

Balram as Postmodern Schizo-Fragmented Subject in Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Abstract

Our society is full of diverse ideas, theories, beliefs, codes, and moral values. It is not possible in the postmodern age to construct an integrated view of the world. Knowledge is taken as a set of perspectives. Different people have different points of view about the world, without anyone being "right" or "wrong" and this is because of the psychological impact of late 20th-century capitalism. Jameson (1991) defines a postmodern schizo-fragmentation as a new dominant consciousness that is the result of local dislocations caused by globalization, the strong impact of mass media on our consciousness, and the standardization of our surroundings. A postmodern schizo-fragmented subject can be defined as a person who has fluctuating emotions and an inability to connect his past and future into coherent experience because of unconnected mental regions where information gets to settle in different compartments of mind. The researcher has used Jameson's concept of postmodern schizo-fragmentation to analyze Adiga's novel *The White Tiger*. The purpose of this study is to highlight the impact of postmodernism and late capitalism on Balram's personality. This study concludes that Balram is a man of ever-changing temperament. This is because of his association with Dark India and Light India simultaneously. Hence, he has different opinions about the persons and events in the novel, he comes across which results in his (personality) fragmentation.

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Introduction

Late capitalism and postmodernism define each other. Postmodernism is not taken as a style of any specific age but it is taken as a cultural form of late capitalism that has a strong impact on an individual. In the late capitalistic age, an individual has lost his center and his ability to place himself in the external world and to organize his immediate surroundings. In the postmodern age, man does not have a single reliable reality and definition. All realities and metanarratives have been challenged. There is nothing universal and complete in its form. According to Jameson, a Postmodern man has lost

his single perspective and he cannot "position himself in this space and cognitively map it" (1991, p. 7). Postmodern man is fragmented and does not have an integrated view of the world. The main reason for postmodern man's fragmentation is mass media which directly or indirectly change a person's view about the world. This postmodern schizo-fragmented man cannot organize his past and future into a coherent experience. His mental region is unconnected and information in the form of fragments goes into the different compartments of his mind. According to Jameson, culture produced by such schizo-fragmented subjects is also just a heap of fragments (Claudia, 1997).

Fuat Firat (1992) in his research, *Fragmentations in the Postmodern*, investigates how different kinds of fragmentation influence the consumers. Unlike postmodernists who state that all metanarratives are at the end, he claims new metanarratives are appearing in the world through mass media. Bahar Mehrabi and Nasser Maleki in their article, *The Sense of Loss: Postmodern Fragmented Identity in Three Plays of Sam Shepard* states that Sam Shepard, an American playwright has been concerned with the theme of an identity crisis. This research paper also demonstrates the fragmented identities of Lee and Austin, Eddie and May, and Jake and Beth in three plays *True West*, *Fool for Love*, and *lie of the mind* respectively (2010). In the article, *The Characteristic of Postmodernism - Fragmentation and its impact on the process of English Language Learning*, it has been investigated that how fragmentation occurs in school learners' process of English language acquiring process by measuring the use of words and integration of vocabulary and the result of this research shows that two Chilean school learners lack their ability to develop and applied vocabulary because of atomization and fragmentation of knowledge (Philominraj (et al.), 2018)

Postmodern man gets information in the form of scattered bits. It gets assorted information from his surroundings and saves it in his mind. Because of that contradictory information, he has a different opinion about the world and events. At one time he takes one segment of information and describes things from that perspective and on another occasion, he takes other segments which results in a split personality of the subject. Culture and art produced by that fragmented subject are also in the form of fragments. In other words, postmodernism and late capitalism produce fragmented selves, and the culture of these fragmented selves also lacks form and authenticity. Booker (2005) quotes Jameson that postmodern narratives also have a strong influence on this schizophrenic fragmentation because, in these postmodern narratives characters of plural, discontinuous identities, and fragmented personalities are depicted.

According to Jameson (1991), we have a different form of false consciousness in this late capitalistic age. The older form of false consciousness which is in the form of vertical containment has been

replaced by newer horizontal containment. In vertical containment, consciousness is implicit. A person cannot easily express it because it is buried beneath the well-learned behaviors and these behaviors are the result of dominant ideologies propagated by powerful people. If Jameson's this concept of postmodern consciousness is correct then the older form of false consciousness has been replaced by new horizontal containment. In this new form of false consciousness, lies and truth are internalized in the separate cognitive compartment. Although they are not connected yet, it is easy to express them because they are not buried (Claudia, 1997)

Balam, the protagonist of the novel *White Tiger* is also a fragmented subject. The main reason for his fragmentation is his lack of ability to make any coherent relationship with the past. In the whole novel, his opinions fluctuate about people, things, and even religion. He was unable to make his integrated view of the world because he could not create a relationship between his past incidents. He has different experiences in his different phases of life and all these experiences have been saved in a different compartment of his mind and he is depicted in the novel as a schizophrenic fragmented subject. For example, Balram in light and Balram in darkness, Balram as a loyal servant and Balram as a murderer of his master, Balram as an emotional person who admires the innocence of his master and who cannot see his family in trouble, and Balram as an entrepreneur who just wants capital. Balram's statements about Mr. Ashok provide pieces of evidence about his schizophrenic personality. At different places in the novel, he describes the innocence, honesty, and virtues of Mr. Ashok as he says

You won't find me saying one bad thing about him. I protected his name when I was his servant and now (in one sense) that I am his master (Adiga, 2008, p. 47)

In this statement, Balram is admitting the goodness of Mr. Ashok by recalling all the good things he did to him and other servants. All the good deeds which Mr. Ashok did to him are saved in a separate compartment of his false consciousness and whenever he recalls his past, he appreciates his quality of being kind-hearted. But when he was convincing himself to murder Mr. Ashok, he recalls

misbehaves which Mr. Ashok did with him as he says himself

Mr. Ashok made you take the blame when his wife killed that child on the road and Mr. Ashok threatens your family makes your blood boil (Adiga, 246)

By the above-given statement, he justifies his action to murder Mr. Ashok by recalling all the immoral deeds which he did to him which make his blood boil and enforces him to murder him. These two statements about Mr. Ashok are contradictory and depict that Balram’s opinion about Mr. Ashok varies with his mood. Even this is also not his final statement about Mr. Ashok. He forgives him for his unjust demand to take the blame for an accident on him which his wife committed. His anger against him departed when he thought about the whole

situation. It was Madam Pinky’s fault to hit a child on road, not Mr. Ashok’s fault (Adiga, 186)

In all these statements about Mr. Ashok, Balram has different views about his master. Once he calls him a kind-hearted man then on another moment recalls his unjust behavior with him and then again forgives him and declares him innocent. All his previous experiences are placed in a different compartment of his mind and according to situation and mood, his opinions vary about Mr. Ashok. From these shreds of evidence, it is proven that Balram is the postmodern schizo- fragmented subject who has not integrated assessment about Ashok’s personality. Even before killing Mr. Ashok, he is confused. He is trying to convince himself to murder his master and for that purpose, he continuously compares different facts of his life. This table from the novel also gives proof that he has a postmodern schizo-fragmented personality.

<p>The left-hand puddle of spit seemed to say:</p>	<p>But the right-hand puddle of spit seemed to say:</p>
<p>Your father wanted you to be an honest man</p> <p>Mr. Ashok does not hit you or spit on you as people did to your father.</p> <p>Mr. Ashok pays you well, 4,000 rupees a month. He has been raising your salary without even asking.</p> <p>Remember what the buffalo did to his servant’s family. Mr. Ashok will ask his father to do the same with your family once you run away</p>	<p>Your father wanted you to be a man</p> <p>Mr. Ashok made you take the blame when his wife killed that child on the road.</p> <p>This is a pittance. You live in a city. What do you save? Nothing</p> <p>The very fact that Mr. Ashok threatens your family makes your blood boil!</p> <p>(P.246)</p>

Balram in the whole novel tried to convince Mr. Jiabo that he is a successful businessman because he is not an emotional fool like other people of this country who are caught in a *rooster coop* of emotions.

I am not a sentimental man, Mr. Jiabo. Entrepreneurs can’t afford to be (p.12)

In the above-given statement, he claims that he is not an emotional fool. When he was killing Mr. Ashok

and robbing his money, He knew that his master’s family would immediately kill his whole family. But he sacrificed his family for money because he did not want to live his whole life in poverty with his family instead, he preferred to live a prosperous life alone as a successful businessman. He calls himself successful because he took a practical step to kill his master and robbed his money for his business without considering consequences. And if he became emotional about his family then he would be

like all common men who spent their whole life in a rooster coop of emotions and moral values. But in different places, he contradicts his statement which shows that he has a fragmented personality as

Thinking of Mr. Ashok is making me sentimental. I hope I've got some paper napkins here somewhere (p.46)

In the above-given statement, he contradicts his verdict that he is not an emotional fool as he takes the bold step to sacrifice his family for money but here he is admitting that the memories of Mr. Ashok make him sentimental. These various opinions again prove his personality schizophrenic. He admits that his decision to kill his master was not wrong but he gets emotional whenever he recalls all.

I'll never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master's throat. (p.320)

Balram's faith in religion and Gods also fluctuates in the novel as on some occasions, he laughs at religion but in some places, he is shown as a humble worshiper of gods.

I see the little man in khaki uniform spitting at god again and again (P.87)

If he had anger for god and wanted to spit on him then why he swung his hand and sang Shiva's name as truth on his mother's death and prayed god for her. Even when he was in light (as called his life in the city was living in light), he went to the temple to pray to god for the reunion of Mr. Ashok and madam Pinky (Adiga, 187)

Even his views about different characters are also changed. Sometimes, he calls different people by their original names and sometimes gives them animals' names as he called Mr. Mukesh with his original name on few places but on different places calls him mongoose. Balram as a man of late capitalistic age has a fragmented personality who does not have a fixed and authentic view about the world but his opinion changes with the circumstances and context which confirms Jameson's view that a vast knowledge system is present in our mind in form of segments and we human being can attend only one piece of that vast knowledge system

at a time, so metaphor for postmodern consciousness is that of "channel switching" among different "compartments of reality"(1991) that is why one thing becomes real for Balram on one occasion but when he perceives things from other angles, his views change with it. As Adiga also defines postmodern fragmented man in the novel by the protagonist:

The Indian entrepreneur has to be straight and crooked, mocking and believing, sly and sincere at the same time (P.9)

Friedrich Engle's term false consciousness has a different form in the postmodern age. Jameson also suggests that there is a shift in the form of false consciousness. The old form of false consciousness is in the form of vertical containment which is replaced by the new form of false consciousness which is in the form of horizontal containment. In this new form of false consciousness, lies and truth are internalized in the separate cognitive compartment and they are not buried. One can easily express his fear and identify ideologies and express them openly. In the modern age, ideologies of the elite class and Europeans were spread in this way that they softly became part of the unconscious of common men. They adopt them as normal and natural things and realities. There were two different ways to spread the ideologies of powerful people. One is, by books and through formal education and another way is through media as Balram got a book from the inspector who came to check their school. That book's name was *lessons for young boys from the life of Mahatama Gandhi*. Balram as a child internalized those moral lessons which were given in that book and acted nonviolently in his childhood. But mature Balram challenged those moral lessons and adopted that violent way to get money and became a successful businessman because he had observed that a successful businessman has to be violent and immoral to make his capital double. People in darkness were more religious as according to Karl Marx religion is used as opiates for masses same occur in the novel was Balram says:

This is hanuman, everyone's favorite god in darkness...he was the faithful servant of god Ram, we worship him in our temples because he is a shining

example of how to serve, your masters with absolute fidelity, love, and devotion. These are the kind of gods they have foisted on us (P.19)

In the name of religion and moral values, the poor people are subjugated. They are made nonviolent by giving references to Gods and moral values. They are given hope that they will get the reward in life after death for their sufferings and patience. Balaram identified these ideologies and freed himself from all chains of relations and moral values. Balaram was also a victim of ideology, when he was in darkness as Mr. Ashok asked him how much he wants in salary he says:

You're like a father and mother to me and how I ask for money from my parents? (p.65)

In this line, he is under the influence of those ideologies which influence poor people and make them obedient to their master. Today our poor class is still suffering because of this and they accept whatever upper class does to them as Balaram took the blame of killing a child on road himself and spent one night in jail while Ms. Pinky committed that crime. And on daily basis, Balaram tells, thousands of drivers spent their lives in jail for those crimes which they had not committed. According to Balaram, the poor people are like the roosters who are locked in a coop and that coop is made up of values and emotions for family. Drivers in Delhi do not dare to stole bags of their master full of money because they know they are in a coop and they will be caught if they try to break that coop. (169)

But, In the postmodern age, moral values and already set realities and standards have been challenged. Art and literature produced in this age are increasingly concerned with female subjugation, class, and ethnicity issues. Salman Rushdie's novels challenge and transcend cultural convention and parochial mentalities, in two different worlds, Islamic as well as European.(W.R Goodman 2007,p.51). Adiga has also adopted an anti-euro-centric approach in his novel *White Tiger*. In different places, he challenges the definitions given by Europeans which depicts that postmodern man is not a slave of western countries and their ideologies anymore. He can use his mind to view the world or

at least he has become aware of the lenses which the Europeans had put on their subordinates.

As Balaram hero of the white tiger tells Mr. Premier that the four greatest poets are Muslims yet Muslims are considered illiterate and barbarians. It is a puzzle, isn't it? (p.40)

In the above text, Balaram is challenging the definition of Muslims given by Europeans who consider them barbarian and illiterate who just want to destroy the world but according to Balaram all four of the greatest poets in the world are Muslims then how they can be illiterate and dangerous.

As a postmodern man, Balaram was not an emotional fool, he could see things beyond the values constructed by powerful people. Jameson defines postmodernism as a historical situation and it would be inappropriate to assess it in terms of moral values and norms. He also suggests that in this era one can see the good and bad of anything at the same time. In this postmodern age, one accepts something without giving moral judgments to it and we have to accept this new historical situation. That is why Balaram is not embarrassed about his crime because he has adopted the way which elite have adopted to kill the poor and earn money. Balaram also did the same. He killed his master and in return, he knew that he had to lose his family but he did not care and broke the coop in which all half-baked men were packed. As Balaram defines the late capitalistic man:

That only man who is ready to see his family destroyed-hunted, beaten, and burned alive by masters-can break out of the coop (P.176)

Later in the story, that so-called selfish man appeared and that was Balaram. He sacrificed his family for money and success and broke that coop. He told that he was hypnotized, when he was in a cage, like a white tiger in a zoo cage, and he freed himself from family love, marriage, and religion and adopted a realistic approach which a postmodern man should adopt. This late capitalistic age is classless in one sense, it does not matter that one belongs to which class and ethnic group and gender, only matter is potential of man to rise, as Balaram says:

It did not matter whether you were a woman or Muslim, or an untouchable: anyone with a belly could rise (p.64)

Balam protagonist of *White Tiger* is a fragmented subject who continuously changes his opinions about things which shows his schizo-fragmented personality. Art and culture produced by this schizo-fragmented postmodern man are also the heaps of fragments. *White Tiger* as the postmodern novel also does not have a linear plot but in the form of seven letters to the prime minister of China. The form of false consciousness is also changed in the postmodern age. Man of this age is aware of the presence of ideologies and it is not difficult for him to express the implicit lies and truth as Balam describes how in the name of religion and family love people are fooled. Media plays important role in constructing realities and people considered all the stories told by media as authentic realities. In the late capitalistic age, money has taken the position of god which drives postmodern man and which decides what is wrong and what is right. Lust for money drives Balam to murder his master. Balam tells that in India two castes exist: the man with big bellies and the man with small bellies and only that man can rise who has a big belly. Successful postmodern man with his big belly, under the influence of late capitalistic age, can eat everything even his family, religion, and values and he does not have any regret. Balam is also a postmodern man of this age who was unable to create the link between his past that's why his opinions about people, religion, and incidents vary.

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