

Globalization and Class Struggle: A Critical Analysis of *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in Tower*

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Abstract

In the works of Aravind Adiga, particularly *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in Tower*, globalization and class struggle serve as significant thematic concerns. Both novels offer a vivid portrayal of India's evolving socio-economic landscape, emphasizing the impact of global forces on local realities. In *The White Tiger*, the protagonist Balram Halwai's rise from a lowly servant to a self-made entrepreneur symbolizes the dark side of globalization, where the poor and disenfranchised are often left behind in the race for progress. Through his story, Adiga critiques the widening gulf between the rich and the poor, exacerbated by the forces of neoliberal capitalism. *Last Man in Tower* takes a different approach, focusing on the impact of globalization on urban development and the tension between tradition and modernity. The novel centers on a community in a Mumbai high-rise, where residents are faced with the dilemma of selling their homes to a real estate conglomerate.

The story becomes an exploration of greed, resistance, and the clash of social values, revealing how class struggles manifest in the urban transformation driven by global economic interests. Both works provide a stark commentary on how globalization fosters systemic inequality and creates a world where the lines between the haves and the have-nots become increasingly difficult to bridge. This paper examines the interplay between globalization and class struggle in these novels, exploring how Adiga uses the narrative to criticize the social, economic, and political conditions that arise in the wake of India's integration into the global market.

Keywords: Globalization, Class struggle, social, economic, and political condition.

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Introduction

Aravind Adiga's works are recognized for their vivid portrayal of modern Indian society, often emphasizing the social, economic, and moral challenges in a rapidly globalizing nation. Two of his most acclaimed novels, *The White Tiger* (2008) and *Last Man in Tower* (2010), both explore the deepening class divisions that arise amidst the forces of neoliberal capitalism and urban transformation. In these novels, globalization does not merely symbolize progress or development; rather, it acts as a double-edged sword that exacerbates inequality and perpetuates corruption. Through the lives of ordinary individuals in modern India, Adiga presents a critique of the socio-economic systems that uphold the privileges of the elite while suppressing the aspirations and rights of the marginalized.

The central theme in both novels is the dynamic interplay between globalization and class struggle, with Adiga examining how global forces shape local realities. In *The White Tiger*, the protagonist Balram Halwai's journey from a humble rural background to becoming a self-made entrepreneur mirrors the promises of mobility and success offered by globalization. However, this success is achieved through corrupt and morally ambiguous means, which highlights the moral and ethical costs of a system driven by capitalist forces. On the other hand, *Last Man in Tower* takes a closer look at the urbanization that accompanies globalization, focusing on the residents of a Mumbai high-rise who must grapple with the pressures of real estate development. The moral dilemmas they face in selling their homes reflect the tension between tradition, individual desires, and the demands of global economic interests. This paper will explore the ways in which Adiga critiques the forces of globalization and their contribution to class struggles in contemporary India. By comparing and contrasting *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in Tower*, this paper aims to show how Adiga uses his narratives to expose the systemic inequalities, social conflicts, and ethical dilemmas created by the interplay between global forces and local realities.

Globalization and Class Struggle in *The White Tiger*

The White Tiger Published in 2008, It follows the story of Balram Halwai, a poor village boy who rises through the social ladder to become a successful entrepreneur in the Indian city of Bangalore. Balram's ascent is not a tale of traditional hard work and perseverance but rather an illustration of the dark side of globalization. Through Balram's journey, Adiga critiques the inherent flaws of a capitalist system that disproportionately benefits the wealthy elite while perpetuating the oppression of the lower classes.

In the novel, the backdrop of globalization is seen in the rapid economic development that has taken place in urban India, especially in cities like Bangalore, which are becoming hubs of the global tech industry. Balram's employer, Ashok, is a symbol of the new wealthy class, benefiting from both the Indian economy's integration into the global market and the corruption that facilitates it. Balram, on the other hand, represents the millions of Indians who remain trapped in the poverty-stricken rural countryside, cut off from the opportunities that globalization promises. Despite the narrative of economic growth, the lower class remains deeply entrenched in systemic social and economic inequalities.

Adiga uses Balram's rise to power as a metaphor for the brutal, cutthroat nature of the capitalist system that globalization fosters. Balram's eventual decision to murder his employer is not just an act of personal vengeance but a form of rebellion against the rigid caste system and the systemic exploitation he faces. His path to success is paved with moral compromises, illustrating the harsh reality that success in the globalized world often comes at the expense of ethics and human dignity. In this sense, *The White Tiger* offers a critique of the promises of upward mobility in a system that is inherently unequal, where social mobility is not a matter of merit but of survival.

By focusing on Balram's personal journey, Adiga emphasizes how the underprivileged are often forced to navigate a corrupt system where success is determined by manipulation and exploitation, not hard work or talent. In this world, the rise of the self-made man is often a product of systemic injustice, exposing the limits of the Indian Dream in a globalized context.

Globalization and Class Struggle in *Last Man in Tower*

In contrast to the rural-urban divide explored in *The White Tiger*, *Last Man in Tower* (2010) shifts the focus to the urban spaces that are undergoing massive transformations due to globalization. Set in a middle-class neighborhood in Mumbai, the novel revolves around the residents of the Vishram Society, a

group of people living in a once-residential tower that is now under threat of demolition. The building's residents are offered a large sum of money by a real estate developer in exchange for their homes, but not all of them are willing to sell. The central conflict revolves around the tension between individual desires, social values, and the force of globalization represented by the real estate developer.

In this novel, globalization is represented by the real estate boom in Mumbai, where skyscrapers and luxury apartments are quickly replacing older, more traditional homes. The new economy, driven by global capital, is changing the face of urban India, pushing aside the working-class and middle-class inhabitants who cannot keep up with the demands of modernity. The residents of Vishram Society, particularly the protagonist, Masterji, a retired schoolteacher, represent a generation that is unwilling to sell out to the global capitalist forces. Their resistance highlights the way that globalization reshapes not only physical spaces but also social and cultural values.

Masterji's resistance to selling his apartment is not just a personal choice but a metaphor for the values of traditional India, which are being displaced by a new, profit-driven global economy. Adiga portrays the ethical dilemmas faced by the residents of Vishram Society as they must choose between their financial interests and their sense of community, illustrating the moral costs of global urban development. For some characters, the offer of wealth is an opportunity for upward mobility in a globalized world, while for others, it signifies the loss of a cultural and emotional attachment to their homes and communities.

Like *The White Tiger*, *Last Man in Tower* presents globalization as a force that exacerbates class divides. However, while Balram's story focuses on the exploitation and corruption within the rural-urban divide, *Last Man in Tower* deals with the effects of urbanization and the commercialization of space. Both novels, however, critique the socio-economic systems that are disproportionately shaped by global capital, leaving little room for individual ethical choices or collective resistance.

Comparison of Themes in *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in Tower*

Although *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in Tower* are set in different contexts rural versus urban both novels present similar critiques of globalization and its role in deepening class divisions. In *The White Tiger*, globalization is portrayed through the economic and social opportunities available to the new middle class, but it is also revealed as a source of exploitation for the working poor. Balram's rise to

power illustrates the corrupt and morally ambiguous nature of success in the globalized economy, where social mobility is achieved not through ethical means but by exploiting the system.

In *Last Man in Tower*, globalization is represented through the urbanization of Mumbai and the commodification of land. The conflict between the residents and the real estate developer exposes the cultural and emotional costs of modernization, which is driven by global capital. Both novels portray how the marginalized classes are manipulated and coerced into participating in systems that perpetuate inequality. The residents of Vishram Society, like Balram, are left with little choice but to navigate a system that offers no genuine alternatives to upward mobility.

In both novels, Adiga's protagonists are caught in a system where class struggle is not just about economic hardship but also about moral and ethical decisions. Whether it is Balram's murder of his employer or Masterji's resistance to selling his home, both characters make choices that reflect the deep moral conflicts inherent in a world shaped by capitalist and global forces.

Psychological Alienation and Identity Crisis in the Age of Globalization

Globalization in Adiga's novels also manifests in the psychological alienation and identity crises experienced by the characters, particularly as they grapple with a society that is increasingly detached from traditional values. In *The White Tiger*, Balram's internal conflict as he navigates between his humble origins and the newly acquired wealth is a significant aspect of his transformation. His journey to becoming a self-made entrepreneur is not just a physical ascent in the social hierarchy, but also a psychological struggle to reconcile his identity with the values of the elite. Balram is caught between two worlds: the rural, caste-bound community he comes from, and the corrupt, capitalist society he now inhabits. His sense of alienation grows as he realizes that, despite his newfound wealth, he is never truly accepted by the elite, who continue to view him as "other." The constant tension between his past and present makes Balram's identity unstable, highlighting how globalization's promise of success is often accompanied by a loss of self.

Similarly, in *Last Man in Tower*, the residents of Vishram Society, especially Masterji, face an identity crisis brought on by the rapid urbanization of Mumbai. Masterji's refusal to sell his apartment represents more than just a resistance to modernity; it is a refusal to abandon his cultural and personal

identity, which he has invested in the space over decades. As the tower becomes a symbol of both modernity and the erosion of communal values, Masterji's personal struggle reflects the psychological toll of being caught between the traditional, close-knit community of old Mumbai and the lure of wealth that comes with the new global economy. His resistance to selling symbolizes a deeper desire to hold onto a sense of belonging in a world where the past is being rapidly erased by development. This existential crisis underscores how globalization not only alters physical spaces but also forces individuals to confront the erosion of their social and cultural identities, leading to profound psychological dislocation.

Conclusion

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in Tower* offer piercing critiques of the effects of globalization on Indian society, particularly its impact on class struggle, identity, and morality. Both novels present globalization not as a force of universal progress, but as a driving force behind inequality, exploitation, and ethical decay. In *The White Tiger*, Balram Halwai's journey from a poor rural background to a wealthy entrepreneur in Bangalore reflects the grim realities of a globalized world where success is often achieved through corruption and betrayal. The novel critiques a system where the promise of upward mobility is hollow for the vast majority, as it is attained at the cost of ethics and human dignity. Balram's rise represents the moral compromises that come with navigating a capitalist system that thrives on exploitation, with the global market providing opportunities for those who can manipulate the system, while leaving the majority of the population trapped in poverty.

Similarly, in *Last Man in Tower*, Adiga examines how globalization manifests in the urban spaces of Mumbai, where real estate development driven by global capital displaces communities and reshapes social relationships. The novel contrasts the individual aspirations of the residents with the collective values of their community, highlighting the psychological and emotional costs of development. Masterji's refusal to sell his apartment becomes symbolic of resistance to a system that values wealth over tradition and emotional attachment. In a society increasingly defined by materialism, globalization pressures individuals to compromise their cultural and emotional ties for the sake of financial gain.

Both novels demonstrate how globalization forces individuals to confront their identities and moral beliefs. Balram's alienation in *The White Tiger* and Masterji's struggle in *Last Man in Tower* illustrate how personal and communal values are eroded by global economic forces. Adiga's works reveal that

while globalization may offer economic opportunities, it often deepens class divides and leads to moral decay. Through these narratives, Adiga critiques the human costs of a globalized world, challenging readers to reconsider the notion of progress and question the ethical implications of a system that continues to exploit the poor for the benefit of the wealthy elite. In the end, Adiga's novels serve as a powerful reminder that true societal advancement cannot be measured by economic growth alone but must also account for the dignity and well-being of all individuals.

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