



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

[www.vidhyayanaejournal.org](http://www.vidhyayanaejournal.org)

Indexed in: Crossref, ROAD & Google Scholar

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## Major themes in Aravind Adiga's '*The White Tiger*'

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### Abstract

'*The White Tiger*' is an epistolary novel written by Aravind Adiga. '*The White tiger*' is his debut novel and he won the 40<sup>th</sup> Man Booker Prize for this novel in 2008. This novel provides a dark aspect of 'new' India. Balram Halwai, the narrator of the novel, has expressed the lives of poor people of India in a very rational manner. Adiga has shown how poverty has usurped the Indian society where the poor people are dispossessed of their basic rights. The novel also presents the suppression of lower social class/caste by the upper social class/caste. It also depicts man's quest for freedom. Through this novel, the novelist has shown how the marginalized people are usually discriminated on the basis of caste, gender, culture, religion, ethnicity and economy. Balram, the narrator of the story, wishes to leave the 'darkness' so that he could experience the life in the 'light'. Balram represents the voice of lower class/caste which is symbolically depicted as 'rooster coop'. The novelist has also shown how the globalized world has a great impact on India. Throughout the novel, Aravind Adiga has repeatedly laid stress on the fact that in Indian society there is not just an unequal distribution of wealth but of human rights also. This paper attempts to explore the major themes that are presented in the Man Booker Prize winning novel, *The White Tiger*.

**Keywords:** Darkness, Globalization, Rooster Coop, Poverty, Social class/caste

### Introduction

The setting of "*The White Tiger*" is modern day India. The protagonist of the novel, Balram Halwai, is born in a rural village, Laxmangarh, Bihar. He narrates the story of his life to the



Premier of China, Wen Jiabo, in the form of a letter. He describes how he has become a successful entrepreneur by escaping the life of servitude. He starts the novel by reporting his life in Laxmangarh. He says that his grandmother forced him to quit the school so that he could pay for his cousin sister's dowry. While working at a teashop in Dhanbad, he learns about India's government and economy from the customers' conversation. Then, he decides to become a driver. He gets the job as a driver at Ashok's house. He moves to New Delhi with his master Ashok and his wife Ms. Pinky Madam. It is here in New Delhi that he is exposed to extensive corruption in Indian society.

One night, Ms. Pinky drives the car and hits a child. The family decides to plot Balram for the hit and run. But the police tell them that there is no need of worrying as no one has reported a child missing. So, there will be no inquiry. Here again, Balram is exposed to the corrupt police. Ashok becomes involved with the corrupt government. This is the point in the novel where Balram thinks that the only way of escaping from the 'Rooster Coop' is by killing and robbing Ashok. Thus, on a rainy day, he murders Ashok. He flees to Bangalore with his nephew. There he bribes the police and starts his own taxi company. At the end of the novel, he justifies his actions by saying that his freedom is worth the lives of Ashok and his family and the monetary success of his taxi company.

## Conclusion

In the novel, *The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga has shown how even after the independence, Indian society still has flaws. The novelist successfully raises the issues related to marginalized Indian society. Through the narrative of Balram, the novelist has given a message; if the repression and dominance of lower class/caste prolong, then the people living in 'darkness' can become criminals. And they would not feel guilty in doing so. At the end of the novel, Balram justifies his actions by saying,

*"...I'll never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master's throat. I'll say it was all worthwhile to know, just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant." (The White Tiger, page 321)*



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