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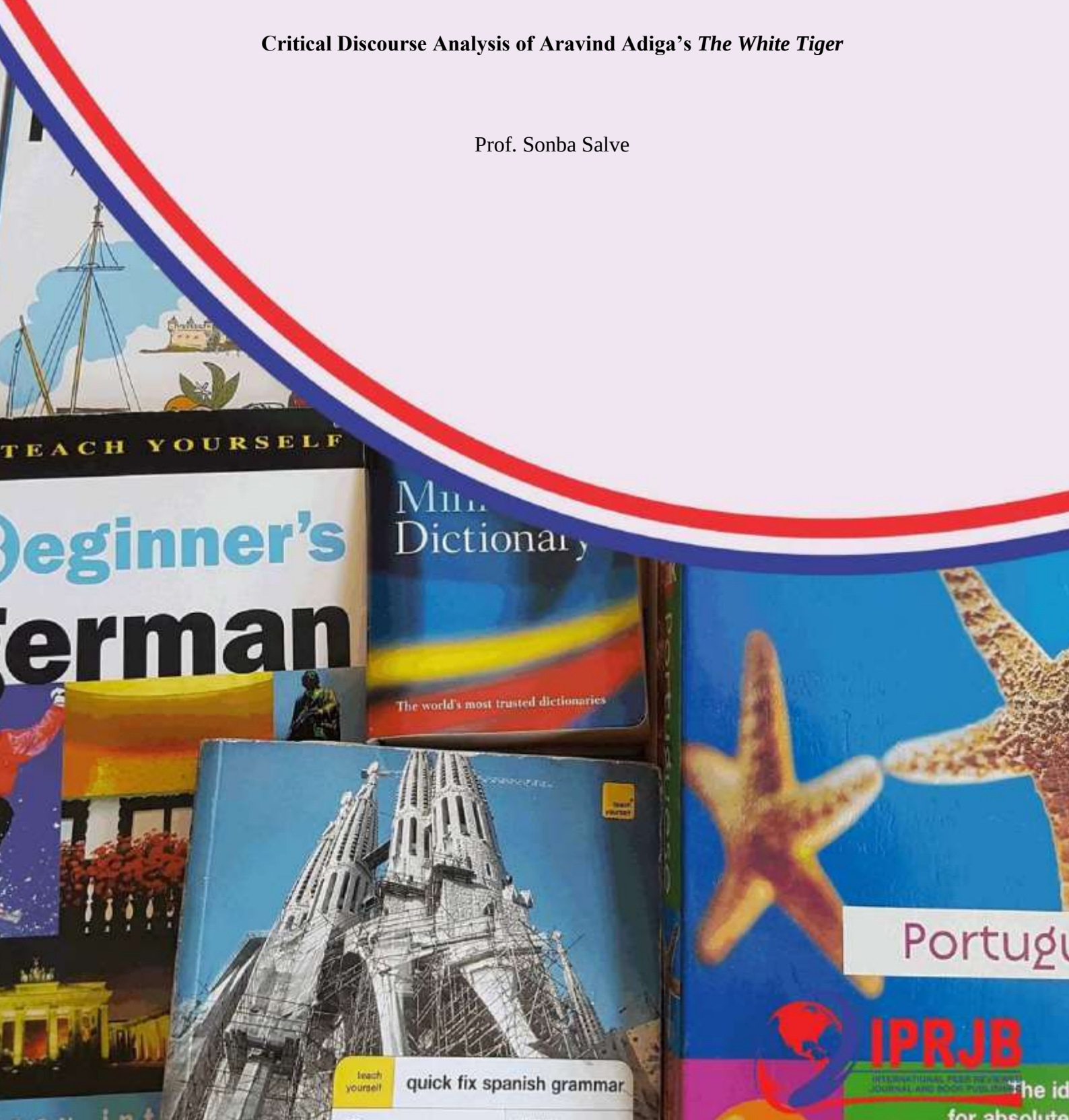

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Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is part of Discourse Analysis which deals with the way meaning is further explored beyond the realm of sentences. Its use in literature takes the exploration further by making critical inquiry in to the source of the problem or the conflict. By critically looking at conversations and writings that are being used in the society, Critical Discourse Analysis aims to attach the source of all problems in a story to a systemic failure of socio-political powers. In so doing, it tries to take an active role to correct the wrongs in the society by highlighting the conversational and textual rhetoric of the state or related entities. This article investigates the ways and methods in which Aravind Adiga has used discourse in his novel, *White Tiger* to highlight the plight of the millions of poor Indians who were living under the shadows of the few economically affluent political elites in postcolonial India. His novel, crafted in the form of a series of letters addressed to the Chinese premier, utilizes the ordinary discourse of the people in the lower strata of the society. Techniques of satire and dark humor have predominantly been used to narrate the individual story of the protagonist in a way that represents the wider society which was struggling to break the 'rooster coop' and survive with economic and political liberty.

Keywords: *Satire, Discourse, Dark Humor, Rooster Coop, Analogy, Imagery, Symbolism, Alegory*

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www.iprjb.org

INTRODUCTION

Critical discourse analysis is an approach of discourse analysis which studies how speakers of a language co-construct meaning. There is not much difference between discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis aside from the fact that the latter uses much more critical outlook. This critical outlook or perspective is constructed by three basic principles. The first one is critically viewing all the problems in a society as systemic or institutional problems. For example if there is poverty, or if there is a failure in education, or if there are racial problems in a certain society, the critical discourse analysis looks at them as a result of the failures of the systems or institutions in the society. It doesn't view them as separate issues representing simple cases but as inextricably linked ones, with their roots based in the institutions or political systems. The second one is that critical discourse analysis aims at challenging the perceived unjust institutionalized problems or societal ills in texts, especially in literature. The third one is that critical discourse analysis aims to bring about positive changes in the society which it has based its attention on. Critical discourse analysis does all of these tasks by understanding how language is employed in constructing meaning in perspectives that are asymmetrically intertwined with each other in intricate power relationships. According to Jan Blommaert and Chris Bulcaen:

> CDA's locus of critique is the nexus of language/discourse/speech and the social structure. It is in uncovering ways in which social structure impinges on discourse patterns, relations, and models (in the form of power relations, ideological effects, and so forth), and in treating these relations as problematic, that researchers in CDA situate the critical dimension of their work. It is not enough to lay bare the social dimensions of language use. These dimensions are the object of moral and political evaluation and analyzing them should have effects in society: empowering the powerless, giving voices to the voiceless, exposing power abuse, and mobilizing people to remedy social wrongs. CDA advocates interventionism in the social practices it critically investigates. Toolan (1997) even opts for a prescriptive stance: CDA should make proposals for change and suggest corrections to particular discourses. CDA thus openly professes strong commitments to change, empowerment, and practice-orientedness. (Blommaert, Bulcaen 449)

One of the ways in which critical discourse analysis is used in literature beyond the sentence is through the use of satire. Aravind Adiga's novel, White Tiger, which is a critique of the institutional problems in postcolonial Indian society, is addressed to the Chinese premier in a very satirical manner. It employs idiomatic expressions of dark humor and satire in a writing style of a conversational letter. According to Alexander Adkins:

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www.iprjb.org

> By placing the language of free enterprise into the mouth of an illiterate migrant who conflates entrepre-neurial success with the willingness to commit bribery, extortion, and murder, *The White Tiger* swaps the hero who represents a nation struggling to overcome neocolonial forces with a misanthropic rogue who marks the incursion of neoliberalism into the developing world. As Betty Joseph argues, "the novel's satire works not by caricaturing the normal agents of neoliberalism but, rather, by 'speaking otherwise'—an allegorical mode where the servant appropriates the language of his employer, the underclass the language of economic success, and the criminal the mantras of the entrepreneur" (80). Balram's Janus-faced narrative functions as the novel's object and method of satire, for it marks not only the proliferation of a newly dominant economic discourse and subjectivity, but also the reworking of disgust's oppositional function into a global-capitalist ideology. (Adkins: 171)

The narrator in Aravind Adiga's novel writes to the Chinese premier in a long series of letters in which he uses satire and dark humor to explain the real situation on the ground. In those letters he expresses his disgust not directly but indirectly through satire. One of the things he feels strongly about is the way the Indian newspapers were presenting the postcolonial Indian situation. They were presenting to the world a rosy picture whereas for the tens of millions of poor Indians, life was anything but rosy. So the narrator ridicules the media in both China and India which were glamorizing the rise of the Indian and Chinese global power in the times. They were showering it with praises that the century was indeed an "Asian Century". The protagonist Balram writes to the Chinese premier that the situation was not what it was portrayed to be in the papers but he puts it sarcastically. Instead he offers to tell the premier his own real life's story in the hope that it would represent the 'truth' about the then Bangalore. Balram writes:

> Out of respect for the love of liberty shown by the Chinese people, and also in the belief that the future of the world lies with the yellow man and the brown man now that our erstwhile master, the white-skinned man, has wasted himself through buggery, mobile phone usage, and drug abuse, I offer to tell you, free of charge, the truth about Bangalore. by telling you my life's story. (White Tiger: 5–6)

The narrator writes to the Chinese premier about a story of a man who had been forced by his poverty-ridden circumstances to murder his former master for survival. It is an unpretentious confession which shows how one had to carry out such a heinous crime in order to break the shackles of poverty and misery. The narrator demonstrates step by step as to how the systemic injustices had caused a man to lose his sense of respect and decency for human life and is acting as a predatory animal which kills its prey for its own survival. Had there been any other way of breaking 'rooster coop' or the shackles of poverty and injustices in the society, the narrator implies there would not have been such murderous inclination as a solution to get out of poverty.

The narrator uses the language of the poor in the society to attain a realistic representation of the real life of the people at the lower strata of the postcolonial India. His narration gives a contrasting account of life between the rich business people and the millions who were living in abject poverty. As a result his story becomes an allegory representing the entrapment of the majority disadvantaged members of the society who had to do whatever was necessary to get out of their miserable life conditions. As the individual story is meant, by the writer, to

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represent the societal ills, the liberty of the society is also intertwined with the liberty of the individual.

If the society and its systems as well as economic and political structure were not corrected, the individual could not be free. At the same time he alluded to the fact that in the modern economic theories of the twenty-first century, the reasonable thing to do would seem to liberate the individual in order to liberate the society. As a result he sarcastically shows how an individual could set himself free of the shackles of the society, which was unprepared to grant him his freedom. According to Betty Joseph:

> Even though the plot of the novel follows the slow unraveling of a whodunit, when Balram's letter to Wen Jiabao morphs into the confession by a servant who has killed his former master, it is difficult to miss the satire of a newly dominant economic discourse. Adiga works his allegory through quotation and parody, and the novel moves into this mode by appropriating the familiar language of possessive individualism for its narrator. The life story is exemplary and representative at the same time, for through it the narrator tells us, "You will know everything there is to know about how entrepreneurship is born, nurtured and developed in this, the glorious twenty-first century of man" (6). Such a narrative connotation, the novel reminds us, is already part and parcel of the inspirational shibboleths in circulation when neoliberalism is believed to be, as Harvey points out in his quotation cited earlier, "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutionalized framework." (Joseph: 73)

White Tiger employs metaphorical figures of speech such as the analogy of humans whose life was compared to that of animals. Just like in the animal world, the state of human affairs was described as the predator and prey scenario of the jungle. But for the poor people of the lower caste who were at the lowest economic and social strata, even some animals were portrayed as having better lives in comparison. Those people lived in abject poverty, darkness, and absolute degradation.

Through a critical discourse analysis one could see that Balram stipulates animal status even to the members of his own family in which the most important in status was the 'water buffalo' or the 'dictator' in the house. She is described as a fat dictator. That dictator was his grandmother. When she sends them to work in the teashops he finds other people who were also working there in a degraded situation. He describes these members of the lower caste who were working for almost peanuts as 'human spiders'. Similarly he dubs different people according to their status and level as different types of animals.

Having overcome a lot of trouble Balram manages to become a chauffeur for a wealthy family. In comparison to his fellow lower caste members and family, this was quite an achievement. Even then another fellow servant who works for the family advises him to coddle the family's pets in order to please his masters. In their discourse he tells him that the pet dogs were worth more than him to the family. So the status of the lower caste is portrayed even lower than that of animals. According to Sara. D. Schotland:

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www.iprjb.org

> Ashok is inordinately fond of his Pomeranians and shows off their pictures as a parent might his children (179). Balram understands Ashok's desires the way that "dogs understand their master" (94). Dogs and humans of the lower class are interchangeable. After Ashok's wife Pinky Madam recklessly runs down a living creature on a highway, the Ashoks wonder whether what she has killed was a child or a dog (138). Balram's fellow chauffeurs crouch like monkeys as they humbly wait for their masters; Balram calls them the " monkey circle" (170–72). While poor Indians are donkeys, dogs, and monkeys, Ashok's exploitive father and brothers are identifi ed with more aggressive, larger, or devious animals; they are known as "the Buffalo," "the Stork," "the Raven," and "the Mongoose" (20, 21, 64). (Schotland: 6)

The protagonist in *White Tiger* was very hoping against hope to make it out in the world but the conditions around him didn't allow for an individual to break out of his poverty status. He narrates how he wished to change the system once he had made it out in the world. He would first have to liberate himself and then change the system that held millions in poverty. For that he was prepared to do whatever it took as there was no other option left for him to make it in the economic system of the day.

Barlam's sarcastic description of the economic system doesn't only criticize the institution or the community. He also criticizes the individual rivalry which held him and millions of others back when he was in his impoverished village. If it was not the political elite, it was close family members and backward societal cultural practices and friends which deterred one from prosperity. On the one hand the backwardness and underdevelopment instigate inside him the need to change his status as well as his community's. But on the other hand, he presents a very grim criticism of the disgustingly unhygienic situations that pertained in his community. That sort of created alienation between him and his community that he harbors a strong disliking toward several cultural practices and condemns them using his satirical rhetoric in strong terms.

One of the things he strongly satirized was the practice of lavish funerals for the dead. He describes his own mother's funeral as a 'grand' service, which he implied that a good funeral was a sign of a miserable life. He saw all the flow of grief and ceremony from his family as a way of them exposing themselves to being guilty when his mother was alive. In his child imagination, he felt that they were vain attempts to try and make up for their guilt. So he was not impressed with the lavish funeral.

He was also disgusted by the way the river Ganges was constantly been polluted as a result of dead people's ashes being poured on it time after time. He resembles the river with 'mud' and imagines how it was holding his mother back as if she were trying to free herself from it. This is a symbolic discourse implying that the life of the millions of impoverished individuals was being held back by backward practices. He lashes with a strong comment on the religious practices, underdeveloped infrastructure as well as unhygienic situations in the community rhetorically.

Balram recounts his mother's funeral as such:

> This mud was holding her back: this big, swelling mound of black ooze. She was trying to fight the black mud . . . but the mud was sucking her in . . . And then I understood: this

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> was the real god of the Benaras—this black mud of the Ganga into which everything died, and decomposed, and was reborn from, and died into again. The same would happen to me when I died and they brought me here. Nothing would get liberated here. I stopped breathing. This was the first time in my life I fainted. I haven't been back to the Ganga since then: I'm leaving that river for the American tourists! (Adiga 15)

Aravind Adiga's critical use of discourse analysis does not rest only on the actual economic situations and historical mistakes of the postcolonial India he was writing about. He highly satirized the narrative of the native mass media and historical rhetoric that was being put out in public domains, blaming all the mishaps of the Indians on the white man. He criticized the narrative of glamorizing history which claimed that India's civilization was superior. He criticized the narrative that British colonialism destroyed an already civilized and inventive society and claimed its inventions for itself. He criticizes the country satirically that for thousands of years it had upheld negative practices that held the individual from development. He used the symbolism of 'rooster coop' to explain how limiting and imprisoning the thousands of years of culture were for economic freedom of the individual. In his letters to the Chinese premier he satirizes this narrative as follows:

> When you [Mr. Jiabao] get here, you'll be told we Indians invented everything from the Internet to hard-boiled eggs to spaceships before the British stole it all from us. Nonsense. The greatest thing to come out of this country in the ten thousand years of its history is 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 colored roosters, stuffed tightly into wire-mesh cages, packed 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 . . . The roosters in the coop smell the blood from above. They see the organs of their brothers lying around 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 147)

In many ways the critical discourse employed by Aravind Adiga added to his negative and dark representation of thegrim life in postcolonial India has been seen as a precursor to new fashions of discourses that dealt with the dark side of India. The representation of 'Dark India' in movies such as slum dunk Millionaire is a clear reference of how difficult it is for an intelligent individual to rise above his status in the Indian postcolonial economy. His discourse and rhetoric does not spare Indian culture as he criticizes the various cultures for being responsible to the pertinent situations and predicaments that caused poverty and hindered development.

Adiga's discourse leaves the Indian culture as bearing a hand in the Eurocentric narratives that portrayed Indian civilization to be inferior to that of Europe. Such kinds of narratives were behind the justification which the colonizers used to exploit the subcontinent with impunity. Even though critical works such as Edward Said's Orientalism fought hard to correct the misconceptions that European narratives propagated the supremacy of European culture over the Exotic cultures such as India's, Adiga's conviction of the Indian way of life which spans for thousands of years is a strong indictment of culpability. According to Clelia Clini:

> In her analysis of Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* (2008), Ana Cristina Mendes talks about 'Dark India' as "a new- fangled object of exoticist discourses" ("Exciting Tales" 276). If 'Dark India' is the new exotic, exoticist discourses around India are

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> certainly not new and can be traced back to colonial accounts of the subcontinent. As something that "occurs outside everyday experience, beyond the ordinary, maybe even the fantastic" (Nayar 59), the exotic (the prefix *exo-* , from Greek, literally meaning 'from outside one's country') was the most suitable framework to define India in colonial writings, for, Nayar argues: "India- as- exotic was the *distant* colony, unique, different" (59). Used to encode the difference that India represented in comparison with Europe, exoticism was thus a literary device that reinforced Orientalist discourses on the subcontinent, as in fact this difference was not neutral but served the specific purpose of affirming Europe's superiority over its colonies. (Clini 21-22)

In conclusion, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to an important tool in understanding the linguistic style used in literature in Aravind Adiga's novel: *White Tiger*. Several figures of speech and narrative techniques have been used by the author to explicate meaning out of the text in his novel. Satire, symbolism, allegory, analogy, imagery and dark humor are some of the main tools the writer used in his discourse throughout the novel. The narrative used a mode of letter writing as well as native vocabulary which at times bordered vulgar language. The combined effect of such metaphors and stylistics greatly contributed to the depiction of dark images and harrowing circumstances in which millions of lower caste people survived in the postcolonial Indian economy. By creating a pessimistic image of the adverse situations under which individuals that were by birth condemned to live in the lower strata of the societal structure, the novel has been able to highlight the realistic picture of the country. The liberty of the individual and the liberty of the society are portrayed as deeply intertwined and that one could not be accomplished without the other. As the long series of letters to the Chinese premier by the protagonist Balram portry, the only way the individual could break the chain of his poverty was through drastic and questionable ways. The novel uses harsh linguistic and discourse to hone the grim institutionalized failures of postcolonial India.

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