

**Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review**

**Print ISSN: 3006-5887**

**Online ISSN: 3006-5895**

**<https://llrjournal.com/index.php/11>**

**Man, Vs Society: A Psychoanalytic Study of “THE WHITE TIGER”**



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**Abstract**

This paper explores the mental and social issues that form the behaviors of the protagonist in *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga. The study aims at determining the defense mechanisms revealed in the nature of Balram Halwai and assessing how these mechanisms influence his personality and choice of actions all through the story. The paper embraces the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud in understanding the subconscious motivations, internalization and behavioral reactions of the protagonist to social oppression and inequality of the classes. The entire analysis is founded on the qualitative research methodology with the main part being based on the textual evidence of the novel with the help of the available scholarly literature that is located in the academic literature. The results indicate that Balram is highly driven by the subconscious motives, pressure of society and his disobedience to the person of authority, who are symbolic parents in the story. The paper also reveals that defense mechanisms used by the protagonist, including rationalization, denial and projection are a major factor in his change of being a lowly servant into a self-made businessman. On the whole, the study reveals the complicated interdependence between the psychological processes and the socio-economic situation in the formation of the character in the novel.

**Introduction**

*White Tiger* is the first novel of Arvind Adiga and he has been fortunate to win the reputable Booker Prize in 2008. Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai are the other three Indian authors who had won this award. He is the author of the postmodernism and is well-known in terms of laying the real image of post-colonial Indian society on the floor. It is the audience that praises the novel due to the originality of the actions of the main character, his life, and the plot of the story.

This is a new novel of class struggle within the Indian society. Some of the serious issues that the novel depicts are religion, poverty and corruption in the Indian society. The discrepancies between the two worlds are pointed out in the novel. The former is the Darkness of life is associated with the poor in society that cannot even afford to meet their primary needs in life. The other is that of political leaders, Zemindars, the elite etc., who always present obstacles in the path of the lowly ones and fail to allow them any forward. Elites are the Lords of the Earth simply because they possess more pieces of paper than the poor ones and that piece of paper is Money. An example of this, a poor boy who visits the city and behaves like the people of that city makes him the cause of stress to him He might lose his own personality. This type of stress will drive the person to the negative evil thoughts such as irritation and disillusionment.

Their theory of psychoanalysis was first attracted to their attention in the 1890s when the concept of psychoanalysis was first brought into the limelight by the Austrian neurologist, Freud. Following such an idea, they came up with the defense Mechanism: there are forces in the mind that are in opposition and fighting to each other or behavior that people apply to restrain themselves against depressing events, or thoughts. In their paper *The Neuro-Psychoses of*, they use this term.

Defense (1894)."

The Defense Mechanism is broken in three phases; Id Ego and Superego. Id is the

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**Print ISSN: 3006-5887**

**Online ISSN: 3006-5895**

primitive and instinctive part of the personality. The ego is the feeling of arrogance and a sense of self-respect. Superego is morality as portrayed by the parents, the teachers and even the society. The White Tiger by Arvind Adiga uses this Mechanism to apply to the personality of the main character (Balram). Balram and his family were in a deplorable condition. His personality employed the Mechanism to make change in the situation and help himself out of the life-destroying inhumanity of his master. The study seeks to know the psychological factors and know factors which influenced the behavior of the protagonist and analyze the crime in the novel in terms of the perspectives of Sigmund Freud. The study is far too serious to demonstrate that, human beings are neutral that they are not criminal by their birth and many factors are behind the harsh acts of being and displaying the defenses can be exercised by human beings.

## **Problem Statement**

Despite the extensive research on The White Tiger based on the socio-economic, postcolonial and globalization concepts, few studies have explored the psychological motivation of the protagonist in the context of psychoanalytic defense mechanisms. The majority of works focus on the concept of class struggle, corruption, and social inequality within the Indian society, but they fail to provide the complete explanation of how the internal conflict of the personality in the character of Balram Halwai interacts with the external forces of the society to influence his behavior. Thus, it is necessary to study the actions of the protagonist through the prism of the role of subconscious drives, defense mechanisms, and social influences. This paper will help address this gap by examining how psychology and social factors all come together to make Balram a humble servant turn into a defiant businessperson.

## **Research Objectives**

The key aims of the research are:

To examine the personality of Balram Halwai in a psychoanalytic manner.

To determine the defense mechanisms as shown in the action and behavior of Balram in the novel.

To consider psychological and social influences on the formation of personalities of the protagonist.

To find out the contribution of inequality based on classes and social repression to the transformation of Balram and his criminal behavior.

To analyze the events in the novel in the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud.

## **Research Questions**

This research paper tries to answer the following questions:

What is the psychoanalytic interpretation of the character of Balram Halwai?

What are some of the defense mechanisms evident in the actions of the protagonist in the novel?

What are the social forces like poverty, discrimination, and exploitation that affect the psychological growth of Balram?

What are the reasons how subconscious desires and internal contradictions make Balram turn to crime and rebellion?

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## **Literature review**

Aravind Adiga The White Tiger novel has gained a lot of academic interest due to its representation of inequality in the society, psychological tension and identity construction. The transformation of the main character, Balram Halwai has been discussed by some researchers in various ways.

In the article Fashioning of Balram Halwai by The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga, the author, Priya (2017) provides insight into the factors that were involved in changing the personality of Balram. By analyzing conversations and narrative action in the novel, the paper will prove that the internal and external socio-economic factors play a role in characters of Balram and his life goals as they grow.

Likewise, in an article by Repressive Psyche, Unceasing Eloquence of Silence and fragmented Self in the book the white tiger by aravind Adiga, Dubey (2018) talks about the unfulfilled desires and mental conflict of the main character. The study follows Balram in his route starting with a village setting to the metropolis of the present-day cities and how repressed feelings, silence, and mental oppression affect his behavior. According to Dubey, the personality of Balram which is suppressed and stifled is an important element in the development of the events that will eventually drag him into crime.

In other work, Herlina (2016), in the thesis Personality Issues on the Main Character in The White Tiger: A Psychological Analysis by Aravind Adiga, explores the psychological aspect of the character of Balram. The role of the father figure in determining the behavior of the protagonist is also highlighted in the research and is observed to have been a combination of obedience and aggression in the personality of Balram. The analysis comes to a conclusion that multiple mental problems play an important role in shaping the nature of Balram.

The symbolic meaning of the Rooster Coop has also been discussed in the literature. In the The White Tiger of The Image of a Rooster Coop by El-Sobky (2015), The White Tiger perceives the metaphor as a symbol of the repressive socio-economic system of contemporary India. The Rooster Coop, the study says, is the image of mental and psychological imprisonment of the underclass people profoundly indoctrinated to believe in exploitation and inequality. The study is based on social identity and self-categorization theory suggested by Tajfel and Turner (1979), and it emphasizes the effect of social hierarchies and economic injustice on the identity and behavior of individuals.

Dwisocio (2017) is another author who introduces another significant point of view in the work Balrams Capitalist Desire by Aravind Adiga in The White Tiger. This study examines connection between desire and capitalism and discusses ambitions of Balram in the context of socio-economic aspects. The paper proposes that his behavior is based on the need by Balram to get out of poverty and succeed in a capitalistic society. To understand the development of the objectives of the protagonist by socio-economic reality, the research also resorts to theoretical consideration of capitalism (Riesman, 1990), narrative representation (Verstraten, 2009), and characterization (Prince, 1982).

Another theme that is prominent in the literature is the problem of corruption in Indian society. In Corruption as a Social Evil in Aravind Adiga written by Deivasigamani and Gayathridevi (2014), the authors present that the novel reveals the social-economic inequality and systematic corruption in contemporary India. The authors underline that split between Light India and Dark India is the manifestation of

the bigger picture of injustice and exploitation. The study reveals that these social conditions breed the occurrence of criminal behavior among the marginalized people. Moreover, Matsudo (2019), in the article *Psychopath Balram in Aravind Adiga, The White Tiger*, views the main character as the psychopathic character whose exceptional ambition and intellectual potential make him commit the murder. The paper indicates that what the Balram could not achieve with a poor mindset and remorse, which are typical characteristics of a psychopath, pushed him to become a rich businessman. This explanation correlates with the definition of psychopathy, as stated in Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2018), that defines it as a self-centered and anti-social character, where the individual is incapable of feeling empathy and remorse.

Yang (2020) also provides another point of view in the article *Exploring the Dilemmas of Identity in Modern Indian Society in the Context of Globalization: Taking The White Tiger as an Example*. In India, the paper identifies the influence of globalization on the development of identity and social mobility. By implication, Yang further suggests that the novel brings out the problem of individuals grappling with confusion of identity and social anxiety as a result of historical and socio-economic impacts. The struggle of self-identity and freedom of Balram in a fast evolving society is reflected in his journey.

In *Redefinitions of India and Individuality in The White Tiger by Adiga*, Waller (2012) holds that the novel questions the ancient Indian social organization and the system of hierarchies. Waller argues that the novel highlights the social change that is required through the challenge of strict class hierarchies limiting the freedom and movement of individuals.

On the whole, the novel has been discussed in social, psychological, economic, and identity-based aspects in earlier researches. Nevertheless, the given work will seek to examine the psychoanalytical aspect of the main characters with a special emphasis being on the psychological processes that drive their actions and decision-making. Thus, the current work is a qualitative study that will be used to discuss the chosen text. The main information in this study is borrowed in the novel *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga. Major extracts and conversation bits of the novel are selectively chosen and analyzed to comprehend the state of mind and behavioral pattern of the main character.

The psychoanalytic theory of Freud, especially the notion of defense mechanisms (denial, projection, and rationalization) is the theoretical framework of the given research. Besides the main text, secondary sources such as research articles, theses, and scholarly discussions that are retrieved through academic databases such as Google Scholar are utilized to back up the analysis.

Even though the *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga has been widely discussed in past literature, some critical gaps exist in the already available literature.

To begin with, most of the previous researches have concentrated mainly on social disparity, corruption, and globalization in the novel (Deivasigamani and Gayathridevi, 2014; Yang, 2020). The works are marked with the dichotomy of Light India and Dark India and the social-economic issues that affect the lower classes. Nevertheless, they are more focused on the social background than the mental mechanism that makes the protagonist act the way he behave. Second, the personality change and psychological issues of Balram have been studied by some authors (Herlina, 2016; Dubey, 2018), however, the given works consist mostly of the descriptive discussions

# **Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review**

**Print ISSN: 3006-5887**

**Online ISSN: 3006-5895**

of the character traits, repression, and identity conflict. They fail to critically examine the defense mechanisms and subconscious motivations that affect the decisions made by Balram in a formal psychoanalytical manner.

Third, single concepts, like capitalist desire, fashioning identity, or a symbolic representation, like the Rooster Coop, were studied by other scholars (Dwisocio, 2017; El-Sobky, 2015). Although these studies help one to comprehend the thematic aspects of the novel, they address psychological aspects indirectly and fail to combine it with a Freudian psychoanalytic view in a wholesome fashion. In addition, previous studies tend to talk about Balram becoming successful or committing crime based on social mobility or economic ambition, however, not much has been said on how the internal psychological conflicts (repression, unconscious desires, and defense mechanisms) interact with the exterior societal pressure to influence his change.

Thus, the given research will seal this gap by performing a psychoanalytical reading with the help of the theory by Sigmund Freud, particularly the defense mechanisms and subconscious motives that determine the character formation of Balram Halwai. With the integration of the psychological theory and the textual analysis of the novel, this study offers a more detailed explanation of how the internal processes of the psyche as well as the external state of the social conditions are influenced in transforming the protagonist.

## **Methodology**

In this paper, the proposed qualitative research approach will be used to examine the chosen reading. The data that is going to be used in the research is mainly the novel *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga. The appropriate passages and dialogues in the novel are selectively chosen and analyzed to know the psychological condition and the behavioral pattern of the character.

In the research conducted, the theoretical framework applied will be the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud especially with emphasis on the defense mechanism of denial, projection and rationalization. Along with the primary text, the analysis is supported by the secondary sources in the form of research articles, theses, and scholarly discussions that were found on the academic databases like Google Scholar.

The method of research will be:

The textual examination of the novel.

Determination of cases that indicate psychologically conflicted and defensive processes.

Explanation of the actions of the protagonist concerning social and economic situation. By use of this qualitative analysis, the study seeks to show the combination of psychological urges and social pressures to influence the behavior and change of the protagonist.

## **Analysis**

This section analyzes the original text of the novel and explore the text-keeping at the beginning of the analysis of the aspect of the novel and the factors of the society that are influencing an individual of survival class in the society. And particularly with the use of the defense.

In the psychoanalysis theory, mechanism" (Sigmund Freud) refers to the unconscious defenses.

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**Print ISSN: 3006-5887**

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The life path of Balram is the literal image of the oppressed poor Indian society, as the roosters were in the coop and watched themselves being slaughtered one after another, and are reluctant to leave the cage. Similarly, Balram is described as the rooster coop whose family dictates what he must do and the society demonstrates how to do it, when Balram enters the city, he understands his value and wanted to be free of the slavery.

Some of them are his psychological forces in the murder of his master and some are the societal forces that result in the murder. The behavior of the upper ones is mostly contained by societal forces.

The following are some of the dialogues that will be used to support this research analysis:

The inspector held his cane into me: You, young man, are an intelligent, honest, vivacious man among all these thugs and idiots 'The white Tiger'. That is what you are, in this jungle. (Adiga, 2008, *The white tiger* p.22)

This conversation confirms that he was a student of higher IQ level at a tender age. Individuals having high IQ tend to succeed in whatever any situation they would always find a way of thriving whether it is wrong or wrong. Balram who was in the dire need of money finally comes out through a circumstantial solution that was to murder his master in exchange of gaining prosperity and becoming a prosperous business man.

What caste, my old driver asked, is your caste? Halwai. Sweet-makers, the elderly chauffeur said, and shook his head. That's what you people do. You make Sweets. How can you learn to drive?"

He had his hookah pointed at the live coals. That is as though making Coals make ice. Learning a car--he was flicking the lever of a non-existent gear-box--it is as though you were riding a wild stallion--only a boy of one of the warrior castes can do that. And you must possess blood of aggression.

The Sikhs of the Muslims--they are fighters, they can turn out to be drivers. You reckon sweet-makers will have long in fourth gear? (Adiga, 2008, p.33)

Through this conversation, it is evident that how the lower classes people, however bright they are and have the abilities to prove themselves, they are tormented due to their caste to survive in society. Since the prejudiced mindset of the driving instructor with respect to the potential capabilities of Balram owing to his caste demonstrates how debilitating the caste system had become, and how its elimination gave people some level of freedom previously unavailable to them. However, this freedom is the freedom of the jungle as the novel refers to the open road. We are able to observe how the society pressures an individual.

Balram consider themselves white tiger in this world. This is a title that a professor had attached to Balram when he was in school. He calls him so because he is able to perceive the exceptionality in Balram as a white tiger. He told balram that since the white tiger is a rare animal and that is more intelligent than any other animal, the same thing is with yourself; you are also rare among people that surround you.

in dark India. As India is split into two the India of white and the India of darkness. It is on these foundations that individuals are evaluated in society, as Balram was judged by the people due to the fact he was also an India of the dark. They named him the white tiger though he was very bright but the society does not bother about the intelligence or good learner he is. This life education is compliant with his philosophy that the greatest lesson a youngster needs to grasp has nothing to do with moral or

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**Print ISSN: 3006-5887**

**Online ISSN: 3006-5895**

intellectual logic, but rather learning survival techniques.

Another minute he struck me again at the head Do you have to strike the servants, Father this is not America, son. Ask not why I cannot ask questions They signify to us that we are supposed to ask questions, Ashok. It is important to keep in mind that they are respecting us because of it" (Adiga, 2008, p.43)

Servants are treated as servants in the current society. Their responsibility is limited to the duty which they had assigned. In India, however, there still remains the idea of caste on which they treated servants on the foundations of their caste. Even after their literacy level they treat servants like their slaves in India despite the fact that the country is rising as an economic power. Their servants were chained to work 24/7. Since he was employed to drive only, but he had to do all the rest of the work of their master, say he used to clean the yard and the car, he used to sweep the floor, wash the feet of his master and massage his legs, etc. Then, here we may see how people of lower classes perish to elevate their position or to exist in the society. They are regarded as slaves to the society and without them, they are nothing.

They were discussing politics, coal, and your country China. These things somehow were associated with politics, coal and China to the family wealth of the Stork" (Adiga, 2008, p.42)

Balam is a part of India of darkness because he was very special and intelligent among others around him, thus he had something to learn anywhere to gain more information about everything and that is why he keeps on eavesdropping. The fact that Balam takes in the fragments and bits of information in the conversation between his master even when performing the feet of his master depicts his innate curiosity and intelligence. Both his ambitions reveal his motives, however, and the way he is eager to know the money situation of the family demonstrates that he already feels very attached to his master, cares about their well-being, and even against his own will has the urge to work there.

I fancy he thought he would bugger me at the suddenness of the way I had left them at the village, but instead he was lost in joy,--his eyes were brimming over. One of his family would escape the Darkness and make it to New Delhi It is just the way mother always said. She was aware that you were going to make it. (Adiga, 2008, p.66)

The episode of Balam meeting Kishan, his brother is important. At the news of Balam going to Delhi Kishan was quite excited. He urged Balam that it is good on their part that someone of their low society and caste was leaving the darkness. The event

represents the urge to do something unique, to work towards a better life, or at least relocate to a good working place. Kishan also reminds him about his mother. Their mother was very much convinced that one day Balam will come up with something special and unique. Balam was entering a new life and her dream was coming true.

I had to smile I would have liked to roll down the each time we had gone by one of these busses.

yell at them, I am going to Delhi in a car an air-conditioned car But I am sure they read the words in my eyes" (Adiga, 2008, p.66)

As they were going to Delhi Balam, he was so excited. He could not resist his joy, and he just wanted to inform everybody that he went to Delhi. Once again the elements of the personality of the person are depicted that his desire was to make everyone notice how happy he is. He attempted to display his opulent manner. He is more concerned with the passengers who move by busses.

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**Print ISSN: 3006-5887**

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At the outset, sir, I could make out what he meant to say, as dogs know what their masters mean by them (Adiga, 2008, p.66).

Once again he shifts between a joyful disposition to some form of sophisticated tone when he discusses his training as a servant. He identifies himself with a dog that is trained to know the gestures of his master and now he is working the same way as well. He is able to trace the movements of his master since they are conditioned in such a manner and are obligated to act like servants, which marks the beginning of the defense system.

I will tell you I do not understand these things. I am not sure whether I will tell you the right story to tell. I am not sure that I understand why Mr. Ashok died, just to be sure (Adiga, 2008, p.67).

The author of the novel *Balram* is saying that he cannot attract the instinct which makes him kill his master. He cannot accept the fact that he murdered Mr. Ashok and at the same time Balram cannot discover why he needed to do this and it is the beginning phase of a defense mechanism which reveals the true need of the protagonist, the id.

He reached forward and he hit me on the head with his hand Take a left at the fountain, you stupid fool! Do you not know how to get to the house by this way? I started to apologize, however, a voice behind me added It is all right, Balram. Get us home Just see you defending him again. It has to be like a first time in New York was to me. (Adiga, 2008, p.70)

The novel represents the real picture of Indian economic and social realities. Balram with his worldly expressions is describing the real relationship of a servant-master. The way Mr. Mukesh, and his father are treated is so inhuman. The employees at home were forced to comply with anything they ordered, simply because they had given him the freedom to work there. Balram and his family were forced to endure at high wages in the event of any sort of mistake. Balram was forced to be abused physically and verbally. However, he feels relieved because Mr. Ashok will come to his defence at all times. He tells Mukesh to put himself in his position because Balram was going through different scenarios in Delhi. Demonstration of the reason of uprising and defensive mechanism.

The primary fact about Delhi is that the roads are good, and people are bad When they take their late-night parties it's hell to us You sleep in the car, and the mosquitoes eat you alive so you must have something you read (Adiga, 2008, p.71)

In *The White Tiger* (Adiga, 2008), Balram Halwai's journey from a village boy to a wealthy entrepreneur is deeply shaped by the oppressive social structures of India and his interactions with the elite. At the outset, Balram observes the lives of other drivers, noting that many secretly despise their masters due to their cruel behavior, irresponsibility, and sudden temper. While reading trashy magazines that discuss crimes like murder and rape, drivers pass the long hours waiting for their masters. Balram reassures Emon that not all servants would act violently, but he acknowledges that many harbor hidden resentment (p.73). This establishes the early tension between obedience and suppressed desire for retribution.

Balram's initial introduction to Delhi's corruption comes through a neighboring driver who mentors him. The mentor provides practical advice for surviving as a driver, emphasizing keeping one's mind occupied during long waits, and introduces Balram to the decadent lifestyle of the rich, including foreign liquor and prostitutes (p.75). The seasoned driver genuinely wants to help Balram, yet this guidance exposes the

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**Print ISSN: 3006-5887**

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naïve and idealistic country boy to the moral decay of the city. Balram initially refuses to believe that Ashok would indulge in such behavior, reflecting his upbringing in servitude and his tendency to idealize the powerful (p.108). This demonstrates the tension between his conditioned obedience and emerging awareness of the city's corrupt realities.

Balram's role as a driver brings him into situations highlighting the vulnerability and exploitation of lower-class workers. After an accident involving Ashok, Balram is coerced into taking full responsibility, despite his family knowing he is not guilty (p.75, p.85). This reflects the broader societal injustice in India, where the law often protects the elite while punishing the subservient. Balram notes that Delhi's jails are full of drivers imprisoned for taking the blame for their masters (p.101). Such systemic inequities contribute to Balram's growing awareness of the necessity of self-preservation, planting seeds for his eventual moral transgressions.

The narrative further illustrates the psychological pressures Balram faces in serving his master. When Ashok's wife leaves him due to family cruelty, Ashok becomes withdrawn, reflecting the interplay between personal loss and societal pressures (p.107–108). Balram observes his master's helplessness, yet he continues to serve diligently, while secretly cultivating a desire for revenge and upward mobility. Here, Balram's mind demonstrates the mechanisms of defense and rationalization, balancing his ambition with fear of losing his position.

The shift from passive obedience to active exploitation begins subtly. Balram starts cheating his master in minor ways, such as siphoning petrol from the car to sell on the black market (p.135). This behavior illustrates how societal corruption and inequality can contribute to moral compromise. Balram recognizes that the wealth and power of the elite operate under their own rules, often indifferent to ethical considerations. Exposure to such inequities encourages him to adopt morally questionable behaviors, rationalizing them as survival strategies rather than immoral acts.

Ashok's wife frequently comments on the ignorance of "people from the Darkness," reinforcing the theme that societal hierarchies and prejudice mislead individuals and perpetuate insecurity (p.161). Balram experiences financial insecurity firsthand, recognizing that his family's basic needs are unmet, creating stress and a sense of vulnerability. Such conditions heighten the likelihood of unethical decisions, illustrating how poverty and social pressure influence individual morality.

Balram's psychological evolution is also evident in his use of Freud's defense mechanisms. He projects his own ambitions and plans onto Ashok, presuming that his master is plotting against him, when in reality Balram himself is orchestrating schemes (p.22). Projection allows Balram to externalize his desires, framing them as reactions to others' intentions, thereby justifying his actions psychologically. Similarly, he employs rationalization to defend theft, bribery, and ultimately murder. Observing the wealth and moral flexibility of the elite, Balram convinces himself that stealing money or killing Ashok is acceptable to achieve freedom and personal advancement (p.170, p.171, p.192). He frames these actions as necessary steps toward escaping the limitations of servitude, portraying himself as a participant in a system already skewed by inequality.

The culmination of these psychological and societal pressures occurs when Balram murders Ashok. In his reflections, he acknowledges the presence of alternative actions, such as allowing Ashok to recover or face justice, but rationalizes murder as self-protection and preemptive revenge (p.173). Here, rationalization merges with

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projection: Balram imagines the potential threats from Ashok and his family to justify a morally extreme act. Despite committing murder, he experiences guilt and anxiety, taking four weeks in Bangalore to calm his nerves (p.177). This period highlights his awareness of the immorality of his crime, contrasting with his rationalizations and desire for upward mobility.

Balram's narrative also demonstrates denial, another Freudian defense mechanism. At times, he struggles to acknowledge his role in Ashok's death or to articulate why the murder occurred (p.177). Denial enables Balram to reconcile the cognitive dissonance between his ambition, his loyalty to Ashok, and the violent actions he undertakes. This interplay of rationalization, projection, and denial reflects the complex psychological mechanisms that allow an individual to navigate morally corrupt environments while pursuing personal advancement.

Ultimately, Balram's story in *The White Tiger* is a commentary on the interplay between social inequality, corruption, and individual psychology. His initial obedience, shaped by servitude and idealization of the elite, gradually gives way to strategic moral compromise and calculated ambition. Exposure to the decadence and indifference of the upper class cultivates desires previously unknown to him, while societal inequities and financial insecurity provide both motive and justification for crime. Through the lens of Freudian defense mechanisms, Balram's rationalizations, projections, and denials explain his ethical transgressions as responses to systemic oppression and personal ambition.

The novel portrays the darker realities of Indian society, where wealth, power, and corruption intersect, and where moral compromise becomes a necessary survival tool. Balram's transformation from a naïve country boy into a morally complex entrepreneur illustrates how environmental pressures, societal structures, and internal psychological processes coalesce to shape behavior. By understanding Balram's actions through defense mechanisms and social critique, readers gain insight into the ways inequality, ambition, and psychological survival strategies interact to produce morally ambiguous outcomes.

## **Discussion**

This paper will offer a psychoanalysis of *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga, emphasizing the defensive strategies that Balram Halwai uses on his way to the crossroads of personal ambition and social oppression. This analysis shows that the inner mental processes of Balram, as well as the outer socio-economic forces, affect his gradual change into a submissive villager and a morally and ambition-conflicted person.

As it can be seen in the reviewed literature, earlier works mainly talked about the transformation of Balram in the context of social inequality (Deivasigamani and Gayathridevi, 2014), capitalist desire (Dwisocio, 2017), and identity struggles (Yang, 2020). Although these studies can be very helpful to reveal the societal and thematic context of the novel, they tend to ignore the psychoanalytical aspect of the actions of the protagonist. This paper employs the system of defense mechanisms outlined by Sigmund Freud, especially, denial, projection, and rationalization, to draw attention to the unconscious motivation that drives the decisions made by Balram, such as his decision to kill his master.

The fact that Balram was judged and restricted by his caste despite his obvious intelligence at a young age is an example of internalizing the hierarchies of society

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**Print ISSN: 3006-5887**

**Online ISSN: 3006-5895**

and formation of an unconscious coping mechanism. As an example, his perceived necessity to adhere to the demands of his family and the employers in higher classes can be viewed as the application of repression, as socially inappropriate needs or frustrations are repressed unconsciously. This is consistent with the findings of Dubey (2018) that the personality of Balram is silenced and repressed, which affects his behavior in the future.

The protection mechanism of projection can be followed when Balram puts intentions and plans to his master Ashok that he is the owner of them. Such remarks as, "I thought I was planning with him? He'd been making plans for me!" As (Adiga, 2008, p.22) prove, Balram projects his desires and ambitions as the ones imposed upon him by other people. This process enables him to justify his hatred to his master and preserve his moral identity, which can be described as dynamic in line with the theory of Freud, whereby projection is a way of people denying the existence of unpleasant inner truths.

On the same note, rationalization is another repetitive process in the story of Balram. His defense of his criminal activities, particularly killing of Ashok, shows how he tries to balance his moral consciousness and aspirations. The fact that all he wanted to do was have the opportunity to be a man (Adiga, 2008, p.192) and the discussion of the murder as revenge in advance (p.173) show that Balram used logical-sounding arguments to justify morally wrong deeds. Rationalization helps him to rationalize his activities with unconscious wishes to power and social mobility and alleviate guilt feelings. Denial is also eminent especially when it comes to the murder of Ashok. Balram keeps saying that he is not sure whether he needs to do it or it is a good thing: "I cannot be sure that I know exactly why Mr. Ashok died" (p.67). This denial of the full responsibility is the efforts of the psyche not to undergo the emotional trauma of transgression. Denial also enables Balram to maintain a state of self coherence even when he does actions that contradict societal norms and personal conscience.

This interaction of society as a systematic oppressor and psychological defense systems is the core of the development of Balram. The fact that he is a lower-class man in Dark India, the discrimination that he has to endure on the basis of his caste, and moral decadence of the upper-class all create an atmosphere in which survival requires certain tactical psychological actions. The texts like the fact that Balram can see the exploitative nature of the upper classes in Delhi (p.73) clearly show that external socio-economic factors combine with the internal processes to influence his actions. This observation strengthens the point of view presented by El-Sobky (2015), who regards the Rooster Coop metaphor as a manifestation of the systemic mental confinement, but takes it to a psychoanalytical approach.

Additionally, the ultimate criminal behavior of Balram is neither only a reaction to the external stimuli nor the manifestation of subconscious motives and wishes as the ambition, the desire to become free, the latent aggression. His tactical manipulation of the situation and final offense is the reflection of the complicated negotiation of the id, ego, and superego, where defense mechanisms mediate the conflict between instinctual desires and social reality. This reading supports the fact in which Matsudo (2019) interpreted Balram as a psychopathic character, and in this way the antisocial nature develops alongside the psychological defenses that the system of oppression required.

In short, this paper manages to assert that the change in Balram Halwai is an achievement of both environmental and psychological influences. Although the results

# Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

of previous studies focused on social, economic, or identity-related factors, the current assessment has shown that the defense mechanisms have been central to inform his moral judgment, the decision to behave in a particular way, or his reactions to social injustice. The study sheds light on the interaction of repression, projection, rationalization and denial with the forces in the society to create a complicated image of ambition, survival and moral ambiguity in contemporary India by incorporating Freudian psychoanalysis with textual evidence. The psychoanalytical approach provides a delicate insight into character growth in *The White Tiger*, which fills in the gaps in the literature and allows considering parallel processes in other works where the marginalized protagonists are described.

## Conclusion

The author applies the psychoanalysis theory to the main characters behaviors by examining it in terms of defense mechanism. And mind of the main hero character balram, and actions. Balaram was driven by his subconscious in his actions as a protagonist and influenced through his behavior by the parent character to his unconsciousness. Authors were to study the in detail. psychological reasons and social reasons which impact the character of the dominant character and his behaviors

The protagonist is depicted as he struggles between classes and gets into the inhumane side of society. To accomplish his personal purposes, main character is revealed as creating the defense mechanism and becoming the faithful servant during the difficult times of his master. And theory finds out in particular mistakes of the character of the protagonist that most of his actions are determined by his psyche, behavior of others, and societal factors. Then finally finding liberation with the parent-like personality and travel towards the attainment of his motives.

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## **Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review**

**Print ISSN: 3006-5887**

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