

I found Bombay and opium, the drug and the city, the city of opium and the drug Bombay.

— [Jeet Thayil](#), *Narcopolis* (2012)

The new battle fields of new writing from India are the urban scapes, the sprawling metropolitan cities- Mumbai, Kolkata, New Delhi and Bangalore. As mentioned in the earlier chapter the publishing industry has also targeted these spaces for its prospective readers- the *Metro reads* (Penguin, 2010). It is here that the stories of today spring up from, stories of young professionals making their way in its jostling, jiggling crowds, encountering all kinds of travails and traumas, accosting the rich and the poor, the bold and the beautiful, the ugly and the evil. Life here is on the go at all times of the day, some make it at dawn, some at dusk, and others at night, and yet there are many who don't make it at all. It is from these scapes that the material for *Magnum Opuses* is gleaned by the new, discerning writers in order to materialize the dictum that 'every life has a story'- the life of cricket, *The Premier Murder League* (2010), the crime and murder thriller *Close Call in Kashmir* (2010), the corporate narrative, Jack Patel's *Dubai Dreams* (2011) or *With or Without You* (2010) and even chick lit, *Almost Single* (2010), *Love Over Coffee* (2010). The dynamics and the complexities of interfaces and encounters of all classes and the class less is explored in these settings. Not too long ago Rohinton Mistry had reverentially recreated his *The Tales of Ferozsha Baag* (1992) and the Mumbai *chaal*, thereafter there has been a spate of fiction written about Mumbai and its diverse populations living in the Saraswati Parks and Vishram Societies.

So far, about morals, I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after.

- [Ernest Hemingway](#), *Death in the Afternoon*

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Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) is yet another attempt at trying to reclaim an imaginary home that has slipped out of the ken because of spacio-temporal distancing. Thus, when the *Time* magazine opportunity presented itself to travel through India in an attempt to 're-lens' it Adiga could not refuse the temptation. What emerges in another *Midnight's Children* (1981) but without the magic realism? With the slender story line of an oppressed protagonist murdering his employer and getting away with it in pursuit of his ideal of social mobility Adiga has intertwined political, economic and cultural dialectics: The division of society into the haves and the have nots, the cultural imperialism of the elites and a veiled critic of the cosmopolitan/global ethos that has gripped the mindset of India shining.

The novel begins its journey from now, when the protagonist has a booming business as a travel agent in Bangalore trying to arrange an 'insider's view' of India for Wen Jiabao, the Prime Minister of The People's Republic of China. This here and now takes him into the then and there of India, a strategy intimately connected with a diasporic mindset that simultaneously wants to unravel ones roots in order to trace the routes not only he himself has taken but those his nation has taken as well. So, the novel rolls through some important locations like an Indian railway train from one stop to another over seven chapters that are notionally recounted over seven nights. During this cross country ride Adiga presents a cross-section of the Indian society especially hinging on the underclass and recounting their hope and rage. As he himself points out that it was a rickshaw puller who set him thinking about India in a different way. The choice of the protagonist as a driver turned tycoon is therefore not surprising at all and even the fact that his ancestors were at one point of time Halwais, now because of displacement rickshaw pullers, is symptomatic of what the rise of the Urban Jungles does to the establish order. The choice of the name Balram also is symbolic. As a driver Balram portrays the endlessly patient and silently watchful tribe who can catch on sleep and wait while the employer does important building. This

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Balram Halwai turned Driver is Macbeth like in his vaulting ambition and akin to the driver hero of Shaw's *Man and Superman* (1903) wherein he enshrines Shaw's iconoclastic belief that a Chauffeur will be 'the first of the working class to move up to new technocracy and meritocracy'. Also the driver is that oblivious, non-entity who gets to hear also the backseat conversation about anything and everything that the passengers are a part of Adiga's Balram is no less a recipient of the inside story of the rich, the bold and the beautiful who sit on the other-side of the driver's seat, but it is the driver who maneuvers through the throng and arrives at destinations, he has the sense of the geography and of the system that delivers.

Also, in order to come to grips with the vastness of India and its heterogeneity Adiga perhaps did not want to foreground the incredible India, the picturesque and the glamorous, the spiritual and the mystic. He wanted to look at the underside, of the dark and deep abyss that divided the class based ethos of India and he also wanted to prove that no gorges are unspanable – given the spur and spark of mobility all heights are scaleable – this is proved by Balram the driver turned tycoon. If it needs a murder or two to hop, skip and jump into possibilities, there is nothing wrong for are not thousands being murdered in this unprecedented drive for betterment: the politicians are doing it, the top-notch corporate are doing it and so are the *Bhais* and *Dadas* down the line. In this sense Adiga's *The White Tiger* envisages the hope and achievement of today's Indians who have to fight exploitation by breaking social hierarchies and chartering an uneven course from the margins to the centre, a deconstructive process that works at the level of both the individual and society.

Beginning with the premise that 'the hardest thing in India is to see India', Adiga uncovers very systematically and persistently layer after layer but he reverses the process, not from the surface down but from the deep recesses to the superficial synchronicity. Bullied, uneducated, under privileged, Balram Halwai comes from that vast, rural hinterland in which seventy percent of India's population still lives in shocking deprivation, that area of darkness which is in itself a

continent of Circi where the wounded civilization still eeks out a below subsistence level existence. It in but natural that in this man created neither world there are satans, beelzebubs, mammons and mollocks incarnating the desires that have remain unfulfilled. Balram, however, is an exception to begin with, a white tiger, the rarest of animal who comes along only once in a generation, sharp, intelligent, gritty and resourceful. It is no surprise that he out does his counterpart Ram Persad, the driver of a Honda City, his first overture in the quest for better. It is this that takes him to Delhi and to a whole new atmosphere of debauchery, depravity and wickedness. The innocent Balram learned to cheat and indulged in things he was ashamed to admit and it was not guilt that wrecked his soul but the rage of how circumstances can derail the best of intentions, how the onslaught on basic human rights of an individual can lead to a shocking disregard for the sanctity of human life. His employer, Ashok has a blemished genealogy. His forefathers symbolically named Stork, Wild Boar, and Raven are all predators, shrewd, cunning and lusty, those responsible for raging and ravaging the smaller animals out of the jungle. It was this that Ashok had inherited as part of his Indian heritage but had acquired a Western mindset having been abroad, having studied and married there. Back at home he indulges in nefarious activities of which Balram is a witness for eight months. The underhand, under the table transactions are now nothing new for the driver who has imbibed this aesthetics of the so called upward mobility so on a dark rainy night he executes a clean operation of removing his employer from his path and with the acquired booty of seven hundred thousand rupees he makes his way to Bangalore and establishes himself as an entrepreneur.

The novel is not, contrary to confused assertions in the Indian press, another attempt at a form of Indian magical realism in the wake of Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy. No one has telepathic or supernatural powers here; time is broadly Newtonian in its flow. This is a novel that wants to be realistic, even if the realism is meant to be understood as tinged with black comedy. There may even be some moralizing intention, with Adiga denouncing the greed and

corruption of the New Indian Society. But the merit of the book must eventually rest on the credibility and verisimilitude of the voice of Balram Halwai.

As it turns out, the Halwais are an upper-middling caste of sweet makers, resident across large swathes of northern, India and often using the caste name of Gupta. Balram is presented in the novel as impoverished but with some education, even if it doesn't give him access to English. 'Neither you nor I speak English' (WT, 3) he writes to Wen Jiabao at the outset of the novel and yet the novel is written in English. We are meant to believe even within the conventions of the realist novel- that a person who must really function in Maithili or Bhojpuri can express his thoughts seamlessly in a language that he doesn't speak.

This is a problem that takes us back to the roots of the Indian novel in English and its two broad categories. One type deals with Indian characters who speak English because they have had a western education (as in the work of Vikram Seth) and often involved middle-class angst, urban lust and loss, or satirical views on post-colonial pretension. Some of these novels describe more or less ironically the tragic fate of anglicized members of India's elite colleges, rotting away in the 1980's in the wilds of places like Dhanbad while dreaming of Fleetwood Mac or Super tramp. As it's most genteel, this attitude may be found in an Indian-American writer such as Jhumpa Lahiri, whose work would never embrace the subjectivity of a crass chauffeur from Bihar who smashes his employer's head in with a whisky bottle in Dhaula Kuwaan while chewing betel-leaf.





### Dhanbad Coal Mines

The other-more common-type of novel tries to represent in English dialogue spoken in another language. Some writers, like Raja Rao, adopt an elaborate sing-song tone supposedly intended to correspond to the rhythms not merely of the various Indian vernaculars but of Indian life itself. Others, including Rushdie, have tried the macronic solution, sprinkling their English with Hindi or Urdu words or even inventing words. Still others, such as Lee Siegel (who navigates between Indology and fiction writing), have attempted for comic effect to have Indians speak in a drolly exaggerated way, though the use of odd vowels and diphthongs. None of these solutions really works; what they bring to mind are the SS Officers in World War Two films speaking English among themselves with a strong Mittel European accent. Rushdie's characters sound like no known Indian, but it is not meant to matter because his novels are not realistic. None of these writers has the ethnographic ambitions of a Zola, attempting to capture, notebook in hand, the vocal nuances of the other.

What of Balram Halwai? What does he sound like? Despite the odd *namaste*, *daal*, *paan* and *ghat* his vocabulary is not sprinkled with North Indian vernacular terms. His sentences are mostly short and crudely constructed, apparently a reflection of the fact that we are dealing with a member of the "subaltern" classes. He doesn't engage in Rushdian word-

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play. But he does use a series of expressions that simply don't add up. He describes his office as a 'hole in the wall' (WT, 7). He refers to 'kissing some god's arse' (WT, 8), an idiomatic expression that doesn't exist in any North Indian language.

'Half-formed ideas bugger one another and make more half-formed ideas' (WT, 11), and the Chinese Prime Minister is advised never to 'let that blasphemous ideas into your yellow skull (WT, 8). On another matter, he sneers: 'They are so yesterday' (WT, 6). A clever little phrase appears. 'A statutory warning - as they say on cigarette packs - before we begin' (WT, 9). Dogs are referred to as 'mutts'. Yet whose vocabulary and whose expressions are these? On page after page, one is brought up short by the jangling dissonance of the language and the falsity of the expressions. This is a posh English - educated voice trying to talk dirty, without being able to pull it off. This is not Salinger speaking as Hoiden Caulfield or *Joyce* speaking as Molly Bloom. It is certainly not Ralph Ellison or James Baldwin, whom Adiga has claimed as his models in speaking for the underdog. What we are dealing with is someone with no sense of the texture of Indian vernaculars, yet claiming to have produced a realistic text.

Imagine recording the speech of your interlocutor - a driver encountered in a car park in Gurgaon, say - in an Indian language and trying to render it not literally, but credibly, and with some effort at verisimilitude, into English. This is no easy task. The translator always faces dilemmas, of course, and can never get it quite right. But we also know. What it is to get it disastrously wrong. It is when the 'autobiography' of an Indian untouchable woman appears in French using expressions from Victor Hugo. The falsity in *The White Tiger* goes much further. It means having a character that cannot read Urdu, and certainly has no notion of Persian; tell us that his favorite poets include Jalaluddin, Rumi and Mirza Ghalib. It means having someone who can't read English being able to recall a conversation in which his interlocutor speaks of books by James Hadley Chase, Khalil Gibran, Adolf Hitler and Desmond Bagley. "Try that lot

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out on a Hindi speaker who knows no English next time you are in India" (Subrahmanyam, 2008).

Adiga gets the tone right only when he writes of the world of the bourgeois. Some of this is quite funny and rings partly true.

'Ashok', she said. 'Now hear this Balram, what is it we're eating?'

I knew it was a trap, but what could I do? - I answered. The two of them burst into giggles.

'Say it again, Balram.' They laughed again.

'It's not piJJA. It's piZZa. Say it properly?'

'Wait - you're mispronouncing it too. There's a T in the middle. Peet. Zah'.

'Don't correct my English, Ashok. There's no T in pizza. Look at the box' (WT, 154-5).

Some two decades ago, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak wrote a celebrated essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' At the time, a folklorist is said to have responded: 'More importantly, can the bourgeois listen?' We can't hear Balram Hawlai's voice here, because the author seems to have no access to it. The novel has its share of anger at the injustices of the new, globalized India, and it's good to hear this among the growing chorus of celebratory voices. But its central character comes across as a cardboard cut-out. The paradox is that for many of this novel's readers, this lack of verisimilitude will not matter because for them India is and will remain an exotic place. This book adds another brick to the patronizing edifice it wants to tear down.

Gridlocked in corruption, greed, inhumanity and absolute inequality-of class, caste, wealth, religion - this India is unredemptive. What Adiga India the lid on is also in exorable true: not a single detail in this novel rings false or feels confected. *The White Tiger* is an excoriating piece of work, stripping away the veneer of 'India Rising'(Mukherjee, 2008).





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The novel is a social commentary and a study of injustice and power in the form of a class struggle in India that depicts the anti-hero Balram representing the downtrodden sections of the Indian society juxtaposed against the rich. "Guilt is a terrible thing. It makes one suspicious. It makes you see conspiracies everywhere. And the guilt of killing a man you call your 'second father' could be huge. So, even as he rolls in money and lives his dream in New India..." (Saxena, 8, 2008)

Balram Halwai can't get rid of the blood stains on his conscience. His personal guilt of realizing his ambition through murder turns political and this morally bankrupt man confesses to Chinese premier Wen Jiabao, telling the story of his rise from the Swamp to Silicon Valley. But, it becomes a story of darkness that is India, where an election is "like eunuchs discussing the Kama Sutra" (WT, 98), where the new economy means shiny call centre workers sitting in air-conditioned towers overlooking filthy shanties, where an entrepreneur can survive the slime and grime of bureaucracy only by greasing palms.

For most Indians, there is nothing new about this territory. For them, there is nothing novel about western tourists looking at India as a dustbowl, where death hangs in the air like a stale smell and a glass of water can kill you with diarrhea in minutes. India readers are familiar with the works of Western writers who travelled through India and saw nothing but the broken bodies of beggars, buzzing flies, dirty drains and famished faces. What's new - for prosperous, post-liberalization India - is the old suspicion that the West is holding up *The White Tiger* as a mirror to us. It's telling us that India is not shining and, despite its claims of a booming economy, it is still "the near - heart of darkness" which it has been since time immemorial.

There is no conspiracy. The present Booker jury thought it was a good book and it got the award. A different jury might have given the award to an equally good book on the bright side of India", says William Dalrymple, author of *The Last Mughal* (2008) and *City of Djinns* (1994). Left - leaning Australian writer and broadcaster John Pilger is even moral dismissive, calling the Booker "Only one award that represents the views of a clutch of mostly elite, London - Centric, conservation - liberal judges (Saxena, 8, 2008).

But that's not how many Indians see Aravind Adiga's success. They were euphoric when Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai won the Booker. This time, there is a stunned silence: for many of us, our worst fears have come true. The west is once again using our poverty to humiliate us. Seeing the award as a stamp of disapproval on India's poor social indicators, a recently published, Indian author calls *The White Tiger* "a tourist's account of India." He raises question about the intentions of Adiga, who grew up in Australia and went to elite Universities in England and the U.S.

Reality may be a question of perspective, but in an age where history is being written like fiction and fiction is being read like history, the Booker for *The White Tiger* might be The West's way of telling us that it's not been thinking about us the way we thought it was. "Everybody knows the truth", says a Mumbai -based U.S. diplomat dealing with trade and business. "We don't need a novel to tell us what's wrong with India. It's visible to us every day" (Saxena, 8, 2008).

To India's middle - class elite, says Dalrymple things like hunger may not matter, but they are "obvious to westerners". There should be more of this kind of book", he says. However, Pilger believes "the most important way to tell India's dark stories is through journalism and not just fiction" (Saxena, 8, 2008).

But the age of embedded journalists, it is argued that only one novel can tell the true stories of countries torn apart by conflict. Thousands of reports coming out of Afghanistan failed to do what Khalid Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) did for the country - Chronicling contemporary history through the eyes of an insider. The truth about Iraq, it is being said, will be captured by a novel written by an Iraqi. And that's where *The White Tiger* falls short. Even as India struggles with conflicts of caste, class and religion, Adiga's story may remain the view of a professional observer, who failed to see anything good about the country he travelled through as a journalist, always recording and never experiencing anything real. It could be mere suspicion, but it takes care of our guilt. As Adiga says

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The novel is written, in "voice" - in Balram's voice - and not in mine. Some of the things that he is confused by or angry about are changes in India that I approve of; for instance, he is uncomfortable with (as many men like him are) the greater freedom that women have in today's India. Some of the other things he's unhappy about like corruption - are easier for me to identify with. When talking to many men whom I met in India, I found a sense of rage, often suppressed for years and years and years, that would burst out when they finally met someone they could talk to. But their anger was not the anger of a liberal, middle class man at a corrupt system; it was something more complex - a blend of values both liberal and reactionary - and I wanted to be true to what I'd heard. Balram's anger is not an anger that the reader should participate in entirely - it can be seen at times like the rage you might feel if you were in Balram's place - but at other times you should feel troubled by it, certainly (Di Martino, 2008).

Deirdre Donahue labeled *The White Tiger* an angry novel about injustice and power. "But Tiger isn't about race or caste in India. It's about the vast economic inequality between the poor and the wealthy elite. The narrator is an Indian Entrepreneur detailing his rise to power. His India is merciless, corrupt Darwinian Jungle where only the ruthless survive" (Donahue, 2008).

Adiga depicted his protagonist as

.... his talking out into the night, in his isolated room. He has to tell his story to someone, but he can't ever do so because it's a terrible story. Indians, traditionally, are stimulated into reflecting on their society and nation by the arrival of an outsider who asks questions; in the past, this outsider was the European or the American - today, it is the man from China, which is India's alter-ego in so many ways. Indians today are absolutely obsessed with the Chinese and keep comparing themselves to China out of a belief that the future of the world lies with India and China (Di Martino, 2008).

Adiga's first hand meeting the poor of India inspired him to create his protagonist.

Many of the Indians I met while I travelled through India blended into Balram; but the character is ultimately of my own invention. I wanted to depict someone from India's underclass - which is perhaps 400 million strong - and which has largely missed out on the economic boom, and which remains invisible in most films and books coming out of India. My aim was to draw aspects from the people I'd met to create someone whom I see all around me in India, but never in its literature : someone whose moral character seems to change by the minute - trustworthy one minute, but untrustworthy the next - who would embody the moral contradiction of life in today's India. I'm glad you point out that he is a hustler - which he is! - one of the frustrations of writing a book like this is that so many critics seem to think that Balram's views are meant to be taken objectively! (Di Martino, 2008)

Balram does have something to get off his chest of course and his letters to the Chinese premier are a confession of sorts. Balram tells his life-story, recounting how he got to where he now is a successful entrepreneur in Bangalore. He calls his life's story "The Autobiography of a Half-Baked Indian" (WT, 10). He said this because he was the poor side of India and in that side major people were not able to complete their studies because of poverty and illiteracy. But he became glad to explain that only this half - baked people had the ability to become a successful entrepreneur and those who completed their studies in fifteen years worked for us - half - baked Entrepreneurs.

Me, and thousands of others in this country like me, are half-baked, because we were never allowed to complete our schooling. Open our skulls, look in with a penlight and you will find an odd museum of ideas : sentences of history or mathematics remembered from school textbooks, sentences about politics read in a newspaper while waiting for someone to come to an office, triangle and pyramids seen on the torn pages of the old geometry textbooks which every tea shop in this country uses to wrap its snacks in, bits of All India Radio news bulletins, things that drop into your mind, like lizards from the ceiling in the half-hour before falling asleep - all these ideas, half-formed and half digested and half correct, mix up with other half - cooked ideas in your head, and I guess these half - formed ideas bugger one another and make half - formed ideas and this is what you act on and live with [...] the story of how a half baked fellow is produced...Entrepreneurs are made from half- baked clay (WT, 11).

But Balram belonged to the rural part of India a tiny hell-hole called Laxmangarh. His family was too poor that his family couldn't bother to give him name. Initially, they told Balram as "Munna" which only means 'boy'. He gained his name by the school teacher. The near feudal conditions there meant that everything was controlled by a very few powerful families and that opportunities were limited. "Please understand your Excellency 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" (WT, 14).The black river is the Ganges, beloved of the sari and spices tourist image of India. "No! - Mr. Jiabao, I urge you not to dip in the Ganga, unless you want your mouth full of faeces, straw, soggy parts of human bodies, buffalo carrion and seven different kinds of industrial acids" (WT, 15).

In fact, he was a smart lad, and that was even recognized by a school inspector, who praised him as a 'White Tiger', "the rarest of animals - the creature that comes along only once in a generation" (WT, 35). The school inspector promises to arrange a scholarship and proper schooling for the young boy, but of course, instead his family takes him out of school and puts him to work at a teashop, smashing coals and wiping tables as part of the conditions of a loan his family takes from one of the village landlords to meet the expenses of his cousin sister's wedding. By shrewdly listening in on the conversations of customers, Balram gathered that his best option was to become a driver, an ambition he doggedly pursues.

Go to a teashop anywhere along the Ganga, sir and look at the men working in that tea shop - men, I say, but better to call them human spiders that go crawling in between and under the tables with rags in their hands, crushed humans in crushed uniforms, sluggish, unshaven, in their thirties or forties or fifties but still 'boys'. But that is your fate if you do your job well - with honesty, dedication, and sincerity, the way Gandhi would have done it, no doubt [...] I did my job with near total dishonesty, lack of dedication, and insincerity- and so the tea shop was a profoundly enriching experience (WT, 51).

While Balram retains some affection for his father and his elder brother Kishan, the woman of his large extended family, led by his hypocritical, grasping grandmother, were portrayed as parasitically driven the men to premature death -they were described as 'pouncing' on the men who return home with their earnings as migrant laborers 'like wildcats on a slab of flesh' (WT, 26) more concerned with feeding the family buffalo than the men of the household. "A month before the rains, the men came back from Dhanbad, Delhi and Calcutta leaner, darker, angrier, but with money in their pockets" (WT, 26).

The women like Kusum, grandmother of Balram, were also responsible for forcing the boys of the family into child labor and the young men into early marriage for the sake of dowry. When Balram returned home to find Kishan, he imagined that instead of chicken the women "had served me flesh from Kishan's own body on that plate."

While it could be argued that the misogyny is Balram's rather than Adiga's, the author clearly shares his protagonist's distorted perception that women of all classes only consume. Why else, for example, are there no women in the world of domestic servants in Delhi - where

are all the maids and ayahs, so many of whom have also migrated to Delhi from Bihar and Jharkhand to work? (Wilson, 2009)

Ultimately, Balram's family's poverty was explained all too stereotypically in terms of the joint family system, too many children, a per chant for lavish weddings and with so little depth to his personal history, he inevitably remained a superficial character.

Balram Halwai is a composite of various men I've met when traveling through India. I spend a lot of my time loitering about train stations, or bus stands or servants' quarters and slums. I listen and talk to the people around me. There's a kind of continuous murmur or growl beneath middle class life in India and this noise never gets recorded. Balram is what you'd hear if one day the drains and faucets in your house started talking (Adiga, 2008).

Balram slowly managed to distance himself from his family, but it took a while. He got his break when a rich man, his village landlord, hired him as a chauffeur, and took him to live in Delhi. He was taken on as 'Number Two Driver' and all round servants by the same landlord. Quite soon, having dispatched driver number one by threatening to expose his Muslim background, he was on his way to Delhi as driver to the younger son of the family, the liberal, cosseted Ashok, newly returned from America, and his wife Pinky. The City is revelation. As he drove his master to shopping malls and call centers, Balram becomes increasingly aware of immense wealth and opportunity all around him. But he knew that he will never be able to gain access to that world. He wanted to be the part of modern India. A vision of the city changed his life forever. His learning curve was very steep. He quickly came to believe that the way to the top is by the most expedient means. And if that involved committing the odd crime of violence, he persuaded himself that this is what successful people must do.

See, this country, in its days of greatness, when it was the richest nation on earth, was like a zoo. A clean, well kept, orderly zoo. Everyone in his place, everyone happy. Goldsmiths here. Cowherds here. Landlords there. The man called a Halwai made sweets. The man called a cowherd tended cows. The untouchable cleaned faeces. Landlords were kind to their serfs. Women covered their heads with a veil and turned their eyes to the ground when talking to strange men.

And then, thanks to all those politicians in Delhi, on the fifteenth of August, 1947 - the day the British left - the cages had been let open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law. Those that were the most ferocious, the hungriest,

had eaten everyone else up, and grown big bellies. That was all that counted now, the size of your belly. It didn't matter whether you were a woman, or a Muslim, or an untouchable: anyone with a belly could rise up. My father's father must have been a real Halwai, a sweet maker, but when he inherited the shop, a member of some other caste must have stolen it from him with the help of the police. My father had not had the belly to fight back. That's why he had fallen all the way to the mud, to the level of a rickshaw puller. That's why I was cheated of my destiny to be fat, and creamy -skinned and smiling. To sum up 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" (WT, 63-4).

"The India that we see in *The White Tiger* is a brutal, dog-eat-dog world, totally corrupt and unjust, where people behave like animals and everything is for sale: far distant from the Shining India" (Apte, 2008). Adiga was particularly good on describing *Indian Corruption*, from the vote-rigging of the local elections, where the 'Great Socialist' candidate was unopposed, to the conditions at school, where the teacher steals the money for the school - food – program and sells the uniforms meant for the students - but no one hold's it against him, because he hasn't paid in six months and that's simple the way the system works. Anyone in power abuses it for his or her own benefit.

A man in government uniform sat at the teacher's desk in the schoolroom, with a long book and a black pen and he was asking everyone two questions.

'Name'

'Balram Halwai'

'Age'

'No age'

'No date of birth?'

'No sir, my parents didn't make note of it'. He looked at me and said, 'I think you're eighteen. I think you turned eighteen today. You just forgot didn't you?'

I bowed to him. 'That's correct, sir. I forgot. It was my birthday today.'

'Good boy'.

So, I got a birthday from the government (WT, 96-7).

I had to be eighteen. All of us in the tea shop had to be eighteen, the legal age to vote. There was an election coming up, and the tea shop owner had already sold us. He had sold our fingerprints-the inky fingerprints which the illiterate person makes on the ballot paper to indicate his vote. I had overheard this from a customer. This was supposed to be a close election; he had got a good price for each one of us from the Great Socialist's party (WT, 97).

*The White Tiger* veered between detailed and highly specific descriptions of the world Balram enters as servant in Gurgaon, and a crudely simplified code used to describe the world he left behind in Bihar lower castes became 'Pigherders', a powerful and corrupt politician, possibly intended as an amalgam of *Laloo* and *Mulayam*, is 'the Great Socialist' (he is a 'Pigherder' too) and most tellingly, the entire Gangetic plain is referred to simple as 'the Darkness'.

A total of ninety three criminal cases for murder, rape, grand larceny, gun-smuggling, pimping, and many other such minor offences - are pending against the Great Socialist and his ministers at the present moment. Not easy to get convictions when the judges are judging in Darkness, yet three convictions have been delivered, and three of the ministers are currently in jail, but continue to be ministers. The Great Socialist himself is said to have embezzled one billion rupees from the Darkness, and transferred that money into a bank account in a small, beautiful country in Europe full of white people and black money (WT, 97-8).

Balram's father told Balram about the voting process and way of election goes, in detail. He told Balram that one of his friends who did a very little resist against the Great socialist and was murdered by the police and Vijay, a member of the party of the Great Socialist. He also told that he had never gone to vote. After wards, Balram also told the readers that he also never gone to vote. As Balram's father said "I've seen twelve elections-five general, five state, two local-and someone else had voted for me twelve times. I've heard that people in the other India get to vote for themselves - isn't that something (WT, 100).

As Balram said about his power of voting "I am India's most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth" (WT, 102). In each case, Adiga's own disdain for political distinctions was cleared -and was very much in time with the metropolitan elite's view of Bihar. Thus the 'Great Socialist's party was shown sloganeering not about 'social justice' but 'stand up to the rich, the landlords form a party called the *All India Social Progressive Front* (Leninist Faction) and Naxal's main activity was kidnapping the children of the rich. "The stork himself came out to see Vijay, and bowed down before him - a landlord bowing before a pig herd's son! The marvels of democracy!" (WT, 103)

Here, another example of the corruption was the Government Hospital when Balram's father fell ill and Balram and Kishan took him to the general hospital whose name was:

Lohia Universal Free Hospital

Proudly Inaugurated By the Great socialist

A Holy proof That He keeps His Promises (WT, 48).

But in the hospital, there were no doctor. All were busy with their personal clinics. But their presence was recorded in the government ledger that they were on the duty till 6o'clock in the evening. At last, without any cure, Balram's father died of tuberculosis in that government hospital that was dysfunctional because of endemic corruption.

...although there are three different foundation stones for a hospital, laid by three different politicians before three different elections (WT, 47). There's a government medical superintendent who's meant to check that doctors visit village hospitals like this. Now, each time this post falls vacant, the Great Socialist lets all the big doctors know that he's having an open auction for the post. The going rate for this post is about four hundred thousand rupees these days (WT, 49).

This all shows that how corrupt are the government jobs in "darkness". There is no honesty at all. From top to bottom, officers to peon all have got corrupt. Adiga tries to show all the reality about them.

...Nothing in its chapters actually happened and no one you meet here is real. But it's built on a substratum of Indian reality. Here's one example

Balram's father in the novel dies of tuberculosis. Now, this is a make -believe death of a make -believe figure, but underlying it is a piece of appalling reality — the fact that nearly a thousand Indians, most of them poor, die every day from tuberculosis. So if a character like Balram's father did exist; and if he did work as a rickshaw puller; the chances of his succumbing to tuberculosis would be pretty high. I've tried hard to make sure that anything in the novel has a correlation in Indian reality. The government hospitals, the liquor shops and the brothels that turn up in the novel are all based on real places in India that I've seen in my travels (Adiga).

In government schools, there were no separate classrooms, no school uniforms for the students. If the government sent uniforms, they were never reached to them as the school teacher sold

them to the shopkeepers in a nearby village. Also the school teacher stole all the lunch money. "No one blamed the school teacher for doing this. You can't expect a man in a dung heap to smell sweet" (WT, 33).

The real picture of his native village Laxmangarh was shown to Mr. Jiabao by Balram in a very ironical manner.

I am proud to inform you that Laxmangarh is your typical Indian village paradise, adequately supplied with electricity, running water, and working telephones : and that the children of my village, raised on a nutritious diet of meat, eggs, vegetables and lentils, will be found, when examined with tape measure and scales, to match up to the minimum height and weight standards set by the United Nations and other organizations whose treaties our prime minister has signed and whose forums he so regularly and pompously attends.

Ha!

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 (WT, 19-20).

Adiga created two desperate worlds, Balram's tiny native village in the Darkness and the Silver of Delhi he inhabited in his life as a driver for the urbanized son of the village landlord. The first is a place of absolute hopelessness presided over by allegorical figures of corrupt wealth : the four landlords known as The Stork, The Buffalo, The Wild Boar, and The Raven. From afar, the Great Socialist is re-elected again and again through promises of change (always unkept) and corrupt electioneering. Balram's family, it was cleared, will be poor forever.

When Balram came to Delhi with his employer, Mr. Ashok, he compared the two India's - India in Light and India in Darkness. The place where he came from is Darkness and we have discussed it in detail previously. Now, there is a description about the shining New India. "Delhi is a crazy city" (WT, 118). "The main thing to know about Delhi is that the roads are good, and the people are bad. The police are totally rotten" (WT, 124).

In light, the location of the residents of the servants was also distinct. Balram explained about the residential facilities for the servant class. but in India every apartment block, every house, every hotel is built with a servant's quarters - sometimes at the back and sometimes underground - a warren of inter connected rooms where all the drivers, cooks, sweepers, maids and chefs of the apartment block can rest, sleep and wait. When our masters wanted us, an electric bell began to ring throughout the quarters - we would rush to a board and find a red light flashing next to the number of the apartment whose servant was needed upstairs." (WT, 130) [...] the smooth, polished road of Delhi that is the finest in all of India... (WT, 245)

Balram told Mr. Jiabao that Delhi is the capital of two India's not one India. "Delhi is the capital of not one but two countries - two India's. The Light and the Darkness both flow in to Delhi. Gurgaon, where Mr. Ashok lived, is the bright, modern end of the city, and this place, old Delhi, is the other end" (WT, 251).

Glass skeletons being raised for malls or office blocks; rows of gigantic T-shaped concrete supports, like a line of anvils, where the new bridges or overpasses are coming up ; huge craters being dug for new mansions for the rich (WT, 158).[...] Delhi is full of grand hotels. In ring roads and sewage pipes you might have an edge in Beijing, but in pomp and splendour, we're second to none in Delhi. We've got the Sheraton, the Imperial, the Taj Palace, Taj Man Singh, The Oberoi, The Intercontinental and many more (WT, 199-200). However, displaying their usual genius for town planning, the rich of Delhi had built this part of Gurgaon with no parks, lawns or play grounds - it was just buildings, shopping malls, hotels and more buildings. There was a pavement outside, but that was for the poor to live on. So if you wanted to do some 'walking'. It had to be done around the concrete compound of your own building (WT, 225).

In light, there is almost everything was good and developed. The things which, are not developed, are growing and changing tremendously. But, with every good aspect the bad is also there. The pollution in Delhi was the best example of it. Adiga explains the traffic problem and pollution problem in detail. This is the very reality of Delhi.

Rush hour in Delhi. Cars, Scooters, motorbikes, auto-rickshaws, black taxies, jostling for space on the road. The pollution is so bad that the men on the motorbikes and scooters have a handkerchief wrapped around their faces -each time you stop at a red light, you see a row of men with black glasses and masks on their faces, as if the whole city were out on a bank heist that morning (WT, 133). [...]They say the air is so bad in Delhi that it takes ten years off a man's life (WT, 133). There was a fierce jam on the road to Gurgaon. Every five minutes the traffic would tremble - we'd move a foot - hope would rise - then the red lights would flash on the cars ahead of me and we'd be stuck again. Everyone honked. Every now and then, the various

horns, each with its own pitch, blended into one continuous wail that sounded like a calf taken from its mother (WT, 137).

....Full of things that the modern world forgot all about - rickshaws, old stone buildings and Muslims on a Sunday, though there is something more : if you keep pushing through the crowd that is always there, go past the men cleaning the other men's ears by poking rusty metal rods into them, past the men selling small fish trapped in green bottles full of brine, past the cheap shoe market and the cheap shirt market, you will come to the great second - hand book market of Darya Ganj (WT, 251-2).

Aravind Adiga explained the vast difference between the rich and the poor of India in all respects.

As Adiga said in an interview that

My background as a business journalist made me realize that most of what's written about in business magazines is bullshit and I don't take business or corporate literature seriously at all. India is being flooded with "how to be an Internet businessman" kinds of books and they're all dreadfully earnest and promise to turn you into Iacocca in a week. This is the kind of book that my narrator mentions, mockingly—he knows that life is a bit harder than these books promise. There are lots of self - made millionaires in India now, certainly and a lot of successful entrepreneurs. But remember that over a billion people live here and for the majority of them who are denied decent health care, education or employment, getting to the top would take doing something like what Balram has done (Adiga, 2008).

Adiga told about the lives of poor in Delhi and the lives of rich.

The rich of Delhi, to survive the winter, keep electrical heaters or gas heaters, or even burn logs of wood in their fireplaces. When the homeless or servants like night watchmen and drivers who are forced to spend time outside in winter, want to keep warm, they burn whatever they find on the ground. One of the best things to put in the fire is cellophane, the kind used to wrap fruits, vegetables and business books in: inside the flame, it changes its nature and melts into a clear fuel. The only problem is that while burning, it gives off a white smoke that makes your stomach churn (WT, 157).

The dreams of the rich and the dreams of the poor - they never overlap "...the poor dream all their lives of getting enough to eat and looking like the rich. And what do the rich dream of? Losing weight and looking like the poor" (WT, 225) [...] how the rich always get the best things in life and all that we get is their leftovers" (WT, 233) [...] all these construction workers who were building the malls and giant apartment buildings lived here. They were from a village in the darkness"(WT, 260). [...]

these people were building homes for the rich, but they lived in tents covered with blue tarpaulin sheets and partitioned into lanes by lines of sewage. It was even worse than Laxmangarh" (WT, 260).

Balram also described about the difference between Bangalore and Laxmangarh. This was the difference of 'choice'."...it is not as if you come to Bangalore and find that everyone is moral and upright here. This city has its share of thugs and politicians. It's just that here, if a man wants to be good, he can be good. In Laxmangarh, he doesn't even have his choice. That is the difference between this India and that India: the choice" (WT, 306).

Adiga also explained this difference with the reference of history.

...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: and it had been this way since the start of time. The poor win a few battles (the peeing in the potted plants, the kicking of the pet dogs, etc) but of course the rich have won the war for ten thousand years. That's why, one day, some wise men, out of compassion for the poor, which appears to be about roses and pretty girls and things like that, but when understood correctly spill out secrets that allow the poorest man on earth to conclude the ten-thousand -year-old brain-war on terms favorable to himself (WT, 254).

The homes of middle class and wealthy Indians are staffed by teams of servants who cater to their employer's every need. Born in poor states like Bihar or countries like Nepal and Bangladesh, these live-in drivers, cooks and cleaners often work twelve hours days and seven-days week. Despite the economic upswing that has enabled their bosses to decorate their homes with plasma televisions and purchase European cars, the lifestyles of domestic workers have only improved marginally in recent years. Their working conditions remain unregulated, and as India's population continues to grow at exponential rates, their wages remain low, from fifty to one-hundred and fifty dollars a month (Sawhney, 2008).

Balram Halwai, the eponymous 'white tiger', was a diminutive, over weight ex-teashop worker who now earned his living as a chauffeur. But this was only one side of his protean personality; he dealt in confidence scams, over ambitious business promotions and enjoyed approaching life with a philosophical turn of mind. But was Balram also a murderer? We learnt the answer as we devoured these 300 odd pages. Born into an impoverished family, Balram was removed from school by his parents in order to earn money in a thankless job: shop employee. He was forced into banal, mind -

numbering work. But Balram dreamed of escaping and a chance arose when a well-heeled village landlord took him on as a chauffeur for his son, Ashok and his wife Pinky. Ashok's main activity in Delhi turned out to be to bribe various ministers and politicians on behalf of the family's illicit coal business. Balram Halwai remained a superficial character. Once installed in an up market apartment block in Gurgaon, however, Adiga was clearly on more familiar ground, and in fact the portrayal of Balram's employer Ashok, seen through his driver's eyes, was much more complex and credible. America-returned Ashok was attached to his self - image as more liberal and caring than his feudal father and brother. He expressed concern over Balram's cockroach-infested living quarters. "You and Ram Persad will both get a better room to sleep in. And separate beds. And some privacy" (WT, 79) [...] "His eyes seemed full of wonder: how could two such contrasting specimens of humanity be produced by the same soil, sunlight and water?" (WT, 80)

Mr. Ashok was always kind to Balram. When they visited to Laxmangrah, Balram went to meet his family members and got late. Pinky madam yelled on him but Mr. Ashok took Balram's side. "Have a heart, Pinky. He was seeing his family. You know how close they are to their families in the Darkness" (WT, 88). Mr. Ashok was very caring master and he felt always sorry for the lack of comforts of the servants. In Delhi, when we went to Balram's apartment and saw some red marks on his hand and behind his ear, he immediately told him to get treated. He took responsibility for paying all the bills. "It's the twenty-first century, Balram. Anything can be treated. You go to the hospital and get it treated. Send me the bill, I'll pay it" (WT, 237).

When Pinky madam went back to America, Mr. Ashok beaten Balram almost try to kill him. Now, he became alone and Balram found that it was now his responsibility to take care of him like a wife. He went to his apartment, prepared food and fed him. He also told some jokes to feel him happy. After few days, the relationship became stronger than before. To cheer up the mood of Mr. Ashok he philosophized like Lord Krishna, joked, even sang a song so that he felt better finally, he said "Has there ever been a master- servant relationship like this one?" (WT, 86)

When Ashok demanded

'Take me to the kind of place you go to eat, Balram.'

'Sir?'

'I am sick of the food I eat, Balram. I'm sick of the life I lead. We rich people, we've lost our way, Balram. I want to be a simple man like you, Balram.'

'Yes, Sir.'

'Order for us, Balram. Order the commoner's food.'

I ordered okra, cauliflower, radish, spinach and *dhal* enough to feed a whole family, or one rich man. He ate and burped and ate some more.

'This food is fantastic. And just twenty five rupees! You people eat so well!'(WT, 238)

"Many of Adiga's readers, particularly NRIs might recognize something of themselves in this" (Wilson, 2009). As a driver, he began to understand the relation between master and servant in his culture, "The servant is nothing more than a throw away item to be used and discarded." (Johnson) When Ashok's wife demanded to drive after a wild night out with her husband, on the way home, she hit and killed a young child. No one saw the accident. Yet, to be safe, the landlord's family arranged for Balram to confess to the hit-and-run accident. Also, the dispensability of Ashok's principles was brought home when he agreed to his family's scheme to make Balram took the rap after his wife, Pinky.

Much of the second half of the book focuses in on the relationship between 'servant' and 'master' a relationship which grew increasingly obsessive on Balram's side. Adiga seemed to intend this as a metaphor for the current Indian economic model. There was much emphasis on the increasing polarization between rich and poor (which, according to Balram, had rendered all previously existing barriers of caste, community and gender obsolete!) But the India presented in *The White Tiger* had been demanded not only of its vast and varied middle class, but also its working class. People who had to wait for buses were all servants in the houses of the rich or destitute pavement dwellers; Delhi's call centre workers are all the daughter of the rich. By doing this - and by embodying the poor in Balram - a man apparently without human tied of any kind, inextricably bound to his employer, and only

desiring (literally) to become Ashok. Adiga avoided and elided any question of the possibility of challenges to the model itself.

India is a land of chicken coops. The Chicken coops have been in existence since Manu wrote that kings and priests came out of god's prettiest and purest body parts while, shit-eating lowly men and women came out of his holy anus. The chicken can move freely-two inches to the right and two inches to the left. If any chicken dares to poke its head out of the coop, a moment later the chicken's family can pull the stupid chicken back in, lament the lack of a head on it and bury it quickly. Once in a while there comes a daring chicken that thinks out of the coop. "Aravind Adiga's Man Booker Prize winning novel *The White Tiger* is about the chicken coop and a certain chicken that turns into a White Tiger" (Selva, 2008).

The story unfolded the way Balram broke out to his new found freedom from a caged life of misery through crime and cunning. This was a reflection of contemporary India, calling attention to social justice in the wake of economic prosperity. It was a novel about the emerging new India which was pivoted on the great divide between the haves and have-nots with moral implications. "Everyone thinks he should do what was written on his forehead but a fire in him burns and .moves him away from the established path of penury and servitude" (Selva, 2008). The key metaphor in the novel was of the Rooster Coop. Balram was caged like the chickens in the rooster coop. He, being a White Tiger, had to break out of the cage to freedom.

Go to old Delhi, behind the Jama Masjid, and look at the way they keep chicken there in the market. Hundreds of pale hens and brightly colored roosters, stuffed tightly into wire - mesh cages, packed as tightly as worms in a belly, pecking each other and shitting on each other, jostling just for breathing space; the whole cage giving off a horrible stench - the stench of terrified, feathered flesh, On the wooden desk above this coop sits a grinning young butcher, showing off the flesh and organs of a recently chopped - up chicken, still oleaginous with a coating of dark blood. The roosters in the coop smell the blood from above. 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" (WT, 173-4).

Balram decided to become a big bellied man, by resorting to corrupt ways he had learnt through bribery, crime, disregarding all civilized ways of life. His violent bid for freedom was shocking. "Did he make just another thug in India's urban Jungle or a revolutionary and idealist?" (Turpin) Adiga "strikes a fine balance between the sociology of the wretched place he has chosen as home and the twisted humanism of the outcast" (Prasannarajan, 2008). Balram broke away slowly from his family which was contrary to the Indian tradition where loyalty to one's family upholder moral principles. Through his criminal drive Balram became a businessman and runs a car service for the call centers in Bangalore.

"Above all, it's a vision of a society of people complicit in their own servitude: to paraphrase Balram, they are roosters guarding the coop, aware they're for the chop, yet unwilling to escape. Ultimately, the tiger refuses to stay caged. Balram's violent bid for freedom is shocking." (Turpin, 2008) The protagonist confirmed that the trust worthiness of servants was the basis of the entire Indian economy. This was a paradox and a mystery of India.

Because Indian's are the world's most honest people, like the prime minister's booklet will inform you?

No. It's because 99.9 percent of us are caught in the Rooster Coop just like those poor guys in the poultry market.

The Rooster Coop doesn't always work with minuscule sums of money. Don't test your chauffeur with a rupee coin or two - he may well steal that much. But leave a million dollars in front a servant and he won't touch a penny. Try it; leave a black bag with a million dollars in a Mumbai taxi. The taxi driver will call the police and return the money by the day's end. I guarantee it. (Whether the police will give it to you or not is another story, sir!) Masters trust their servants with diamonds in this country! It's true. Every evening on the train out of Surat where they run the world's biggest diamond - cutting and polishing business, the servants of diamond merchants are carrying suitcases full of cut diamonds that they have to give to someone in Mumbai. Why doesn't that servant take the suitcase full of diamonds? He's no Gandhi, he's human, and he's you and me. But he's in the Rooster coop. The trustworthiness of servants is the basis of the entire Indian economy.

The Great Indian Rooster Coop. Do you have something like it in China too? I doubt it, Mr. Jiabao. Or you wouldn't need the Communist Party to shoot people and a secret police to raid

their houses at night and put them in jail like I've heard you have over there. Here in India we have no dictatorship. No secret police. That's because we have the coop.

Never before in human history have so few owed so much to so many, Mr. Jaibao. A handful of men in this country have trained the remaining 99.9 percent, as strong, as talented, as intelligent in every way - to exist in perpetual servitude; servitude so strong that you can put the key of his emancipation in a man's hands and he will throw it back at you with a curse.

You'll have to come here and see it for yourself to believe it. Everyday millions wake up at dawn - stand in dirty, crowded buses - get off at their masters posh houses - and then clean the floors, wash the dishes, weed the garden, feed their children, press their feet - all for a pittance. I will never envy the rich of America or England, Mr. Jiabao: they have no servants there. They cannot even begin to understand what a good life is. Now, a thinking man like you, Mr. Premier, must ask two questions.

Why does the Rooster coop work? How does it trap so many millions of men and women so effectively?

Secondary, can a man break out of the coop? What if one day, for instance, a driver took his employer's money and ran? What would his life be like?

I will answer both for you, sir.

The answer to the first question is that the pride and glory of our nation, the repository of all our love and sacrifice, the subject of no doubt considerable space in the pamphlet that the prime minister will handover to you, the *Indian family*, is the reason we are trapped and tied to the coop.

The answer to the second question is 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. That would take no normal human being, but a freak, a pervert of nature (WT, 175-7).

Balram showed his perverted psychopathic nature by deciding to break out of the coop betraying his family and society. He had to suffer humiliation in the hands of his masters with ever increasing menial duties which climaxes in his being blackmailed when Ashok's wife Pinky killed a man in drunken driving. He was forced to sign a statement accepting full responsibility for the accident.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

I, Balram Halwai, son of Vikram Halwai, of Laxmangrah 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 23<sup>rd</sup> of this year. That I then panicked and refused to fulfill my obligations to

the injured party or parties by taking them to the nearest hospital emergency ward. That there were no other occupants of the car at the time of the accident. That I was alone in the car, and alone responsible for all that happened.

I swear by almighty God that I make this statement under no duress and under instruction from no one (WT, 168).

He has to suppress his embittered feelings being confined to the Rooster Coop. He cannot go contrary to his master's bidding. He was falsely implicated and forced to accept responsibility for a crime he had not committed. A remorse filled Pinky madam left Mr. Ashok for good in the middle of the night pushing a fat envelope with cash into Balram's hands. From then on, he had to play the wife - substitute for Mr. Ashok. He had to oversee his master's every need as he turned to heavy drinking. Left to control his master, Balram began to awaken from his reverie in the Rooster Coop. Having been a witness to all of Ashok's corrupted practices and gambling with money to buy politicians, to kill and to loot, Balram decided to steal and kill. Adiga spoke out his mind why he wrote the novel:

...I want to challenge this idea that India is the world's greatest democracy. It may be so in an objective sense, but on the ground, the poor have such little power... I wanted something that would provoke and annoy people ...The servant-master system implies two things: One is that the servants are far poorer than the rich-a servant has no possibility of ever catching up to the master. And secondly, he has access to the master-the master's money, the master's physical person. Yet crime rates in India are very low... What is stopping a poor man from taking to the crime that occurs in Venezuela or South Africa? You need two things (for crime to occur)-a divide and a conscious ideology of resentment. We don't have resentment in India. The poor just assume that the rich are a fact of life. For them, getting angry at the rich is like getting angry at the heat ...But I think we're seeing what I believe is a class-based resentment for the first time... (Sawhney, 2008).

Injustice and inequality had always been around us and we got used to it. How long could it go on? Social discontent and violence had been on the rise. What Adiga highlighted was the ever widening gap between the rich and poor and the economic system that lets a small minority to prosper at the expense of the majority. "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...The great divide" (Raaj, 9, 2008).

Commenting on a servants' viewpoint in the novel, Adiga wrote "It is his subjective views which are pretty depressing. There are also two crimes that he commits: His roles and he kills, and by no means do I expect a reader to sympathize with both the crimes. He's not meant to be a figure whose views you should accept entirely. There's evidence within the novel that the system is more flexible than Balram suggests, and it is breaking down faster than he claims. And within the story I hope that Balram suggests, and it is breaking down faster than he claims. And within the story I hope that there's evidence of servants cheating the masters systematically... to suggest a person's capacity for evil or vice is to grant them respect - is to acknowledge their capacity for volition and freedom of choice" (Sawhney, 2008).

When he planned meticulously how to snatch Ashok's huge money bag he would get out of his Rooster Coop and would take a plunge into the entrepreneur's world. He never gave up the fight for survival like the freak white tiger. While visiting the National Zoo in Delhi he told Dharam "Let animals live like animals; let humans live like humans. That's my whole philosophy in a sentence" (WT, 276). When he chanced to see the white tiger in the enclosure, he began his musings:

...Not any kind of tiger.

The creature that gets born only once every generation in the jungle.

I watched him walk behind the bamboo bars. Black strips and sunlit white fur flashed through the slits in the dark bamboo; it was like watching the slowed -down reels of an old black-and-white film. He was walking in the same line, again and again-from one end of the bamboo bars to the other, then turning around and repeating it over, at exactly the same pace, like a thing under a spell. He was hypnotizing himself by walking like this that was the only way he could tolerate this cage. Then the thing behind the bamboo bars stopped moving. It turned its face to my face. The tiger's eyes met my eyes, like my master's eyes have met mine so often in the mirror of the car. All at once, the tiger vanished. A tingling went from the base of my spine into my groin. My knees began to shake, I felt light (WT, 276-7).

It was the experience of being hypnotized by the tiger that energized the criminal in him to be blood thirsty and took law into his own hands. The more he was educated, he became more corrupt, and the reader's sympathy for the psychopath never dwindles. The Rooster Coop continued to exist

like a never ending oppressive system, "The Rooster coop was doing its work, and Servants have to keep other servants from becoming innovators, experimenters, or entrepreneurs... The coop is guarded from the inside" (WT, 194). An Andrew Holgate opined, "Rather than encouraging freedom and "enterprise", everything in this system... landlords, family, education, politics... seems designed specifically to suppress them" (Holgate, 2008).

Balram escaping from the Coop was a servant turned villain and a murderer who became a self - proclaimed entrepreneur who called himself "I'm tomorrow" (WT, 6). He subscribed to a philosophy of future with hope. As he waited to board a train he got on to weight machine which represented for him "final alarm bell of the Rooster Coop. The sirens of the coop were ringing - its wheels turning- its red lights flashing! A rooster was escaping from the coop! A hand was thrust out – I was picked up by the neck and shoved back into the coop. I picked the chit up and re - read it" (WT, 248). His subconscious kept haunting him of his escape from the coop of his past oppression. Moving from train to train he kept his track untraceable by the law enforcing agencies who had advertised his pictured as a wanted man.

Life in Bangalore had to be that of a fugitive as "White Tiger keeps no friends. It's too dangerous" (WT, 302). But he had to keep in touch with the world of the road and the pavement where he received his education to freedom. Speaking of the socialist leaders in Bangalore on whom people placed their hope of revolution.

Keep your ears open in Bangalore - in any city or town in India - and you will hear stirrings, rumors, threats of insurrection. Men sit under lampposts at night and read. Men huddle together and discuss and point fingers to the heavens. One night, will they all join together - will they destroy the Rooster coop?...May be once in a hundred years there is a revolution that frees the poor (WT, 303).

Sitting in his comfortable office as an entrepreneur living in the world centre of technology and outsourcing, Balram was confident that he will not be caught by law enforcing

agents as he had stepped out of the coop of his past. "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" (WT, 320-1).

In portraying the character of Balram, Adiga had excelled in projecting a 'typical psychopath/sociopath, our society can churn out. In "Behavioral Traits of Psychopaths," Jennifer Copley points out : "While most people's actions are guided by a number of factors, such as the desire to avoid hurting other people, the Psychopath selects a course of action based on only one factor - what can he get out of it. This cold - blooded mode of reasoning enables the psychopath to commit acts that most people's consciences would not allow" (Copley, 2008). Psychopaths were also known as sociopaths who were manipulative, deceitful, impulsive, lacking self - restraint, and inclined to take risks. They were "Callous, deceitful, reckless, guiltless... The psychopath understands the wishes and concerns of others; he simply does not care... The psychopath believes that rules and morals are for other, weaker people who obey because they fear punishment" (Adams, 2008) ... All these traits are found in Balram who went about heroically planning his heinous crimes.

In the 1940's African- American author Richard Wright's *Native Son* told a similar tale about a poor black man named Bigger Thomas, but there are two important differences. One is that the Balram Halwai character easily gets away with his crime, and the second is that Balram's character never actually changes: he already has a self-described model of how the world works and of his place in it (Apte, 2008).

Balram was exceptional and beyond his circumstances, a rare "White Tiger" amongst his generation. He achieved that which seemed impossible - to break free from the chains of his poverty, lack of education and low social status to develop a business of which he was the master - rather than the servant. Balram's amoral attitude made him unlikeable, but his circumstances created within us a feeling of sympathy and compassion. Adiga skillfully weaved a multifaceted picture of India and its people that stirred similar conflicting response from us, driving the story forward and drawing the reader into this blackly humorous, insightful and thought-provoking tale.

But with his sinister humor and storytelling virtuosity, Balram traced one nobody's reckless route to status and security. Even now, most will never follow him. Yet, as any visitor grasped, the country kept the place to a baffling violence, most of India remains miraculously civilized in everyday life.

Adiga grabs our hands and places it on the pulse of new India, the India which like the moon shines brightly on one face and is utterly dark on the other. He grabs our face and rubs it on the unwashed underbelly of real India (as opposed to pretend India where the chicken masters live). The real India is where private car drivers wait for three hours while their masters have their nails manicured and their butts wiped, where a poor child is taken out of school to walk a dog that wears a silk scarf. If reality is what majority agree to, then real India is where poor people live and how they live (or die), all else is pretend India. A few may cross over to Light from Darkness but that's only a few. Even a Revolution cannot turn the Darkness into Light in India. Besides, Revolutions are not for India (again, like the moon). They are for countries like China where one man can decide to starve a hundred million chickens because they are dead weight when making The Great Leap Forward.

Adiga captures both the opportunities and the rottenness that pervades our society and out time with unceremonious and in your face narrative. The novel frames the issues from a very one - sided angle that of the intelligent but culturally and ethically impoverished protagonist. This is by design however; it does make the novel limited in scope. Nevertheless, the novel succeeds in pressing home the colluding factors that make or break a person born to poverty and the senselessness of the suffering that millions of Indians go through every day. Between the lines that tell Munna's story, the stink of India viscerally penetrates our minds that the story lingers in one's head long after the book is finished.

**Statistics show how poverty is on the rise in India:**

- i) 4 in every 10 Indian children are malnourished according to a UN report.

ii) India Ranks a lowly 66 out of 88 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2008. The report says India has more hungry people - more than 200 million - than any other country in the world.

iii) One third of the world's poor live in India, according to the latest poverty estimates from the World Bank. Based on its new threshold of poverty - \$ 1.25 a day - the number of poor people has gone up from 421 million in 1981 to 456 million in 2005.

iv) India ranks 128 out of 177 countries in the UN's Human Development Index  
Aravind Adiga's story of a rickshawallah's move from the "darkness" of rural India to the "light" of urban Gurgaon reminds us of the harsh facts behind the fiction (Raaj, 9, 2008).

Excessive economic inequalities and unwarranted delay in applying the remedies for them are often the causes of such dissention. Besides, quest for power and total disregard for human rights helps escalate violence and strife among men. There is need for organizations that promote peace among men. Remedial measures have to be taken by Government and law makers to prevent rampant corruption and oppression of the downtrodden. Let not the *law of the jungle* prevails as Adiga has proven through his protagonist. Mere anarchy and chaos will prevail if an evil is hatched to counter another evil.

There are some Indian's who wonder if the award was given to *The White Tiger* to mar the face of India in the international arena as she is becoming a global economic power. Is the west exposing our poverty and unrest to hurt our national pride? Such fears are baseless as Adiga has brought out a fable with superb mingling of his observations. Though several critics have raised eyebrows stating that Adiga has not depicted the brave new India in a sufficiently glowing light, David Godwin comes to his rescue saying, "It really isn't the job of a writer to be the ambassador for his country. A writer's commitment is to the truth as he sees it" (Roy, 4, 2008). Manjula Padmanabhan, author and playwright, is very critical of Adiga when she says that the book is "a tedious, unfunny slog ...compelling, angry and darkly humorous... But is this school boyish sneering the best that we can do? Is it enough to paint an ugly picture and then suggest that the way out is to slit the oppressor's throat and become an oppressor oneself?" (Padmanabhan, 2008) Whatever be the critical appraisal, as Gurcharan Das would opine, "A book

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should not be judged on the basis of whether it creates a negative or positive picture of a country. It should be seen as a work of art and judged on its literary merits" (Das, 2008).

However, *The White Tiger* should make every right thinking citizen to read the signs of the times and be socially conscious of the rights and duties of each one, irrespective of cast, creed or economic status, to prevent create the types of Ashok and Balram in our society. No use building giant cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata where the residents do not have enough water, transport and electricity. India should become a country of smaller cities and towns. All that the government and industry have to do is to select suitable areas where offices or industries can be conveniently located. In each of these places, the government and private enterprise must provide a good school, a college and a hospital. They are already spending that money but mostly in big cities. Let them do it in smaller new and old towns and the people will do the rest.

It was pleasantly surprised to find a most unlikely person knowing what India needs. Ironically, he is the king of high fashion, Pierre Cardin, who was in India. What would he be planning for India? Making India dazzle in fashion so that he could earn his millions? His reading of the Indian situation was remarkably wise:

I have not come here to dress 10 rich women; they can come to Paris to buy my clothes. I will be happy to dress one million Indians in the street. Because your country is a poor country, I did not want to come here with eccentric clothes. You will look ridiculous in sophisticated clothes and I am not ridiculous (Verma, 2008).

This is the true message for India - We must look to the millions, not just the few who, through segments of golf clubs and five star hotels, make India seem desirable. But India lives beyond. While we let those few make the millions that will help India, let us also let the others make themselves and also India.

