

The white tiger by aravind adiga essay



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The White Tiger, published in 2008, is an epistolary novel written by the Indian author Aravind Adiga. It is a story about a low cast Indian named Balram. Balram exploits all opportunities to break free from the so-called rooster coop. Ultimately he succeeds, though under a terrible cost. Aravind Adiga shows his readers India like they have never seen before; the crooked cast system, the ever-present corruption and the pretence of freedom.

Choosing a narrative format for his story, Aravind Adiga is also enabled to show his readers Balram's thoughts. The storyline, the characters and Adiga's writing style cause the reader to be sucked into the book from the very beginning. The White Tiger takes place in India. Adiga himself grew up in India and while writing the story, he clearly criticised its society. A reason for this may be that Adiga moved to Australia, where he presumably realised many Indian habits and aspects of society are problematic: the cast system, the corruption, etc.

It is highly assumable that this was also his main aim of writing the story: to aware the reader of the negative sides of the Indian society. In the next three paragraphs we will focus on the Indian society described by Adiga. In the book, Balram narrates his entire life story to the Chinese premier. He tells the premier that he was born in a little village named Laxmangarh, located in the rural areas of India, an area that is called "The Darkness".

Aravind Adiga describes the village like any other village in "The Darkness": "Your Excellency, 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. Yes, a typical Indian village paradise, Mr. Jiabao. ” In this paragraph Adiga clearly states the difference between Indian society and Indian society people hear about. This also substantiates the following statement made in *The White Tiger*: “ One fact about India is that you can take almost anything you hear about the country from the prime minister and turn it upside down and then you will have the truth about that thing. Adiga’s aim of these two texts is to show Indian politicians are liars and one should not always believe what he or she hears about India. To get back to Laxmangarh, this is where Balram’s entire youth takes place, so the reader gets to know the situation in the village in detail. Three landlords control the entire village, from its trade to its politics. The other villagers are poor and entirely dependant on the three landlords. To maintain this power, the landlords keep money away from the other villagers and corrupt elections to stay in power.

Because the villagers have nearly no money, they are unable to keep their children in school and this leads to another low educated generation. For this reason, the situation in the village does not change a lot over time. This shows us the basic principle of the cast system: someone born in a certain

cast will stay in that cast for a lifetime. The cast system is also the founder of the rooster coop, a topic to which Adiga devotes several pages. The rooster coop is the similarity between chickens living under bare circumstances in too small cages and Indian servants: neither one can escape from its “ cage”.

So though India is officially an independent country and the inhabitants have civil rights, they are nevertheless captured in the rooster coop. The cast system and the rooster coop are recurrent themes throughout the entire book. When Balram escapes from Laxmangarh, he becomes the driver of Mr. Ashok and his family. Balram discovers that Mr. Ashok frequently brings a red bag filled with money to politicians, so his family business does not have to pay taxes. This corruption is an aspect of Indian society that Adiga criticises a lot: elections being won by a party that bribed the entire village; doctors who refuse to go to hospitals, thus bribing administration staff; and the red bag filled with money. Ironically, this red bag was ultimately a way for Balram to escape from the rooster coop, resulting in death for Mr. Ashok. These examples given, it is clear Adiga’s main focus is the Indian society and more specifically its negative sides. There is however a hidden message that may or may not have added to Adiga’s motive for writing the book, which we will discuss either way.

An ethical question the reader asks him or herself while reading the last chapters. Is Balram’s choice of murdering Mr. Ashok the right choice? Many people will respond to this with a definite “ no, murdering is unethical, no matter what”. There are of course also more substantiated reasons for this point of view: Mr. Ashok was often nice to Balram; by killing Mr. Ashok, he

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endangered his own family; and what about loyalty? There are however, also reasons to believe murdering Mr. Ashok was ethically right.

For example, after Balram became an entrepreneur, he was able to send his cousin Dharam to school, to employ boys in and most importantly, it was the only way in which he could break free from the cast system, a system that has damaged him, his family and the majority of the Indians. The answer on the question is personal. Nevertheless is Adiga capable of creating sympathy in all his readers for Balram, despite the fact he is a cold-blooded murderer. A servant. An entrepreneur. An exception.