

A Flux of Greed as Emerged in Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower*

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ABSTRACT

Aravind Adiga, a highly appreciated figure, a reputed journalist and the Man Booker Prize Winner, occupies a prominent place among the most widely read and admired Indo-Anglian writers of the modern English literature. In his literary career, Adiga has written five novels - *The White Tiger* (2008), *Between the Assassinations* (2008), *Last Man in Tower* (2011), *Selection Day* (2016) and *Amnesty* (2020). His most stunning novel is *Last Man in Tower* (2011) which narrates the story of a show down, i.e. a struggle between two men – Mr. Yogesh A. Murthy generally known as the Masterji and Mr. Dharmen Shah, a highly ambitious builder. It also depicts the backdrop of Mumbai, a city of opposites. It is an interesting study of human nature reflecting a war between principle and practicality. In fact, *Last Man in Tower* is a complex and multi-layered novel focusses greed, a natural human instinct in its vital role. The present research article studies the emerging flux of greed which pervades the whole novel from the very beginning to the end.

Key Words: correspondent, flux, greed, materialistic, dwellers, emerging, ambitious

INTRODUCTION

Aravind Adiga, a highly appreciated figure, a reputed journalist and the Man Booker Prize Winner, occupies a prominent place among the most widely read and admired Indo-Anglian writers of the modern English literature. Born in Madras (now Chennai) on the 23rd October, 1974 to Dr. K. Madhava Adiga and Usha Adiga, he has been a former Indian correspondent for *Time* magazine. His paternal grand father was the late K. Suryanarayan Adiga, the former chairman of Karnataka Bank while his maternal great grand father U. Rama Rao had been a popular medical practitioner and Congress politician from Madras. Beginning his career as a financial journalist interning at the Financial Times, Arvind Adiga covered the stock market and investments. He was subsequently hired by *Time* magazine where he remained a South Asian correspondent for three years. At present, he lives in Mumbai, India.

In his literary career, Adiga has written five novels - *The White Tiger* (2008), *Between the Assassinations* (2008), *Last Man in Tower* (2011), *Selection Day* (2016) and *Amnesty* (2020). His debut novel *The White Tiger* won the 2008 Booker Prize. He is the fourth India-born author to win the prestigious prize, after Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai. Sir V. S. Naipaul, another winner, is of Indian origin, but he was not born in India.

His most stunning novel is *Last Man in Tower* (2011) which narrates the story of a show down, i.e. a struggle between two men – Mr. Yogesh A. Murthy generally known as the Masterji and Mr. Dharmen Shah, a highly ambitious builder. It also depicts the backdrop of Mumbai, a city of opposites. It is an interesting study of human nature reflecting a war between principle and practicality. Marcela Valdes remarks: "Funny, provocative and decadent: Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* is the kind of novel that's so richly insightful about business and character that it's hard to know where to begin singing its praises..."¹

The Economist, a reputed magazine, asserts the view: "Funny yet deeply melancholic, this (*Last Man in Tower*) is a brilliant and remarkably mature second novel... A rare achievement."²

In fact, *Last Man in Tower* is a complex and multi-layered novel delineating greed, a natural human instinct in its vital role. In the novel, there emerges a flux of greed which pervades the whole novel from the very beginning to the end. The centre of the greed is Mr. Dharmen Shah who is the owner of the Confidence Group, a large real estate development company and is in direct competition with J.J. Chacko of the Ultimax Group, another developer in the city. Overdriven in

the flux of greed, Shah offers to buy each of the flats in the Vishram Society for a sum of money beyond the dwellers' wildest expectations, almost all the residents, except the Masterji, immediately plan how they could use this newly found opportunity to become rich all of a sudden. Actually, Shah entraps most of the residents in his fatal web of greed so that he may sweep away the Masterji from his typical materialistic way at any rate.

Ultimately, Mr. Yogesh A. Murthy @ the Masterji, the protagonist of the novel, remained all alone as the last man in the Vishram Society standing against Dharmen Shah's world of greed. Now the Masterji's value and respect among his neighbours begin to fade away as his firm determination of not selling his flat to Dharmen Shah distorts the choices of his neighbouring people. Having been flown away in the greedy flux of becoming richer and richer by selling their flats to Dharmen Shah at higher rates, the dwellers of the Vishram Society under Dharmen Shah's materialistic magic go to the extent of murdering the Masterji.

The current of greed degrades not only the worth of the fellow human but also self-consciousness of the very person. Dharmen Shah seems to be least bothered to his worsening health due to Chronic bronchitis when it comes to the act of achieving his dreams. Doctor Nayak warns Shah saying:

"That again. That city is going to kill you! Dharmen."³

But Shah does not value even his own health and replies:

"You should have come with me, Nayak. Roads as far as the eye can see, skyscrapers, everything clean, beautiful."⁴

Miss Rosie, a personal assistant to Dharmen Shah, is also trapped in the comfortable, luxurious and high-paid facilities offered by him and becomes his kept. But soon she realizes the lack of her importance and value in Shah's life and reacts thus:

"I'm not your prostitute! I'm not your property! I don't give a shit about your fucking money!"⁵

The fatal enchantment of greed is well reflected when the Masterji's brothers-in-law get the inheriting papers forcefully signed by their sister i.e. the Masterji's wife Purnima. On being asked by Sonal, the Masterji narrates this incident:

"...she went to Suratkal to perform the last rites with her brothers. When she came back to Mumbai, she said nothing for days. Then she confessed. "They locked me in a room and made me sign a paper." Her own brothers! They threatened her until she signed over her father's property and gold to them."⁶

As a whole, Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* reflects greed, a human instinct in its fatal form. The entire novel is full of greedy activities made by different people in their different ways.

NOTES & REFERENCES

- [1]. Marcela Valdes, *The Washington Post*
- [2]. The Economist, on the back cover page of Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower*, Uttar Pradesh: Harper Collins Publishers, 2012
- [3]. Adiga Aravind, *Last Man in Tower*, op.cit., p.55
- [4]. Loc. cit.
- [5]. Ibid., p.91
- [6]. Ibid., p.44