

Pinky Madame (Adiga's novel *The White Tiger*) Determined

Character Despite the frivolity of her name, Pinky Madame ('madame' is appended to a woman's name as a term of respect) is no 'dumb blonde.' In fact, she is a very strong, determined woman who almost always gets her way. She spent many years in the US, where, apparently, she learned the virtues of 'retail therapy.' Moving back to India, she intends to carry on her high-maintenance life-style. Because she is independently rich, she is able to act independently from her weak husband and eventually leaves him and returns to America. Before that, though, when her husband moves them to Delhi, she demands that they settle in the new, luxurious, hi-tech suburb of Gurgaon.

Activities Pinky Madame spends hours driving to and from shopping malls, which have appeared all over Delhi. Sitting in the back seat with her husband, she mixes English and Hindi, commenting on life in India and America. She is very good-looking, Balram observes, but rarely goes to the hairdresser or gym. She keeps to herself, shunning the company of others. Balram observes that she 'never joined in our conversation. Except to play badminton, which she did wearing dark glasses, she never left her room.'

Illustrative moments

Impetuous On Pinky Madame's birthday, she orders her husband to provide a special dinner, to be served by Balram dressed as a maharaja. After a lot of drinking, she insists on driving them all back home to their apartment. On the way, she runs over and kills a young child. Her impetuosity has result in an avoidable death.

Influential In the aftermath of this car accident, she insists that Balram take the blame, which he (as a servant) does. While he fears that he will be imprisoned, Pinky Madame informs him that through her contacts in the police force, he is free.

Self-sufficient Perhaps because of her independent income, she is a self-sufficient person. Once, while sitting in the car with her husband, she challenged him on something and he told her to keep her voice down because 'there's a driver in the car.' She replied, 'We don't need a driver. I can drive. Just like in America.'

Discussion questions

Does Pinky Madame represent a positive or negative image of a woman?

Her obsession with America appears to symbolise modern India's turn toward globalisation, US-style neo-liberal economic policies and an entrepreneurial business culture. Do you regard this symbolism as effective? Heavy-handed? Clever? Trite?