

**A SOCIO-LITERARY EXPLORATION OF CONTEMPORARY INDIA THROUGH
ARAVIND ADIGA'S MAJOR NOVELS: URBANIZATION, CAPITALISM, CLASS
CONFLICT AND THE POLITICS OF MODERNITY**

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Abstract

Aravind Adiga's fictional universe provides one of the sharpest literary critiques of post-liberalization India. Across his five major novels—*The White Tiger* (2008), *Between the Assassinations* (2008), *Last Man in Tower* (2011), *Selection Day* (2016), and *Amnesty* (2020)—Adiga examines the tensions between development and deprivation, aspiration and exploitation, and modernity and marginalization. This paper explores how his works collectively portray the social, political, and economic contradictions of contemporary India. Using a socio-literary approach grounded in Marxism, urban sociology, and postcolonial theory, this paper argues that Adiga forges a multi-layered narrative landscape that mirrors the fragmented realities of neoliberal India.

Introduction

Aravind Adiga emerges as one of the most significant contemporary Indian English novelists whose works function as an unflinching commentary on India's rapid socio-economic transformation. His novels are deeply rooted in the complexities produced by globalization, urban expansion, neoliberal capitalism, and class hierarchies. By portraying the struggles of marginalized individuals across cities, towns, and migrant spaces, Adiga foregrounds the human cost of modernity.

This paper expands its focus beyond the commonly studied three novels to include five of Adiga's major works. Each novel reveals a different facet of contemporary India—rural discrimination, urban chaos, middle-class anxiety, sports commercialization, and migrant precarity. Together, they form a holistic social portrait of India in transition.

Urbanization and the Fragmented City

Urbanization is one of the most dominant forces shaping Adiga's fictional worlds. In *Last Man in Tower*, Mumbai becomes the epicenter of violent urban development. Gated towers, corporate builders, and real-estate mafia reshape the city at the cost of dignity and community life. The Vishram Society becomes a microcosm of a city struggling to accommodate capitalistic expansion.

In *The White Tiger*, Balram Halwai's journey from a village in the 'Darkness' to Delhi and Bangalore uncovers the moral chaos and structural inequalities embedded within India's new cities. Urbanization reproduces class hierarchies while promoting the illusion of opportunity.

Between the Assassinations portrays Kittur as a small town undergoing early modernization. Through interconnected stories, Adiga exposes how urban pressures alter caste, economy, and identity.

In *Amnesty*, Sydney becomes a symbolic global city where undocumented migrants struggle with fear, invisibility, and exploitation. Although set outside India, it reflects the socio-economic displacement that pushes migrants abroad.

Capitalism and the Neoliberal Economy

Adiga's five novels offer a sustained critique of neoliberal capitalism. In *The White Tiger*, Balram represents the new entrepreneurial class shaped by ambition and exploitation. In *Last Man in Tower*, real-estate capitalism corrodes ethical values and dismantles community bonds.

Selection Day uses cricket as a metaphor for commodification, where talent becomes a product marketed by coaches, scouts, and corporations. Meanwhile, *Amnesty* examines global capitalism's darker side through the life of Dhananjaya, an undocumented worker trapped in a system that thrives on invisibility.

Between the Assassinations reveals early forms of capitalist behavior—local elites manipulating caste and labour for profit.

Class Conflict and Social Inequalities

Class conflict lies at the center of Adiga's socio-literary vision. *The White Tiger* exposes the 'Rooster Coop'—a metaphor for psychological imprisonment of the poor. In *Between the Assassinations*, caste and class intersect, restricting mobility. *Last Man in Tower* shows class becoming fluid yet fractured within Mumbai's middle class. *Selection Day* highlights how lower-middle-class families struggle against structural barriers in elite sports. *Amnesty* expands class conflict transnationally, depicting migrants who occupy the lowest rung of the global class hierarchy.

The Politics of Modernity

Modernity in Adiga's works embodies contradiction. It promises opportunity while demanding moral compromise, expands cities while displacing communities, and encourages ambition while commodifying dreams. Balam becomes a ruthless modern entrepreneur; Masterji becomes a martyr resisting capitalist pressure; Manju becomes a victim of parental, societal, and neoliberal expectations; Dhananjaya becomes the face of global migrant precarity; Kittur's characters reflect early modern anxieties. Through these figures, Adiga critiques the psychological and social costs of modernity.

Conclusion

Examining all five major novels establishes that Aravind Adiga's body of work offers a comprehensive socio-literary critique of contemporary India. From urban chaos and capitalist violence to caste oppression and migrant vulnerability, his narratives reflect the fractures underlying India's development story. Adiga's fiction not only documents modernity but also interrogates its contradictions, making his work essential for understanding the complexities of 21st-century India.

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