

The Novel as a Social Critique: A Study of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020*

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DECLARATION

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*I, **Lalbiakdiki**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anyone else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University or Institute.*

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that “The Novel as a Social Critique: A Study of Aravind Adiga’s The White Tiger and Chetan Bhagat’s Revolution 2020” written by Lalbiakdiki has been written under my supervision.

She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down within the M.Phil. regulations of Mizoram University. The dissertation is the result of her own investigation. Neither the dissertation as a whole nor any part of it was ever submitted by any other University for any research degree.

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<u>CONTENTS</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Declaration	i
Certificate	ii
Acknowledgement	iii
Chapter 1	1 - 23
Chapter 2	24 - 49
Chapter 3	50 - 80
Chapter 4	81 - 105
Chapter 5	106 - 115
Select Bibliography	116 - 120
Appendices	
Bio-Data	

Chapter 1

Introduction

Literature is interpreted as reflecting norms and values, as revealing ethos of culture, the progress of class struggle and certain types of other social facts. Literature reflects society through its matter and manner. Literature is known to have changed the direction of the human mind and set in motion movements that have altered our ways of life. The influence of literature on society is felt directly or indirectly. If literature expresses social sympathies, naturally it is bound to exercise some positive influence on our mind and attitude. Society reacts to literature in a living way. An inspiring work creates general influence on the society. It rouses the feelings and enthusiasm for welfare. But the quality and nature of the reflection depends upon the writer's attitude of mind. Some writers stress those aspects of social life, which put the traditional ways of life in the best possible way setting a high value on reverence for age-old ideals, respect for religion and chastity of woman. On the other hand, some writers tend to show how old ideals act as restraints on the natural freedom of the human mind, cripple the free movement of man and women in an unrestricted atmosphere, set for liberating new ideals and moving society that looks forward to newer ways of life. In this sense, literature plays its part as a reflector and a corrector of society. Literature is rather a complex, creative re-construction of lived reality. Whenever social events and experiences get transcribed in a work of literature, they acquire a different angle, a new perspective, a life and reality of their own.

Many of the modern authors have approached literature from the perspectives of economic, ethical, sociological, political, religious or educational question; and thus literature proves to be the most effective instrument to deliver their socialistic

propaganda. Social criticism functions as a conscious mode to analyze social structures functional in an age pertinent to a culture. With the help of social criticism, one can perceive the social mentality of an age. As the Russian critic Georgy Plekhanov observes, “The social mentality of an age is conditioned by that age’s social relations. This is nowhere quite as evident as in the history of art and literature.” (Eagleton 3)

“Social criticism” as a term has a wide meaning, hence the term “social” will be discussed in this research in the sense, as the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2013) puts it, “of or relating to human society, the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society.” This means that, the term “social” concerns the way the individuals, the characters of the novels, deal with each other, how the society is organized and how its institutions treat the individual and the group, which also brings economic, socio-political, religious and educational components into the scope of the study. Social criticism as a critical mode of understanding analyzes social structures which, when perceived as flawed, may elicit certain specific measures including radical reform or even revolutionary change. Its function is to distinguish that which is true from that what is merely interesting. In the words of Mr. Brownell, “it would apply the criterion of reason to the work of ascertaining value apart from mere attractiveness.” (Peck 137)

The term social criticism locates the causes of malicious conditions of the society in flawed social structures and aims at practical solutions by specific measures. Academic works of social criticism can belong to social philosophy, political economy, sociology, social psychology, psychoanalysis, cultural studies and other disciplines or reject all other academic forms of discourse. Harvey

Whitefield Peck has emphasized the importance of social criticism in his essay “The Social Criticism of Literature” in *The Sewanee Review*, as a new function of literary criticism as an academic specialty. He states:

It [criticism] now requires extraordinary assurance or exceptional versatility for a writer to deal, as did Matthew Arnold, with critical valuations of poetry ancient and modern, with Biblical and theological questions, and with contemporary problems of politics and sociology. (Peck 134)

Peck proposed similar standards of criticism like rationalized taste and social serviceability which could indicate the most fruitful methods of determining the value of literature. In this sense, Peck says “sociologists have already the equipment for the most reliable of literary critics.” (Peck 140)

In “Interpretation and Social Criticism” in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, Michael Walzer states that “social criticism is an external activity; what makes it possible is radical detachment.” (Walzer 31) Elaborating on this statement, he further writes,

First, critics must be emotionally detached, wrenched loose from the intimacy and warmth of membership: disinterested and dispassionate. Second, critics must be intellectually detached, wrenched loose from the parochial understandings of their own society (standardly taken to be self-congratulatory): open-minded and objective. (Walzer 39)

Fictional literature is an imaginative and insightful reading of a society whose complex relations give impetus to such a literature, and it can have a significant social impact. For instance, the 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe

furthered the anti-slavery movement in the United States, and the 1885 novel *Ramona*, by Helen Hunt Jackson, brought about changes in laws regarding Native Americans. Similarly, Upton Sinclair's 1906 novel *The Jungle* helped create new laws related to public health and food handling, and Arthur Morrison's 1896 novel *A Child of the Jago* caused England to change its housing laws. Hence social criticism deals with the exposure of faults in various aspects of society. It analyzes social structures which are seen as flawed and aims at practical solutions by specific measures to reform. Gertude Buck states:

Social criticism treats literature not as a finished product, but as a social process, and in doing so it does not make the common mistake of emphasizing one part of the process to the neglect of another. It gives positive expression to the consciousness of literature as a continuous activity, “generated immediately in the writer's consciousness and ultimately in the consciousness of his age,” but completing itself only as it passes over “into the reader's consciousness to enlighten or to stir it to action.” And social criticism knows itself also as a social process, organically related to the literature with which it deals and the society which it serves. (Buck 5)

Prominent writers in literature had incorporated the art of social criticism to their work. *Animal Farm*, written in 1944, is a book that tells the animal fable of a farm in which the farm animals revolt against their human masters. It is an example of social criticism in literature in which Orwell satirized the events in Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution. He anthropomorphizes the animals, and alludes each one to a counterpart in Russian history.

Charles Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* (1849) with the zeal of a social critic in order to expose the ugliness of material of the Victorian Age. In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens has presented the pathos of innocent childhood and protest against the abuses of powers, especially on the part of the governmental institution throwing light on the workhouse system of those days in 17th Century England. At the same time he has exposed the defects of the Poor Law of 1834 which aimed at abolishing begging and unemployment. The novel is an attack on the inhuman conditions of subsistence in the work houses, the idiocy of law and the unsatisfactory medical facilities. In *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), Dickens examines the inner soul, and shares with us how people are driven to the valley of human emotions, where desperation and anger reign, and what could happen afterwards if we let these emotions build up inside. Every human being is capable of becoming a ruthless, opportunistic being like Napoleon or Madame Defarge, if placed in the right place, at the right time. These novels show us that, unfortunately, human nature causes us to be vengeful and, for some of us, overly ambitious.

Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) is also a social novel because it deals with social issues which include the growing middle class, the upper class, the occupation of the governess, the issue of servitude and women. Jane's character presents and struggles with the issues of the growing middle class, the occupation of the governess and the subject of servitude. George Bernard Shaw has adopted the drama as his medium of expression, since he considers it the most effective instrument to the end of socialistic propaganda. Alienation, angst and pessimism became the central themes of Modern English Novel ranging from Virginia Woolf and James Joyce to Aldous Huxley and George Orwell.

The art of social criticism has been incorporated in the novels of Indian Writing in English as well. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) deals with India's transition from British colonialism to independence and the partition of British India. Mukul Kesavan delves into the relationship between the Muslim population and the nationalist movement in *Looking through Glass* (1995) which looks at a community which is often erased from nationalist histories and in the process offers a different, less heroic perspective on the closing years of the struggle for independence. Kesavan's novel begins in the present, with a young photographer taking the ashes of his grandmother to the Ganges. En route he falls from a railway bridge in pursuit of a picturesque shot, but wakes up to find himself in 1942 amid the Quit India agitation. *The Last Burden* (1994), a novel by Upamanyu Chatterjee portrays life in an Indian middle-class family. It portrays the struggle of the newer generation in order to move into an atomic family structure from a strictly hierarchical joint family structure where even the elders have an even more elderly person who dictates the terms. In Amit Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song* (1998), the child's Calcutta is still present but has been changed by two decades of communist rule and political violence across the country. In *A New World* (2000), Chaudhuri writes of a more ambivalent Calcutta, a city no more than a minor place of transit. Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* (2000) meditates on large historical and nationalist issues such as diaspora, migration, refugees, colonial hegemony, and the economic and cultural subjugation of populous regions by the West. The most impressive of Ghosh's novels remains his second book, *The Shadow Lines* (1988), which deals with relations between the different arms of a prospering bhadralok family, the DattaChaudhuris, displaced from Dhaka to Calcutta by the Partition.

A similar approach for the purpose of using social criticism in Indian literature underpins Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989). *The novel* takes an irreverent view of the development of modern India which is in tune with the scepticism of many recent historical novels. Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993) is a set in the early 1950s, formative years of the Nehru period, with the passing of the zamindari abolition legislation and the first election of the post-independence era looming. Shashi Deshpande *That Long Silence* (1988), sensitive woman lives grappled between the powerful currents of tradition and patriarchy, of terror and suppression. These women are inescapably subjected to continuous physical torture and sexual assaults in the society. Some facets of Kerala life which the novel captures in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) are communism, the caste system, and the Keralite Syrian Christian way of life.

India is the seventh largest country in the world by area, and the second most populous country with over 1.2 billion people. Gradually annexed by and brought under the administration of the British East India Company from the early 18th century and administered directly by the United Kingdom from the mid-19th century, India became an independent nation only in 1947 after a struggle for independence that was marked by non-violent resistance led by Mahatma Gandhi. However, it continues to face the challenges of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, corruption, malnutrition, inadequate public healthcare and terrorism. These remain prominent themes since the birth of Indian Writing in English. Almost one hundred and fifty years ago, Indian English fiction saw the light of the day as a manifestation of native literary creed when the pioneers of Indian Writing in English made relentless struggle to construct an independent identity of Indian social life through the medium of

English language. In pre-Independence India, the issues like suppression of women, exploitation of peasants, sufferings of rural folks born out of poverty and illiteracy, absurdity of caste prejudices, the awareness of political crisis and the passionate desire for independence and national awareness inspired the writers of Indian origin. With its vast geographical area, India is divided, unlike the United Kingdom, into numerous cultures and languages. Four world religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism—originated here, whereas Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam arrived in the 1st millennium and also helped shape the region's diverse culture. Over 700 million Indians live in rural areas. Of these around 190 million live below the poverty line. In fact, India has the largest number of poor people in the world. In addition, 84 per cent of our literate population is in the villages. (Murthy 220)

The diversity and magnitude of the problem create huge challenges. The ever widening gap between the rich and the poor leads to competitive corruption. Due to this rampant corruption, India has failed to uplift poverty. Therefore, its rural poor with 230 million people being undernourished – the highest for any country in the world. India ranks 84th in global corruption perception list among the 180 countries. Four in every 10 Indian children are malnourished, says UN report (2013). India ranks a lowly 66 out of 88 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2008. The report says, “India has more hungry people - more than 200 million - than any other country in the world”. One third of the world’s poor lives in India, 32.7% of India’s population is under poverty, according to the latest poverty estimates from the World Bank (2014). India ranks 136 out of 186 countries in the UN’s Human Development Index (2013).

Epics, lyrics, dramas, short stories and fables have their respectable ancestries, going back to several centuries, but it is only during the nineteenth century that the

novel has emerged as a literary phenomenon in India. The Western impact on India's cultural front had resulted in the development of formal written prose in the regional languages, first as functional, and then gradually as an artistic medium. The translation of the Bible was followed by the translation of Western classics, including novels. Novels had been published in a dozen Indian languages, and its influence had been more intimate and purposive than such influence in the fields of poetry or drama. (Iyengar 314) The first novel in Indian Writing in English was by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864). It was followed by Durgeshnandini in Bengali in the following year, which appeared in an English translation in 1890. Several novels in English came out between 1866 and 1886; Raj Lakshmi Devi's *The Hindu Wife* (1876), Toru Dutt's *Bianca* (1878), Kali Krishna Lahiri's *Roshinara* (1881), H. Dutt's *Bijoy Chand* (1888) and Khetrapal Chakravarti's *Sarata and Hingana* (1895), all of which were of historical interests.

India's pioneer political activists right from Ranade, Naoroji, Gokhale, Tilak, Aurbindo, Gandhi and Nehru were conscious of the corresponding perils of socio-economic inequality, injustice and neglect. This plight of the poor has remained in focus in the writings of several Indian English writers in general and the novelists in particular. Subsequently during 1935 to 1945, the trio of R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao made collective efforts to introduce social renaissance in Indian subcontinent. Mulk Raj Anand, the social activist, presented a true vision of Indian life in his novels *Untouchables* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939) and *Across the Black Waters* (1940). He has harnessed the novel as a social critique to highlight the current political action and trembling humanity, advocating the downtrodden and the underprivileged. Anand comments:

All these heroes, as the other men and women who had emerged in my novels and short stories...were the reflections of real people... They were not mere phantoms... And I was doing no more than what a writer does when he seeks to interpret the truth from the realities of his life. (Iyengar 334)

R.K. Narayan explored the nature of life and reality in his works like *Swami and Friends* (1935), *Bachelor of Arts* (1936), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945), *Mr. Sampath* (1949), *The Financial Expert* (1952) and *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955); and Raja Rao experimented with form. They set a strong foundation of Indian fiction to provide an independent identity to Indian fiction at global level. Their fiction focused on small-town middle class folk of India's backwaters torn between tradition and modernity, between the past and the future that was in the making. The central theme remained 'East-West Encounter' and its effect on the Indian tradition. (Sablok 1) The preferred narrative mode for these pioneers was mythic, and their target audience a handful of English-educated middle class people. The fictions of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan have caught the attention of the audience because of their deep concern with the social problems of their contemporary society.

The 1960 to 1970 writers like Ruth Pravar Jabwalla, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Manohar Malgonkar looked for answers to the question often raised in academic circles: can the Indian sensibility be expressed in English? The 1970's could more than fulfill the expectations of the '60s. The decade was marked by an endless variety in the handling of themes and variations, coupled with varying modes and techniques of narration influenced by Russian and American short fiction. By the end of the nineteen seventies, Indian English novel had reached a stagnant stage, in terms of

both content and form. The old masters of the craft like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan, who had started writing in the 1930's, reached their peaks in 1960's. No new novelist drew the attention of serious readers after Arun Joshi and Anita Desai.

During the last quarter of the 20th century social problems facing women were consciously articulated by writers such as Anita Desai, Nayan Tara Sehgal, Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur, Nargis Dalal and Bharati Mukherjee. They opened new windows to articulate the voice of the subjugation of women and their encountering with the dilemmas of the woman's world. At the turn of the 21st century, however, a new trend seems to be emerging: works of new writers like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra, Gita Mehta, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, V.S. Naipaul, Mahasweta Devi and Kiran Desai attempt creative expression of the prolific quality of the Indian mind to assimilate the newly emerging situations and the complex dilemmas of the modern world.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) has emerged as a classic in its depiction of India's partition 1947 as a social, political and psychological disaster for the succeeding generations. Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993) illustrates the emerging polity of Post-Colonial India in the form of a political fable. The novel follows the story of four families over a period of 18 months as a mother searches for a suitable boy to marry her daughter. novel alternatively offers satirical and earnest examinations of national political issues in the period leading up to the first post-Independence national election of 1952, including inter-sectarian animosity, the status of lower caste peoples such as the jatav (untouchable community), land reforms and the eclipse of the feudal princes and landlords, academic affairs, inter and intra-family relations The Oscar winning Hollywood movie *The Slum Dog Millionaire* (2005) by

Danny Boyle portrays the darkest part of our country where “rottenness and corruption”, with degraded and degenerated moral qualities replacing the age old moral values and qualities highlighting the ‘darkness’ of India as in V.S Naipaul’s novel *Area of Darkness* (1964). In Kiran Desai’s *Inheritance of Loss* (2006), poverty is the root cause of GNLFF movement (political party in the Darjeeling District of West Bengal, India. It was formed in 1980 by Subhashv Ghisingh with the objective of demanding a Gorkhaland state within India), depicting the extreme polarities of the poor and rich which brings drastic changes in the attitude and love of the characters. Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997) is famous for its attack on the class/caste structure of Indian society where the lower classes are victims of class disparities and discrimination in society. Both *Inheritance of Loss* and *The God of Small Things* deal with secret transgressive love across social classes in a way that underscores the disparity in the world. Similar to the two, Adiga’s characters Ashok and Pinky belong to different religion order, and Bhagat’s Gopal and Aarti comes from different economic background. Mulk Raj Anand’s *Coolie* (1936) maps the life of the underdog, the life of a village boy who caters to India’s upper classes. Anand’s novel ended with the death of a teenage Munoo from tuberculosis, unlike Adiga’s protagonist Balram, who grows into a man, and prospers after robbing and killing his master.

In the new millennium, the clarion call of Information Technology and globalization has rocked the established pattern of behavior and has modified the structures of familial relationships, professional life, paradigms of morality, economic patterns and the commitments of life conditions. New challenges have paved a way for the new currents suitable enough to reconstruct the human experiences in the new world order. In Indian society, the population involvement in IT Hubs has resulted in

the birth of multi-cultural societies, involvement of man and woman in corporate world, entrepreneurship and the persistent stress of the challenges of education and professional competence. The new light of the new millennium became a guiding motif to the creative art of writers like Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat.

Two texts have been selected to take critical view of issues focusing on social issues like caste and class system, individual aspiration, exploitive loyalty, patriarchal authority, corruption and poverty in India. The texts are Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) and Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020* (2011). The selected authors appear to have articulated almost identical views on the dominant social structures of their times. In both the novels, *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020*, the novel deals with the protagonist's struggle to establish themselves in the hostile social environment and the decline of traditional culture under the impact of Westernization. Both the writers feel greatly concerned about the subordination of the Eastern culture to the Western.

Adiga's attitude toward poverty and servitude may be compared to that of V.S. Naipaul who directly expressed his disgust, drawing severe criticism from the Nationalist Indians. Adiga's reference to the backward area in India, Bihar, in particular, as 'Darkness,' is reminder of 'Darkness' in Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* (1964) where he ruthlessly exposed the hypocrisy in Indian society. According to Naipaul, Indian society is mimicry of "the fairy-tale land of Anglo-India, of clubs and sahibs and syces and bearers." He says,

It is the mimicry of an old country which has been without a native aristocracy for a thousand years and has learned to make room for outsiders, but only at

the top. The mimicry changes, the inner world remains constant: this is the secret of survival. (Naipaul 56)

Adiga also expresses a similar view; his protagonist in *The White Tiger* writes, “For this land, India, has never been free. First the Muslims, then the British boss us around. In 1947 the British left, but only a moron would think that we become free then” (Adiga 22) While Naipaul makes a thorough study of history, Adiga hardly refers to the past of India – except, however, some stray remarks – and concentrates on the present corruption and the state of euphoria. Moreover, while Naipaul’s attack is direct and almost without humour, Adiga uses ironic comments and black humour. (Dhawan 45) Like Naipaul and Adiga, Salman Rushdie draws greatly on historic allusions and religious topics in his work. Because of their bold statements, these authors have been the target of active criticism for their political and religious ideas.

Both Naipaul and Adiga come down heavily on Indian mentality of servitude. Adiga writes in *The White Tiger*:

An Indian revolution? No, sir, it won’t happen. People in this country are still waiting for the war of their freedom to come from somewhere else – from the jungles, from the mountains, from China, from Pakistan. That will never happen. Every man must make his own Benaras. The book of your revolution sits in the pit of your belly, young Indian. Crap it out and read. Instead of which, they’re all sitting in front of colour TVs and watching cricket and shampoo advertisements.” (Adiga 304)

Naipaul also expressed a similar view in his novel *Magic Seeds* (2004). He observes that the Indian people are not ready for revolution, that most of them have accepted their servitude as the only condition of survival while a few “maniacs” kill

well-off people indiscriminately with the logic “if you kill the rich man, that will be one less man to oppress you.” (Naipaul 144) This holds true for Adiga who reflects, “Once I was a driver to a master, but now I am a master of drivers.” (Adiga 302) Like Mulk Raj Anand in his novel *Coolie*, both Bhagat and Adiga express their views about poverty and how their protagonists are victims of this extreme poverty.

The White Tiger is the debut novel by Indian author Aravind Adiga (born October 23, 1974). It was first published in 2008 and won the 40th Man Booker Prize in the same year. Other works of Aravind Adiga includes *Between the Assassinations* (2008) and *Last Man in Tower* (2011). Aravind Adiga was born in Madras in 1974 and has subsequently lived in India, Australia, the U.S. and the U.K. He currently lives in Mumbai. The novel provides a darkly humorous perspective of India’s class struggle in a globalized world as told through a retrospective narration from Balram Halwai, a village boy who journeys from the darkness of village life to the light of entrepreneurial success in an utterly amoral, brilliantly irreverent, deeply endearing and altogether unforgettable manner. The language used is lucid and spontaneous.

Born in a village in the dark heart of India, the son of a rickshaw-puller, Balram is taken out of school by his family and put to work in a teashop. As he crushes coal and wipes tables, he nurses a dream of escape, of breaking away from the deep mud of Mother Ganga into whose murky depths have seeped the remains of a hundred generations.

According to Michael Walzer:

Men and women standing behind the veil of ignorance, deprived of all knowledge of their own way of life, forced to live with other men and women

similarly deprived, will perhaps, with whatever difficulties, find a *modus vivendi* — not a way of life but a way of living. (Walzer 14)

His big chance comes when a rich village landlord hires him as a chauffeur for his son, daughter-in-law and their two Pomeranian dogs. From behind the wheel of a Honda, Balram first sees Delhi. The city is a revelation of a much wider view of the society compared to Laxmangarh. Amid the cockroaches and call-centres, the 36,000,004 gods, the slums, the shopping malls and the crippling traffic jams, Balram's re-education begins. But unfortunately there are innumerable evil forces which we call 'corruption' that exist in countless forms. Caught between his instinct to be a loyal son and servant, and his desire to better himself, he learns of a new way of life at the heart of a new India.

Balram transcends his sweet-maker caste and becomes a successful entrepreneur, establishing his own taxi service after killing his master and stealing his money. Balram represents, as he himself says, "tomorrow" (Adiga 6), thus in this way he also represents his own class. In the light of Marxist analysis of the economic structure of society, Balram represents the bourgeoisie class, the class that constitutes the economic base of the Indian social structure.

Revolution 2020 (2011) is a novel by Chetan Bhagat (born April 22, 1974) written in 2011, its story is concerned with a love triangle, corruption and a journey of self-discovery. Chetan Bhagat is the author of four other bestselling novels – *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night at a Call Center* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008) and *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* (2009). With their simple plot lines, easily identifiable characters and situations and inexpensive pricing, his books target an aspiration-driven youth market. The *New York Times* called him "the biggest

selling English language novelist in India's history.” (Agarwal 1) Bhagat writes for leading English and Hindi newspapers, focusing on youth and national development issues. He is also a motivational speaker and a columnist. He was named one of the ‘100 Most Influential People in the World’ by *Time* magazine and one of the world’s ‘100 Most Creative People in Business’ by Fast Company, USA. His collection of selected essays and columns were published in the book *What Young India Wants* (2012). Chetan quits his international investment banking career in 2009, to devote his entire time to writing and make change happen in the country. He lives in Mumbai with his wife Anusha and his twin sons Shyam and Ishaan. The works of Chetan Bhagat shows the dreams and hopes of an aggressively ambitious generation whose laughter is tinged with tears. His characters are irreverent young people.

There remains a pall of gloom about these bright young people, an existential angst about their future and an unrelenting presence of their past. This curious blend of humour and pathos, of hopes and fears, of success and failure marks his-best selling dark comedies of contemporary India. (Sablok xii)

Revolution 2020 comes with a sub-title “Love, Corruption and Ambition.” The novel highlights the exploration of the life of three friends – Raghav, Gopal and Aarti. Raghav is a brilliant scholar who got educated from an NIT and is dedicated to his dreams and studies. Gopal belongs to a middle class family of limited resource who does not seem to find luck in education. Aarti, the daughter of the District Magistrate, is an emblem of female beauty and grace. She is a source of pleasure and consolation for both of them. The novel opens with a funny and light interaction of all these three characters. The first-person narrative unfolds *Revolution 2020* in the voice of Gopal Mishra, a poor lower-middle-class Varanasi boy. Religious sensibility and human

love dominates the narration. In the *Teresian Journal of English Studies*, Rajarajeshwari Ashok reviews,

Revolution 2020 as the title suggests is not a story set ahead in time. Nor is it the story of a great rebellion that brings forth a tremendous transformation in the society. Like all other Chetan Bhagat novels, *Revolution 2020*, too, is basically a love story. The plot revolves around the lives of three childhood friends, Gopal, Raghav and Aarti, who live in Varanasi. As each struggles to fulfil their own dreams, they become aware of the deep rooted corruption, especially in the education system of the country. (Ashok 123)

In the second section entitled “Seven Years Later,” Gopal goes on elaborating the spiritual and sublime spectrum of life at Varanasi. For him, the greatest fascination was the boat ride with Aarti at the river Ganga. As a foil to his romantic ambition, there is the anxiety of IIT-JEE and AIEEE. The obsession for the admission in NIT’s has become the focal point of the novel. Despite his ailing father, Gopal struggles to make it to engineering college, but fails heartbreakingly.

I imagined myself in a sea, along with lakhs of other low-rankers, kicking and screaming to breathe. The waters closed over us, making us irrelevant to the Indian education system.(Bhagat 87)

The section entitled “Kota” presents an elaborate picture of Kota. The arrangements of coachings, the temptations and illusions for the students are all collectively presented to expose the creeping illusions ruining the life and sensibility of young technocrats. Kota is just another sort of illusion swarming the young technical aspirants from all the corners of the country. These coaching institutes are just another mode of business sectors that provide opportunities of self employment to

the academicians, organizers and financiers. Gopal realizes the misery of Baba and their limited money, Kota does not give any opportunity for his personal desires.

“What I really want is not in Kota, I am leaving it behind in Varanasi.” (Bhagat 46)

In *Revolution 2020*, the use of flashback technique in the first person narrative enriches the authenticity of expression. Gopal stays at Kota but his sensibility remains rooted in Varanasi. He has a consistent longing for the company of Aarti. His confessions like “I miss you” and “I have no one” are highly emotional. It gives an insight into the isolation creeping fast in the mind of Gopal. In the personal crisis of Gopal, Chetan Bhagat explores how the psyche of adolescence moves:

For many youths, adolescence is a period of torturous self consciousness characterized by awakening sexual drives and rapid growth of the body, by doubts and shame over what they are already sure they are and what they might become. (Agarwal 120)

Gopal confesses: “Awww Gopal, you are homesick. Talk to me whenever you want.” (Bhagat 63) Here, Chetan Bhagat intends to communicate that it is the obligation of society to save youths from despair and despondency. To keep oneself busy is not a mechanism of future building but a method to escape the obscurities of isolated life. Moreover, such isolation and loneliness generate the psyche of discontent and anger. Submerged in the pool of devastation, Gopal continues, “Increasing your percentile in a hyper-competitive class is not easy. You have to live, breathe and sleep IIT.” (Bhagat 68)

Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat are among the Indian writers who dare to explore the reality of India in the current years. *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020* are set in backdrop of economic boom in India that has ushered in great chasm

between the haves and have not. Although India is on the rise in its economical growth among the nations, it is still punctured with various problems like corruption, faulty education system, local administration elections, misuse of Government welfare schemes, Judicial system, local administration; these are some faults which are discussed in both the novels. Zamindari system and poor health services are issues that mark the dark image of India. Political system and bureaucratic set up in the novels refer to the darkest areas of our country.

In the narrative of *The White Tiger*, it is Balram Halwai that articulates them. Similarly, the words of Gopal articulate the narrative in *Revolution 2020*. Both the novels are nearly a monologue of the protagonist's views and memories. But both the texts are so political, and so analytical that it is impossible not to see the voice of Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat written into everything. Davis Dunbar McElroy has written:

And our literature is the work of desperate men; men whose anguish and despair have driven them to see further and to see more clearly than it is possible for most of us to see. (McElroy 19)

Balram expresses Adiga's frustration and socio-political arguments for greater democracy and justice in India – particularly with regard to alleviating poverty. In *The White Tiger* Balram implies the young will fight for reform, to be free from the constraints of poverty and fight for greater freedom and justice in India. In *Revolution 2020*, Gopal expresses Bhagat's angst and frustration in witnessing the plight of the youth and the corrupt educational system. He cries out for a 'revolution' so that India could see better days. "A revolution that will dismantle the old corrupt system and put a new one in place." (Bhagat 197) Both Balram and Gopal strive to fulfill their

individual aspirations, and these two novels reveal a journey through the various corrupt systems in fulfilling their quest for liberty.

Both Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat have explored the issues of socio-political, economic, religious and educational aspects as they narrate simultaneously the account of their protagonist in their journey from childhood to maturity within the contemporary India. Everything the protagonist sees or does pertain to the society he lives in. However, within a society that ensues various discourses (economic, religious and educational), the question arises whether the stance of the individual is embraced or at stake. Society is responsible for nurturing an individual, at the same time it could hinder the aspiration of an individual. This is where the sociological insight of the authors comes to play. The study on how the authors deliver their social message through their protagonists, and through the textual narrative as a whole determine why the novel is studied as a social critique.

With just three years apart from publishing their books, one may observe that Adiga and Bhagat hold parallel mindset in responding to the social issues of India. Both the authors have touched upon the social issues of poverty, corruption, servitude, patriarchal authority, caste and class system that are still prevalent in India in the 21st century which are studied closely in the subsequent chapters. In the view of Adiga and Bhagat, the social structure of India is in need of a reformation, the measures however may be a radical reform or revolutionary. The present study is supposed to use social criticism as a tool to locate the reasons for malicious conditions in the Indian society adhering to the critic's aim at practical solutions by way of specific measures which might include a somewhat violent process or milder revolution of the mind.

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Chapter 2

Individual aspiration and the quest for liberty

The word “aspiration” is derived from the Latin word *aspirare* which means “to breathe upon.” Goals are typically about convergence, narrowing and focusing on an outcome. On the other hand, aspirations are expansive. They create new possibilities with a wide peripheral vision, sensing new opportunities as they arise. In other words, aspirations are emotional and inspirational, panting with desire. It is the inspirationally felt need that the individual aspires to achieve. The main fuel of achievement comes from aspirations that are higher than the status quo. In both *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020*, we have two overtly ambitious protagonists struggling to achieve their individual aspirations. Both Balram and Gopal aspire to liberate themselves from the clutches of class distinction and poverty. They aspire to meet realistic goals of escaping the status quo in order to experience new sense of accomplishments.

In *The White Tiger*, Balram Halwai recounts his experience in the form of letters written within seven nights. Pulled out of school and forced to work in a tea shop by his family, Balram comes to terms with his life. Through the desolate character of the young lad, the writer represents every village boy who is constrained to swathe the sweetness of his life with the ludicrousness of crude truth. Through the letters written to the Chinese Premier, Adiga surveys the hidden depths of the nation.

At the very onset of the novel, we see that Balram is a lover of freedom and individual liberty. The reason why the letters were specifically addressed to the Chinese Premier and not anyone else is “out of respect for the love of liberty shown

by the Chinese people.” (Adiga 5) Earlier Balram has read about the history of Hong Kong, he recounts as follows:

It said that you Chinese are great lovers of freedom and individual liberty. The British tried to make you their servants, but you never let them do it. I admire that... Only three nations have never let themselves be ruled by foreigners: China, Afghanistan, and Abyssinia. These are the only three nations I admire. (Adiga 5)

Balram’s confession to the Chinese Premier in the form of a letter helps him to get in terms with himself; it helps him to liberate the burden he has carried in his heart for so long, the outspoken anger and his voiceless plight. Adiga uses China alternately as a symbol of economic power and thus freedom, and economic power caused by authoritarian government. China’s prosperity comes with a contradiction: it has occurred under extreme regulation of both the economy and society, but has achieved a huge reduction in poverty and inequality. The balance of social freedom with economic prosperity is one Western nations are uncomfortable with, as it could delegitimize capitalism’s ideological power. In the novel, there is bitter admiration for China’s economy, regardless of its politics compromising human rights:

Apparently, sir, you Chinese are far ahead of us in every respect, except that you don’t have entrepreneurs. And our nation, though it has no drinking water, electricity, sewage system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy, or punctuality, does have entrepreneurs. (Adiga 4)

Corresponding with the Premier through the letters, Balram tries to deliver the story he wants to relate. It seems as if Balram has too much pressure on his chest which he deliberately wants to articulate, and the letters to the Chinese Premier offer a

sort of confession for him. The letters narrate his journey from his shaky past to a successful present, throwing light on the 'India of Darkness' and the 'India of Light', the rural and the urban life. The narration wades through the mind of Balram, his journey along with its unforgivable misdeeds, however one uncritically nurtures a kind of sympathetic attachment for the protagonist. Balram, outwardly a loyal, honest, and faithful servant but inwardly a restless aspirant for doing better in life, kills his master Ashok and grabs his money. He does not allow his predestined servitude to last, because he detests being a straggler.

The continuous irony of the protagonist's life is depicted in the social context both in the village and the metropolitan cities. The protagonist, Balram mockingly describes the story of his life "The Autobiography of a Half-Baked Indian," endorsing to a large number of Indians like him, inborn talented but defied schooling because of the corruption of the system or the extreme criticism of his family. This implies that both these forces also acted against the aspiring Balram's future, in addition to the social structure.

Me, and thousands of others in this country like me, are half-baked, because we were never allowed to complete our schooling. Open our skulls, look in with a penlight, and you'll find an old museum of ideas: sentences of history or mathematics remembered from school textbooks, sentences about politics read in a newspaper while waiting for someone to come to an office, triangles and pyramids seen on the torn pages of the old geometry which every tea shop in this country uses to wrap its snacks in, bits of All India Radio bulletins, things that drop into your mind, like lizards from the ceiling, in the half-hour before falling asleep – all these ideas, half formed and half-digested and half correct, mix up with other half-cooked ideas in your head, and I guess these

half-formed ideas bugger one another, and make more half-formed ideas, and this is what you act on and live with. (Adiga 10-11)

Nirad C. Chaudhuri had written *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951) and thirty years later, in 1980, Salman Rushdie had written *Midnight's Children*. Adiga's protagonist joins this line of the unknown Indians wanting to be heard and their desire to be inserted into official history.

The concept of the Half-Baked Indian also echoes Homi Bhabha's hybridity. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha demands that we should try to understand cultural differences as being based on hybridities created in moments of historical transformation. We should no longer classify groups of people based on "organic," pre-existing traits attributed to ethnic groups. Instead, we should locate the differences created "in-between" time and space spanning different cultures. People's characteristics are not limited to their ethnic heritage, but rather are subject to change and modification through experience. Bhabha discusses the interstitial relationships formed between cultures as well as those formed in the public and private spheres. Bhabha challenges the binary opposition of West/Non-West. Instead, he sees post-colonial cultures as "hybrids" identified by their own people as well as the colonial power. Today's society is made up of hybrids of different ethnic backgrounds and present social experiences. This is the place where the crossing over of time and cultural differences occurs and where new signs of identity are formed, the identity of a Half-Baked Indian.

Being himself a Half- Baked Indian, Balram understands that entrepreneurs are made from Half-Baked clay. To take part in the rat race, his training begins in Laxmangarh. Balram was raised from the underdog community with "no drinking

water, electricity, sewage system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy, or punctuality” (Adiga 4) but somehow he manages to achieve his own aspirations although the measures demand extreme procedure. The fact that Balram calls himself ‘half-baked’ is worth noting. Being a half-baked Indian, it justifies the fact that he is given half freedom to decide for himself, which is a lot better than being completely deprived a choice. The advantage of being a half-baked is that one can have the privilege of choosing between the good and bad, moral and immoral. However, Balram is too ambitious to give a chance to right actions.

Balram knows very well that in order to bring about a change, in order to fulfill one’s aspiration, one need to be different.

Go to a shop anywhere along the Ganga, sir, and look at the men working in that tea shop – men, I say, but better to call them human spiders that go crawling in between and under the tables with rags in their hands, crushed humans in crushed uniforms, sluggish and unshaven, in their thirties or forties or fifties but still ‘boys.’ But that is your fate if you do your job well – with honesty, dedication, and sincerity, the way Gandhi would have done it, no doubt. I did my job with near dishonesty, lack of dedication, and insincerity – and so the tea shop was a profoundly enriching experience” (Adiga 51)

It is evident here that Balram, as an individual denounces the way of Ghandhi. He is by nature dishonest and he holds no appreciation for honesty, dedication and sincerity. However, his dishonesty earns him ample of time which he exercises at the tea shop in Laxmangarh to spy on every customer at every table, and overhear everything they say. Instead of wiping out spots from the table and crushing coals for the oven, he was pursuing his own kind of education. This shows that he never

believes in the right means to right ends. This further shows that Balram is always inwardly led by his ambitions to fulfill, by foul means. Naturally, the dirty images of his society would fill his vision. Later, Balram boast of this in a mocking tone, “I am tomorrow... I am a self-taught entrepreneur. That’s the best kind there is, trust me.” (Adiga 6) He learns that in modern India if any one performs his duty sincerely and dutifully, he fails to rise in life. From the journey from village to city, from Laxmangarh to Delhi, Balram notices number of provincial towns that have pollution and noise and traffic of a big city – without any hint of the true city’s sense of history, planning and grandeur. He calls them, “Half-baked cities, built for half-baked men.” (Adiga 53)

In the journey of making India an economic superpower in the 21st century, Adiga never forgets the needs of the thousands of poor Indians who live in miserable conditions and are denied decent health, care, education or employment. He comments:

I don’t think a novelist should just write about his own experience. Yes, I am the son of a doctor, yes, I had a rigorous formal education, but for me the challenge as a novelist is to write about people who aren’t anything like me... This is the reality for a lot of Indians and it’s important that it gets written about, rather than just hearing about five per cent of people in my country who are doing well. (Dhawan 115)

Adiga captures the unspoken voice of people from “the Darkness” – the impoverished areas of rural India, and how he “wanted to do so without sentimentality or portraying them as mirthless humorless weaklings as they are usually.” (Adiga 19) Adiga draws our attention through the life of the poor people, like his protagonist

Balram, who too have some aspirations – to make it in life, to become rich and to lead a comfortable life.

Like Adiga, Chetan Bhagat has introduced some unique trends in the Indian English literature as well. He has focused the interest of the youth and the aspirations they hold. He has attempted to guide their ripe energies into proper direction and his novels touch an emotional chord of the third generation. These display the ambition of the youth, mixed with fears and tinged with tears. Their concern lies specifically in the innovation of education system and the society as a whole. In *Revolution 2020*, Bhagat conveys what an aspiring student goes through if he somehow does not end up qualifying to premier educational institutions in India, the myth that these institutes have created for themselves in the minds of students and parents alike and how it is being perceived as being a shortcut way to riches. The character of the protagonist mirrors the majority of people in India and can therefore be readily identified by anybody as to be his own.

In the two novels *Revolution 2020* and *The White Tiger*, both the authors, Bhagat and Adiga can be associated with the angry decade of 1950's in the history of contemporary English literature. The term 'Angry Young Man' originates from the title of Leslie Allen Paul's autobiography that appeared in 1951. However, it became a cult-figure, a critical catch-phrase, with the popularity of John Osborne's *Look Back In Anger* (1956), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), John Wain's *Hurry On Down* (1953) and John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957) also contributed to the growth of the angry phenomenon with their ironic, anti-establishment fictional creations. These angry novels have as their theme the striving of their protagonists to escape from the negative aspects of their class. They wish to exclude poverty,

narrowness, lack of status and desire to achieve the wealth, education or respect that is associated with the middle class. Men like them succeed but they pay a high price for it. Both the novels; *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020* show that the successful characters forget close contact with the family and neighbours. They lead lives of great tension.

The tensions and contradictions between the roots and aspirations can become a long term problem for those who have moved out of their class and for the family that has been left behind; there is no blue-print for how it should be solved. In the first place the individual is involved in a lengthy process of weighing the pros and cons of the two life-styles – community against individualism, or emotions against intellect. At the same time he is aware that his own development is being in turn, weight by his family. Is he still the hero of the class, the pioneer, beating them at their own game, or is he getting above himself; becoming one of them as opposed to remaining one of us? Thirdly, he is trying to come to terms with his new class, to be accepted without being compromised, to be more than a token figure or an eternal outsider. (Sablok 95)

Chetan Bhagat is himself something of an angry young man. If we consider his non-fiction writings, his sense of indignation and frustration with post-colonial India is quite evident. In *Revolution 2020*, Gopal suffers from complete isolation. Neither can he go back to the strata he has just left, nor can he fully adjust with the new class he has attempted to become part of. His over drinking is a symptom of his frustration and guilt. He seemingly appears to win, but he only wins by joining the upper class. He does not defeat the upper class but joins them.

Chetan Bhagat's fictional world is a microscopic representation of the realities of postmodern society that are responsible for the suffering and perversion of human beings. He finds that in the framework of adverse conditions, man has no free will to express his own choices. On certain occasions, life becomes too burdensome and it leads individual on war both against the well designed social constructs and one's own inner self.

Everyone will give you opinion on how to live your life. No one, no one will give you good advice on how to end it worse, they will tell you to continue living, without any respect for individual choice. (Bhagat, *Hindustan Times*: July 27, 2009)

Similarly, in *The White Tiger*, Adiga comes out as the angry young man of India who shouts at the politicians for not taking basic steps to lift the million Indians who live in extreme poverty; at the executives whose corrupt practices erode the effectiveness of the meager anti-poverty programmes currently in place, at the well-off citizens who go on arguing about corruption, but never do anything to prevent the pervasive corruption.

The absence of individuality or identity is evident from the life of the narrator who comes from a nameless and birthday-less past with a written fate as a member of the lower caste. In *The White Tiger*, Adiga is first defined through nonidentity by the fact that he has never been given a name nor known his exact age. He has always been called "Munna," which just means "boy," which his teacher claims is "not a real name" (Adiga 13) and subsequently names him "Balram ... the sidekick of the god Krishna" (Adiga 14). Although there is consideration through the novel of the narrator's place in society that is dependent on his position in India's caste system, his

lack of name challenges a strict fate through its potential for mutability. The teacher already challenges the notion that we are born into identities by labeling Munna with the new name of Balram and tells Balram that his own name is Krishna, therefore placing Balram as his “sidekick” in the classroom. The new name may be a step up from “boy” in the hierarchy, but a “sidekick” is not only below another by definition but also at the mercy of the other's fate. “Balram” is an elevated status of a name with less freedom of identity. However, Balram's father seems to have no care what his son is called: “If it's what he wants, then we'll call you that” (Adiga 14). He does not attempt to design Balram's fate, and we are suddenly aware that the narrator need not be caught in the continuous cycle of father and son that dominates class definitions worldwide.

According to the Hindu avatar belief, Balaram is the elder brother of Krishna, and their younger sister is Subhadra. Some say that Krishna is Vishnu, Balarama is Shiva and Subhadra is Devi, thus the three siblings represent the three main schools of Hindu theism: Vaishnava, Shaiva and Shakta. Balarama carries the plough and the pestle, associating him with agricultural activities while Krishna carries a flute, associating him with animal husbandry. Adiga's treatment of Balram as a ‘sidekick’ of his teacher Krishna is questionable in the above.

The White Tiger and *Revolution 2020* expose the binary nature of Indian Culture, the Light and the Darkness. The novel thus portrays two extreme dimensions of modern India: on one side is the changing face of high-tech and rich India and, on one other side, is the darker side of India, revealing the culture of caste and the snare of corruption. Both Balram and Gopal are exposed to both these varying extremities. It is through their observations and narration that we are exposed to the injustice that

pervades the Indian society. *The White Tiger* concentrates on the protagonist Balram, his rise from the servant status, the emancipation from his caste and his rise to the position of his own master. Joining a rich family exposes him to a wider world and sparks his furious ambition to succeed in life and to live like rich men and women whom he serves. Like Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, *Revolution 2020* depicts the socio-political milieu of India. Bhagat's *Revolution 2020* distinguishes between the powerful politicians and the powerless peasant like Gopal's father. The distinction between the rich and poor, the powerful and powerless, between the god of big things and the god of small things, between India of Light and Darkness, Big Bellies and Small Bellies, runs through the works of Chetan Bhagat and Aravind Adiga.

In *The White Tiger*, the caste system has been ironically reduced to "Men with Big Bellies and men with Small Bellies." The viciousness of the so-called modern rising and shinning India is in stark contrast to value based traditional India as Balram claimed,

To sum up - in the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat - or get eaten up. (Adiga 64).

While in Delhi and Gurgaon , Balram counters two kinds of India , one that eats and the other to be eaten, two types of people, prey and predators. In *Revolution 2020*, MLA Shukla holds the biggest belly as he feeds on everyone around him to ensure the establishment of his economic power. Both Balram and Gopal have witnessed the privileges that entails by being a fat belly, hence they choose to be a predator, the man with a big belly, at any cost. In their greed for money and

desperation for glamorous life, they follow the path of crime, which they have chosen with their half-baked decision. Emulating his master, Balram becomes a usurper by resorting to fraudulent means, corruption and misdemeanor, ignoring all refined ways of life. Likewise, the moment Gopal succumbs to corruption is the day he experienced the privileges of holding power for the first time over another person.

The binary nature of Indian Culture could be traced mainly because of the difference in money power. The division of the society based on social and economic status is interpreted through Marxism; the bourgeois and proletariats, exploitive and exploited, or politically the ruler and ruled. Both the protagonists Balram and Gopal belong to the underclass and hence they are studied as a representative of the downtrodden who aspire to liberate themselves from their status quo. According to what Marx calls “the economic structure of society,” the economic structure consists of the “base” or “infrastructure.” From the economic base, in every period, emerges a “superstructure” – certain form of laws and politics, a certain kind of state, whose essential function is to legitimate the power of the social class which owns the means of economic production. (Eagleton 5) Both Balram and Gopal aspire to come out of the bourgeois class, both wanted to liberate themselves from the exploitation of ruling class. For them, the response to each and every situation that they encounter in modern India, through their masters, further witnessing the glitz as well as the unjust system around them, they begin to question their position. The realization of their place in the society leads to resenting their condition for such a life and the desire to exit the periphery of their poverty to being part of the “superstructure.” Both Balram and Gopal are the strong voice of the underclass in which marginal farmers, landless labourers, jobless youths, rickshaw-pullers, auto/taxi drivers, servants, prostitutes, beggars and all other underprivileged figure. The underclass is the result of poverty,

illiteracy, unemployment, caste and culture conflict, economic disparity, corrupt education system, poor health services, poor police services which are systematically run by socially empowered classes. These classes collectively operate to perpetuate the underclass. The underclass constitutes what Marx called the economic base.

It takes them no time to realize that hierarchy, sycophancy, corruption and ruthlessness prevail the society that they live in. Balram begins to long for a better life for himself and is no longer proud to wear the driver's uniform, which in the beginning of the novel had so fascinated him. He begins to desire the basic things of life which have so far been denied to him by circumstances. Likewise, Gopal no longer plans to sit for entrance exams, he realized now that it was far profitable to own a college than search for one. "Stupid people go to college. Smart people own them." (Bhagat 177) Hence, both the protagonists aspire to define themselves with materialistic wealth.

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga discusses how the main character has developed from childhood to maturity, not only in terms of the physical growth but also the mental growth. Likewise in *Revolution 2020*, Bhagat traces the childhood friendship of Gopal, Aarti and Raghav till adulthood. Raghav's mentality grows into a deep hatred for corruption and craves for revolution. This type of mental growth is also evident in the portrayal of Gopal in *Revolution 2020*. Gopal, in association with MLA Shukla, is now aware that money is essential in asserting one's own identity. Through the character of MLA Shukla, his mind develops a whole new perception towards success which is corruptive in nature. Balram's growth is based on his observation of his master Ashok. In this way, the adaptation of the *Bildungsroman* is significant with regards to the development of the main characters in both the novels.

[Bildungsroman] is a genre that relates individual's development from childhood to maturity within a given social order. Scholars have identified "idealist" and "realist" versions of the genre. The former posits a more dialectical relation between the individual and society has sufficient initiative to transform the existing social norms even as he or she comes to maturity. In the realist version, the individual has no agency to change society, but achieves wholeness by adapting to existing social mores and structures. (Saini 62)

The growth in the consciousness of Balram and Gopal in both the novels is shaped by the social and cultural contexts. Both of them have had innocent childhoods, all they want is to make it big in life. However, in the course of the novel, both have been influenced by the corrupt Ashok and MLA Shukla, by adopting their ways, Balram and Gopal falls into the category of the realist version of a Bildungsroman. Since they are helpless of any actions to change their situation, they adopt the ways of the person closest to them, and it is ironic that the people who make up their immediate social environments are subjected to rampant corruption. *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020* can also be called a novel of formation. "The novel of formation is a novel that focuses on one central character, a *Figureroman*. It is the story of a representative individual's *growth and development* within the context of a defined social order." (Hirsch 296-297)

Balram and Gopal represents every underprivileged youth of the country who dream of a bright future but are bound tight to the stinking present. Adiga's metaphor for the caged society has placed them and the lower classes into the rooster coop, a busy spot in the marketplace. Adiga described how modern India has existed in years of its history in the Rooster Coop:

Go to Old Delhi, behind the Jama Masjid, and look at the way they keep chickens there in the market. Hundreds of pale hens and brightly coloured roosters, stuffed tightly into wire-mesh cages, packed as tightly as worms in a belly, pecking each other and shitting on each other, jostling just for breathing space; the whole cage giving off a horrible stench – the stench of terrified, feathered flesh. On the wooden desk above this coop sits a grinning butcher, showing off the flesh and organs of a recently chopped-up chicken, still oleaginous with a coating of dark blood. The roosters in the coop smell the blood from the above. They see the organs of their brothers laying them. They know they're next. Yet they do not rebel, they do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with human beings in this country. (Adiga 173-74)

The Rooster Coop is symbolic of the treatment given to the poor people of India. It shows that human beings especially the poor, are looked upon merely as animals without heart and soul. The novel shows the ingrained prejudice and unfairness meted out to the poor on the basis of caste and class discrimination in the globalized India. Adiga's metaphor of poor people trapped within darkness, growing up without self-awareness and self-realization of what they need for their livelihood and better conditions depict the poor man's tragedy. The coop limits their opportunities. The poor have to continue living in pathetic conditions without thinking of changing their life, feeding and scrounging from the rich man's waste. Although they have been treated like caged animals, bonded labour and slaves, unless they take actions in pursuit of their aspiration for betterment and freedom, no change or improvement is possible. The renowned Urdu poet Iqbal gives similar views about the mental make-up of the slaves: "They remain slaves because they can't see what is

beautiful in this world.” (Adiga 40) Even if they wanted to come out of this coop, they do not know how, and it only takes a white tiger like Balram to escape the social cage.

Freedom of thought, profession, money, and time are never accessed by millions who are trapped in the rooster coop. Their time is filled up by tasks within society's prefixed definition of them. The narrator asserts that if a servant were to try to break from the coop, by stealing or disobeying someone from the higher social class, he must be “prepared to see his family destroyed — hunted beaten and burned alive by the masters... that would take no normal human being, but a freak, a pervert of nature” (Adiga 177). Therefore, servants force their yearnings for freedom and independence to their unconscious minds and cease to be anything of consequence. It takes an anomaly, or a rare “White Tiger” that the narrator is eventually able to morph into, to break from this meaningless, and paradoxically defined, position in society or in other words, the rooster coop.

The inspector pointed his cane straight at me. ‘You, young man, are an intelligent, honest, vivacious fellow in this crowd of thugs and idiots. In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals – the creature that comes along only once in a generation?’ I thought about it and said: ‘The white tiger.’ ‘That is what you are, in *this* jungle.’ (Adiga 35)

From thence on he was called the “White Tiger.” He becomes an exception among his kind and becomes a ‘thinking man’ and ‘an entrepreneur.’ The use of the word entrepreneur here is very significant, in Oxford dictionary the word refers to a person who takes risk in order to make profit, in the novel, Balram takes the risk in fulfilling his overtly ambitious aspiration. He is called the “white tiger” because of the rare qualities he exhibited in ambition and determination, ruthlessness and cruelty,

greed and passion. Balram broods, “Even as a boy I could see what was beautiful in the world: I was destined not to stay a slave.” (Adiga 41)

White tigers are rare and only a dozen or so have been found in the wild. These mutations of the Bengal tiger are inbred in zoos, have led to a larger population in captivity than in the wild, and forced breeding and caged concrete habitats make the lives of such kingly animals meaningless like Adiga's description of poor servants in India. Balram has his first encounter with a white tiger at the National Zoo in New Delhi: he notices the sign that reads: “Imagine yourself in the cage” (Adiga 177). This moment comes when Balram is about to take the fall for Pinky’s ran over and killed a poor unidentified Indian on the street. He is anticipating jail time for the rest of his life, much like the tiger in front of him and can easily imagine an existence in the cage. He remarks that he “can do that with no trouble at all” (Adiga 177), while likening his entrapment again to that of being in the rooster coop. Balram resembles “The Second Coming” by W.B. Yeats, where the white tiger comes out from the *spiritus mundi* to pull out the human race from the ignominy of the darkness to the pride of the light. Likewise, Balram himself is the white tiger, coming out of the Rooster Coop.

The life of Balram being cooped within a cage with thousands of other members of his equal status depicts the absence of individuality. Individualism according to Merriam Webster dictionary is “the belief that the needs of each person are more important than the needs of the whole society or group” or “the actions or attitudes of a person who does things without being concerned about what other people will think.” (Merriam-Webster 2013)

According to the individualist, all values are human-centered, the individual is of supreme importance, and all individuals are morally equal. Individualism places great value on self-reliance, on privacy, and on mutual respect. Negatively, it embraces opposition to authority and to all manner of controls over the individual, especially when exercised by the state. As a theory of human nature, individualism holds that the interests of the adult are best served by allowing him maximum freedom and responsibility for choosing his objectives and the means for obtaining them. In *The White Tiger*, Balram represents the individualist breaking out of a system, who is carried away by his overtly ambitious aspirations to make it in life. In the quest for liberating himself from his struggle, Balram cultivates immoral deeds against the law and order of the government and eventually end up with a murder.

What individuals want for themselves is conditioned in fundamental ways by the lives of others. One such pathway of influence is the formation of individual “aspirations” based on society-wide economic outcomes. (Genicot 2)

In *Revolution 2020* Gopal falls prey to corruption in order to elevate his social identity. The individualist mindset drives him to the path of corruption and alcoholism. The addiction to wine in the city life is a process to reduce the burden of loneliness, depression and angst. In spite of the social climbing that Gopal achieves, there is a greater loss and chaos in his life. In the process of achieving his individualistic aspiration, he has fallen to the clutch of corruption. According to Coleman:

For many people – both men and women – it is the severity of stress in their life situations that appears to lead to excessive drinking is an attempt to screen out unbearable reality. (Coleman 426)

The past experience of an individual is profoundly affected by his social environment as evident in the case of Balram and Gopal. It is evident from the study that others around us shape our desires and goals.

While social outcomes affect aspirations, those very aspirations influence — via the aggregation of individual decisions — the overall development of a society. As a result, aspirations and the distribution of income evolve together. (Genicot 2)

As a modernist writer, Chetan Bhagat reflects the social upheaval of post 1991 in his writings. It may be presumed that in pre 1991, India was a liberal communistic social economy and with the collapse of USSR, a new world order emerged which changed the status quo of the patriarchal society long enmeshed in the cultural fabric of India. *Revolution 2020* mirrors this change, which in a very brief time of 20 years, has went through a very rapid and successive cultural and ethical mini revolutions. The opening of the Indian Economy and end of licensing Raj meant that people for the first time in their life were more liberated to pursue their individual ambitions since independence. The skewed ratio for a common man to have a shot at the riches is now more favorable than it has been earlier in the past although the measures include unfair means. The story mirrors those aspirations in a comical narrative and records change of vicissitudes of fortune that the protagonists find themselves in and stands tribute to the infinite possibilities that the common people of India is now faced with in their lives.

In *Revolution 2020*, Gopal has two main ambitions: the quest for Aarti's love and his career ambition. Aarti is the soul of Gopal's aspiration and the prime motivating reasons for Gopal to embark on a lifelong quest for her love that had started in his childhood. The desire to land upon an engineering career runs too high and Gopal is swept off his feet in this mad rush all the time pinning for the love of Aarti and jealous of his once best friend Raghav's success. He perceives that getting into the hallowed halls of any IIT would make Aarti fall in love with him again. However, Gopal fails immensely in the quest to join any engineering college and eventually fails to win the love of Aarti. The epic failure of Gopal mirrors the hapless drowning of multitude of students who are forced to pursue a dream not of their own liking and eventually throw in the ways of the corrupt system after a brief struggle. Gopal decides to somehow fulfill the dream of his father after encountering a chance with MLA Shukla and the complex business of setting up a college in India. With the right amount of cash and persuasion, Gopal swept off into the maelstrom of hyperactivity of setting up a college, slowly making inroads into the life of his beloved and making efforts of tearing her away from the object of her affections. In the prologue to *Revolution 2020*, Bhagat wrote: "Let's begin with Aarti... She got me into trouble the first day we met." (Bhagat 8)

Somehow Gopal's college gets inaugurated and he settles down to run it all the same time trying ways to get closer to Aarti. After many encounters he manages to quite a major degree to change the perception of Aarti about Raghav. Love can make people do silly things and try harder when the odds are stacked against you. The jealousy so strongly felt for Raghav for stealing away the love of his life has slowly, with time, metamorphosed into revenge and with Aarti safely secured, Gopal is impulsed in getting even with Raghav. In other words, Gopal is fighting a duel with

himself, he cannot let go of his past failure of not able to break into the ranks of IIT and holding a lifelong grudge against his friend. Gopal has always felt small in the company of his friend Raghav and his family. He confesses, “Never in my life had I felt so small. I felt like a beggar hanging out with kings.” (Bhagat 30) Now that he has won back some respect for himself after setting up a college, he tries to face his own guilt. But the encounter with Raghav changes psychologically and emotionally and the sense of grudge and feelings of revenge gives way to respect.

The bitter experience of the tide of corruption while setting up the college generates a change of outlook in life for Gopal. He senses that he should do something. Gopal decides that the right course that needs to be followed is to take a step back from the life of his beloved, whom he has chased for his entire life, and let the affections of his once estranged friend grow back into her. Thus, Bhagat is different from other writers to an extent. He reposes humanity in his characters more than any mundane aspiration. They do not die for the failure in love. Instead, they live for the sacrifice in love.

Unlike Bhagat, Adiga in the course of his chasing his ambition imbibes the way of his master Ashok to the extent that he has ignored the moral humanity in him. For Balram, the only way he knew how to escape India’s “Rooster Coop” is by killing and robbing Ashok, his master. However, it is questionable whether social mobility could be acquired by any other means in an environment of darkness. At the end of the novel Balram validates his evil actions by saying,

I think the Rooster Coop needs people like me to break out of it. It needs masters like Mr. Ashok – who, for all his numerous virtues, was not much of a

master – to be weeded out, and exceptional servants like me to replace them.

(Adiga 216)

Adiga's protagonist Balram holds to the reader as both a hero and a villain. He may be compared to Shakespeare's tragic play *Macbeth* which deals with an "ambition realized through murder." However Adiga has given a delicious twist, whereas Lady Macbeth and Macbeth are driven mad by their crime, Balram is only driven mad by the fact that he hesitates and might not have committed murder. As Macbeth's ambitions could not have been fulfilled without removing King Duncan from his way, so Balram's ambition could not have been fulfilled without removing his multi-millionaire master Ashok. The question arises whether the action of Balram can be justified on the touchstone of morality. Macbeth too hesitates before he embarks upon the heinous crime. But the seed of criminality lies dormant in his character and it spurts when the opportunity comes. After committing the crime, Macbeth is full of repentance. On the other hand, Balram is not filled with regret or sense of remorse for his wrong-doing after he committed the crime. He does not justify his action nor his morality thereby liberating himself from criminality. His attitude is amoral in the sense that it falls outside the domain of morality.

Revolution 2020 also stands for the revolutionary spirit of Chetan Bhagat.

Unlike Gopal, Raghav disregards the suggestion of his father to get admission in IIT, even though he was eligible for it. Unlike the protagonists Balram and Gopal who fall prey to crime and corruption, Raghav listens to his own aspiration and serves the downtrodden of his city by communicating their pains through the media to the responsible authorities. He emerges as a successful journalist and continues to serve the wretched even after his printing press is destroyed. He writes the daily news on

the papers and distributes them to the social activists. Although the job is quite tough, he does not abandon his service. In the end, the exploiters yield to the revolutionary spirit of the journalist. Gopal, the big exploiter of the students as well as Raghav's arch enemy surrenders to the latter's vitality. Through the character of Raghav, Bhagat shows us that society can still be mended with morality and truth.

Balram boasts of his social climbing and his journey in hacking the great Indian system. Both Gopal and Balram revolted against the class prejudices and had their ambitions fulfilled. They always wanted to reach to the top, but the question is 'Are they happy after getting there?' In fact, they were those who showed their anger and revolted by gatecrashing into the same class they hated the most.

Social Climbing isn't unworthy. When a man's got half-way up the ladder by hard work, as you have, it's only human for him to decide that he might as well jump the rest of the rungs by a quicker method. (Wain 193-94)

Balram Halwai, the protagonist is a typical voice of underclass metaphorically described as "Rooster coop" (Adiga 173) and struggling to set free from age-old slavery and exploitation. His anger, protest, indulgence in criminal acts, prostitution, drinking, chasing, grabbing all the opportunities, means fair or foul endorse deep-rooted frustration and its reaction against the "haves". Bloody acts, opportunism, entrepreneurial success of Balram, emergence of Socialists in India alarm that the voice of the underclass cannot be ignored for long. Through the voice of the narrator Balram, Adiga endeavors to analyze the nature of underclass, its identity, and causes of its emergence, ways of its subjection and articulation and reaction against it.

It is evident from the above study that both Balram and Gopal has undergone various hardships and struggles in their journey to accomplish their individual

aspirations. The quest for their liberty demands hard work and determination. However, being categorized the underclass, it is difficult or almost near impossible to attain their aspirations, and hence they fall prey to corruption and in the case of Balram, even a murder. Adiga suggests a mechanical approach to life according to which there seems to be no conscious choice of an individual, because for Adiga, an individual is completely controlled by circumstances. However one questions if the individual really controlled by circumstances or is he really responsible for controlling the circumstances within his social environment. Adiga's treatment of attaining liberty through a murder is a wickedly subversive tool. For Bhagat, humanity is held higher over mundane aspiration. The individualistic mindset pushes them forward in the social climbing by means of corruption.

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Chapter 3

A statement on social corruption

In the world of globalization and technological advancement, every individual aspires to become successful. Although there is an age old tradition of hard work that lands a person to success, in a population like India, hard work cannot be the only source of success. Hence, crave for individual aspiration towards success leads to the practice of unfair means. Today, power is seen in terms of wealth. Money plays a vital role in asserting honor to one's own identity. The quest for liberation from poverty, frustration, hopelessness and humiliation has yielded the society towards their selfish ambition which in turn opens an era of rampant corruption.

India is a democratic country. Liberty and equality are two major boons of democracy and any egalitarian society. These two vital aspects of human life are instrumental to sustainable development and peace. But unfortunately, there are innumerable evil forces in the form of corruption that destroy human liberty and equality. Corruption exists in India in countless forms. India is a sixty six year old democracy; arising out of imperial captivity and foreign rule, the nation aspired for radical change under democracy, however it could not achieve perfection. One wonders how a democratic society which is supposed to be transparent and egalitarian could house corruption. Corruption is spread over in the society in several forms. Of these, the major ones are bribery, nepotism, misappropriation, patronage and favoritism. The many definitions of corruption compiled by Ram Ahuja in his book *Social Problems in India* are as follow:

Corruption in simple terms may be described as “an act of bribery.” It has also been described as “the use of public power for private profits in a way that

constitutes a breach of law or a deviation from the norms of society.” D.H. Bailey (Doughlas and Jhonson, 1971) has explained it as “misuse of authority as a result of consideration of personal gain which need not be monetary.” Andriski (Machael, 1983) considers it as “the use of public power for private advantage in ways which transgress some formal rule or law.” Szeftel (Machael, 1983) has observed that “corruption is behavior which is deviance from norms and duties governing the exercise of public role or office for private gains.” This private gain is achieved by ignoring prohibitions against certain acts, by exercising legitimate discretion to act, or by fulfilling obligations to act. J. Nye (1967:410) states that “corruption denotes the abuse or misuse of public offices for personal gains.” Corruption is also described as “deviation from formal duties of public role for pecuniary or status gains.” (Ahuja 449)

Corruption starts at the top and percolates down to the whole society. Such corruption cannot be confined to the towns alone. It is as widespread in the villages where the dishonest officials and the traders carry the germs of the disease. The tyranny of confusion and price rules the land and the people are helpless victims of corruption everywhere. The study echoes Foucault’s concept that, “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but it comes from everywhere.” (Faucault 93)

Both Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat provide samples of gross malpractices and corruption within the Indian democracy and society. In both the novels, we are introduced to an India where we witness the progress of social change and the lack of it, the social structure and human relationships, and the various ills affecting the

society. The novels provide an insight to the plight of the downtrodden, their poverty, frustration, hopelessness and humiliation, and most of all how these people, in spite of all their hardships, are the immediate victims of corruption. N.R Narayana Murthy, Founder-Chairman of Infosys Technologies Limited, one of India's most powerful CEOs wrote:

Corruption is not just a moral issue but also a powerful inhibitor to economic progress in a poor country like India. Most economists observe that corruption thrives when politicians and bureaucrats espouse the choice of unnecessary and unviable public projects, inflated costs, and selection of incompetent contractors. Those politicians who proclaim their commitment to improve the lot of the poor would do well to remember that it is really the poor that suffer most in a corrupt country. (Murthy 67)

India is shown as an emerging entrepreneurial power in the world.

Advancement in the field of science and technology, space, transportation, hotel industry, tourism, real estate, expansion of cities, mall culture, industries and outsourcing characterized the image of India. However, India's image on tackling corruption has not improved with Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) placing it at 94th rank out of 176 nations in the year 2012. India has a score of 36 out of 100 on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) which is a result of an average of 10 studies including World Bank's Country Performance and Institutional Assessment and Global Insight Country Risk Ratings. India also scored 7.5 out of 10 in Bribe Payers Index (BPI) giving itself a rank 19th out of 28 nations in the year 2011. The control of corruption in India by 2010 was just 36%.

Political system and bureaucratic setup as seen in *The White Tiger* refers to the darkest areas in our country which breed, “rottenness and corruption” (Adiga 50) in our society and hamper all developmental and welfare schemes. Corruption restricts half of the country from achieving its potential. The socio-economic crisis is expressed through the characters and chain of incidents. In *The White Tiger* most of the politicians are “half-baked. The country is full of people like him, I’ll tell you that. And we entrust our glorious parliamentary democracy to characters like these. That’s the whole tragedy of this country.” (Adiga10) Politics is the last refuge for scoundrels. Government doctors, entrepreneurs, tax payers, industrialists all have to befriend a minister or a politician to fulfill their vested interests. Mukesh and Ashok, Balram’s masters, often bribed the minister to settle income tax accounts. Although we feel very proud of India’s democratic election, it has been manipulated and power is transferred from one hand to another.

Politicians, the so-called people's representatives welcome the rich who bribe them inside their office and make the poor people, who voted them, stand outside. Balram narrates, “The Great Socialist had been the boss of the Darkness for a decade at the time of this election. His party’s symbol, a pair of hands breaking through handcuffs – symbolizing- the poor shaking off the rich – was imprinted in black stencils on the walls of every government office in the Darkness” and yet “a total of ninety-three criminal cases – for murder, rape, grand larceny, gun-smuggling, pimping, and many other minor offences – are pending against the Great Socialist and his ministers at the present moment.” (Adiga97)

MLA Shukla is the root of all evil in Varanasi in *Revolution 2020*. Although the crook has a soft corner for the orphaned boy, he has molded Gopal to his own

image, the image of a corrupt politician. However, Shukla was the overall provider, the guardian of Gopal. For opening the college Shukla said, “Mr Bedi will give you the experience. I will give you the money for construction and everything else.”

(Bhagat 124) The assured support has lured the innocent Gopal to fall prey to corruption. MLA Shukla is a powerful man because of his political identity and also because he holds power in the form of money. “Money, status and power – however evil people may say these are – get you respect in life.” (*Bhagat 207*)

Aravind Adiga describes the corruption and exploitation which is ruining the nations. For Adiga, authority is everything and authority is established through money power. The same notion is opined by Bhagat in *Revolution 2020* that power is essential in asserting one’s identity, and power is attained through economic wealth. Bhagat aligns himself with Che Guevara, the great revolutionary: “Power is not an apple that falls from a tree into your lap. Power has to be snatched from people who already have it.’ We have to start a revolution, a revolution that resets our corrupt system. A system that shifts power back into the hands of the people, and treats politicians like workers, not kings” (Bhagat 205). Both the authors highlight how power is misused in the society. “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad man.” (Acton) What is evident from both the selected novels is that in India, not only that power corrupts, but also corruption empowers a few and dispossesses the majority.

For Michel Foucault, “Power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations” (Foucault 94) For Foucault, power lies in the acquisition of knowledge and “in itself the

exercise of power is not violence” (Foucault 1982, 220). However, the study reveals that, in India, power is acquired and is seized from the powerless; power is exercised to oppress the poor to the extent of violence. The continued exposure to such power amidst the poverty of the protagonists tempts them to adopt corruption. Both Balram and Gopal are driven by their ambitious crave for power, a temptation so strong that they fall prey to violence, debauchery and corruption. According to Gaventa,

Power is diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them’ (Gaventa 1)

In *Revolution 2020*, Bhagat reminds us how work is delayed in the legal administration. Poverty for Gopal and his father is because their only land is being mortgaged and “all these cases moved through our legal system slower than a bullock cart on the national highway” (Bhagat 15). Money and greed shaped bothers into rivals over an agricultural land. Gopal’s uncle Ghanshyam taya-ji had already gone ahead of Gopal and his father, “soon after my grandfather’s death, Ghanshyam uncle took a loan from the bank and mortgaged Baba’s half of the property, forging the papers with wrong plot numbers and bribing the bank officer.” (Bhagat 14) Although people like Gopal’s uncle easily fall prey to corruption and greed, for Baba, “the loss of a brother hurt him more than the loss of land.” (Bhagat 15) Here, Baba represents the typical middle-class Indian citizen, who is deprived of his inheritance because of his corrupt and greedy brother, and has to live with poverty as its consequence. People like Baba, being the unrepresented and powerless; they are always the targets of attack and hostility by the powerful. They have to face the challenges of illiteracy and social prejudice. They lack collective power and whenever they make an effort to

unite at the local or micro level against the politically, economically and socially stronger sections of the society, they are crushed. They have to pay higher interest rate for credit. They are accused and labeled as undisciplined, immature, having very little foresight. They receive little or no attention in offices they visit. Vikram Halwai in *The White Tiger* also shares the same plight as Baba.

India has witnessed numerous cases of injustice, unbearable and extreme.

Bipan Chandra in *India's Struggle for Independence*, 1988 observes:

The new courts and legal system gave a further fillip to the dispossessors of land and encouraged the rich to oppress the poor. Flogging, torture and jailing of the cultivators for arrears of rent on land revenue or interest on debt were quite common. The ordinary people were also hard hit by the prevalence of corruption at the lower levels of the police, judiciary and general administration. The petty officials enriched themselves freely at the cost of the poor. The police looted, oppressed and tortured the common people at will.

(Doshi 73)

Money-bags, muscle power, police, strategic alignment of various factions and power to woo the underclass assure the victory in the political game. Foucault challenges the idea that 'power' is wielded by people or groups by way of 'episodic' or 'sovereign' acts of domination or coercion, seeing it instead as dispersed and pervasive. According to Foucault, power involves making a free subject do something that he would not have done otherwise: power therefore involves restricting or altering someone's will. This statement justifies Adiga and Bhagat's view on power. In *The White Tiger* and *Revolution2020*, power is used to alter the wills of the poor, it is used to suppress their social climbing in the form of a coop and whoever tries to

come out of it are often treated with the same power to back down. Essentially, power is a relationship between people in which one affects another's actions. Power differs from force or violence, which affect the body physically. Power is present in all human relationships, and penetrates throughout society. The state does not have a monopoly over power, because power relations are deeply unstable and changeable.

The omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation between one point to another. (Foucault 93)

Adiga observes that we are lagging behind China because of “this fucked up system called the parliamentary democracy. Otherwise, we’d be just like China.” (Adiga 156) Adiga highlighted the darker side of democracy of India and tries to say that India is not a country worth living if a person resists giving up the values he holds. He stresses that the parliamentary democracy is responsible for India's backwardness. It seems India has embraced democracy only for namesake.

The strategic adversary is fascism... the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us. (Foucault)

Adiga resembles the fascist ideology according to which he views political violence, war, and imperialism as a means to achieve national rejuvenation. Fascists sought to unify their nation through an authoritarian state that promoted the mass mobilization of the national community and were characterized by having leadership that initiated a revolutionary political movement aiming to reorganize the nation along

principles according to fascist ideology. Fascist movements shared certain common features, including the veneration of the state, a devotion to a strong leader, and an emphasis on ultra nationalism and militarism. (Eatwell 215) The continuous mockery of India's democracy and the comparison with China shows Adiga's admiration for the communist ideology except for India's entrepreneurship. Communism is "a way of organizing a society in which the government owns the things that are used to make and transport products (such as land, oil, factories, ships, etc.) and there is no privately owned property" (Merriam-Webster 2013)

In *The White Tiger* Adiga considers, "the three main diseases of this country: typhoid, cholera, and election fever. The last one is the worst." (Adiga 98) Voters in Laxmangarh discuss the election helplessly like "eunuchs discussing the Kama Sutra." (Adiga 98) The fact that Balram says, "I am India's most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of the voting booth" (Adiga 102) ironically hallmarks the victory of misused power and the practice of corruption in the political game and its election. In the words of Bhagat,

Every now and then, a politician tosses cheap rice or wheat at them, keeps them alive on drip feed, and hopes to swing some votes. Our rural people never see the benefits of liberalization. (Bhagat *What Young India Wants*, 25)

There are many cities in India in which voters sell their votes either for money or a bottle of liquor. Balram describes the elections in Laxmangrah:

I had to be eighteen. All of us in tea shop had to be eighteen, the legal age to vote. There was an election coming up, and the tea shop owner had already sold us. He had sold our fingerprints – the inky fingerprints which the illiterate

person makes on the ballot paper to indicate his vote.... he had got a good price for each one of us from the Great Socialist's party. (Adiga 97)

The novels thus depict the drawbacks of the Indian democracy and society in the form of maladministration, citizens being deprived of liberty and equality, prevalence of injustice and widespread corruption. This rotten system has created new distinctions and classes. Adiga narrates in *The White Tiger* that in the olden days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. Now just two castes remain: "Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat – or get eaten up." (Adiga 64) These lines echo Charles Darwin's "Survival of the Strongest" where people who had not the belly to fight back like Balram's father had fallen all the way to the mud, to the level of a rickshaw-puller. His body tells the history of his life and sufferings:

A rich man's body is like a premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank. *Ours* are different. My father's spine was a knotted rope, the kind that women use in villages to pull water from wells; the clavicle curved around his neck in high relief, like a dog's collar; cuts and nicks and scars, like little whip marks in his flesh, ran down his chest and waist, reaching down below his hip bones into his buttocks. The story of a poor man's life is written on his body, in a sharp pen. (Adiga 26-27)

Eventually, Balram's father's health deteriorates and died at an untended hospital spewing blood from his mouth. Likewise, in *Revolution 2020*, Baba has been literally eaten off his health by his brother, who eventually dies coughing away. On realizing that corruption is a major hurdle in the process of progress and solidarity of the nation in India, Chetan Bhagat also states:

Corruption is a way of life in India. It is a by-product of a system that is power driven. Our society respects power, not excellence or integrity. Power-driven systems resemble the jungle. The lion is always right and the lion's friends have a good life. Everyone else's place in life is dependent on their power. Sure, such societies can function. However, they don't progress much. (*What Young India Wants*, xxi)

Adiga also incorporates animal symbolism into his narratives by labeling his characters by their hierarchical social status as, 'the buffalo,' 'the stork,' 'the mongoose,' 'the wild boar,' 'the raven,' human spiders, monkeys, eagle, pig, dog and lamb. Balram, the protagonist is symbolized by the white tiger. Both the authors agree in comparing the society to a jungle. And in that jungle, the animal with the biggest belly holds the ultimate power over the other subjects.

In India, honest politicians are a rare breed today. Corrupt politicians not only go scot-free, unharmed and unpunished but they manage to strut on the political stage as honorable leaders. Examples of ministers like Lal Bahadur Shastri and Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel are rare who had very little bank balance at the time of death. In this land of ours, while a thief who commits theft for feeding his hungry children after remaining unemployed for a long time is promptly put behind the bars, those who plunder the country masquerade as honorable citizens are merely caught just because they happen to be big-wigs in politics or are close to the centre of power. Here lies the irony of the corrupt system. This is what Adiga and Bhagat wanted to highlight in their novels. People never feel shocked when politicians' corruption is divulged. Even if these people are reported to be involved in such corruption scams, nothing tangible has been done in uncovering, tracing, apprehending, prosecuting and punishing the

culprits on the plea of 'inadequate evidence.' On the other hand, the poor are harassed, humiliated and discriminated against at every level. While the judge holds high consideration in settling court cases for the people in power, the very judge shows no sympathy for the down trodden and politically unfit audience. Hence it is almost impossible to convict these evil forces when "the judges are judging in Darkness." (Adiga 97) However for Foucault, wherever power is forced upon a subject, there is resistance.

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power... These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. (Foucault 95)

Both the protagonists Balram and Gopal have witnessed the enactment of power upon them, their family and people belonging to their class, the poor. These two protagonists, unlike the many downtrodden who are trapped in the coop, decide to resist the power that has long cast them under poverty. The resistance employed by people could vary from one another.

There is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial. (Foucault 96)

Both Adiga and Bhagat find it necessary to raise resistance against the people at power. Adiga has adopted a violent stunt by killing his master and Bhagat exposes his protagonist to rampant corruption bribing his way to building a new college.

The White Tiger and *Revolution 2020* are sound depiction of postmodern ambiguities and frantic desire for an enhanced social status in a society where one man's wealth is another's poverty. If we look at the Indian experience of modernity, the fallout is not satisfactory. Our expectation with modernity is that it will provide us all-round development, millions of our villages will get self-sufficient, and agriculture would enable the people to fulfill their livelihood needs. It was believed that green revolution would strengthen the poor peasants. But modernization did not bring any worthwhile change in the poor status of the farmers. At the urban level, the general masses are alienated. Similar is the output of our democracy. Adaptive transformation experienced in the wake of modernization has made Indian society a victim of despair. V.S. Naipaul observes in his *book, India: A Million Mutinies Now*, 1990:

With industrialization and economic growth people have forgotten all reverences. Men honoured only money now. The great investment in development in over three or four decades had led only to this: to 'corruption,' to 'criminality' of politics. In seeking to arise India had undone itself. No one could be sure of anything now; all was fluid. Policeman, thief, and politician: the roles have become interchangeable. And with money – the money of which the crowded, ugly skyscraper towers of Bombay spoke – may long – buried particularities had been released. (Doshi 9-10)

Agriculture is demographically the broadest economic sector and plays a significant role in the overall socio-economic fabric of India. Zamindari system is a powerful source of exploitation and subjugation of the underclass. Adiga with a tinge of black comedy deprecates greed and corruption, rampant in the Indian Society. The Buffalo, Stork, Wild Boar and Raven are four landlords in Laxmangarh who got their

names from the peculiarities of appetite that had been detected in them. The Stork owned the river that flowed outside the village, and “he took a cut of every catch of fish caught by every fisherman in the river, and a toll from every boatman who crossed the river” (Adiga 24) to reach Laxmangarh. His brother the Wild Boar owned all the good agricultural land around Laxmangarh. Men who wanted to work on those lands “had to bow down to his feet, and touch the dust under his slippers, and agree to swallow his day wages.” (Adiga 24)

The Raven owned the worst land, which was dry, rocky hillside around the fort, and “took a cut from goatherds who went up there to graze with their flocks. If they didn’t have their money, he liked to dip his beak into their backsides.” (Adiga 25) The Buffalo was the greediest of the lot. He had “eaten up the rickshaws and the roads. So if you ran a rickshaw, or used the road, you had to pay him his feed – one third of whatever you earned, no less.” (Adiga 25) Due to their exploitative tendencies, Adiga calls them “Animals” who lived “in high-walled mansions just outside Laxmangarh – the landlord’s quarters... and did not need to come out into the village except to feed.” (Adiga 25) These landlords also align with the corrupt regional political parties for the selfish motives. With the emergence of Naxalism these landlords had sent their sons and daughters to Dhanbad or Delhi. The bloody fighting between the Naxal outfits and the landlords, having their own private armies, hits the common man the most. They go around shooting and torturing people suspected of sympathizing with the other. This was the reason why Balram was pulled out of school to work at a tea shop because their family happened to borrow loan from The Stork, not able to pay the loan, the family of Balram falls prey to bonded labour under the Stork.

In *Revolution 2020*, land is a very vital item for survival. When Gopal father died, he was left with the land. Apparently, his father's lawyer Dubey Uncle had already been bribed by Ghanshyam taya-ji. Lawyers are considered to abide by the system of rules of conduct established by the sovereign government of the society to wrong doings, maintain the stability of political and social authority, and deliver justice. Working as a lawyer involves the practical application of abstract legal theories and knowledge to solve specific individualized problems, or to advance the interests of those who retain (i.e., hire) lawyers to perform legal services. However, in the case of Gopal, his very lawyer offered him to sign a three lakhs agreement, earlier his father was offered a ten lakhs agreement to which he had already turned down, and hence Gopal was deceived by his own lawyer. Gopal said, "I wondered whose side my lawyer represented anyway." (Bhagat 111)

The life of underclass darkens when corrupt and defunct education system operates in the society. Education has become the handmaid of multi-millions, a safer cover to complete all black designs. In Laxmangarh in *The White Tiger*, supply of free food to the school goes to the teacher who gives legitimate excuse for it because "he hadn't been paid his salary in six months." (Adiga 33) Corruption in its deceiving disguise is soon revealed when truck full of uniform that the government had sent to the school is not issued to the children, "but a week later they turned up for sale in the neighbouring village." (Adiga 33) The whole education system is governed by the "crowd of thugs and idiots" which Adiga calls the "Jungle." (Adiga 35) The lack of focus on quality has severely impacted the teaching quality in schools.

In 1992, the Indian government announced a planned target of 'universalizing' elementary education in India aimed at making education accessible to children,

making sure they continued their education, and finally ensuring that they completed their goals. By the end of 2003, an estimated 90 per cent of India's rural population had primary schools within 1km of their residence, and 84 per cent had upper primary schools within 3kms. However, it seems these education programmes have failed to build in accountability in implementing and outcomes. In 2003, World Bank researchers made random visits to 200 primary schools in India, and found no teaching activity in half of them. A survey by Harvard University's Michael Kremer found that one out of four teachers in India's government-owned elementary schools was absent at any given time. Teachers did not attend at all for almost a third of the school year. (Murthy 139)

The term education in *Revolution 2020* is abused when Bhagat reduces the term to strict business. An incident at the Dr. Sampooranand Sports Stadium reflects the forgery and manipulation present in the educational system.

I enter the main tent. Hundreds of stalls made it resemble a trade expo. Private colleges around the country were trying to woo the students of Varanasi. Members of managing bodies of colleges stood with smiling faces. Banners inside the stalls displayed campus pictures like real estate projects. In cases where parts of the college building were under construction, the pictures were an artist's rendition.

Loud posters proclaimed college names along with emblems. Names varied, but were often inspired by gods or grandfathers of rich promoters. Select faculty and students from each college greeted us with glossy brochures of their institute in these stalls. Everyone wore suits and grinned like a well-trained flight crew. (Bhagat 112)

Education, which is supposed to bring the country to 'Light' is abused in both the novels. Colleges are built for sheer profit for the owner, they fake interest for the students, make them believe that everyone has the right to study, but in reality, all they want is drain out money from these helpless students and their hard working parents. While Gopal's father spends all his savings and takes on many loans to pay for Gopal's coaching classes, the tuition centre never charged Aarti "because her father was about to become the District Magistrate of the city." (Bhagat 23) And these tuitions came under the ambit of acceptable favors.

The description of the passions for coachings in Kota is ironical, humorous and thought provoking. Bhagat presents the realistic description of the mushroom growth of coachings in Kota:

In fact, Kota now had small coaching shops to coach you to get into top coaching classes. From there, you would be coached to get into an engineering college. Once there, you study to become an engineer. Of course, most engineers want to do an MBA. Hence, the same coaching class cycle would begin again. This complex vortex of tests, classes, selections and preparations... (Bhagat 55)

Revolution 2020 exposes the inhuman practices being employed in the name of education. Everything is manipulated in context of profit taking policy. Bhagat exposes the description of fee bargaining almost like a business deal. In the coaching classes of Kota, the students have uniforms to eliminate social inequality. However "equality in clothes didn't mean Bansal believed all students were equal. A class system existed, based on your chances of cracking the entrance exam." (Bhagat 59)

In order to build the new college Gopal had to handle corrupt politicians, bureaucrats and regulators, all of whom had to be bribed during various stages of planning and construction of the college. When Gopal inquired how to fix the land case, Shukla replied, “We don’t fix cases. We fix the people in the cases.” (Bhagat 125) In the words of Gopal, “Politicians can multitask better than most people.” (Bhagat 123) For people like Shukla, bribery is the first means to fix cases. On the making of ‘Ganga Tech’ bribes are given out to whosoever stepped on the way. Honesty is sold to sums, and even the so-called honest like the DM, Mr. Pradhan is just “honest enough to not take the money. But not so honest that he will stop others from taking it” (Bhagat 135) despite calling himself, “practical enough to leave the people who do the funny stuff alone.” (Bhagat 170) Bribes are given out in the form of money offered in cash or gift as inducement to procure illegal or dishonest action in favor of the giver. “But why pay a bribe? We are paying a bribe because if we don’t the Registrar will stall our approval” (Bhagat 137)

On recruiting for the college faculty, Gopal proposed a house visit, “No way. We have to go to their houses. Three other colleges are opening in the area. They are having offers. We have to lure them.” (Bhagat 156) Terms like ‘offer’ and ‘lure’ echoes the commercial dealing in the corrupt system.

The manipulation of language and the flux of consciousness suggest the triumph of commercialization over the religious and educational ideology. Corruption is not only in the colleges and its directors but also among the teachers who are providing their services to those institutions. Mr. Shrivastava demands two lakhs per month with the warning, “You don’t have to disclose my salary. . . In fact, my on-paper salary will be lower than that of the teachers.” (Bhagat 157)

In *Revolution 2020*, through the inner consciousness of Gopal, Bhagat exposes the horrible conditions of private colleges. Although their work is huge, they “listed out the palms (they) had to grease” (Bhagat 138) and most of the time, Shukla’s connections and a generous envelope would do the trick. They ensure the ruin and pervasion of the youths of India. In these private colleges, students are being pushed in such a mud from where no escape route is possible for them. The irony is remarkable at every stage. In an article published in *Times of India*, Bhagat explains,

One big reason for corruption is the government’s no-profits-allowed policy for private institutes. Every educational institution has to be incorporated as a non-profit trust . . . Of course, none of this no-profit business ever happens. What happens is that shady methods are devised to take money out from the trust. Black money, fake payments to contractors and over-inflation of expenses are just a few ingenious methods to ensure promoters get a return on their investment. This means that none of the legitimate players ever enter the field. Ex-academics, world-class corporate houses and honest people will never touch private education for they do not want to pay bribes at every single stage and devise shady methods to bypass no-profit rules. Thus, people like country- liquor barons, sari manufacturers and mithai-shop owners open technical colleges for engineering and medicine. And we hand over our kids and their future to them. (*What Young India Wants* 125)

MLA Shukla himself reflects on the same hypocrisy of the corrupt educational system:

If we had a straightforward and clean system, these professors would open their own colleges. Blue-chip companies and software firms could open

colleges. The system is twisted, they don't want to touch it. That is where we come in. (Bhagat 166)

Amidst the corrupt educational system, Bhagat introduces another issue of corruption – the illegal constructions that are ruining the beauty of the city. The headline “Varanasi Nagar Nigam eats, Builders Cheats” exposes the illegal land use policy that has been altered by means of corruption, a farmland mysteriously approved for construction of buildings beyond permissible floor-space index. The details of the article goes:

Surprisingly the inappropriate approvals and the resultant illegal constructions are right there in front of our eyes. Unlike other corruption cases where the wrongdoing is hidden (like the Ganga Action Plan Scam), here the proof is for all to see. Farms are turned into colleges, which when flout all norms to construct as much as possible. Colleges will soon have malls next door. Politicians, meant to protect us and prevent all this, are often the culprits. This is not all, the city has new hotels, residential towers and office buildings where the VNN has taken its cut. We have proof to compare the vast difference what is allowable and what the VNN approved... (Bhagat 191)

Another ironic situation in *The White Tiger* is when Balram drives his master, Ashok and his companies across the large bronze statue of a group of men in Delhi: at the head is Mahatma Gandhi, with his walking stick, and behind him follow the people of India, being led from darkness to light. Balram narrates the incident, “We're driving past Gandhi, after just given a bribe to a minister. It's a *fucking joke*, isn't it. It is a *fucking joke* – our political system – and I'll keep saying it as long as I like.”

(Adiga 137)

Corruption among public servants has always existed in one form or the other although its shape, dimensions, textures and shade have been changing from time to time and place to place. At one time, bribe was paid for getting wrong things done but now the bribe is paid for getting right things done at the right time.

The *Revolution 2020* has become a cause of frustration and depression in the life of the youths. Chetan Bhagat accepting this futility of education system admits:

Add to this, poor education, archaic caste-based social discrimination, poorly implemented welfare policies and a general lack of job opportunities, and it leads to a kind of passive frustration that urban citizens can never understand. The leaders of these movements apparently do, and that is why a youth with his whole life ahead of him, takes up arms against the state and becomes a rebel. (*What Young India Wants* 25)

Poor health services and non-implementation of government policies expose the rampant malpractices which collectively enhance the miseries of the poor. In Laxmangarh, there were “three different foundation stones for a hospital, laid by three different politicians before three different elections.” (Adiga 47) However, Balram’s father died due to the lack of hospital and medical facilities. Medical services are shown as an object of political mockery and social stigma. The Great Socialist inaugurated Lohia Universal Free Hospital in view of election result. There is no doctor in the hospital. The post of the doctor is auctioned because there is good money in public service and doctor gets the job by offering bribe and touching the feet of the great Socialist – the employer. Subsequently, “you can keep the rest of your government salary and go work in some private hospital for the rest of the week. Forget the village. Because according to this ledger you’ve *been* there. You’ve *treated*

my wounded leg. You've *healed* that girl's jaundice." (Adiga 50) The author Adiga himself seems to intervene in these lines "Stories of rottenness and corruption are always the best stories, aren't they?"

Corruption creeps into every corner of the country, in every field. Forgery is also present in the field of prostitution. In the big city, due to poverty most of the women are forced to adopt this profession. In Dhanbad, Delhi and Bangalore, there are red light areas where one can negotiate a price with these women. And the price depends on, "High class or low class? Virgin or non-virgin?" (Adiga 227) In Delhi, especially rich people prefer "golden-haired women" (Adiga 232) However, suppliers present a woman dyed in golden hair to snatch maximum price. Nobody in the industry hesitates for a second to play fool with the other, so long as they grow their "Big Belly." Likewise, in *Revolution 2020*, the person at the admission office at Bansal in Kota offered Gopal a fifty per cent discount at another institution that was just started by his cousin. Nepotism does not fail to exist even in the silly little walks of life. The priest arranged for Baba's cremation offered ten-thousand-rupee package. "It felt macabre to bargain for a funeral, but someone had to do it. My uncle paid the priest in crisp five-hundred-rupee notes." (Bhagat 110)

Corrupt police, legal and administrative structure mark off another dark spot of shining India. The corrupt police forces protect the rich men from legal proceedings and get huge money in return. Hence the Police Department is said to be the most corrupt department where bribes are taken by constable upwards to high status officers. It is surprising that the police takes money both from the accused and the complainants. The powers enjoyed by the police are so wide that they can accuse, arrest and harass even an honest person. The hit and run case which legally belongs to

Pinky Madam is shifted to Balram. Every servant in India is considered to take the fall of their master, to be as “loyal as the dog” and be the “perfect servant.” Servants are often framed for a murder his master committed on the road and are made to sign confessions to the equally corrupt policemen like their masters. “The institutions of justice exist for those only who are worth to live. The criterion for this worth stands on the footing of money and power. Power again is the grandchild of money.” (Adiga 145) Even the judges ignore to see the forced out confession, because they “are in the racket too. They take their bribe; they ignore the discrepancies in the case. And life goes on.” (Adiga 170)

Both Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat acquire Marxist point of view while describing the social reality in India. Human beings, as Marx put it, do shape the development of their society but in this they do not have complete freedom, instead they are constrained by the conditions of the material conditions around. According to Marx and Engel’s in *The German Ideology* (1845-66):

The production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is first of all directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the spiritual intercourse of men, appear here as the direct efflux of men’s behavior... we do not proceed from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as described, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at corporeal man; rather we proceed from the really active man... Consciousness does not determine life: life determines consciousness. (Eagleton 4)

Similar statement can be found in the preface to *A Contributuion to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859):

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. (Eagleton4)

In *Revolution 2020*, everything around Gopal fails upon him. The loss of his father, the educational failure and betrayal of friendship from both Aarti and Raghav leads Gopal to immense frustration which further inspires him to get a new definition of life. After his father's death, he discovers that he can do better using his father's barren agricultural land to start his own college than to study in one. "Stupid people go to college. Smart people own them." (Bhagat 177) The tone of Gopal gradually acquires Marxist point of view. For him money becomes the source of honor and power. It is in association of an MLA that he bribes his way to opening a new technical institute.

History of all societies is the history of class struggle. "Men are not free to choose their social relations; they are constrained into them by material necessity – by the nature and stage of development of their mode of economic production." (Eagleton 6)

Balram's success is based on the bribe he gave to political institution. He is unable to draw a line difference between justice and fairness as his act is heinous. Balram is living in a country where one can prove himself through money, power and industry. No one is committed to moral values and traditional ideologies. His lines describe the scenario:

I'm 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. I know by heart the works of the four greatest poets of all time, Rumi, Iqbal, Mirza Ghalib, and a fourth fellow whose name I forget. I am a self-taught entrepreneur. (Adiga 6)

The tone of Balram throughout the novel is sarcastic and invective. According to the narrator, the political, social and cultural systems are replete with materialism. He takes the world as a place to practice Marxist notion.

Balram Halwai, when transformed into Ashok Sharma, confidently says that he is "one of those who cannot be caught in India," (Adiga 320) for now he has become a successful entrepreneur in Bangalore equipped with enough money power to silence the police force. Foucault uses the term 'power/knowledge' to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and 'truth.' For Balram, the truth is seen through the wheels of a Honda, he gains the knowledge of corruption by observing his social environment and his master Ashok. By killing his master and adopting his name after killing him, power of his master is transferred on him. On how the sweet, innocent village fool transformed into a citified full of debauchery, depravity, and wickedness, Balram comments, "All these changes happened in me because they happened first in Mr. Ashok. He returned from America an innocent man, but life in Delhi corrupted him – and once the master of the Honda City becomes corrupted, how can the driver stay innocent?" (Adiga 197) In *Revolution 2020*, Gopal witnessed the corruption through the company of MLA Shukla, the knowledge of the ways of corruption establishes and strengthens his status power.

In *Revolution 2020*, Bhagat voiced his motifs through the character Raghav. As a staff reporter of a popular newspaper *Dainik*, he published a critical article

regarding Gopal's college headlined, 'New engineering college opens in the city – with corruption money?' on the day of its inauguration in which he accuses Shukla of corruption. Shukla get Raghav sacked however this led him to start his own newsletter called *Revolution 2020*. The article about the Ganga Treatment Scam which led Shukla to resign and eventually end up in jail headlined 'Because Enough is Enough' is as follows: (Bhagat 205)

What do you say about a society whose top leaders are the biggest crooks?

What do you do in a system where almost anyone with powers is corrupt?

India has suffered enough. From childhood we are told India is a poor country.

Why? There are countries in this world where an average person makes more than fifty times that an average Indian makes. Fifty times? Are their people

really fifty times more capable than us? Does an Indian farmer not work hard?

Does an Indian student not study? Do we not want to do well? Why? Why are we then doomed to be poor?

This has to stop. We have to clean the system. Che Guevera, the great revolutionary, once said, "Power is not an apple that falls from a tree into your lap. Power has to be snatched from people who already have it.' We have to start a revolution, a revolution that resets our corrupt system. A system that shifts power back into the hands of the people, and treats politicians like workers, not kings.

Of course, this won't happen overnight. This also won't happen until the real suffering begins. As India's young population increases, we will need more good colleges and jobs. Soon, there won't be enough. People will realize who is fooling them. It could take ten years. I call it Revolution 2020, the year in

which it will happen, the movement that will finally shake the much off India. When the Internet will connect all colleges across the country. When we will go on strike, shut down everything, until things are fixed. When young people will leave their classes and offices and come on to the streets. When Indians will get justice and the guilty will be punished.

And it will begin in Varanasi. For that reason, we bring you Revolution 2020.

Both *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020* highlight the age-old worries, anxieties of the downtrodden, is a pulsating critique of the deep-rooted socio-economic inequality rampant in India. The study of the social structure of India reveals the deep-rooted corruption that is embedded in all its branches. Of course it is human nature to thirst for luxuries and comforts, and yes the novels taught us “politicians, businessman and educationist – power, money and respect – perfect combination,” (Adiga 256) however, uncontrolled motifs result in all unscrupulous activities which further results in the deterioration of moral and human values. Salaries given to hard working men do not suffice the needs of their family, hence they are forced to earn money by illegal ways. The corrupt politicians and authorities are responsible for deterioration of the society. The agony of corruption is expressed by Balram when he says, “the rich *always* get the best things in life, and all that we get is their leftovers.” (Adiga 233)

The White Tiger and *Revolution 2020* are novels that plead to root out the evils of corruption in the Indian society. What is interesting is the timings of these novel, both published in 2008 and 2011, both depicts the excruciating clutch of corruption in the Indian system, and which interestingly aligns itself to the movement of the Jan Lokpal Bill proposed to the Lok Sabha which was to be passed in December, 2011.

The Jan Lokpal Bill aims to effectively deter corruption, compensate citizen grievances, and protect whistle-blowers. This bill also proposes improvements to the Lokpal and Lokayukta Bill 2011. In order to draw the attention of the government, a focused campaign “India Against Corruption” (IAC) was started in 2011. The campaign was led by anti-corruption crusader Anna Hazare and his associates.

Although Adiga and Bhagat are not among the known associates of Anna Hazare, both are profound supporters of India against corruption. These two authors do not nibble on the topic of India’s corruption just for the sake of humiliating the system or finding faults to the situation. When one is ready to mend something wrong, one needs to focus on what is wrong with the subject first, then only do the necessary mending. That is exactly what Adiga and Bhagat try to voice in their novels, and hence brought out this topic to the limelight, so that people are aware of what is going on around us. At the completion of the book, Adiga mentions:

The book of your revolution sits in the pit of your belly, young Indian. Crap it out, and read. Instead of which, they’re all sitting in front of color TVs and watching cricket and shampoo advertisements. (Adiga 304)

The novels do not envision immediate strategies to turn angst and suffering into effective results. The methods employed by the protagonists are individualistic, morally indefensible and revolutionary. Large-scale social corruption needs cleansing by means of the individual. Revolution against corruption is not going to be an easy task. Both Adiga and Bhagat are aware of this, but just because the change is gradual and slow, it does not mean that one should not start the campaign. Adiga mocks the slow process, “Maybe once in a hundred years there is a revolution that frees the poor.” (Adiga 302) Bhagat has more optimistic a vision about the matter, he writes:

Revolution 2020. That's his goal. That India must have a full-blown revolution by 2020. Power will be with the youth. We will dismantle the old corrupt system and put a new one in place. (Bhagat 197)

It is clear that both Adiga and Bhagat longed for a revolution against corruption. Highlighting the different modes of corruption in their novels has indeed cropped up awareness among the Indian citizens. It is clear from the study that the administration is no longer effective and efficient towards the common man in the globalized India. The sad truth is that adopting corruption seems to prove successful in both the novels, however, it is clear that corruption needs to be uprooted from the society.

India has known corruption, and with writers like Adiga and Bhagat, and other social activists, a change is at the molding, nevertheless it should be noted that India is a very vast country with rich and diverse cultural heritage, its tradition of patriarchal authority and institutional ideology has governed the society in many ways that it would take a long time for a change, or even to break away from the age old tradition and ideologies.

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Chapter 4

Patriarchal authority and institutional ideology

Patriarchy is a social system in which males are the primary authority figures central to social organization, occupying roles of political leadership, moral authority, and control of property, and where fathers hold authority over women and children. It implies the institutions of male rule and privilege, and entails female subordination. Historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political, and economic organization of a range of different cultures. The manifestation of patriarchal authority is visible through the characters in both *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020*.

Revolution 2020 is an exploration of the life and consciousness of three friends. Each individual has come from a different family background. Aarti is endowed with all the feminine delicacy and sensibility as she is the daughter of a District Magistrate and therefore retains the sophistication of a dignified family. Gopal, mediocre in studies is hailed from a middle class family. Raghav is also endowed with rare intelligence and is dedicated to his dreams and studies. Although the three friends come from three different family backgrounds, they do not escape the clutch of their parent's dominance over them. All of them are governed by the institutionalized ideologies such as family, religion and caste/class system.

Gopal Mishra, the protagonist, is presented not only as a cyber den but also sensitive of the holy city of Varanasi. Gopal is proud for having kinship with the soil of Kashi,

People call my city several names – Kashi, Benares or Banaras – depending on where they come from. Some call it the City of Temples, for we have thousands of them, and some the City of Learning, as Varanasi apparently has great places to study. I simply call Varanasi my home. (Bhagat 13)

He further appreciates the distinctive character of Varanasi and continues,

Some call my city beautiful, holy and spiritual – especially when we have to introduce it to foreign tourists. Many call it filthy and a dump. I don't think my city is dirty. It is the people who make it dirty. (Bhagat 13)

Gopal was born and brought up in limited resources but with unlimited love and sentiments in the company of his father called 'Baba.' In his family the greatest respect was for personal relations. Family relations play an important role for Baba, even though his elder brother has greedily mortgaged the inherited agricultural land, he did not react because, "He [was] is my elder brother" and "the loss of a brother hurt him more than the loss of land." (Bhagat 15) As the novel unfolds, the obsession for the admission in NITs has become the focal point of the narrative. For Gopal's father, the only dream was to look to the success of Gopal in NIT. His dream was to see his only son as a successful engineer. Gopal makes an ironical observation,

I imagined myself in a sea, along with lakhs of other low-rankers, kicking and screaming to breathe. The waters closed over us, making us irrelevant to the Indian Education System. Three weeks and the AIEEE tsunami would arrive. (Bhagat 24)

Gopal has a realization of Baba's health and the futility of the efforts but with Baba it becomes a compulsive conviction. Gopal declares, "Engineering is not

everything, Baba” (Bhagat 26) but for Baba it was a method to ensure peace and happiness. The presence of the patriarchal authority of Baba has become a constant reminder for Gopal to thread that path of becoming an engineer. Gopal makes a desperate confession of this reality:

My dad is not in the IAS. My grandfather was not a minister. We are from a simple Indian family. We don't ask these questions. We want to make a living. Engineering gives us that. (Bhagat 36)

Chetan Bhagat in the depression of Gopal captures the psyche of the failure governing the life of those who aim at being the top rankers among the taste takers of AIEEE. Gopal out of embarrassment and disappointment fails to compromise with his real position. He tries to make Baba realize the reality, “Nine lakh fifty thousand of us didn't.” (Bhagat 32) Gopal wanted to do a B.Sc., however, the patriarchal authority which Baba holds upon him as a son compelled him to try the same pond over again. Gopal remarked, “It is harder to manage family expectations than prepare for exams.” (Bhagat 26) For Gopal, the only possible remedy seems to seek admission in any reputed coaching in Kota.

Personally, for Gopal, “What I really want is not in Kota, I am leaving it behind in Varanasi.” (Bhagat 46) However, Baba's conviction is firm, “And how will you do a repeat attempt without better coaching?” (Bhagat 41) Gopal realizes the misery of Baba and despite his realization that his studies in Kota would not be possible with a limited amount of money, he has to obey his father, “paternal love obviously overestimating progeny's abilities.” (Bhagat 26) Life at Kota gives an insight into the isolation creeping fast in the mind of Gopal. In Gopal's restlessness, the quest for love for Aarti is evident.

The sight of bottles and cigarettes inside Prateek's room at Kota makes him realize the hollowness of the system of which he has been pushed into by Baba. He comes to the realization that it can afford him neither intellectual food nor promising career. Prateek has no anxiety of higher percentile and makes a careless comment:

Nothing, reality check for my parents. Both of them are teachers. Hopefully, the passing of two years and half their life savings will make them realize that their son can't crack any entrance exam. (Bhagat 80)

'What is love?'

'Love is what your parents give you if you clear the IIT exam' (Bhagat 81)

It is evident in the case of Prateek that his presence at Kota is solely because his parents forced him to an engineering path. The prose of Chetan Bhagat delicately captures the burden that most parents thrust onto the shoulders of their children of their own unfulfilled dreams and achievements and we see young people like Gopal and Prateek rushing off to fulfill it without having the maturity to understand the complexity of this decision or its consequences. Neither Prateek nor the atmosphere of Kota makes any impression on Gopal. On the occasion of his birthday, the voice of Aarti had him overwhelmed and immediately resolute to go back to Varanasi. The intensity of emotions in his nostalgias of home is remarkable in his confession:

Even the filthy and crowded streets of Gadholia seemed beautiful to me. No place like your home town. More than anything, I wanted to meet Aarti. Every inch of Varansi reminded me of her. People come to my city to feel the presence of God, but I could feel her presence everywhere. However, I had to go to Baba first. (Bhagat 95)

Amidst the nostalgic monologue, it was the patriarchal authority that compels Gopal to report to his father first, although he has a lot other things he wanted to tend to. Here, Gopal's struggle is the struggle between his personal desires and sentiments and the compulsions of career imposed upon him by Baba. Gopal ultimately fails to qualify AIEEE. He comments, "Telling your parents you've failed at something is harder than the actual failure." (Bhagat 32) In this line, Bhagat echoes the amount of patriarchal burden that is entrusted upon Gopal, "one stupid exam, half a dozen mistakes in multiple-choice problems changes your life forever." (Bhagat 32) In India, parents often forced their children to their own decision irrespective of what they want to do with their lives. This patriarchal dominance often crushes the dreams of young youths all over India, Gopal sighs, "Losers, even if they do not have a brain, have a heart." (Bhagat 102)

Raghav is smart and follows the footsteps of his IITian father. Four students from Varanasi had cracked the JEE. Among those four, only Raghav had cleared the exams as a resident of Varanasi which turned him into a mini-celebrity in Varanasi. However, Raghav wanted to do journalism. "Journalism is my passion." (Bhagat 40) Raghav had a thing for writing. He had published some letters to the editor and a couple of articles in some papers, nevertheless he had to take up his engineering career because of his father. None of the two friends would like to take up engineering as their career, however it is because of their patriarchal dominance that both are compelled to step foot against their individual passions.

Revolution 2020 explores the various compulsions of passions. When Gopal and Aarti arrives at the guestroom, both of them have a private world of passions beyond the morality principles imposed by their parents. Gopal ironically comments, "I think at some point a switch flicks in the head of Indian parents. From 'study,

study, study' they go marry, marry, marry." (Bhagat 217) For Gopal, the triumph on Aarti's body becomes a method to claim of his authority over her, and also to eliminate the lingering effect of the patriarchal authority over him. Aarti faces the same patriarchal pressure, her dreams were suppressed by her father and her passions remain unfulfilled in the company of Raghav, "Raghav had no time. My parents can't see why I want to work. They can't understand why the DM's daughter has to slog. All my girlfriends are getting married, planning kids and I am not. I am weird." (Bhagat 220) Under the strict observation of her parents, Aarti is bound under the patriarchal dominance, although she has her own aspirations to become an air hostess, she is suppressed. "Do I have to do something? I am an Indian woman. Can't I get married, stay home and cook?" (Bhagat 24) Her submission to Gopal only heightens the patriarchal dominance upon her, she felt the guilt, as if now she is under Gopal's dominance. Patriarchal order pervades every aspect of life in India.

In Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Balram reveals the admiration he has of his father, "Rickshaw-puller he may have been – a human beast of burden – but my father was a man with a plan. *I* was his plan." (Adiga 27) Although Balram could not grasp the implied meaning of his father, the words haunted him perpetually: "My whole life, I have been treated like a donkey. All I want is that son of mine – at least one – should live like a man," however for Balram "what it meant to live like a man was mystery." (Adiga 30) For Balram's father, being a man was to be educated, economically independent and free of poverty.

India is an uneasy country, where separate worlds of rich and poor, orbit each other closely without ever actually colliding. There are many self-made millionaires in India now, and certainly many more successful entrepreneurs. However, there are a billion more people who are devoid of decent health care, education or employment,

getting to the top, shinning India or India of Light. The world of Darkness in *The White Tiger* abounds with social taboos, rigid caste distinction, superstitions and culture conflict. Man is known and recognized by his caste.

In India, one's lot is determined the day he is born, as he will be known by his religion, caste and sex. Everything in his life is predetermined – who will do what and how he will have to conduct himself in society. (Dhawan 237)

The caste system in India is a social system that divides the Indian population into higher and lower social classes. Although said to be disappearing in urban India, the caste system still remains in rural India. The irony of the Indian class system is that when a person is born into a caste, and the caste one belongs in determines his or her occupation. When Balram got his first job, the old driver of the Stork asked him,

What caste are you?

'Halwai.'

'Sweet-makers,'

'That's what you people do. You make sweets. How can you learn to drive?'

'Mastering a car – it's like taming a wild stallion – only a boy from the warrior castes can manage that. You need to have aggression in your blood. Muslims, Rajputs, Sikhs – they're fighters, they can become drivers. You think sweet makers can last long in fourth gear? (Adiga 56)

Similar question is asked by the Stork, "Halwai... what caste is that, top or bottom?" (Adiga 62) "Are you from a top caste or bottom caste, boy? ... All our employees are top caste. It won't hurt to have one or two bottom caste working for us." (Adiga 64-65) The snobbishness of the caste system comes to force even while hiring the service providers. Even the servants are conscious about their status and

this consciousness runs up to the possession of small objects as who will drive the Honda City and who Maruti 800.

“Communalism is an ideology which states that society is divided into religious communities whose interests differ and are, at times, even opposed to each other. The antagonism practiced by the people of one community against the people of other community and religion.” (Ahuja 120) In *The White Tiger*, Ram Persad, the servant of Stork disguised his Muslim identity because the prejudiced landlord didn't like Muslim, a namazi Muslim is forced to become Ram Persad just to earn his livelihood. On disclosure he was sacked from the job. Balram comments:

Mohammad was a poor, honest, hardworking Muslim, but he wanted a job at the home of an evil, prejudiced landlord who didn't like Muslims – so just to get a job and feed his starving family, he claimed to be a Hindu! And took the name of Ram Persad. (Adiga 109)

Balram further comments, “what a miserable life he's had, having to hide his religion, his name, just to get a job as a driver – and he is a good driver, no question of it, a far better one than I will ever be.” (Adiga 110) Religious boundaries became evident while playing cricket, Roshan, the grandson of Stork calls himself Azharuddin, the Captain of India. Stork reacts quickly, “call yourself Gavasker, Azharruddin is a Muslim.” (Adiga 70) Our outlook becomes coloured religiously and is caste-based while idolizing our sportsperson, artists and politicians.

Interfaith marriage is another religious issue in the Indian society. Traditionally called mixed marriage, it is a marriage between partners professing different religions. Some religious doctrines prohibit interfaith marriage. Others traditionally oppose interfaith marriage but may allow it in limited circumstances.

Several major religions have left the matter relatively unspecified and still others allow it entirely but with some requirements for ceremony and custom. An ethno-religious group's resistance to interfaith marriage can constitute a form of self-segregation. In *The White Tiger*, the marriage of Ashok and Pinky is not appreciated by the society because Pinky is not a Hindu. Later, due to caste and cultural differences their relationship is snapped.

Similar to the above, In the book *2 States* (2009), Chetan Bhagat brings up the topic of an inter-caste love marriage. He comments:

Indian love marriages are not easy. It's not just the boy and the girl who fall in love. Everyone, both their clans, have to fall in love. In the end, the boy and the girl start questioning whether there's anything more left to it and even fight. But it's important, at least for me, what parents think of your marriage,... India is opening up and parents are learning to accept love marriages despite prejudices about caste, or region. (Sablok 145)

Himself being married to a girl of different community, Bhagat comments in an interview as follows:

We say we are very secular but when it comes to marrying your child in another community, then your true projectiles come out. I feel what I did, marrying a woman from another community, was a good thing for India. In a broader sense, if everyone was to do the same, we would overcome regional divisions. We would become pure Indians. And if we become a pure Indian race then we deserve to be a superpower and will be one.” (Sethi 31)

Chetan Bhagat has a realization that irrational parental authority generates the psyche of resistance and nonconformity. The family traditions are the part of collective human consciousness and the inter-caste or interfaith marriages generates the guilt of betrayal – the betrayal of family, community and society.

In India we didn't have outside influences like the media or schooling on cars, dating and drugs, we didn't know family break downs. Our family exists inside an impenetrable bubble. We honoured the properties. There was no rebellion, no seeking after individual identity.” (Agarwal 99)

The Indian institution is full of superstitious ideologies. “Marriage” brings “more rain in the village” (Adiga 190) “any disease, of body or mind, get cured when you penetrate a virgin” (Adiga 193) “His buffalo died at once” because he “stopped believing in God” (Adiga 186) are the superstitions common in the society from the patriarchal male viewpoint,

The practice of dowry is another social stigma in Laxmangarh. The marriage of Balram's cousin sister pushed the whole family into world of misery and Balram is dropped from the school. Krishna's marriage also brings huge dowry, Balram reports: “It was one of the *good* marriages. We had the boy, and we screwed the girl's family hard. I remember exactly what we got in Dowry... five thousand rupees in cash, all crisp new unsoiled notes fresh from the bank, plus a Hero bicycle, plus a thick gold necklace for Kishan.” (Adiga 51)

Adiga is well aware of the traditional transition that India has undergone at the advent of the British colonizers. He compares and points out the caste system as follows:

See, this country, in its days of greatness, when it was the richest nation on earth, was like a zoo. A clean, well-kept, orderly zoo. Everyone in his place, everyone happy. Goldsmiths here. Cowherds here. Landlords there. The man called a Halwai made sweets. The man called a cowherd tended cows. The untouchable cleaned faeces. Landlords were kind to their serfs. Women covered their heads with a veil and turned their eyes to the ground when talking to strange men. (Adiga 63)

However, what was once orderly had been changed after the Britishers left India.

And then thanks to all those politicians in Delhi, on the fifteenth of August, 1947 – the day the British left – the cages had been let open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law. Those that were the most ferocious, the hungriest, had eaten everyone else up, and grown big bellies. That was all that counted now, the size of your belly. (Adiga 64)

Adiga is severely critical of modern India and its manifold ills, expressed in language which disrobes Indians to their animal base. His language attacks more relentlessly than hungry animals hitting their preys.

It didn't matter whether you were a woman, or a Muslim, or an untouchable: anyone with a belly could rise up. My father's father must have been a real Halwai, a sweet-maker, but when he inherited the shop, a member of some other caste must have stolen it from him with the help of the police. My father had not the belly to fight back. That's why I was cheated of my destiny to be fat, and creamy-skinned, and smiling. (Adiga 64)

To sum up – in the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat – or get eaten up. (Adiga 64)

‘Belly’ is a strong metaphor employed by Adiga, it stands for rapacity, endless thirst for material possession, lust for power and capacity for corruption. In Laxmangarh the reign of four big bellies – Buffalo, Stork, Wild Boar and Raven – was writ large, and the rest of the villagers depended on their fancy. These landlords are nothing short of ‘animals’ as we hardly find any strain of humanity in them, even their names have symbolic connotations. They treat the low-caste people like Balram as animals or worse than them. Balram is admonished by the Nepali servant when he takes the two white Pomeranians – Puddles and Cuddles – around the compound by their chains: “Don’t pull the chain so hard! They’re worth more than you are!” (Adiga 78) The rich expect their dogs to be treated like human, while they themselves treat their servants like animals. Moreover “servants need to abuse other servants. It’s been bred into us, the way Alsatian dogs are bred to attack strangers.” Even the drinks, wines of Western and Eastern people show the difference between poor and rich:

“There are two kinds of Indian: ‘Indian’ liquor men and ‘English’ liquor men. ‘Indian’ liquor was for village boys like me, toddy, arrack, country hooch. ‘English’ liquor, naturally, is for the rich. Rum, whisky, beer, gin, anything the English left behind.” (Adiga 73)

Adiga has further elaborated the political, social and cultural milieu of India in his second novel *Between the Assassinations*. Kittur is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multilingual town. Underneath the assured richness, diversity and scenic topography, Kittur proves a backdrop for communal hatred, casteism, corruption,

social evils and political rottenness. The “old bad India” still exists, “India of caste and class privilege – the India of child marriage; of ill-treated widows; of exploited subalterns” (Adiga 2008, 267). Adiga comments, “when it comes to three areas- black-marketing, counterfeiting and corruption, we are the world champions” (Adiga 2008, 31).

Socio-cultural slavery is perpetuated in our society by elite through the process of socialization. Adiga comments, “The greatest thing to come out of this country in ten thousand years of its history is the Rooster Coop.” (Adiga 173) The hens and roosters have no option, so is the case with the low caste people. Despite being aware of their exploitation and vulnerability, they cannot come out of the coop because the Light takes advantage of the Darkness. Adiga uses the Rooster Coop as an expression to describe the oppressed, confined and hopeless situation of the average Indian. He uses hard hitting sarcasm to serve and arouse the deprived class to self-awareness.

“A handful of men in this country have trained the remaining 99.9 per cent – as strong, as talented, as intelligent in every way – to exist in perpetual servitude; a servitude so strong that you can put the key of his emancipation in a man’s hands and he will throw it back at you with a curse.” (Adiga 176)

The ‘Indian Family’ (Adiga 176) is one reason why one cannot come out of the Rooster Coop. Only a man dares to see his family – hunted, beaten, and burned alive by the masters, can come out of the Coop and that would not be a normal human being in his right sensibility but a freak, a pervert of nature, a White Tiger. Sometimes a man does not wish to be in the Coop but he becomes a victim of circumstances that compel him to be in. Balram has to work as a bonded labour not because he has done

something but simply because his family took a loan for the wedding and failed to repay. All the members of the family work for the Stork family in return of the loan. He has to leave the school for “Working in a tea shop. Smashing coals. Wiping tables” (Adiga 38). Poverty itself becomes a Rooster Coop that makes man lead the life of a slave. Balram is at times humiliated to the core by his masters. Once when Mr. Ashok and Mukesh bribed and returned home, Mukesh unknowingly dropped a one rupee coin inside the car. He made Balram to search for it thoroughly inside the car which is mysteriously missing. Finally Balram took a coin from his pocket and dropped it in the floor and returned it replacing that missing coin. This is the plight of a loyal servant in India.

Adiga also uses the image of the Rooster Coop to describe the Indian scenario. Balram, deliberates over the fact that in India millions of people are involved in various jobs ranging from delivering furniture and carrying back the cash payment in thousands for the master, driving cars and seeing or handling a lot of money, sometimes in millions, for their masters; carrying suitcases full of cut diamonds for their masters. And the people engaged in these jobs as servants never think of running away with the merchandise, which may be worth of their year or two years of salary or perhaps a steal which could last them throughout their miserable lives.

In India, the act of bonded servitude binds an individual from breaking away from the institutionalized ideologies. The high-class Indians have no respect for their service providers. Whether they are cooks, drivers, sweepers, whatever the nature of their job may be, they just fit into one class – servants. The suppressed class finds itself trapped in constant mental pressures that shape their needs and desires. This class has to work under elite class regardless of their personal demands and

satisfaction. Same is the case with Balram, he is a type of servant to Ashok although he earns money with his own efforts, and he does not take charity from his master but the attitude of society forces him to believe that he is no more than an animal to his boss. The servants' life is more a slave's life in India. *The White Tiger* thus reflects the struggle, humiliations, atrocities and cruelties of the dominating class towards the poor, inferiors and servant class. Every statement of Balram draws the readers into darkness and compels to think about the emotional and psychological state of the lower class people like drivers, servants, guards and rickshaw-pullers. They are subordinate, marginalized and subaltern and their will is dominated by their masters. They live in basement of the apartments where they can be called at any time with the ringing of the electronic bells.

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga explains how religion can be the cause of manipulated servitude towards others. The act of serving others has gone too far as a moral gesture that we have almost sold our dignity, freedom and soul to that person. “Every day millions wake up at dawn – stand in dirty, crowded buses – get off at their masters’ posh houses – and then clean the floors, wash the dishes, weed the garden, feed their children, press their feet – all for a pittance” (Adiga) but they never complain because they are trapped within the coop. Adiga points out, “In India –or, at least, in the Darkness – the rich don’t have drivers, cooks, barbers, and tailors. They simply have servants.” (Adiga 69) It is ironic that the “half man half monkey: Hanuman” is “everyone’s favorite god in the Darkness.” (Adiga 19) Balram narrates:

Do you know about Hanuman, sir? He was the faithful servant of the god Rama, and we worship him in our temples because he is a shining example of how to serve your masters with absolute fidelity, love, and devotion.

These are the kinds of gods they have foistered on us, Mr. jiabao. Understand, now, how hard it is for a man to win his freedom in India. (Adiga 19)

The caste system even offers the God which they should worship. The entire servant class people as well as the people live in Darkness are made to worship Hanuman. Hanuman becomes the best instance of devotion and servant. People from darkness take him to be the ideal. Hence, they remain servants like Hanuman and never think of replacing their masters. While serving the Stork family, he considers Mr. Ashok as Rama, Pinky Madam as Sita and himself as Hanuman. He says: "I would drive them wherever they wanted, as faithfully as the servant-god Hanuman and carried about his master and mistress, Ram and Sita" (Adiga 46).

In Delhi, poor drivers are often subjugated to conspiracy for the criminal doings of their masters. Mongoose, the master, forced Balram to sign a forged certificate that could have easily led him to prison house. From innocent errors committed by drivers, they turn to professional criminals. With deep anguish and mockery, Balram exposes this bitter truth of human life:

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. (Adiga 170)

When Pinky, Ashok's wife in an inebriated condition runs over a pavement dweller and kills the poor child, Balram is trapped to own the crime. The power of the elite to get away with murder shows how weak everyone else is in comparison. Balram was forced to sign a statement accepting full responsibility for the accident:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

I, Balram Hawai, son of Vikram Halwai, of
Laxmangarh village in the district of Gaya, do make the
following statement of my own free will and intention:
That I drove the car that hit an unidentified person,
Or persons, or person and objects, on the night of
January 23rd of this year...
I swear by almighty God that I make this statement
under no duress and under instruction from no one. (Adiga 168)

His employer's family entices him to sign a statement. " 'You're part of the family.' My heart filled up with pride. I crouched on the floor, happy as a dog, and waited for him to say it again." (Adiga 166) Moreover, his old grandmother is made a witness to the confession as well. For instances such as these, it is ironic that the drivers and their family would actually go about bragging. "Their boy Balram had taken the fall, gone to Tihar Jail for his employer. He was a loyal dog. He was the perfect servant." (Adiga 170) Adiga justifies the statement when he says, "The trustworthiness of servants is the basis of the entire Indian economy. The Great Indian Rooster Coop." (Adiga 175)

Servitude as a value is a generalized principle of behavior to which the members of the group or institution feel a strong, emotionally-toned positive commitment and which provides a standard for judging specific acts and goals. Each member of the group is expected to remain committed to the values accepted by the group. Values, thus, provide the generalized standards of behavior. Because of the strong emotional feeling attached to values and because they serve as standards for judging concrete goals or actions, they are often regarded as absolute.

Different groups have different systems of values. Incompatibility between the values of two or more groups to the extent that the role performance of individuals is interfered with is called 'value conflict.' (Ahuja 11) Bhagat's concept of values is comprehensive. It includes moral values, social values, human values and values essential for the sanctity and integrity of the nation. He feels that for the solidarity of the nation, the collective national values are more significant than individual values. He states:

Values cannot be unpredictable, they are consistent, even in volatile times. The past decade was spent by Indian society in a muddled set of values, ... a clear set of values helps tell people what their lives are for and what is worth working for. Values tell people what is good and important. They bind society. Social scientists believe that without values, human life is meaningless and all the worldly pleasures will not lead to any satisfaction yes a lack of good values is why scams happen, nepotism exists and government doesn't care about its people. Core values are vital to any society and human being. (Bhagat 2012, 5)

Similar to value conflict, culture lag is a situation in which some parts of a culture change at a faster rate than other related parts resulting in the disruption of integration and equilibrium of the culture; for example the material culture changes more rapidly than the non-material culture in industrial societies through rapid advances in science and technology. The theory of cultural lag, in particular holds that in modern societies there has been a tendency for change in the political, educational, family and religious institutions to fall behind technological changes. It is thus easy to see how culture lag can create social problems. Even after rapid industrialization in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in the first quarter of the twentieth century, some people were

so influenced by the rigid restrictions of the caste system that they refused to work with members of other castes in the industries and preferred to remain unemployed and poor. The first quarter of the twentieth century, thus, remained a period of culture lag. It took more than a generation to adapt ourselves to technological development in agriculture and industry. Our social institutions, thus, retained the traditional flavor whereas technology advanced in the world. (Ahuja 10)

In the twenty-first century, amidst the uproar of the economic boom, there grew a greater economic disparity in the society with the poor being invisible than ever before. Similarly their very existence is quite often at stake and is more vulnerable to crime. The evidence of their involvement knee-deep in crime is the rise in armed rebellions in many parts of India. Though a murder cannot be justified and the murderer cannot be pardoned, through Balram's mobility, Adiga shows that an easy and shorter way to success is only by illegal patronage and corruption. Adiga has issued a stern to the policy makers of this nation by presenting that material advancement, a significant component for survival, can also be achieved through benefaction and using underhand means in this postmodern society.

In Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Balram realized that he will fail and never succeed if he did not forego his middle class traditional values which he possessed and has been taught to maintain right through his childhood. He realized that in this world fraught with promise and possibilities one cannot grow richer or achieve success at the cost of virtue. Balram, is able to achieve that he craved. He is now an entrepreneur but with a cost, he at the same time is also a criminal, a murderer. He achieved success by leaving behind the traditional virtue. His success reveals that through underhand means a subaltern too can become an entrepreneur overnight.

Balram's breaking the traditional system is a clarion call for the Indian society that the traditional social structure in India is losing its ground.

What persuades men and women to mistake each other from time to time for gods or vermin is ideology. One can understand well enough how human beings may struggle and murder for good material reasons – reasons connected, for instance, with their physical survival. It is much harder to grasp how they may come to do so in the name of something as apparently abstract as ideas. Yet ideas are what men and women live by, and will occasionally die for. (Eagleton xxii)

Balram fully realize that his penurious condition made him both a misfit and unfit in the society. He was well aware of the consequences of his crime and realized that if caught it would be an end for him but taking no risk meant a confirmed and guaranteed end. He is symbolic of those new young Indian men, who are prone to commit even more heinous crimes to achieve their target.

Balram's act empowers the marginalized by retrieving their voices, spaces and identities suppressed by colonial surrogates in the postcolonial environment. His act is a rebellion against prevalent dominant ideology, cultural supremacy and investigates the petrified condition simultaneously issuing a warning for struggle of the marginalized because humiliation, resentment and grief are the fundamental components of the process of their struggle. Thus, for the advancement and growth of the country in true sagacity, this ever increasing socioeconomic inequality has to be bridged because the educated population of youth belonging to the marginalized sections is increasing at an alarming rate and their helplessness and vulnerability is obvious either from their reticent suppression or intrepid rebellion. They have a right

to enhance their social status and in order to achieve this, they have to follow the path of virtue or to leave the traditional moral values and follow the dangerous road chosen by Balram because they are to survive at any cost.

Ideology in this negative sense is objectionable either because it gives birth to massive social illusion, or because it deploys true ideas to unpalatable effect, or because it springs from some unworthy motivation. (Eagleton 43)

With the breaking of traditional relationship and the emergence of new patterns of life, there is a greater isolation and loneliness. “Strangers seem to be suspended in the empty space between a tradition which they have already left and the mode of life which stubbornly denies them right to entry.” (Sarup 10) Isolation within these empty spaces cultivates unconscious violence and unexpressed resistance. The lack of harmony existing between the demands of society and desires of individual creates colossal angst within an individual, which later is more likely to surface.

In the *The White Tiger*, the narrator acquires Marxist point of view while describing the social reality in India. History of all societies is the history of class struggle. Balram Halwai puts this idea of Marx in his own social context in this paragraph:

Mr. Premier, I won't be saying anything new if I say that the history of the world is the history of a ten-thousand-year war of brains between the rich and the poor. Each side is eternally trying to hoodwink the other side: and it has been this way since the start of time. The poor win a few battles (the peeing in the potted plants, the kicking of the pet dogs, etc.) but of course the rich have won the war for ten thousand years. That's why, one day, some wise men, out of compassion for the poor, left them signs and symbols in poems, which

appear to be about roses and pretty girls and things like that, but when understood correctly spill out secrets that allow the poorest man on earth to conclude the ten-thousand-year-old brainwar on terms favorable to himself. (Adiga 141-142)

Balram does not consider any other reality of the history than the war and conflict between the rich and the poor. Balram does not show any respect for non-material things such as religion, values, beliefs and morals. He satirizes the Hindu religious rituals and practices from the beginning to the end of the narrative. The satirical tone is obvious in these lines from the novel:

Now, I no longer watch Hindi films—on principle—but back in the days when I used to, just before the movie got started, either the number 786 would flash against the blackscreen—the Muslims think this is a magic number that represents their god—or else you would see the picture of a woman in a white sari with gold sovereigns dripping down to her feet, which is the goddess Lakshmi, of the Hindus.

It is an ancient and venerated custom of people in my country to start a story by praying to a Higher Power.

I guess, Your Excellency, that I too should start off by kissing some god's arse.

Which god's arse, though? There are so many choices.

See, the Muslims have one god.

The Christians have three gods.

And we Hindus have 36,000,000 gods.

Making a grand total of 36,000,004 divine arses for me to choose from. (Adiga

8)

Balram not only wants to break away from the Rooster Coop but also wants to break away from the religious tradition, from the “ancient and venerated custom of people of my [his] country to start a story by praying to a Higher Power” (Adiga 8) because he is very much aware that power lies in wealth; and his religion cannot offer him aid in fulfilling his aspirations. Balram is tilted more towards atheism which is another trade of a Marxist influence.

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 exist. There are just us and an ocean of darkness around us. (Adiga 6)

There are some political parties, who think that not many of these gods actually exist. Only their vested party leaders seem to be their gods. They politically believe their class and culture communists have no gods. For them, party workers and leaders are gods. This is the believe of Balram, the protagonist of the novel.

The functioning of social structures, patriarchal authority and institutions operate as a means of control over an individual which creates alienation. These maladjustment, non-attachment and non-commitment of an individual lead to a feeling of relative deprivation. “Relative deprivation is the perceived discrepancy between group's expectations and their capabilities.” (Ahuja 143) This further leads to violence and corruption. The conditions which lead to collective communal violence are: stress, status frustration and cries of various kinds. Both the protagonists, Balram and Gopal are corrupt and even violent because they suffer from insecurity and anxiety. The origin of these feelings and anxieties can be traced to social barriers created by the oppressive social system and its institutional ideologies like the power

elite, the individual's background and upbringing, patriarchal authority, social norms and social institutions like family, class/caste and religion. By lying, betraying and using his sharp intelligence, Balram escapes the Rooster Coop. Similarly, in *Revolution 2020*, Gopal bribed his way to establishing a new college. Both the protagonists have come a long way in denouncing the patriarchal authority and institutional ideologies in their quest for liberty and fulfilling their individual aspirations.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion

This dissertation analyses Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) and Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020* (2011) as a social critique of the contemporary Indian society within the timeframe from the 21st century till the present time. Social criticism is employed because literature is the mirror of society. In this sense, literature plays its part as a reflector and a corrector of society. Social criticism analyzes social structures which are seen as flawed and aims at practical solutions by specific measures to reform. Both the authors' understanding and consequent portrayal of the contemporary Indian society unveils a new definition of the social structure pertaining to the nature of social and human psyches. The study shows that India continues to face the challenges of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, corruption, malnutrition, inadequate public healthcare and terrorism even after its independence in 1947. The diversity and magnitude of the problem create huge challenges. Both the novels highlight these problems including the 'East-West Encounter' and its effect on the Indian tradition. (Sablok 1)

Both Adiga and Bhagat come down heavily with the extreme poverty of India. The study locates Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat in utilizing the novel as a social critique to highlight the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor which leads to competitive corruption. The statement is justified by an in-depth study of *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020* by highlighting the protagonist's struggle to establish themselves in the hostile social environment and the decline of traditional culture under the impact of Westernization. Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* exposes the loopholes in the democratic system of India. It provides a darkly humorous

perspective of India's class struggle in a globalized world and focuses on the binary nature of the nation using sardonic humour. *Revolution 2020* depicts aggressively ambitious generation of irreverent young people amidst rampant corruption and defunct educational system. The flashback technique in the first person narrative enriches the authenticity of the expression.

In both *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020*, the two overtly ambitious protagonists struggle to achieve their individual aspirations. Both Balram and Gopal aspire to liberate themselves from the clutches of class distinction and poverty. They aspire to meet realistic goals of escaping the status quo in order to experience new sense of accomplishments. It is evident that the main fuel of achievement comes from aspirations that are higher than the status quo.

The social structure is also held responsible for the performance of an individual in the society. The statement is justified by an in-depth study of both the protagonists Balram and Gopal, and their plight to abide by the moralities of the contemporary Indian society, probing into their psychology and their struggle to tackle with the system that has restrained them from fulfilling their individual aspirations. The adaptation of a Bildungsroman is significant with regards to the development of the main characters.

The study exposes the binary nature of the Indian Culture; the haves and have not's, the India of Light and Darkness, Men with Big Bellies and Men with Small Bellies. The division of the society based on social and economic status is interpreted through Marxism; the bourgeois and proletariat, exploitive and exploited, or politically the ruler and ruled. Both the protagonists belong to the underclass and hence they are studied as a representative of the downtrodden who aspire to liberate

themselves from their status quo. Adiga's metaphor of a caged society is studied in the form of a 'Rooster Coop' to show the ingrained prejudice and unfairness meted out to the poor on the basis of caste and class discrimination in the globalized India.

The concept of the 'Half-Baked Indian' in *The White Tiger* is explained by Homi Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity' from *The Location of Culture* (1994). It explains how people's identities are not limited to their ethnic heritage, but rather are subject to change and modification through experience. Bhabha challenges the binary opposition of West/Non-West and sees post-colonial cultures as "hybrids" identified by their own people as well as the colonial power. Today's society is made up of hybrids of different ethnic backgrounds and present social experiences. This is the place where the crossing over of time and cultural differences occurs and where new signs of identity are formed, the identity of a Half-Baked Indian.

The overtly ambitious nature of both the protagonists is driven by the angst of the authors. The study associates Chetan Bhagat and Aravind Adiga with the angry decades of the 1950's known as the 'Angry Young Man' in the history of the contemporary English Literature. These angry novels have as their theme the striving of their protagonists to escape from the negative aspects of their class. They wish to exclude poverty, narrowness, lack of status and desire to achieve the wealth, education or respect that is associated with the middle class. Men like them succeed but they pay a high price for it.

The effect of individualism is responsible for the protagonists to cultivate overtly ambitious aspirations, which eventually cultivate immoral deeds against the law and order of the government by falling prey to corruption, like Gopal, or in the case of Balram, a hideous crime. Their individualistic mindset is held responsible for

the overtly ambitious protagonists who denounce the moral traditional values and eventually fall prey to corruption. Both the novels explore different types of corruption present in the contemporary India such as bribery, nepotism, misappropriation, patronage and favoritism which start off with the individual, the social system; law, politics, elections and how it percolates into the medical and academic institutions.

In *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020*, power is seen in terms of wealth and money plays a vital role in asserting honor to one's own identity. The study echoes Foucault's concept that, "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but it comes from everywhere" (Foucault 93). However for Foucault, "where there is power, there is resistance." The study of both the protagonists shows the "plurality of resistance". In *The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga celebrates the triumph of corruption as the only means to attain power and authority. "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." (Lord Aucton) The same notion is opined by Bhagat in *Revolution 2020* that power is essential in asserting one's identity, and power is attained through economic wealth. What is evident from both the selected novels is that in India, not only that power corrupts, but also corruption empowers a few and dispossesses the majority.

Both Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat acquire Marxist point of view while describing the social reality in India. Human beings, as Marx put it, do shape the development of their society but in this they do not have complete freedom, instead they are constrained by the conditions of the material conditions around. History of all societies is the history of class struggle. "Men are not free to choose their social

relations; they are constrained into them by material necessity – by the nature and stage of development of their mode of economic production.” (Eagleton 6)

The binary nature of Indian Culture could be traced mainly because of the difference in money power. The division of the society based on social and economic status is interpreted through Marxism; the bourgeois and proletariats, exploitive and exploited, or politically the ruler and ruled, the upperclass and underclass. Both the protagonists Balram and Gopal belong to the underclass and hence they are representative of the downtrodden who aspire to liberate themselves from their status quo. The underclass constitutes what Marx called the economic base. Balram transcends his sweet-maker caste and becomes a successful entrepreneur, establishing his own taxi service after killing his master and stealing his money. Balram represents, as he himself says, “tomorrow” (Adiga 6), thus in this way he also represents his own class. In the light of Marxist analysis of the economic structure of society, both Balram and Gopal represents the bourgeoisie class, the class that constitutes the economic base of the Indian social structure.

In both *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020*, patriarchy still manifests itself in the social, legal, political and economic organization of the contemporary society. Patriarchal order pervades every aspect of life in India. The individual is subjugated to fulfill the dreams of their parents, suppressing their own aspirations. It studies how “paternal love obviously overestimating progeny’s abilities” (Bhagat 26).

The various institutions of the contemporary Indian society comes with certain ideologies. The rigid caste distinction of the society traces how man is known and recognized by his caste. “In India, one’s lot is determined the day he is born, as he

will be known by his religion, caste and sex. Everything in his life is predetermined – who will do what and how he will have to conduct himself in society.” (Dhawan 237)

The study treats Communalism as an ideology which states that society is divided into religious communities whose interests differ and are, at times, even opposed to each other. In *The White Tiger*, Ram Persad, the servant of Stork disguised his Muslim identity because the prejudiced landlord is a Hindu. On disclosure he was sacked from the job. The study reveals that an ethno-religious group's resistance to interfaith marriage can constitute a form of self-segregation citing the marriage of Ashok and Pinky. In *The White Tiger*, Adiga explains how religion can be the cause of manipulated servitude towards others. It is ironic that the “half man half monkey: Hanuman” is “everyone’s favorite god in the Darkness.” (Adiga 19) This explains how socio-cultural slavery is perpetuated in our society by elite through the process of socialization. The servants' life is more a slave's life in India.

The study of the two novels shows that different groups have different systems of values. Incompatibility between the values of two or more groups to the extent that the role performance of individuals is interfered with is called ‘value conflict.’ (Ahuja 11) The study further traces value conflict as a result of culture lag. The theory of cultural lag, in particular holds that in modern societies there has been a tendency for change in the political, educational, family and religious institutions to fall behind technological changes. In this way culture lag creates social problems.

Ideology in this negative sense is objectionable either because it gives birth to massive social illusion, or because it deploys true ideas to unpalatable effect, or because it springs from some unworthy motivation. (Eagleton 2007, 43).

The outcome of the comparative study of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020* show that India still suffers from the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor. Both the protagonists Balram and Gopal belong to the lower class of equal economical background, both are overly ambitious and both has adopted their individualistic approach to fulfil their aspirations. Adiga blames the Indian democracy while Bhagat grumbles on the defunct educational system. Adiga's protagonist committed a murder to jump into the society of the elites, while Bhagat's protagonist bribes his way up to the social status he aspires. Balram is void of remorse or regret; he justifies the fact that in order to be the master, he needs to kill one. The role reversal of master-servant is seen in Balram's social climbing, even adopting the name of his master Ashok in the end. Gopal, on the other hand is aware of his immoral practice and bribery. At the end, he deliberately breaks his bond with Aarti, with the hope that Raghav would reform the corrupt society he has succumbed to.

The chapter on the social corruption reveals the pathetic politicians, the government and the educational system. Adiga studies the irony of election under the Indian democracy. Bhagat accuses the education system as a safer cover to complete all black designs. Adiga sees the whole educational system as a "Jungle" governed by a "crowd of thugs and idiots." (Adiga35) The irony lies in education which is supposed to bring the country to "Light" is abused in both the novels.

The subordination of the Eastern culture to the Western creates a new class called as the 'Half-Baked' Indian. Although Balram and Gopal is seen transcending their initial social status quo, one may observe that they are just shifting from one kind of a 'half-baked' identity to another, because by social climbing to the status of elites, they are submerged into another kind of half-baked class. They are just shifting from one 'coop' to another. Balram is metaphored as the White Tiger, but what if the

society comprises of many other white tigers. A coop full of white tigers would be chaotic, devouring one another, and hence Adiga's method of social climbing is proved as more disturbing than the Rooster Coop itself.

The functioning of social structures, patriarchal authority and institutions operate as a means of control over an individual which creates alienation. These maladjustment, non-attachment and non-commitment of an individual lead to a feeling of relative deprivation. "Relative deprivation is the perceived discrepancy between group's expectations and their capabilities." (Ahuja 143) This further leads to violence and corruption. Both the protagonists are corrupt and even violent because they suffer from insecurity and anxiety.

The origin of these feelings and anxieties can be traced to social barriers created by the oppressive social system and its institutional ideologies like the power elite, the individual's background and upbringing, patriarchal authority, social norms and social institutions like family, class/caste and religion. By lying, betraying and using his sharp intelligence, Balram makes his ascent into the heady heights of Bangalore's big business. Similarly, in *Revolution 2020*, Gopal bribed his way to establishing a new college. Both the protagonists have come a long way in denouncing the patriarchal authority and institutional ideologies in their quest for liberty and fulfilling their individual aspirations.

In their attitude to contemporary Indian society, both Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat are undoubtedly social critics focusing on the flaws of society of their time. Adiga does not see any good in Indian democracy; he admires the administration of China to the extent that he wants to replace India's democracy with it. However, for Bhagat, although he finds numerous flaws within the Indian democracy, feels more

concerned for a transformation to come through a reformatory revolution. Bhagat stresses on the need to reform the society in a subtle manner through awareness through the media while Adiga opts for a violent, even clandestine, overturn of an unjust society. In all these aspects, the study concludes that both *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020* are indeed novels of social critique of the contemporary Indian society.

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APPENDICES

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<u>DEGREE</u>	: M.Phil.
<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	: English
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<u>DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION</u>	: 03.08.2012
<u>(Commencement of First Semester)</u>	
<u>COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND</u>	: 01.01.2013
<u>SEMESTER/DISSERTATION</u>	
<u>APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL –</u>	
1. BOS	: 26.04.2013
2. SCHOOL BOARD	: 07.05.2013
3. REGISTRATION NO. & DATE	: MZU/M.Phil/135 of 07.05.2013
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5. EXTENTION IF ANY	: 1 Semester

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X	MBSE	2003	D	86.6%
XII	MBSE	2005	II	57.6%
B.A.	MZU	2008	II	55.5%
M.A.	MZU	2010	II	57.50%
M.Phil.	MZU	Course work completed in 2012	I 'A' Grade awarded. 10 pt. scale grading system, 'A' corresponds to 6 - 6.99 pts.	Corresponds to 62.3 % in terms of percentage conversion.

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Other relevant information :

- i. Currently working on M.Phil. dissertation entitled, “The Novel as a Social Critique: A Study of Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger* and Chetan Bhagat’s *Revolution 2020*” under the supervision of Dr. Sarangadhar Baral, Associate Professor, Department of English, Mizoram University.
- ii. Attended and participated in a national seminar entitled, “Narrativizing Trauma in North Eastern India and Beyond,” organized by the Department of English, Mizoram University on 5th and 6th November, 2012.
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- v. Awarded the UGC-MZU Fellowship for the tenure of eighteen months from the date of admission on 4th August 2012.

**THE NOVEL AS A SOCIAL CRITIQUE:
A STUDY OF ARAVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER* AND
CHETAN BHAGAT'S *REVOLUTION 2020***

(ABSTRACT)

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in English**

By

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The novel as a social critique would apparently sound to include a broad area of investigation. However, the present study has circumscribed its focus to two texts of Indian Writing in English, Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) and Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020* (2011) to see if these novels too are motivated by the theme of social criticism of the contemporary Indian society. It is increasingly realized that both the authors' understanding and consequent portrayal of the contemporary society unveils debased facets of the social structure, and due to their parallel approach, the two authors are studied together based on their observation of the contemporary Indian society pertaining to the nature of social and human psyches.

Many of the most successful of modern authors have approached literature from the perspectives of economic, ethical, sociological, political, religious or educational question; and thus literature proves to be the most effective instrument to deliver their socialistic propaganda. Social criticism functions as a conscious mode to analyze social structures functional in an age pertinent to a culture. With the help of social criticism, one can perceive the social mentality of an age. As the Russian critic Georgy Plekhanov observes, "The social mentality of an age is conditioned by that age's social relations. This is nowhere quite as evident as in the history of art and literature." (Eagleton 3)

"Social criticism" as a term has a wide meaning, hence the term "social" is discussed in this study in the sense, as the Merriam-Webster dictionary puts it, "of or relating to human society, the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society." This means that, the term "social" concerns the way the individuals, the characters of the novels, deal with each other, how the society is organized and how its institutions treat the individual and the

group, which also brings economic, socio-political, religious and educational components into the scope of the study. Social criticism as a critical mode of understanding analyzes social structures which, when perceived as flawed, may elicit certain specific measures including radical reform or even revolutionary change. Its function is to distinguish that which is true from that which is merely interesting. In the words of Mr. Brownell, “it would apply the criterion of reason to the work of ascertaining value apart from mere attractiveness.” (Peck 137)

The term social criticism locates the causes of malicious conditions of the society in flawed social structures and aims at practical solutions by specific measures. Academic works of social criticism can belong to social philosophy, political economy, sociology, social psychology, psychoanalysis, cultural studies and other disciplines or reject all other academic forms of discourse.

In “Interpretation and Social Criticism,” Michael Walzer states that “social criticism is an external activity; what makes it possible is radical detachment.”

(Walzer 31) Elaborating on this statement, he further writes,

First, critics must be emotionally detached, wrenched loose from the intimacy and warmth of membership: disinterested and dispassionate. Second, critics must be intellectually detached, wrenched loose from the parochial understandings of their own society (standardly taken to be self-congratulatory): open-minded and objective. (Walzer 39)

Animal Farm, written in 1944, is an example of social criticism in literature in which Orwell satirized the events in Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution. He anthropomorphizes the animals, and alludes each one to a counterpart in Russian history. Charles Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* (1849) with the zeal of a social critic in

order to expose the ugliness of the Victorian Age throwing light on the workhouse system of those days in 17th Century England. At the same time he has exposed the defects of the Poor Law of 1834 which aimed at abolishing begging and unemployment. The 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe furthered the anti-slavery movement in the United States, and the 1885 novel *Ramona*, by Helen Hunt Jackson, brought about changes in laws regarding Native Americans. Similarly, Upton Sinclair's 1906 novel *The Jungle* helped create new laws related to public health and food handling, and Arthur Morrison's 1896 novel *A Child of the Jago* caused England to change its housing laws. Gertude Buck states:

Social criticism treats literature not as a finished product, but as a social process, and in doing so it does not make the common mistake of emphasizing one part of the process to the neglect of another. It gives positive expression to the consciousness of literature as a continuous activity, “generated immediately in the writer's consciousness and ultimately in the consciousness of his age,” but completing itself only as it passes over “into the reader's consciousness to enlighten or to stir it to action.” And social criticism knows itself also as a social process, organically related to the literature with which it deals and the society which it serves. (Buck 5)

The art of social criticism has been incorporated in the novels of Indian Writing in English as well. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) deals with India's transition from British colonialism to independence and the partition of British India 1947 as a social, political and psychological disaster for the succeeding generations. Mukul Kesavan delves into the relationship between the Muslim

population and the nationalist movement in *Looking Through Glass* (1995) which looks at a community which is often erased from nationalist histories and in the process offers a different, less heroic perspective on the closing years of the struggle for Independence. Kesavan's novel begins in the present, with a young photographer taking the ashes of his grandmother to the Ganges. En route he falls from a railway bridge in pursuit of a picturesque shot, but wakes up to find himself in 1942 amid the Quit India agitation. *The Last Burden* (1994), a novel by Upamanyu Chatterjee portrays life in an Indian middle-class family. It portrays the struggle of the newer generation in order to move into an atomic family structure from a strictly hierarchical joint family structure where even the elders have an even more elderly person who dictates the terms. In Amit Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song* (1998), the child's Calcutta is still present but has been changed by two decades of communist rule and political violence across the country. In *A New World* (2000), Chaudhuri writes of a more ambivalent Calcutta, a city no more than a minor place of transit. Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* (2000) meditates on large historical and nationalist issues such as diaspora, migration, refugees, colonial hegemony, and the economic and cultural subjugation of populous regions by the West. Ghosh's second book, *The Shadow Lines* (1988), deals with relations between the different arms of a prospering bhadralok family, the DattaChaudhuris, displaced from Dhaka to Calcutta by the Partition.

A similar approach for the purpose of using social criticism in Indian literature underpins Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) which takes an irreverent view of the development of modern India which is in tune with the scepticism of many recent historical novels. Shashi Deshpande *That Long Silence* (1988), sensitive woman lives grappled between the powerful currents of tradition and patriarchy, of

terror and suppression. These women are inescapably subjected to continuous physical torture and sexual assaults in the society. Some facets of Kerala life which the novel captures in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) are communism, the caste system, and the Keralite Syrian Christian way of life.

Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993) is a set in the early 1950s, formative years of the Nehru period, with the passing of the zamindari abolition legislation and the first election of the post-independence in 1952. It illustrates the emerging polity of Post-Colonial India in the form of a political fable. The novel follows the story of four families over a period of 18 months as a mother searches for a suitable boy to marry her daughter.

The Oscar winning Hollywood movie *The Slum Dog Millionaire* (2005) by Danny Boyle portrays the darkest part of our country where 'rottenness and corruption', with degraded and degenerated moral qualities replacing the age old moral values and qualities highlighting the 'darkness' of India as in V.S Naipaul's novel *Area of Darkness* (1964). In Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss* (2006), poverty is the root cause of GNLF movement depicting the extreme polarities of the poor and rich which brings drastic changes in the attitude and love of the characters.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) is famous for its attack on the class/caste structure of Indian society where the lower classes are victims of class disparities and discrimination in society. Both *Inheritance of Loss* and *The God of Small Things* deal with secret transgressive love across social classes in a way that underscores the disparity in the world. Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* (1936) maps the life of the underdog, the life of a village boy who caters to India's upper classes. Anand's novel ended with the death of a teenage Munoo from tuberculosis, while Adiga's

protagonist Balram grows into a man, and prospers after robbing and killing his master.

Two texts have been selected to take critical view of issues focusing on social issues like caste and class system, individual aspiration, exploitive loyalty, patriarchal authority, corruption and poverty in India. The texts are Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) and Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020* (2011). The selected authors appear to have articulated almost identical views on the dominant social structures of their times. In both the novels, *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020*, the novel deals with the protagonist's struggle to establish themselves in the hostile social environment and the decline of traditional culture under the impact of Westernization. Both the writers feel greatly concerned about the subordination of the Eastern culture to the Western.

The White Tiger is the debut novel by Indian author Aravind Adiga (born October 23, 1974). It was first published in 2008 and won the 40th Man Booker Prize in the same year. Other works of Aravind Adiga includes *Between the Assassinations* (2008) and *Last Man in Tower* (2011). Aravind Adiga was born in Madras in 1974 and has subsequently lived in India, Australia, the U.S. and the U.K. He currently lives in Mumbai. The novel provides a darkly humorous perspective of India's class struggle in a globalized world as told through a retrospective narration from Balram Halwai, a village boy who journeys from the darkness of village life to the light of entrepreneurial success in an utterly amoral, brilliantly irreverent, deeply endearing and altogether unforgettable manner. The language used is lucid and spontaneous.

Revolution 2020 (2011) is a novel by Chetan Bhagat (b. April 22, 1974) written in 2011, its story is concerned with a love triangle, corruption and a journey of

self-discovery. Chetan Bhagat is the author of four other bestselling novels – *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night at a Call Center* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008) and *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* (2009). With their simple plot lines, easily identifiable characters and situations and inexpensive pricing, his books target an aspiration-driven youth market. Bhagat writes for leading English and Hindi newspapers, focusing on youth and national development issues. He is also a motivational speaker and a columnist. He was named one of the ‘100 Most Influential People in the World’ by *Time* magazine. His collection of selected essays and columns were published in the book *What Young India Wants* (2012). Chetan quits his international investment banking career in 2009, to devote his entire time to writing and make change happen in the country. He lives in Mumbai with his wife Anusha and his twin sons Shyam and Ishaan. The works of Chetan Bhagat shows the dreams and hopes of an aggressively ambitious generation whose laughter is tinged with tears. His characters are irreverent young people.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the social backdrop of the two texts. The study locates Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat, their positions as writers among contemporary novelists such as Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Vikram Seth and other prominent novelists within the ambit of Indian Writing in English. The chapter traces a brief history of India before Independence and draws out the social challenges of the time. It further studies how India still continues to face the challenges of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, corruption, malnutrition, inadequate public healthcare and terrorism even after its independence in 1947. The study focuses on the part played by Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat in utilizing the novel as a social

critique to highlight the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor. The statement is justified by an in-depth study of *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020* by highlighting the protagonist's struggle to establish themselves in the hostile social environment and the decline of traditional culture under the impact of Westernization. Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* exposes the loopholes in the democratic system of India. It provides a darkly humorous perspective of India's class struggle in a globalized world and focuses on the binary nature of the nation using sardonic humor. *Revolution 2020* depicts aggressively ambitious generation of irreverent young people amidst rampant corruption and defunct educational system.

Chapter 2: Individual aspiration and the quest for liberty

This chapter studies how the social structure is held responsible for the performance of an individual in the society. The statement is justified by an in-depth study of both the protagonists Balram and Gopal, and their plight to abide by the moralities of the contemporary Indian society, probing into their psychology and their struggle to tackle with the system that has restrained them from fulfilling their individual aspirations. The chapter studies the question of identity through the two protagonists. The adaptation of the Bildungsroman is significant with regards to the development of the main characters. The chapter exposes the binary nature of the Indian society; the haves and have not's, the India of Light and Darkness, Men with Big Bellies and Men with Small Bellies. The division of the society based on social and economic status is interpreted through Marxism; the bourgeois and proletariats, exploitive and exploited, the ruler and ruled. Both the protagonists belong to the underclass and hence they are studied as a representative of the downtrodden who aspire to liberate themselves from their status quo. Adiga's metaphor of a caged

society is studied in the form of a 'Rooster Coop' to show the ingrained prejudice and unfairness meted out to the poor on the basis of caste and class discrimination in the globalized India.

The concept of the 'Half-Baked Indian' in *The White Tiger* is explained by Homi Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity' from *The Location of Culture* (1994). It explains how people's identities are not limited to their ethnic heritage, but rather are subject to change and modification through experience. Bhabha challenges the binary opposition of West/Non-West and sees post-colonial cultures as "hybrids" identified by their own people as well as the colonial power. The chapter studies how today's society is made up of hybrids of different ethnic backgrounds and present social experiences. This is the place where the crossing over of time and cultural differences occurs and where new signs of identity are formed, the identity of a Half-Baked Indian.

The overtly ambitious nature of both the protagonists is driven by the angst of the authors. The study associates Chetan Bhagat and Aravind Adiga with the angry decades of the 1950's known as the 'Angry Young Man' in the history of the contemporary English Literature. These angry novels have as their theme the striving of their protagonists to escape from the negative aspects of their class. They wish to exclude poverty, narrowness, lack of status and desire to achieve the wealth, education or respect that is associated with the middle class. Men like them succeed but they pay a high price for it. The effect of individualism is studied in this chapter as responsible for the protagonists to cultivate overtly ambitious aspirations, which eventually cultivate immoral deeds against the law and order of the government by falling prey to corruption like Gopal, or in the case of Balram, a hideous crime.

Chapter 3: A statement on social corruption

The chapter studies how the overtly ambitious protagonists denounce the moral traditional values and eventually fall prey to corruption. The chapter explores different types of corruption present in the contemporary India such as bribery, nepotism, misappropriation, patronage and favoritism which start off with the individual, the social system; law, politics, elections and how it percolates into the medical and academic institutions.

This chapter draws out scenes from *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020* on how power is seen in terms of wealth and how money plays a vital role in asserting honor to one's own identity. The study echoes Foucault's concept that, "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but it comes from everywhere" (Foucault 93). However for Foucault, "where there is power, there is resistance." The study of both the protagonists shows the "plurality of resistance". In *The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga explains the triumph of corruption as the only means to attain power and authority. Bhagat aligns himself with Che Guevera, the great revolutionary: "Power is not an apple that falls from a tree into your lap. Power has to be snatched from people who already have it." (Bhagat 205). What is evident from both the selected novels is that in India, not only that power corrupts, but also corruption empowers a few and dispossesses the majority.

Both Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat acquire Marxist point of view while describing the social reality in India. Human beings, as Marx put it, do shape the development of their society but in this they do not have complete freedom, instead they are constrained by the conditions of the material conditions around. History of all societies is the history of class struggle. "Men are not free to choose their social

relations; they are constrained into them by material necessity – by the nature and stage of development of their mode of economic production.” (Eagleton 6)

Chapter 4: Patriarchal authority and institutional ideology

This chapter studies how patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political and economic organization of a range of different cultures. The manifestation of patriarchal authority is studied in both *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020* with reference to the young aspiring characters. The study stressed on how an individual is subjugated to fulfill the dreams of their parents, suppressing their own aspirations. It studies how “paternal love obviously overestimating progeny’s abilities” (Bhagat 26). The chapter further analyses the rigid caste distinction of the society. It traces how man is known and recognized by his caste. “In India, one’s lot is determined the day he is born, as he will be known by his religion, caste and sex. Everything in his life is predetermined – who will do what and how he will have to conduct himself in society.” (Dhawan 237)

The study treats Communalism as an ideology which states that society is divided into religious communities whose interests differ and are, at times, even opposed to each other. In *The White Tiger*, Ram Persad, the servant of Stork disguised his Muslim identity because the prejudiced landlord is a Hindu. On disclosure he was sacked from the job. The study reveals that an ethno-religious group's resistance to interfaith marriage can constitute a form of self-segregation citing the marriage of Ashok and Pinky. In *The White Tiger*, Adiga explains how religion can be the cause of manipulated servitude towards others. It is ironic that the “half man half monkey: Hanuman” is “everyone’s favorite god in the Darkness.” (Adiga 19) Hence they remain perfect servants like Hanuman and never think of replacing their masters. This

explains how socio-cultural slavery is perpetuated in our society by elite through the process of socialization. The study traces value conflict as a result of culture lag.

The study of both the novels shows that both Adiga and Bhagat have treated the patriarchal authority and institutional ideologies as the determining factor in shaping an individual's character. "Ideology in this negative sense is objectionable either because it gives birth to massive social illusion, or because it deploys true ideas to unpalatable effect, or because it springs from some unworthy motivation" (Eagleton 2007, 43).

Chapter V: Conclusion

This chapter sums up the whole research evaluating the issues and problems of the contemporary Indian society as explored by Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat. The outcome of the comparative study shows that India suffers from the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor. Both the protagonists Balram and Gopal belong to the lower class of equal economical background, both are overly ambitious and both has adopted their individualistic approach to fulfil their aspirations. Adiga blames the Indian democracy while Bhagat grumbles on the defunct educational system. Adiga's protagonist committed a murder to jump into the society of the elites, while Bhagat's protagonist bribes his way up to the social status he aspires. Balram is void of remorse or regret; he justifies the fact that in order to be the master, he needs to kill one. The role reversal of master-servant is seen in Balram's social climbing, even adopting the name of his master Ashok in the end. Gopal, on the other hand is aware of his immoral practice and bribery. At the end, he deliberately breaks his bond with Aarti, with the hope that Raghav would reform the corrupt society he has succumbed to.

A study on the social corruption reveals the pathetic politicians, the government and the educational system. Adiga studies the irony of election under the Indian democracy. Bhagat accuses the education system as a safer cover to complete all black designs. Adiga sees the whole educational system as a “Jungle” governed by a “crowd of thugs and idiots.” (Adiga35) The irony lies in education which is supposed to bring the country to “Light” is abused in both the novels.

The subordination of the Eastern culture to the Western creates a new class called as the ‘Half-Baked’ Indian. Although Balram and Gopal is seen transcending their initial social status quo, one may observe that they are just shifting from one kind of a ‘half-baked’ identity to another, because by social climbing to the status of elites, they are submerged into another kind of half-baked class. They are just shifting from one ‘coop’ to another. Balram is metaphored as the White Tiger, but what if the society comprises of many other white tigers. A coop full of white tigers would be chaotic, devouring one another, and hence Adiga’s method of social climbing is proved as more disturbing than the Rooster Coop itself.

The alienation, maladjustment and non-commitment of an individual lead to a feeling of relative deprivation which further leads to violence and corruption. Both the protagonists are corrupt and even violent because they suffer from insecurity and anxiety. The origin of these feelings and anxieties can be traced to social barriers created by the oppressive social system and its institutional ideologies like the power elite, the individual’s background and upbringing, patriarchal authority, social norms and social institutions like family, class/caste and religion creates alienation.

Both Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat are undoubtedly social critics focusing on the flaws of the contemporary Indian society of their time. Adiga does not see any

good in Indian democracy. However, for Bhagat, although he finds numerous flaws within the Indian democracy, feels more concerned for a transformation to come through a reformatory revolution. Bhagat stresses on the need to reform the society in a subtle manner through awareness through the media while Adiga opts for a violent, even clandestine, overturn of an unjust society. In all these aspects, the study concludes that both *The White Tiger* and *Revolution 2020* are indeed novels of social critique.

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