



**"The English August" by Upmanyu Chatterjee and "The White Tiger" by Arvind Adiga as Works on the Marginalization and Disillusionment of Fragile and Underprivileged Communities in Popular Literature**

**Manoj S. Madavi**

Assistant Professor, Department of English  
A.G. College, Nagpur

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.12.4.26](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.12.4.26)



**Article info**

Article Received: 18/09/2024  
Article Accepted: 10/10/2024  
Published online: 13/10/2024

**Abstract**

With India's independence, the writing of Indian English fiction took off. Throughout the postcolonial novel writing of this era, issues of poverty, the struggle for liberation, post-partition conditions, and the social, political, historical, and cultural milieu and its aftermath were examined. The elite mindset of the educated Indian classes in the new India was being questioned by this new literature, which also established a new trend in Indian English writing by highlighting the impact of Westernized values and their function in the country. Several notable authors have broken free from stereotypes and achieved global recognition in literature. These include Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Nalinaksha Bhattacharya, Bharti Mukherjee, Anita Desai, and Meera Nair, among many other exceptional novelists who have significantly contributed to Indian English fiction. There is little room in this literary fair for the underprivileged and subaltern indigenous people. The subject of Indigenous ethos, centuries of disillusionment, genocide, and deculturation of Adivasi peoples is not found in the esteemed, profound, and revolutionary Indian English novel literature. The current study article discusses several factors contributing to Adivasi marginalization, subordination, and disappointment.

Keywords: post-colonialism, disorientation, contradiction, subjugation by corruption, and red tape.

Postcolonial writing can be viewed as a form of resistance, representing the shattered and broken cultures of native countries that were severely oppressed by the capitalistic and Eurocentric policies of Britain. Upmanyu Chatterjee's novels, "The English August", "The

Last Burden", and "The Memories of Welfare State", offer a postcolonial perspective from Indian writers. These novels depict hybrid societies that feel stifled due to the monotonous and intricate nature of their relationships. Chatterjee depicts the grim and morally corrupt

existence of postcolonial India. The protagonist of "The English August," Agyustya Sen, who is stationed in Madna, a small town in southern India, deeply unsettles and troubles the author. He expresses his opinion;

"Cigarette and paan dhabas, disreputable food stalls both lead by fierce kerosene lamps, cattle and clanging rickshaws on the road, he felt as he was living someone else life. Life in Delhi and life in Madana seems two extreme points of an unreal existence." (Chatterjee: 1988:177)

The novel explores Adivasi life, which appears to have a very narrow scope. Most situations such as draught, exploitation, conversion, and naxalism occurred in Adivasi territories such as Jompanna and Chipanthy, yet Adivasis remain in the dark. The daily struggle of Adivasi peoples has not been adequately described. While describing Adivasis in Jompanna author opines:

"There is no cast war anything like that in the area. It is just economics and politics. The Adivasis have been ignored for decades, primarily because of them, stayed in those inaccessible hill forests. The money that was pushed into Jompanan was directed by the politician to benefit the non-Adivasi population of the plains. Government should not blame for this." (Chatterjee: 1988:240)

Officers and bureaucrats are so busy that they consider Adivasi people to be superstitious, despite the fact that the Adivasi people of Chipanthy are confronting a multitude of challenges, including the lack of basic comforts of life. In spite of the fact that they perceive Adivasi regions to be in a state of draught, they have the tendency to glorify the fact that Adivasi people also believe in human sacrifices. In the tale, the indigenous people are having a difficult time obtaining water for drinking. Nobody pays heed to the grievances of the indigenous people when they complain about the lack of water. In the event that a Adivasi lady visits Augustay's office, Augustay

then calls the Deputy Engineer, and any response from the Engineer demonstrates a despicable affront to democracy;

"Chipanthy was at the base of the low hills that had once been heavy with timber. Now the trees brought less rain, the Adivasi had rained the jungle as the changing world had rain them. Generations ago, they had been kings capable of founding's townships, now they were emasculated, relying for succour on government largesse." (Chatterjee: 1988: 254)

We find little hope of survival, as described by the Chipanthy Adivasi territory. There was nothing but red sand, brush, gnarled trees, a lifeless forest, a heavy non-silence, and the sound of twigs breaking underfoot. All the Adivasi faces that Augusta encountered upon his arrival in Chipanthy were black and destitute, and he found them weird. An extreme depiction of the drought-stricken Adivasi region has been painted by the author. Only mud and no water can be found in the well. It is startling to see that even after independence, Adivasi people have not been allowed to practice their fundamental right to fill up their buckets from the well, as shown in the novel. Little Adivasi children would lean over and fill their buckets with water. The colored scene depicts an embarrassing image of India's largest democracy.

"The only sound were the echoing dang of the buckets against the wall of the well and the tired sniveling of a few children on the side. The women who had come to the office was looking at him in a king of triumph. He looked into the well. He could not see any water, but the children were blared forty foot below, scoring the mud of the well floor for water, like sinners serving some mythic punishment." (Chatterjee: 1988: 255)

Though Augustya Sen arrived to Chipanthy to alleviate the problem of draught in the Adivasi settlement, his encounter with Para piqued his interest in Adivasi women. By the time Sen. and Rao openly discuss the issue of

naxalism in Adivasi areas. Rao addresses the topic of naxalism in Adivasi areas. Rao clarifies that the exploitation of Adivasi women is not a new phenomenon in the area. Outsiders, particularly government officers, consistently misinterpret their innocent and free conduct and attempt to molest them. Rao used the example of Assistant Conservative Forest Officer Mohan Gandhi, who violated a Adivasi woman and had his hands cut off as punishment. "A man called Gandhi; even he abused the honour of the Adivasi women, who cooked for him. The man of her village was angry. They visited Gandhi, there nights ago. In revenge and as punishment they cut of his arms. It was impossible to stop them." (Chatterjee: 1988:259)

'*The English August*' centers around the profound topic of the conversion of Adivasi communities to Christianity. Within the confines of Chipanthy, German authorities have established a sizable Dutch Hospital to provide healthcare services for the indigenous population. All the missionaries were diligently engaged in facilitating this process of conversion. The hospital facilities and missionaries were prepared to allocate a substantial sum of money in order to convert the oppressed, sick, and afflicted indigenous people to Christianity. This is a significant problem that could be thoroughly examined in the novel, but the novelist chooses not to address it.

"Lacks of rupees just to seduced a few Adivasis to make the sign of the cross over some sick illiterate and bewildered individuals called Anganagla, or something like that and insist on a David or John before or after his name. May be he sometime thought when he passed the hospital, they had a red phone, a hot line to the Vetican and had to send in daily reports your highness, "four more heathens captured today. Two unsuccessful cases were Muslim. They were very very angry and snatched the medicines out of our hands and left.' (Chatterjee: 1988:245)

Even though the novelist attempted to depict the exploitation of Adivasi people in the Mandana district, he was able to paint a more comprehensive picture of the area's draught, exploited indigenous feminism, illegal conversion, and serious health problems. However, the book merely takes an objective stance toward their sorrow, agony, and disillusionment. Subversion, scatology, cultural clash, deceit, oppressed Adivasis, tragic conversion, and lethal draught are some of the themes that are covered in this story.

The book "*The White Tiger*" by Arvind Adiga was awarded the Booker Prize for literature in the year 2008. "Between the Association" and "The Last Man on Tower" are two among the numerous novels that it has written. The decolonization of the mind is something that he has attempted to depict through all of these works, which are all about post-colonial India. The reader is presented with a contemporary perspective on significant topics such as socio-economic inequality, cultural dominance, ethical subjection, identical marginalization, political nepotism, and corrupt bureaucracy through each and every one of his stories. The film "*The White Tiger*" reveals a number of inconsistencies that were present in the early liberated Indian communities. A grim life and the struggles of Adivasi people and dalits are shown in the novel. Laxamangarh, Gaya, and Dhanbad are the primary locations of the novel, and they are characterized by a significant amount of Adivasi and dalit popularity. The Dalits and Adivasi people continue to be the most miserable people in this country.

The novel discusses their mistreatment, the issue of illiteracy, employment, Jamindari practices, societal taboos, strict class inequality, dishonest politicians, and cunning businesspeople. The marginalized and subaltern segments of society were exploited by all of the aforementioned mechanisms. In the book, the main character is Balram Halwai. He is a member of the underprivileged group.

Balram can be viewed as the spokesperson for farmers, laborers, Dalits, and Adivasi people. The majority of the narrative takes place in Dhanbad, Jharkhand, a significant Adivasi and peasant region. Regarding these people's movement from their rural areas to large cities around a specific time of year, Balram believes;

"So the rest of the villages waited in a big group outside the shop. When the buses came, they got on packing the inside, hanging from railing, lambing into the roof went to Gaya and then rushed into train, climbing into the roofs and went to Delhi, Calcutta and Dhanbad to find work. A month before rain, the men came back from Dhanbad and Delhi and Calcutta, looking leaner, darker with money in their pockets. The women were waiting for them on door, as the man walked in, they pounced like wild cats on a slab of flesh. (Adiga: 2008: 26)

The novel presents a critical commentary on subalternity, which is based in prejudices in colonial and postcolonial Indian society. The novel provides a historical overview of India, depicting how impoverished, Adivasi, dalit, farmers, and laborers are exploited and overlooked because of their culture, caste, occupation, and economics. This leads in the irreversible paralysis of one segment of society, which includes Balram, Adivasis, and dalits, as well as mindset. The English language has evolved beyond its colonial origins and the hegemony of British imperialism in the modern world. Indian English novelists have chutanified English in postcolonial literature by writing in English from an Indian viewpoint while fusing regional ethos and expressions. In every one of his novels, Arvind Adiga portrays ordinary Indians through the medium of English. The author seems to be writing in his native Indian English from the comfort of his home. "The White Tiger" exemplifies perfect Indian English. Prashant Jadhao offers remarks on the decolonization of the English language and psychology;

"The White Tiger" is the most heart rending picture of imbalanced societies in India. The novel specially refers to the cultural and social issues of marginal tribes in the early free Indian villages. The prime approach of the people in the newly free societies becomes the important issues of discussion in the novel. The novel slowly but steadily criticizes both the phenomenon, positive and negative developments in the places such as Laxamangarh and Dhanbad where ends of imperial rule meant new possibilities of self-determination but also a kind of chaos both the pain of developing indigenous culture and political system." (Jadhao: 2014: 37)

The novel "The White Tiger" is fundamentally about social, political, and economic marginalization. Novel is symbolic of India within India. Novels depict India of Darkness and India of Light. Balram is from the dark India, where many people suffer from hunger, poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy. In this gloomy side of India, everyone wants to live a happy life, but there are no opportunities. Second, India of light is dominated by a few corporations that are becoming wealthy at the expense of Indians' lives in darkness. They are slaughtering India of darkness in order to satisfy their desires or strengthen their capitalistic dominion. India of darkness paints a bleak picture of a dismal life that is no better than animals, exactly as they keep chickens in the shop. Adiga expresses her opinion on the vast socioeconomic disparities:

"Hundreds of pale hens and brightly colored roosters, stuffed tightly into wire mesh cage, packed as tightly as warms in a belly, pecking each other and shitting on each other, jostling for breathing space; the whole cage giving off a horrible stench the stench of terrified, feathered flesh. They see the organs of their brothers lying ahead them. They know, they are the next, yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with human being in this country. (Adiga: 2008: 174)

"The White Tiger" parodies the vast gaps in social and economic status that are created by humans. The anti-hero Balram becomes wealthy by learning worldly skills. He gains experience leading government employees. Adiga has replaced Bhabhani Bhattacharya, who first portrayed social fervour in his novels "He Who Rides the Tiger" and other works, after a number of years. Through his singular work in Indian postcolonial literature, he managed to capture the essence of the globalized, decolonized India, rotting with sexism, racism, bigotry, casteism, violence, herd mentality, exploited feminism, oppressive moneylenders, Adivasis, dalits, and the downtrodden, all of whom find themselves marginalized and subjected to centuries of subjugation. Balram's opinion on India within India is as follows:

"A rich man's body is like a premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank. Our are different. My father's spines was a knotted rope, the kind that women use in village to pull water from wells, the circle curved around his neck in high relief, like a dogs collar, cuts and nicks and scars, like little whip marks in his flesh, ran down, this chest and west; reading down below his hipbones into his buttocks. The story of a poor man's life is written on his body in a sharp pen." (Adiga: 2008: 27)

In this remarkable postcolonial novel, Adiga enlightens the global, prosperous, and technologically advanced India, emphasizing the urgent need to dismantle the barriers of caste, creed, and religion. This is a modern story that explores extreme criminal behaviour and moral uncertainty. If left unchecked, the nation would inevitably suffer severe consequences due to intense animosity and bloodshed. This novel serves as a powerful admonition to the policymakers and self-proclaimed leaders of this nation, urging them to become aware of the plight of disadvantaged and subaltern individuals. It emphasizes that these individuals are beginning to assert their rights and seek retribution for centuries of oppression.

#### References

- Adiga, Arvind. *'The White Tiger'* Noida: Harper Collins pub. 2008 print.
- Chatterjee, Upmanyu, *The English August*. London: Faber and Faber. 1988 .print
- Jadhao, Prashant *New Man International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies: Issues 04 Vol - 01, 2014 print*