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**SELF VS TRADITIONAL CULTURAL: A STUDY OF ARAVIND ADIGA'S *LAST MAN IN TOWER***

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Abstract

Aravind Adiga was born in Madras in 1974 and educated at Oxford University. His debut novel *The White Tiger* was published in 2008 and it won the Booker Prize in the same year. Aravind Adiga's second book *Between the Assassination* that depicts twelve interlinked short stories was published in 2008. The people lived in Vishram Society are mostly middle class and each one has their own problems in life. Even though they face many problems they all lived together with a community in harmony. Ceri Radford in his review comments: "*Last Man in Tower* is evocative, entertaining and angry. All of Adiga's gifts for sharp social observation and mordant wit (Come) to the force... Teaming with life and skull digger" (1). The generation gap is another issue which affects the culture of our society and people face many problems in the modern world. The generation gap between Masterji and his son Gaurav and the character Dharman Shah and his son Sathish shows how the younger generations are against their parents. Rozalind Dineen in her article  *Holding Out* comments: "The only inevitable is the upholding of the family unit – even in the debased state that Adiga describes it – and the status quo. All are 'prisoners of necessity' and there is little hope for the next generation" (21). In the novel, the *Last Man in Tower* Dharman Shah's son Sathish joins his father in the temple on the eve of Vishram's offer promises to avoid the sin of mediocrity.

Keywords: *Oxford University, Vishram Society, culture, etc*

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Aravind Adiga was born in Madras in 1974 and educated at Oxford University. His debut novel *The White Tiger* was published in 2008 and it won the Booker Prize in the same year. Aravind Adiga's second book *Between the Assassination* that depicts twelve interlinked short stories was published in 2008. *Last Man in Tower* was published in 2011. Aravind Adiga's contribution to literature not only includes novels but also short stories such as "The Sultans Battery," "Smack," "Last Christmas in Bandra" and "The Elephant." He is one among the famous writers who dared to write about the major social issues in Indian Society such as antisocial behavior, poverty, criminality, emotional stress, economic hardships, relationship, material hardship, globalization, corruption, and loneliness.

The *Last Man in Tower* is the story of Yogesh Murthy, the retired Science teacher who is known as Masterji. The story is from India but shows the universal issue seen all over the world. Dharman Shah a real estate mogul plans to build a luxurious skyscraper for which he selects the place where middle-class people live together in Vishram Society. Vishram Society is an old cooperative society which was built in the 1950s. The people in Vishram Society live together with great love and affection. It is a cosmopolitan society where Hindu, Christian, and Muslim live together. "A marble block set in the gate post says.... Vishram Society should serve as an example of GOOD HOUSING FOR GOOD INDIANS" (LMT 4)

The interaction of people with every different aspect offers delivery to the group. The social institution interacts with each different and increases courting with every different, leads to a society. Man is dependent on society for his basic desires and pride. In the novel, the *Last Man in Tower* an old retired Science teacher, a social worker, accountant, cyber café owner are the main occupants of Vishram Society. Gaurav son of Masterji live with his family in South Mumbai. Masterji had great respect among the Vishram Society people. He was generous with books, passionate about education and a role model to his society. After his wife Purnima's death he lived alone in the building. Masterji was very affectionate with his daughter Sandhya. Though his daughter died in an accident Masterji recollects her memories through her paintings and her cycle. Masterji lived his life according to his morals and values.

The people lived in Vishram Society are mostly middle class and each one has their own problems in life. Even though they face many problems they all lived together with a community in harmony. Ceri Radford in his review comments: "*Last Man in Tower* is evocative, entertaining and angry. All of Adiga's gifts for sharp social observation and mordant with (Come) to the force... Teaming with life and skull digger" (1). The social problem includes antisocial behavior, poverty, hating one another, criminality, physical and mental stress, globalization, corruption and loneliness and so on which automatically affects our culture. Though the people of Vishram Society are affectionate and kind they had jealousy feeling towards one another.

Adiga clearly portrays their jealous and greed to live a luxurious life automatically affects every individual "She envied Kudwa his happy family life. Hating one another is another burning cultural issue in today's society. It has become the social evil. Today people instead of being happy of their own life they are sad by others happiness.

Dharman Shah is a property builder and he wants to build a luxurious complex for which he chooses the place of Vishram Society. He tries to convince all the residents of Vishram Society to vacate the building by offering a huge amount of money to each individual. "... Vishram Society, a generous offer is made to all owners at the uniform rate of rupees nineteen thousand a square foot (LMT 79). People being rude, noisy and showing their authoritative power upon others in order to satisfy their needs are seen as antisocial behavior and also creates

a cultural problem. This behavior is revealed in Dharman Shah's character in the novel *Last Man in Tower*.

Poverty is the major issue which every poor and middle-class people face in their day to day life. Dharman Shah's workers in the building work in the hot sun during the summer season by which they are paid unfair wages by their owner for their work. When they oppose working, Dharman Shah increases their greed for money by saying "But if you stay and work, I'll pay you three hundred rupees, day after day. I'm tossing gold in the air who will grab it?" (LMT 62). The greed for money and poverty made the workers to cancel the strike and they worked according to Shah's command.

The process of globalization has not produced unprecedented growth to all that it promised to bring. Joseph.E.Stiglitz in the article *Globalization and its Discontents* comments: "To many in the developing world, globalization has not brought the promised economic benefits. A growing divide between the haves and have-nots has left increasing the Third World in drive poverty, living on less than a dollar a day" (5). In the novel, the *Last Man in Tower*, the uneven growth and development of globalization is clearly portrayed by Aravind Adiga. When Adiga narrates about the offer of Dharman Shah he comments

A few lucky hut-owners were becoming millionaires, as a bank or a developer made an extraordinary offer for their plot of land; others were being crushed (LMT 36-37).

The butter was in the form of generous offer in the Vishram Society and everyone should say yes to the offer. Some occupants were ready to accept the offer while the others were thinking about it.

The generation gap is another issue which affects the culture of our society and people face many problems in the modern world. The generation gap between Masterji and his son Gaurav and the character Dharman Shah and his son Sathish shows how the younger generations are against their parents. Rozalind Dineen in her article  *Holding Out* comments: "The only inevitable is the upholding of the family unit – even in the debased state that Adiga describes it – and the status quo. All are 'prisoners of necessity' and there is little hope for the next generation" (21). In the novel, the *Last Man in Tower* Dharman Shah's son Sathish joins his father in the temple on the eve of Vishram's offer promises to avoid the sin of mediocrity.

Our Traditional Culture is eroded by corruption which affects every individual in society. It is evident in the novel *Last Man in Tower* when Adiga talks about slums. "It was now a season of will power in Bombay: the coalition of corruption, philanthropy, and inertia that had protected them for so long was disintegrating" (LMT 143). The city slums were cleared by illegal ways by a new officer who accepts the bribes from higher authority. He made arrangement to clear the slums and smashed miles of huts.

Emotional stress is also an important issue which affects the individual in the society both physically and mentally. Masterji faced a lot of emotional stress when all the inhabitants of Vishram Society turn against him and forced him to accept the offer. Even his only son Gaurav forced him to accept the offer of Dharman Shah. All these incident, in turn, affects Masterji, he talked to the cow on the road. "When they saw Masterji talking to the cow and telling her his woes, those who had....piety on his act"( LMT 287). Masterji was deeply depressed and affected both physically and mentally.

Ajwani, Ibrahim Kudwa, Mr. & Mrs.Pinto, Mrs.Georgina Rejo faced economic hardship, this economic hardship to earn more money and live a luxurious life made them involve in illegal and criminal activities which in turn affected our culture. They forgot they're humane and treated a respectable man like a mad person and avoided his presence and neglected him to the core.

Dharman Shah a real estate owner activates his plan through Shanmugam who made arrangement to threaten Masterji by phone calls and by anonymous communication. Gradually one by one all the people of Vishram Society accepts the offer but the last man Masterji was standing alone and he was not ready to vacate his building due to his past memories of his wife and daughter. Loneliness is a cultural issue in our country. Even though we are in the twentieth century it seems like millions of people are around, one can suddenly become stricken with a sharp pain of loneliness. Masterji was also affected by this issue which made him depressed when all his neighbors turn against him. All the people in Vishram society turned against masterji at the end they planned to kill him. Alex Clark in his review comments: "Masterji is the eponymous last man, entrenched in his commitment to resistance, secure in his belief in the power of cooperative living, impervious to bribes and threats alike" (2)

Murdering human being for money, enjoying a luxurious life becomes common now a day. In the novel, the *Last Man in Tower* the occupants of Vishram Society plans to murder a respectable man for want of money and live a luxurious life. People forget their cultural and moral values and involvement in criminal activities to kill a respectable man. Masterji losses his life at the last minute and his murder was registered as a suicide the next day.

The major cultural issues and its impacts towards every individual in the society are analyzed in the work of Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower*. Hence one should boldly face these cultural issues and they must be aware of not losing their cultural and moral values in the society.

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