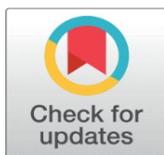
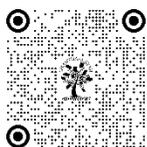


# POWER, CORRUPTION, AND THE INDIVIDUAL: THEMES IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S THE WHITE TIGER

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## ABSTRACT

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* is a literary work of art that deals with power, corruption, and the individual struggle for self in modern India. Adiga was born of his background in journalism and literature; for instance, this novel brings out the protagonist, Balram Halwai; whose journey from subjugation to rebellion serves as a pivot point to dissect India's changing socio-economic landscape.

The article examines Adiga's background, influences and the context in which he wrote "The White Tiger." Adiga is an astute observer of societal nuances, thanks to his blending journalistic insight with scholarly understanding.

A detailed description of the plot and characters forms the basis for a more profound exploration of its thematic design. Power structures within Indian society are explained and analysed along with these themes: complex rich poor links and search for freedom by the central character. The conversion of Balram as a submissive driver into an insurgent person serves as a powerful tool for critiquing corruption in various dimensions of Indian society by Adiga.

Adiga employs symbolic elements and imagery which include the use of rooster coop metaphor, darkness and light motifs or animals' symbolism to convey the overall themes of the novel. By comparing it to other literary works and real world situations, it is possible to see how this novel stands apart from other literary works dealing with similar themes but in a different way.

Thus, *The White Tiger* is an influential work whose themes of power, corruption and individual struggle resonate far beyond the bounds of India. It is Adiga's narrative genius combined with his keen socio-political observations which make the book ever relevant for provoking thoughts about intricacies of societal structures and how they interrelate with the continual search for autonomy and justice.

**Keywords:** Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger*, Power Dynamics, Corruption, Individual Struggle, Socio-Economic Backdrop, Balram Halwai, Symbolism, Imagery, Rooster Coop Metaphor, Darkness and Light Motif, Comparative Analysis, Unique Perspective, Enduring Relevance

## 1. INTRODUCTION

An Indian writer of considerable acclaim, Aravind Adiga burst into the literary world with his first book, *The White Tiger*. Born in Chennai, India, Adiga combines a background in journalism and literature to weave this novel into a poignant and brutal account of modern India. The white tiger was first published in 2008 and is set in a fast-changing India where economic disparities collide with societal norms to produce an elaborate narrative which interweaves themes of power, corruption and individual relentless search for self-rule.

The story has been narrated through the eyes of Balram Halwai, a driver who is also the main character in the book and takes readers through the journey from servitude to defiance where he finally becomes free. We are thus taken on a literary odyssey through "The White Tiger" that exposes not only power dynamics at play in a stratified society but also reveals deep-seated corruption within such societies. In this respect, Adiga uses Balram's personal voyage to invite

readers into accepting some truths about power structure, social injustice and the far reaching consequences of personal decisions.

This article is going to be moving through the complex nuances of Adiga's narrative, it will break down the layers that make *The White Tiger* an emotional discussion about power, corruption, and unending struggle of individuals. By analyzing his characters, settings and other narrative techniques employed by Adiga in this novel, we shall be able to demystify this thematic tapestry and put it in a wider context so as to reveal the universality of its messages and the impact it has had on literary world. We move along with whilst we traverse the harsh streets of India today, passing by so many realities which exist beyond any set boundaries.

The trip taken by Aravind Adiga as a writer can be traced back to a multicultural background which represents personal experiences and keen awareness about contemporary India's socio-political environment. Aravind Adiga was born in Chennai, India on October 23rd 1974; this was at a time when he was influenced by different cultures and deep intellectual explorations. The family he grew in was characterized by mixing traditional values alongside academic pursuits hence shaping his viewpoints.

Adiga's educational journey took him to some renowned learning institutions such as Columbia University in New York City where he studied English literature and journalism. These academic endeavours laid the foundation for his later career as a journalist, giving him a nuanced understanding of history and the power of words to shape ideas

Before launching his career as a novelist, Adiga appeared as a journalist, contributing articles to leading publications such as *Time Magazine*, *The Financial Times* and *The Independent* were, which would later appear in his novels in "*The White Tiger*," Adiga's first novel, appeared at a time when India was undergoing major economic and social changes. Published in 2008, the novel captures the essence of this phase of change, marked by rapid economic growth and persistent socio-economic disparities that Adiga observed closely as a journalist adding to his education prepared him to go and explained the challenges of a changing India

Since the books of literary heroes like Salman Rushdie got the attention of V.S. Naipaul, Adiga's writing displays a blend of narrative skill and commitment to unearth the hidden side of society. The socioeconomic differences and tensions between tradition and modernity depicted in "*White Tooth*" can be traced to the influence of these literary predecessors who, in their own ways, followed colonialism the complexities of personality and social development.

Specifically, Arvind Adiga's background as a journalist, his academic work and the influence of prominent literary figures combined to produce "*White Tooth*," a novel that testifies to Adiga's ability to capture the essence of a changing India it will be a thought-provoking story.

Arvind Adiga's "*The White Tiger*" is a moving novel that explores the complexities of Indian society, focusing on power, greed and personal control The story is told by Balram Halwai, a small village in rural India, who rises from the life of a slave into challenging oppressive social structures.

## 2. PLOT SUMMARY

The novel begins with Balram's letter to the Chinese premier, describing his life as a way of explaining why he is a "white tiger" — a rare and unique creature that appears only once in one generation. Despite being brilliant and ambitious, Balrama faces structural obstacles that prevent him from realizing his full potential.

Balram's life changes drastically when he drives a wealthy and influential house owner named Saras, later the brilliant Ashok and his wife Pinky Madam Through his experiences as a driver, Balram realizes the corruption of Indians class system and he faces a huge gap between the rich and the poor

When an incident forces Balrama to take matters into his own hands, the story takes a dark turn. Driven by growing desperation driven by a desire to be free, he makes a heartbreaking decision that sets him on a path of rebellion against the oppressive forces that have determined his life

## 3. KEY CHARACTERS

- 1) **Balram Halwai:** Balram, the protagonist and narrator, undergoes a dramatic transformation from a humble driver to a shrewd and ambitious challenger to the status quo.

- 2) **The Stork:** Balram is hired as a driver by a ruthless village lord who initially epitomizes the oppressive and exploitative nature of traditional Indian aristocracy.
- 3) **Ashok Sharma:** An affluent and educated man who hires Balram as his driver in Delhi. He represents a new face of India that appears to be modern but also immersed in the corruption and moralization process that Balram wants to escape.
- 4) **Pinky Madam:** Ashok's wife, who inadvertently instigates Balram's rebellion. His actions and decisions play an important role in the unfolding of the story.

#### 4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS

"The White Tiger" is set against the backdrop of rapidly changing India in the 21st century, marked by economic growth and urbanization. The novel vividly illustrates the stark contrast between densely populated and prosperous cities and poor rural villages. Critical of deeply entrenched social hierarchies, Adiga explores how caste, class and corruption intersect and exploit the majority for the benefit of a privileged few.

The cultural milieu is portrayed through the lens of Balram, giving readers a glimpse into the traditional values, superstitions and social expectations that shape the behaviour of the characters. As Balram navigates the complexities of rural and urban, the novel becomes a commentary on the collision of tradition and modernity in contemporary India

"The White Tiger" acts as a powerful examination of the harsh realities of India's socio-economic and cultural fabric, prompting readers to confront uncomfortable truths about the waste of power and the individual the struggle for independence in a complex layered society.

#### 5. PORTRAYAL OF POWER STRUCTURES

"The White Tiger" examines the complex and often rigid power structures that define Indian society, highlighting the stark disparity between rich and poor. The story explores traditional caste-based hierarchies and an emerging economic gap fuelled by a rapidly modernizing India

Central to the novel is the expression of power as a pervasive force that penetrates the fabric of everyday life. Traditional power dynamics are exemplified with homeowners like Sarasa who do not question their rights and whose exploitation among the lower classes is justified. The novel also reveals the urbanized power structure, somewhere with economic success and political influence playing an important role in determining their social status.

#### 6. RICH-POOR RELATIONSHIP AND THE PROTAGONIST'S JOURNEY

The protagonist of the novel, Balram Halwai, is a mirror for exploring the complexities between the rich and the poor. Originally put down as humbling as a driver, Balram's journey becomes a metaphor for a wider struggle the disenfranchised promise to break the chains of oppression

Balram's interactions with his bosses like the dog, later Ashok, and Madam Pinky reveal the dehumanizing effects of traditional power structures. Rich people hold power without any accountability, and provide consumption the cycle that Balram becomes increasingly aware of as he moves through the puzzle continues slavery. As Balram transforms from a humble honest driver to a resourceful and rebellious individual, the dynamics of the narrative shift and his rebellion is not only against his individual oppressors but against the system which drives the poor set aside and use the whole. Balram's decision to defy societal norms and control his own destiny becomes a powerful commentary on the role of the individual in the face of conventional power structures

The relationship between Balram and the rich unfolds as a complex network of trust and exploitation. While Balram relies on his employers for a living, the rich rely on the enslavement of people like them to maintain their lavish lifestyle. Adiga skilfully conveys the interactive but inherently imperfect nature of this relationship.

The symptom of Balram's rebellion is his rejection of the humble role that society has assigned to him. His journey from slavery to rebellion is one of sweeping social change, challenging accepted norms and redefining the power dynamics that have perpetuated inequality for generations. Through Balram's narrative, Adiga encourages readers to question not only existing power structures but also the power of individual sovereignty to disrupt and reshape these structures in pursuit of a more just and equitable society.

## 7. DEPICTION OF CORRUPTION IN INDIAN SOCIETY

"The White Tiger" offers a searing critique of corruption in various aspects of Indian life, emphasizing the widespread impact in rural and urban areas. Arvind Adiga examines corruption not only as a moral failing but as a systemic issue that is deeply embedded in the socio-political fabric of the country.

- **Corruption in politics**

The novel highlights the pervasiveness of corruption in politics. Political figures, bureaucrats and legislators are portrayed as complicit in corruption, establishing a system where power and wealth will be concentrated in the hands of a select few. Adiga's portrayal suggests that corruption in politics does not necessarily hinder national development not only a way but a means of maintaining the status quo and protecting the interests of elites.

- **Corporate Corruption**

The emerging corporate sector in India is not immune to corruption. The novel highlights unfair practices in the business world, where powerful individuals use their positions for personal gain. The character of Ashok Sharma, Balram's boss, portrays a morally compromised elite who indulges in corrupt practices without facing necessary consequences.

- **Corruption in traditional power structures**

The traditional power structures represented by landlords in the countryside are portrayed as corrupt institutions that exploit the labour and resources of the lower classes. The Stork, is the corruption of landlords and in peasant relations, where exploitation is justified

## 8. IMPACT OF CORRUPTION ON INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES, AND INSTITUTIONS

"The White Tiger" paints a damning picture of corruption as a cancerous force that corrodes the foundations of Indian society. Adiga's narrative invites readers to reflect on the far-reaching consequences of corruption, not only on the lives of individuals like Balram but on the collective destiny of communities and the integrity of institutions in a nation at the crossroads of tradition and modernity.

- **Individuals**

Corruption exerts a profound impact on the lives of people inside the novel. Balram, as the protagonist, witnesses the dehumanizing consequences of corruption firsthand. His initial obedience and servitude in a corrupt system are met with a developing cognizance of the injustices perpetrated towards him. The novel shows that corruption erodes the moral material of individuals, leading to moral compromises and the lack of empathy.

- **Communities**

The portrayal of communities in "The White Tiger" highlights their struggles with systemic corruption. In rural areas such as Laxmangarh, poverty and exploitation run rampant due to the corrupt actions of landlords. Meanwhile, in the urban setting, the stark contrast between the lavish living of the wealthy and the dire conditions faced by the less fortunate further underscores the damaging effects of corruption on society.

- **Institutions**

The novel depicts institutions as facilitators of corruption, be it in the political, corporate, or social spheres. It illuminates how corrupt tendencies have seeped into the very fabric of these institutions, undermining their capacity to promote the common good. The absence of responsibility and openness within these systems perpetuates a vicious cycle of corruption, obstructing sincere efforts towards progress and social equality.

## 9. THE INDIVIDUAL'S STRUGGLE AGAINST SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION

In "The White Tiger," Aravind Adiga eloquently explores the theme of a person's daunting fight against the entrenched oppressive systems of Indian society. Through his artful storytelling, Adiga skilfully depicts the multifaceted nature of this struggle and highlights the immense hurdles that individuals must overcome in order to escape the constrictions of a deeply unequal and prejudiced system.

- **Caste and class barriers**

The novel explores how caste and class act as formidable barriers, restricting individuals to predetermined roles and limiting opportunities for advancement. Belonging to a lower caste, Balram is trapped in social expectations that define his servitude and marginalize him.

- **Economic Exploitation**

Economic exploitation is common in personal struggles. Balram's journey as a driver he encounters a huge economic disparity between rich and poor. The economic exploitation experienced by individuals like Balram is not only a consequence of their socio-economic status, but also of a corrupt system that thrives on subjugating the powerless.

- **Educational Inequity**

Adiga sheds light on the pervasive educational disparities, shedding light on the fact that marginalized individuals are unable to attain high-quality education. This unfortunate reality perpetuates the cycle of dominance, limiting opportunities for individuals to challenge and better their lives.

## 10. PROTAGONIST'S QUEST FOR AGENCY AND SELF-EMPOWERMENT

"The White Tiger" depicts an individual's struggle against systemic oppression as an intense and multifaceted battle. Through Balram's transformative journey, Adiga offers a poignant insight into the resilience of the human spirit in the face of life's constraints, urging readers to consider the critical importance of agency, power of self-sufficiency, and of the quest for freedom in the fight against systems of oppression.

- **Transformation of Balram**

Balram's evolution from a humble, obedient driver to a calculating and courageous individual symbolizes independence and the quest for personal empowerment. His journey has brought to greater awareness the oppressive forces that mean he lives. This insight is the catalyst that drives Balram to rebel against the social norms that have held him back.

- **Act of Defiance**

The turning point of the novel is when Balram takes matters into his own hands, performing a morally ambiguous act which is a strong affirmation of his office This act of defiance is not a personal rebellion merely but a broad description of how far one must go to release oneself from the chains of organized oppression.

- **Quest for Personal Freedom**

Balram's quest for agency is linked to his quest for personal freedom. Her hope of escaping the predestined fate assigned to her by society is a powerful metaphor for the oppressed's broader aspirations for independence and self-determination It represents a person whose rarely rising above circumstances the "White Tiger" metaphor encompasses Balram's relentless pursuit of self-empowerment

- **Critique of Societal Expectations**

In his compelling novel, "The White Tiger," Adiga boldly critiques the suffocating confines of societal expectations. Through the rebellious journey of protagonist Balram, he dismantles the rigid roles enforced by caste, class, and economic status. Adiga invites readers to question the validity of a system that strips agency from the marginalized and compels them to challenge the norms perpetuating oppression. Balram's story is more than just a tale; it serves as a powerful catalyst for societal reflection and change.

## 11. BALRAM HALWAI

- **Role in Power Dynamics**

As protagonist and narrator, Balram Halwai serves as a lens through which readers examine the ongoing power dynamics of the novel. Originally a subordinate driver, Balram's transformation into a cunning individual rebel is central to the narrative's quest for power with the actions challenging established norms and upsetting traditional power structures that coerce people who they come down to the ground.

- **Ethical challenges**

Balram grapples with ethical dilemmas throughout the novel. His quick obedience to authority and compliance with social expectations contrasts with his growing awareness of the corruption and exploitation of the system posing an ethical dilemma for the readers. The turning point comes with his decision to he'll take matters into his own hands — an act of rebellion against a corrupt system

- **Motivations for corruption**

Balram's motivation is largely based on his desire for personal freedom and independence. His revolt against corruption is motivated by his acute awareness of the injustice he faces and his refusal to accept the predestined fate of a corrupt social order. Balram's actions are driven by a quest for self-empowerment under oppression which has been systematically developed.

## 12. ASHOK SHARMA

- **Role in Power Development**

Ashoka represents the new face of the Indian elite—educated, modern, but immersed in a corrupt dynamic of power. As an employer, Balram symbolizes the younger generation's exposure to persistent systemic corruption. His position in the economic and social hierarchy places him in a special role as both beneficiary and victim of a corrupt system.

- **Ethical challenges**

Ashoka is consumed by moral dilemmas stemming from his family's wealth and exploitation of the lower classes. His inner conflict manifests itself in his attempts to be kind to Balram and at the same time benefit from the oppressive system. Ashoka's moral struggles illustrate the parallel between the pervasiveness of corruption and the difficulties faced by individuals trying to navigate its moral dilemmas

- **Motivations in the Context of Corruption**

Ashoka's motivations are influenced by social expectations, family dynamics, and a sense of oppression. While his actions reflect a desire for greater compassion and satisfaction, they are often distorted by the corrupt environment he works in. His character reflects the conflicts of the privileged but achieves morality way in a corrupt system

## 13. PINKY MADAM

- **Role in Power Development**

Pinky Madame occupies a unique position as a member of the elite, symbolizing the conservative, and often apathetic, wealthy. His decisions and actions influence Balram's trajectory, reflecting the dynamic power of the employer-employee relationship.

- **Ethical challenges**

Pinky Madam faces ethical dilemmas as she wrestles with the consequences of her actions, including the hit-and-run story. His character depicts a moral breakdown as part of a corrupt system, and the story invites readers to question the moral boundaries within which the privileged operate

- **Motivations in the Context of Corruption**

Pinky Madame is driven by the desire to escape responsibilities and maintain her privileged lifestyle. His character is critical of the moral policies of the wealthy to protect themselves from the consequences of corruption. He thus perpetuates the misery of the innocent and becomes a punishment for the corrupt machine.

The roles, moral dilemmas, and motivations of everyone in "The White Tiger" help the novel explore greed and power dynamics. Adiga uses these characters to paint nuanced portraits of a society grappling with structural issues and the complex interactions of individual choices in a corrupt and oppressive environment.

## 14. SYMBOLISM AND IMAGERY IN "THE WHITE TIGER"

- 1) The Rooster Coop:

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The rooster coop serves as a powerful metaphor for the societal structures that constrain individuals. It represents the entrapment of the lower classes in a system that restricts their freedom and agency. The rooster coop embodies the dehumanizing effects of societal expectations and the struggle to break free from oppressive norms.

2) The Darkness and Light Motif:

The recurring motif of darkness and light symbolizes the stark contrast between the privileged and the oppressed. Dark spaces, such as the "Darkness," represent the poverty and despair of the lower classes. In contrast, the well-lit areas signify the affluence and privilege of the elite. This motif reinforces the thematic exploration of societal disparities and corruption.

3) The Stork:

The character of the Stork, Balram's first employer, symbolizes the traditional power structures in rural India. The Stork, a landlord, is predatory and ruthless, embodying the exploitation and oppression faced by the lower classes. The Stork's actions and influence serve as a microcosm of the larger societal issues explored in the novel.

4) The White Tiger:

The white tiger represents the rare individual who breaks free from societal constraints. Balram sees himself as a white tiger, a creature that emerges once in a generation. This symbolism encapsulates Balram's journey from subservience to rebellion and self-empowerment, defying the norms imposed by a corrupt and oppressive system.

5) The Key:

The key that Balram steals from the Stork's apartment represents a literal and metaphorical unlocking of doors. It becomes a tool of liberation, allowing Balram to break free from his predetermined role. The key symbolizes the agency and empowerment sought by individuals trapped in the rooster coop of societal expectations.

6) The Use of Animals:

Animals are recurrent symbols in the novel, each representing a facet of human behavior or societal dynamics. For instance, the buffalo symbolizes the fate of the poor, tethered and burdened, while the Rooster Coop metaphor underscores the collective oppression of individuals. Animals serve as powerful visual and thematic elements that enrich the narrative.

7) The Darkness and Light Motif:

The recurring motif of darkness and light symbolizes the stark contrast between the privileged and the oppressed. Dark spaces, such as the "Darkness," represent the poverty and despair of the lower classes. In contrast, the well-lit areas signify the affluence and privilege of the elite. This motif reinforces the thematic exploration of societal disparities and corruption.

8. The City vs. The Village:

The shift from the rural village of Laxmangarh to the bustling city of Delhi symbolizes the broader transformation occurring in India. The city represents modernity, economic growth, and the allure of success, but it is also a hotbed of corruption and moral compromise. The contrasting settings serve as a backdrop to the exploration of evolving power dynamics and corruption.

Adiga's use of symbolism and imagery is rich and multifaceted. These literary devices enhance the thematic depth of the narrative, allowing readers to engage with the story on multiple levels and decipher the complex interplay of power, corruption, and individual agency. The carefully chosen symbols and imagery contribute to the overall impact of the novel, creating a vivid and resonant portrayal of the societal landscape Adiga seeks to critique and illuminate.

## 15. HIGHLIGHTING THE UNIQUENESS OF ADIGA'S PERSPECTIVE

Aravind Adiga's perspective in "The White Tiger" is wonderful because of his exploration of India's evolving socio-economic panorama. The novel delves into the tensions bobbing up from rapid modernization, the clash between conventional energy structures and rising economic forces, and the nuanced dynamics of the caste gadget. Adiga's use of symbolism, the Rooster Coop metaphor, and the narrative of an person's transformation contribute to the novel's distinctiveness, imparting readers with a concept-frightening exploration of corruption and the quest for organization in the context of contemporary India.

## 16. CONCLUSION

In this in-depth analysis of Arvind Adiga's "The White Tiger," we examined various aspects of the novel, exploring key themes such as power, greed, the individual's struggle for freedom, and the symbolism of it enhances the plot Power forces, corruption in society and the Protagonist's journey has been analyzed in detail

Aravind Adiga's debut novel is a searing critique of present day India, skilfully unravelling the elaborate layers of a society grappling with economic transformation, entrenched corruption, and the profound impact of systemic oppression. The rooster coop metaphor vividly encapsulates the struggles confronted via the decrease instructions, at the same time as characters like Balram, Ashok, and Pinky Madam serve as cars for exploring the ethical dilemmas and motivations within the corrupt power structures.

The symbolism and imagery, from the rooster coop to the key, contribute to the novel's thematic richness, enhancing the reader's understanding of the socio-political landscape Adiga seeks to unravel. The comparative analysis further contextualizes "The White Tiger" within the broader literary and real-world frameworks, highlighting its unique perspective on India's socio-economic dynamics.

"The White Tiger" remains relevant and impactful due to its insightful examination of issues that go beyond cultural and temporal boundaries. The novel's themes of power, corruption, and the individual's struggle resonate globally, inviting readers to reflect on the universal challenges of navigating oppressive systems and the quest for personal agency. As societies continue to tackle with issues of inequality, corruption, and the clash between tradition and modernity, Adiga's work serves as a compelling and enduring exploration of the complexities inherent in the human experience. Through its provocative narrative and distinctive lens, "The White Tiger" continues to offer readers a powerful reflection on the enduring relevance of its themes in the ever-evolving tapestry of the human condition.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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