

# The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga: Exploring Innovation, Creativity, and Development

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**Abstract:** *The White Tiger*, a celebrated work by Aravind Adiga, vividly chronicles the journey of the protagonist Balram Halwai. He hailing from impoverished beginnings, orchestrates his ascent to success through a blend of unorthodox thinking and resolute perseverance. Rendered through Balram's own narrative lens, the novel presents a tapestry of incisive and humorous reflections on the complexities of Indian society. Embedded within the narrative's fabric is the recurring theme of audacious innovation and the valor to defy conventional norms, echoing profoundly throughout its pages.

**Keywords:** *The White Tiger, Aravind Adiga, Philosophy of Action, innovative thinking*

## 1. Introduction

The novel *The White Tiger* has been hailed for its challenging portrayal that prompts readers to delve deep into the hidden corners of both inner and outer "boxes" of thought. Through Balram's journey from a poor rural village to a businessman in Bangalore, Adiga raises numerous questions not only about the structure of dynamics governing Indian society but also about our assumptions regarding success, morality, and self-determination. *The White Tiger* has candidly critiqued Indian society through the character of Balram Halwai: "*The greatest thing to come out of this country in ten thousand years of history is the Rooster Coop*" (1, 197). In the context of the novel, the Rooster Coop emerges as a metaphor for the stagnation of thought.

## 2. Discussion

### 2.1. The Symbol of the Rooster Coop: Challenging Conventions

In the novel *The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga portrays Indian society as a Rooster Coop, with hundreds of chickens crammed together, "*pecking at each other, shitting on each other, and trampling on each other*" (1, 197) in a struggle for survival. In newly emerging economies, societal stratification occurs rapidly and ruthlessly. There always exist two contrasting realities, juxtaposing and reflecting upon each other. Behind the glamour of "*economic miracles*" lies the horrific darkness of poverty. The A small group of individuals still holds the majority of wealth. Only a fraction of benefits and job prospects (often accompanied by low wages) are "*trickled down*" to the disadvantaged working class. *The White*

*Tiger* vividly depicts the harsh realities of everyday life unfolding in India, an economic powerhouse of Asia. The imagery of chickens scrambling to feed, trampling on each other, serves as a metaphor rich in implication yet devoid of ostentation. The looming spectre of socio-economic inequality has deepened the already stark divide of class distinction. In the 21st century, Indians witness a peculiar, appalling ecosystem emerging within luxurious mega-cities.

Within that survival space, humans calmly witness the scenes of "*slaughtering*" each other and "*knowing it's the next one's turn*" yet still accept it, never seeking to escape the Rooster Coop. Aravind Adiga asserts, "*99.9% of me is stuck in the Rooster Coop*" (1, 199). This acceptance stems deeply from the hierarchical system that has governed Indian thought for thousands of years. It is believed that destiny, in the form of caste, is attached to individuals from birth to death. No matter how talented one may be, they are not permitted to deviate from the obligations and duties of their caste. It is taboo for someone from a lower caste to aspire to live the life of a higher caste. Such desires are met with control and punishment through violence.

The control proves particularly effective for those belonging to the lower castes. The "*healthy, talented, and intelligent*" individuals accept the confines of their mindset. Contemporary figures in positions of power have opted to use the symbol of deities, possibly in an attempt to evoke respect and wonder. Through this choice, they attribute divine qualities to themselves, adding a hint of the mystical to their roles.

In the Indian worldview and philosophy, the realms

of the divine and the secular coexist and intertwine. Above lies the world of supernatural deities, eternal and immortal. Below, is the earthly life, governed by the Brahmin and Kshatriya castes - embodiments of the gods. These embodiments become secular leaders (bearing the noble status of deities). According to Freud, these secular leaders “*perhaps belong to the supernatural world, completely self-adoring and immersed in self-love, confident and self-sufficient*” (2, 93). Confidence and self-sufficiency here do not imply liberation. They denote a serene acceptance of the constraints within the human mind.

### 2.2. Reinventing the Heroic Image

In the narrative, despite Balram being blamed by his master, “*the thought of escaping never arose... I myself was locked in the Rooster Coop*” (1, 202). The situation of oppression, framing of consciousness, emotions, and deep-seated psyche is deeply subconscious. It forms an internalized defence mechanism. Freud termed this as the “super-ego” In *The White Tiger*, the character Balram confidently shares about the wall of ideology: “*You could put the key to his liberation in his hand, and he would throw it back at you with a curse*” (1, 200). He also examines why the Rooster Coop is so effective and whether humans can escape it. Firstly, the effectiveness of the Rooster Coop, dissected by Balram, is none other than the “*Indian family - the glory of the Indian nation*” It is the “*repository of all love and sacrifice*” (1, 201). This leads to the majority being “*trapped in bondage*”. Balram’s story is a reminder of the cost of success. Achieving it requires immense effort and a spirit of innovation. Because life always presents paradoxes and challenges.

However, rising above that dark backdrop, *The White Tiger* also brings us a story of hope. It shows that humans can overcome difficulties and achieve their dreams, no matter how daunting they may seem. And an ordinary person cannot escape the Rooster Coop on their own. There must be a “*devil’s spawn*”, a “*freak of nature*” to be more precise, a *White Tiger* - a trailblazer, a new leader brave enough to do so. The character Balram is ambitious and determined to achieve his goals, even if it means breaking the rules. It demonstrates Balram’s willingness to think boldly and dare to do things “*never dared before*” to achieve his dreams. Through Balram’s journey from a poor village to becoming a businessman in Bangalore, Adiga challenges readers to think beyond mundane stories. by this exploration, the author

provocatively prompts reflection upon entrenched beliefs surrounding success, morality, and the concept of self-determination.

Freud (2, 93) contends that crowd psychology illustrates how individuals’ perceptions and emotions often mirror the collective group. This tendency operates deeply in the unconscious and imposes its choices as soon as conditions allow. It indicates the weakness of individual consciousness. This state, he refers to as a regression to the primitive mental form of crowds. Freud writes, “*Even to-day the members of a group stand in need of the illusion that they are equally and justly loved by their leader; but the leader himself need love no one else, he may be of a masterly nature, absolutely narcissistic, but self-confident and independent. We know that love puts a check upon narcissism, and it would be possible to show how, by operating in this way, it became a factor of civilisation.*” (2, 93). The outward affection towards the master and the sense of being loved by the master is an illusion created by primitive humans. This self-deceptive disposition becomes entrenched within the human psyche as an indelible mental framework, “*rendering me incomprehensible to myself*” (1, 212). Balram emerges as a complex and contradictory character, embodying a multitude of traits and beliefs that seem to contradict one another. Despite his aspirations and optimism, he also harbours doubts and scepticism. Alongside his ambition for success, there are elements of self-destructive behaviour present within him. He is molded by his surroundings, yet resolute in his pursuit to carve out his destiny.

Balram’s experiences and minimal education have helped him develop a different perspective on the world. He is always learning about different cultures and lifestyles, expanding his mind beyond the narrow confines of a village. Balram realizes that the illusion of being sheltered is but a deceitful facade. Instead, it gradually unveils the raw instincts within him, growing increasingly vivid and undeniable: “*I hate my master behind his outward affection*” (1, 212). Beneath the surface, Balram conceals something profound, amidst the labyrinth of a hundred thousand complexities. What makes *The White Tiger* unique is its central character. Balram is not a typical hero. He is not a saint or a martyr. He is a flawed and complex character, driven by the ambition to break free from all “*constraints*”. Balram proves to be extremely intelligent and resourceful. But most importantly, he can see the world in a way that most people cannot.

(Xem tiếp trang 69)

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The majority of individuals within Balram's social stratum are deprived of independent thought, for as he aptly observes, "*the Rooster Coop is guarded from within*". They must "*prevent other servants from becoming reformers, experimenters, or entrepreneurs*" (1, 212). For characters like Brahmins or Kshatriyas, it resembles a cosy golden cage, offering absolute protection for their privileges, shielding them from the harsh realities beyond its gilded confines. In a world teeming with incessant flux, change has become the least changed thing. But the Rooster Coop still exists in a dignified and challenging manner. Its fortress is the blurry zone of mental limits.

When Balram is frustrated by having to obey Mrs Kusum, he sits quietly in the car with a lotus position (a sign of Brahman caste or Buddhist equality), noticed by the drivers, who rush over to scratch the car, scratch the windows, and "*stare at me as though I were some animal in a zoo*" (1, 219). He wonders, in a society where everyone acts mechanically according to others, "*will they gather together - will they break the Rooster Coop*" (1, 331). The answer is only the White Tiger dares to escape the Rooster Coop. For Balram, "*freedom is so precious to know, only in one day, only in one hour, only in one minute, how it feels not to be a servant*" (1, 51). Nowadays, people are increasingly less surprised to see trailblazers là gi lagging in a journey always aimed forward.

### 3. Conclusion

*The White Tiger* urges us to question long-held beliefs about poverty, class, and what it means to succeed. Its fearless exploration of unconventional ideas adds a new and exciting layer to the story. Balram, the protagonist, epitomizes the courage to think differently and strive for more. The novel's cold-eyed view and humorous tone pinpoint the key weaknesses of contemporary India. These include the rich-poor divide, environmental pollution, caste discrimination, wastage of human resources, and the limitations of thinking... Aravind Adiga, a realist writer, decisively answers the question of destiny, proactively (though the resolution at the end of the story is somewhat brutal). The symbol of the Rooster Coop vividly and profoundly illustrates the deeply ingrained negative prejudices that affect human thoughts and emotions. It governs individual behaviour according to herd mentality and dependency. Until individuals exhibit the initiative to emancipate themselves from the constraints of conventional paradigms and actively pursue avenues for authentic advancement, our trajectory along the path of development remains unfulfilled.

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