



Original Article

A Critical Analysis of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

Dr. Ashok N. Borude

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Ahmednagar College, Ahilyanagar, (Maharashtra)

Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2025-020717

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 2
Issue 7
Pp.81-87
July 2025

Submitted: 07 June 2025
Revised: 21 June 2025
Accepted: 11 July 2025
Published: 31 July 2025

Correspondence Address:
Dr. Ashok N. Borude
Assistant Professor,
Department of English,
Ahmednagar College,
Ahilyanagar, (Maharashtra)
Email:
anborude85@gmail.com

Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.17036329

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17036329>



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Abstract

This paper critically examines Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger as a searing social critique of contemporary Indian society. Through the retrospective narration of Balram Halwai, the novel dismantles idealized narratives of India's economic progress, exposing the deeply entrenched realities of class and caste disparity, pervasive corruption, and the ambivalent impact of globalization. The analysis delves into Adiga's use of the "Rooster Coop" metaphor to illuminate systemic oppression and explores Balram's transformation into an antihero, highlighting the moral ambiguities inherent in the desperate pursuit of social mobility. By dissecting the novel's thematic concerns and narrative strategies, this report argues that The White Tiger serves as a powerful, unflinching commentary on the dehumanizing structures and ethical compromises defining "New India." It offers a critical analysis of Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger, arguing that the novel provides a scathing critique of contemporary India's socio-economic and political realities through the protagonist Balram Halwai's journey. The paper examines themes of class division, corruption, and exploitation, and analyzes Balram's transformation from a subaltern to a ruthless entrepreneur as a response to the harsh realities of inequality and a quest for freedom. Through Balram's cynical narrative, Adiga exposes the stark disparities between the rich and the poor, using his story to challenge societal structures and promote social consciousness regarding the plight of the marginalized.

Keywords: Economic Progress, Class and Class Disparity, Corruption, Social Reality, Oppression

Introduction

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, published in 2008, swiftly garnered international acclaim, winning the prestigious 40th Booker Prize in the same year. This immediate recognition cemented its significance in contemporary Indian literature as a novel that offers a "darkly humorous perspective of India's class struggle in a globalized world". The narrative unfolds through the retrospective account of Balram Halwai, a village boy whose journey from poverty to entrepreneurship forms the core of the story.

The novel is widely regarded as a "poignant exploration of social criticism" and a "powerful critique of socio-political realities" prevalent in modern India. Adiga's professional background as a journalist profoundly influences his narrative approach, enabling him to seamlessly integrate real-life observations into his fictional work. This journalistic lens allows for a sharp focus on critical societal issues such as "inequality, corruption, and social injustice", providing a grounded and incisive commentary on the nation's complexities.

The White Tiger is set against the dynamic backdrop of India's rapid economic growth and increasing globalization in the 21st century. This period is frequently characterized by the emergence of India as a "booming economic superpower" on the global stage. However, Adiga meticulously presents a contradictory and often grim reality that challenges this idealized image. He portrays India as a nation "deeply entrenched in poverty, class stratification, and endemic corruption", thereby directly confronting "utopian narratives of economic liberalization" and the prevailing "myth of India's democratic progress".

The novel consciously endeavors to articulate the "unspoken voice of people from the darkness – the impoverished areas of rural India". This perspective is crucial, as it provides an "underdog's" view of the nation's profound socio-economic disparities. By focusing on the experiences of the marginalized, Adiga aims to reveal the often-observed realities beneath the surface of India's celebrated economic ascent.

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How to cite this article:

Borude, A. N. (2025). *Critical Analysis of Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger*. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 2(7), 81–87. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17036329>

The White Tiger functions as a trenchant social critique, meticulously dissecting the systemic inequalities of contemporary India by exposing the pervasive influence of class and caste, the endemic nature of corruption, the exacerbating effects of globalization, and the psychological conditioning that traps the impoverished, ultimately arguing that genuine social mobility often demands a morally compromised, even violent, subversion of the existing order.

The Landscape of Inequality: Class, Caste, and Poverty

1. The Stark Class Divide: "India of Light" vs. "India of Darkness"

Adiga's narrative vividly delineates India as fundamentally bifurcated into "two countries in one: an India of light and an India of darkness". Balram Halwai, the protagonist, originates from this "Darkness," embodying the "colossal underclass" or the "have-nots" who constitute the vast majority of the population. The novel establishes a stark contrast between the "crushing poverty" and pervasive "darkness" of rural India, exemplified by Balram's native Laxmangarh in Gaya district, and the ostentatious "urban wealth" and "excess of metropolitan cities like Delhi".

The impoverished are depicted living in conditions of "abject starvation, poverty", their existence marked by "thin bodies, filthy faces, the animal-like way they live under the huge bridges and overpasses, making fives and washing and taking lice out of their hair while the cars roar past them". Such graphic descriptions underscore the dehumanizing impact of poverty, highlighting the profound chasm that separates the privileged few from the struggling masses in modern India.

2. The Enduring Grip of the Caste System

Despite the formal abolition of caste-based discrimination in India, Adiga's narrative powerfully demonstrates how this deeply entrenched system "continues to influence economic and social mobility". Balram's experiences as a driver in a society where "opportunities are stifled by birthright" serve as a compelling illustration of this persistent reality. The novel delves into the psychological and emotional toll of this hierarchy, portraying how individuals often "internalize their assigned roles, perpetuating a cycle of submission and oppression". This internalization suggests a self-reinforcing mechanism of societal control, where individuals accept their predetermined place.

Balram's initial state of "nonidentity"- lacking a given name or a known birthday- is presented as a subtle challenge to a strict, fate-driven existence. This absence of a fixed identity, paradoxically, hints at a potential for mutability beyond the confines of caste-based destiny. The narrative further juxtaposes traditional caste oppression with the emerging barriers of class, illustrating how these two systems intersect and reinforce each other in contemporary India.

3. Poverty as a Cycle of Exploitation and Misery

The novel vividly portrays the "sufferings, misery, dejection and the exploitation of the downtrodden" within Indian society. The poor are frequently coerced into "bonded labor" and are often "bought off with little money"

by the powerful. A poignant example of this systemic neglect is the death of Balram's father from tuberculosis, with "no doctor to treat him", starkly illustrating the profound lack of basic healthcare services available to the impoverished.

Furthermore, Balram himself is forced to abandon his education to contribute to a cousin's dowry, a situation that underscores how familial obligations and dire economic hardship conspire to trap individuals within an inescapable cycle of poverty. This perpetual state of deprivation is depicted as a dehumanizing force, stripping individuals of their agency and dignity.

Beyond the visible structures of economic and social barriers, the narrative uncovers a profound underlying issue: the social reality depicted is not merely one of external oppression but also one of deeply ingrained psychological conditioning and internalized servitude. The repeated portrayal of "deeply entrenched caste system" and class stratification is amplified by the observation that individuals "internalize their assigned roles, perpetuating a cycle of submission and oppression". This suggests that the "Rooster Coop," a central metaphor in the novel, is "more mental than physical", and that the "underclass have been ingrained with a mentality of servitude, so even if they had the opportunity to escape, they would not". This psychological dimension creates a self-reinforcing mechanism of oppression, where the system sustains itself without the constant need for overt force.

Moreover, while the pervasive caste and class systems are shown to strip individuals of their inherent worth and identity, Balram's initial "nonidentity"- his lack of a given name or birthday- paradoxically grants him a unique form of agency. Although being nameless might imply being nobody, the narrative suggests that this very state "challenges a strict fate through its potential for mutability". This implies that by not being strictly defined by birth, Balram possesses a latent capacity for self-redefinition and rebellion against predetermined societal roles, even if this redefinition ultimately leads to morally ambiguous actions. This suggests that the very dehumanization of the underclass can, in rare instances, foster a radical detachment from societal norms, enabling extreme acts of self-liberation.

The Pervasiveness of Corruption and Systemic Injustice

1. Corruption as the Foundation of Power

In *The White Tiger*, corruption is not merely an isolated incident or an aberration; it is depicted as "endemic" and a "powerful force controlling social and political structures". It is portrayed as "a commonly accepted practice", deeply woven into the fabric of Indian society. The novel illustrates how the wealthy elite, such as the Stork and his sons, engage in "unethical business practices involving bribing officials evading taxes and stealing coal from government mines". Ashok's relocation to Delhi, for instance, is explicitly motivated by the need to "bribe Indian politicians so that his family would avoid paying tax money". Balram, observing his masters, frequently witnesses the exchange of "brown packages" of bribe money, which highlights the open and pervasive nature of this illicit economy. This demonstrates that corruption is not a

deviation but rather a fundamental, self-perpetuating mechanism that underpins the entire social and economic order. It is a cyclical process where the powerful use corruption to maintain their status, and those seeking to escape oppression must, ironically, adopt similar corrupt practices to succeed, implying that the system itself is inherently flawed.

2. Exploitation and the Impunity of the Elite

The novel powerfully exposes how the rich "manipulate legal frameworks and bribe officials to sustain their dominance". A dramatic and pivotal moment illustrating this impunity occurs when Pinky, Ashok's wife, accidentally kills a child while driving under the influence. Instead of facing consequences, the Stork family "coerces Balram into signing a confession endorsed by his grandmother". This incident serves as a critical turning point for Balram, as it forces him to confront the harsh reality that "loyal service to Ashok was no guarantee of a comfortable life once his services were no longer needed". It also lays bare the complete absence of justice for the poor, as the wealthy can simply "bribe people such as police officers with money to cover up murders". The novel critiques "the police's inability to apprehend criminals" among the elite, showcasing a system where power and wealth grant absolute immunity from legal repercussions.

3. Moral Degradation as a Societal Norm

The relentless pursuit of wealth and success in this "cutthroat society" inevitably leads to widespread "moral degradation". Balram, initially possessing a "moral sense," consciously "drops it behind to become successful". Adiga suggests a cynical truth: "to live in the light one needs to be dark or bad", implying that ethical conduct is fundamentally incompatible with upward mobility within this corrupt system. Balram's retrospective narration "does not glorify his actions or achievements but uses his actions to portray how moral ambiguity is a commonly accepted practice". The narrative highlights how "unethical behaviour flourishes after globalization, resulting in moral decline and ethical concessions", painting a picture of a society where integrity is a luxury few can afford.

The pervasive corruption and systemic injustice in Adiga's India lead to a profound erosion of trust and the commodification of human relationships. Balram's forced confession and the betrayal of the family's primary driver vividly illustrate a breakdown of loyalty and human connection. The narrative explicitly states that in this "world of material success, relationships are reduced to commodities and people become indispensable". Balram himself, in his ascent, "betrays the ideals of service, loyalty, and obligation that define one's basic humanity". This societal condition fosters an environment where individuals are constantly in fear of betrayal, and moral values are subordinated to the ruthless pursuit of self-interest. The ultimate consequence is a breakdown of societal cohesion and the creation of a dehumanizing environment for all, where even the most fundamental human bonds are compromised.

Globalization's Dual Impact: Development and Disparity

1. Economic Boom and Westernization

The White Tiger is firmly situated in a period of "rapid economic growth and globalization" in India. The nation is presented as boasting "one of the fastest growing economies" globally. This era of globalization has ushered in a significant degree of "Americanization", transforming Indian cities. Gurgaon, for instance, is depicted as a "modernist suburb of Delhi" replete with offices for "American Express, Microsoft, all the big American companies," and numerous shopping malls. Ashok, Balram's master, even expresses a belief that India is on the verge of "surpassing the US" in terms of opportunities. This influx of "multinational firms, foreign cash, and Western ideas" creates a compelling facade of modernity and boundless opportunity, suggesting a nation on an unstoppable upward trajectory.

2. Exacerbation of Inequality

Despite the outward appearance of an economic boom, globalization is critically portrayed as a "dual force that drives inequality and development at the same time". It is shown to significantly "widen the gap between the rich and the poor". The supposed "fruits/benefits of globalization have not reached the subalterns", leading to pronounced "uneven geographical development" across the country. While the elite, like Ashok and his family, readily enjoy the "conveniences and opportunities" afforded by a globalized world, the impoverished masses remain deeply marginalized. The novel challenges the "utopian promises of neoliberalism", revealing that the celebrated "success" and "development" are often achieved through underlying processes of "violence, crime, and destruction".

This portrayal suggests that globalization is not a universal liberator but a powerful ideological tool that provides a modern veneer and a convenient justification for existing and even intensified exploitation. The rhetoric of "progress" and "opportunity" associated with globalization allows the elite to consolidate wealth and power through unethical means, while simultaneously deflecting attention from the deepening disparities and the moral decay it fosters. This effectively creates a "new India" that is economically booming for a select few but morally bankrupt for many.

3. Identity Crisis and Moral Compromises

Globalization, as depicted in the novel, contributes significantly to an "identity crisis" within Indian society. This crisis arises from the inherent conflict between "traditional Indian beliefs" and the pervasive "Western influences", leading to a situation where "conventional social institutions are crumbling, and cultural values are becoming less relevant". Balram's own trajectory exemplifies this moral erosion; his "recognition of the increasing competition resulting from globalization contributes to his corruption". His transformation from a "meek driver to a crafty businessman" and subsequently from a "subservient driver to a cunning and ruthless businessman" is presented as a metaphor for the "extreme measures individuals resort to succeed in a globalized world". The book eloquently

illustrates how "unethical behaviour flourishes after globalization, resulting in moral decline and ethical concessions", demonstrating the profound ethical cost of navigating this new globalized landscape.

The novel further critiques the idealized "entrepreneurial spirit" often celebrated in a globalized capitalist economy, revealing it as a corrupted ideal in the context of India's social reality. Balram aspires to be an "entrepreneur" from the outset, a goal that aligns with the globalized narrative of self-made success. However, his actual path to entrepreneurship involves murder and bribery. The narrative explicitly states that Balram becomes the "white tiger" not through merit but by exploiting "loopholes of a morally corrupt system". This implies that for the marginalized, true entrepreneurship is not a result of innovation or ethical endeavor but a desperate act of subversion that necessitates engaging in the very corruption and ruthlessness characteristic of the dominant system. Balram's "success" thus becomes a cynical commentary on the impossibility of achieving the "Indian Dream" through ethical means, suggesting that the path to upward mobility is paved with moral compromise and violence.

The Rooster Coop Metaphor: Servitude and the Quest for Freedom

The "Rooster Coop" stands as Balram's central and most potent metaphor, meticulously crafted to describe "the oppression of India's poor". It vividly illustrates a scene where "roosters in a coop at the market watch themselves get slaughtered one by one, but are unable or unwilling to break out of the cage". This analogy encapsulates the essence of the "master-servant social system that is at the core of Indian society", wherein the servant is "perpetually oppressed" while the master continues to enjoy a position of "social and political privilege". The metaphor thus highlights the pervasive "cycle of poverty and oppression that entraps these members of the darkness", underscoring the seemingly inescapable fate of the underclass.

Adiga posits that the poor are "so perfectly conditioned, and so perfectly does the mentality of servitude operate, that there is no need for the secret police". This profound level of psychological conditioning means the "coop" is effectively "guarded from within". The narrative suggests that the "servant spontaneously and unquestioningly accepts his servitude". This deep-seated acceptance is so formidable that, as Balram observes, "you can put the key of emancipation in a man's hand and he will throw it back to you with a curse". This underscores the crucial point that the "rooster coop is more mental than physical", implying that even if genuine opportunities for escape were presented, the ingrained mentality of submission would prevent the majority from seizing them.

Beyond merely illustrating oppression, the Rooster Coop metaphor serves as a profound critique of the societal fatalism and passive acceptance that Adiga argues is deeply ingrained in the Indian underclass. The metaphor explicitly states that the roosters "don't rebel" despite knowing their inevitable fate, which is directly linked to the "mentality of servitude" and the notion that "servants here have been raised to behave the same". This portrayal of internalized submission, rather than solely external

coercion, represents a deeper societal critique. It suggests that the greatest barrier to social mobility is not just external systemic forces but also the internal psychological conditioning that prevents collective rebellion or even individual initiative. This implies that the novel is not just a commentary on exploitation but also a challenge to the cultural norms that perpetuate it, questioning the very nature of "trustworthiness" when it leads to perpetual servitude.

Balram's realization that "only a man who is prepared to see his family destroyed – hunted, beaten, and burned alive by the masters – can break out of the coop" marks a turning point. Such an individual, he concludes, would be a "freak, a pervert of nature". This "freak" is none other than the "classic white tiger – only a white tiger can break out of the coop". Balram's ultimate act of murdering Ashok is presented as his "extreme or desperate act" necessary to break these metaphorical shackles. This violent act is explicitly framed as a "figurative reference to Balram's ability to break out of the coop", thereby fulfilling his destiny as the rare and exceptional White Tiger.

Adiga demonstrates that "freedom" within a fundamentally corrupt and unjust system is not a liberating ideal but a destructive, morally compromising endeavor. Balram's ascent, while breaking the chains of servitude, necessitates a descent into the very ruthlessness and immorality that characterize his former oppressors. His escape is achieved through murder and theft, and the narrative explicitly states that this comes at a price, as Balram "sacrifices his humanity and his compassion". The novel deliberately avoids glorifying his actions, with the narrative suggesting that "viewers are not supposed to feel satisfied" by his outcome, particularly given the strong implication that Balram's family was "probably also killed by Ashok's family in revenge". This suggests that the system is so perverted that true, ethical liberation is impossible, and any escape from the "Darkness" into the "Light" merely transforms the individual into a perpetrator of the same systemic violence, albeit from a position of power. This challenges simplistic notions of "rags-to-riches" narratives and highlights the profound ethical cost of survival in such a society.

Balram Halwai: An Antihero's Journey and Moral Ambiguity

1. Balram as a Product of His Environment and a Voice for the Marginalized

Balram Halwai emerges in *The White Tiger* as a compelling figure: a "poor villager turned successful entrepreneur". His journey involves ascending the socio-economic ladder by not merely navigating but ultimately "subverting, a system designed to keep individuals like him suppressed". He is portrayed as a "quintessential antihero at the intersection of ambition and ethical complexity", embodying the inherent "contradictions inherent in the pursuit of the 'Indian Dream'". Balram's narrative elevates him beyond a simple protagonist; he becomes a powerful "voice for the marginalized, an embodiment of the disillusionment that pervades a rapidly evolving society". Adiga explicitly states that his work endeavors to "capture the perspectives of men encountered in every region of

India, the voices of the oppressed", and Balram serves as the primary conduit for this critical social commentary.

2. Transformation and Moral Compromises

Balram's journey is fundamentally defined by a series of escalating "moral compromises". He begins as a seemingly loyal servant, but his experiences gradually strip away his innocence and integrity. Exposure to the pervasive corruption in Delhi, coupled with being coerced into signing a false confession for Pinky's hit-and-run, transforms him into a cynical and dishonest individual. His transformation from a "meek driver to a crafty businessman" and further into a "subservient driver to a cunning and ruthless businessman" involves illicit activities such as defrauding Ashok and operating the car as an unlicensed taxi. Ultimately, his "personal successes are based around corrupt acts", culminating in the murder of Ashok and the theft of a large sum of bribe money.

Balram's "freedom" is not a genuine liberation from the oppressive system but rather a successful replication of its core mechanisms. His journey is presented as a quest for freedom and an escape from the Rooster Coop. However, his method involves murder and bribery. Once successful, he bribes the police to establish his own business and, while treating his own drivers as employees rather than servants, he acknowledges the grim possibility that his remaining family back home may have been killed in retribution for his actions. The narrative explicitly notes that he becomes "like the Stork," one of "those who cannot be caught in India". This suggests that by adopting the very tactics of corruption, violence, and exploitation that characterized his former masters, Balram merely "switches sides" from the oppressed to the oppressor. This demonstrates a cyclical nature of power and corruption rather than a true societal transformation, implying that the system is so deeply entrenched and morally compromised that even those who break free from its lower echelons are compelled to perpetuate its injustices.

3. Ethical Dilemmas and the Justification of Violence

Balram's actions throughout the novel raise profound "ethical dilemmas" for the reader. The narrative deliberately refrains from glorifying his deeds; instead, it "uses his actions to portray how moral ambiguity is a commonly accepted practice" within the depicted society. His violence is presented not as an act of pure evil but as a desperate, albeit extreme, means to "escape India's Rooster Coop" and achieve a semblance of freedom. The novel suggests that "moral ambiguity is bound to happen in such circumstances" where individuals are "forced by their poor condition to commit immoral acts". The "ambivalence surrounding Balram invites readers to reflect on the implications of their identification with an antihero, challenging them to confront the uncomfortable truths of ambition, power, and moral compromise."

The "White Tiger" is not merely a symbol of individual exceptionalism or freedom, but rather a tragic symbol of systemic failure. Balram is described as a rare phenomenon, born "only once in a century", a "freak, a pervert of nature". While he embodies this uniqueness in his ability to break out of the Rooster Coop, his success is explicitly stated as not being due to merit but to his

exploitation of the "loopholes of a morally corrupt system". His "individualism" is achieved through violent and unethical means. This implies that the system is so rigidly oppressive that it actively prevents ethical upward mobility, forcing the rare individual with the will to escape into a path of violence and corruption. This highlights the system's inherent brutality and its inability to foster genuine, ethical progress, making Balram's unique ascent a condemnation of the societal structure rather than a celebration of individual triumph.

Literary Devices and Narrative Strategy

1. First-Person Epistolary Narrative

The White Tiger is presented entirely from the first-person perspective of Balram Halwai, structured as "a series of letters written over a period of seven nights" addressed to Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. This deliberate narrative choice allows Adiga to effectively capture the "unspoken voice of people from the darkness", providing a raw and unfiltered account of their experiences. The epistolary format lends the narrative a confessional and direct quality, offering "satirical yet realistic account of India's" complex socio-political realities. Furthermore, the "metonymic links between the individual and the nation" enable Balram's deeply personal story to serve as an allegorical representation of the broader narrative of India, reflecting its struggles and transformations.

This choice of a first-person epistolary narrative addressed to the Chinese Premier is a strategic literary device that deconstructs the dominant, often idealized, narratives of India's economic progress and democratic success. By having an "unvoiced" subaltern directly address a representative of another rising global power, Adiga implicitly critiques the Western-centric "success story" narratives and exposes the brutal, often violent, realities obscured by such hegemonic discourses. This narrative choice elevates Balram's personal story to a national and even global commentary, challenging the very definition of "development" and "freedom" in the context of neoliberal capitalism.

2. Dark Humor, Satire, and Irony

Adiga masterfully employs a "darkly humorous perspective" and a "satirical yet realistic account" throughout the novel, which serves to intensify his social critique. Irony is a pervasive element, particularly evident in Balram's cynical observation that "India has never been free" despite gaining independence from the British in 1947. Hyperbole is frequently used for "emphasis or emotional effect", as seen in the exaggerated notion of a "billion servants... secretly fantasizing about strangling their bosses". Sarcasm is also employed effectively to underscore the moral failings of society, for instance, in remarks about businessmen who are "probably here to bribe ministers".

Adiga's masterful use of dark humor, irony, and sarcasm is not merely for comic relief but serves as a crucial tool for intensifying his social critique and creating reader discomfort. By presenting the grim realities of poverty, corruption, and violence with a cynical wit, Adiga forces the reader to confront the absurdity and moral depravity of the system without the emotional distance that overt tragedy might create. This stylistic choice prevents easy moral

judgments and instead compels a deeper, more unsettling reflection on the ethical compromises inherent in the pursuit of survival and success in such a society. Balram's unexpected pride in seeing his own police poster, for instance, is a "surprise ending" that highlights the perversion of values within his world, challenging conventional notions of right and wrong.

3. Symbolism and Imagery

The novel is rich in symbolism and recurring imagery that deepen its social commentary:

- **The White Tiger:** This central symbol represents "power," "freedom," and "individuality". It embodies Balram's unique and rare ability to break free from the "Rooster Coop".
- **Light and Darkness:** This dichotomy vividly represents the stark divide between the affluent and the impoverished, as well as the moral choices faced within the narrative. The "light from the Black fort provides a significant symbol of all that fascinates and appeals Balram", signifying his aspiration for a better life.
- **Red Imagery:** Adiga strategically uses the color red to reflect "the development of this crazed fixation of bribery and corruption". Red appears ubiquitously in Balram's observations, including "red spot, red light, red puddle, red light bulbs, red claws, and the red light district". The "red bag" containing bribe money is a prominent motif.
- **The Chandelier:** This opulent fixture serves as a direct symbol of the master's "corruption" and the "light" they exclusively enjoy, contrasting sharply with the "darkness" experienced by the poor.

4. Social Realism and Documentary Mode

Adiga's narrative approach notably favors the "documentary mode, characteristic of social realism". This stylistic choice distinguishes *The White Tiger* from the magical realist narratives often found in contemporary Indian literature, such as those by Gabriel García Márquez or Salman Rushdie. By adopting social realism, Adiga grounds his critique in a stark, unflinching portrayal of reality. The detailed descriptions of crushing poverty, the squalor of slums, and the "animal-like way" the poor are forced to live under bridges and overpasses all contribute to this profound sense of realism. This approach ensures that the novel's social commentary is perceived as a direct reflection of tangible societal conditions, lending greater weight and urgency to its critique.

Conclusion: *The White Tiger* as a Scathing Critique of "New India"

The White Tiger stands as a powerful and incisive social critique, meticulously dissecting the intricate layers of contemporary Indian society. The novel vividly exposes the stark realities of deep-seated class and caste divisions, demonstrating how these hierarchies perpetuate systemic inequalities. It unflinchingly portrays the pervasive nature of corruption, revealing it not as an anomaly but as a fundamental, accepted practice that underpins power and wealth. Furthermore, the narrative explores the ambivalent and often exacerbating impact of globalization, showing

how economic growth can widen disparities rather than alleviate them. The central "Rooster Coop" metaphor effectively illustrates the psychological and systemic nature of oppression, highlighting how internalized servitude traps the impoverished. Finally, Balram's complex journey as an antihero serves to illuminate the profound moral ambiguities and the violent necessities that can arise in the desperate pursuit of social mobility within a fundamentally rigged system.

Adiga's novel directly "challenges the myth of India's democratic progress" and its "utopian narratives of economic liberalization". It systematically reveals the "underlying hollowness of its so-called economic success", exposing the grim "underside of the economic boom" that is scarred by persistent "poverty, illiteracy, poor health, class/caste division, and deep inequalities, diseases, slums, and corruption". The narrative asserts a profound and unsettling truth: that "India has never been free". This statement implies that the political independence gained in 1947 did not translate into genuine social or economic liberation for the vast majority of its population, who remain entrapped by enduring systems of exploitation and injustice.

The White Tiger maintains profound relevance as a compelling commentary on globalized societies worldwide, particularly where rapid economic growth often coexists with, and indeed exacerbates, deep social inequalities and moral compromises. Adiga's unflinching work encourages readers to "confront uncomfortable truths about India's social fabric" and to critically reflect on the "underlying ethical dilemmas of real-world situations". The novel's "grim yet realistic portrayal" continues to resonate, serving as a powerful and timely reminder of the persistent struggles faced by marginalized communities in their arduous pursuit of liberation and dignity within a rapidly changing and often unforgiving world.

Acknowledgement

I thank authorities of Ahmednagar College for their promotion to undertake this research work. I also thank my colleagues in the department of English for their help and support.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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