



International Journal of Research in Academic World



Received: 03/March/2023

IJRAW: 2023; 2(4):01-03

Accepted: 31/March/2023

Bildungsroman Explorations in Aravind Adiga's Acclaimed Novels

*¹Sanjay Kumar*¹Assistant Professor, Department of English, SPS Janta College, Mustafabad, Yamuna Nagar, Haryana, India.

Abstract

Aravind Adiga is a renowned contemporary Indian novelist who masterfully employs the bildungsroman as a literary device in his works. The bildungsroman, or coming-of-age story, is a genre that follows a protagonist as they navigate the challenges of learning and growth while transitioning from youth to adulthood. Adiga's debut novel, *The White Tiger*, is a prime example of this genre, as the protagonist Balram Halwai undergoes a remarkable transformation from being born into poverty to becoming a successful entrepreneur in Bangalore. Adiga's subsequent novels, *Between the Assassinations* and *Last Man in Tower*, also feature characters on journeys of self-discovery, grappling with social hierarchies, politics, and personal identity. Adiga's use of the bildungsroman is a testament to his skill as a storyteller and his critique of contemporary India. Through his works, he illuminates the struggles faced by individuals who come from complicated backgrounds in their attempts to achieve success in life. The present paper aims to explore and evaluate the traits of bildungsroman elements in selected works of Adiga. *Amnesty and Selection Day* are also notable examples of Adiga's focus on this genre. Adiga's use of the bildungsroman is a powerful tool that allows him to delve into the complexities of human growth and development. His works are a testament to his ability to tell compelling stories while also shedding light on the challenges faced by individuals in contemporary India.

Keywords: Bildungsroman, aravind adiga, development, education

Introduction

Aravind Adiga is a celebrated Indian author who has garnered favorable international acclaim for his contributions to the world of fiction. He was born in Madras, India, and later educated in Australia and the United States. His debut novel, *The White Tiger* (2008), won the Man Booker Prize in 2008, making him the fourth Indian writer to receive this prestigious award. In his works, Adiga draws on his personal experiences as well as issues facing modern-day India, such as wealth inequality and corruption. With his vivid prose and realistic characters, Adiga's writing continues to resonate with readers all over the world. He has authored several books including *Between the Assassinations* (2008), *Last Man in Tower* (2011) and *Selection Day* (2016). Adiga has been widely recognized for his work, winning awards including Amban Literary Award (2010), Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book (2009) among others. His work contributes meaningfully to contemporary literature analysis on themes that cut across societal affairs like political injustice, immigration attitudes among others. The bildungsroman is a genre of literature that focuses on the moral, psychological, and intellectual growth of a character, typically through coming-of-age experiences. Aravind Adiga's novels often contain elements of the bildungsroman, and studying these elements is essential to understanding the author's work as a whole.

Bildungsroman

Bildungsroman is a genre of novel that originated in Germany in the eighteenth century and is known for its focus on the moral, intellectual, and spiritual growth of the protagonist. The term Bildungsroman itself means "novel of education" or "novel of formation." Such novels typically follow a young protagonist through a series of educational and personal struggles as they try to find their place in society. This genre often explores themes of identity, social class, sexuality, and relationships. One notable example of this type of novel is Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-96), which follows the journey of a young man through many different careers before finally settling on his true calling as an actor.

Objectives of the Study

1. To gain insight into the themes of identity and personal growth that are prevalent throughout his novels..
2. To examining Adiga's language and style, we can understand how his writing contributes to the development of character and emphasizes the protagonist's unique perspective. This analysis can help us to appreciate the artistry of Adiga's writing and to better understand how his work fits into the broader genre of Indian literature.
3. To understand the universality of the human experience.
4. To understand human condition and our own journeys of personal growth and development.

Bildungsroman Elements in Aravind Adiga Works

Bildungsroman, a German term for a novel of formation, depicts the psychological and moral growth of a protagonist from youth to maturity. Aravind Adiga's novels are renowned for their full depiction of bildungsroman traits, demonstrating that an altered mental and moral state can arise from one's life experiences. In this essay, I will analyze various bildungsroman traits present in Aravind Adiga's novels.

1. The White Tiger (2008)

One of the most prominent bildungsroman traits in Adiga's novels is the moral education and growth of the protagonist. For instance, in "The White Tiger," the protagonist Balram Halwai, a poor Indian driver, narrates his journey of enlightenment where he transforms from a subservient driver to an entrepreneur who kills his employer to establish his business. In his journey, Balram acquires valuable knowledge about the corrupt politics and power system in his country, and this enables him to transcend his victim mentality to become a perpetrator of violence. Similarly, racism and class differences are essential components in Adiga's bildungsroman, explicitly highlighting the societal challenges that contribute to the protagonist's growth.

A significant bildungsroman trait in Adiga's novels is the protagonist's quest to realize their identity. Adiga's protagonists navigate difficult circumstances to come to self-awareness and clarify who they are. In his novel, "Selection Day," Radha, the protagonist, struggles with his identity as a cricket player, constantly questioning his talent and interest. His journey becomes one of self-discovery and acceptance, a classic bildungsroman character arc.

Another important trait in Adiga's novels is the protagonist's search for autonomy and independence. Adiga's characters face paternalistic and repressive cultural and societal pressures that hinder their independence. For example, in "The White Tiger," Balram's family pressures him to work hard and earn money to support them, but Balram eventually defies these expectations by becoming an entrepreneur. In doing so, Adiga portrays rebellion against repressive societal norms as a means of character growth.

2. The Last Man in Tower (2011)

The Last Man in Tower by Aravind Adiga is a novel that follows the story of Masterji, a retired schoolteacher, who is living in a condominium in Mumbai. The novel, which was published in 2011, is an excellent example of a Bildungsroman. One of the primary elements of a Bildungsroman is the growth and development of the protagonist. In The Last Man in Tower, Masterji is the protagonist, and his growth is evident throughout the novel. Masterji's transformation begins when the condominium's residents receive a generous offer to sell their apartments to a property development company. Masterji is initially hesitant about the offer, but as the novel progresses, he becomes more determined to resist the offer. Masterji's transformation is not just limited to his resistance to the property development company, but he also stands up for his beliefs and defends his fellow residents.

In The Last Man in Tower, the role of mentor is played by Masterji's deceased wife, who appears as a ghost in his dream. Masterji's wife guides him and provides him with the strength to resist the property development company's lucrative offer. She helps him understand the importance of standing up for his beliefs and defending what he thinks is right.

The Bildungsroman genre also features the protagonist's struggle with societal norms and expectations. In The Last

Man in Tower, Masterji is struggling with his moral compass as he is torn between his desire for financial gain and his moral responsibility towards his fellow residents. Masterji's struggle is further compounded by the pressure from his family and friends who urge him to take the offer and retire comfortably. Ultimately, Masterji decides to stand up for what he believes is right, even if it means going against societal norms.

The final element of a Bildungsroman is the protagonist's realization of their place in society. In The Last Man in Tower, Masterji's realization occurs after his transformation when he decides to resist the lucrative offer from the property development company. He realizes that he is not just an individual but part of a community, and his actions will affect others. Masterji's resistance is not just for himself, but for his fellow residents as well, and it is this realization that completes his Bildungsroman journey.

3. Selection Day (2016)

Selection Day tells the story of two brothers, Manju and Radha, as they navigate the complexities of life and cricket in Mumbai. The novel contains many bildungsroman elements, which are characteristics of a coming-of-age story. These elements are that the protagonist undergoes a transformation, that they learn from their experiences, and that there is a focus on personal growth.

The first bildungsroman element is evident in Manju's transformation throughout the novel. At the beginning of the story, Manju is portrayed as a shy, reserved boy who is overshadowed by his cricket-obsessed brother Radha. However, as the story progresses, Manju becomes more confident and assertive. He starts to challenge Radha's dominance, and he also begins to question the traditional structures in society that have held him back for so long. He learns that success is not everything, and that it is important to pursue what makes him happy. He learns this lesson through his interactions with Javed Ansari, who is a mentor to both Manju and Radha. Javed tells Manju that he should approach cricket with a philosophical mindset, rather than just focusing on winning. Manju takes this advice to heart, and he begins to see cricket as a way to better understand the world around him.

The third element is the focus on personal growth. Manju's journey is not just about becoming a better cricket player; it is also about becoming a better person. He learns to be more open-minded and to embrace new experiences. He also learns to be more empathetic towards others, particularly towards his father, who is struggling with his own demons. Through his personal growth, Manju becomes a more well-rounded and compassionate individual. The protagonist, Manju, undergoes a transformation, learns from his experiences, and undergoes personal growth. These elements make the story more than just a simple tale of cricket and competition; they make it a story about the complexities of adolescence and the importance of personal growth.

4. Amnesty (2020)

Amnesty is also a brilliant example of a Bildungsroman novel in which the protagonist, Danny, undergoes a journey of self-discovery, growth, and development. Through the novel, Adiga explores the elements of the Bildungsroman genre such as the initiation process, the quest for self-realization, and the development of a moral code.

The initiation process in Amnesty is marked by Danny's decision to become a cleaner of houses and apartments after

fleeing his homeland Sri Lanka. Danny is forced to come to terms with the hardships of a new country and the low-paid job that he has to undertake to make ends meet. By becoming a cleaner, Danny not only gains financial independence but also learns the ropes of the new society in which he has to survive.

The quest for self-realization is a crucial element in the novel as Danny tries to find his identity as an exiled illegal immigrant in Australia. He discovers the power of language and communication as he learns to speak and understand English. With the help of a lawyer, Priya, Danny becomes aware of his legal rights and the need to stand up for himself. The development of a moral code is another pivotal element in *Amnesty* as Danny faces ethical dilemmas in his job as a cleaner. Danny is forced to weigh his loyalty to his employer against the safety of the people whose homes he is cleaning. He also must decide whether to inform Priya about a possible crime that he has witnessed. Through these moral choices, Danny embarks on a journey towards ethical maturity.

5. *Between the Assassinations* (2008)

Between the Assassinations depicts the stories of various characters living in the fictional Indian town of Kittur. The novel explores the lives of these characters and how they are shaped by the social, political, and economic conditions that exist in their world. One of the significant aspects of the novel is its emphasis on the bildungsroman element, which portrays the coming-of-age experiences of the characters. This essay will explore the bildungsroman elements in the novel and how they contribute to the overall theme of the story.

One of the primary bildungsroman elements in the novel is the theme of education. The characters in the novel are all struggling to find their place in the world, and education offers them a way to do that. For instance, Ziauddin, the young boy who works in the local tea shop, dreams of attending school so that he can break free from his life of poverty. Clinton, on the other hand, who aspires to become a writer, is pursuing a degree in English literature. The novel illustrates how education is a vital tool for the characters to navigate their social, economic, and political realities, and it plays a significant role in their journey towards self-discovery. The characters in *Between the Assassinations* are grappling with questions about who they are and where they belong. For example, Shankara, the Dalit boy, is struggling to find his place in a world that values caste privilege over individual merit. The novel illuminates how the characters' identities are shaped by their experiences, and how they strive to define themselves in a world that is often hostile to their existence.

Conclusion

Aravind Adiga writes books that are all about growing up and figuring out who you are. In *The White Tiger*, the main character goes on a journey where he learns about society and himself. *The Last Man in Tower* is another book that shows a character growing up and learning from his mentor. *Selection Day* is a story about a boy who learns from his experiences and becomes a better person. *Amnesty* is a book about a guy who goes on a journey of self-discovery and learns about the challenges of moving to a new place. *Between the Assassinations* is a book that talks about education, identity, and morality and how they all play a part in growing up. Studying bildungsroman elements in Aravind Adiga's novels has multiple objectives allows us to better understand his views on identity and personal growth, to appreciate his

writing style and language, to explore his social commentary, and to understand universal human experiences. Through careful analysis of Adiga's literary works, we can gain a deeper understanding of contemporary Indian society and the complex dynamics that shape the human experience.

References

1. Adiga A. *The White Tiger: A Novel*. Free Press, 2020.
2. Khan M. *The White Tiger: A Critique*. *Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies*, 1(2), 2010b.
3. Adiga A. *Selection Day: A Novel*. Simon and Schuster, 20179.
4. Aravind Adiga. In *Wikipedia*, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aravind_Adiga
5. Adiga A. *Amnesty: A Novel*. Scribner, 2021.
6. Adigap A. *Last Man in Tower*. Atlantic Books Ltd, 2011.
7. Adiga A. *between the Assassinations*. Atlantic Books Ltd, 2010.