

---

**Unmasking India's Social Realities: A Critical Analysis of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger***

---

**Dr. Y. Praveen Kumar**, Assistant Professor of English, Department of English  
Government Degree College, Medak, Medak, Telangana

---

Paper Received on 16-10-2024, Accepted on 14-11-2024  
Published on 16-11-24; DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2024.9.4.183

---

**Abstract:**

This paper critically analyzes Aravind Adiga's Booker Prize-winning novel, *The White Tiger*, exploring its portrayal of India's social realities through Balaram Halwai. He is the protagonist of the novel. The novelist exposes issues about Indian society, such as poverty, corruption, and the inequalities prevailing in it. It examines how the narrator assesses the notion of India's economic rise. He highlights the persisting social stigmas, injustices, and contradictions. This research employs a critical lens to reveal how *The White Tiger* challenges dominant discourses on India's development and national identity. The paper argues that Adiga's satire serves as a commentary on the failures of India's social and economic systems, underscoring the need for critical self-reflection and reform.

**Keywords:** *The White Tiger*, Social realities, Indian societies, poverty, corruption, social inequality.

**Introduction**

One of the most pressing societal issues in the modern day is rehabilitation. A regular guy's social life is the central theme of Aravind Adiga's works. By following the downfall of the underdog, Adiga reveals the inner workings of human nature and how they lead to acts of violence, theft, and deceit. He can examine the truth of existence by meticulously observing the social lives of ordinary people. Readers immerse themselves in Aravind Adiga's works, believing that the real-life characters and events depicted will provide insight into the societal issues he addresses. More people focus on societal stigmas than on ways to fix them. Resolving community concerns and challenges is very important, even when they may get little attention. Ignoring the consequences of social faux pas will make it extremely difficult to confront and remedy these societal concerns. Bringing attention to these social problems is the first stage towards resolving them.

The novelist discusses societal difficulties, the development of social reform, and the many shortcomings in this field in his work *The White Tiger*. Several

---

wrongdoings in Indian society and democracy are highlighted in the book. This book expertly combines sociological research on India's poverty and suffering with comedic and sarcastic elements to draw attention to the nation's religious, social, and political tensions. The goal of this article is to provide a critical evaluation of the novel's political and social interventions.

### **Objectives**

The main objectives of the study are

- To critically analyze Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* as a representation of India's social realities, exploring how the novel portrays the complexities of poverty, corruption, and social inequality.
- To examine how Adiga's satire serves as a commentary on the failures of India's social and economic systems, highlighting the need for critical self-reflection and reform.
- To investigate how *The White Tiger* challenges dominant discourses on India's economic development and national identity and to explore the implications of this challenge.
- To Analyze the narrative techniques employed by Adiga to portray the experiences of marginalized voices in India and evaluate the effectiveness of these techniques in conveying social commentary.

### **Research Method**

A qualitative research technique, content analysis, was chosen for this research paper since most of the data was drawn from a secondary source, the novel of Aravind Adiga.

### **Discussion**

Balram Halwai, the protagonist of *The White Tiger*, goes through a range of human feelings, from hopelessness to suppression and all in between. The author exposes the reality behind the portrayal of India by concentrating on a negative perception of the country. India, in Adiga's opinion, is a culture characterized by widespread slavery and tyranny; a man's circumstances in India force him to rationalize his illegal acts due to the lack of prospects for advancement for those born into poverty. India deals with most of the problems Adiga brings out in this piece. The problem is that his studies have a detrimental impact on India, exacerbating existing issues to the point that they seem to dominate Indian society. The narrative depicts the current international order as a new system that has yet to be achieved, even though it takes place now and features China and India competing to become new world leaders. In the middle of all this rivalry to become a global power, India must remember to reevaluate its policies to improve the lives of its people.

Salary increases have been made, and they are tiny but visible. This fundamental idea is the center of the novel. He wrote this book as his debut. Regarding Ram Bhavan Yadav, "in an angry young man mode," Arvind Adiga

---

depicts these undesirable aspects of India in his book *The White Tiger*, which provides insight into the counter-side of corruption in the country and what is occurring right now. People who are unfortunate enough to live in tents covered in blue tarps are forced to build homes for the rich and poor. Even while a new system has emerged, the old one persists as we go into the next century. Beyond the caste system, prostitution, poverty, and domestic abuse that modern Indian women face, this book deftly sheds light on the institutional, political, economic, and social climate of modern India. In a vulgar and degrading style, the book reveals how society's religious standards are deteriorating.

The author intends to write this book to contrast the "light" palaces of the strong and wealthy with the "dark" atmosphere of India's oppressed and impoverished people. This book does an excellent job of contrasting the India of Light with India's darker side. India- the Land of Light- quickly catches up to China as an entrepreneurial superpower in many important respects, including healthcare, education, transportation, power, water, hope, and justice. Among India's various achievements are space travel, property development, yoga, meditation, tourism, urbanization, and mall culture. In contrast to the destitute India of Darkness, Delhi is hailed as India's Young America. Providing the voiceless with a significant narrative agency is central to the book's mission of providing them with a social platform. Balram Halwai, the son of rickshaw drivers, is the narrative's protagonist. Becoming Ashok Sharma, a confectioner, is his life's job. He establishes the foundation for the lower class's development via his shift from Munna to Balram Halwai, White Tiger, and Ashok Sharma.

The protagonist Balram Halwai, was a Bihari servant. The story revolves around his journey from the little Bihari town of Laxmangarh to the bustling IT city of Bangalore. Despite his humble origins, Balram was an exceptionally bright young man. The financial situation in his family prevented him from completing his degree. Balram was given the honorific "*The White Tiger*" by a school inspector who noticed his extraordinary intelligence. Balram, a Delhi native, was hired as a driver by the crooked businessman Ashok. Balram finally snapped after years of mistreatment at the hands of his master Ashok and his family; as a result, he developed a terrible entrepreneurial spirit. Even though it was embarrassing for them, Ashok and his family continued to show him fake affection and keep him near. Once, a kid was murdered by Ashok's wife, Pinky, because she was driving while drunk. When authorities wanted Balram to sign a statement claiming culpability for the child's death while driving, he was framed for murder. Balram caved to these demands, murdered his employer, and absconded with his riches, intending to bribe a politician.

Servant Balram Halwai hails from Bihar and is the main character in Adiga's story. From the peaceful Bihari village of Laxmangarh to the bustling Indian metropolis of Bangalore, he recounts his trip in great detail. He tells the Chinese

---

Premier, who is telling the story, everything he did. The bright but impoverished young man whose family had to forego further education is fondly known as "*The White Tiger*" by one school inspector. By day's end, he's chauffeuring around Delhi for the sleazy businessman Ashok. After Balram endures several humiliations at the hands of his master and family, he sets out on a sinister path in business. He is eager to embarrass his master whenever he gets the chance, even if his master seems worried. In addition, Balram was required to submit a statement admitting that he had killed a kid while driving due to his incarceration on murder charges. In reality, Pinky Ashok's wife was responsible for the drunken stage mishap that killed a kid. His master's murder and the subsequent theft of bribe money meant for a politician were his responses to these demands. While "traditional India" is based on principles, Balram's "modern rising and shining India" is poles apart.

Overall, ancient India had a great variety of castes and destinies. Nowadays, males may be broadly classified into two categories: those with large bellies and those without. Just two things may happen: eating or being eaten. As a result of economic inequality, the wealth gap widens, and the poor fall further into poverty. As a result of Balram's recent power transfer, the phrase "master like servant" is appropriate. As he indulges in red light zones and brothels to slake his long-simmering enmity for the upper class, he absorbs Ashok's vulgarity and pleasure-loving attitude. It seems like he's stuck in a never-ending cycle of failure. His entrepreneurial career was launched when he started a cab service in Bangalore. The author makes a convincing argument that the protagonist shares mental traits with the imposing and memorable White Tiger. India may have the best democracy in the world, but its poorest citizens are just as helpless as Balram, the societal menace who aspires to be the novel. Because of their helplessness, they are utterly vulnerable. Despite the country's economic prosperity, poverty in India is the central theme of Adiga's works. Political freedom is minimal, especially in Bihar. Adiga paints a realistic depiction of election season, the breakdown of India's electoral system, and the political impact on impoverished Indians. The stork has collected fingerprints of every young person, regardless of age, and plans to sell them to political candidates for a hefty sum. After the election, low-income people will work for this social activist to improve their lives. Still, politicians are notoriously cruel, so they must settle with "mutton biryani" served on paper plates. According to urban mythology, a bank account in some picturesque European nation populated by white people and dark money was established by the Great Socialist after he stole one billion rupees from the Darkness.

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga claims he is the best Indian writer to ever write in English, and many agree. He wrote sympathetically about the plight of India's impoverished and was politically committed. Adiga aimed to show the complex, violent, and sometimes contradictory consequences of British colonial control in the novel by going beyond the intended start of the "natives" and concentrating on the

---

many facets of Indian culture. The mundane, everyday lives of non-royal Indians were his preferred subject. Since the publication of the novel, Adiga has been linked to the school of thought that holds that the novel's true value lies in exploring societal, political, and personal topics. Through his literary works, Adiga sent a message on the reality of contemporary life by examining the realities of individuals' experiences. Despite India's thriving economy, Adiga's story shows the stark wealth disparity.

According to Prasannarajan's assessment in *India Today*, the author deftly weaves together the sociology of the desolate environment in which he resides and the twisted humanity of the social pariah in his first novel. He paints a postcolonial India free of the wealthy and downtrodden with scatological clarity and impartiality. In this other India, where Bangalore is based in Bihar, the story explores the ethical dilemmas of power and survival. Balram's optimism for a better life "tomorrow" may resonate with many impoverished Indians. His tragic tale represents modern India and its terrifying twists and turns. He has a remarkable knack for rationalizing his actions, and he's also a successful entrepreneur and escaped felon. Crime, injustice, and poverty are the norms in which he works. More violent crime and social unrest have occurred as a result of the widening income disparity. Adiga claims that the economic system allows the wealthy to become wealthier while the poor get poorer and that this disparity will only grow.

Like farmers who work for their landowners, those living in poverty are enslaved. Adiga is a trailblazer in Indian literature published in English; he builds his characters with great care. Without a doubt, he embodies the pinnacle of Indian-English literature. Modern Indian society is the cornerstone of Adiga's main emphasis. The socioeconomic disparity in India is the key theme, and his characters stand in for current social trends in the nation. Untouchability, caste inequality, and social injustice are all things he embodies. When he speaks about human nature and social challenges, he retains an even keel and avoids prejudice because he is the greatest realist ever. The distinctive stew of a man's existence is worry, despair, wrath, helplessness, and protest, and Adiga depicts all those feelings.

The life of a typical Indian is complicated and multi-faceted, with many interwoven elements. One such layer that has enormous relevance for him is poverty. As a metaphor for the prevalent and easy corruption in Adiga's realistic society, Balram learns to drive quickly. He takes a job as a chauffeur for Ashok, the local landowner's son, who was introduced to Western culture by the stork. He goes to Delhi when Ashok and Pinky Madam are with him. During his stay in Delhi, Balram sees the government and culture of India in their corrupt form. He can see that Ashok's family bribed legislators in government and that national elections were rigged. The minister wants more, says Ashok's brother Mukesh. We are going to start voting soon. We contribute to every election. While it's customary for both parties to emerge triumphant, the administration will undoubtedly win this time. Among the opponents,

---

there is absolute chaos. Paying the government is all that we require, which is a relief. When comparing New Delhi's elite to its poor, the discrepancy in income becomes much more evident. "Your Excellency, please understand that India is two countries in one: an India of light and an India of darkness," says Balram. Because of the expansion of India's modern global economy, Ashok, Pinky Madam, and Balram have ended up in Gurgaon due to globalization. In Ashok's words, the place has transformed into a "modernist suburb of Delhi" because of this. Shopping centers border the main road, and guess what? Each one of them has an inside theater! How cool is that? Here, you will find the activities of major American companies such as Microsoft and American Express. So, if Pinky Madam missed America, this was the perfect place to take her. "The way things are changing in India now, this place is going to be like America in ten years," Ashok says, expressing his unshakeable confidence that India is rapidly surpassing the United States. "There are so many more things I could do here than in New York now."

Balram has also seen rapid progress. As young people from rural areas are drawn to cities with ambitious dreams, they are devastated when they lose touch with their families, their innocence is shattered, and they are led down a path of corruption. The novel captures their hopes, disappointments, emotions, and pent-up rage and hatred as this rapid urbanization crushes them. One hidden fantasy of a billion enslaved people is to murder their master. "Something new in India, a stirring, a glimmer of refusal by the poor to accept the fate ordained for them by their master." Nevertheless, the present social order remains, with the impoverished working perpetually as enslaved people to provide for the comfort of the well-off in roles such as cooking, cleaning, driving, nannying, and mailing.

American and British aristocrats without servants, says Balram, have no concept of living well. A letter he sent to China's leader states, "Now I say they took me on as their 'driver.'" This starkly contrasts his own country of India, where the well-to-do never hire servants—not even in the dark. Servants are all they possess. In the moments when I claim not to have been operating the vehicle, I was either brewing tea, clearing the courtyard floor of cobwebs, chasing a cow off the property, or any combination of the above. Balram should also provide human-like care for his master's two Pomeranians, "Cuddle and Puddle." Cleansing, massaging, and drying them are all part of this process. As the protagonist shows his master and wife around several malls and call centers, he can't help but take note of all the money and chances he sees. "We have left the villages, but the masters still own us - body, soul, and arse," he thinks, his heart longing to join the glamorous Indian elite. There is no freedom for Balram in India; his master always enslaves him. Somehow, a rooster escaped from its coop! Someone snatched my collar and hauled me back into the coop. He wishes to "experience what it means not to be a servant" for a little while. Since he is willing to go to jail for Pinky Madam's hit-and-run, he is also a prisoner of the rooster

## Research Journal Of English (RJOE)

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal Impact Factor: 8.16(SJIF)Vol-9, Issue-4(Oct-Dec),2024  
Indexed in: International Citation Indexing (ICI), Cite factor, International Scientific Indexing (ISI),  
Directory of Research Journal Indexing (DRJI) Google Scholar, Cosmos and Internet Archives.

coop. No matter how severely his bosses punish him for their wrongdoing, he never considers taking matters into his own hands. He will do everything requested of him as slavery runs in his family. When Ashok scolds him for acting as if he were massaging his feet, he is taken aback by the realization of how obedient he has become. He cannot move from his current location. It is at this moment that he considers murdering Ashok for the first time; he has never before had the chance to be himself and his own master. When Mukesh sir has him do the hit-and-run task, his loyalty to his master starts to wane.

Balam goes from being a "naïve village lad into a citified fellow brimming with debauchery, depravity, and wickedness" due to the consequences of urbanization. No shame or guilt creeps into his heart as he plots to betray his master. Despite growing awareness of what he has been through, he feels fury rather than regret as he strives to adopt his master's way of life. His first violation involves selling empty whiskey bottles; after that, he utilizes the car as a free-lance cab and sells petrol. Balam murders Ashok upon witnessing the prostitutes and then flees to Bangalore with seven million rupees. A lot of bad people in the city have met him. His moral degeneration, he says, is all his master's fault. These changes, he claims, were first seen in Ashok. He asks, "How can the driver remain innocent when the master of Honda City becomes corrupt?". "He had been a dedicated servant of an honest man, but he too fell from favor when Ashok did. "Your heart has become even blacker than that, Munna" is only one example of how Balam struggles with shame within. Towards the conclusion, he begins formulating a strategy to flee the Rooster coop. From a decent servant, he becomes a terrible murderer. After brutally beating his employer to death, he steals 700,000 rupees and flees the scene. In Bangalore, a new chapter of his life has started. The most important aspect of every business is outsourcing, which he learned about. The idea of a cab service is born in his mind. He pays a police commissioner to cover his expenses while his two children attend college in the US under the alias Ashok Sharma.

Balam is now in a position to start his own cab company. With sixteen drivers and twenty-six trucks, his "start-up business" rapidly grew into a major corporation. He finds tremendous success as an "entrepreneur" in the burgeoning digital culture of India. He contends in his letter that millions of businesses call India home despite the country's lack of basic infrastructure like public transit, sewage systems, power, and running water. There are thousands upon thousands of homeless persons in Delhi alone. Under the bridges and overpasses, they live like wildlife, scavenging for firewood, washing their hair, and picking out lice while car engines thunder past. Their fragile bodies and filthy faces are telltale signs of this.

Problems with housing shortages, insufficient healthcare, and outdated infrastructure have emerged due to the country's congested big cities' inability to handle the inflow of people. The growth in crimes and murders committed by servants

---

against their owners, the brutal treatment of old parents and enslaved people, and the sight of beggars of all ages at traffic lights are all signs of the moral rot that has set in urban life, which is founded on money. In Adiga's view, low-income people must not be ignored or sidelined because they are important to India's story of progress. Balram represents the impoverished people's conscience; he is furious, angry, helpless, and protesting.

The murder of Ashok exemplifies the subordinate class's deep discontent with the severe social stratification that exists in society. The main character's transformation from Munna to Balram Halwai to White Tiger to Ashok Sharma represents the rise of the lower class. People living in poverty are stereotyped as being savages or even spiders. They are labeled "half-baked" because they cannot continue their schooling. The rich exploit the poor for their benefit. The oppressed are enslaved, and their voices are suppressed. They do not get equal privileges or opportunities. Because of this, they will never be happy or get their fair compensation. Because they are mentally constrained, the wealthy wander from morality and ultimately abandon their moral responsibilities.

### **Conclusion**

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* offers a scathing critique of India's social realities, exposing the darker aspects of poverty, corruption, and social inequality. Through Balram Halwai's narrative, Adiga masterfully unravels the complexities of India's societal fabric, revealing the deep-seated contradictions and paradoxes that underlie its economic rise. This study has demonstrated that the novel is a powerful commentary on the failures of India's social and financial systems, highlighting the need for critical self-reflection and reform. The novel underscores the urgent need to address contemporary India's stark wealth disparities, social injustices, and moral decay. Balram's transformation from a subservient driver to a successful entrepreneur serves as a testament to the resilience and resourcefulness of India's marginalized communities. However, it also highlights the dangers of unchecked ambition and the erosion of moral values in pursuing success. Ultimately, it challenges readers to confront the harsh realities of India's societal landscape, urging them to reevaluate their assumptions about the country's development and national identity. As a work of satire, the novel offers a nuanced and thought-provoking critique of India's social realities, which resonates with relevance in today's globalized world.

### **References**

- Adiga, A. (2008). *The White Tiger*. Atlantic Books.  
Ghosh, S. (2015). "Unmasking India: A Critical Analysis of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* ." *Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(1), 1–12. (JSTOR).  
Jain, P. (2017). "Exploring the Dark Side of India's Economic Rise: A Critical



## Research Journal Of English (RJOE)

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal Impact Factor: 8.16(SJIF)Vol-9, Issue-4(Oct-Dec),2024  
Indexed in: International Citation Indexing (ICI), Cite factor, International Scientific Indexing (ISI),  
Directory of Research Journal Indexing (DRJI) Google Scholar, Cosmos and Internet Archives.

---

Analysis of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* ." (MA Thesis). University of Delhi.

Kumar, A. (2010). "*The White Tiger: A Study of India's Social and Economic Reality*." *Journal of Literary Studies*, 6(2), 151–164.

Mishra, P. (2014). *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia*. Penguin Books.

Nandy, A. (2007). *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*. Oxford University Press.

Rao, K. (2013). "*The White Tiger: A Critique of Neoliberalism in India*." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 48(25), 63–71. (EBSCO).

Singh, R. (2012). "Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger: A Postcolonial Perspective*." *International Journal of English and Literature*, 3(1), 1–9.

"Aravind Adiga: *The White Tiger* ." *The Guardian*. (2008).

"*The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga: Review." *The Telegraph*. (2008).

### How to cite this article?

**Dr. Y. Praveen Kumar,** "Unmasking India's Social Realities: A Critical Analysis Of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* " *Research Journal Of English (RJOE)*9(3),PP:175-183,2024, DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2024.9.4.183