

Write History - The Laxmangarh Revolution

The following extract is from the award winning book by Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger*. Balram Halwai, the narrator, writes an open letter to the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, about how he rose from living in poverty, in "The Darkness", to becoming a thinking man and entrepreneur, "The White Tiger".

A white Ambassador car had stopped outside. My father put down his teacup and went out.

The door of the Ambassador opened: a man got out with a notebook. The regular customers of the tea shop could go on eating, but my father and the others gathered in a line.

The man with the notebook wasn't the the Buffalo; he was the assistant.

There was another fellow inside the the Ambassador; a stout one with a bald, brown, dimpled head, a serene expression on his face, and a shotgun on his lap.

He was the Buffalo.

The Buffalo was one of the landlords in Laxmangarh. There were three others, and each had got his name from the peculiarities of appetite that had been detected in him.

The Stork was a fat man with a fat moustache, thick and curved and pointy at the tips. He owned the river that flowed outside the village, and he took a cut of every catch of fish caught by every fisherman in the river, and a toll from every boatman who crossed the river to come to our village.

His brother was called the Wild Boar. This fellow owned all the good agricultural land around Laxmangarh. If you wanted to work in those lands, you had to bow down to his feet, and touch the dust under his slippers, and agree to swallow his day wages. When he passed by women, his car would stop; the windows would roll down to reveal his grin; two of his teeth, on either side of his nose, were long, and curved, like little tusks.

The Raven owned the worst land, which was the dry, rocky hillside around the fort, and took a cut from the goatherds who went up there to graze with their flocks.

The Buffalo was the greediest of the lot. He had eaten up the rickshaws and the roads. So if you ran a rickshaw, or used the road, you had to pay him his feed – one-third of whatever you earned, no less.

All four of the Animals lived in high-walled mansions just outside Laxmangarh – the landlords' quarters. They had their own temples inside the mansions, and their own wells and ponds, and did not need to come out into the village except to feed. Once upon a time, the children of the four Animals went around town in their own cars; Kusum remembered those days. But after the Buffalo's son had been kidnapped by the Naxals – perhaps you have heard about them, Mr Jiabao, since they're Communists, just like you, and go around shooting rich people on principle – the four Animals had sent their sons and daughters away, to Dhanbad or to Delhi.

A rich man's body is like premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank. Ours are different. My father's spine was like a knotted rope, the kind that women use in villages to pull water from wells; the clavicle curved around his neck in high relief, like a dog's collar; cuts and nicks and scars, like little whip marks in his flesh, ran down his chest and waist, reaching down below his hipbones into his buttocks. The story of a poor man's life is written on his body, in a sharp pen.

My uncles also did backbreaking work, but they did what everyone else did. Each year, as soon as it began raining, they would go out to the fields with blackened sickles, begging one landlord or the other for some work. Then they cast seed, cut weeds, and harvested corn and paddy. My father would have worked with them; he could have worked with the landlords' mud, but he chose not to.

He chose to to fight it.

Project Instructions

A revolution breaks out in Laxmangarh because no steps are taken to address the conditions of the oppressed and new systems are set in place after the revolution.

You have been asked to write the History of the revolution to be studied by students in the future. You will write a textbook chapter titled "The Laxmangarh Revolution". This should include the conditions before the revolution, the spread of ideas, the outbreak of the revolution, important events and personalities, and the immediate and long term effects of the revolution.

You can use the textbook chapter on the French Revolution as a reference. Use the lessons and ideas learnt from the French Revolution to craft your own events and personalities.

Use illustrations and make the chapter interesting. Include interesting facts, ideas, questions, activities and so on for bonus points.

Grading Criteria

Criteria	Points
Detailed Content	40
Uses lessons and ideas from French Revolution	20
Creativity	20
Presentation	20
Total	100
Bonus points for interesting facts, ideas, questions, activities etc	10