

**Bridging the Communication Gap: An Analytical Study of the Selected Themes of The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga**

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| ***Article history:*** |  | **Abstract** |
| Submitted: 3.12.2021Revised: 16.02.2022Accepted: 20.02.2022 |  | The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga voices the story of an underprivileged Indian man who desires to put an end to his dark and poor life. The entire novel is revealed through letters in which he addresses some Chinese premier who wants to visit and discover India. He wants to be different than his family and peer group. Balram, the protagonist of the novel, wants to reach the bliss of the riches. The story fascinates many readers across the world. The communication gap between the master and the servant serves as the core conflict of the novel. A constant struggle between the fortunate and the less fortunate reaches its peak towards the end of the Booker Prize-winning literary work. The novel showcases a modern-day outlook towards a capitalist Indian society with free market. Psychological implications of the miscommunication trigger the actions in the masterpiece of Adiga. The themes that reflect the need for communication between the characters is an important criterion to discover. The paper has dealt with the exploration of selected themes like miscommunication, psychological barricades, economic struggles, social inequalities, corruption, entrepreneurship, education and blurring lines of morality to name a few. Selected models of communication have been applied in accordance with the communication discussed in the novel. It is an honest attempt to focus on the possible solutions to the problems and issues presented in the novel. |
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**1 Introduction**

A novel expresses an artist. The form can reflect a thought process that can be associated with a region, culture and, traditions. With the discussions on culture, there is no better country to portray the multitudes like the Indian one. Whether it is folklore or writing, the values that shape the morality, way of thinking and standards are focused on all the forms alike. The societal outlook in India is an area which has been the concern of several people. Qualities and cognitive processes are subconsciously rooted in one’s own family. Cognitive or *Jnyanam* as in Sanskrit forms an important part of understanding of characters. Additionally, these according to times are changed by the peer group and educationalists. Indeed, even the more extensive network and society sculpts our values. Society and circumstances eventually determine the path of one’s eventual morality and behaviour. Truth is the thing that we speak. Truthfulness, genuineness, decency, respect and respectability are all the inclusive standards of the society. These standards are genuinely fundamental for social and individual endurance. Typically, one’s conduct uncovers decisions, and these decisions depend on the qualities one pursues. Amongst the virtues we generally pick what is best for us and best for other people. In the post-pandemic society we need to reimagine a world without hatred. To rebuild the communities worldwide, it is essential that the novel, *The White Tiger* be taken as an example of how things can work only if we bridge the communication gap.

**A Word on the Author**

Aravind Adiga won the Man Booker Prize 2008 for his epistolary novel *The White Tiger*. He was the fourth Indian to win the Booker Prize for his novel. His novel is about common India and the urban India. He pictures the ‘truth’ legitimately from one’s introduction to the world to one’s death. He makes it astoundingly apparent that his endeavour is a reflection of his experiences in different areas of India. He writes in all the major parts of his novel that social commitments of the people usually rely on the social assessments of individuals. He advances human characteristics and social government assistance and is strongly critical of excess of riches in the hands of the fortunate few. He clearly warns about the dangers of a majority of the less fortunate and underprivileged in a society. He has provided a new dimension to Indian fiction by realistically portraying the dangers of the miscommunication especially when it comes to the issues of basic needs. Aravind Adiga being from Chennai does a fine job of portraying the Indian society in his novel. His ideas of ‘darkness’ and ‘light’ create an interest amongst all the readers. He provides a crystal-clear insight into the lives of the service class. The elements of dark humour are interwoven to make the readers understand how a driver is forced into committing a murder, robbery and selecting crime to be successfully recognized as an entrepreneur.

The prime thought process of this book is to bring about an awareness about the crimes related to the shades of hatred. Usually, a crime is considered as a hallmark of evil. The novel gives an extra dimension to murder and related stealing as a stepping stone to success without repentance. To search for the correct answers for these socio-economic issues is an enormous task. The White Tiger’s depiction of social authenticity has exceedingly changed the landscape of the changing times. Despite the circumstances, the novel depicts that period in which people perceived India and China as new emerging economic powers. It is a clever portrayal of the restructuring of the world economic order and also the underlying social tensions. The Storks, in their behaviour, do not realise the damage they have done to different communities in the rural areas. Their communication lacks basic humanity and politeness, which is usually a part of downward communication in any organisational structure. Miscommunication results in further worsening of the conditions of many underprivileged people. The ‘Rooster Coop’, as Balram describes results from the misbehaviour of the masters who are the landlords. There are many people who silently suffer under the unjust tyranny of the four landlords. Many people who want to change their destiny cannot do so because the economic hardships hamper them. A lot needs a transition, but few realise it. Balram is the one who comprehends the situation well.

Adiga’s clarity in the study of a person and his adaptability to his changing social circumstances and his rebellion is praiseworthy. Adiga voices the prevalent simple inclinations of a man whose journey could be a mix of shock, grief, and burden. The stable Indian, Balram, lives a lifetime of two or three layers and everything about his story is indistinguishably interactive with others. Poverty is one such layer and it’s a really a crucial issue for him. The author’s validity exists in the depiction of an overall population inside which the corruption issue works regularly. The brilliant work of Adiga turns round the social lifetime of a standard person. His basic studies of the feeling of deprivation and the wish for more in a human being moves Balram to the world of crime. He has discovered the meagerness of the life and has showed the low points of the mind of an underprivileged individual which explains a criminal act as a necessity. It is important for Balram to achieve his goal of socio-economic upliftment or *Unnati* as in Sanskrit. Adiga’s portrayal of characters and things are realistic. Adiga’s gathering up the problems, issues and expectations of the lower section of society involved as the monetary extensions of the seemingly great economic powers of the future or *Agami* as in Sanskrit are at large good reading but mostly overlooked lessons by the upper classes. Indian culture is so trapped in the class system that upward bound individuals are occasional and unfortunately when they are available their talent or *guna* as in Sanskrit is normally unheeded by the fortunate ones. The absolute distinctiveness of Adiga’s subject and his way of projecting his tale renders it weak to criticism. The only objection by the elite people remains that this work shows Indian upper society and politics in a highly critical manner. That Balram joins the same elite group is the irony of this objection thereby proving that the system is really flawed.

**2 Literature Review**

The research “Poor-Rich Divide in Aravind Adiga’s The White Tiger” by A.J. Sebastian was submitted to the Nagaland University in 2009. This research aims to trace the huge poor-rich split portrayed in The White Tiger, which has catastrophic ramifications if left unaddressed. The narrative reveals the poor-rich split that has surrounded India in the midst of economic success in the aftermath of the IT revolution. Balram Halwai transforms into his master’s duplicate following his horrible deed. Balram leads his entrepreneurial world via criminality and guile in the name of social injustice caused by India’s current rich-poor split. Through these elements, the study/paper will explain the economic variation. The paper “Social Consciousness in Aravind Adiga’s The White Tiger” by Dr. Waghmare Balkrishna Dada was submitted to Aayushi International Interdisciplinary Research Journal in January 2021. This research investigates social consciousness as a response to social injustice, whether experienced by the person or in the lives of those around the individual. The paper “A Comparative Study of Human and Societal Values in Aravind Adiga’s The White Tiger” by Dr. L. M. Swarnalatha, discusses several terrible systems such as election riots, corruption, poverty, unemployment, the educational system, and the misuse of welfare programmes The protagonist’s life circumstances lead him to greater goals, and he nurtures a desire of getting wealthy at any cost. When Balram learns that the only way to become rich and renowned is to murder his master and survive the storm, things take a turn for the worst. Through these elements, the study/paper will cover the aspect of dishonesty in human beings for their own greed.The study “Class Stratification in Aravind Adiga’s The White Tiger” by Iqra Shagufta & Noor-ul-Qamar Qasmi was submitted to the International Journal in English in 2013. This paper explores the protagonist Balram’s journey from poverty to riches in the midst of a ferocious class battle, exploitation, amorality, and growing globalisation. In the narrative, Balram points out that India is divided into two parts: India of Light and India of Darkness. It emphasizes class division in Indian culture and the subcontinent, with Balram portrayed as a working-class hero. It also predicts the future of unjust class divide, which will result in the capitalists’ overthrow. It also verifies the authenticity and applicability of Marxist principles by highlighting numerous splits and fissures within Indian society.The research “Rise by sin or fall by virtue: A Marxist study of class consciousness in The white tiger” by Zarina Qasim and Shaehroz Anjum Butt is a research that that seeks to analyze and define the phenomena of class awareness while preserving social stratification at its core. The primary goal of this research is to investigate the nature of class consciousness as it manifests itself in Adiga’s The White Tiger, a selected postcolonial novel. It considers the rich-poor split, which may be appropriately represented by drawing inspiration from the notions of class and class consciousness displayed in Marxist critical theory. Furthermore, the study seeks to determine if the level of class consciousness acquired by members of the working class qualifies them to be free of the shackles of class slavery.The paper “Negative Impact of Globalization and Changing Values, Morals in Arvind Adiga’s The White Tiger” by Balasaheb Bawake investigates the primary functions of values and persuades the reader that morality is an informal system that gives a distinctive direction to conduct in every moral situations. It is critical to recognize that globalization has a direct and profound impact on people’s lives, affecting them both favorably and badly. As a result, globalization and changing values and morals have a negative impact.The research “Darkness, Light and Beyond: Reading Aravind Adiga’s The White Tiger” by Sheikh Mehedi Hasan attempts to analyse how Aravind Adiga’s The White Tiger juxtaposes the two opposing aspects of contemporary Indian culture and politics via the unique character Balram Halwai. It intends to investigate to what extent Balram is able to escape from the Darkness and enter the Light, to what extent he is controlled by social hierarchies and functions of power when attempting to break free from the chain of servitude, to what extent the world of Light illuminates his persona, and to what extent he is able to resist the system and go beyond the so-called Dark-Light binary.The paper “An Application of Strain Theory in Aravind Adiga’s Postmodern Indian Fiction: The White Tiger” by A. Hariharasudan and S. Robert Gnanamony explores the aspects of strain theory in The White Tiger. After the 1950s, strain theory emerges in the fields of sociology and criminology. This hypothesis is concerned with persons who commit crimes as a result of social pressure to reach a high level of living. Balram, the key character in this work by Aravind Adiga, simply dismisses his professional ethics; he is not loyal to his boss and commits crime. As a result, the applicability of Strain theory in this novel is demonstrated.The paper “The Theme of Corruption and Moral Decadence in Arvind Adiga’s The White Tiger” by Sushil Sarkar addresses the novel’s gloomy depictions of India, such as widespread malpractices that cause the poor to suffer. Corruption and the bribing procedure in India have tarnished the morals of the dazzling India. The government officials have photos or statues of Gandhi, but the situation is different since they are more interested in Gandhi on the notes. He also finishes by addressing the novel’s Protagonist Balram, a hero who does not elevate himself to the level of a genuine hero, but rather becomes a morally damaged hero.The study “The Elements of Subalternity in ‘The White Tiger” by Nidhi Singh Chauhan, A.K.Chaturvedi and Monika Singh investigates the elements of the lower society present in the novel. Balram, the novel’s protagonist, is a symbol of the shifting subaltern in India’s middle class.

**3 Materials and Methods**

The archival and library methods were useful in conducting the research. The website of the Internet Archive was extremely helpful while conducting this research. Especially the data on Epidemiology was handy to understand the consequences of health difficulties in creating a rich-poor gap. The Harper Collins version of the novel under study formed a part of the primary source.

As per the data across the world, the pandemic has been creating chaos and divide between the economic classes. In families with children attending school, their need for devices also increased (Voghel, 2021). In the novel under study, the protagonist is also fascinated to learn new things at the school but the family does not cooperate.

**4 Analysis of the Communications in the Novel**

Communications portray diverse dimensions in the novel. These communications have an ascending influence on the life of the protagonist. It is through the diverse psychological dimensions that we can map the journey from Balram to Ashok Sharma. They play a vital role in developing the action in the novel. Words become the fuel for the thought process of the protagonist who is motivated enough to execute his plans of reaching the apex of the riches although the means may not be just.

In the beginning of the novel, an inspector recognizes the talent (also known as *guna* in Sanskrit) of Balram. He declares Balram as the white tiger because of the exceptional and prompt answer. This inspires Balram to foster his ambitions to reach the ‘Light’. The ambitions get a much-needed boost, although Balram has to unfortunately leave the school later to help his family. The White Tiger is a rare animal who is born once in a generation, according to the novel. Balram starts his journey well. Poverty challenges him, but does not deter his ambitions of becoming rich. Harold Lasswell’s model of communication, which was propounded in 1948, can be useful to understand Balram’s progress. The source who is the inspector utters the words of motivation which form the message content. The receiver, Balram, comprehends the message content and shows observable and measurable change which the reader can analyse in the novel.

The communication between the Balram’s family (also known as *kutumbah* in Sanskrit) and Balram is an interesting one, too. One can easily observe that the family wants to escape the hardships of poverty at any cost. Balram is their glimmer of hope so they send him to the town. Kusum, who is an elderly woman and Balram’s grandmother, has conversations which indicate her control over the family. She is the person responsible for Balram’s dropping out of the school. The protagonist of the story has to face many hardships and mental stress due to the demands of marriage by Kusum and the family. Although, he successfully counters the stress.

Another angle that forms an important aspect of communication is the interaction between Balram and Mr. Ashok. Balram moves to Dhanbad, decides to become a chauffeur, and manages to find an employment as the second driver for Mr. Ashok, the son of ‘the Stork,’ what villagers back home address the local landlord. Balram performs any menial chore asked of him without question, but he soon succeeds to blackmail his way into being the sole driver. Balram had long since understood that politicians make fake promises to improve the lives of the underprivileged, but as a chauffeur, he is able to witness political corruption directly. Mr. Ashok and his brother, Mukesh, are trying to bribe their way out of a large tax bill owed to the Great Socialist, the leader of India. Mr. Ashok is generally a nice person who helps Balram but is passive and indecisive when it comes to difficult situations. Ashok does not understand the aspirations of Pinky and refuses to honour her wish that both should return back to America. His quarrels with Pinky madam who is his wife indicate his lack of understanding and miscommunication. Balram, on the other hand impresses Pinky madam with his mannerisms.

One night, Pinky Madam, drives while intoxicated and accidently kills a child. Her protests drive the family to force Balram to sign a statement of responsibility of the accident. But as no one reports the death, he doesn’t go to jail. After Pinky abandons Ashok to return to America, Balram gets closer to Mr. Ashok, but his master still treats him like a poor servant also known as *nirdhana* *sevaka* in Sanskrit. These communications can be understood through different models of communication like the Charles E. Osgood’s model or Schramm’s model.

Balram tries hard to convince Mr. Ashok to return to sanity or consciousness and live a righteous life but in vain. Ultimately, he realizes that the ‘rooster coop’ mentality is too deeply engraved in the poor Indians. He is left with little choice and kills Mr. Ashok. After the master is killed, Balram takes away the money and starts his new business in Bangalore. Although this does not fit in the conventions of morality of an individual, he mentions it proudly in one of his letters to the Chinese premier in the following words,

 ‘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.’ (Adiga, 2021, p. 321)

There are several problems mentioned in the novel which may have been solved if right communication was stressed instead of abusing power like The Stork. The root or *mula* as in Sanskrit of the problem is located in the psychological mindset of dominating the servants come what may. This rich-poor divide ultimately results in the disastrous scenario for Ashok. The corruption is rampant and honest portrayal of it on the literary landscape is one of the best things that makes Adiga’s work even more effective. The solution to most of the problems lies in the conversations and non-verbal behaviour. Albert Mehrabian, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, University of California, Los Angeles is an expert in the field of understanding communications has developed a game-changing model of communication. This model focuses on the significance of non-verbal elements in communication. According to him, 7 percent of meaning lies in the spoken words, 38 percent is paralinguistic (the manner in which words are said) and 55 percent of meaning is conveyed through facial expressions.

**5 Results and Discussions**

Had the landlords adopted a proper communication and shown little humanity, things would have been a little different from they were towards the end of the novel. Non-verbal behaviour which shows politeness can assist the fortunate ones to create a better society than what is shown in the novel. Additionally, the concentration of money in the hands of few needs to be checked by the government in order to create harmony amongst the masses.

**6 Conclusion**

Both Ashok and Balram are flawed characters. The development of such characters can be avoided in real life by following simple rules of communication and cherishing of the values of honesty and integrity. The White Tiger is a reminder of the hazards of the excess of money and abuse of power by a few. Right communication and correct psychological mindset are essential to make a difference to this world. Rights and duties of all the citizens in a country need to be protected regardless of the diversity. An equal society can prosper if excellent communication skills are fostered, which can ultimately result in creating a better nation.

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