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HUMANITY

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Corruption is a dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery. It also indicates the action of making someone or something morally deprived or the state of being so. From small clerks to the high profile politicians, commissioners, police inspectors, traffic police, stock exchange brokers, military establishments, recruiters, sports men, judiciary and most of the government employees, corruption is seen and felt in every nook and corner.

Corruption is a global phenomenon and it is omnipresent. It has progressively increased and has a rapid growth in society and hurts everyone who depends on the integrity of people. Forms of corruption vary, but invariably include bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, patronage, graft, and embezzlement. A healthy India will not be a product of merely its motivated people, or honest public servants, or judicial systems; it is the amalgamation of all of these. Corruption ruins the nation to immeasurable extents. Corrupt minded people lose all their morality and conscience in their dealings.

Corruption is a disease that eats the cultural, political and economic fabric of society, and destroys the functioning of the vital organs. It is one of the greatest challenges of the contemporary India. It undermines good government, fundamentally distorts public policy, leads to the misallocation of resources, harms the private sector and its development and particularly hurts the poor.

Today the stench of corruption in India is widely spread right from getting into schools or colleges, to getting jobs, promotions or even passports. An already financially burdened common Indian cannot bear such extra costs and eventually ends his or her life in some way or the other. Corruption weakens the political body and destroys the supreme importance of the law that governs the society. Corruption in India is a result of the connection between bureaucrats, politicians and criminals. It is a weapon for criminals to escape from a crime and develop their status in the society. India suffers by this evil deed.

Everyone should think about the reasons of the developing culture of corruption. People who work on right principles are unrecognized and considered to be a fool in the modern society. People of India are not awakened and enlightened about the corruption. They fear to raise their voice against anti-social elements that prevail in the society.

Aravind Adiga, one of the notable writers has raised his voice against this corrupt culture in India in his novels *The White Tiger*, *Between the Assassinations*, and *Last Man in Tower*. Adiga proves his concern for India by portraying the evil power, corruption which is obviously seen in different areas like politics, security forces, law and order, education, and government hospitals.

Corruption is one of the prime concerns in Adiga's works. India's total edifice structure is damaged by these corrupt politicians. Politicians are in constant thirst for monetary benefits and they do not care about the welfare of the people. The greedy politicians make havoc in the society. Elections in many parts of the country have become associated with a host of criminal activities.

Adiga brings a clear picture about the poor condition of politics due to corruption. Political leaders have spoiled the society completely. They lead a luxurious life and do not care

about the society. This corruption in politics ruins the life of citizens in various ways. The corrupt political system, bureaucratic set up according to these novels refer to the darkest sight of India which spreads rottenness and corruption in society hindering all developmental and welfare schemes. It restricts half of this country from achieving its potential.

Indian politics has different political issues. Some issues are of national level and some are regional. Some communities demand more economical and social rights for their communities, while others demand more autonomy for their cultures within the Indian states. Some demanded autonomous states within the Indian Union, while the others demanded to be independent from India. Number of political problems still exist and remain unsolved in India.

India got it's freedom from the British, but today she is a slave in the hands of the politicians. In *The White Tiger*, Adiga indicates "On the fifteenth of August, 1947 – the day the British left – the cages had been left open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law. Those that were the most ferocious and hungriest, had eaten everyone else up, and grown big bellies" (63-64).

Adiga condemns harshly the total parliamentary system. He points out that "We have this fucked-up system called parliamentary democracy . . . What a fucking joke" (186). In India, Parliament becomes the place of chaos and complications. The only place to break the chairs and tear the shirts is the parliament. Krishna Singh in the article "Aravind Adiga's *The White tiger*: A Tale of two Indias" quotes the words of Kiran Desai who comments on the corrupt political system in India "Not one truthful politician in the whole country. Yes our parliament is made of thieves, each one answerable to the Prime Minister who is the biggest thief of them all" (6).

Adiga in his novels tries to convey that India is being ruled by thieves only. India's lower house of parliament, the Lok Sabha, has 545 elected law makers. Approximately 30 percent have

criminal cases against them. India has lost its total perfection and protection. Adiga's novels are a proclamation of corruption.

The protagonist Balram, in *The White Tiger* belongs to the marginalized section of the society. He does not belong to any elite groups. He comes from a poor family. But due to corruption he reaches the pinnacle of entrepreneurship. All the misconducts of Balram are hidden by the power of money. He says, "most of the politicians are half baked. That is the whole tragedy of this country" (10). But these half baked corrupt politicians are wise, only in looting. In educational status, most of the politicians are semi-literate. Those who are well versed in looting, swindling, lying are the eligible candidates to enter the politics. Politics doesn't require any educational qualification. Anybody can enter politics to earn money. This is the pathetic condition of India.

Balram says "I still can't believe it. The people of this country had a chance to put an efficient ruling party back in power, and instead they have voted in the most outrageous bunch of thugs" (280). Adiga notes, "Typhoid, cholera and election fever are the three main diseases of this country and the last one is the worst; It makes people talk and talk about things that they have no say in" (98).

India is the largest democracy in the world. Elections are held at different levels in India – in city, town and in village councils. In some places elections are being organized at gunpoint. In these elections, voters are not given freedom of choice and are being threatened to vote for a particular candidate.

The poor and the down trodden are thought about only on the day of election as politicians need their vote. They give lots of promises for the enhancement of their life status. But after the election, these politicians forget their pledges and their promises. These voters are

carried away by the false promises of the politicians. Hence, they dream of a bright future without knowing that they would be thrown into darkness again. The elections never make any changes in society.

These elections are the strong source for these politicians to change their life condition. Balram reports, "I am India's most faithful voter and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth" (102). Election is a strong weapon to change the fate of a country, but it becomes vain. The result of the election is nothing, only the ruling power is transferred from one hand to another, but the common man's fate remains unchanged. Money-bags, muscle power, police strategic alignment and power compel the underclass to assure the victory in the political game. Adiga observes that "there's only one thing wrong with this place – we have this . . . system called parliamentary democracy. Otherwise, we'd be just like china" (156) . This is the ironic tone of Adiga which makes the readers to realize how these contemporary politicians are corrupt and power hungry.

Corruption has created new distinctions and classes. Balram says "In the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India now just two castes. Men with big bellies and men with small bellies. And only two destinies: eat – get eaten up" (64). Every politician wants to fulfill their needs first. Finally corruption becomes the sacred symbol of politics. Corruption in politics is a major issue and adversely affects the Indian democracy.

Adiga concentrates on corruption in the educational system. According to Adiga the life of the underclass darkens when corruption exists in the educational system of the society. Education is fundamental to human progress. It plays a prominent role in all-around development of an individual as well as the at large society. Education plays a key role in creating patriotic, disciplined and productive manpower.

Educated manpower is considered as a precious asset as well as agents for advancing the nation. Corrupt practices in the education system have declined the ethical values among students and shatter confidence in the quality of the educational system. When youngsters become familiar with corrupt practices in the educational system, they realize that personal success depends not on performance but on bribery, favoritism and nepotism. So they develop unethical behaviour. This passes to the next generation in a rapid way.

The government has implemented many schemes and has allotted a huge amount of money to develop the literacy ratio. These scholarships do not reach the students completely. Half of the money is looted by the corrupt officers. The protagonist Balram in *The White Tiger* explains about this kind of improper and corrupt educational system in his village, Laxmangarh. There is a typical school teacher called 'big pan and spit man' who goes to sleep by noon and drinks toddy in the school. He is not duty conscious and he illegally sells the uniforms which are provided to the poor students by the government and swindles the money from the school funds. Balram reports:

If the Indian village is a paradise, then the school is a paradise within the paradise. There was supposed to be free food at my school—a government programme gave every boy three rotis, yellow dall, and pickles at lunch time. But we never ever saw rotis, or yellow dall, or pickles, and everyone knew why the school teacher had stolen our lunch money. The teacher had legitimate excuse for it he hadn't been paid his salary in six months. . . . Once, a truck came into the school with the uniforms that the government had sent for us; we never saw them, but a week later they turned up for sale in the neighbouring village. The whole educated system is governed by the crowd of thugs and idiots. (33)

The student scholarship system in India also suffers highly by corruption and posing a great threat to the eligible candidates. Owing to the corruption in education system, government's multi-schemes in education lose its shine and reputation.

Aravind Adiga describes the poor health services and non-implementation of government policies in government hospitals. His novels interpret how the government hospitals also play a major role to give a painful life to the poverty stricken. Government hospitals provide treatments full of free service to the poor people. So the poor prefer government hospitals for their remedy. But these hospitals lack good infrastructure, proper management, dedicated staff and many other things.

The common miserable scenes in government hospitals are unusable lifts, clogged toilets, patients waiting for hours to see a doctor, absconding nurses, poorly stored medicines, unclean wards and torn beds. Most of the employees behave rudely to the patients. People are forced to bribe to every pillar and post in government hospitals to receive decent treatment. The worst place in a government hospital is the maternity ward. When a woman delivers a baby, she must bribe the employees, right from the menial staff to the matron. The amount will be varied according to the gender of the child. Five hundred rupees for a female child and thousand rupees for a male child; mortuary is also a torturous place, where attenders demand a minimum of thousand rupees for post-mortem. Only if money is given, they would start their work. This state of affairs exposes the widespread malpractices, which collectively enhance the miseries of the poor.

In *The White Tiger* Balram's father dies due to the lack of hospital and medical facilities. Medical services are shown an object of political mockery and social stigma. Balram indicates the Lohia universal free hospital which is inaugurated by the great socialist in view of election

result in Laxmangarh. There is no doctor in the hospital, doctor seldom visits the hospital; even the rooms are not safe with adequate facilities. Money is given utmost importance to undergo treatment as early as possible. They need to pay money whether it is birth or death. Due to poverty they have to face all the atrocities in the name of corruption. Balram explains about the worst condition of health service in his village. He says,

There were three black goats sitting on the steps to the large faded white building; The glass in most of the windows are broken . . . There was no doctor in the hospital. The ward boy, after we bribed him ten rupees, said that a doctor might come in the evening. The doors to the hospital rooms were wide open; the beds had metal spring, 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. (48)

Balram explains the negative attitudes and the unmindful service of doctors in government hospitals. The money-minded doctors prepare a fake ledger, to show their attendance regularity and they are very concerned about their private clinics. Balram says “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 the village you’ve been there. You’ve been treated my wounded leg. You have healed the girl’s jaundice” (50). These doctors are eager to earn money and fail to put an end to the poor’s ailments. The downtrodden and the poor group feel, getting treatment is more painful than their diseases in government hospitals.

Corrupt police, legal and administrative structure mark off another black spot of India.

Corruption in the police department is a form of police misconduct in which they seek personal gain, such as money or career advancement, through the abuse of power and breaking the laws.

They get huge amount of money to protect the rich men from the legal proceedings. By accepting bribes they arrest innocents, to exchange an investigation and compel them to confess through their brutal attack. Thus they abuse the police code of conduct in order to secure convictions of suspects. Through the use of falsified evidence police officers themselves may deliberately and systematically participate in organized crime.

They involve themselves in fake encounters also. In a fake encounter, the police or armed forces kill the suspects, when they are either in custody or unarmed. In such cases, the police may set weapons on or near the dead bodies to provide a justification for killing the individual and they prepare the fake records to hide these killings. Such killings are not authorized by a court or by the law.

The police must set a role model to the society to protect law and order. But the craze of money makes them dishonest. The sort of corrupt acts that have been committed by police is one of the means to help criminals and evil-doers to escape from the evil deeds. A corrupt police can make changes in all cases as they wish. They can quench their personal bias by arresting and registering fake cases against innocents. Balram has these kinds of bitter experiences in Delhi. He goes to Delhi with his master, Ashok. He reports about the police and their evil deeds in Delhi to the readers. Balram says: "the main thing to know about Delhi is that the roads are good and people are bad and the police are totally rotten. If they see you without a seat belt, you'll have to bribe them a hundred rupees . . . when they go for their late night parties, it's hell for us" (78).

The police protect the rich men from the legal proceedings and get huge money in lieu of that. This miserable incident happens in Balram's life also. In a drunken speedy drive, Pinky madam crushes a poor street boy, kills him and the inhuman master, Ashok forces Balram to to

accept the crime. The hit-and-run case which legally belongs to Balram's master's wife Pinky, is shifted to Balram.

Fortunately nobody lodges any case against this accident. So, Balram escapes from this torture. Balram brings out the pathetic condition of the drivers in Delhi, when he reports: "The jails of Delhi are full of drivers who are there behind the 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. Yes, that's right: We all live in the world's greatest democracy here. What a . . . joke" (169).

Adiga humorously criticizes the judges in the court. In the dock, people are compelled to accept the complaint against them. The fake witnesses are created. But some judges are lured by the currencies. In some cases, they blindly give their verdicts. Balram says, "The judges? Wouldn't they see through this obviously forced confession? But they are in the racket too. They take their bribe, and ignore the discrepancies in the case. And life goes on for everyone but drivers" (169). This culture of bribing helps to protect all the scamps and evil-doers. Balram says, "You will have to keep paying and paying the fuckers" (310) to avoid registering case against you.

Balram is a rustic and an innocent. Originally he comes from an honest family. But this corrupt society teaches him how to become corrupt and changes him into a murderer. Balram gets the lessons of corruption in the company of his master, Mr. Ashok. Balram confesses,

The rest of today's narrative will deal mainly with the sorrowful tale of how I was corrupted from a sweet innocent fool into a certified fellow full of debauchery, disparity and wickedness. All these changes happened in me because they happened first in Mr. Ashok he returns 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?. (197)

He also follows his master's way. He kills his master Ashok and loots his money. He bribes the Assistant Commissioner and become free from the murder case. Balram reports "the police have let me off. That is the way of this jungle we live in" (312). By portraying Balram's entrepreneurial success, Adiga brings the apt picture of corruption and its adverse effects.

In the novel *Between the Assassinations* Adiga raises a voice against bureaucratic corruption through the character of Abbasi, a god-fearing Muslim businessman. He is the owner of the embroidery clothing factory. He shuts down his factory because the embroidery works make the employee women blind. Most of the rich people own factories or have invested in factories and they employ women. However, none has the thought of closing down the factory. They think that it is the fate of the women who become blind.

The social conscience in Abbasi makes him get rid of this sin. So he closes the factory. After closing the factory the poor women struggle to lead their life. He again decides to open the factories for the sake of the poor. He bribes all the government officials and has to overcome number of obstacles to re-open the factory. As a god fearing man, Abbasi is against corruption and feels bad to lead a life in this corrupt society. His mind is preoccupied with the thought of ending corruption. However, the bureaucrats are always in search of an opportunity to get bribe and say lame excuses like "A man has to eat these days, Mr.Abbasi. And prices are rising so fast. Ever since Mrs. Gandhi died, this country began falling apart" (26). Adiga says through the voice of Abbasi that,

There is no end to it in this country . . . since he decided to reopen his shirt factory, he had to pay off: the electricity man, water board man, half the income

tax department of Kittur; half the excise department of Kittur; six different officials of the telephone board; a land tax official of the Kittur City Corporation; a sanitary inspector of Karnataka state sanitation Board; a delegation of the All India small Factory Workers' Union; delegation of the Kittur Congress Party, the Kittur BJP, the Kittur Communist Party, the Kittur Muslim League (28)

Bribing is against his principles, however, for the survival, he has to offer bribes. "After that, he sat quietly... and said; RULES OF THE GAME MUST BE FOLLOWED AT ALL TIMES" (29). Out of frustration Abbasi says, "In black-marketing, counterfeiting and corruption, we are the world champions. If they were included in the Olympic Games, India would always win gold, silver and bronze in these three" (31) and also says "Corruption is like a demon" (33).

In the novel *Between the Assassinations*, a powerful business-man Mr. Engineer kills a poor man in an accident. But the truth is easily manipulated and he escapes from the hit-and-run case with the power of money. The police reports are changed in favour of Mr. Engineer. Drivers and servants are forced to confess the crime that their masters have committed. The rich man substitutes a servant who works in his factory to say that he was driving the car when the accident happened. He bribes the police and closes all the records. Adiga says,

Mr. Engineer gives the judge six thousand rupees, and the police something less, perhaps four thousand or five, because the judiciary is of course more noble than the police, to keep quiet. Then he wants his Maruti Suzuki back, because it's a new car and a fashion statement and he likes driving it, so he gives the police another thousand to change the identity of the killer car to a Fiat, and he has his car and he's driving around town again. (123)

The police know perfectly well who drives drunkenly, however being the richest man in the town, he is not arrested. Shocked by the reality, Gururaj, an honest journalist wants to reveal all these hidden facts. But he is not allowed to do this. His editor-in-chief tries to suppress the matter. Gururaj bursts with anger, "A man might have been sent to jail for no good reason; a guilty man might be walking free. And all you can say is, let's drop the matter" (125). Gururaj looks at the editor-in-chief with new eyes. The fact is that the newspaper is owned by a businessman who serves only capitalist interest. Gururaj says

This is the fate of every journalist in this town and in this state and in this country and maybe in this whole world ... you have never understood the ways of the world ... It is a false earth I am walking on. An innocent man is behind bars, and a guilty man walks free. Everyone knows that this is so and not one has the courage to change it. (129)

In India, freedom of press also is curbed through the influence of corruption. The journalist Gururaj depicts "You and I people in our press pretend that there is freedom of press in India but we know the truth (128). Adiga says through the voice of the journalist Gururaj that "Thousands, sitting around tea shops and universities and work places every day and every night were cursing corruption. Yet not one fellow had found away to slay the demon without giving up his share of the loot of corruption" (41).

In the novel *Last man in Tower*, the real estate owner Darmendra Shaw announces a huge amount as a bribe to the dwellers to vacate the apartment. Here this bribe takes the role of evil to kill an innocent man, Masterji. Thus Adiga brings a true picture of India clearly in his novel to make the readers be aware of various crimes and social issues happening in the society.

In an article “‘Unadorned Portrait’ of India by Aravind Adiga” Neeru Tandon quotes the words of Adiga who says,

I am an optimist on the future of India, I think young Indians want real change and are determined to reduce the corruption and mis governance that are the root cause of poverty in parts of India that have good governance – in the southern state of Kerela for instance and I think that if young Indians step up the pressure on the political system, poverty can be slashed in the coming decade-and action has to start now. (100)

Thus Adiga gives an optimistic encouragement to the youngsters to eradicate the corruption to save the nation. Adiga’s attempt is a brilliant portrayal of the typical human foibles due to corruptions, aspirations, and survival instincts as well as the total shame that the political system has all along been.

Through these novels, people are given understand the influence of money in hiding the crimes. Adiga’s various characters reveal the fact that corruption is dangerous and it slowly corrodes the country. It makes the readers to analyse its dreadful consequences. Adiga’s novels give a powerful message to the society to awake and abolish corruption. Government has implemented many strict rules and punishments to curb corruption. But it does not give good results. Thus corruption continues as an endless crime in India.