

## ARVIND ADIGA'S 'THE WHITE TIGER' : A REVIEW



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### Abstract

*Arvind Adiga was born on 23,oct 1974 – A writer – journalist – His debut novel 'The White Tiger' ,won 2008 , Man Booker Prize. Born in Madras to Dr. Madhav and Usha Adiga, studied in Canara High School, Columbia College and University in New-York and graduated in 1997.*

*Arvind Adiga's 'The White Tiger' provides a dark comical view of modern day life through the Protagonist 'Balram Halwai'.He was a Journalist (Financial Times).At present he is living in India (Mumbai). Arvind Adiga is the fourth writer to win the Man Booker Prize, after Sulman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai. Arvind Adiga has crafted with clarity the social, political, religious and cultural differences of the Indian Economy. The Title' The White Tiger' is the Nick Name of Balram and he names his Taxi Company' The White Tiger Drivers'.*

*The novel studies the contrast between Indias rise as a modern global economy and the lead character who comes from a crushing poverty. "At times when India is going through great changes with China likely to inherit the world from the west--- it is important for writers like me try to highlight the brutal injustice of the society (India). That is what I'm trying to do—It is not an attack on the country, it is about the great process of self examination". He explains the great criticism of the writers like Flaubert and Dickens of the 19<sup>th</sup> century helped England and France become better countries.*

**KEY WORDS** : The White Tiger, Rooster Coop, Light and Darkness, Rich and Poor, Entrepreneur, Coop, Family- Structure, Corruption and Bribe, Religious Tension, Marriage ,Poverty and Politics.

**Themes** : The main theme is about - The contrast between India's rise as a modern global economy and the working class who lied in crushing poverty. The other themes are: Corruption in Indian Society and

Politics, Family Loyalty versus Independence, Religious tension between Hindus and Muslims, Experiencing of living in India after living in America, Globalization, Rivalries between India and China, Marriage in India, Indian Families, Light and darkness.

**Plot :** Balram lives in Laxmangarh (Bihar), a community in the darkness of rural India. A son of a rickwallah-puller, forced to leave school and work in the tea shop. His parents gave him no name and simply called him Munna(boy in Hindi). His teacher named him as Balram. Balram turns a driver for Ashok (son of a rich man). Ashok is worried of his wife, corruption, marriage to his foreign wife (a member of other caste). Balram experiences the opportunities for him to the glossy world and the contrast between master class and servant class. Balram murders Ashok and flees to Banglore, where he changes his name to Ashok Sharma and becomes a entrepreneur. This is the way he goes from darkness to light.

**Religion:** It symbolizes tradition and honour. There is tension of Hindus and Muslims. Religion leads to the tension of marriage eg:Ashoks marriage to the foreign wife and even to appoint a driver eg: Balram fires his Masters driver because he was a Muslim.

**China and India Relationship:** The common thing in both the Nations is population, poverty, rich and poor people.

**Hero:** The hero Balram is a anti Hero and Narrator who tells the Premier the secret of India is --the extreme inequality is stabilized by its strong family structure.He is a modern Indian hero and says “ I’m tomorrow.” He represents “Darkness” where necessities of life are snatched away

by the wealthy-living in the light. Balram writes to the Premier of China-Wen Jaibao, his own story of entrepreneur and his journey from darkness to light in India - where there is strong family structure and corruption is necessary.

**Introduction:**

The White Tiger , by Arvind Adiga deals with dark comical view of modern day life through Balram Halwai.Balram lives in Laxmangarh (Bihar), in a community deep in darkness of rural India, son of a rick-puller and family poor to finish his school. Despite being poor and promised a scholarship, he is forced to break coals and wipe tea-tables. Parents didn’t bother to name him and named him as Munna which according to the school teacher meant - (boy in Hindi). He named him Balram in reference to God Krishna’s brother. Balram’s last name Halwai, is derived from his sweet maker in his caste system.

In Dhanbad drivers are paid high salary as a result Balram learns driving. Balram is hired as a chauffeur by a rich man for his son- Ashoka (living in Delhi). Ashoka is in conflict due to his return from America, corruption, harshness of life in India, family unhappiness with his foreign marriage to his current wife (a member of different caste).

Balram drives his master’s to the shopping malls and observes: wealth, prosperity and opportunities around him, and the contrast between servants and master’s class. Balram realizes that the servant class is held back by conservatism like the chicken in the coop, despite seeing the horrors of fate make no effort to escape. Through experiences Balram becomes worldly and ambitious. Balram broods over the situation. He thinks of

murdering his employer and escape. Fate helps Balram as Ashoka's involvement in corruption, politics, and divorce from his wife provides him with opportunities. One day Ashoka is carrying 700000, Rs to a politician, Balram murders him and flees to Bangalore with nephew Dharam. Balram uses loot money to bribe the commissioner to create his own Taxi Company and changes his name to Ashok Sharma .He becomes an entrepreneur in India's new technological society thus completing his emergence from darkness to light

**The Title:** 'The White Tiger' is the nick name of the protagonist –Balram. The name given by the education inspector He is like a White Tiger a rare species which comes only once per generation. Later on Balram names his Taxi-Company as "The White Tiger Drivers"

**Religion:** There is some discussion of Hinduism. Religion plays an important role in India's life as it symbolizes tradition and honor. This is revealed through the marriage of Ashok and Pinky Madam as Asoka's father did not approve of their union because she was from a different caste and religion as him. "The White Tiger" plays a number of roles throughout the story .There is limited knowledge of the rural beliefs of the people of upper class, by making up signs of respect s for the various buildings or objects or sacred temples or a tree. Balram doesn't take religion seriously. There is a tension between the Hindus and Muslims (For instance Balram gets another driver for Ashok's family, fired because he was a Muslim in hiding. He felt sad for Ram Prasad. He even loves Muslims and says that they are good people. He respects four great Muslim poets and finds meaning in their poetry.

### **Competition and similarities between China and India:**

It is predicted that because of the massive population of both the countries working for technology and industry, China and India will become super powers in the world. Balram says that brown and yellow people will be at the top of the world. Other common thing is the massive economic disparity i. e. that is there are many rich and poor people. There is darkness in both countries where many people try to escape in to light-light is where rich people live on the lap of luxury. The poor serve the rich with honest attitude, while the poor remain poor. Hard work is taken for granted. Balram says that, "The trustworthiness of the servants is the basis of the entire Indian economy" Balram Halwai the narrator of the novel is the modern Indian Hero and a self made man . In a nation proudly shedding its history of poverty and underdevelopment he represents as he himself says: "I'm tomorrow".

**Booker Prize Novel:** Balram's narrative is a letter to the Chinese Premier who is visiting Bangalore. A complicated story where Balram a driver to the son of a landlord ,crushes his skull and flees with the money that finance his taxi business in Bangalore. Ferrying technology workers to and fro depends on keeping the police happy with occasional bribes. He is not only a entrepreneur but a roguish criminal with a capacity for self justification. The background against which he operates is the Economy and the Nation but a landscape of corruption, inequality and poverty. Balram describes the family life where landlords pull children out of school in servitude and elections are bought and sold. This grim world is far from the glossy

world where Bollywood stars and technological entrepreneurs – that are displacing Indian stereotypes featuring Yoga and spirituality. He justifies his murder as - class warfare. The White Tiger is a social commentary to the inequalities that persist despite India's new prosperity. It correctly identifies India's middle class euphoria. Adiga a former correspondent of the times magazine now lives in Mumbai is less successful as a novelist .His description of Indian life are monotonous. The reader is reminded of India's cruelty. The hero is dazzled by the sight of liquor, perfume, elevator and air conditioned. There is absence in description of human complexities and description of a nation.

Arvinda Adiga's novel is a cock sure confession from a murderous philosopher who has the brass neck to question his lowly place in order of things. Balram knows , good things have awe-ful consequences. This is because he along with his lowly Indians inhabits the darkness, a place where necessities of life are snatched away by wealthy who live in light He gets a lucky break when he learns to drive a car and then a job. He is half baked, self mocking, quick witted and quick to seize an advantage.

The novel is presented in an epistolary form, a series of letters. Balram is writing to the Primier about the entrepreneurship something China is missing. Balram was a wanted man, the school inspector called him' The White Tiger', (a rare animal). Balram promises scholarship but the family puts him in tea shop to earn money for the family girl's marriage. This is the claim to his earnings when family decides when to marry. He has to distance his family. Balram explains why

Indian servants are so honest. This is what he calls a rooster coop. Any opportunity may be the servant will not take advantage of the Master. If the servant runs away with the money the master will burn his family, beat him and destroy him. Only the man who breaks the coop will not be normal. A coop may be broken only by an abnormal person.

The White Tiger deals with some psychological situations. Adiga does not tell why so many people are stuck up in the coop. Adiga describes the haves and have-nots of the servants. Adiga tells up corruption, how school teachers steals money from school food programme, sells uniform, corrupts vote and no one complains. Balram, the anti-hero tells the premier that the secret of India is the extreme inequality is stabilized by its family structure and the advancement depends on the corruption and stepping out of the coop of conventional morality.

His mom and dad succumbed to T B. Adiga is the fourth Booker Prize Winner. With a journalistic approach he crafted the political, social differences of India's economy. He tells of his journey from darkness to light. The city life is of light and village life is of darkness. Darkness refers to dark skin, dark buffalos that are fed but children are not and the dead bodies floating in the river are left to American tourists. This is the error of globalization where corruption and injustice rule.

**Major Themes:** The main theme deals with the contrast between India's rise as a modern global economy and the working class living in poverty. The other themes are-corruption in Indian society and politics, family loyalty Vs independence, religious tension between Hindus and

Muslims, experiencing life in India after returning from America, globalization and contrast of China- India relationship.

The theme of marriage in India is important. Family decides marriage. Balram's cousin is engaged and her marriage disrupts his life. Lone is taken from the landlord. And Balram is pulled out of the school to repay the loan. He is put in tea- stall to earn for repayment of loan. So family has claim on the earning of Balram. Family decides whom to marry and he cannot distance his family. He gets a lucky break and becomes a driver to Mr. Ashoka whose wife is American and of different caste. Ashoka's father disagrees with this marriage. Ashoka's conflict due to corruption, family problem and drinking gives Balram the opportunity to murder Ashoka. He flees with Ashoka's money and bribes the police and creates white tiger driver's company and thus emerges as an entrepreneur and from darkness to light.

The other theme is the Indian family which deals with the family ties if you are bad to your mother. It is a crime in India. Balram abandons his family which is a crime and shameful thing in India. Balram's family becomes an obstacle to murder Ashoka.

The theme of China-India deals with the economic disparities- both the countries have poor and rich people. The countries like China and Afganistan have less master-slave relationship. India is full of entrepreneurs but China has less. The theme of darkness and light battle within the novel.

Adiga tells when we talk of the rich people we talk of the five percent people who are successful but at the same time there are people in Bihar who die of T. B. and there are no doctors. Balram presumes

to tell Wen how to win money and power in India.

**Conclusion:** Arvind Adiga studies the contrast between India's rise as a modern global economy and the lead character who comes from (crushing poverty). At the time when India is going through great changes and China is to inherit the world from the west it is important that Adiga highlights the brutal injustice of Indian society. It is not an attack on the country but it is a process of self-examination.

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