

**GLOBALIZATION AND THE QUESTION OF SERVITUDE IN
ARAVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER***

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Abstract

This paper examines the way in which Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* acts as a harsh critique of the notion of the "New India," which is still plagued with a system of servitude and rampant political, economic, and social corruption. It also sheds light on the social, economic, and cultural impact of globalization on the poor of India, particularly in terms of its role in widening the gap between the upper and lower classes. It argues that both globalization and the system of servitude have contributed to creating two facets in India: the India of Light and the India of Darkness, where the poor are marginalized and kept at the periphery, far from the center. The study concludes that *The White Tiger* issues a stern warning that the division of Indian society will inevitably lead to violence, destruction, and anarchy. To avert this, the economic and social disparities that keep millions of

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Indians living in extreme poverty should be addressed, the system of servitude and discrimination should be dismantled, and it should be ensured that all human beings in India are able to live with dignity and in equality.

Key Words: *The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga, globalization, servitude, India of Light, India of Darkness.

1-Introduction

Globalization¹ can be defined as "a process in which more and more people become connected in more different ways across larger distances" (Lechner, 2009, 15). This worldwide integration permits people to travel, communicate, and invest internationally. It helps companies "market their produces widely, acquire capital and human resources more efficiently, share advanced technology, and enjoy economics of scale" (Wells, Shuey, & Kiely, 2001, 37). Globalization also implies a shrinking of the world in terms of space and time, since it "increases the 'thickness' of human interaction and the impact this interaction has on the earth itself " (Ervin & Zachary, 2008, 2).

However, globalization has transformed our present social conditions and contributed to the weakening of nationality and the creation of globality (Ritzer, 2009). This rapid process of intercontinental, social, political, and economic integration has come with promises of equality and high standards of living for everyone. In spite of the fact that the ongoing global changes are essential to human beings, these changes do not similarly affect everyone in society. Though globalization can have a positive impact on people, it can also drastically affect some sectors of society by widening the gap between the poor and the rich.² Critics such as Chomsky (2002), Falk (1999), and Petras and Veltemyer (2001), critically deconstruct the concept of globalization and find it to be a destructive force. It creates "profound asymmetries between the center and the periphery" (Rajgopal, 2002, 134), which have been responsible for poverty, economic destabilization, and inequality.

2-Globalization in India

If we examine the impact of globalization on India, we find that the country has undergone tremendous change since it opened up its markets in

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the late 1980s and early 1990s. For Ann Harrison, "India liberalized its international trade as part of a major set of reforms in response to a severe balance of payments crisis in 1991" (2006, 299). Rajiv Gandhi's government,³ for example, started to liberalize the economy by removing economic restrictions and high taxes imposed as part of the Nehruvian closed economy (Assayag & Fuller, 2005). In 1990, Manmohan Singh⁴ adopted a determined policy of liberalization that integrated India into the global economy. Singh's economic policy led to an increase in direct foreign investment, a reduction of foreign trade barriers, and to a growing number of Indians working for global enterprises. For Raj Nayar, the economic liberalization of India "refers to deregulation and decontrol in a national economy—an economic process inextricably linked with globalization" (2006, vii).

By the mid-2000s, it became clear that life for many people in India had been changing rapidly. Globalization has undeniably raised the standard of living of the Indian rich and the upper middle classes. It has facilitated the growth of information technology and the development of new cities like New Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, with new and expanding marketing opportunities, such as the building of malls and luxurious complexes. These changes are the most obvious markers of "India Shining," which is a concept promoted in the BJP's electoral campaign⁵; a campaign that puts emphasis on the potential benefits the Indian people will reap from a liberal economic policy, such as access to house and car loans, and the prospect of India becoming a hub for growing information technology (Varughese, 2013).

In the Indian context, contemporary globalization has reached an unprecedented level, to the extent that "the government has neglected agricultural needs to promote industrial needs" (Suman, Tapan, & Subarno, 2009, xv). The farming sector is also "thrown up in the name of Special Economic Zones to multinationals and to agricultural big business" (Deb, Sengupta, & Datta-Ray, 2008, 4). The emphasis on industrial rather than agricultural needs has led to the marginalization of India's population inhabiting rural villages. In this regard, Arundhati Roy says that

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In a country like India, 70% of the population lives in rural areas. That is 700 million people. Their lives depend directly on access to natural resources. To snatch these away and sell them as stock to private companies is a process of barbaric dispossession that has no parallel in history. (2000, 43)

The focus on industrial production has caused the marginalization and dispossession of 70 percent of the Indian population whose lives depend on land and natural resources. This may explain why India accounts for a third of the world's poor, as well as the tragic cases of farmers' suicides. Farmers are driven to death by desperation and deprivation as a consequence of government economic policies that integrate with the international economy (Schmidt & Jacques, 2003). These drastic economic changes and policies adopted by the Indian government have thus created two countries: the India of Light and the India of Darkness. The India of Light represents the rich who comprise a small minority of the Indian population, while the majority lives in the India of Darkness, a place marred by poverty, misery, and deprivation. The impact of these changes on India is examined thoroughly in Aravind Adiga's⁶ novel, *The White Tiger*.

3-Globalization and the Question of Servitude in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

In spite of having spent many years outside India, Aravind Adiga has "masterfully caught the changing mental makeup of the India's underprivileged class who are no longer content to dawdle their lives away in poverty but want opportunities, moral or immoral, to stride ahead in the race of life" (Mathur 2011, 2). Speaking of how *The White Tiger* was initially conceived while traveling to write for *Time* magazine, Adiga says that the book was born of hanging around stations and having conversations with servants and rickshaw pullers in India. For Adiga, it is meant to,

capture the voice of men you meet as you travel across India....What struck me was how funny a lot of these people were, how similar their voice was, their sense of humor, their cynical intelligence. But theirs was a voice that had not been

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captured. It was important for me to get this voice down . . . and to do that without sentimentality. (Suri 2008, 63)

The White Tiger is arguably a critique of "the smugness of the Indian elite, the complicity of Indian capitalism, and the neo-colonialism flourishing in shining India " (Lau & Dwivedi, 2014, 84). It is an attempt to give a voice to the silent majority of the marginalized lower class who suffer from poverty, discrimination, unemployment, denial and dispossession. It is worthy of note that Adiga felt shocked coming home to see the stark changes globalization has created in India. He sees what others fail to see in the impact of globalization on the social, economic, cultural, and moral aspects of Indian society in terms of the poor, marginalized, down-trodden people and their chances of survival in the New India. Within this context, Adiga says that, "At a time when India is going through great changes and, with China, is likely to inherit the world from the west, it is important that writers like me try to highlight the brutal injustices of society....it's not an attack on the country, it's about the greater process of self-examination" (Jeffries, 2008, 1).

One may argue that Adiga's observation of the rapid changes caused by globalization coupled with the system of servitude, were the driving force behind his writing of *The White Tiger*. Adiga is, however, keen to point out that his real motive was to highlight the injustices of Indian society. His critique is driven only by a belief that India urgently needs to undertake a process of self-examination of its economic, political, and social systems, rather than any wish to tarnish the image of his own country.⁷ Adiga's sense of urgency is shared by Michael Portillo, who maintains that *The White Tiger* is an angry book, which gives expression to the lower class anger the privileged upper class people have ignored (Suri, 2008).

The White Tiger is about the dark side of the New India. It takes an unblinking look at the reality of India's economic prosperity and progress. Adiga's ostensible mouthpiece, the character Balram Halawai, belongs to

the marginalized caste of the sweet-makers, located in the “India of Darkness”. He narrates the brutal injustices of the rising India. For example, Balram reflects sarcastically on the divide between the rich and the poor: "In the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat – or get eaten up" (Adiga, 2008, 54)⁸.

The White Tiger revolves around the struggle between the upper and lower classes in their quest for economic and political power. Lily Want also refers to Adiga’s chronicling of both “an India of Darkness and an India of Light” (2011, 71), where Balram ponders on the rigid boundaries between the center and the margin, and their underlying relationship which is fraught with discord and antipathy, essentially defining what is known as the class struggle. When it comes to the question of the class struggle, it is important to consider the role of production in the determination of class. For Karl Marx⁹, the process of production constitutes the basis of class construction, and the individual's status within a class is defined by his role in the process of production. The individual's ideological and political consciousness is also decided by his class position (Marx & Engels, p. 2002). Within this context, *The White Tiger* can be seen as a realistic depiction of the brutal class struggle between the upper and lower classes and the gap between them, which is shown to be widened and intensified by globalization.

According to Lena Khor, *The White Tiger* is a critique of "the socio-economic conditions promoted by a ruthless form of neoliberal globalization which privileges profit over people" (2013, 43). It aims to highlight the disturbing fact that a neo-liberal economic policy can widen the gap between the rich and the poor by helping a small minority to prosper at the expense of the majority. This is why, as Brouillette points out, Adiga asks his readers in interviews to situate the novel “in opposition to business books for aspiring elites, and . . . newspapers . . . which boast overwhelmingly of celebratory treatments of the globalization of markets and the arrival of the ‘new India’” (Brouillette, 2011, 42). However, it is

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argued here that *The White Tiger* examines not only the impact of globalization on the poor and marginalized of India's villages, but also the system of servitude which is an integral part of Indian society. Servitude is defined as the state of being submissive and under control of someone who is more powerful.¹⁰(Ray & Qayum, 2009). Globalization and servitude, together, are shown to contribute to the poverty and suffering of the poor and marginalized who are kept at the periphery in the India of Darkness; a world of which no one is aware because everyone is busy looking at the shining towers of New Delhi which symbolize the new India.

Adiga's *The White Tiger* is arguably a witty parable of a present-day India which is still plagued with servitude and rampant corruption. It is a critique of a false notion of the New India and a quest for equality and justice in the face of poverty, greed, and the political corruption of the feudal landlords. For Adiga, *The White Tiger* is an attempt to "relocate India in a political and economic context" (Suri, 2008, 59). This is why he presents us with a new India of two worlds: the "India of Darkness", represented by Balram Halawai of Laxmangarh, and the "India of Light", symbolized by Mr. Ashok of New Delhi. Balram explains that: "India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness. The ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near the ocean is well off. But the river brings darkness to India — the black river" (12), alluding to the fact that people prosper and thrive in the India of Light at the expense of the rich resources stolen from the India of Darkness. The novel highlights the fact that poverty dominates every aspect of life in the India of Darkness (Jadahv, 2014).

Balram, with his satirical observations on the painful realities of the New India, is a representative of the marginalized poor who strive and struggle for a better future and a place within it. *The White Tiger* begins with Balram narrating his life story in a letter to Mr. Wen Jaibo, the premier of China, on the eve of his visit to Bangalore, a hub of information technology and entrepreneurs. It is through visits like that of the Chinese premier that contracts are signed and trading zones are built and expanded. Balram wants to make sure that visiting foreign officials won't leave with a

belief in the state propaganda of Indian officials, such as the idea that it is possible to "Become an Entrepreneur in Seven Easy Days!" (4). Instead, he wishes them to know the other, largely ignored, story of how "entrepreneurship is born, nurtured, and developed in this, the glorious twenty-first century of man" (4), and to wonder how a nation like India, which does not have the infrastructure to serve the majority of her own people when it comes to basic human needs, like clean drinking water, sewage systems, electricity, proper public transport, or health care services, does at all manage to have "entrepreneurs. Thousands and thousands of them. Especially in the field of technology. And these "entrepreneurs—we entrepreneurs — have set up all these outsourcing companies that virtually run America now" (2-3). In this passage, Balram enlightens the Chinese premier about the brutal and heart-wrenching reality of the New India by presenting him with his own, corrective narrative. Balram's letters reflect his journey from the India of Darkness to the India of Light, and shows what it really takes for poor people like him to make it. Through his journey, Balram exposes the sufferings and oppression of the victimized, marginalized classes, those who are silenced socially and politically. The novel thus gives expression to the anger against injustice and inequality in all its forms raging within such people.

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga deconstructs the system of servitude and its mechanisms. For instance, we find Balram, a servant seeking his freedom and identity, asking crucial questions, which highlight his servitude, its underlying implications; and pondering whether it will ever be possible to break free from it: "What keeps the millions of poor Indians work in servitude? How stable is such system? Why does the Rooster Coop work? How does it trap so many millions of men and women so effectively?(150), "What if one day, for instance, a driver took his employer's money and ran? What would his life be like?" (150). Balram's soliloquy reflects how hard it can be to achieve liberty in the New India, where masters exploit the miserable economic conditions of their servants and their desperate need to survive.

Through Balram, Adiga examines further the system of servitude which relies on an underlying relationship between masters and servants, which involves "a handful of men" training "the remaining 99.9% — as

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strong, as talented, as intelligent in every way — to exist in perpetual servitude" (149). Here, we see how the entire Indian economy is practically underpinned by the servitude and trust of servants. India is notably a place which does not need a secret police to keep its people down because its system is based on the truthfulness of its servants. "Masters trust their servants with diamonds in this country! . . . Why doesn't that servant take the suitcase full of diamonds? He's no Gandhi, he's human, he's you and me. But he's in the Rooster Coop" (149). It is the system of servitude, or the "rooster coop", which prevents servants from killing and stealing from their masters. This may explain why it is unusual to find a master killed by his servant in India. Adiga's portrayal of Balram's journey could be seen to stem from a wish to awaken a currently absent resentment and class consciousness in such servants, which may incite a revolutionary ideology encouraging them to revolt against their masters. Jeffries (2008) attributes the absence of such resentment and class consciousness to the fact that the poor just assume that not being rich is merely a fact of life which has to be accepted.

The White Tiger emphasizes the disastrous impact the system of servitude has on the lives of the poor. For instance, Balram is born in Laxmangarh, in the district of Gaya, in Bihar, an impoverished area which represents the India of Darkness. He is brought up by his father, a rickshaw puller, in extremely poor and miserable conditions. The people there are trapped in poverty by the few families that rule the roost and exploit its natural resources (Want, 2011). People in Laxmangarh are shown to be living under the mercy of feudal landlords, like the Buffalo, the Stork and Wild Boar, who control their means of subsistence. The Wild Boar, for example, owns all the good agricultural land around Laxmangarh, and "if you wanted to work on those lands, you had to bow down to his feet, and touch the dust under his slippers, and agree to swallow his day wages" (21).

Laxmangarh is also described by Balram as a place that has been located in darkness since India's independence. It suffers from a lack of technological progress, roads, and electricity, compared to cities like New Delhi or the capital of information technology, Bangalore. In Laxmangarh, he cites:

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Electricity poles—defunct.

Water tap—broken.

Children—too lean and short for their age, and with oversized heads from which vivid eyes shine, like the guilty conscience of the government of India (16)

Balram criticizes the government's plans for improving the life of the poor in a place where children look like ghosts with "oversized heads" caused by malnutrition. Ironically, Balram finds that instead of providing the poor people with electricity, clean drinking water, and proper nutrition, the Indian government sells them mobile phones to accrue profit.

People also forget to name their children in a place like Laxmangarh, and this is exactly what happens to Balram. He is called Munna by his parents which means 'boy.' 'That's all I've got sir' I said. It was true. I'd never been given a name. 'Didn't your mother name you?' 'She's very ill, sir, she lies in bed and spews blood. She's got no time to name me' (10). It is also noticeable that the name Balram is only given to him by his school teacher, Krishna, during his school days. At school, Balram catches the attention of the school inspector who is impressed with his intellectual abilities. He presents Balram with a gift, a book entitled, *Lessons for Young Boys from the Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (30), and praises him for his intelligence and diligence. He singles out Balram as a great person among a crowd of thugs, by comparing him to the white tiger: "In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals the creature that comes along only once in a generation?" I thought about it and said: 'The White Tiger.' 'That's what you are in this jungle.'" (30). But the miserable and poor conditions prevent Balram from completing his education, particularly after the death of his father. He is forced to leave school to sustain his family and settle its piling debts. We therefore find Balram joining his brother, Kishan, "working in a tea shop, smashing coals and wiping tables" (32). During his struggle for survival, we see Balram work as a coal crusher and table sweeper, with very minimal earnings. His main concern is to secure bread and housing for his family, and healthcare for his father who is dying from tuberculosis. Finally, Balram decides to learn to drive to earn more money and improve the economic conditions of his family: "Granny had agreed to let them invest in my driving lessons" (47). Destiny smiles on Balram when he gets an offer to

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work as the driver of a landlord's son, Mr. Ashok, and his wife, Pinky Madam. It is an opportunity for Balram to leave the India of Darkness and enter the India of Light, far away from the misery of sheer poverty.

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga presents to us the symbols of both countries of India. The India of Light represented by Mr. Ashok who is very rich, educated, and a very important figure in the New India while the India of Darkness is symbolized by Balram who is very poor, marginalized, and less educated. This contrast is emphasized when Mr. Ashok first lays eyes on Balram:

He looked me up and down, from head to toe, the way I had been looking at him ever since I had come to the house. His eyes seemed full of wonder: how could two such contrasting specimens of humanity be produced by the same soil, sunlight, and water? (68)

Ashok's wonder is created by the gap between the poor and the rich, where the poor are regarded and treated as less-than human, or like animals. When Balram works with landlords, like Mr. Mukesh and Stork, for instance, he finds that they expect their pets to be treated like humans: "They expect their dogs to be pampered, walked, petted, and even washed" (67). They expect their animals to be treated like humans, while, ironically, treating their servants like animals. This is elaborately illustrated when Balram takes the dogs for a walk: "Then I took them around the compound on chain while the king of Nepal sat in a corner and shouted, "Don't pull the chain so hard! They're worth more than you are!"(67). One may understand that the dogs of the rich landlords are seen as more worthy than the poor servants and this may construe why their dogs have to be treated with a special care.

Further, we find that the poor in the new globalized India have no political representation since they are deprived of the right to vote. Their voices are forced to be silent due to the ongoing alliance of the politicians and the rich. Balram recounts how the teashop owner has sold their votes: "He had sold our fingerprints which the illiterate person makes on the ballot paper to indicate his vote" (81). Balram's father is also deprived of his right to vote by others who vote in his place: "My father told me that night, I've

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seen twelve elections — five general, five state, two local — and someone else voted for me twelve times”(84). We thus find that the votes of the poor are rigged or sold. In some cases, people are terrorized or even killed if they ask to exercise their voting rights, and their deaths are not even registered as murder when the killer belongs to the ruling party.

During his work as a driver in New Delhi, Balram witnesses the huge gap between the haves and the have-nots. He sees the way in which the workers who build the great towers and malls of the city are exploited and live miserably on the streets close by. They are seen scattered around the city hoping to find a better life. They are huddled in stinking quarters and afflicted with mosquitoes and cockroaches. Their inhuman life conditions are described by Balram as follows:

Thousands of people live on the sides of the road in Delhi. They have come from the Darkness too—you can tell by their thin bodies, filthy faces, by the animal-like way they live under the bridges and overpasses, making fires and washing and taking lice out of their hair while the cars roar past them (99)

They are, thus, easily recognizable as coming from the India of Darkness, from their appearance and the way they live like animals under the bridges. For Iqra Shagfuta (2013), they do not have any control over their lives which are charted by their rich masters. Their destinies are determined by their class and caste.¹¹ While caste is defined by religion and culture, class is determined according to a person’s relationship with the means of production. But both the influences of “socio-economic organization” and “production relations” intertwine (Basile, 2013, 98). The fact that caste represents destiny for people in India, is made clear by Balram: “See Halwai, my name, means, 'sweet maker.' That’s my caste - my destiny. Everyone in the darkness who hears that name knows all about me at once” (53).

The idea that is generally promoted of “Shining India” is shown to be dependent on a system of servitude, which itself promotes class segregation and injustice. Both the rich and the poor go to the India of Light

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to pursue their dreams, but their dreams are completely different and never concur: "See, the poor dream all their lives to get enough to eat and looking like the rich. And what do the rich dream of? Losing weight and looking like the poor" (191). According to Om Mathur, the benefits of globalization are that "a few economic sectors have been impacted, and the most obvious changes have been in the built environment, e.g., new buildings and spatial structure" (2006, 43). As markets expand, some cities have become important strategic centers of financial investment and information technology, but they are also defined by class segregation. Within this context, we find Balram wondering about the mentality of the rich. They are geniuses in terms of town planning, but in Gurgaon,¹² for instance, they have failed to build parks and playgrounds, which helps to ensure complete segregation from poor people: "it was just buildings, shopping malls, hostels, and more buildings. There was a pavement outside, but that was for the poor to live on" (191). Balram notices that even in highly developed cities, there are slum areas similar to Laxmangarh. These slum areas are inhabited by people, like Balram, escaping from the India of Darkness, seeking a new life in the India of Light:

The poor bastards had come from Darkness to Delhi to find some light — but they were still in the darkness. Hundreds of them, there seemed to be, on either side of the traffic, and their life was entirely unaffected by the jam (116)

Due to the changing realities of the new globalized India, we find people deserting their villages, leaving their families and migrating to the big cities, such as New Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, in search of jobs and a better future. They leave in order to survive and support their families back home, but, as Adiga demonstrates, they are, unfortunately, blackmailed, forced to work in inhuman conditions, humiliated, and exploited by their employers. Here, Adiga sheds light on the inhuman working conditions of the poor people in New Delhi; they are deprived of their basic human rights of decent living and proper working conditions. As David Allen and Bryan Husted point out, each year, millions of people are leaving the India of Darkness to come to the India of Light, where poverty is

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seen as "a medieval master who pits each human being against every other and where men and women are slaves to landlords" (2010, 299).

Balram represents such people as, through his journey of discovery, he is shown to encounter forces which try to exploit, humiliate, and rob him of his identity and humanity. For example, when Pinky Madam kills a child in a car accident while drunk driving, he is forced to sign a statement accepting full responsibility for the accident:

TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN,
I, BALRAM HALWAI, SON OF VIKRAM HALWAI, OF
LAXMANGARH VILLAGE IN THE DISTRICT OF GAYA, DO
MAKE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT OF MY OWN FREE
WILL AND INTENTION:
THAT I DROVE THE CAR THAT HIT AN UNIDENTIFIED PERSON,
OR PERSONS, OR PERSON AND OBJECTS, ON THE NIGHT OF
JANUARY 23RD THIS YEAR.....I SWEAR BY ALMIGHTY GOD
THAT MAKE THIS STATEMENT UNDER NO DURESS AND
UNDER INSTRUCTION FROM NO ONE. (143)

No one reports the death of a child to the police, which is fortunate for Balram who otherwise would have been imprisoned for a crime he did not commit, like many others who are imprisoned for the sake of their masters: "The jails of Delhi are full of drivers who are there behind bars because they are taking the blame for their good, solid middle-class masters" (145). The accident episode is an eye-opening experience for Balram who realizes the falseness and cruelty of the so-called justice system. This incident shows us the way in which poor workers can be blackmailed and exploited. It shows them to be owned like slaves by their masters, as Balram relates: "We have left the villages, but the masters still own us, body, soul and arse" (145). He wonders why, in spite of having so much money, the rich still treat "*us like animals*" (176).

The incident also introduces the problem of child labor,¹³ which involves children leaving their villages, alone, to work in big cities like New Delhi, living under bridges without anyone to care for them, like the one killed by

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Pinky Madam, whose parents are not around to register a complaint or report the loss of their child.

The discrimination, degradation, and depravation Balram experiences in the India of Light is further illustrated when he is prevented from entering a shopping mall because of his class:

If he walked into the mall someone would say “*Hey, That man is a paid driver! What’s he doing in here?*” There were guards in grey uniforms on every floor — all of them seemed to be watching me. It was my first taste of the fugitive’s life (128)

The mall guards also prevent Balram’s fellow drivers from entering the mall, and he relates how they are recognized from their attire:

The guard at the door had stopped him. He pointed his stick at the man's feet and shook his head—the man had sandals on his feet. All of us drivers too had sandals on our feet. But everyone who was allowed into the mall had shoes on their feet....The man in sandals exploded, “Am I not a human being too?” (125).

Class discrimination makes Balram feel isolated and alienated within his own country. Thorat and Neuman (2012) suggest that this is a deliberate policy adopted by the upper classes in order to perpetuate the subordination of the lower classes and prevent their social mobility. Even the builders who work on the rising towers of New Delhi are not allowed to have a look at what they have just built.

The ill treatment of the poor is further illustrated when Mukesh insults Balram for not being able to find a rupee coin he loses while getting out of the car. Mukesh has just bribed someone with half a million rupees, and so the loss of a rupee is not the issue. It is about mistrust of Balram and the fear that if he is capable of stealing one rupee, he may also steal millions. This is reflected in Mukesh’s humiliation of Balram:

“Get down on your knees. Look for it on the floor of the car.”
I got down on my knees. I sniffed in between the mats like a dog, all in search of that one rupee.

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“What do you mean, it’s not there? Don’t think you can steal from us just because you’re in the city. I want that rupee.”

“We’ve just paid half a million rupees in a bribe, Mukesh, and now we’re screwing this man over for a single rupee. Let’s go up and have a scotch.” “That’s how you corrupt servants. It starts with one rupee. Don’t bring your American ways here.” (117)

By humiliating Balram and treating him like a dog, Mukesh wants to teach his son, Ashok, that a servant cannot be trusted, and any incident, even minor, should not be taken for granted. This same attitude towards servants is demonstrated when they are given a list of do’s and don’ts: Balram, for instance, is told never to switch on the AC or play music when he is alone. In another incident, servants are shown to be the subject of their masters’ ridicule, which is designed to break them down psychologically, but is also shown to help suppress their masters’ own sense of inferiority. For instance, Ashok and Pinky Madam make fun of Balram's poor command of English when he mispronounces the word “mall” :

“It is not maal, it's a mall" he said. “Say it again." I kept saying "Maal," and they kept asking me to repeat it, and then giggled hysterically each time I did so. By the end they were holding hands again. So some good came out of my humiliation (124)

Balram's humiliation seems to be a source of amusement for Ashok and his wife as well as an opportunity to patch up their marital differences, as indicated by their "holding hands again"(124). Balram also has to undertake all kinds of humiliating, menial jobs, such as massaging his master, carrying cash bribes to politicians, and entertaining the men by bringing them women and drinks.

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga also exposes the corrupt nature of the Indian political system, which he portrays as being steeped in bribery. Balram is shown to discover that the secrets of prosperity and success in the India of Light are based on bribery, murder, the ability to abscond from judicial proceedings, and opportunism, rather than the prayers and Gandhian values Indian children are generally brought up on. He learns the bitter reality of the new globalized India while driving Mr. Ashok to Delhi, where

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he witnesses him evading tax payments related to his coal mines by bribing officials. He notices that the rich people go to New Delhi to settle their black money while the poor go to the city in search of a better economic life (Hussein, 2012). The wealth of the Indian nation is notably wasted by the politicians who receive Mr. Ashok's bribes. From his master's corrupt practices Balram concludes that "The history of the world is the history of a ten-thousand-year war of brains between the rich and the poor. Each side is eternally trying to hoodwink the other side" (217). It is the eternal struggle between the rich and the poor where one eats or gets eaten up.

Balram's class consciousness makes him keen to move out of the India of Darkness, represented by the "Rooster Coop" where people are, metaphorically speaking, caged like chickens without equal and basic human rights. Balram compares the rooster coop to the market in Old Delhi:

Go to Old Delhi, behind the Jama Masjid, and look at the way they keep chickens there in the market. Hundreds of pale hens and brightly colored roosters, stuffed tightly into wire-mesh cages. . . . They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they're next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with human beings in this country (147).

The poor are aware that they are merely roosters who guard the coop until it is their turn to be chopped up and eaten. They are still trapped in the coop because they do not have the courage to rise up against their masters. Being afraid for the safety of their families makes them mental and physical slaves to the system of servitude:

. . . *the Indian family*, is the reason we are trapped and tied to the coop. . . . only a man who is prepared to see his family destroyed — hunted, beaten, and burned alive by masters— can break out of the coop. That would take no normal human being, but a freak, a pervert of nature. (150)

It seems to take an extraordinary human being, like Balram, to break out of the rooster coop in order to seek dignity and freedom. Balram refuses to accept his lot, to stay caged up, and this, coupled with his years of suffering injustice and inequality, is the reason for his violent breakout. For

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Balram, the only option seems to be is to kill and steal from his master. It seems the only way left to make it in the New India: "*I was looking for the key for years, but the door was always open*" (228). Adiga gives us insight into Balram's deep psyche when he begins to plan to kill and steal from Ashok:

Go on, just look at the red bag, Balram — that's not stealing, is it? I shook my head. And even you were to steal it, Balram, it wouldn't be stealing. How so? I looked at the creature in the mirror. See Mr. Ashok is giving money to all these politicians in Delhi so that they will excuse him from the tax he has to pay. And who owns that tax, in the end? Who but the ordinary people of this country — you! (208)

Adiga also depicts servants exploiting their masters, which is born of anger, rage, and revenge. They know that the India of Light thrives only on the natural resources stolen from the India of Darkness, which belongs only to them. For them, it is only a small redemption for what has been stolen from them: "The more I stole from him, the more I realized how much he had stolen from me" (230).

In the final chapters, Balram kills Mr. Ashok, steals his money and settles in Bangalore as a successful entrepreneur working in a call center for drivers. Through murder, Balram seeks his freedom and a new identity in the India of Light: "I have switched sides: I am now one of those who cannot be caught in India...*I've made it! I've broken out of the coop!* ... I'll never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master's throat" (275-6). The killing of Mr. Ashok and the stealing of his money suggests that people huddled in the coop will finally break out of it as Balram has done. It also indicates that freedom has a price, and that it takes conscious effort to dismantle the structures of servitude, inequality, oppression, and privation (Rahman, 2011). Balram's breakout is not ostensibly a smooth transition, but a revolutionary one, implying that those trapped in the India of Darkness will not be silenced forever; their voices will no longer be sold out and their future will not be compromised. It is also a symbolic message to say that if the poor are not given equal place in the new globalized India, they will take the law into their own hands,

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carving out a place for themselves, exactly as Balram does. Furthermore, the killing indicates that the system of servitude is falling apart and poverty, slavery, and corruption should thus be eliminated from Indian society.

Balram is unafraid of the consequences of his revolt because he does not want to die as an unknown, poor driver who belongs to the India of Darkness. He is also conscious of the fact that without revolution, people will remain in poverty and misery in the India of Darkness forever. For Balram, signs of revolt and revolution are imminent as he sees men discuss, talk and read by the dim light of Delhi:

I saw hundreds that night, under trees, shrines, intersections, on beaches, squinting at newspapers, holy books, journals, Communist Party pamphlets. What were they reading about? What were they talking about? But what else? Of the end of the world. *And if there is blood on the streets-I asked the city-do you promise that he'll be the first to go- that man with the fat folds under his neck?* (188–9).

Freedom from servitude does not seem, thus, to require a miracle, only awareness and consciousness, and that is summed up in Balram's words: "*I was looking for the key for years. But the door was always open*" (228). It is the key of freedom, justice, equality, and emancipation from servitude, which is hidden by man's ignorance and lack of courage. It seems that enlightened and conscious people, like Balram, will not stand the ugliness of servitude and will live in dignity, but those who are dormant will be like "Hippos lie in mud and do nothing—that's their nature" (237).

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Finally, Adiga's *The White Tiger* can be seen to be a realistic, unfaltering, and eye-opening presentation of the New India on the brink of unrest. It presents a warning that the New India will not be able to move ahead without solving the pressing problems of servitude, poverty, and political and social corruption. Only then, we can talk about "Shining India," setting an example for other nations to follow. Thinking of himself as a rare white tiger among his generation, Balram succeeds in what seems to be the impossible: breaking free from the chains of servitude, poverty, and inferiority in order to survive and make it: "*I've made it! I've broken out of the coop*" (275).

4-Conclusion:

One may conclude that through his fictional character, Balram, Adiga deconstructs the three pillars of the New India: enterprise, democracy, and justice, which turn out to be mere clichés obscuring the reality that its foundations are in fact economic, social, and political corruption, and a culture of servitude. He is keen to get the view across that, in spite of India's economic prosperity and growth, the vast majority of its population are living in shocking poverty. In other words, *The White Tiger* serves as a mirror reflecting the fact that, despite its claims of a booming economy, India is not "shining" and still lives closer to the darkness.

Moreover, Adiga's *The White Tiger* renders a harsh critique of the impact of globalization on the poor, in terms of its exacerbation of inequality and injustice in the form of the class struggle in India. It throws "a terrible light on the darkness and the creatures it produces" (Rennison, 2010, 5), and presents a warning that servitude and poverty, intensified by globalization, will inevitably turn people into monsters, like Balram, poor, marginalized, and down-trodden people will not wait long to take what they believe to be rightfully theirs. In the absence of equality, justice, and a more equal distribution of wealth and resources, there will always be Balrams ready to take the law into their own hands, and to destroy in order to survive and "make it". For them, acts of subversion are the only means of asserting their identity and place in the New India. Furthermore, it seems that the division of Indian society into two countries: the India of Light and the India of Darkness, due to globalization and servitude, will consequently lead to an inevitable collision of the classes. Therefore, to fix the economic disparities and lift up the millions of Indians who live in extreme poverty should be a part of any serious government plan to address India's growing problems. Finally, for Aravind Adiga, it seems that a politically, economically, and socially corrupt system that fails to provide social justice, can be seen to breed destruction and anarchy. To avert this, we need to create a decent world based on equality, respect, and dignity where "humans can live like humans and animals can live like animals" (273).

1-For more on globalization, see, Scholte, J. A. (2005). *Globalization: A critical introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan; Waters, M.(2001).

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Globalization: Key Ideas. London: Routledge; Ervin, J, & Zachary A. S. (2008). *Globalization: A reference handbook*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO; Ritzer, G. (2011). *Globalization: the essentials*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons; Sparke, M.(2012). *Introducing globalization: ties, tensions, and uneven integration*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons; Benyon, J, & David D.(2014). *Globalization: the reader*. London: Routledge.

- 2-For more on anti-globalization, see, Chomsky, N.(1999). *Profit over people: neoliberalism and global order*. New York: Seven Stories Press; Falk, R. A. (1999). *Predatory globalization: A critique*. Michigan: Polity; Monbiot, G.(2004). *The age of consent*. New York: Harper Perennial; Singh, K. (2005). *Questioning globalization*. London: Zed Books.
- 3-In the 80s, the government led by Rajiv Gandhi has adopted a policy of economic liberalization in India and promoted the growth of the telecommunications and software industries.
- 4-In the 1990s, the Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh has carried out several structural reforms that liberalized India's economy and adopted several measures which prove to be successful in alleviating India's economic crisis.
- 5-By the time of the elections in 2004, the Bharatiya Janata Party shifts its position away from protectionism toward globalization and its electoral campaign has recommended increasing foreign investment in certain important sectors.
- 6-Aravind Adiga begins his journalistic career at the Financial Times and Time. He has covered the stock market and financial news. His debut novel, *The White Tiger*, has won the 2008 Booker Prize. He is the fourth Indian-born author to win the prize, after Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai.

- 7-In regard to the criticism levelled against Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Amitava Kumar and Sanjay Surahmanyam critique Adiga's *The White Tiger* in light of that fact that Aravind Adiga has spent most of his life abroad in Australia, England and USA. For them, Balram is a sketch of an English-educated voice trying to talk dirty who wants to tarnish the image of India. But for Adiga, he makes clear that his novel, the *White Tiger*, is not attack against India but a great process of self-examination. For more information, see, Lau, L., & Mendes, A.C. (Eds.).(2011). *Re-orientalism and South Asian identity politics: the oriental other within*. London: Routledge; Khan, M. Q. (2010). *The White Tiger: A Critique*. *Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies*, 1(2).
- 8- All references will henceforth be taken from Adiga, A. (2008). *The White Tiger*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- 9- For more on class, see, Scott, J.(Eds.).(1996). *Class: critical concepts*. Oxford: Taylor & Francis; Donner, H.(Ed.).(2012). *Being middle-class in India: a way of life*. London: Routledge; Elster, J.(Ed.).(2008) Karl Marx: A reader. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Crompton, R. (2008). *Class and stratification*. Cambridge: Polity.
- 10- For more on servitude in India, see, Ray, R., & Qayum, S. (2009). *Cultures of servitude: Modernity, domesticity, and class in India*. CA: Stanford University Press; Patnaik, U., & Dingwaney, M. (1985). *Chains of servitude*. Andhra Pradesh : Sangam Books;
- 11- For more on the Indian caste system, see, Pruthi, R. K.(Ed.).(2004). *Indian Caste System*. Michigan: Discovery Publishing House. Singh, E. (2007). *Caste system in India: a historical perspective*. New Delhi :Kalpaz Publication. Thorat, S., & Neuman, K. S. (2012). *Blocked by caste: economic discrimination in modern India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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12-Gurgaon is a leading financial and industrial city of India, situated in the National Capital Region near the Indian capital New Delhi in the state of Haryana.

13-Child labor is a practice of letting children work. The practice deprives them of their childhood, and is harmful to their physical and mental development. The causes of child labor can be attributed to rising global India, poverty and lack of education. For more details, see, Lietai, G. K. (Ed).(2004). *Working children around the world: child rights and child reality*. Amsterdam: Institute for Human Development and IREWOC Foundation.

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