where the villagers have to visit the neighbouring village hospital to avail of any medical treatment. Once, Balram’s father, Vikram Halwai, falls severely ill, and Balram and his brother, Kisan, take him to the next village hospital by crossing the river. After reaching the hospital, they find that there is no doctor, or if any, he pays seldom visits to the hospital. All the patients lie on the floor moaning in pain but there is no one to look after them. It is clearly demonstrated how pathetic their lives are:

A couple of Muslim men had spread a newspaper on the ground and were sitting on it. One of them had an open wound on his leg. He invited us to sit with him and his friend. Kishan and I lowered Father onto the newspaper sheets. We waited there ...The Muslim men kept adding newspapers to the ground, and the line of diseased eyes, raw wounds, and delirious mouths kept growing. (48-49)

As a result, Balram’s father dies of tuberculosis. All this shows the terrible conditions of government hospitals. All the elites get themselves treated in private hospitals and it is only the underclass people who suffer and die without any treatment in government hospitals.

The exploitation, subjugation and sufferings of the underclass are not only present in rural areas but in urban areas also. When the action of the novel shifts from the village to the city, we also find both types of India. The labourers working in industries, drivers, beggars, prostitutes, servants etc., all suffer at the hands of the upper class, government schemes or corrupt police. The novel lays bare that the predicament of the underclass remains the same everywhere be it a village or a city. Balram shows the miseries, sufferings, and humiliation the drivers receive at the hands of their masters, and not only the personal drivers but auto and taxi drivers also face these problems. Balram is hired by the Stork as a chauffeur for his son, Ashok and daughter-in-law, Pinky. The drivers have not only to do their jobs, but they are also forced to do other household work, like cooking, brooming, massaging scrubbing etc. In Delhi, there are separate quarters for servants, who cannot reside in the same building where their masters live. The residing place of servants is really unhygienic; they have to deal with cockroaches and mosquitoes at night, hazardous air and sound pollution during the day. Delhi's city malls make Balram even more miserable when his owner, Mr. Ashok, and his wife, spend hours shopping there and he has to wait impatiently for hours outside the malls. He feels marginalised and deprived of his fundamental human right to go into a mall. A driver is not permitted to enter a mall because he is not wearing mall-culture footwear and clothes. He recalls reading an article in the early days of the newspaper on malls, titled "Is There No Space for the Poor in the Malls of New India?" (148). When masters give their servants instructions on what to do and what not to do, such as telling Balram not to turn on the air conditioning or play music while he is alone, their cruel attitude persists. In reference to the portrayal of a corrupt lifestyle in big cities such as Delhi, S. K. Singh notes:

...it encapsulates in itself economic growth, the burgeoning of an aggressively consumerist, call centre, an IT class, predatory capitalism, rampant corruption, greed, inhumanity, absolute inequality of class, caste, wealth and religion and of course, the lively and realistic picture of metro life. (238)

The novelist's portrayal of Pinky Madam's hit-and-run incident contains a subtle indication of the worsening state of the Delhi servants. She decides to drive alone after having a late-night drink at a party, and she unintentionally murders a homeless child who is resting by the side of the road. This mishap reveals the corruption and hypocrisy of the administration and its elite members. She wants to help the child's family and take up the whole responsibility for this accident, but her in-laws do not allow her to do so. After consulting with a lawyer, they decide that they will put the blame for this accident on Balram. The advocate persuades them, "The judge has been taken care of. If your man does what he is to do, we'll have nothing to worry about" (166-167). Balram is forced by Mr. Ashok's family to accept responsibility for Pinky Madam's murder. Without any fault of his own, he is sent to prison. His incarceration represents the calamity to which most Delhi servants typically suffer as a result of their master's unchallenged authority over both their body and soul. Balram phrases it, "The jails of Delhi are full of drivers who are there behind bars because they are taking the blame for their good, solid middle-class masters. We have left the villages, but the masters still own us, body, soul and arse" (169).

Balram blames his family and the customs they uphold for his situation rather than taking responsibility for it himself. He discovers that during his early years, the seeds of servitude are planted in him, making it impossible for him to avoid becoming a docile servant who is willing to suffer for the transgressions of his master. In India, Balram encounters both the eaters and eaten. He aspires to be an eater. Through “Rooster Coop”, Adiga expresses the oppressed people’s hope of escaping this system and their terrible circumstances (173). Balram wants to break this “coop” and change his position equal to the elites. Balram chooses to steal and murder after witnessing all of Ashok’s unscrupulous acts and his reckless use of money to purchase politicians. Balram kills Ashok. The only way out of the bonds of servitude he has been held in is murder. By killing Ashok, Balram raises his voice against the upper class and their oppression. Balram quickly departs Delhi for Bangalore after killing his employer.

Between the Assassinations, a collection of twelve interconnected short stories that centre on various Indian castes, classes, and faiths, puts forth the subaltern issues. This work vividly depicts the pitiful and challenging circumstances faced by the underclass people, who are divided by economic disparity, poverty, exploitation, and class/caste inequalities. Here the stories are set against the backdrop of Kittur, an Indian town situated between Goa and Calicut on the country’s southeast coast, telling the story of events that took place during the seven years that separate the assassinations of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi. There are a variety of characters who belong to different sections of society. *The Guardian* notes,

“...the characters are all conflicted and alienated in one way or another, grappling with their inner demons, seething or scheming. In unsentimental, utilitarian prose, Adiga fleshes out their quirks and contradictions and maps their aspirations and anxieties.” (theguardian.com)

Ziauddin, a Muslim boy of twelve years old who works at a tea stall and is the sixth of eleven children born into a family that labours on farms, is the main character in the story “Day One: The Railway Station.” Through him, Adiga exposes the discrimination faced by Muslims and their lack of acceptance in mainstream society. He labours at a young age when he ought to enjoy the bliss of carefree youth. Muslims in Kittur are excluded from the mainstream of society. Since Ziauddin is innocent, Ramanna Shetty hires him despite the fact that none of the Hindu business owners near the railway station engage Muslim labourers. It is evident that Muslims are marginalised since Ramanna Shetty touches Ziauddin’s head and speaks to the Thimma, ““Which, I can tell you, aren’t much, even for a Muslim!”” (BTA 4). It is the poverty of his family that forces him to work at a tender age. There he receives only insult and humiliation because of his religion. When it is time for harvest, Ziauddin goes to his home to support his family and to work in the fields. Here, Adiga shows the day-to-day struggle of farm labourers or low-class people who have to depend on the mercy of landlords and who cannot meet the status of the upper class, even after working so hard. When Ziauddin returns to work, he completely changes as he develops a sense of pride in his religion and turns into a thief, which gets him fired from his job. He starts identifying himself as a Pathan, he says while fighting ““From the land of the Pathans, far up north, where there are mountains full of snow!

I'm not a Hindu! I don't do hanky-panky!" (6). Ziauddin is tempted by a Muslim Pathan who also involves him in some terrorist activity. But he soon realizes and escapes from there. Thus, religious disharmony is another cause of suppression as we see in Adiga's work *The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassinations*.

Adiga also addresses caste issues in his works. In *The White Tiger*, he raises this issue through Balram, and in *Between the Assassinations*, he takes up the issue through the story of "Day Two: Lighthouse Hill." Uma Chakravarti says the following on the caste system:

The relationship to the occupation and specific cultural traditions of each caste functions within a broader framework in which the localized hierarchy is based on ritual status, control or lack of control of productive resources and power. This is the difference within the caste system, making for the division between upper caste or higher castes and lower caste... and the low castes who are at the bottom of hierarchy and whose touch was often regarded as polluting. (9)

Ramkrishna is known as Xerox, a Dalit bookseller, who has been imprisoned twenty-one times in nine years for peddling unauthorized versions of books at cheaper prices. He sells books for both survival and the reputation of his profession as he informs Inspector Ramesh, "...I just love books: I love making them, holding them, and selling them. My father took out shit for a living, sir: he couldn't even read or write. He'd be so proud if he could see that I make my living from books" (BTA 39). Xerox is imprisoned in a cruel jail because he sells copies of *The Satanic Verses*, a book that has been banned in India. While in prison, Xerox, a member of the lower caste, tells the tale of his father's lifelong job of removing trash from wealthy landlords' homes—a custom that is specific to members of his caste. His father spends his days near the landlord's house, waiting for someone to use the toilet. Upon smelling a visitor, he hurries to retrieve, clean, and return the portable potty through a wall opening before the next person needs it, ensuring the toilet remains functional and clean. While he sleeps, the police inspector Ramesh and lawyer D'Souza, both from the upper caste, drink Old Monk rum. They reluctantly glance at Xerox's sleeping form and make comments:

'That fucking son of an untouchable. See him snoring.'

'His father took out the shit - this fellow thinks he's going to dump shit on us!'

'Selling *The Satanic Verses*. He'll sell it under my nose, will he?' (41)

Both the lawyer and Inspector beat Xerox and broke his legs. When he gets discharged from the hospital and released, he confronts the policeman with a smile on his face and declares that he will only sell one book, *The Satanic Verse*, which is illegal in India. He says, "You can break my legs, but I can't stop selling books. I'm destined to do this, sir," (42). Xerox represents the downtrodden who are beginning to stand up to the ruling class and take on the strong.

The caste also defines the identity of a person in society. Regardless of wealth, individuals from lower castes often face humiliation. This is illustrated through the story "Day Two Afternoon: St. Alfonso's Boys' High School and Junior College", where Shankara is born to a Brahmin father and a low-caste Hoyka woman, belonging to the lower-caste Hoyka

community. Shankara, from the lower-caste Hoyka community, senses mockery from teachers, leading to insecurity about his mixed-caste identity. Frustrated with the biased caste society and past humiliation, he seeks revenge by planting a bomb in his school. He believes he has “burst a bomb to end the 5,000-year-old caste system that still operates in our country. I have burst a bomb to show that no man should be judged, as I have been, merely by the accident of his birth” (50-51). By bombing, he envisions a different jail experience, hoping to be seen as a martyr. The Hoyka self-advancement committee might march for him, and the police might back off. After his release, crowds cheered him, launching his political career. The author portrays Shankara, a Brahmin-Hoyka mix, in a unique way:

Shankara was always treated as someone special among his Hoyka relatives; because he was half-Brahmin, and hence so much higher than them in caste terms... Swearing to himself, he kept going up the stairs. Didn't these stupid Hoykas understand? There was nothing he hated more than their grovelling to him, because of his half-Brahmin-ness. If they had been contemptuous of him, if they had forced him to crawl into their shops to expiate the sin of being half-Brahmin, then wouldn't he have come to see them every day? (53-54).

The boy's fury is fueled by social exclusion and humiliation due to caste. Even his upper-caste driver pisses him off. His family sees him with disgust. Shankara sees his father as autonomous and without caste after they spend six years apart. He advises his Hoyka mother to disregard her inferiority complex while she is with Brahmin relatives. She tells Shankara:

“She did not want to face the Brahmin woman alone. Her sole claim to acceptance, to respectability, was the production of a male child, an heir – and if he wasn't in the house, then she had nothing to show. She was just a Hoyka trespassing into a Brahmin's household. (52)

Here Adiga shows the results of caste discrimination through Shankara. Despite being wealthy, Shankara is not acknowledged by the higher caste. Despite being a Brahmin's son, he is never regarded as one. But his driver, an upper caste member, is impoverished but has respect in society. Adiga says that the result of this caste discrimination is like Naxalite and terrorist activities. Women are subjugated worldwide; they have been marginalised, oppressed, and subverted from one angle to another in every age group, religion, and society. Women are typically viewed as unholy, gentle, weak, subservient, emotional, fearful, and unadventurous. The patriarchal authority in society causes agonies for women. As a result of this discrimination, women eventually lose their identities or their lives to horrific murders. Social norms, religious rites, and cultural institutions all serve to marginalize women.

Through Balram and his family in *The White Tiger*, Adiga condemns the dowry system in India. To pay for the dowry of their cousin, Balram's family has to borrow money from the landlord. In order to repay the landlord, they have to sell themselves, which keeps Balram away from school. Balram reveals, “My cousin-sister Reena got hitched off by a boy in the next village. Because we were the girl's family, we were screwed. We had to give the boy a new bicycle, and cash, and a silver bracelet, and arrange for a big wedding - which we did” (*TWT* 36). A similar instance of a dowry victim who is still single due to the dowry system can be

found in the book *Between the Assassinations*. The curse of dowry is made clear by Jayamma's account in "Day Five: Valencia: To the Crossroad" in *Between the Assassinations*. Jayamma is the eighth daughter of her parents. Her life has been fantastic, and she is currently the advocate's cook. Adiga reveals her pitiful tale:

Her father had saved enough gold only for six daughters to be married off; the last three had to remain barren virgins for life.... For forty years she had been put on one bus or the other, and sent from one town to the next to cook and clean in someone else's house. To feed and fatten someone's children. (BTA 205)

Adiga demonstrates through Jayamma that the dowry is a social evil that forces women to endure subjugation and suffering in a male-dominated culture where they are denied equality and a voice. Within this social order, they have to face suppression and subordination.

Thus, Adiga's *The White Tiger* and *Between the Assassinations* offer a searing critique of the subaltern's plight in India, illuminating the complex subaltern themes of gender-based oppression, caste discrimination, and economic inequality through a masterful use of character development. These works are effective means of bringing attention to and promoting the rights and dignity of the underprivileged. The novelist explores the depths of Indian culture to reveal the complex subaltern problems that have plagued the country for generations. In *The White Tiger*, the hardships of the lower class are explored through Balram Halwai. The evolution of Balram's life from Munna to Balram to Ashok Sharma offers a blueprint for the development of the subaltern, showing how they overcome a system filled with nepotism, corruption, and lack of opportunities. In *Between the Assassinations*, social division and discrimination based on caste are key factors contributing to subaltern subjugation. The book highlights the unfair treatment of people according to their caste, using Ziauddin and Shankara as instances who experience marginalization and humiliation because of their lower caste origins. Adiga also explores the important issue of economic exploitation, especially through Xerox. The way in which Adiga portrays the Dalit bookseller Xerox and his struggle against the oppression of the upper caste highlights the subalterns' quest for equality and dignity. Women's subjugation is also a prevalent issue in Adiga's works. The works highlight the hardships faced by women and their families as a result of the dowry system through Jayamma and Reena. Adiga, in this way, unveils the subaltern realities and seems to make a clarion call to do away with all the forces that join hands to dehumanize humans.

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