

The Selfish, Greedy and Hypocritical nature of contemporary metropolitan Indians in Arvind Adiga's *Last Man In Tower*

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ABSTRACT

Paper makes efforts to explore how the people acts less compassionate in the urge to become rich and human in the age of globalisation. The second novel of Arvind Adiga, the man Booker prize winning writer unfolds the crimes associated with real estate i.e one of the successful industries in the age of globalisation. The book describes how the people become more selfish in the urge to become rich and encourages them to do bad, unexpected things with other humans. The globalisation which is the definition of contribution to the developing nations but on the other hand in reality, it is wide gap between the rich and the poor in developing nations. Therefore insatiable desire for money and success made the middle class and privileged to indulge in criminal activities. With reference to Adiga's *Last Man in Tower*, efforts has been made to explore this reprehensible acquisitiveness of people that makes them more self-obsessed and unkind.

1. Introduction

There is reciprocal relation between society and literature. It is influenced by the society. It is an imaginative writing that transmits aesthetic sense as well as the socio-economic, cultural and political milieu of particular society are imparted in this work. This phenomenon of literature has no exception for English novels. The national, social and domestic issues such as post-partition problems, communal violence, social disparity, untouchability and man-woman relationships were used to be earlier Indian fictions topics. But after Globalisation, there has been greater change from national and domestic issues related to globalisation in the recent Indian fictions. As compared to developed nations, globalisation has both positive and negative impacts on developing nations yet they become more vulnerable the negative impacts of globalisation. Hence, contemporary Indian writers mainly focus on the socio-economic, cultural, political and ecological impacts of globalization on developing nations. Therefore only socio-economic, cultural, political and ecological impacts of globalisation on developing nations are focused by the Indian writers. In the Arvind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* makes efforts to describe how the people are becoming selfish and less compassionate to become rich in the age of globalisation. Arvind Adiga, the Man Booker prize winning writer has his debut novel *The Tiger* throws light on the dark India which remained untouched by the rapid economic transformation of 21st century. The crime associated with real estate, successful industries in the age of globalisation are unfolded by his second novel *The Last in Tower*. The book describes how the people become more selfish in the urge to become rich and encourages them to do bad, unexpected things with other humans. . The globalisation which is the definition of contribution to the developing nations but on the other hand in reality, it is wide gap between the rich and the poor in developing nations. Therefore insatiable desire for money and success made the middle class and privileged to indulge in criminal activities. With reference to Adiga's *Last Man in Tower*, efforts has been made to explore this reprehensible acquisitiveness of people that makes them more self-obsessed

and unkind. The explanation on the 'globalisation' and 'middleclass' for better understanding of proposed argument are included in the theoretical framework of this research paper.

2. Research Methodology

The Descriptive study and the analytical methodology will be used for the present research work. The emphasis will be laid on the close reading and review of the primary and secondary data available on the subject, visit to various libraries for the collection of relevant information. Besides, discussion will be done with the persons who have done similar kind of study. Moreover, the internet can be used for study.

Importance of the Research:

The purpose of this research is to study changing nature of contemporary Indian's in *Last Man in Tower* by Arvind Adiga .The present research work throws light upon the contemporary Indian society. They are the post modern writers having the realistic problems of post modern society. He is new writer with new approach and dimension of thinking; hence it is essential to search out their approach.

3. Description

The symbolic change in the lives of human being represented by the beginning of new century in human history. This phenomenon of change has no exception for the 21st century. The tremendous changes in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres are experienced by the present century which are often referred as 'globalisation'. It is energetic process of liberalisation and international integration of market and technology. Globalisation is defined as

"a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time flustering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant" (13),

by Manfred B. Steger. Across all the spheres such as the social, the cultural, the economical, the political and the ecological milieu globalisation refers to the process of transnational and interrelatedness. In recent decades the richest and powerful agency in recording the social life of middle class is the booming real estate industry is one of the growth engines of national economy. As the novel centres around the Indian middle class, it would be beneficial to know the concept of middle class in Indian context. In the Indian context, PavanK. Verma defines middle class as

"Anybody who has a home to live in and can afford three meals a day, and has access to basic health care, public transport and schooling, with some disposable income to buy such basics as a fan or watch or cycle, has already climbed on to the middle class bandwagon" (XVIII).

The parallel processes such as "the politics of exclusion" and "the politics of aspiration" are involved in formation of the new middle class. The middle classes are viewed as aspirational in countries such as India, China and Nepal as they believed in "the privileged lifestyle" and "distinctive images" represented by advertising industry and media mass are achievable. Therefore exploitative property developers victimized the aspiring middle class, they make profit out of such popular dreaming. The urban middle classes often becomes vulnerable to economic crisis but they are beneficiaries of economic globalisation. Although the national economy has been increasing in fast pace, there is a intense sense of uncertainty about how long the economic miracle will last and where one can put there newfound luxury in safe-zone, explicated by Li Zhang. Yet this unconsciousness can also drive individual to take more risks, such as setting out into the "gray" economy, to acquire more wealth and securing it for their privileged position. Thus the fear of dropping induces and the loss of sensitivity towards the age of globalisation is fore grounded in this paper.

The story in the Adiga's Last Man in Tower is of Yogesh Murthy, the retired science teacher well known as Masterji, who rejected generous offer given by Dharmesh Shah who was the cruel mogul of real estate in Mumbai. Adiga defines Vakola as,

"On a map of Mumbai, Vakola is a cluster of ambiguous dots that cling polyp-like to the under-side of the domestic airport; on the ground, the polyps turn out to be slums, and spread out on every side of Vishram Society" (Last Man in Tower 3). Although Tower A and Tower B are erected within the same compound wall, often Tower A is referred to as 'Vishram society.' Its residents are proud of the fact that Vishram is "pucca absolutely, unimpeachably pucca" (3)

comparing with its crumbling neighbourhood. The colour of Tower A

"once pink, is now a rainwater-stained, fungus-licked grey. . . Luxuriant ferns, green and reddish green, blur the corners of some windows, making them look like entrances to small caves" (5).

After four decades of monsoon, air pollution and erosion, Tower A is more in the precarious state. Although there are chances of collapse in the next monsoon,

"no one, either in Vishram Society or in the neighbourhood at large, really believes that it will fall" (9).

In late 1950s Tower A of Vishram was built. The three-foot-tall polished black-stone cross indicates that

"the building was originally meant for Roman Catholics. Hindus were admitted in the late 1960s and in the 1980s the better kind of Muslim - Bohra, Ismaili, college-educated. Vishram is now entirely 'cosmopolitan' (i.e. ethnically and religiously mixed)" (5). The colour of Tower A "once pink, is now a rainwater-stained, fungus-licked grey. . . Luxuriant ferns, green and reddish green, blur the corners of some windows, making them look like entrances to small caves" (5).

The problems and struggle faced by the residents of Vishram society are elaborated by Adiga as: most of the houses in the vakola were not getting supply of running water for 24 hours. Vakola was blessed by only twice a day by the municipality since it is on the poorer, Eastern side of the train track. Residents therefore fitted the storage tanks above their bathrooms, but the tanks were can hold so much (the stability of building were threaten by the larger tanks this ancients). (7) Although the members of Tower A were well-known for their Good-neighbourliness and middle class virtue, they may be in the midst of the slums of Vakola or their own personal problems. The respected peoples of Vishram society were an old retired science teacher, a real estate broker, a social worker, a retired accountant and a cyber café owner. The main character of the novel, the sixty-one years old Yogesh Murthy is affectionately known as Masterji. In the memory of his deceased wife Purnima and daughter Sandhya, he lived alone in his apartment. The presence of her wife was felt through "the vapours of mothballs", "old newspapers" and "silk sari". He had only one son Gaurav who was a banker and was living in the Sout Mumbai Marine Lines. He used to offer top-up classes to the children of the resident and played with his rubik's cube in his free time. A Hindu Middle aged couple, Mr. and Mrs. Puri were living with their 18-years-old son Ramu. Ramu had down syndrome. A real estate broker, Ramesh Ajwani had lost his investments in real estate business as well as in stock market. People always noticed him:

"In the movie of his own life, he had to admit, he was just a comedian" (134).

Well-off sister of Mrs. Georgina Rego was always trumped by the battleship tried by her. Whereas a good relationship was shared by Mr. and Mrs. Pinto with their neighbours.

"Over the years, the residents have formed a village. There is love, there is dislike, there is bickering, there is resentment. Most of all, there are genuine human connections" (USA Today Sept 25, 2011),

remarked by Deirdre Donahue. They have been living together as a community in harmony for decades. Though the residents were generous and tender towards each other, Adiga clarifies the

She envied Kudwa his happy family life - just as she knew he in secret envied Ajwani for owning a Toyota Qualis; just as Ajwani probably envied someone else; and this chain of envy linked them, showing each what was lacking in life, but offering also the consolation that happiness was present right next door, in the life of a neighbour, an element of the same Society. (74)

As Mr. Dharmen Shah, the pitiless property developer decided to build his luxuriant skyscraper the charming genuine relationship of residents started chipping away. The skyscraper was named as Shanghai in the place of Vishram society. For his successful new project he freehandedly offered a huge amount, twice the market value to the residents of Vishram society. Shah became the managing director of the Confidence Group, one of the Mumbai's real estate and started smuggling and slum clearance. He offered the good amount not out of his generosity but the reason was expanded financial center: :

You have Santa Cruz airport there, you have the Bandra-Kurla Complex there and you have the Dharavi slums there. Why is this line golden? Air travel is booming. More planes, more visitors. Then' - he moved his finger - 'the financial centre at Bandra-Kurla is expanding by the hour. Then the government is starting redevelopment in Dharavi. Asia's biggest slum will become Asia's richest slum. This area is boiling with money. People arrive daily and have nowhere to live. Except' - he dotted his golden line in the centre - 'here. Vakola. (54-55)

Never before seen growth to all that it promised to bring, was not produced by the process of globalisation. Instead of that the difference between the poor and rich people in the developing nations. Joseph E. Stiglitz pointed out that:

"To many in the developing world, globalization has not brought the promised economic benefits. A growing divide between the haves and the havenots has left increasing numbers in the Third World in dire poverty, living on less than a dollar a day" (5).

On speaking about uneven growth and development of globalisation Adiga comments that: ...

like butter on a hotplate, was melting and trickling into the slums, enriching some and scorching others among the slum-dwellers. A few lucky hut-owners were becoming millionaires, as a bank or a developer made an extraordinary offer for their little plot of land; others were being crushed - bulldozers were on the move, shanties were being leveled... (3738)

Though the generous offer as a butter came with a strict deadline in the Vishram society that: "Important: The day after Gandhi Jayanti 30 October will be the last date for the acceptance of the offer. (Non-negotiable.) Single minute will

also be not extended beyond this date"(80). The proposal must be accepted unanimously as the society was Co-operative. If it will not happen everyone will lose the fortune:

" if one person says no, you can't tear down the society. That's the whole idea of a c-operative Housing society. One for all, all for one" (95)

.Four occupants refused the proposal in the beginning. Ibrahim Kudwa worrying about

"How would his neighbours interpret his character if he rushed to take Mr Shah's money" (132)?

Delayed his acceptance. Because Mrs. Rego distrusts the Property developer who often fail to keep up their promises, she rejected the proposal. For the sake of his blind wife who may find difficult to move around in a strange building, Mr. Pinto declined the proposal. Mrs. Pinto's emotional trauma: :

"What if the others overpowered them and carried her off to a building with strange walls and neither 'the Diamond' nor 'the Bad Tooth' nor her million other eyes? Her heart beat faster" (96). Vividly depicted by Adiga. "Aman's past keep growing, even when his future has come to a full stop" (150) as described by Adiga.

In the novel Masterji, protagonist rejects the beneficial offer just for the memories of his deceased wife and daughter. Adiga writes: even though the people around him are dreaming for the wealth and luxurious life, his joy resides in expanding square footage of his inner life. He reminds about her daughter as he looked at the various places in the Vishram - the stairwell where she ran up, the garden that she walked around, the gate that she liked to swing on. Thus it becomes more beautiful memories of his wife and daughter. Sometime he however feels like Sandhya and Purnima are sharing the rain with him and there was sense of fullness inside the dim flat. They are forced to accept the proposal by threatening them if they reject the proposal. Mrs. Rego accepts the offer just to trump her well-off sister. To accept the offer Pintos are threatened. James Purdon comments:

"Slowly, under the pressure of intimidation and the lure of hard cash, the opposition breaks down, until the retired teacher Yogesh Murthy remains "Last Man In Tower." a lone holdout against encroaching gentrification and slum clearance" (Observer June 26, 2011).

Masterji was the last man in the tower who fights till the end of his life "Masterji is the last man remained in the society to oppose the offer brought by them and securing his trust in the strength of cooperative living, impervious to bribe and threats like". (The Guardian June 15, 2011) is noticed by Alex. The memories of his wife and daughter are valued more than monetary gain by Masterji. Therefore he firmly said: Vishram society will not sold, not be leased, not rented or redeveloped as it is my home. (262) the relations build over years are scathed by the maddening need of money and dream of luxurious life. As Deirdre noticed: :

"Life-long friends turn on each other, new alliances are forged between old enemies, upstanding matrons turn into scheming Borgias. Money — even the possibility of it — changes everything" (USA Today Sept 25, 2011).

He was boycotted by his neighbour and even his son who exposed their resentment :

"in the early days of the 'boycott,' there was an apologetic smile on the Secretary's lips when he evaded Masterji's attempts to make small talk, now there were neither smiles nor apologies" (217).

His neighbour now began to treat him with increasing contempt and ferociousness who once used to call him as "English gentleman". For the false charges that

"he has not paid his dues with regularity, and has engaged on questionable, and immoral, activities within his premises" (274).

Masterji was expelled from the society. The residents failed to empathize Masterji's emotional attachment to his home as they were enticed by Shah's beneficial offer and his sweeteners. Shah used to employ brutal ways to decline the opponents from his way remains pernicious. The inhabitants were manipulated by him to do the brutal things to eliminate Masterji by pressurising him. Their frantic need for money and prosperity made them to stoop as slow as possible. They decided to simply kill him as every efforts to convince Masterji for accepting the offer were failed. Adiga elucidates vibrantly the struggle of Masterji: He could not tell that he is dead or alive when he opened his eyes; these men thought to be demons, yet they were forcing his body to budge from places between life and death kindly and where it was stuck. The reason behind this was just because he was neither good nor bad; and neither strong nor weak enough. He had lost his

hand and legs and was not able to speak also. Yet everything he had remained to do was in his head right here. He thought of his son his, strength. 'Help me' he cried. (391) through the words of Shah :

"you have to respect human greed" (107).

The contemporary materialistic society was indicated as the people living there give more importance to wealth and benefits from any material. The slogan of contemporary globalised world in which people strive to elevate their lifestyle is investigated through the words of Shah:

"You should look around you, at people. Rich people. Successful people. You should always be thinking, what does he have that I don't have? That way you go up in life" (230).

4. Conclusion

Last Man in tower underlines the selfish, greedy and hypocritical nature of contemporary metropolitan Indians. The novel shows not only the rich builders but also the common men like us can also kill a man just for a money.

In this way in the novel, The Last Man in Tower, Adiga vividly describes the progress, lessening humanity and emerging inequalities in the globalised India. The frenzied desire for money and benefits of material are disclosed in the novel and turned the life-long friends into nemesis and made them to kill their friend. Evidentially the impulse to become rich and successful in the contemporary globalised India made the people act more selfish and unkind.

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