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Representation of Dark India in 'The White Tiger' and 'Q and A'

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ABSTRACT

Arvind Adiga's Man Booker Prize winning novel 'The White Tiger' and Vikas Swarup's debut novel 'Q and A' represent an unromanticized dark picture of India. In 'The White Tiger' Balram's letter to Wen Jiabao and in 'Q and A' Ram's flashbacks of his childhood which he is telling to lawyer Smita are explained artistically to know the dark facts of life in modern India. Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, caste discrimination, superstition, social injustice, dowry system, corrupt education system, weakening family structure, prostitution, corruption and poor health service are expressed in these novels with a keen eye. In the novel 'The White Tiger', Adiga defines two different India "..... an India of Light and an India of Darkness(14)." The Protagonist Balram is the representative of the lower class who wants to come out of the rooster coop. So, he robs and kills his own master in order to achieve the light. In the novel, 'Q and A' Vikas Swarup represents various social issues as the backdrop to the story. The paper represents the idea how these novels depict the dark side of India.

Keywords: darkness, caste discrimination, prostitution, child molestation.

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INTRODUCTION

The novels 'The White Tiger' and 'Q and A' is the representation of dark and naked facts about modern India. Like Mulk Raj Anand, Arvind Adiga and Vikas Swarup highlight the weaker section of society. Balram Halwai and Ram Mohammed Thomas are the representatives of downtrodden class in the novel. They struggle very hard to revolt against prevailing social evils. These novels represent the journey of these protagonists from darkness to light. In an interview Swarup said,

I did not want to write about the privileged class, I wanted to explore the core of contentment in the underclass.(www.shodhganga.inflibnet.com)

The novels depict the poor rich conflict which has been growing drastically. Adiga discriminates between " Big Bellies and small Bellies(64)." Balram calls the four corrupt landlords the Raven, the Wild Boar, the Buffalo and the Stork. These landlords become more and richer by corrupted means. They bribe the politicians for their profit. Balram opines,

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,..... cuts and nicks and scars, like little whip marks in his flesh.... The story of poor man's life is written on his body, in a sharp pen. (TWT 47)

While the novel moves from country to city, the whole world of underclass also migrate their exploitation and sufferings. Due to excessive consumption of alcohol and driving the car, Pinky Madam hits a child and Balram is forced to admit all that happened:

The jail of Delhi are full of drivers who are there behind bars because they are taking the blame for their good, solid middle class masters. (TWT 170)

The poor of India is often referred to as rooster in a rooster coop. Balram Halwaii is a voice of downtrodden and symbolically described as rooster coop. He yearns to escape its darkness. The deep rooted frustration of underclass experiences resulted in a heinous crime. The gap between rich and poor destroys the innocence of Balram and makes him opportunist and murderer. Growing meanness of Ashok in treating him leads him to justify his plan of murder.

The novel 'Q and A' also represents this conflict. This book gives a detailed look on how the slums work and operate in modern India. Ram is blamed for cheating on the game show only because he was a person coming from the slums. The novel presents the fact that our society is controlled by power and money. Only the rich can survive while the poor are deprived in modern India. The poor are completely outcast from the society. Ram remarks:

when, your whole existence is *illegal*, when you live on the brink of penury in an urban wasteland where you jostle for every inch of space and have a queue even for a shit, arrest has a certain inevitability about it ..the elders in Dharavi say about never crossing the dividing line that separates the rich from the poor. After all, what business did a penniless waiter have to be participating in a brain quiz ? The brain is not an organ we are authorized to use. We are supposed to use only our hands and legs. (Q&A8)

The downtrodden are even not consider as human beings by the rich. The children from the slums are made cripples, blinds and maim by Babu Pillai then send them out on the streets to beg. If they do not earn enough, they do not eat.

Prostitution is another dark spot of modern India which is also depicted in these novels. In the novel 'The White Tiger' Balram describes that there are red light areas in Dhanbad, Delhi and Banglore where men negotiate for price with these women. Not only Indian girls even foreigner girls are also indulge in this evil act deliberately or forcefully.

In 'Q and A', Ram falls in love with Nita who is a prostitute. In her culture, it is tradition to send the most beautiful girl in the family to be a prostitute. She always forces Ram not to call her beautiful. Her own brother is her pimp. Vikas Swarup artistically describes the miserable condition of women. Shantaram, a drunkard, beats his wife and breaks a bottle over her head. Shantaram tries to molest his daughter, Smita. In order to protect her, Ram pushed her drunkard father down the stairs. Another female character, Neelima also suffered a lot. She has a very deep cut on her face, her cheek is swollen and her chest has been burnt by cigarettes which are the symbol of her mental and physical sufferings.

In this world of darkness, there is caste and culture discrimination. Everyone is known from his caste and culture. In 'The White Tiger' Stork asks Balram about his cast: "Halwaii..... What caste is that, top or bottom?(62)" The novel also depicts the tension between Hindu and Muslim. Balram had got his job as chauffeur to Mr. Ashok by revealing that Ram Persad was actually a Muslim. Ram Persad pretended to be a Hindu and hide his real identity in order to get a job. While playing cricket, the grandson of Stork, Roshan calls himself Azaruddin. Stork replies him quickly to call himself Gavasker becauseAzruddin is a Muslim.The marriage of Ashok and Pinky Madam is also not appreciated by Ashok's family because Pinky is not from their caste.

In 'Q and A' Vikas represents almost every religion. He gives his protagonist the name which is stand for three religion Ram Mohammad Thomas. Because it is unknown which religion his parents had. He was found as an abandoned child in a clothes donation box at a church in Delhi. His protagonist is named as Ram Mohammad Thomas and the reason as the writer wants his character to be an everyman. When someone broke the idol of monkey god, people armed with machetes, pickaxes, sticks and torches raided the homes of all the Muslim families. The mob attacked Salim's family and they were burnt to death. Vikas describes the

corrupt means of religion artistically. People fulfill their evil motives under the shadow of religion. Ram has witnessed father John in a homosexual act. Father John sexually abuses younger boys.

Balram criticizes the condition of government hospital in 'The White Tiger'. He points out in spite of three foundation stones led by three politicians, no hospital has been made. There is no hospital in the village. They have to go to the city hospital for their treatment. Balram's mother and father both died due to the lack of medical treatment. Even the city hospital was also in a very bad condition. There was no doctor in the hospital. Hospitals have also become the centre of corruption. Balram reports:

There was no doctor in the hospital. The word boy, after we bribed him ten rupees, said that a doctor might come in the evening. The doors to the hospital's rooms were wide open; the beds had metal springs sticking out of them, and the cat began snarling at us the moment we stepped into the room. It's not safe in the rooms-that cat has tasted blood .(TWT 48)

Balram's description of dowry system prevalent in Indian society is full critical remarks. The bride's parents suffer a lot in order to satisfy the hunger for money of the parents of the bridegroom. As Balram describes about Krishan's marriage:

We had the boy, and we screwed the girl's family hard. I remember exactly what we got in dowry from the girl's side, and thinking about it even now makes my mouth fill up with water: five thousand rupees cash, all crisp new unsoiled notes fresh from the bank, plus a Hero bicycle, plus a thick gold necklace for Kishan.(TWT 51)

The boys are victims of 'beggar mafia' criminals. After being crippled the children are forced to beg. In jail, Mr. Gupta, calls young boys into his room and molest them. He sold Ram and Salim to Babu Pillai. The novel also represents the degradation of family values. Shantaram molests his own daughter Gudiya. Mr. Rao kills his brother for money and power. Swapna Devi threw her own son Shankar out of the house when he comes to know about his mother's extra marital affair. She also refuses to pay for rabies treatment for her son and consequently he dies. Nita's own brother is her pimp.

These novels deal with the idea that even though India is a developing economy the poor are still under poverty line which is artistically described through the narrative of Balram Halwai and Ram. The journey of Balram Halwai and Ram from the world of darkness to the world of light is used symbolically to describe the various social evils prevailing in India.

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