Narrating Micro-Power in Contemporary Indian Fiction: Critical Literacy and Social Consciousness in the White Tiger and the Accidental Apprentice

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ABSTRACT:

This article is a comparative analysis of Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger and Vikas Swarup's The Accidental Apprentice to expose the often-invisible ways in which power rules, disciplines, and affects people's everyday lives. Drawing on the concept of micro-power developed by Michel Foucault, the study argues that in the novels, power is not only played out in relation to the political or economic domain, but in relation to the different micro-practices of the culture, institutions and in everyday life which regulate behaviour, normalise it and produce subjectivity. Complex disciplinary practices, including surveillance and evaluation mechanisms, moral judgement, competition, and self-regulation, contribute to the institutionalisation of individuals and their engagement in spaces of resistance. This study indicates the pedagogical potential of literature as a medium to cultivate critical literacy, reflective learning and democratic citizenship by highlighting the hidden workings of power in educational, corporate, familial and social institutions through literary narration. This study of contemporary Indian fiction helps the reader to identify the pervasive nature of institutional power, understand how inequalities and social exclusion can be analysed, and have an ethical awareness of the nature of authority, responsibility and engagement today.

Keywords: Critical Literary, Cultural Hegemony, Disciplinary Power, Docile Bodies, Micro-power, Indian English Fiction, Social Consciousness, Subject formation.

1. Introduction:

In today's culture, stories about ordinary people who overcome huge challenges to become great are very popular. Vikas Swarup's The Accidental Apprentice tells a story like this, with Sapna Sinha, the main character, going on a journey of self-discovery and self-determination. Vikas Swarup has demonstrated an exceptional ability to craft intricate narratives, develop multifaceted characters, and examine profound themes in his previous works, including Q&A. Sapna Sinha agreed to take over Vinay Mohan Acharya's business empire because of her own situation and goals. The VMA lists seven rites of passage to see how well he can be a CEO. These tests don't just

test memory but also test a person's character and strength. "A school simply tests your memory. But life tests your character. My seven tests are rites of passage, designed to gauge your mettle and potential as a CEO" (Swarup 12). The tests don't have anything to do with what they do every day; instead, they focus on one of the seven key traits of a successful CEO. The assessments look at how people make decisions and deal with everyday problems, and they are based on the life textbook. The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga tells the story of the class conflict in globalised world through the eyes of a young boy of the countryside named Balram Halwai. The story examines the concepts of religion, caste, loyalty, corruption and poverty in India in the context of Balram, who moves from Delhi, where he is a driver for a wealthy landowner, to Bangalore where he runs away after killing his boss and taking away his money. Balram is very conscious about the power dynamics at work. He knows that his employers have power over him not only because they are rich, but because they have the power to control who he is and his position in society. They control not only his body but also his thought and desire. Balram's desire of power gets also influenced by the Foucauldian style of thinking. At first, he says that he is able to achieve power by creating relationships with his bosses and demonstrating that he is always dedicated to his job. In the end, he realises that this isn't sufficient and that he needs to get power on his own. He does this by killing Mr Ashok who is his boss and taking his all money. This violent act is not only a way for Balram to get rich, but also a way for him to take charge of his own life and gain freedom.

1.1 Critical Literacy and the Formation of Social Consciousness:

Balram Halwai's story in The White Tiger demonstrates how class stratification affects one's identity from a young age. Not being able to attend school, being degraded to become a driver despite being smart, being forced to show blind obedience even now, shows how social and economic processes create consent. An illustration of this will be how Balram describes the servants as being captured in the "Rooster Coop" (Adiga 173) because the oppressed buy into the loyalty, fear and duty to their masters. Similarly, The Accidental Apprentice is an exploration into the secret power systems in India in the wake of Sapna Sinha's journey through 'Textbook of Life' (Swarup 12). In Sapna's seven trials she must deal with honour killings sanctioned by Khap Panchayats, child labour in dangerous factories, police corruption, Bollywood nepotism, gender discrimination and corporate privilege. Her conversations with Guddu and other child labourers expose the vicious circle of economic inequality – that's not due to lack of efforts, but by exploiting people – and the choices of women driven by patriarchy in the name of honour, as seen in Babli's case. These encounters make Sapna a more critical and conscious person who can question the institutions that represent injustice as custom or merit. The stories are designed to make readers realise that normal behaviours, such as privilege, exclusion and social stratification, all play a role in creating inequality as well, beyond economic hardship. In the novels these back-stories are made prominent and so promote critical literacy (the ability to challenge received ideas, to question institutions of power and to expose the pressure of ideology on lived experience). The readers are asked to transcend the perception of poverty, corruption, caste privilege, gender inequality and corporate domination as a fact of life or a natural occurrence. Instead, they are informed about the micro-level interactions that constitute, reproduce and sometimes challenge power. This heightened awareness leads to social awareness, in developing empathy towards the marginalised population as well as uncovering the systemic reasons which leads to their marginalisation. In this way, The White Tiger and The Accidental Apprentice are pedagogical interventions that invite the reader to reflect on the current Indian social reality, not merely as a success story or a survival narrative, but as a reality of power, justice, agency and responsibility for a democracy.

2. Literature Review:

Modern power relations are becoming increasingly a part of everyday life. These are

operated not merely through institutions and class structures, but also through micro cultural, identity and interest-based transactions. Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Adamson, 2014, p.10) has been examined primarily in macrocosmic terms, in light of the widespread implementation of ideological leadership as well as the exercises of brute force in a powerful group's attempt to maintain the peace. Michel Foucault's ideas about micro-power and disciplinary mechanisms provide a useful way of looking at the dispersion of power in everyday social practises, institutions and relations among people. Foucauldian theory posits that power is decentralised, affecting individuals' "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1998, p.17) and promoting internalised obedience through mechanisms of self-control (discipline), normativity, and surveillance. This form of micro-power aligns with Gramsci's theory where the mechanisms of consent-manufacturing infiltrate minor cultural domains, a phenomenon termed cultural micro-hegemony.

When subordinate groups internalise hierarchic social norms, as normative and acceptable, Pierre Bourdieu's extension of Gramscian cultural domination results in symbolic violence, an expression of this cultural micro-hegemony. In this setting, ideological supremacy is not just imposed, but lived, embodied and subliminally endorsed. Gramsci emphasises that hegemonic systems are never absolute, they encourage opposition through a struggle for supremacy, and counter-hegemony gradually develops from marginalised and "organic" individuals. Walter L. Adamson (2014) also states that:

Under capitalism, the organic intellectuals are not just the specialists in management and industrial organisation, the economists, the doctors, and the lawyers, but also the journalists, publishers, television personnel, and everyone else associated with what is now sometimes called the culture industry. (p.143)

These are the organic individuals who are aware of and challenge set structures of power. Adamson summarised traditional vs organic intellectuals, he characterised traditional intellectuals as people who consider themselves autonomous and impartial, and whose existence is not dependent on class conflict. They often belong to old classes of society, such as the priests and academics, '"autonomous and independent social group' which experiences through an "esprit de corps" their uninterrupted historical continuity and their special qualification." (p. 143) but in fact, what they do is linked to old powerful groups and continue their domination in society.

James C. Scott's idea of hidden transcripts makes this process even more precise. In its operation, micro-hegemony not only controls bodies but also promotes concealed, counter-discourses (speeches, gestures, and practises). Scott (1992) states that "I shall use the term hidden transcript to characterise discourse that takes place 'offstage', beyond direct observation by powerholders." (pg.4) In this way, micro-hegemony not only controls bodies but also promotes hidden counter-discourses (speeches, gestures, and practises). Later, Scott peeks into the paradox of the incomplete rebellion of the working class against the capitalist system, despite its possession of political rights. Scott (1992) evaluates two theories of ideological hegemony, and begins with Thick Hegemony, which argues that the ruling class uses consumption of strong Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) "such as schools, the church, the media, and even the institutions of parliamentary democracy, which, it is claimed, exercise a near monopoly over the symbolic means of production just as factory owners might monopolise the material means of production" (p.73) as a means of shaping and ensuring compliance. This criticism is supported by Louis Althusser's thesis of Ideological State Apparatuses. He says that the family, the media, schools, and religion are all pretended to be neutral but actually held the power. Althusser (2014) suggests that the absolute monarchy epitomised dominant class in transit, promoting both the nobility and incipient capitalists "the absolute monarchy was a new form of state representing a form of transitional state between the feudal and capitalist state". (p.16) This

framework helps to understand how state power changes as a means of adapting to new economic relationships and how institutions change as society changes. This is especially the case in modern India, where traditional hierarchies coexist with capitalist and neoliberal structure. Althusser emphasises the coercive complicity of state authority in maintaining ideology, he claimed that the only transformation of philosophy occurs inside a class society with state formation and scientific breakthrough whereas Gramsci advocates for civil society as a battleground for hegemonic struggle. His Marxist intervention comes into play in particular because the Indian postcolonial state often masks the structural injustices, caste-capital entanglements, and the neoliberal promises that only help the elite. In this sense law is for ensuring justice, order, and protection of people. Gramsci assumes that historical "laws" are not the ultimate determiners of human behaviour, but transitory tendencies that are made void through public action "such laws are absolutely accurate only to the extent that the great masses of the population remain essentially passive." (Adamson, 2014, p.125) These laws are most accurate in situations where people don't do anything. When people don't resist, innovate and intervene, social patterns become stable and predictable. This aligns with Foucault's analysis of the historical shift from sovereign legal authority to pervasive disciplinary power, illustrating how bureaucratic institutions and the law normalise and regulate citizens rather than liberate them "power always takes the form of a rule of law" (Lynch, 2012, p.17). In this regard, law functions as a hegemonic utopia—a moral and legal framework that appears to be liberating, but in reality, it legitimises exploitation. When law protects power rather than people, injustice becomes legal.

Vikas Swarup's The Accidental Apprentice (2013) as well as Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger (2008) both approach these theoretical ideas in fascinating ways. Both novels portray contemporary India as such a battleground wherein micro-hegemonies act through the corporate culture, moral discourses, education, and class. The main characters, Balram Halwai and Sapna Sinha, are "organic" subaltern people that have to deal with entrenched power structures like favouritism networks, dishonest institutional hierarchies, neoliberal ideas of meritocracy, and cultural norms of obedience. Sapna challenges this dominance in the moral and legal spheres of resistance, against dominating forces like the symbolic violence and intellectual indoctrination, while Balram is rebellious through head on violent acts, unethical behaviour. Their experiences highlight the prevailing struggles in which resistance does not emerge by way of big revolutions but through acts of self-assertion and idealistic defiance - they explain the dialect behind disciplinary authorities and the new emerging counter-hegemony. This study employs a three-level hierarchy model to illustrate that both novels represent power not as a single oppressive force but as a dispersed network that shapes aspiration, morality, and resistance in neoliberal India.

3. The Hierarchical Model

The Accidental Apprentice and The White Tiger both demonstrate how complicated power relations in modern India. The macro- meso-micro framework is a basic social paradigm. This is the method used to demonstrate how power works simultaneously in terms of state ideology, institutional practices and individual subjectivity in some novels. In these select novels power is conferred by the state's commitment to democracy, and flows through the institutions such as police station, housing society or corporate office and lastly ends up in the bodies and minds of people, who learn to obey, fear and sometimes rebel. Wang & Polillo (2016) describes "Theoretically, power is hierarchical and concentrated in organizations. The pyramid organizational structures are direct reflections of hierarchy power relations." (p.53) In sociology, power is defined as the ability of one person or group to change, control, or decide what other people do; what chances they have in life, and what opportunities they have, even if they don't want to. Lukes (2021) "the word power is polysemic: like, say, the words social and political, it has multiple and diverse meanings, appropriate

to different settings and concerns." (p.66) The exercise of power takes place on multiple levels, not only in the hands of individuals but also in terms of institutions, organisations and in the everyday practices of people. Capitalism, class and state are all examples of big systems and institutions that are involved in determining how organisations work on a macro level. The meso level concerns how things (institutions) are organised, who is in charge and how things are kept running by managers. And at the micro level, how people behave, speak and punish one another every day to demonstrate power. These levels, taken together, demonstrate the fashion in which power is made, used and held nowadays. Ahasan, F. (2024)

Foucault's conceptualisation of power is very similar to later sociological models such as Wang and Polillo's macro - meso - micro hierarchy. Foucault draws a distinction between dominant institutions of authority and subtle practises through which power is exercised "characterization is a distinction between macro-structures (the "over-all decisions") and micro-practices ("capillary interventions")" (Lynch, 2012, p.17) On a much bigger scale, power manifests in laws, policies, institutions and the decisions of governments. Foucault refers to these as over-all decisions.' On the other hand, Foucault's concept of 'capillary power' is centred around the ways that people are disciplined and normalised in small and local ways that often go unnoticed. Surveillance, assessment, schedules, procedures, names, moral judgements - all are small examples of these practises.

At the macro level, however, power is exercised through large-scale and seemingly impersonal structures, throughout which the modern state, legal system and capitalist economy seem to define the limits of the contemporary Indian existence. Ellen K. Feder (2012) describes Foucault's power and explains that power does not fit within just one institution or authority, instead, power works as a 'technology',

Foucault does not explicitly make use of the term "power/knowledge". Yet the focus on "technologies of the self" in Foucault's ethics provides what could well be understood as an elaboration of the concept of power/knowledge in the "positive" terms that are only suggested in the middle work. He is still interested in the notion of subjectivity (assujettissement), is also concerned with disciplinary practices. (pg. 66,67)

Technology of self is an existing major, yet dispersed force that shapes bodies, behaviours and beliefs. In both novels, this technology of power is tied into the neoliberal transformation of India, where economic growth promises were a smoke and mirror of the persistent structure of inequalities. Louis Althusser's distinction between Repressive State Apparatuses and Ideological State Apparatuses is an important one for understanding the self-perpetuating nature of this macro-level hierarchy. In both stories, the police, courts and government do more to protect the interests of the rich and powerful rather than uphold justice. "the policemen would park their jeep here when they came to bugger someone in the village." (Adiga, 2008, p.23) In The White Tiger, Balram's encounters with corrupt police officers are repeated, the point that it is hopeless to attempt to get legal protection when those in power are not held responsible. The state is not a neutral mediator, but an accomplice in the process of exploitation, where violence is selectively employed, where legality is not guaranteed, etc. Balram's piercing inquiry, "Who can keep a check on the police?" reveals a system in which repression is built in and where there is no accountability. Jenner E. G., J., & Jebakumar, A. N. (2024)

Nonetheless, hierarchy can still not be explained by repression alone. The cultural hegemony introduced by Antonio Gramsci explains the maintenance of power through consent rather than power. Both novels portray a society where people internalise the rationalisation for inequality and accept it as a natural part of society or as deserved. The ideas about taking risks, starting businesses and being self-reliant in neoliberalism society well as an ideological narrative that shifts systemic failure into personal failure. The Accidental Apprentice shows the effect this talk about ambition has on Sapna Sinha. The corporate world into which she comes

does not overtly coerce her but convinces her that it is up to her to work hard, adapt, and persevere to be successful. The illusion of meritocracy conceals structural barriers such as class, gender and access to networks. Delhi, Gurgaon and Bangalore are all examples of cities which are centres of this large power. They are seen to look like beautiful places with lots of opportunity but, hidden beneath their clear surfaces, are dangerous jobs, exclusion and dispossession. Pathak, G. (2024)

The meso level reveals how this abstract power manifests itself in the living world in terms of social agents and intermediary institutions. At this level, hierarchy becomes personal, familiar and intimate, operating in the name of the offices, housing societies, work, families, and informal networks. Based on the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, the concept of social and cultural capital, the meso level demonstrates the amount of power is more than just dollars. This also depends on networks, attitudes and symbolic legitimacy. Landlords, drivers' union, political aides, and corrupt law enforcement are some of the groups that link the elites and the subalterns in The White Tiger. These actors do not create the system, but it is they who keep the system going. Balram's master doesn't so often do menial work themselves. Instead, they use managers, family members and middlemen to exercise authority in an easy-to-deny manner. The home turns into the home of government, to which one must follow the rules, to owe loyalty and do what he/she is told in the name of work and kindness. In The Accidental Apprentice, the corporate office is a meso-level institution where neoliberal ideas are put into action instead of just being talked about. The workplace doesn't threaten Sapna directly, but it manages her through performance parameters, loose hierarchies, and unspoken rules. Michel Foucault concept of discipline power is very clear here, as control is imposed through schedules, tests, self-monitoring people do on their own. "I want to hope, to dream, to have faith again, but the soulless weight of reality keeps crushing me down." (Swarup, 2013, p.2) To remain employable, Sapna learns how to control her feelings, goals and moral doubts. Housing societies also become important centres of power at the meso level. These areas are examples of Giorgio Agamben's idea of 'zones' where laws are not clear and power is not based on alternatives of one thing. Residents' associations, secretaries and informal leaders have a lot of power to control who can and cannot join. They are often the ones to decide who gets to be in and who has to be out.

The micro level, on the other hand, displays where hierarchy manifests itself in the closest to personal and most enduring fashion: in the body, mind and moral imagination of the individual. At this point, power should not have to be enforced from the outside. It sustains itself by means of self-discipline, emotional regulation and internalised consent. The young Balram Halwai's early years are filled with a keen sense of his own inferiority. His behaviour, speech and pauses are all effected by constant scrutiny and fear. He acquires the ability not only to obey but to look forward to commands - an example of what Foucault calls the generative nature of power. The Rooster Coop is not only a social structure, but also the state of mind. Even when it appears to be possible to get away, people's sense of guilt as well as family duty and fear of punishment prevent them from doing anything. Power works in microcosm by penetrating the conscience of Balram and makes him believe that submission is natural and rebellion, immoral. Balram's transition to murderer and entrepreneur is a micro-level fracture, albeit an ethically ambiguous one. He doesn't break down hierarchy - he learns how to work with it. Even at a time, when it looks like people are free, there's still micro-level power. This demonstrates Foucault's argument that power doesn't disappear, it merely takes on different forms and manifests itself in different ways.

Sapna's self-monitoring is an example of what Foucault calls 'governmentality' as a form of bio-power "Discipline may be seen as biopower as it targets the individual body, therefore, while another level of biopower targets the species-body." (Taylor, 2012, pg.45) which is the control of people through freedom instead of force. She believes that she is making choices for herself

even though the company's reasons are limiting her choices. Anxiety, self-doubt and guilt are methods to discipline people without forcing them to do what you want. Power is micro-levelled, through affect, in desires, fears and aspirations.

4. Disciplinary Practices: The Making of a Neoliberal Citizen

The White Tiger shows how characters learn to submit, accept, negotiate, or oppose hegemonic structures through an intricate synthesis of ideology, discipline, habitus, and hidden dissent. Characters embody and sustain the cultural narratives linked to their social positions rather than merely occupying those roles. Adiga's criticism of modern India is based on the idea of cultural hegemony, which is how ruling elites get the support of oppressed groups without using force, but by making oppression seem normal and moral. Balram Halwai unequivocally accepts the idea that his destiny is preordained by his birth into the "Darkness" at the outset of the narrative. His belief that service is a moral obligation shows the power of hegemonic cultural narratives like loyalty, obedience, gratitude, and submission based on caste. Gramsci says that hegemony happens when the oppressed think that their oppression is 'common sense' instead of oppression. For example, "He was loyal as a dog. He was the perfect servant." (Adiga, 2008, p.169) Balram's family works for landlords like the Stork and the Buffalo because they believe that a servant must be loyal, not because they like them.

Balram's switch in profession from working in a teashop to driving, his body, posture, gestures, and desires slowly changed to fit what a typical servant would do in hegemonic culture. This kind of power is internalised, long-lasting, and hard to see. The servants' quarters in Delhi are like a panopticon, it is an example of surveillance, "The panoptical view from the window allowed surveillance of the entire open space." (Welzbacher, 2018, p.38) which makes sure that people keep an eye on themselves and learn to control themselves in a way that supports hierarchical structures. Drivers constantly watch each other and keep an eye on their behaviour. Balram learns how to stand behind Ashok, open doors exactly when he wants to, and disappear unless someone calls for him. These small gestures turn the servant into what Foucault calls a docile body. Instead of using violence, it is controlled by self-surveillance, normalisation, and discipline.

Balram strongly believes in entrepreneurial capitalism and doesn't believe in old myths about caste and fate. Althusser asserts that ideology interpellates people, which means it puts them in social roles. Neoliberal ideology, which includes the story of urban modernity, the fantasy of corporate success, and the desire to be a "self-made man," makes Balram its target. He begins to believe that he can also succeed through hard work and cleverness, even though caste limits him. "Halwai…" He turned to the small dark man. "What caste is that, top or bottom?" And I knew that my future depended on the answer to this question." (Adiga, 2008, p.62) Balram is thus dual-interpellated: under feudalism, he is a servant, and under capitalism, he is an aspiring entrepreneur. Balram's rebellion is not against all ideologies, but rather a shift from one dominant ideological instance to another.

Gramsci and Althusser explain ideological consent, while Bourdieu's concept of habitus explains how domination is etched in the body and memory. "Bourdieu explores the constitution of habitus, an enduring set of dispositions acquired in early life and then later modified through participation in multiple fields." (Burawoy, 2019, p.20) Habitus is a set of long-lasting ways of walking, talking, and seeing that people get from their social environment. Balram must break this internalised habitus to become a "white tiger," a rare animal that only appears once in a generation. The murder of Ashok is not only a physical act of violence, but it is also an attack on his own inherited dispositions. Balram while committing this crime symbolically kills the servant-self that the bourgeois and feudal systems have produced.

Adiga shows that resistance doesn't happen on its own; it grows over time through silent

observation and unspoken anger. Scott argues that these hidden transcripts can eventually lead to open rebellion when things change, which is exactly what happens in the text. Balram's murder of Ashok is the point at which the secret transcript of revolt becomes a public transcript. Balram makes fun of his bosses, looks into their corruption, and questions the fairness of the system when no one else is around.

Whereas the series of tests that Sapna is subjected to in the novel The Accidental Apprentice are a compendium of Foucauldian methods of discipline meant to transform Sapna into the ideal neoliberal citizen. Her actions, emotions and decisions are constantly judged against the backdrop of each test dividing a specific virtue valued by neoliberal ideology - self-reliance, resilience, entrepreneurial initiative, moral adaptability, and constant self-enhancement. These evaluations are an amalgamation of observation and evaluation, similar to examinations in Foucault's discourse: Vinay Mohan Acharya, the owner of a business group, keeps an eye on her answers, check on her fitness and rates her work against standards that aren't visible. "I am giving you the chance to be a winner." (Swarup, 2013. p.13) The tests make her believe that success has a personal responsibility, as opposed to it being a systemic problem. Her life is merely a series of competitive tests in favour of effectiveness, self-control, and moral realism. It breeds a human with the qualities that define the neoliberal self: being able to take risks, being able to keep desires in check, and the ability to transform any experience into a marketable talent. These customs change Sapna gradually from a regular salesgirl to a strictly disciplined individual wanting to be part of the modern business world. She is moulded by the attractive self-concept of being able to move around as she wishes but not by force.

Bourdieu's definition of cultural capital, which includes the social competences, preferences, etiquette, and forms of knowledge that legitimize in elite situations, can be applied to analyse Sapna's experiences in The Accidental Apprentice. Even though Sapna is a smart and hardworking, she doesn't have the class-based cultural capital that the corporate and charity elites around Acharya take for granted. This includes being able to speak elite English, knowing how to behave in cosmopolitan settings and the institutional pedigree and the confidence that comes with being part of the upper class. She knows about this shortcoming, however, as shown when she passes discomfort upon meeting rich businessmen, lawyers, and women who come from high society. All of the exams conducted by Acharya are both a moral puzzle and a place where she tries to gain symbolic legitimacy, or the ability to be seen as a member of the elite. Sapna learns how to do the things that people in society consider as respectable and authoritative, such as how to negotiate in the court, handle a business crisis or confront some media myths. She wants to cross the line which separates the powerful from the respectable middle class by collecting different kinds of cultural wealth. When Priya Capoor remarks "You see, this movie was meant for the elites, not the masses. People like you need to analyse it for at least a week to understand it full." (Swarup, 2013, p.127) Sapna is made to feel middle class by Priya Capoor and not because she is wealthy, but because her cultural legitimacy is questioned. This story suggests that this kind of legitimacy is not very strong for someone like her, she has to keep proving herself in ways that people who are born into elite circles never have to. In neoliberal India, hierarchy is maintained not only through income and law but also through the politics of subtlety in discourse, recognition and comportment, the manifestations of symbolic power that differentiate who belong and who does not in the category of the respectable.

To do well in a neoliberal economy, Sapna, a middle-class salesgirl, has learnt how to act professionally, and to act in a polite manner including speaking properly, controlling her emotions, dressing adequately, being on time, and smiling to please the customers. These manners reinforce the class differences by being considered as signs of virtue, discipline and good upbringing. In order to make their submission appear normal, Balram must be very polite, beautifully bent, soft voice while smiling

obediently. The rich want respect not because they are better people, but because hierarchy involves a clear difference in behaviour between a master and a servant. This etiquette serves to make the act of exploitation appear to be polite. "It's because 99.9 percent of us are caught in the Rooster Coop just like those poor guys in the poultry market." (Adiga, 2008, p.175) The "rooster coop" makes Balram's behaviour of submission as a part of him, keeping him submissive allowing the privileged to think of themselves as kind. The elite who are in the book believe they are better than everyone else because they possess a higher and more sophisticated variation of these manners.

Balram demonstrates the public transcript of perfect obedience by smiling, bowing and flattering his bosses and using the submissive language a driver should. But beneath the surface of this seeming peace and business, his inner monologue turns into a place of criticism, bitterness, and radical rethinking. His ideas look at how the rooster coop works, show how hypocritical the 'masters' are, and make fun of their moral pretences. "How many ways are there for a driver to cheat his master?" (Adiga, 2008, p.228) He asks the senior driver for ideas as to how to spoof his boss. He learns that each time he tells Ashok a lie he doesn't feel bad about it, he feels angry. Balram says that he was "developing a belly" (Adiga, 2008, p.231) at last. He talks about how he understands exploitation, corruption how silly India is in its class structure and such while he is driving Ashok in silence and obedience. He can thoughtfully come up with an opposing world view when handling the immediate stress to serve because he knows about the two sides of the issue. Balram's hidden transcript intensifies over the course of time from a sarcastic statement to planned defiance. His comments about how harsh landowners are, how corrupt the law is, how other drivers are too submissive, are not simply him complaining but indications of political awakening. He rehearses arguments against the morality of the hierarchy which controls him through an internal dialogue. When he decides to kill Ashok, the internal uprising has taken place. The way people act on the outside is only the consequence of a long process of rejection on the inside. Balram's internal monologue, which serves as a secret transcript, shows the psychological side of subaltern resistance. Even though the oppressed may seem submissive, there is a rich, subversive world behind the act that undermines the intellectual basis of hierarchy.

5. Discussion: Invisible Techniques in Modern Organizational Structures

One institution can never bring people to obey by itself. It is a product of a structure of power which operates silently in everyday life. Instead of physical force to control employees, workplaces gain access to panoptic self-regulation and make them get their eye on their own behaviour. Balram's occupation of being a driver in The White Tiger is an example of this mixture of business and feudalism. Drivers need to be dedicated, well-groomed and dressed "I kept saying to each shirt he showed me—until I found one that was all white, with a small word in English in the center. Then I went looking for the man selling black shoes." (Adiga, 2008, p.150) and stand up straight as the families they do work for are constantly monitored what they do and how they act. Even without the presence of CCTVs, Balram manages to get his master's attention. The disciplinary system has had such a profound impact on him that he even shines his shoes and utters polite words even when he begins planning the murder of Ashok. Foucault argues that Balram internalised loyalty and that is not a forced one. Even when nobody is watching, his body still remembers that he was being watched. The Accidental Apprentice illustrates the use of mental discipline rather than physical dominance in the companies. Sapna initially didn't want to take Acharya's tests because the media had taught her that real success had to come from respectable, predictable paths. This is because the media, which is a hegemonic tool, restricts her from imagining and informs her what a meaningful life is. The media also provides Balram with consumerist fantasies which results in what Gramsci referred to as 'consensual domination', "but now the concept of hegemony as the consensual and institutional basis of

proletarian power is explicitly introduced" (Adamson, 2014, p.87) which is when people agree to a system that takes advantage of them. Balram doesn't get mad until he realises how very hypocritical these pictures are. Scott says that his disobedience is brought on by the 'hidden transcript' of anger which grows under the surface of devotion. Balram sees how the legal system impacts the poor (his family and the rickshaw puller) but preserves the rich (Ashok's family and Pinky Madam). The police, courts, and the licensing bureaus are all examples of Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) which are also corrupt ideological apparatus. Fear - fear of the police, fear of an improper arrest, fear of the severity of bureaucracy - is the thing that keeps people in line. The law does not do justice, yet it commands obedience. Balram's refusal to be a subject, since the law has never recognised him as a citizen, represents a refusal on his part that his eventual crime is more than an individual revolt; it is a political statement. Whereas Sapna becomes a person according to the law only when it's right and not blindly following it, when she realises that law-abiding behaviour is often a way of passively reproducing injustice.

Micro-power (as opposed to overt oppression) is exercised through secret mechanisms such as education, evaluation and constant behavioural surveillance. In The Accidental Apprentice, Vinay Mohan Acharya's ritualised testing and corporate evaluations reveals micro-power. The seven tests may sound like they are for Sapna's own good, but actually they are very well-planned disciplinary exercises, aimed at turning her into the perfect neoliberal citizen, rational, effective, adaptable to different situations and in any case always trying to improve herself. Her profession also has hidden management monitoring, interacting with customers training, and performance review to micro-control. "Another thing I've learnt is never to judge customers by their appearance. They come in all shapes, sizes and dresses." (Swarup, 2013, p.16) Even soft skills such as how to dress, how to act, how to speak, and how to be on time are made use of in disciplining Sapna, to teach her how to project the 'respectable corporate' image avaricious middle-class desires. This way, they can maintain the hierarchy without the use of force.

At the micro level, both novels reveal the most disturbing truth about hierarchy: domination is a pathology that continues not only due to its enforcement, but also due to its reality, its being felt, its acceptance, its embodiment. Culture acts as a force mechanism (power) in that it has a way of creating a sense of normalcy, possibility, desirability and legitimacy "culture is power." (Nayar, 2008, pg.7) People attain power if they follow the rules which are already in place. Adiga and Swarup demonstrate through the case of Balram and Sapna, that modern power does not succeed only through institutions or ideology, but also by altering the ways people think and feel.

6. Conclusion:

The analysis reveals that hierarchy in The White Tiger and The Accidental Apprentice isn't just about money and power but rather is an intricate web of micro-power that operates through internalised dominance, consent, emotion, technology, ideology, surveillance and classification. Looking at the analysis in the macro-, meso- and micro-levels it can be concluded that modern power is exercised not only in the material domain where it is manifested in the control of things but also in the domain of construction of identities, control of behaviour and formation of consciousness through common practices and institutions. Balram Halwai and Sapna Sinha are representatives of conflicting reactions to this hierarchical system. Balram's violent rebellion is the epitome of systemic injustice being cruel but on the other hand, it still follows the logic of the dominance of competition which he is trying to defy. Sapna instead demonstrates that power can be negotiated in the contexts of ethical agency, critical reflection and informed decision-making, and that real resistance can arise out of consciousness and accountability and moral change, not violence. The comparative reading also reveals that subjectivity in India today is not simply created through physical force but is also fashioned through disciplinary practices and ideological consensus which normalize inequality.

State institutions, market forces, cultural norms and technology systems work together to maintain the status quo and render it "normal", "acceptable", and "unavoidable". These frameworks tend to be internalised by people and they self-regulate, which is why it is called domination.

The significance of this study is that, apart from its artistic aspect, it also highlights the pedagogic side of modern Indian literature in the process of developing critical literacy and social consciousness. The novels expose the complex and subtle mechanisms of micro-power that operate in everyday life events and encourage the reader to question taken-for-granted notions of class, caste, gender, merit, success and authority. Readers are urged to look beyond the facts of social inequality and consider how it is perpetuated by institutional and ideological processes. In this way, The White Tiger and The Accidental Apprentice transform literary narrative into a space of critical inquiry and a space of reading as questioning of power, awareness of structural injustice and a space of imagining other ethical and inclusive social possibilities. The study also argues that the contemporary Indian fiction is not merely a representation of structures of domination but also is a source of critical consciousness which can challenge them and reiterates literature's continuous relevance in the way it continues to produce socially conscious, critically literate and democratically engaged citizens.

This study has the limitation that it only elaborates the comparison between The White Tiger and The Accidental Apprentice and does not attempt to cover the entire spectrum of modern Indian writing or the manifold ways in which readers read the texts. Literary meanings are open to a variety of readings, so other theoretical frameworks can provide other discoveries. This method does not restrict the topic but provides a common analysis framework that can be used for other literary texts, theoretical models, and other disciplines that analyse power, critical literacy, and social consciousness.

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