The White Tiger As A Reflection About India

The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga is a social commentary on the effects of the huge gap between the wealthy and the poor in India. This large gap creates instability that often leads to morality being compromised for individual gain. The poor are so desperate that they are willing to do almost anything to make it out of poverty. At the same time, the rich are so far removed from the plight of the poor that they become desensitized and corrupt. The point of view from which the story is told, the use of humor, the patterns of imagery, and the end of the novel emphasize the disparity in wealth and the immorality that results.

The White Tiger is told in first person from the point of view of Balram Halwai. This makes the reader feel the most connected with Balram, both because it seems like Balram is talking directly to the reader and because Balram's perspective is the only one shown, therefore making him an unreliable narrator. The novel uses a conversational tone to further show his complex and authentic voice. Throughout the novel, we gain an understanding of his morals and motives and how they are influenced by the master/servant dialectic that contributes to the corruption of India. Balram was born into the extreme poverty of a rural Indian village named Bangalore where there are "glistening lines of sewage" in the streets. Balram describes the village this way to enlighten both Jiabao and the audience on his portrayal and imagery of it. Through his job as a chauffeur to a rich man living in New Delhi, Balram is exposed both to extreme poverty and to fantastic wealth. Balram's unique perspective uncovers immorality in the servant class as well as the master class. He believes that immorality is justified at least somewhat by desperation as a result of poverty, and because the novel is written first person, the novel promotes Balram's position.

The Rooster Coop is Balram's extended metaphor for describing the oppression of India's poor. Roosters in a coop at the market watch one another slaughtered one by one, but are unable or unwilling to rebel and break out of the coop. Similarly, India's poor people see one another crushed by the wealthy and powerful, defeated by the staggering inequality of Indian society, but are unable to escape the same fate. In fact, he argues that the poor actively stop each other from escaping, either willfully by cutting each other down, or less purposely but just as powerfully, through a culture that makes them expect such abuse and servitude. The Rooster Coop Balram describes is one that's "guarded from the inside."

Balram believes that the traditional Indian family unit keeps the Rooster Coop of social inequality alive. If a servant attempts to escape or disobeys his employer, the superior's family will punish the servant by murdering or brutally torturing his family. In this way, familial loyalty and love become weaknesses in the context of rooster coop logic. In a country where the rules are stacked so overwhelmingly against the poor, Balram comes to believe that to create a better life and "break out of the Rooster Coop," one must be willing to sacrifice everything, including attachment to traditional morals and to one's family.

Balram's feelings about the rich are conflicted. Balram's perspective as a servant to the wealthy engenders hatred for his masters, who are corrupt and arrogant. Balram's chauffeuring job brings him in close contact with his master's everyday activities, which include paying off politicians and paying large sums of money for prostitutes. While their masters sleep in huge

mansions with many servants, the servants themselves sleep in basement rooms infested with cockroaches. The rich are so far removed from the situation of the poor that they no longer even think of the poor as human. When Balram receives a letter from his family, he asks to read it himself. However, the Mongoose (his master's brother) says "He won't mind [me reading his letter]. He has no sense of privacy" (Adiga 162). This desensitization allows the rich to continue to exploit everyone else. Balram's position in society, a personal servant to a wealthy man, allows him to uncover the immorality of the rich.