
**Borders of Belonging: Migration, Survival, and Alienation in Aravind Adiga's
*Amnesty***

Mr Kure Kishor VishwanathAssistant Professor, Department of English, Shivneri Mahavidyalaya, Shirur Anantpal, Dist.
Latur, MS

Article Received: 02/09/2025**Article Accepted:** 01/10/2025**Published Online:** 02/10/2025**DOI:**10.47311/IJOES.2025.7.10.09

Abstract:

Current research proposes that people need to strike a balance between their requirement for self-concealment and their requirement for social interaction with their community. The research applies thematic analysis to analyse the novel through its social and political environment while using postcolonial theory to understand immigrant experiences. The narrative contains three primary themes which explore: migration, survival and alienation. Aravind Adiga's *Amnesty* presents a tale of undocumented migration through the life of Dhananjaya Rajaratnam. The novel follows Danny's struggle for survival, and his case shows the random events which undocumented immigrants must endure. The research investigates the above-mentioned themes through its analysis of worldwide changes and immigrant life stories. Migration through *Amnesty* serves as a dual process, which includes actual movement between locations and the destruction of personal identity and life stability. Survival exists as a dual system which unites physical survival with mental survival through dangerous work, hidden living, and constant watchfulness. Alienation takes shape in Danny's marginal position, as he is cut off from his homeland and unable to claim full acceptance in Australia. Findings of the research suggest that *Amnesty* highlights the vulnerable space occupied by undocumented migrants.

Keywords- Migration, survival, alienation, displacement, and undocumented**Introduction**

Aravind Adiga's first novel, *The White Tiger*, launched his career and won the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 2008. He is the fourth Indian author to win this award after Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai. Adiga identifies as an Indian-Australian author. His most recent novel, *Amnesty* (2020), falls under the classification of migrant literature and thus explores themes of identity, migration and moral standpoints of Australian modernity. *Amnesty* can be considered and critiqued from geographical, socio-political, cultural, authorship, moral and thematic perspectives. In particular, Adiga is specifically cognizant of legal liminality and precarity. He importantly identifies that migrants from Sri

Lanka tend to enter Australia illegally. And they are undocumented. They also sometimes commit crimes. This raises serious questions about their citizenship, social security and political control. They commit crimes to remain secure and to acquire citizenship from land like Australia. And with their undocumented status comes a level of anguish. This leads to considerations of their human rights. (Mendes and Lau 468). The scholarship suggests the novel offers a fair critique of immigration policy and the exploitation of migrants. Amnesty highlights the hypocrisy of global economies that welcome migrant workers, while creating barriers against migration.

Amnesty represents a moral quandary and civic duty, through which Danny is able to choose only one of two things: should he report the murder, and face deportation, or say nothing, not bring the justice, and try to avoid danger. The novel desires the inner monologue of Danny through the killer frame. It highlights the pride of Australia, which is founded on the given, law posing a danger for immigrants. The novel points out that the world to focuses on the third world that lures international students with promises of future security and safe schooling, yet putting them in danger that depletes it of its assets to the world (Saleem).

Research Statement

Adiga's Amnesty reflects the realism of the psychological journey of migrants. Immigrants violate both national security and the established rules of civic society, according to this view. The novel depicts the psychological terror of Danny of being caught and sent for deportation by the police. The book demonstrates that people who belong to a group share a tiny difference with those who do not belong to the group. The text shows how people must make changes and accept sacrifices and mental and ethical deals to survive in such an unpleasant setting.

Research Questions

- a. Which numerous challenges are faced by Immigrants when trying to survive in the foreign territory of Australia?
- a. Why is it insecure to enter the country without documents?
- a. Which various moral dilemmas, which create psychological and ethical problems for all characters involved, are generated?
- a. How are alienation and belonging conveyed by the protagonist?

Literature Review

The first critical reviews of Amnesty started to appear shortly after its release, and these reviews expanded through interviews and academic studies that started to emerge. The first evaluations of books examined both the storytelling sequence and the moral dilemmas which appeared throughout the narrative. The main conflict of the story about an undocumented immigrant who must decide between revealing criminal activity and maintaining his unstable existence received praise from reviewers who appreciated how Adiga managed to pack social commentary into a concise narrative structure. The Christian Science Monitor and Washington Post praised the book because it presented immigrants as they really were, while revealing the moral conflicts the wealthy members of their community faced ('Amnesty' Review: An Immigrant Weighs an Impossible Decision; In 'Amnesty,' an Immigrant Is Put in an Impossible Position - The Washington Post).

Academic responses took a more problem-based direction. Multiple academic works study *Amnesty* through its connections to hospitality and legal marginality and neoliberal vulnerability. Mendes reads the text as an exploration of inhospitable social spaces that produce and exploit migrant precarity (Mendes and Lau). Sekhar and other scholars analyse the main character's mental state through socio-psychological frameworks, which examine how fear, guilt, and survival need affect him in the novel (Sekhar). The discussion spreads through academic publications from various regions which study *Amnesty* within global migration studies, while examining Danny as a neoliberal subaltern who lacks institutional backing and social acceptance (Prakhar Medhavi).

The critics evaluate *Amnesty* through the lens of Adiga's previous literary works, starting with *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in Tower*. The analysis examines three recurring motifs, which include social advancement, ethical trade-offs, and economic disparities between city residents (*The Last Man in Tower* by Aravind Adiga). *The White Tiger* satirically examines business ethics through its narrative, and *Last Man in Tower* demonstrates how urban Indian society forces people to become homeless. The displaced protagonist in *Amnesty* exists within a globalised urban space, which leads reviewers and scholars to view the story as presenting alternative moral perspectives that examine both institutionalised discrimination and modern migration and asylum issues (In 'Amnesty,' an Immigrant Is Put in an Impossible Position).

The postcolonial analysis of Danny's cultural displacement applies Homi K. Bhabha's theories about hybridity and transitional "in-between" areas to demonstrate how he preserves his identity through his continuous fight against being different (Bhabha 1). Bhabha's theories explain how migrants experience social exclusion because their language, legal status, and social acceptance prevent them from belonging to either their native country or their adopted home. Bhabha develops the theoretical framework which explains the operation of liminal states and their subsequent moral effect (Bhabha Homi 2).

Migration theory provides researchers with a systematic method to analyse migration patterns. The authors of *The Age of Migration* present modern migration patterns as results of three main factors, which include labour market needs, migrant networks, and immigration laws that establish different rights levels for migrants. The framework explains how *Amnesty* presents three main migration patterns, which include unregulated entry into the country, unstable immigration status, and protection that varies between different groups. Through their research on global migration mapping, Castles and his team provide readers with the ability to see how official migration systems affect Danny's personal situation (S. Castles and Miller).

Marx developed his theory of alienation by studying estranged labour, which supports both socio-structural and postcolonial perspectives according to Fromm's social-psychological framework. Marx demonstrates how capitalism separates people from their authentic nature (Marx 31), while Fromm explains how modern social systems produce

emotional detachment in people (Fromm 121). The two texts demonstrate how Amnesty's survival methods create ethical conflicts which harm interpersonal bonds and result in enduring social isolation between people.

The literature demonstrates ongoing critical attention, but researchers have not yet addressed all necessary areas of study. The narrative structure of Amnesty fails to maintain a consistent thematic analysis of the effects of survival and alienation on migration. Most reviews treat one theme at a time or compare Amnesty to other Adiga's novels. Empirical migration scholars establish structural background knowledge, yet they fail to examine the moral and emotional elements which Adiga investigates in his writing. Postcolonial critics have used Bhabha effectively, but they have not completely examined the relationship between hybridity and liminality, and legal vulnerability and survival strategies in the novel. The field lacks sufficient research that combines legal studies with affect theory and close literary analysis. The field requires researchers to conduct extensive studies which combine textual evaluation with social and political statistics and theoretical models to demonstrate how Adiga employs personal moral breakdown to establish a global perspective on migration and social segregation (Mendes and Lau; Prakhar Medhavi).

Research Gaps

This research on Amnesty focuses on the concerns of migration, survival, and displacement. It concentrates on the main theme of the novel only. Nevertheless, it has nothing to do with the analysis of the style of Adiga's work. Limited attention is given to how narrative technique shapes the migrant's fractured identity and sense of alienation. The conflict between legal rules and moral principles in the novel has not received sufficient analysis through stylistic analysis. Academic research about migrant voice construction through language and tone and narrative rhythm has not received enough study.

Discussion

Migration and the Quest for Belonging

Aravind Adiga's Amnesty depicts the harsh reality of undocumented migrants in modern Australia. The story surveys Danny, who lives as a Tamil resident of Sri Lanka in Sydney's remote areas, while his existence remains hidden and unstable. His situation reflects the everyday experiences of undocumented migrants who exist without legal status while they navigate public spaces undetected. The characters in Adiga's story must survive through an entire day while avoiding capture.

Danny begins his migration from Sri Lanka to Australia while experiencing fear with his wish for a better-quality future. He enters the United States on a student visa to find stability and opportunities, but remains past his authorised period to become undocumented. He begins his work with Sydney's underground workforce by cleaning properties that belong to wealthy Australian residents. The process of border-crossing fails to provide migrants with security because it creates a state of legal limbo, which prevents them from fully entering or leaving the country (Adiga 37). The society accepts Danny for his work, yet refuses to give him any form of acknowledgement.

Australia is a paradox in the novel. The country provides him with employment and stability and a chance to start a new life, which he prefers to the ongoing conflict in his homeland. The creation of laws and borders establishes a special environment, and it makes him stand out as someone who belongs to a different world. His daily communications with others constantly bring back memories of his social position as a stranger. Migration theorists explain how migrants experience various levels of social integration through the conflict between available opportunities and social barriers to entry (S. Castles and Miller).

Cultural displacement appears throughout the entire narrative of Danny's thoughts. His existence between two cultures results in a divided self, which he needs to handle. He often thinks about Sri Lanka with a deep sense of desire, because he misses his family connections and the comfort of speaking in his native language, and also following his cultural traditions. The return journey becomes impossible because it symbolises both the unsuccessful efforts and the unsafe situations. He pretends to fit in by using local speech patterns and cultural mannerisms, but his attempts to blend in do not abolish his status as an outsider. The dual nature of his character makes him a liminal individual according to Homi K. Bhabha, who explains this space as the 'in-between' area where hybridity and identity alteration occur (Bhabha Homi 2).

The novel shows that undocumented migrants experience unstable belonging because immigration laws and biased attitudes create hindrances for them. The strategy Danny employed through his silence and following orders resulted in his downfall. His internal conflict over Radha's passing reveals his desire for people to recognise him, as he believes the world ignores him. 'Belonging' provides people with safety, equal treatment rights, and membership in a social group. Migration, according to Amnesty, represents people's search for stability, while they face the challenges of being excluded from their homes and forced to displace in search of a new place to call home.

Survival and Moral Dilemmas

The novel *Amnesty* by Adiga demonstrates how undocumented migrants experience survival as an unstable condition. Danny in Sydney depends on hiding and changing his behaviour and staying hidden while facing the danger of being caught and deported or losing his entire life. He needs to stay masked while doing everyday activities and avoid contact with the police. Adiga reveals this hiding as necessary, not cowardice, in an unconcerned environment.

Survival requires both physical and mental strength because Danny faces three main psychological challenges, which include fear, guilt, and uncertainty. He spends his time constantly in fear of meeting new people and dealing with his neighbours and the everyday people he meets on the street. The book shows how undocumented people must constantly stay alert, for brief moments of safety, such as renting a room, eating a meal, or talking to someone friendly, only give them short-term peace before deportation risks remain active (Arvind Adiga 7). His mental processes show how fear establishes mental patterns that affect our choices in daily life.

Through his story, Adiga creates a situation which forces Danny to leave his state of being unseen. After Radha Thomas's murder, Danny suspects her lover, Dr. Prakash. The story changes from survival mode to moral conflict because he must decide between revealing to the police, which would lead to deportation, or staying quiet to survive while participating in criminal activity. The conflict exists between upholding safety and revealing the truth.

The circumstances show that basic survival needs work against our moral duties. The circumstances require me to decide between fighting for justice and ensuring my personal survival. The human expenses of speaking out become evident through Adiga's work, because it results in deportation and loss of status in Sydney, yet staying quiet preserves safety at the cost of personal integrity. Undocumented migrants find themselves in an unresolvable moral dilemma because they must choose between protecting justice and ensuring their survival.

The situation becomes more complex because of the surrounding social environment. Under Australian law, Danny faces criminalisation, which turns him into an enforcement matter. The legal framework establishes a dangerous situation, which makes it dangerous for him to follow his moral instincts. Marx and Fromm explain that alienation emerges from both exploitation of labour and social isolation, which stops people from achieving full moral subject recognition (Marx, Fromm).

According to Amnesty, survival without dignity results in a situation that makes life unbearable. The migrant faces a difficult choice between remaining silent and risking everything to tell the truth, according to Danny's moral struggle illustrates. The primary focus of Adiga's book demonstrates how undocumented migrants face legal obstacles to entering, but their survival depends on receiving ethical and fair treatment.

Alienation and Identity Conflict

The undocumented migrant experience in Amnesty shows alienation as a social reality, which creates internal separations among undocumented migrants. Danny exists in a state of separation from his native country and his adopted home of Sydney. The man lives in Australia physically, yet his legal status shows him as absent from the country, while his work value remains acknowledged, but his personal identity remains unrecognised. His dual position leads to economic, cultural, and psychological isolation, which makes his life experience a permanent state of being displaced.

The economic part of alienation represents the primary obstacle which Danny encounters. Karl Marx illustrates that 'alienation' is a situation in which labourers are separated from the product of their labour, from the act of labour itself, and from their own human potential (Marx 74). The middle-class Australians find comfort through Danny's cleaning work, yet he receives no recognition and lacks job stability. His endless work schedule produces a feeling of separation from personal fulfilment, which makes him feel like an outsider.

The experience of cultural alienation results in greater economic exclusion of people. Danny uses a stolen identity to move through Sydney by changing his speech patterns, body language, and overall behaviour to stay under the radar. He tries to match his actions to the local customs, yet he stays outside the full social acceptance of the host culture. A single misstep in his accent or his contact with the police would reveal his true identity to him. His Sri Lankan heritage remains broken because he faces threats of harm and failure when he tries to go back to his homeland, which forces him to live in a state of limbo. This liminality, as Bhabha describes, is a state of being caught between cultures, where identity is always conveyed but never fully fixed. (Bhabha 217).

Psychological alienation runs deep. Danny battles between his desire for social contact and his experience of being socially isolated. He experiences three main emotions, which include guilt about his immigration status, shame about being invisible, and fear of being discovered. Fromm's view of modern alienation as isolation from community and self resonates strongly. (Fromm 122). The survival situation forces Danny to make choices which violate his personal moral values because he becomes disconnected from both his moral principles and the world around him.

This alienation culminates in the identity conflict at the heart of the novel. The decision before Danny is whether to maintain his knowledge about Radha Thomas's death as a secret or to disclose the facts surrounding her murder. The situation forces him to doubt his identity because he needs to determine if his purpose in life is to survive as an undocumented worker or if he possesses the ability to establish justice. His body language shows the heavy burden of being left out by the group. The society has excluded him from complete membership, but he must take on the duties which belong to a member.

Amnesty frames alienation as central to undocumented life. The migration process causes people to lose their identity, as Danny shows through his broken self, while he seeks protection and improved opportunities. His inner conflict shows his dual experience of being observed by others and feeling invisible while he searches for his place in the world. Through his storytelling, the author shows how migrants experience genuine alienation because they live between their original homeland and their new country of residence.

Narrative Technique and Style of Adiga

In *Amnesty*, Aravind Adiga exhibits understated control with his writing style, creating a sense of crisis immediately. The story is told from Danny's perspective: the narrative is told in the first person by an undocumented immigrant who manifests his emotional turmoil throughout the narrative. The first-person narration captures a level of intimacy and immediacy. It highlights the banal life of a man in Sydney struggling to figure out how to live between survival and moral obligation (Adiga Aravind 45). The voice is unembellished and simple, replicated through its direct statements, which mimic Danny's unpredictable life in Sydney.

The author employs simple vocabulary and short sentences to illustrate the experience of brutality as an exile. The author employs abrupt juxtaposition between contemplative and abrupt sections to demonstrate how uneven Danny's life is. This gives the writing a raw and unsettled rhythm (Adiga Aravind 102). The narrative has few direct dialogue passages; however, the characterisation spends a considerable amount of time contemplating self-situation; this illustrates the extent to which self-situation of being invisibilised affects a state of mind. The author employs this stylistic technique by combining storytelling methodologies with social critiques.

The narrative structure condenses the time frame into a day, then utilises memory and the reflective time to create an extended time experience. The close framing technique creates extreme pressure, yet enables viewers to delve deeper into issues of identity and fear. Adiga, the writer, channels writing techniques to make individual immigration stories resonate with political situations establishing immigration is an individual struggle and collective social condition.

Conclusion

The novel *Amnesty* examines the dangerous existence of undocumented migrants. It explores their identity struggles and survival needs, and their sense of alienation in the globalised urban environment of Sydney. The story centres around Dhananjaya Rajaratnam, who goes by Danny, as he navigates his illegal Sri Lankan immigration status while uncovering his employer's criminal activities. The author demonstrates how migration leads to national belonging and immigration policy concerns through Danny's fractured identity and his ongoing internal struggle between fear and moral awareness. The research investigates how *Amnesty* portrays border changes that impact migrant survival and their struggle to gain recognition while being without legal status.

References:

- Adiga, Arvind. *Amnesty*. Scribner, 2020.
- Bhabha Homi. *The Location of Culture*. 1994.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 'The Location of Culture'.
- Castles, Stephen, and Mark J Miller. *International Population And*. 2020,
- Castles, Stephen., and Mark J. Miller. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. 2009, p. 369.
- Fromm, Erich. *The Sane Society*. London and New York, 1991.
- Hospitality and Amnesty: Aravind Adiga's Narrative of Legal Liminality: Interventions: Vol 25 , No 4 - Get Access.
- In 'Amnesty,' an Immigrant Is Put in an Impossible Position - The Washington Post.
- Last Man in Tower by Aravind Adiga – Review | Fiction | The Guardian.
- Marx, Karl. *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.
- Mendes, Ana Cristina, and Lisa Lau. 'Hospitality and Amnesty: Aravind Adiga's Narrative

- of Legal Liminality'. *Interventions*, vol. 25, no. 4, May 2023, pp. 468–84,
- Prakhar Medhavi. 'Neoliberal Subaltern Voices in Arvind Adiga's *Amnesty* Through the Paradigm of Alter-Globalization'. *Research Journal of English (RJOE)*, vol. 9, no. 1, Feb. 2024.
- Saleem, Rabeena. 'Amnesty Review: Vital Tale of Morality and the Migrant Plight'. *The Irish Times*, Picador, 4 Apr. 2020.
- Sekhar, R. Chandra. 'Fear, Guilt, and Survival: A Socio-Psychological Analysis of Danny's Dilemma in Aravind Adiga's *Amnesty*'. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, vol. 07, no. 09, Sep. 2024,