

**Contemporary Social Issues in Aravind Adiga's**  
*The White Tiger and Last Man in Tower*

**Monika S.**  
**(12PEN007)**

**A Thesis submitted to**  
**Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education**  
**for Women, Coimbatore – 641 043**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the**  
**Degree of Master of Arts in English**

**March 2014**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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# CHAPTER 1



## Chapter-1

### Introduction

Indian Writing in English refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in English but have one of the numerous languages as their native or co-native language. It is also associated with the works written by members of the Indian diaspora, who are of Indian descent such as V. S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Agha Shahid Ali, Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie. It is frequently referred to as Indo-Anglian literature and as a category, this production comes under postcolonial literature- the production from previously colonised countries such as India.

Indian writing in English has a relatively recent history; it is only one and a half centuries old. The first book written by an Indian in English was by Sake Dean Mahomet, titled *Travels of Dean Mahomet*; Mahomet's travel narrative was published in 1793 in England. Early Indian writers used unadulterated English to convey essentially Indian experiences. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope* are Indian in terms of their storytelling qualities. Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) wrote in Bengali and English and was responsible for the translations of his own works into English. Dhan Gopal Mukerji was the first Indian author to win a literary award in the United States. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, a writer of non-fiction, is best known for his *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* which relates his life experiences and influences. P. Lal, a poet, translator, publisher and essayist, founded a press in the 1950s for Indian English Writing Writers Workshop. Ram Nath Kak (1917–1933), a Kashmiri veterinarian

wrote his autobiography *Autumn Leaves*, one of the most vivid portraits of life in 20th century Kashmir.

R.K. Narayan contributed to Indian Writing in English over many decades and he continued to write till his death recently. Like Thomas Hardy's Wessex, the fictitious town of Malgudi is the setting of R.K. Narayan's novels. His famous works are *A Tiger of Malgudi*, *Swami and Friends*, *The English Teacher*, *The Dark Room* etc. Simultaneous with Narayan's pastoral idylls, a very different writer, Mulk Raj Anand, was similarly gaining recognition for his writing set in rural India; but his stories were harsher dealing with divisions of caste, class and religion. Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) hailed as the Munshi Premchand of Indian English writing, vividly and powerfully depicts the sordid lives of the lowest strata of the society in his novels, *Coolie*, *The Untouchable* etc.

There are Indo-Nostalgic writers- who are either Western-based writers of Indian origin such as Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, or western writers who have spent long periods of time in the subcontinent, possibly having been born or raised in India, perhaps as the children of British Raj-era European expatriates or missionaries like Jim Corbett and Stephen Alter. Or, they may even be Anglo-Indians who have emigrated from the subcontinent to the West. Third culture kids often grow up to produce Indo-Nostalgic writings that exhibit palpably deep feelings for their childhoods in the subcontinent. Accordingly, another common theme in Indo-Nostalgic writing is "rediscovery" or its cousin, "reconnection".

Among the later writers, the most notable is Salman Rushdie, born in India, now living in the United Kingdom. Rushdie with his famous work *Midnight's*

*Children* (Booker Prize 1981, Booker of Bookers 1992, and Best of the Bookers 2008) ushered in a new trend of writing by using a hybrid language – English generously peppered with Indian terms to convey a theme that could be seen as representing the vast canvas of India. He is usually categorised under the magic realism mode of writing most famously associated with Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Nayantara Sahgal was one of the first female Indian writers in English to receive wide recognition. Her fiction deals with India's elite responding to the crises engendered by political change. Her novels try to highlight the independent existences of women and their efforts to thwart attempts to isolate them from the centre-stage of human existence. She was awarded the 1986 Sahitya Academy Award, for her novel, *Rich Like Us* (1985). Anita Desai who was shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times, received a Sahitya Academy Award in 1978 for her novel *Fire on the Mountain* and the British Guardian Prize for *The Village by the Sea*. Anita Desai's (1937) works appearing in the 60's are aptly classified under post-colonial literature. Published more than a decade after Markandaya, her *Voices In The City* is a story about their siblings, and their divergent viewpoints on life in Calcutta. *Fire on the Mountain*, set in Kasauli, focuses on three women and their complex experiences in life. Her daughter Kiran Desai won the 2006 Man Booker Prize for her second novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. Ruskin Bond received Sahitya Academy Award for his collection of short stories *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* in 1992. He is also the author of a historical novel *A Flight of Pigeons*, which is based on an episode during the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

About the same time, faraway in the islands of Trinidad & Tobago, V.S. Naipaul (1932-) a writer of Indian descent, deals with the specific themes of the loss of home in

post-colonial Britain, the loss of the past that is a consequence of these forced migrations, and the yawning void that still remains behind. *The Mystic Masseur*, *The Suffrage of Elvira* and *A House for Mr. Biswas* are widely read. Shashi Deshpande's (1938) *Legacy* was her first collection of short story is published in 1978, followed by her first novel, *The Dark Holds No Terror* in 1980. She is a winner of the Sahitya Academy Award for the novel, *That Long Silence*. Sasthibrata (1939) appeared on the Indian literary scene in the late 1960's with *My God Died Young*, an autobiography. Its unassuming style and youthful angst addressed an entire generation, and the book was an instant success.

Bharati Mukherjee (1940) deals with the themes of the Asian immigrants in North America, and the changes taking place in South Asian Women in a new World. *The Tiger's Daughters*, *Jasmine* and *The Wife* are her landmarks. Apart from *The Satanic Verses* other famous books of Salman Rushdie are *The Moor's Last Sigh*, *Midnight's Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Rushdie's novels are replete with symbolism, powerful imagery, allegory and a vivid narrative style. The language is a trifle queer with Hindi words phrases and colloquial expressions smoothly incorporated into English.

Shobhaa De (1947) writes racy thrillers, with urban India as their backdrop and these are invariably bestseller. Her novels include *Starry Nights*, *Sisters*, *Socialite Evenings*, to name a few. The speeding up of the sexual revolution in India with her sensuous novels and Western outlook may largely be attributed to her. Vikram Seth's (1953-) famous novels include *The Golden Gate*, *A Suitable Boy* and *An Equal Music*, reflecting the post-independent, contemporary life. Shama Futehally (1952-2004) was an academician by profession. Her first novel, *Tara Lane*, won a great critical acclaim. Her

other novel *Reaching Bombay Central* is written with astonishing economy. Indian born Amitav Ghosh (1956-) demonstrates the blend and interstitial nature of diverse cultures, in his writings. Ghosh has already bagged several prestigious awards for his works. Some of these awards are prix Medicis Estranger for the *Circle of Reason* (1986), the Sahitya Academy Award for the *Shadow Lines* (1988).

Shashi Tharoor (1956-) is the celebrated, award winning author of several novels, as well as hundreds of articles in reputed international publications like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *the Los Angeles Times*, *the International Herald Tribune*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and *The Times of India*. His most famous work is *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) which is included in various curricula as a fine example of post-colonial literature; *Riot* (2001), a searching examination of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India, and *Show Business* (1992). Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni (1956) works are partly autobiographical, with most plots set in Bay Area of California, where she lives. She also deals with the immigrant experience, an important issue in the contemporary world in her work like *Arranged Marriage*, a collection of short stories. *The Mistress of Spices*. Upamanyu Chatterji (1959) made his debut on Indian literary scenario with his novel *English August- An Indian Story* centering on the bizarre experiences of a young IAS officer, who is sent to the remote, nondescript town of Madna, for training. The language is colloquial Indian English with generous dosage of Hinglish. Arundhati Roy (1960-) whose *God of Small Things* fetched her the prestigious Booker, probes deep into the obscure, insignificant, inconsequential things in our mundane world.

Vikram Seth, author of *The Golden Gate* (1986) and *A Suitable Boy* (1994) is a writer who uses a purer English and more realistic themes. Being a self-confessed fan of Jane Austen, his attention is on the story, its details and its twists and turns. Vikram Seth is notable both as an accomplished novelist and poet. A writer who has contributed immensely to the Indian English Literature is Amitav Ghosh who is the author of *The Circle of Reason* (his 1986 debut novel), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), and *Sea of Poppies* (2008), the first volume of *The Ibis trilogy*, set in the 1830s, just before the Opium War, which encapsulates the colonial history of the East. Ghosh's latest work of fiction is *River of Smoke* (2011), the second volume of *The Ibis trilogy*.

Rohinton Mistry is an India born Canadian author and his first book *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987) published by Penguin Books Canada is a collection of 11 short stories. His novels *Such a Long Journey* (1991) and *A Fine Balance* (1995) earned him great acclaim. Shashi Tharoor, in his *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), follows a story-telling though in a satirical mode as in the *Mahabharata* drawing his ideas by going back and forth in time. Vikram Chandra is another author who shuffles between India and the United States and has received critical acclaim for his first novel *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995) and collection of short stories *Love and Longing in Bombay* (1997). His namesake Vikram A. Chandra is a renowned journalist and the author of *The Srinagar Conspiracy* (2000). Suketu Mehta is another writer currently based in the United States who authored *Maximum City* (2004), an autobiographical account of his experiences in the city of Mumbai. In 2008, Aravind Adiga received Man Booker Prize for his debut novel *The White Tiger*. Though, he is another Indian English author who has come under

a lot of criticism from not only the vernacular media but also the English media. There are familiar charges like, he does not really know India and is writing on some clichés.

Recent writers in India such as Arundhati Roy and David Davidar show a direction towards contextuality and rootedness in their works. Arundhati Roy, a trained architect and the 1997 Booker prize winner for her *The God of Small Things*, calls herself a "home grown" writer. Her award winning book is set in the immensely physical landscape of Kerala. Davidar sets his *The House of Blue Mangoes* in Southern Tamil Nadu. In both the books, geography and politics are integral to the narrative. In his novel *Lament of Mohini* (2000), ShreekumarVarma touches upon the unique matriarchal system and the sammandham system of marriage as he writes about the Namboodiris and the aristocrats of Kerala. JahnabiBarua, a Bangalore based author from Assam has set her critically acclaimed collection of short stories *Next Door* on the social scenario in Assam with insurgency as the background. Another author AruniKashyap has also based his first novel *The House with A Thousand Stories* on the society and psyche of the people of Assam at the backdrop of insurgency.

For the last couple of years there has been a remarkable rise in the fiction-novel-writing in English by both the established and the emerging authors of India. Their writings have successfully taken the world appeal of the cosmopolitan "Indian Novel". This accounts for the rising status and growing popularity of Indian fictions written in English, which is catching the world market.

The English readers every where in the world read the Indian writings produced in English, through which the Indian authors are able to expose to the world of English

literature, the Indian traditional, cultural and social values. It is making the world aware of what India has been through times immemorial; the social, cultural and religious lives of people living in the past years, and also of those living in the present. It has also made the world aware of what India is capable of achieving through expressive and creative voice in the fictional fragments in the generation. The image of India, and that of the Indians living in India are given significance through the characters in the fictional writings. It will keep alive the characters of the past in the time they lived at, as well as allow the readers to accept the changes in the present time, in the light of the past. The fictional writings will never allow the past to die out, but keep them in the memories and documents of the present time. While reading the fiction, the readers will come to know about the culture and the society of the period in which the story takes place. Indo-Anglican literature represents the most valuable contribution India has made to the world of books.

The beauty of fiction writing is that the characters take the shape and description according to the author. Like the painting has the colour and the drawing of the painter, the fiction has the character and the theme according to what the author has in mind. The author would create his situation and the plot of the story according to the society, experience, and the environment he lives in at the time. Although the fiction is not a true story, yet there are always the elements of the reality and truth in the situation, and the characters. The Anglo-Indian author can make the characters the way he knows them to be in his community. Like the Indian writers, the Anglo-Indian writers can also make their fictional world appealing, and international. Though their fiction, the Anglo-Indians can spread the subculture of theirs for understanding, knowledge, awareness,

cultural values, religious and social values. Besides it being the best way of keeping alive the Anglo-Indians of yesterday, today and tomorrow, it also helps to gain respect for the community and spreads understanding and awareness in the world at large.

Nirad.C.Chaudhuri (1897-1999) who devoted his life to study India's relationship with Britain, gained critical acclaim as one of the most successful writers of Indian origin, in English. His remarkable Bengali prose pieces were "Atmoghaati Bangali" (suicidal Bengali) and "Bangali Jivone Ramnai" (Women in Bengali life).

Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004) is best remembered for her novel *Nectar in a Sieve*, which is a touching account of the life of an Indian peasant woman, Rukmani, her struggle for survival and her abiding love for her husband. Nayantara Sehgal (1927-) from the famous Nehru clan is a feminist writer, advocating women's emancipation. She is a child of the tradition, where the women are deified as an epitome of power (Shakthi).

Aravind Adiga was born in Madras on 23 October 1974 to Dr. K. Madhava Adiga and Usha Adiga, both of whom hailed from Mangalore. His paternal grandfather was the late K. Suryanarayana Adiga, former chairman of Karnataka bank where as his maternal great-grandfather, U. Rama Rao was a popular medical practitioner and Congress politician from Madras.

Adiga grew up in Mangalore and studied at a private Jesuit school, where he completed his SSLC in 1990. He secured first rank in the state in SSLC. Incidentally his elder brother Anand Adiga secured second rank in SSLC and first rank in PUC in the state. He got enrolled in James Rose Agricultural High school, Sydney. At eighteen he left for New York to study English at Columbia. Columbia's upper west side campus

brought his nose to the window of Harlem, which became a reason to be impressed by Black American writers. From Columbia he moved to Magdalen College, Oxford for completing M.Phil. and a brief spell at Princeton.

Adiga began his journalistic career as a financial journalist, interning at the *Financial Times*. His review of previous Booker Prize winner Peter Carey's book, *Oscar and Lucinda*, appeared in "The Second Circle", an online literary review. He was subsequently hired by *Time of India*, where he remained a South Asia correspondent for three years before going freelance. During his freelance period, he wrote *The White Tiger*.

After an internship with the Financial Times, his career as a journalist took off. He is a former correspondent of *Time Magazine* in Delhi and Mumbai. His articles appeared in the publications such as *The Financial Times*, *Independent*, *Times*, *Money*, *the Wall Street Journal*. He was adamant on becoming a writer, and he confesses that journalism was only a means to an end as it "Put a gun" to his shy head and forced him to overcome his aloofness, to talk to people he did not know. "I didn't want to write about people like myself," he says. When asked in another interview how business journalism helped in creating a protagonist who is a self-made man, Adiga unhesitatingly replies that his background in journalism made him realize that most of what is written in the business magazines is "bullshit" and business or corporate literature in India cannot be taken seriously.

In another interview, he describes the process of transition from journalism to fiction writer. A first draft of the *The White Tiger* was

written in 2005, and then put aside. I had given up on the book. Then, for reasons I don't fully understand myself, in December 2006, when I would just return to India after a long time abroad, I opened the draft and began rewriting it entirely. I wrote all day long for the next month, and by early January 2007, I could see that I had a novel on my hands.

Adiga constantly says, in different interviews, that he always wanted to be writer, but when asked more specifically when he knew that he was going to be a writer, he answered, at the Bodleian Library at Oxford University in 1998, where he began writing fiction in earnest. Having been a student of literature, he had a background which helped him write the novel. He admits to have been deeply influenced by Salman Rushdie and three African-American writers of the Post-World War II era, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin and Richard Wright, because, they all wrote about race and class, while later black writers focus on just class. Among Indian writers he especially admires R.K.Narayan and V.S Naipaul above all the others.

In an interview give in *TheGuardian*he talks of the difference in the class systems present in India and Britain. It seems to me that the English class system has always contained escape routes. . .It is permeable-through schools and university and business and marriage. And any class system that survives has to include escape routes. There has to be a way for talented people from the lower class to reach the top . . .The prevailing view is that India and China have been less affected by the financial crisis that they will now surge ahead. It seems inevitable that they will emerge as the new power houses. But they both have so much work to do first.

The new Indian fear for instability has also personally affected Adiga. He has expressed this in many interviews. In Mumbai he describes his difficulties of renting a flat, because he is a single man. Some even suspect him of being a terrorist. The equality he had witnessed in Australia and America made him more aware of the inequality in India. Adiga is sensitively aware how the old bonds of community, caste and family are crumbling leading to more crime. Another factor which has made this disparity more prominent is the greater opportunities of temptation for the poor. Shopping malls, advertisement, immigration, etc., are some factors responsible for crime, which also find mention in *The White Tiger*.

To his credit Aravind Adiga has three novels namely *The White Tiger*, *Between the Assassinations*, *Last Man in Tower*. He also has written short stories like “The Sultan’s Battery”, “Smack Last Christmas in Bandra”, “The Elephant”.

Aravind Adiga's debut novel, *The White Tiger*, won the 2008 Booker Prize. He is the fourth Indian-born author to win the prize, after Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai. It studies a strong contrast between India's rise as a modern global economy and the lead character, Balram who comes from crushing rural poverty and the opening lines of the novel establishes this fact. Being an Indian Adiga has based his novel on the country as it actually is under the cover of ‘India Shining’. The story in the novel revolves around Two India's. One witnesses an affluent India and an India that is beset by common problems like poverty, disease, unemployment, homelessness, environmental degradation, etc. that plague under developed and developing countries. The glitz and shine that is seen is confined to very select areas and by seeing few flyovers, neon lights

and massive malls, one cannot feel that India has come to a stage when it can on a par with western countries. It can rightly be said that the setting of Adiga's *The White Tiger* has been done after a good deal of research work. Adiga has travelled a lot and is well acquainted with all the sights, scenes and places he has depicted in his work. His purpose in giving a true picture of India is because he believes that "the criticism by writers like Flaubert, Balzac and Dickens of the 19th century helped England and France become better societies."

*The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga's first novel is replete with the clichés of ornamental prose and the scent of oriental spices, but brings the reality of harsh life of the Indian common man, closer. Focus on subalterns has been a frequent theme, since the inception of this genre. Published by Atlantic Books, *The White Tiger* has got tremendous response from reviewers. Following the epistolary technique, Adiga narrates Balram's story via seven letters to the Chinese Prime Minister, who Balram has decided, must be told the truth about India before a forthcoming state visit. So, Balram begins by exemplifying the lives of Delhi's servants, who live in rotting basements below the glass apartment blocks that are home to their employers. He narrates how Ashok's family bribes government ministers and how national elections are rigged. Ashok, trendy and liberal, is forever expressing guilt over Balram's treatment, but his fine words never come to anything. It's a thrilling ride through a rising global power, a place where, we learn, the brutality of the modern city is compounded by that of age-old tradition. "In the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days there are two castes: Men with Big Bellies and Men with Small Bellies" (64).

Adiga's *Between the Assassinations* (2008) is a collection of short stories, which he wrote before the novel *The White Tiger* but was published later by Picador in India. "It glistens with the beauty of the rural, coastal south where it is set. Its subject is the pathos, injustices and ironies of Indian life", writes Picador India editor Shruti Debi. The book again focuses on the social landscape of India. The narrative is full of fresh humor and wry observation, as it pans a small town in the south of India, Kittur, a small town in India's south-western coast, between Goa and Calicut. The stories revolve around an illiterate muslim boy working at the train station, who finds himself tempted by an Islamic terrorist; a Dalit bookseller who is arrested for selling a copy of *The Satanic Verses*; a rich, spoiled, half-caste student who decides to explode a bomb in college and a sexologist who has to find a cure for a young boy with a mysterious disease that may be AIDS. Kittur is mapped across class, religion, occupation and preoccupation. Adiga presents a moral biography of this small town in the years that have passed by between the assassinations of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. The humanitarian sensibility of the novelist is clear from the way he composes group portraits of ordinary folks. The injustice, pathos and ironies of Indian life are presented in the background of a coastal set up. It is a neo-realist story that evokes insights into an array of challenges and problems thrown at different sections of society.

His novel *Last Man in Tower* was published in the year 2011. This novel tells the story of the struggle of Masterji to retain his home from the realtors. It is a simple enough narrative concerning one man who stubbornly holds on to his crumbling apartment in a housing society that has attracted a builder's eye, who is willing to pay 250 % of market value to each resident in exchange for their apartments. He wants to pull them down and

build a luxury block in their place. *Last Man in Tower* exposes the subtle grey shades of human emotions.

By presenting India as it is he too feels that steps can be taken in the right direction so that people may use the opportunities in the right way and become stronger. By realizing the existence of the supreme and by knowing his limits through self realization man can emerge as a better being and make the world a better place. The researcher has taken up Adiga's novels because of their contemporary relevance and the study is divided into three chapters excepting the first chapter introduction and the last, conclusion.

The first chapter, introduction gives an overview of a few Indian writers and Adiga's contribution to the literary field. The second chapter Integrity vs Opportunism analyses how people become opportunists losing their integrity and how difficult it is to remain integral in the face of so many challenges. The third chapter Strong vs Weak deals with the conflict between the strong and the weak in terms of money, morality and physical strength. The fourth chapter Spirituality vs Materialism brings out the struggle the characters face when they lose their spirituality driven by their materialistic attitude and what it leads them to. The conclusion sums up the points dealt in the previous chapters. Man who is created as the supreme being should know that he has to remain strong with his integrity in spite of the challenges he faces and love for God and man will help overcome all difficulties. Realization of this will help him live a better life and have better relationships which in turn would give him happiness and peace of mind which he needs the most in today's world.

# CHAPTER 2



## Chapter-2

### Integrity vs Opportunism

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* is the story of a man who hangs between good and evil and is finally overcome by the devil. His 'Macbethian' ambition to live like a lord, and like a master turns him into a cold blooded murderer. The protagonist Balram Halwai, an inhabitant of the darkness always sees the dream of living like a man. This is the dream which his father saw for him. His father was a rickshaw puller who died of tuberculosis in a government hospital waiting for the doctor. His father always desired that Balram should study well in the school and live a better life, the life of human beings and not of insects as he himself ever lived.

Balram was a sharp student but his family takes him out of the school and puts him to work in a teashop of the village. Balram never likes the work of wiping tables and crushing coal. Once he hears that drivers earn a good salary and get Rs.1700 a month, he decides to become a driver. He learns to drive and fortunately the Stork, a rich village landlord, appoints him as a driver for his American returned son Mr. Ashok. Balram comes to Delhi with his master. Here his ambition grows bigger. Earlier his dream was to earn a handsome salary and a khaki uniform but the day he sees his master's red bag filled with money, avarice enters his soul. He is never at peace since then and finally he plans to kill his master and to run away from there to live a free life like a man. Human beings are turning animals. They are fickle-minded and dissatisfied beings who always look backward and forward and pine for what does not come to them easily. Their desires keep for more and there is no end of this more in life. It is believed that the rich hate the poor and the poor are always jealous of the rich.

Every human being dreams to live a good, comfortable and prosperous life. Till a person is poor, he thinks that the rich must think about the benefits of the poor but once a poor being becomes rich, he also starts behaving in the manner of the rich ones. May be, it is the magical effect of money, that it changes a person or his ways. Once Balram starts earning sufficiently well, he starts ignoring his family and their needs. He does not treat his aunt's son well, when the poor boy comes to him in Delhi. Earlier he was quite faithful and devoted to his master Mr. Ashok, but in greed for money and to fulfill his lustful desires, he starts cheating him. The worst ideas of deceit come to his mind when he sees the red bag, full of rupees. As he clicks the red bag open, 'All at once, the entire stairwell filled up with dazzling light-the kind that only money can give out' (WT 243). Money is said to be the mother of sins. Balram, though he likes his master, appreciates him for his goodness, nonetheless kills him ruthlessly. A single glimpse of the insides of the bag makes him brutal and blood thirsty.

When Ashok knows that his wife has left him, he scolds, humiliates and beats Balram as he has dropped Pinky Madam at the airport. Pinky's absence throws Ashok in a nervous state. After a few days, Ashok tries to forget Pinky by visiting the malls and enjoying life with girls. Balram is witness to all the things that Ashok does such as visiting the red-light area in search of a prostitute and bribing politicians. Balram does jobs like carrying cash to ministers and politicians, bringing liquor and women for men, and entertaining people by serving liquor while driving with one hand. He searches for strands of golden hair of women who frequently travel with Ashok in the car and has sex.

Balram uses the opportunity as a driver to his master and knows how to deceive his master. He shows ways enterprising drivers make a little extra money by the following means:

1. Siphoning of petrol and selling it.
2. Repairing the car under a corrupt mechanic who gives inflated bills.
3. Studying his master's habits and capitalizing on his carelessness.
4. Taking the risk of letting his master's car as a freelance taxi.

Having been a witness to all of Ashok's corrupt practices and gambling with money to buy politicians, to kill and to loot, he decides to do the same. Adiga delves deep into his subconscious as he plans to loot Rs. 700,000 stuffed into the red bag. He speaks to himself:

Go on, just look at the red bag, Balram –that's not stealing, is it? I shook my head. And even you were to steal it, Balram, it would be stealing. How so? I looked at the creature in the mirror. See-Mr Ashok is giving money to all these politicians in Delhi so that they will excuse him from the tax he has to pay. And who owns that tax, in the end? Who but ordinary people of this country-you! (WT 244).

The above monologue makes Balram to think seriously to steal the money and kill his master. The writers bring out powerfully Balram unexpressed thought in several conversations punctuated with soliloquies. The stream of consciousness leads him to justify his plans of murder with growing meanness of Ashok in treating him. He has planned to confess his criminal thoughts, but Ashok interrupts him thinking that he might

ask him for some money to get married. Balram finally decides to kill his master for money. Indeed, Ashok's participation in funding political corruption makes Balram to become an entrepreneur. One day as Ashok carries seven hundred thousand rupees in cash as bribes for politicians in New Delhi, Balram decides to murder him. As Ashok's throat is slashed, he dies on the spot. Balram steals the money and escaped from there to Bangalore with his cousin Dharam. With the seven hundred thousand rupees he has stole he creates his own taxi company and changes his name to Ashok Sharma. Thus he becomes a wealthy entrepreneur in India's new technological society, and emerges as a part of the upper caste in the Indian society of the light, namely, the world belonging to rich people who live in large, urbanized cities.

As an innocent boy, Balram has represented the "downtrodden section of our society juxtaposed against the rich," as Shobhan Saxena says. He has sincerely worked as a driver and believes that Indian servants are very honest because of what he calls the 'Rooster Coop' - it is the metaphor that runs throughout the text of *The White Tiger* which demonstrates the way it works in India to tame the Indians. After a few months of driving his master around and overhearing his conversation with others, he is determined to know, just for a day or for a minute, what it means to be a master. In spite of remembering his father's advice, his ambition to be successful leads him to go away from the right path. The social conditions drive him completely towards corruption. When he becomes a boss, he has learned to work with the system too- which is largely about greasing the proper wheels. He is a representative of the poor in India earning for their 'tomorrow'. As a driver, his journey to Delhi indicates his journey from darkness to light. He observes that his master gives bribe to a politician to get a good position. Though his

master is not a bad person, his obsession for money drives him to kill his master for money. Through this criminal drive he becomes a business man and runs a car service for a call centre in Bangalore

Every human being has a conflict, a struggle to do good or evil. Human beings have this dilemma; they can live their life in a good and noble way or in lead a bad and ignoble life. They have to choose either of the two. One is free to choose or decide one's lifestyle and life's principles. But there are certain things that are beyond human choices, which come automatically in their way. One cannot choose to be born in a rich family or in a desired caste. Destiny has to be submitted to, though one can always make efforts to be rich or prosperous in life. In the journey from poverty to prosperity or from slavery to freedom, one has to choose which path to follow, the good and the honest one or the evil and dishonest one. Since childhood one is taught to follow the good, and righteous path in life but the path of goodness, honesty, and nobility is a difficult one and needs a lot of courage, patience, willpower and firm determination on the part of human beings. On the contrary, the path of evil and dishonesty is alluring, easy and smooth to tread on and it also promise an early success, though most often the followers of the good path remain poor, miserable and are deprived of happiness.

Mr. Ashok is representative of India Shining, "things are changing in India now, this place is going to be like America in ten years" (WT 89). Slavery has seeped deep into the bones of the people of his village. But Balram, a rebel, aspiring to come out of it, finds it very difficult to be a mute spectator. He compares the condition of the oppressed to the rooster and hens in the rooster coop in his observation to the Chinese Premier:

Hundreds of pale hens and brightly coloured roosters, stuffed tightly

into wire-mesh cages, packed as tightly as worms in a belly, pecking each other and shitting on each other, jostling just for breathing space; the whole cage giving off a horrible stench – the stench of terrified, feathered flesh. On the wooden desk above this coop sits a grinning young butcher, showing off the flesh and organs of recently chopped up chicken, still oleaginous with a coating of dark blood. The roosters in the coop smell the blood from above. They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they're next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. (WT 173)

Balram, who is yearning to come out of the coop, is held back by his friends and relatives. The foremost among them is his grandmother who does not let him go even to the Black Fort, just because he stares at that thing too long. His grandmother resists change and prefers Balram and his brother Kishan to work in the tea shop and earn something instead of going to school. She is the one who encourages him to be blindly loyal to his master so as to adopt the same nature of servitude, thus closing all his routes to growth or innovation. Other drivers mock at him when he tries yoga in the car without joining others.

I pulled my feet up on to the seat, got into the lotus position, and said, "Om", over and over again. How long I sat that evening in the car with my eyes closed and legs crossed like the Buddha I don't know, but the giggling and scratching noise made me open my eyes.

All the other drivers had gathered around me – one of them had seen me in the lotus position inside the locked car. They were gaping

at me as if I were something in a zoo I scrambled out of the lotus position at once. I put a big grin on my face- I got out of the car to volleys of thumps and blows and shrieks of laughter, all of which I meekly accepted, while murmuring, 'Just trying it out' yoga- they show it on TV all time, don't they?' The rooster coop was doing its work. Servants have to keep other servants from becoming innovators, experimenters, or entrepreneurs. "Yes that's the sad truth, Mr. Premier. The coop is guarded from inside" (WT 193-94).

Basically Balram is not an entirely black character. He is neither rotten nor sanely. He has certain merits and demerits. As Balram is not a completely corrupted individual, so he faces great mental conflict before committing the murder of his master, Mr. Ashok. For a long time his mind is given to the thought of money that he sees in his master's bag. First he avoids looking at the red bag which was tempting for him. "I tried hard not to look at the red bag-it was torture for me. . ." (WT 244). As he drives the car, the red bag lingers in his mind. He keeps on thinking about the right and wrong, fair and unfair. His mind says "go on, just look at the red bag, Balram that's not stealing, is it? . . . and even if you were to steal it, Balram, it wouldn't be stealing" (WT 244). When he looks at the rear view mirror, various images and notions come to his mind. He is caught between the two ideas to steal or not to steal. Strange thoughts visit his mind: "See- Mr. Ashok is giving money to all the politicians in Delhi so that they will excuse him from the tax he has to pay. And who owns that tax, in the end? Who but the ordinary people of this country-you!" (WT 244). A guilt enters his mind and soul and he sees all things as statements in the right of his plan. He feels as if the city has known his secret.

AshaChoubey and TriptiTripathi points out in their article “Conflict between Good and Evil in AravindAdiga’s *The White Tiger*” in the book *AravindAdiga: An Anthology of Critical Essays*.

Everything has become transparent, his evil notions, his plans, everything. He feels as if his heart is saying to him why to worry, why to ruminate so much over this. He remains in this delirium for days. While driving one day, he sees that the driver of the car next to him spits the juice of *paan* on the road twice as the result to vivid red puddles form there, but his eyes, his fevered brain finds words in those puddles that say.(51)

About his father’s vision of him and his own wishes and desires.

It is ironic that Balram who remains in an undecided state of mind whether to steal the red bag or not, starts planning and working ahead. The day his mind sees words and lines scribbled in the red puddles, he goes straight a way to the railway station in PaharGanj instead of waiting for his master in the car. He sees there the names of the cities Benaras, Jammu, Amritsar, Mumbai, Ranchi, etc., and things: “what would be my destination, if I were to come here with a red bag in my hand?”(WT 247).

Balram sees there the shining lightened weighing machines lying on the right platform. He inserts a coin into the slot and waits for the small stiff chit of the card of the board to pop out of the machine so that he could know what the fortune says to him, written on the card. It is human nature that when one plans the thing, one wants to know if that would be a fortunate scheme or the unfortunate one. Even people who do not

believe in such fortune telling can't help themselves to remain untouched by them, they do it out of curiosity. Balram also perhaps wishes to try his luck. The chit that comes out of the machine reads: "Lunna Scales Co. New Delhi:11005. Your weight 59. Respect for the law is the first command of the Gods"(WT 248).

Balram becomes unhappy to see the scribbled message on the chit, gives satirical laugh and broods: "Here, on the threshold of a man's freedom, just before the boards a train to a new life, these flashing fortune machines are the final alarm bell of the Rooster Coop "(WT 248). He imagines that as he is trying to escape, the sirens of the coop are ringing and he wouldn't be given the share of the freedom; rather a hand would pick him up by the neck and he would be shoved back into the coop. The human mind is an important and very powerful tool. If a person has control over his mind and if he is self motivated, he does not need an external stimulus to do his work. Life is so simple and its ups and downs are attributed to emotions, and one always has a choice to be happy always or to be reactive on every stimulus of life. Life is a continuous stream of events with good and bad experiences. Sometimes one may feel nervous, depressed and at other times happy and joyful. Oxford dictionary defines ethos as the characteristic spirit and beliefs of people which distinguishes one culture from the other.

All human beings have a conscience and it always checks them from doing hideous and immoral deeds. Then it depends on individual choice, if one listen to it or ignores it. Secondly there is the fear of being caught and being punished that prevents a human being from doing a wrong and illegal action. Balram's conscience also warns him from committing the crime. His father had taught him to have courage and integrity. His father wanted to see him as an educated man and to earn his bread fairly and honestly that

is what was to live like a man. First it was the goodness of the blood he owned from his father that he meditates for long before slaying and robbing his master, secondly he fears for his family that has to pay later for his sins. It makes him sweat when he thinks of going further in his plan: "Think, Balram. Think of what the buffalo did to his servants family"(WT 248). Tormented with such thoughts he loiters on the roads of Delhi. He decides to go to 'Red-light district' to relax himself but there too he starts fighting with the people. Then with a heated and confused mind he walks away. From there he goes to the big second hand book market of Darya Ganj. Here he learns two lines of an Urdu poem: "You were looking for the key for years/but the door was always open!"(WT 253). He finds the key to his problem in these lines. These regularly echo in his ears.

In Old Delhi Balram passes through a butchers' quarter. He sees a buffalo coming down the road, pulling a large cart behind it. It has no human driver but the buffalo. The cart is full of the faces of dead buffaloes, the skulls and other body parts. Balram walks along with that poor animal for some time, staring at the dead parts of the buffaloes. Suddenly a thing happens there and it is enough to make his soul shiver. While explaining this to Mr.Jiabao, Balram narrates:

You Excellency-I swear the buffalo that was pulling the cart turned its face to me, and said, in voice not unlike my fathers:

'your brother Kishan was beaten to death. Happy?' it was like experiencing a night mare in the minutes before your wake up; you know it's a dream, but cant wake up just yet.

'your aunt Luttu was raped and then beaten to death. Happy?' your grand motherKusum was kicked to death. Happy ?'

The buffalo glared at me.

‘Shame!’ it said, and then it took a big step forward and the cart passed by, full of dead skinned faces, which seemed to me at that moment the faces of my own family”(WT 256).

Just the next day after this incident, when his masters comes to the car, Balram decides that he would make a confession, but then he changes his ideas when he sees his master busy with his mobile. He deems about his masters ignorance relating to the conflict going on his mind, “to have a mad man with thoughts of blood and theft in his head, sitting just ten inches in front of you, and not to know it. Not to have hint, even.”(WT 257). He calls it blindness that his master is taking to American, thousands of miles away but not having even “the faintest idea what’s happening to the man who’s driving your car!”(WT 257).Balrams mood gets rotten when Mr.Ashok gives him a hundred-rupee note for the celebration of his marriage. His masters words, ‘we’ll take care of your wedding expenses’ echo in his mind. For a while he behaves like a mad man, he falls down his face on the ground then he washes his face in a common toilet and comes to his room. His frustration and anger there falls on the young boy Dharam, who had come to Delhi with a letter from Balram’s granny.

Balram remains very inconclusive as to what to do. Though he slaps the boy Dharam and ill-treats him, yet he thinks that the arrival of the boy has saved him from sinning. He muses: “I had come to the edge of the precipice. I had been ready to slave my master-this boys arrivals had saved me from murdered (and a life time in prison)”(WT 263). Once while sitting outside the teashop he sees the dirty black water passing, a voice

inside him says: "But your heart has become even blacker than that, Munna."(WT 265).Balrams mental agony is somewhat similar to that of Macbeth before he murders his lord Duncan. He shares some of his traits with Macbeth. The red bag causes the same spell on Balram as does the prediction of witches on Macbeth. The thought of murdering their lords upset their mental state. Balram's mind is also troubled with his imaginations of killing his masters. Though he always loves him and admits that his master is better than nine in ten yet he slays him. In greed Macbeth and Balram both kill their masters, though fortunately both had good masters and both loved their lords well. Macbeth, while planning to assassinate Duncan, thinks about his goodness, "...thus Duncan/Hath borne his faculty so meek ... that his virtues/will plead like angels trumpet-tongued against/The deep damnation of his taking off; ..." (1.7)

Balram at many places admires his master: "I had always known that he was a good man: a cut above me"(WT 210). "Mr.Ashok was a classic first gear man." He further says: "if you were back in Laxmangarh, we would have called you the lamb"(WT 142). Mr.Ashok always takes care that Balram should live comfortably, he even proposes to pay his hospital bills. Due to his masters goodness Balram tells the caretaker: "I love Mr.Ashok so much, you must let me serve him lunch!"(WT 82).

Because of his greed Balram kills Ashok, though he could not see him suffering. At many places Balrams goodness and humanity also are displayed. He shows his deep concern and love for his master. When Mr.Ashok's wife Pinky Madam leaves him, he becomes miserable. Seeing the sufferings, Balram becomes very sad. He says: "it squeezed my heart to see him suffer like this- but where self interest began, I could not tell: no servant can ever tell what the motives of his heart are"(WT 187). Like Macbeth

also lets evil take over admiration and love for their lords, both of them kill their masters callously. Both deceive their masters who trusted them deeply. Duncan had a lot of faith in Macbeth and his goodness. Mr. Ashok also admires Balram for his devotion, honesty and goodness. His perennial thinking is that Balram is honest, good and trustworthy; he is not crooked and cunning like other city drivers. He could never guess what Balram was doing behind his back. Thus both Macbeth and Balram betrayed their master who have reposed much faith on them.

Balram has been looking for opportunities. But he grabs them the wrong way and ends up as a miserable human being. The lines: "I was looking for the keys for years/But the door was always open" (WT 99) keep on instigating Balram towards the evil deed of killing his master. He finds a meaning in this verse indicating towards his ambition and his aim. He feels that the door of a better life was always open and it was he who could not identify his way. He sees a new life, a free and rich life hidden in the death of his master.

With the choice of this kind of new life Balaram gradually loses the sense of patience, justice and humanity and gains materialistic prosperity. He is lured by the way of crime which leads him towards the external glamorised world and bids farewell to world of goodness and conscience. He feels that all the political, social, official and all controlling powers are under the control of money. With there he wants to join administrative system, police system and the system of bureaucracy that have been in the grip of the businessmen or the so called rich, elite and political leaders. Balram Halwai, a postcolonial subaltern there becomes the victim of class, caste and gender for he has felt in Delhi the great gap between the poor and rich and all these disparities between the two

classes create in him a motive of revenge, revolt and resistance. His father's cherished plan to get him out of the trap of the marginalized territorial condition haunts him always and regenerates in him a dream to become a rich person.

Aravind Adiga in his novel shows through the creation of Balram, the protagonist that the subaltern can speak through crime. Murder is obviously a heinous act in the eyes of the law and no civilized society tolerates this kind of vulnerable act. The law and order always helps maintain the peaceful and orderly atmosphere in the society. But in delineating the character of Balram and later on Ashok Sharma a Bangalore based successful entrepreneur, Adiga shows us that the same person who was, a marginalized, oppressed rustic and a subaltern – unable to speak - becomes a successful businessman, a rich, entrepreneur, an elite and an aristocratic part of the so-called civilized society. Balram's life from Laxmangarh to Dhanbad then to Delhi and Bangalore is a metamorphosing process of his life from innocence to experience and then rootlessness to rootedness and finally from a subaltern to an elite businessman. His changing can be summarised in the following lines: "All these changes happened in me because they happened first in Mr. Ashok. He returned from America an innocent man, but life in Delhi corrupted him – and once the master of the Honda city becomes corrupted, how can the driver stay innocent?" (WT 197).

Balram narrates his experiences as a driver in the following manner:

You have hours to yourself while waiting for your employer. You can spend this time chit-chatting and scratching your groin. You can read murder and rape magazines. You can develop the chauffeur's habit- it's a kind of yoga, really- of putting a finger in your nose and letting your

mindgo blank for hours (they call it 'bored driver's asana). You can sneak a bottle of Indian liquor into the car – boredom makes drunks of so many honest drivers. (WT 149)

Though Balram knows all types of crimes his master has committed, he never tells about those crimes to others because he is the servant or a slave of his master. The servants are the part of the subaltern classes and hence the subalterns cannot speak. Balaram is disgusted with that kind of the slavery and bondage and he always feels guilty of his rootlessness and dumb condition. He decides to murder his master and committing the murder is like the breaking the silence of the subaltern. Balram wants to feel the masterly act "just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant" (WT 321). So he speaks out and rejoices at the murdering of his master.

In *Last Man in Tower* Adiga talks about the lives of the residents of an apartment that comes to the attention of a building constructor who wants to build new luxury apartments on the site. The developer offers the people in towers A and B a princely sum for their houses. Almost all the residents want to accept his offer except Mr. Yogesh Murthy who is called Masterji. In *Last Man in tower*, the plot revolves around an old Mumbai apartment complex, the Vishram Society. Inaugurated in the late 1950's and housing an affable mix of Catholics, Hindus and Muslims, the Vishram is a monument to the independence-minded idealism. Its residents are like a large family, exuding middle-class respectability in a slummy Mumbai neighbourhood. Indeed, their examples inspired a decades-long gentrification process that accelerates after a financial hub appears in the area drawing global giants such as American Express and HSBC: the

lucrative in their vaults, like butter on a hotplate, was melting and trickling into the slums, enriching some and scorching others.

Though the individual is a product of his society, serious opposition between him and some aspects of his society may arise. He may have acquired a personality which is incompatible with the circumstances in which he finds himself. The man who all his life wants to lead an army into the battle, may never get the opportunity to do so; hence he may be at odds with his society and experience some degree of frustration. Opposition between the individual and the society may also come from the deterioration of the social system. An individual brought up in political freedom will find the contrary status irksome and repressive. Under compulsion, he may play the role but he will resent it and come in conflict with the society producing tension in him which in time may release itself in sudden and unprecedented acting. Individual and society are inter-dependent. The relationship between them is not one-sided, both are essential for the comprehension and sustenance of society.

The butter reaches the Vishram in the form Dharmen Shah, a charming, ruthless real state Mogul who offers its residents about \$ 330,000 per family to leave their complex so that he can build a luxuries skyscraper named Shanghai in its place. Almost everyone in the Visharam is thrilled by the deal. The residents are quite happy and think that because they are good people they have been blessed by the Hand of God. But sixty one year old Yogesh 'Masteji' Murthy rejects the deal proposal, and since all the residents must vacate the Vishram for the Shanghai to rise, his opposition is enough to hold up everybody's cash

The only real sin is weakness. The property developer Dharmen Shah the builder fears that he has sinned because the entire proposal has come to a halt because of one man. He is ill, and he cannot get his latest project, a tower of luxury apartments, off the ground because of a single person, an old teacher who has been plagued by his weakness and cowardice his whole life. Masterji has lived in the Vishram Society, in Vakola, Mumbai, for decades. The Society consists of two towers. In brief, effective strokes Aravind Adiga conjures Tower A, a building that leads that moans alongside its inhabitants who, live in a particularly communal fashion.

The many residents of Vishram society Tower A are featured in a cast list at the beginning of *Last Man in Tower*, to help us avoid confusion. But they move like a single commenting organism with occasional, irritating habit of stating plot development in explanatory dialogues: Vishram is the “protective keratin they have secreted hardships of their lives” (LMT 35). As the property boom in Mumbai sounds around them, “stories of golden tears reached Vishram Society like echos from a distant battled field”. But “it was not in their karma to know either gold or tears: they were respectable” (LMT 46).

The weakness of the respectable people is that they do not know what clever property developers know. They do not realize that their society sits on the golden line of the city, the line that makes men rich. Shah sends his left-hand man, the unsurprisingly sinister Shanmugham, to make the residents an offer they cannot refuse. Each member of the society will receive a 250 percent mark-up in the value of their flat, plus eight weeks relocation rent, if they all agree to leave so that their building can be demolished and Shahs Shanghai apartments built in its place. The mass of residents start to become distinguishable from one another in light of the offer: there are those who must take the

money- like Mrs. Puri, whose eighteen-year-old son Ramesh has Down's syndrome- and those who do not wish to, like the elderly Mr and Mrs Pinto. Masterji, the widowed teacher aligns with his friends the Pintos, and he is initially praised for doing so; he is an English gentlemen.

Adiga convincingly shows how, one by one the resistant residents fall with startling speed, like demolished concrete. When nearly all are on Shah's side, the narrative slows down for a lengthy third act. The web has become so complex now. Kudwa saw intensions buried in intensions. But it is really not that complicated: because every man has his price, and Shah is willing to beat it.

Every one, expect Masterji is ready to go out. His motives change as the narrative unfolds, hardening at last around the simple fact that he would like to remain in the building which holds memories of his dead wife and daughter. In doing so, he becomes the figure that defies the rules of the jungle, for in the continuous market of Mumbai, one question is repeated: what you want. Every man must want something: Masterji wants nothing expect to remain in the tower. And this is how he becomes a vilified saint, rather than a sinner. Adiga picks up some of the preoccupation of his Man Booker Prize-winning debate, *The White Tiger*. The builder Shah, like the protagonist of *The White Tiger*, BalramHalwai, is apparently self-made, having raised from nothing to riches, achieved through act of violence. But whereas Halwai had to perform the violence himself, Shah contracts the deed of violence out to the residents of Vishram Society.

It takes this act of violence to break through the limiting code of Indian society into freedom, and nothing can stop a living thing that wants to be free. But the next leap

of logic, which would suggest that such violence is inevitable, is missing in *Last Man in Tower*. The only inevitability is the upholding of the family unit—even in the debased state that Adiga describes it and its status. All are prisoners of necessity, and there is little hope for the next generations, represented by characters such as the Shah's young son, Satish. But at least Satish, who joins his father in the temple on the eve of the Vishram offer, promises to avoid the sin of weakness: "please Lord Ganesha" (LMT 52), he prayed, make his father's new project fail and he will write you a much bigger cheque when he has money.

*Last Man in Tower* is also an existentialist novel, a locked-room character study as the residents of the Vishram try to persuade Masterji to accept Mr. Shah's lucrative destruction. Bit by bit, Adiga strips away the characters' faith in themselves as good people, revealing long-buried seams of pride, greed, hubris, envy and cowardice. Under pressure they turn against each other, and then turn towards each other to form a fearsome mob. Masterji is vain, shrewd and stubborn, one of the most delightfully contradictory characters to appear in recent fiction.

Adiga refuses to give a clear answer as he adds another layer, and subtly aligns Masterji's position with that of old India. It is no coincidence that some of the novel's most violent actions take place against a background of patriotic songs and Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. Or that the residents' first action against Masterji is a boycott—which was a favourite manoeuvre of Gandhi against the British colonialist. In a country that has been dominated by a single political family, that of Nehru, for sixty-odd years, the suggestion that the old independence guard may have itself turned into a paternalistic oppressor has a real bite. The novel is in perfect, and its final, hopeful note feels largely

unearned. But these are small flaws compared with its many delights and its unusually evenhanded take on urban development. As Adiga told the *Times of India* during his interview, money itself is amoral. It can liberate people as easily as it can destroy them.

Mr. Dharmen Shah is the far from respectable but hugely successful builder. His mother committed suicide. A year later, his father marries another lady. She has four sons. His father's love turns towards those boys. They all blame Shah as a cause for his mother's death. Bereft of any compassion or familial strings, he has left home with twelve rupees and eighty paise that he has saved up, and reaches Bombay. He never goes back to his place Krishnapur. In the city, he does not know anyone. At first he works as a delivery boy for the store in the temple and within a year he starts managing a store on his own. "When he got to the city, knowing no one here, he had stood in line outside a Jain temple in Kalbadevi and been fed there twice a day; a store owner pitied his feet and threw him his own chappals; he began working as a delivery boy for that store owner, and within a year he was managing a store himself" (LMT 88). He later starts a construction company and slowly acquires contracts one by one and meanwhile he realizes that as much as he loves cement and steel, he loves people more. Then he enters the business of redeveloping chawls and slums.

... buying out the tenants ageing structures so that skyscrapers and shopping malls could take their place; a task requiring brutality and charm in equal measure, and which proved too subtle for most builders- but one he negotiated with skills from his smuggler years, allying himself with politicians; policemen, and thugs to bribe and bounce people out of their homes. (LMT 88)

Vishram's two tower's proximity to the financial centre attracts his attention. He decides to have it demolished to make way for his magnificent new project. Shah's buyout offer is generous, but it comes with a strict deadline and acceptance must be unanimous. Four of the residents choose not to vote in favour of Shah's offer. Residents who have stayed there for years find it hard to reconcile to the idea of leaving. For Mrs. Pinto, the society is like her eyes and ears. Yet, none can benefit till all agree to vacate. One by one, all residents fall for Shah's offer and, later enticements, and much later the threats; but the last man in the building is Masterji, who clings to the memory of his wife and daughter and refuses to give up his flat and his rights.

At the heart of this novel there are two equally compelling men, poised for a disagreement. Real estate developer Dharmen Shah rose from nothing to create an empire and hopes to seal his legacy with a luxury building named the Shanghai. Shah is a dangerous man to refuse. But he meets his equivalent in the retired school teacher, Masterji. Shah offers a generous takeover to Masterji and his neighbours in a once respectable, now crumbling apartment building on whose site Shah's high-rise would be built. They cannot believe their good fortune; but Masterji refuses to abandon the building he has long called home. As the knocking down deadline looms, desires mount; neighbours become enemies, and acquaintances turn into conspirators who risk losing their humanity to score their payday.

Masterji's initial reluctance to accept the builder's offers, motivated by loyalty to his friends, the Pintos who do not wish to move out of Vishram Society, evolves in slow stages into a symbolic act of solidarity with the daily wage labourer he happens to see in a tea stall, and by extension, with the multitudes of disenfranchised city – dwellers who

despite their precarious conditions manage to have a slippery foothold. As the face – off between these two men unfolds. Masterji's neighbours grow increasingly frustrated and conspire to change Masterji's mind. As he digs in, his fellow residents and former friends begin to despair and devise numerous plots to get Masterji to rethink his position. Masterji is stubborn and irascible; he is that rare individual who has no price. He wants nothing. Shah could have his enforcer cripple or kill him, but he wants the building's gossiping denizens, by now frantic for the money, to do the dirty work. Vishramco operative housing society is a friendly place where neighbours are helpful, some even outrightly generous and never vengeful or selfish or murderous. That is, until developer Dharmen Shah and his side – kick Shanmugham enter this happy picture promising the sort of money most residents could only dream about. Everyone else is eager to sell, from Ajwani, the estate agent, to Kudwa, who owns a cyber cafe, and the Puris who want the money to move somewhere nice with their mentally handicapped son, and all of them try to coax the school teacher to do the same.

*Last Man in Tower* is not about one good and one evil, not about one group versus the other. It is about the contradictions and the burning issues in Indian society highlighting the various shades of human nature. This novel centres on the conflict of two main characters, the greedy and narcissistic real estate developer Dharmen Shah and Masterji and once esteemed resident of the Vishram Society. It can also be considered an existentialist strain with intense focus on character evolution as the residents of the Vishram try to persuade Masterji to accept Mr. Shah's lucrative offer. Community in the novel is a dispirited collection of individuals attempting to survive with whatever luck and talent they were born with. The residents of Tower A seemed to be a cohesive and

amicable group. If not friends, they are alert to the presence of their neighbours and willing to assist if something has gone away. Some grasp the opportunity faster than others but only Masterji refuses the offer. It is difficult to see Masterji as a moral hero or anti-capitalist worker's hero. He is merely an old man whose memories and identity are fixed to the tiny apartment he had once shared with his wife, daughter and son. Masterji's toxic relationship with his son is one of the novel's poignantly understated subplots. He still feels emotionally closer to the two dead women in his life. Adiga invests a rare emotional appeal to all the characters in the novel. Even Shah is not a heartless bastard. He is a decent man, makes a decent offer, far better than what his rivals would do, he even admonishes Shanmugham the first time the latter threatens Masterji. Shah is a man with a vision, a man who wants to construct Shangai, his dream project to change the face of Mumbai, to put it on a path of progress the way he sees it. The creepy, conniving Ajwani is a typical property dealer who does not mind doing anything for an extra cut. He actually assists Shanmugham in threatening his fellow flat mates. "...this Ajwani of yours is neat, happy, ugly, crude, truthful, mongoose faced.' He emphasises each adjective with his hands, which were covered with cheap rings. 'And these are his virtues' (LMT 72).

The Helper's Society secretary, Kothari, is as helpless as they can get, his pettiness often hinted at but never proved. Until the end, poor Ibrahim Kudwa who doesn't want to take any decision and wants to please everyone finally finds himself taking every decision he knows is wrong in his heart. Mrs Rego, the communist social worker, although unable to "trump" her sister in living style is at least able to live in the same neighbourhood together with her two sons. She lives with a sad past and is torn between her beliefs and

her struggle as a single mother after her husband absconded with a younger lover with all her family wealth.

Balam of *The White Tiger* is a villainous character or an anti-hero who is able to evoke the reader's sympathy as well as shock. He knows the consequences of the murder he has committed; nevertheless, he goes on. As the novel proceeds, more and more disgraceful deeds are done revealing the magnitude of his wicked nature. The protagonist Balram cruises through bribery, corruption and murder, sketching the unfavourable portrait of India depicting the half baked Indians who would rather be kept invisible, as the country moves forward towards the moon, rocketed by globalisation and technological prowess. He makes use of each and every opportunity that comes his way though he uses them in the wrong way whereby he loses his integrity.

Part of the narrative progression of *Last Man in Tower*, perhaps, is related to how Masterji, the moral centre of the novel perceives connections between these divides as his isolation from Vishram deepens. It is precisely here that Adiga justifies all the praise and honours heaped on him. Instead of a one dimensional black and white story of an evil builder and aggrieved residents, the author beautifully portrays the various shades of human nature, as the same residents who for years stood by each other in times of crisis and shared each other's happiness start thirsting for each other's blood and prove themselves to be opportunists. Dharmen Shah is symbolic of thousands of such people who believe their wealth to be their values, their comfort to be their principles and their success their untainted conscience whereas Masterji who tries to live his precepts stands for his integrity.

# CHAPTER 3



## Chapter -3

### Strongvs Weak

*The White Tiger* is an epistolary novel. It was written in the form of letters to the Chinese premier Wen Jiabao. BalramHalwai, the protagonist of the novel introduced himself as a half-baked person who represents the entrepreneurs of modern India. He narrates the story in over seven days and nights. He is born in a remote and small village to a rickshaw puller. After his father's death, he went in search of a job. At last he gets the job of a driver to a rich family. The rest of the story depicts how he ends up being an entrepreneur. The novel is an excellent social commentary on the poor and rich divided in India. Modern India is a witness to the mass migration of youth from the rural areas to cities in search of a comfortable life. The urban rich employ them as domestic servants at low wages and treat them in the manner they treat animals. *The WhiteTiger* is about an India that is "two countries in one: an India of Light and an India of Darkness" (WT 14).

The India of Light is that of wealth, strength technology and knowledge while the India of Darkness is that of misery, weakness destitution and illiteracy. The novelist articulating the voice of the silent majority, focuses on the discrimination between the two castes: "Men with Big Bellies and Men with small Bellies" (WT 64) and strives to create a society based on principles of equality and justice. The novel is about BalramHalwai's fascinating journey narrated in the course of seven nights.

The story narrates the protagonists' interesting journey from "Darkness to Light" from rags to riches, transforming from a village tea shop boy into a Bangalore entrepreneur. Balram tells his story to an empty room as he stares at an ostentatious chandelier. As a great entrepreneur, he wants to keep in touch with "His Excellency Wen

Jiabao, The Chinese Premier who is set to visit Bangalore to understand entrepreneurship in India. The volatile and captivating narrator provides the Chinese Premier with a compelling portrait of modern India “The Ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near the ocean is well off. But the river brings darkness to India – The Black River” (WT 14). The events of the novel span out in different dimensions capturing the narrator Balram Halwai as he manages to claw his way into the light of Delhi and Bangalore, out of the darkness of Laxmangarh, a small remote village in the poor state of Bihar, in eastern India, on the banks of what he calls the “The Black River” (WT 14) a reference to the most revered river of India, The Ganges

Balram introduces himself as a Bangalore-based entrepreneur who reveals the secret of entrepreneur which come from half baked clay and calls himself as half-baked Indian. He lives in the village of Laxmangarh, a fictional village in a community deep in the “Darkness” of rural India. Though he is clever, his financial problem makes him to work in a teashop at Dhanbad. His parents call him Munna which means ‘boy’ in Hindi. His school teacher Mr. Krishna gives him a new name Balram which refers to the brother of Hindu God Krishna. As a half-baked person, he observes corruption in his school and says that:

That was supposed to be free food at my school- a government programme gave every boy three rotis, yellow dal, and a pickles and everyone knew why: the school teacher had stolen our lunch money. . . . Once, a truck came into the school with information that the government had sent for us; we never saw them, but a week later they turned up for sale in the neighbouring village’ (WT 33).

Balram wants to become an exclusive person and a 'White tiger'. When his father Vikram is not well, he takes him to a hospital where there are no doctors. His father dies of T.B in the hospital. After a few days, he leaves the tea shop and is interested in learning driving so that he can make more money. After some upheavals, he gets his job as a driver to a wealthy family. He moves to New Delhi with his master Mr. Ashok. He lives in a new apartment called Buckingham towers A Block, which is very famous and best in Delhi. Ashok likes to visit new places and spends his time visiting various places especially malls along with his wife Pinky Madam. Balram's job is not only to drive the car but also has to carry all the shopping bags as they purchased from the mall. In Delhi, Balram is surprised to see the clean roads and big buildings but he doesn't like the apartment because it is very congested. He is very much fascinated by a magazine 'Murder weekly' which has stories of murder, rapes, and revenge. As the other drivers read the magazines, he is comfortable to read it and says that "a billion servants are secretly fantasizing about strangling their bosses- and that's why the government of India publishes the magazines and sell it on the streets for just four and a half rupees, so that even the poor can buy it" (WT 125)

The mean behaviour of the rich is shown through the lost coin episode where Ashok's brother Mukesh, called as Mongoose throughout the novel. He insults Balram for not having retrieved a rupee coin he lost while getting out of the car. He is bothered about the rupee coin after bribing someone with a million rupees: "Get down on your knees. Look for it on the floor of the car. . . Don't think you can steal from us just because you're in the city. I want that rupee. We've just paid half a million rupees in a

bribe, Mukesh, and now we're screwing this man over for a single rupee. Let's go up and have a scotch." (WT 139)

Mr. Ashok asked Balram to prepare tea and sweets at his home as he belongs to Sweet-makers family. He is humiliated by them many times. He recalls how the poor people in rich areas are humiliated. Ashok and his wife Pinky usually look down upon him for he mispronounces words in English. On Pinky Madam's birthday, he is made to dress up like a maharaja with a red turban and dark cooling glasses and serve them food. Pinky madam asks him to repeat PiZZa as Balram always pronounces it as PiJJA.

In the morning and evening hours in Delhi, many vehicles jostle on the road. The traffic grows worse day by day which makes Balram a little bit nervous. It is an eye-opening experience for him. He is degraded as a human being and not allowed to enter a shopping mall. A poor driver cannot enter a mall as he belongs to the poor class. If he walks into the mall somebody says: "Hey, that man is a paid driver! What's he doing here? There were guards in grey uniforms on every floor- all of them seemed to be watching me. It was my first taste of the fugitive's life" (WT 152).

As Balram drives his master and his wife to shopping mall and call centre, Balram becomes increasingly aware of the immense wealth and opportunity all around him, while knowing that he will never be able to gain access to that world. Through these experiences, he learns much about the world and later states that the streets of India provided him with all education he needed, but he is trapped in an accident case to save Pinky madam who kills a man on the road in drunken driving. He is forced to sign a statement accepting the full responsibility for the accident.

Adiga makes use of the animal imagery in a very intriguing manner; it seems that animals represent positions of power. The family's water buffalo is described as a "dictator," and the landlords are given names of animals that represent their personalities. The Stork would naturally be involved in the marriages—if marriage and fertility destroy the men's chance for education, then the Stork represents, as the bringer of the children, the ultimate destruction of that opportunity—they must labour for him (and for their families) instead of seeking to improve their minds and advance in life. Lord Buddha is surrounded by harmless animals because he has essentially subdued them through knowledge. The lizard is another animal that stands in the way of education: Balram is so scared of it that he doesn't want it to return. Thus the destruction of the beast: the lizard, and perhaps later the murder of his master, may symbolize freedom through education. This may also be shown when Balram visits his family and they pay more attention to him than to the buffalo for once.

*The White Tiger* reconnoiters the growing disparity between the materialistic urban elite and the underprivileged rural poor. It beautifully displays how things can alter when people of the two classes encounter and altercates fortunes. *The White Tiger* as its title emblematically advocates the subversion of oppressed or dominated in wider context colonized into oppressor or dominator. It registers the saga of subjugated man, the protagonist of the novel, Balram Halwai and his big fabricated events that make up the structure of the novel in the small village of Laxmargah. Balram Halwai is a self-styled Bangalore entrepreneur who is representative of the rags to riches tycoon of new India. His transformation from Munna- Balram Halwai- White Tiger- Ashok Sharma is the blue print for the rise of underclass. The presence of the insignificant people in the novel is

portrayed in the subordinate condition of big people who are oppressors or dominators, who outline and regulate their lives. *The White Tiger* is one of the Magnum opus literary endeavors to bring into notice the concerns of subaltern and their deplorable condition before the world. The novel also exposes the hitches that accrue the task of recuperating the consciousness and the voice of the troubled and their subjugated histories in India. Balram representing the downtrodden sections of the Indian society is juxtaposed against the rich.

The plot of the novel lingers around BalramHalwai, in Adiga's visionary village Laxamangarh, where the villagers, family and friends are subjected to exploitation, torture and torment by the village landlord. Balram by nature is aspiring and strains to advance his societal position. It transports him to Delhi as the driver of one of the landlord's westernized son, Ashok. Delhi is the place where Balram senses the great fissure between the rich and the poor and also between two castes, they are: the men with the big bellies and the men with the small abdomens, those who eat and those who are eaten. His father's plot and cherished fantasy for his son might have inspired him constantly to struggle and improve his subaltern state.

And when you see these strict men, think of my father. Rickshaw – puller he may have been a human beast of burden – but my father was a man with a plan. I was his plan”(WT 27). “When he caught his breath, he said, ‘my whole life, I have been treated like donkey. All I want is that one son of mine – at least one – should live like a man.(WT 30)

Adiga through the staging ofBalramHalwai presents how the low caste people are treated by the bigwigs. Balram's struggle to shed off oppressive forces is an indication to

the datum that low caste people remain fretful and deprived of all that goes with the plenty and the high caste. The novel explicates in its theme the dominating concerns of class conflict which shows an enormous gap in the life of the rich and the poor people (half-baked people). The dominator- rich or high caste people's efforts to uphold status quo in their favour while the deprived and disadvantaged ones strive for their appropriate place in the world. "The dreams of the rich, and the dreams of the poor – they never overlap, do they? See, the poor dream all their lives of getting enough to eat and looking like a rich, And what do the rich freak of? Losing weight and looking like the poor" (WT 42).

Balram who is called as 'White Tiger', by a visiting inspector of schools, could not continue his schooling due to dearth of money. Balram is allured to be a driver in the imitation of Vijay on observing his satiated life. The dominant classes authoritarian view cognizance in the matters of hiring servants for their daily chores, is also palpable that subjugated or subaltern are also sentient about the status given by their master.

In the term of colonialism and exploitation, the relationship between colonizer and the colonized is like that of master and slave. In India, the mentioned relationship is noticeable in the novel. India has no deference for their services providers – cooks, drivers, sweepers or whatever the nature of their job profile may be; they just fit into the sole title – servants or slaves. Ashok while boasting about India attunes his wife, "We have got people to take care of us here – our drivers, our watch men, our masseurs, and where in New York will you find someone to bring you tea and sweets biscuits while you are still lying in the bed, the way Ram Bahadur does for us?" (WT89).

In India, the low and poor have no right to be part of democratic process. On the day of voting, they are fetched like herds to execute whatever they are imposed to do. They are subjected to be reigned by the bourgeois class and have to adhere to the protocols framed by the master. The representation of Balram's rank in the beginning of the novel is like a subaltern destitute, but when he hoards affluence, he befits him like landlord, a status which was ideologically and socially restricted for him. He acquired this high position through manipulation, murder and acquisition of wealth. "The moment you recognize what is beautiful in this world, you stop being a slave" (WT 39).

The novel demarcates a long conflicting gap between the educated, wealthy, strong bourgeois and the rural rustic, the weak illiterate proletarians. The subjugated or subaltern people are subject to write culturally, socially, politically and professionally under the tutelage of the aristocrats. They are helpless and feeble to raise their voice against the exploitation and mortification entrusted on them. Though they remain inarticulate but they have intense craving to ooze from this entangled web. They have the disposition of rebellion, but keep them chequered with the life style of their rulers, their *métiers* and their vulnerability and then wait for the prospect to strike back at the 'beast' in order to get the ultimate objective of being reckoned.

In contemporary India, there is a wind of sea-change in matters pertaining to caste disparity. The caesium and class consciousness has dashed into two categories - the men with big bellies, the men with small bellies. Adiga has efficaciously depicted the commotion, travail, frustration, subservience and black misery hidden behind the gobar, glittering urban spectacle. He has fruitfully underlined the cry of the underprivileged and given tutelage on the idea that in the saga of India's headway role of the downtrodden

needs to be paid heed to. The novelist as a communist manifesto implores strongly for an egalitarian society. Thus, Adiga has publicized how individual aspirations and reveries are suppressed under mammoth social strictures and hassles.

Adiga's existential and crude prose animates the battle between India's wealthy and poor as Balram suffers degrading treatment at the hands of his employers. Adiga depicts the awakening of a low-caste Indian man to the degradation of servitude. He is a representative of the poor in India yearning for their 'tomorrow'. His story is a parable of the new India with a distinctly macabre twist.

Adiga presents a racist, homicidal chauffeur and a brutal view of India's class struggle. The gap between the rich and the poor widens further. *The White Tiger* is a novel where casteism and feudalism strike a fatal friendship with a police and politicians. The novel traverses the familiar territory of class and caste divide poverty and exploitation and the triumph of the human spirits that unfolds from the place called "Darkness in Bihar." It says about an abject of poverty entrenched across swaths of rural and slum city India.

The novel forcefully shows a corrupt culture and the dangers of mass migration as villagers are drawn to the city and then struggle to find work. It projects undoubtedly a lively image of India with its social reality and also strikes at India's present and future destiny. Every change that comes in a society creates a section of haves and have-nots as it happens in the western-world. According to Adiga, it is bribery and corruption that smear the wheels of the great economic miracle of India. The picture of India that Adiga paints in *The White Tiger* is of a nearly feudal society discussed as a democracy.

Adiga places his narrative in what he calls Dark India, the poor areas of the subcontinent where people are resigned to their condition and there is “no drinking water, electricity, sewage system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy, or punctuality”(WT 3). Schooling is almost non-existent and professors are corrupted because, as they do not get their salaries, they use the money destined to books and uniforms; children starve; natural resources like river and fish are actually owned by the local mafia; politicians are corrupt; people have to beg for other’s throats. This India is contrasted to the “India of Light, associated with the life in the big cities where “the outstanding companies that virtually run America”(WT 3) are located. However, there are people who lead corrupt lives. Indian nation is made up of such people.

Through his narrative, Adiga criticizes the different forms of identification that make up Indian national identity and that, as it transpires in the novel., because they do not seem to function in modern India any longer, they contribute to divide poverty and an area of riches: “To sum up- in the old days there were one thousand castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat- or get eaten up”(WT 54). His irony points to the facts that in present day India, and in the era of globalization, the whole moral of society seems to be the capital ethic of the survival of the fittest. He dramatize this plight through his main character “the White Tiger”, an Indian citizen, from the lower caste, a rare rebel against the identification imposed on him by caste, family and religion. Unlike the stories of some of his literary predecessors and submission but one of rebellion and freedom, ironically earned through violence.

To show how the process of social identification works, Adiga gives his character different names that reveal how others label him and how he tries to escape them, as he

moves from the area of Darkness to the area of Light. His parents give him no name; they had just called him “Munna”, kid. He was one more among so many. So his teacher calls him “Balram”, after his own name, Krishna, and his father, accepted it passively, if that would help his son have a better life. Finally, through murder, he appropriates his boss’s identity and money, Ashok Sharma. However, he continues being an invisible and a half baked Indian, as Adiga ironies through the police poster circulated.

Set into the text of the notice, a photograph: blurred, blackened, and smudged by the antique printing press of some police office, and barely recognizable even when it was on the wall of the train station, just an abstract idea of a man’s face: a small creature with large, popped-out eyes and a stubby mustaches. He could be half the men in India (WT 33-34).

The White Tiger’s rebellion will be not only against the member of the upper caste systems not only by showing how people from the upper caste victimize those of the lower, but also by showing how the individual’s own caste can become stifling. Adiga puts forward in his novel in this attempt not to romanticize the poor or appeal to the reader’s compassion. He ironically dramatizes how the extended family sucks the blood of its men, and tie them to the poorly paid jobs permitted by their caste, as they contract huge debts to pay expensive wedding parties for the daughters of the family.

The novel on the other hand refuses to accept the job assigned by his caste, that of sweet-maker, that, as he ironically pints out, has nothing to do with the profession it indicates but means becoming another ‘spiderman’, a starved man from the Darkness, working in a tea-shop for peanuts:

See: Halwai, my name, means “Sweet-maker”. That’s my caste, my destiny. Everyone in the Darkness, Who hears that name knows all about me at once. That’s Why Kishan and I kept getting jobs at Sweetshops where we went. The owner thought, “Ah, they’re Halwais, making sweets and tea I in their blood.” But if we are Halwais, then, why was my father not making sweets but pulling a rickshaw? Why did I eating gulabjamuns and sweet pastries when and where I chose creamy-skinned and smiling, like a boy raised on sweets would be. (WT 53)

Adiga gives his character the name, White Tiger, pointing to the fact that his liberation will not be collective, in order to improve the conditions of his community, but totally individual, in the style of the ruthless capitalism of modern India, that he has learnt from the upper castes. Honouring his father’s desire, that he should be treated like a man, the White Tiger goes after a different life for himself, appropriating the words of the poet Iqbal, “They Remains Slaves because they cant see what is beautiful in this world”(WT 33). Violating the rules of caste, the White Tiger first becomes a driver because, ironically, the only person, closer to his circle that he ever saw treated well (his father’s ideal) was the driver of the local bus. Adiga’s character is then a nonconformist or dissenter who struggles to break away from his own imposed social identity. *The White Tiger* invokes the language of liberationfor, his fight is of a different kind. It is not a question of morality, of setting things for the community or getting recognition for the people of his marginalized caste. It is a process of individual liberation which does not try to affirm one’s social identity, but be freed from it in order to assume a role which will allow him to enter into new globalized India. Hence, the White Tiger does not see his

liberation process at group level or is proud of it: it is a totally individual and isolated process that, through his deeds, leads to the death of all the people of his family.

In a totally unclimatic move, Balram does not challenge the life of corruption of the upper caste. Rather, he wants a share of it and employs the same means with which they are accustomed—murder. He breaks the dichotomy of traditional India between servant and landlord to assume a new role, that of an entrepreneur. It is at this point that Adiga's novel takes a different path and becomes more pointedly ironical. He kills his kind master a Cosmopolitan Indian, educated in the United States who, though critical of the corruption of his social environment, does not have what it takes to become "White Tiger", because he has been for so long away from India: "He was a weak, helpless, absent-minded, and completely unprotected by the usual instincts that run in the blood of a landlord"(WT 120).

Though the final impression of the novel may seem to justify every kind of trick made by Balram to succeed in life. His rise from Munna to Ashok Sharma testifies this proposition. Adiga's exposure of the Dark areas of India can be taken positively to cure the sick image of it. The political system and the autocratic set-up, according to the novel, refer to the darkest areas of our country which breed, "rottenness and corruption"(WT 50) in our society, and hamper all developmental and welfare schemes. It restricts half of this country from achieving its potential. Most of the politicians are "half-baked. That's the whole tragedy of this country"(WT 10). The story of Balram's emergence is the story of how a half-baked fellow is produced. Politics is the last refuge for scoundrels. Government doctors, entrepreneurs, tax payers, industrialists all have to befriend a minister and his sidekick to fulfill their vested interests. Mukesh and Ashok also bribe the

Minster to settle income tax accounts. Power sets transferred from one hand to another but the common man's fate remains unchanged. Adiga considers "Typhoid, cholera and election fever-the three main diseases of this country and the last one the worst"(WT 98). Voters discuss about the election helplessly as "eunuchs discussing the *kama sutra*"(WT 98). Balram reports: "I am India's most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of voting booth"(WT 102). Adiga observes that Indians are lagging behind China because of "fucked up system called parliamentary democracy. Otherwise, we'd be just like China"(WT 156). This rotten system has created new distinctions and classes.

The novel gives a detailed account of the Indian society- rural as well as urban and its various facets. Laxmangarh, Gaya, Dhanbad, Delhi and Bangalore are generic, represents the portrait of India. Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, caste and cultural conflict, superstition, dowry practice, economic disparity, Zamindari system, and exploitation of marginal farmers and landless labourers, rise of Naxalism, corrupt education system, poor health services, tax evading racket, embittered master-servant relationship, prostitution, weakening family structure, entrepreneurial success and its fallout, etc. constitute the basic structure of Indian society which largely forms the Dark image of India. Adiga is curious and troubled but he sight, and during his travels in India as a journalist, he wanted to explore more. *The White Tiger* is a tale of this underclass and its life begging for food, sleeping under concrete flyovers, defecating on the roadside, shivering in the cold, struggling in the twenty-first century, for its freedom. Adiga has successfully portrayed the different images of India – India of Light and India of Dark. But his focus is on the latter and he tries to give it a literary voice.

Vishram Society of Last Man in Tower was built in the 1950s in Vakola. At that time, it was a fashionable address for the aspiring middle class. But fashions and aspirations change over time and entrepreneurs like Dharmen Shah sense these shifts and act swiftly. The construction industry of the world's ninth largest economy depends on the labour of peasants who work in appalling conditions using unsafe work practices. Drawn by the lure of making a quick profit in the city, their own farms are left without a workforce.

All the people in the society, the Pintos, Ajwani, Ibbi, the secretary, the Puris including Shah's henchman, Shanmugam represent the transitional India that want both the goodness of the old values and also the materialistic success of the future. People are trapped and they want to be trapped. The Pintos with whom Masterji formed the famous 'Vakolatriumvate' cheat in friendship. Masterji's own family declares him insane and severs all relationship with him when he needs them the most. The clergy too refuses to help the old man perform the last rites to his deceased wife. The police and the lawyers who promise to help him also forsake him declaring him selfish and insane.

The residents of Vishram Society – a curious mix of service class and retired people – pride themselves on their very established, routine way of life. The pink colour of the building is “rain water stained, fungus – linked grey” where the neighbour can hear every time you're flush. Yet our respectable residents are a happy community, bound by their middle-class sentiments and middle-class way of life. Out of gratitude to Vishram Society's pioneers, who defied bandits and mosquitoes, rode over the dirt lane with their Fiat cars and Bajaj scooters, cut down the forests, flattened the roads, and put up grills on their windows and signs in English, the local politicians have decreed that the unpaved

lane, winding down from the Ideal Bakery, on the main road, past the beef and bottle shops, past the Goan mansions, until it reaches the front gate of the building, should be called “Vishram Society Lane”. At that time, it was a fashionable address for the aspiring middle class. But fashions and aspirations change over time and entrepreneurs like Dharmen Shah sense these shifts and act swiftly. The construction industry of the world’s ninth largest economy depends on the labour of peasants who work in appalling conditions using unsafe work practices. Drawn by the lure of making a quick profit in the city, they leave their farms to work under realtors like Shah.

Yogesh A. Murthy, ‘Masterji’, is the last man in Tower A: the retired schoolteacher who inadvertently becomes a ‘David’ opposed to the capitalist drive of property developer Dharmen Shah. In an efficient portrayal of rapacious greed and ambition, Shah tantalises the residents of Tower A with enough rupees to double their dreams for self improvement. However, the decision to accept Shah’s offer must be unanimous: all in or all out. The residents of this society are middle-class professionals, respectable people typified by Yogesh Murthy, known as Masterji, the 61 – year – old physics teacher and recent widower. He was one of the first Hindus allowed into Vishram on account of his noble and dignified bearing.

Community in the novel is a dispirited collection of individuals attempting to survive with whatever luck and talent they were born with. The residents of Tower A seemed to be a cohesive and amicable group. If not friends, they were alert to the presence of their neighbours and willing to assist if something had gone awry. It does not take a great deal to dismantle this veneer of civility and mutual regard: an offer of money. Some grasp the opportunity faster than others but only Masterji refuses the offer. It is

difficult to see Masterji as a moral hero or anti-capitalist worker's hero. He is an old man whose memories and identity are fixed to the tiny apartment he had once shared with his wife, daughter and son. Masterji's toxic relationship with his son is one of the novel's poignantly understated subplots. "He was lean, moustached, and of medium height: in physical terms, a typical representative of the earlier generation. Good with languages (He spoke six), generous with books, passionate about education. An adornment to his society" (LMT 30)"

Masterji in his days after his retirement party lost his daughter and wife one by one in tragic incidents and eventually he was also abandoned by his son. His wife was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer an unfortunate and cruel side-effect to the years of medication for her rheumatoid arthritis. Masterji's daughter Sandhya when was on her way to college someone had pushed her out of the train's women's first class compartment. None of her fellow passengers stopped the train because they didn't want to be late for their work. Not a single soul cared for the responsibility they had as a human being.

She had been on her way to college, when someone had pushed her out of the train. A packed compartment in the women's first class in the morning – someone had elbowed her out. She had fallen head first on the tracks, and lain there like that. Not one of her fellow passengers stopped the train. They didn't want to be late for their work. All of them women, good women, secretaries. Bank clerks. Sales managers. she had bled to death. (LMT 103)

She died, her brain oozing from the broken head. Masterji's thought was "surely in the men's compartment someone would have pulled the emergency chain, jumped out, surely someone would have. . ." (LMT 104).

But no one has done this in a women's compartment. This incident shattered him. For three months, he was not able to take the train. He took one bus after the other, and even went by walk when there was no bus around. Masterji's hatred towards women is shown by his words. "Who said the world would be better place run by women? At least men were honest about themselves. He thought." (LMT 104).

*Last Man in Tower* is a simple enough narrative which present a simple theme of strongest people dominating the weakest people: one man stubbornly holds on to his crumbling apartment in a housing society that has had the good fortune of attracting a builders eye, one who is willing to pay unimaginably vast sums of money to each resident in exchange for their apartments, only in order to pull them down and build a "shining and modern" luxury block in their place. The novel unfolds with single-minded briskness that emulates the ferocious pace with which the imperative of 'development' seeks to transform the fabric of a city desperately squeezed for space. Faced with the inevitable, head long rush of this imperative, personified in the builder Dharmen Shah- a principle more than a person- the resident of the middle-class, "absolutely, unimpeachably pucca" Vishram society Tower A turn, chillingly, into a many- headed monster that finds itself capable of forgery, harassment, blackmail, and when the times comes, murder.

Early in the novel, Mrs. Puri borrows Masterji's copy of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, a minor detail playfully introduced in the narrative whose grim overtones only become manifest at the end. Another murder, of Masterji's young

daughter, Sandhya had taken place on another train eleven years ago, by another set of pucca people.

The ease with which genteel middle-class 'respectably', bonds of neighbourly co-existence and concern, as well as longstanding friendship crumble in the face of the sudden, unimaginably prospect of wealth dangled by Shah, is what the novel showcases, simply and powerfully. The chapter headings were simply dates: the narrative begins on eleven May and ends on twenty five December. The speedy chronological progression of the story only highlights the rapidity of the change in people's attitudes and the increasingly desperate measures they are willing to take in order to get what was, until so recently, outside the pale as far as they were concerned but has now, in a moment, become "rightfully" theirs.

This is cityscape that is growing, expanding and changing at a far more aggressive pace than it has ever been. In a city that, "like a practitioner of yoga, was folding in on itself", ravenously looking for room to expand, slums as much as decaying apartments blocks can become, unexpectedly sources of sudden and great wealth.

A few lucky hut-owners were becoming millionaires, as a bank or a developer made an extraordinary profit for their little plot of land; others were being crushed- bulldozers were on the move, shanties were being levelled, slum clearance projects were going ahead. As wealth came to some, and misery to others, stories of gold and tears reached Vishram Society like echoes from a distant battlefield. Here, among the plastic chairs of their parliament, the lives of the residents were slow and regular. They had the security of titles and legal deeds that could not be revoked,

and their aspiration were limited to a patient rise in life earned through universities and interviews in gray suit and tie. It either gold, or tears; they were respectable. (LMT 38)

When Vishram Society's great stroke of luck seems on the verge of being stymied by an ageing widower who lives alone and refuses to be dazzled by the bait of a chore of two, he becomes a stubborn node of incomprehensibility and increasing frustration to his neighbours who cannot fathom why someone would reject windfall that has come their way out of the blue. In a city-in a world- fuelled by the logic of wants and desire Masterji's contrariness, his decided refusal to want- anything at all – makes him an anomaly that simply has to be expelled. For, "a man must want something- for everyone who lives here knows that the islands will shake, and the mortar of the city will dissolve, and Bombay will turn again into seven small stones glistening in the Arabian Sea, if it ever forgets to ask the question: what do you want?"(LMT 231)

In a sense, then, the denouement is entirely logical and entirely expected; it is, in fact, the only possible one. The total blanket nature of Masterji's refusal leaves out all room for compromise or negotiation, a possibility- nay, expectation- that is built into the very act of holding out against the builder. As Mr. Parekh of Parekh and Sons, Advocate, "Legal Hawk with Soul & Conscience" asks, "How long do you and Mr. Pinto plan on resisting this slum rate?". When Masterji answers, "Forever", For a moment everything in the office seemed to come to a stop: the fluids in Parekh's head ceased to circulate, the rats in the wall termites in the old wooden ceiling stopped burrowing; even the particles disinfectant spreading through the air stopped their dispersion"(LMT 258).

Dispossessed of the support of family, friendship and society, Masterji turns to the institutions of law and order to aid him. It's impossible not to think of the works of Charles Dickens when reading *Last Man in Tower*. The law firm of Parekh and Sons, Advocate, 'Legal Hawk with Soul & Conscience' might occupy rooms next door to Mr. Jaggers in *Great Expectations*. However, for all his skill at portraying a sense of place, Adiga fails the reader in his characterisations. There are glimpses of the scathing satire and irony Adiga is capable of writing when Parekh and Sons lead Masterji on a wander round the mulberry bush in the mutable world of Indian jurisprudence. Dickens's characters are beautifully and richly evoked: Masterji and his fellow Tower A inhabitants become tedious and repetitive. Real life is inescapable but fiction must elevate it to art so that the reader can perceive its multitude of connections.

The image of the hawk recurs in the book; Dharmen Shah is identified with one at the very outset. The flamingo, too, appears- in Kothari, the secretary's dream of an apartment in Sewri with a large glass panel "for a full view of the flamingoes" – only to be forgotten; it is a dream that has to be abandoned for a more prosaic replacement by the sparrows found hopping around in Andheri West. The novel's epiphanies are created not by views of birds flying in the air but the everyday experience of life in the city. Masterji's initial reluctance to accept the builders offer, motivated by loyalty to his friends the Pintos who do not wish to move out of Vishram Society, evolves in low stages into a symbolic act of solidarity with the daily wage labourer he happens to see in a tea stall, and by extension, with the multitudes of disenfranchised city-dwellers who, despite their precarious, slippery foot hold on the fabric of the city, embodies its spirit of enterprise and determination far more robustly than the likes of Dharmen Shah. It is with

them that Masterji chooses to throw in his lot, and it is from a sense of oneness with and responsibility to them rather than the cowardly Pintos that he digs in his heels and resists, futilely perhaps, the head long march of a progress and ‘development’ that only deepens the shameful divides that are already in place. One response to them is that of Ajwani, and indeed most of Masterji’s neighbours- one motivated by fear: “The autorickshaw sped over a concrete bridge. Below him, home-less men slept, bathed, played cards, fed children, stared into the distance. They were the prisoners of necessity; he flew. *Tomorrow by this time I will be different from all of them*, he thought: and his hands became dark fists” (LMT 336).

The other response takes the form of Masterji’s epiphany, worth quoting at some length.

Until now he had only been conscious of fighting against someone: that builder. Now he sensed he was fighting for someone. In the dark dirty valley under the concrete overpass half-naked labourers pushed and slogged, with such little hope that things might improve for them. Yet they pushed: they fought. Illuminated in these strips, the straining coolies looked like symbols: hieroglyphs of a future, a future that was colossal. It looked like another Bombay waiting to be born. He knew that Ronak had a place in this new Bombay. Mary and all the other maid-servants had a place in it. But for now their common duty was to fight. Masterji walked behind the marching band towards VT, and felt – for the first time since his wife had died – that he was not alone in the world. (LMT 301-302)

So the confident man (the developer) makes the residents of Vishram an offer they cannot refuse. The offer comprises a square foot rate several thousand in above the prevalent market rate, which, due to some of the residents, residing in close to 1000 square feet homes, works out to more than a chore, a sum still respectable even after the deterioration of the Indian currency, financial market. Here's where the plot is lost. Instead of a righteous man's fight for what he believes in, it then becomes a deranged man's fight for something he doesn't himself know whether he believes in, for, believe it or faint, Masterji doesn't really know why it is exactly that he is opposing the redevelopment. So as the scenes progress Masterji's door is plastered with the son of the differently abled son of another member, Masterji attempts a futile resistance by way of an advocate's consultation, and loses all his friends and is frowned upon by friends and foes alike. Towards the end of the book, Adiga seemingly re-asserts that in his books, there really is not the usual white vs black for all the characters are various shades of grey. The misplaced jibes.

Societies are not divided only into proletariat and bourgeoisie but there are numerous other subdivisions too. Every single aspect of a man's life is an expression of his class. Man's language, food, dress, and ways of living, speak about his class. This is witnessed in the novel as people in India are stratified on the basis of the geographical places of the country in which they reside, the liquor that they drink, the schools where they study, their appearance and their castes. There are further sub-divisions on the basis of the size of their bellies and their appetites. The rich and ruling elite grab their wealth only because of proletariat working class but they are reluctant to spend even a single penny on their servants. Balram happens to lose one coin and Ashok's elder brother goes mad about

this loss, exposing the stinginess of the filthy exploiters who do not allow the poor to have even a small part of the money that belongs to them. Balram succeeds in breaking his shackles by the end of the novel and becomes a part of the master's class, using the money he stole from him. He wonders the way 99 percent of the population is enslaved by the 1 percent ruling rich, how they could keep the 99 percent unaware of the conspiracies for the maintenance of the rooster coop, how they could accept their inferior status unquestioningly and unhesitatingly! "How could two such contrasting specimens be produced by the same soil, sunlight and water?" (WT 80)

Aravind Adiga has given the story of a New India; one is full of greed and opportunism, and other is underpinned by the daily struggle of millions in the lower classes. *Last Man in Tower* is the story of money and power, luxury and deprivation; the story of a small apartment building and its owner occupants tells how the rich and poor are divided in India. The rich are supposed to be strong and the poor weak. The power of Dharmen Shah is the power of rich people in the society, whereas the sufferings of Masterji shows the painful suffering of poor class and the weak people in India.

# CHAPTER 4



## Chapter-4

### Spirituality vs Materialism

Values in life arise out of one's desire to live usefully. The most common one is the desire to live for oneself. In the novel *The White Tiger* Balram lives for himself. The novel is divided into eight parts. The first part of the novel is dominated by the early days of Balram in the village as well as Dhanbad. The novel is Balram's confession of murdering his master. It is the story of a subaltern who goes to the extreme limits of brutality to come out of a muted existence and out of the 'darkness' where he was born and brought up. He yearns for freedom even when he is a child, and decides to win it at any cost even when he is working in the teashop with other "human spiders that go crawling in between and under the tables with rags in their hands, crushed humans in crushed uniforms, sluggish unshaven, in their thirties or forties or fifties but still boys" (WT51). All he can think of is how he can come out of the coop. *The Cultural Hegemony* work of Antonio Gramsci, defined a sub/altern as the under /other- someone who is an underdog, a downtrodden, an inferior or stationed below or belonging to a subordinated group.(12)

Adiga illustrates the modern India that does not have "drinking water, electricity, sewage system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy or punctuality" (WT 4). The most important part of this novel is Balram's observation of the real and modern India; the flocks of drivers hanging out by their vehicles outside air-conditioned buildings, waiting for their masters to summon them; the beggars at traffic stops, who get money mostly from the poor; the petty manipulations among the servants of the house.

Adiga illustrates how rich people live in Delhi and at the same time he conveys the problems of the poor people in India. "The main thing to know about

Delhi is that the roads are good and the people are bad. The police are totally rotten. If they see you without a seat belt, you'll have to bribe them a hundred rupees"(WT124). The development we see is purely in the big towns. Though India got independence in 1947, the people really do not have it. There is no development in India. Balram gives the scenario of India that ". . . Families of pigs are sniffing through sewage . . .vivid red and brown flashes of feather-roosters fly up and down the roofs of the houses"(WT 20).Many villages do not have hospitals though people have liquor shops and brothels. ". . .there is no hospital in Laxmangarh although there are three different politicians before three different foundation stones for a hospital, laid by three different politicians before three different elections"(WT 47). He says that "people in this country are still waiting for the war of their freedom to come from somewhere else-from the jungles, from the mountains, from china, from Pakistan. That will never happen. Every man must make his own Beneras"(WT 304). Nobody can cure India's problems such as corruption and inequality. Finally he labels, "There's no end to things in India, as Mr.Ashok used to say. You can give the police all the brown envelopes and red bags you want, and they might still screw you. A man in a uniform may one day point a finger at me and say, Times up, Munna"(WT 320).

The narrator also undermines the spiritual reputation of Laxmangarh, which is just a few miles from Bodhi Tree under which Lord Buddha obtained enlightenment. While it is reported that the Buddha walked through Laxmangarh, in the protagonist's opinion "he ran through it – as fast as he could – and got to the other side-and never looked back!"(WT18).Laxmangarh is not merely introduced as a "typical Indian village paradise" (WT 19). Throughout the novel Balram refers to himself as a person born and raised in Darkness.

Adiga begins with a revolting picturisation of The Ganges, the holy river of the Hindus. The river, the life line of not just Bihar but the nation, is labeled “the black river” or the “river of Death”(WT 14). In this novel Balram warns Mr. Jiabao “not to dip in the Ganga, unless you want your mouth full of faces, straw, soggy parts of human bodies, buffalo carrion, and seven different kinds of industrial acids” (WT 15). Balram holds the river the Ganges as responsible for “bringing darkness” to the country. After deconstructing the touristic image of Ganges, the narrator states that “hundreds of American tourists come each year to take photographs of naked sadhus at Hardwar or Benaras” (WT 15).

Balram’s village becomes an authentic portrait of the hardships faced by the rural population of many Indian villages. There are also hints at the debate on the tensions between Hindus and Muslims. For instance, Balram is able to get the other driver of Ashok’s family Ram Prasad fired, because Prasad is a Muslim in hiding. However, Balram does feel sorry for Prasad and feels some remorse for his action. Balram also represents the drawbacks of a rapidly developing country which aspires to the western wealth, and yet whose institutions are still governed by Communist-style greed and corruption. As much as Balram’s tale is endemic of social evolution and class progression, he also represents the drawbacks of India’s drive towards modernity, amongst which are the corrosion of religious, familial and moral values. The author writes about poverty, corruption, aggression and the brutal struggle for power in the Indian society. A society utterly divided on economic lines, where corruption reigns supreme, superstitions are fuelled for one’s private gains is also strangely a society that aspires to land on the moon.

Religion plays the most significant role in Indian’s life as it symbolizes traditions and honour. Adiga has seriously focused on how religion dominates people.

Balram takes advantages of the limited knowledge of rural beliefs of the upper classes by making up a sign of respect for various objects or buildings, like a sacred temple, statue or tree. He does not take his religion too seriously and often pokes fun at it, especially at the number of god's Hinduism has, which he quotes as 36,000,000. Adiga mentions that "a common Hindu is worse than an Islamic terrorist"(WT 311). Balram does not have anger against Muslims. In fact, he even respects them and says that they are good people. He makes plenty of references to the "the four greatest poets who have ever lived" who are all Muslims, and agrees with the meanings he finds in their poetry. Thus this novel deals with not only corruption and inequality but also caste and religion.

Freedom is one of Balram's dream. The theme of freedom has been handled in the novel in the light of materialism. The term freedom has always been discussed in various ways. The word has different interpretations for different people. Saints and the divine scholars say that getting rid of worldly relations is freedom. They teach human beings that they should free their minds and souls from jealousy, falsehood, passions, and from all evil things, existing in the world and they should devote themselves to the divine and the divinity that is the real freedom. For a prisoner coming out of the four walled cage is freedom. For a poor being released from the shackles of poverty is freedom. Every one defines freedom in his own way. Balram too, has his own concept of freedom. He is a lover of freedom and he has his sparks since his childhood. He quotes a poem about slaves though he is not able to recall the name of the poet (a Muslim poet, as he calls).

"They remain slaves because they can't see what is beautiful in this world" And he thinks: "that's the truest thing anyone ever said"(WT 40). He says to Mr. Jiabao: "even as a boy I could see what was beautiful in the world: I was destined not to stay

a slave” (WT 41). He admires Mr. Jiabao’s country and people for they never let the British rule them: only three nations have never let themselves be ruled by foreigners: “China, Afghanistan, Abyssinia. These are the only three nations I admire” (WT 5). However, he prints out that one can know the joy of freedom only when he is deprived of it at least for some time. He regrets: “free people don’t know the value of freedom, that’s the problem”(WT 117). Being the son of the poor rickshaw-puller who was “a man of honor and courage” as he calls his father, Balram has been a servant. In the beginning, as his good side dominates he serves his master honestly and devotedly. He does all household works, washes his master’s Pomeranian dogs and does not reveal the secret of his master. Many times he suffers humiliation also. He feels that all poor servants are trapped in a Rooster Coop and there is no escape because it is not guarded only from outside by the masters, but also by the fellows inside. “the rooster coop was doing its work. Servants have to keep other servants from becoming innovators, experimenters, or entrepreneurs”(WT 194). So finally he decides the strategy of his freedom, but it was full of cruelty and wickedness.

Religious tolerance is very much needed in the world today. Many people are butchered mercilessly in the name of religion. A book that mocks the feelings of anybody’s religion may attract the reader’s attention for the time-being but can never be valuable for the society. It has become a fashion to write according to the set-parameters to please the western readers who take pleasure in the derogatory depiction of India. Adiga does not feel any hesitation in creating the hierarchy for deities-deities of the Light and deities of the Darkness. For him, Hanuman is the deity not of the Light but of the Darkness. Playing with the religious feelings of any sect is an unpardonable sin, which has been committed knowingly in the novel just to please the west. He never talks of the positive side of the Hindu religion which talks of

cosmopolitanism. It seems that he believes only in one religion-the religion of mockery.

For Adiga, the Ganga is not a holy river, it is simply a drain where, to take a dip, will be a dangerous step. That may be due to the fact that people are not religious. Their devotion is replaced by so many external factors and outward signs. Moreover the river is polluted so much that bathing in it may not be advisable. He uses the abusive words for the mother Ganga to make the Chinese Premier believe that it is not a holy river where sins can be washed away and where having a dip can offer him calmness of mind. The river Ganga has been connected with India in such a way that the two are inseparable. Nehru talks about such association in his book *The Discovery of India*.

The story of the Ganges, from her sources to the sea, from old times to new, is the story of India's civilization and culture, of the rise and fall of empires, of great and proud cities, of the adventure of man and the quest of the mind which has occupied India's thinkers, of the richness, and fulfillment of life as well as its denial and renunciation, of ups and downs, of growth and decay, of life and death (WT 38).

For Nehru, the story of India's civilization and culture is the story of Ganga. The words of Swami Tapovan regarding the importance of the Ganga in shaping the destiny of India in his book *Hymn to Ganga* can be noted in this context.

“She is ‘Mother of the Universe,’ as she looks after her children. She nurses and nourishes the Gangetic Valley and but for Her icy-cold perennial stream the Rajputana desert would have by now spread over to Delhi and even up north. Lastly, it is in Her valleys, up in

the mountains, that the Rishis sat lived, reflected and contemplated upon and soared in their meditations to heights of thinking, the altitudes of which have not yet been, even from afar, touched by any human generation ever after, anywhere. And it is again the Gangetic Valley of the North-Indian plains that the glorious Aryans selected to settle down, to live the Hindu Culture and grow, prosper and achieve a brilliant civilization of peace, Love and Progress” (7)

The river Ganga is the life-breath for Nehru and Tapovan but for Adiga, it is the end of breath of life. On the basis of this river and ocean, he makes a division of India-India of darkness and India of light. The River symbolizes the darkness while the ocean brings light. For him the south is a place of light. The cities that are near the sea are full of light-light of knowledge and light of prosperity with modern amenities. The Ganga, no doubt, for him, has made the northern part-the cow belt an area of darkness. It is the area that covers Uttar Pradesh and Bihar which, for Adiga, are the most backward states where caste-syndrome has spread like plague, where the python of feudalism swallows the poor; where corruption has become the oxygen, where superstitions have become the way of life and where the holy water of the Ganga is still a miracle for purifying sins. It is “a fertile place” which is “full of rice fields and wheat fields” and the people who live here call it “the darkness”. The Premier is made to understand that “India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness. The ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near the ocean is well-off. But the river brings darkness to India- the black river ”(WT 14). One may have many questions like this. How can the Ganga bring darkness when she makes the land fertile? Won't it be like playing with the religious feelings of the Hindus if Ganga is called a black river? Adiga also call it a river of death, Yamaraj,

the lord of Death that takes everything in its grip. “Which black river am I talking of- which river of Death, whose banks are full of rich, dark, sticky mud whose grip traps everything that is planted in it, suffocating and choking and stunting”(WT 15).

Adiga through his protagonist BalramHalwai suggests to the Chinese Premier not to take a bath in the river Ganga because of the pollution. For him, the river seems to be full of faces and dead bodies. It seems that the industrial acids have been poured into the river knowingly. Balram’s views on Ganga bring out the change in his character also. The change that has come over him – the evil overcoming the good. Mother Ganga is no longer a holy river where sins will be washed away and where having a dip will give him calm of mind: Adiga demeans the holy Ganga and shocks the people who have faith in her healing power. If he is conscious of the environmental pollution, why does he not talk of any action plan for her purification? He seems to be a nihilist blabber when he presents the derogatory picture of the Ganga. Tapovan criticizes such people calling them self deceived if they believe that their blabbing will lessen than the faith of the people in the miraculous charm of the river Ganga. While invoking her, he states:

“Let the Nihilists blabber

That thou art

“Non-Existent!”

Let the unintelligent ones

Insult and demean Thee!

They get themselves

Only self- deceived.

O Sat- Chit-Ghana!

In spite of

All these,

Thy devotees

Will never

Turn their eyes

Away from Thee! (III.6)

The protagonist Balram goes to the river for cremation when his mother dies. He smells the river from afar and declares that it is the only truth. It seems that he makes his impression with his nose, not with his eyes. "I smelled the river before I saw it: a stench of decaying flesh rising from my right. I sang louder: the only truth!"(WT 16). Stench of flesh that enters his nose from afar makes him believe that it is the river of death, not of life. This is the river that swallows everything through its mud. For him, the Ganga is not Ganga maiya but she-devil that swallows man. Balram becomes so apprehensive that he imagines his own death and the rites that would soon follow. "And then I understood: this was the real god of Benaras- this black mud of the Ganga into which everything died, and decomposed, and was reborn from, and died into again. The same would happen to me when I died and they brought me here. Nothing would get liberated here"(WT 18).

As soon as Balram imagines his death, he faints. He fears death so much that he decides not to go the Ganga thereafter and leaves "that river for the American

tourists”(WT 18). Whether it happened due to the cremation on the bank of the Ganga or not, somehow, he developed a sort of antipathy for her. Every Hindu longs for his death on the banks of the Ganga. Her water is Gangajal used for the purpose of purification. Every dying Hindu wishes for some drops of the Gangajal. Tapovan declares that those who do not believe in the existences of the Ganga as the holy river are atheists BalramHalwai is such an atheist. He is one of those people who do not cater to go in the right path leave alone the existence of god or the holy things.

Let the atheists declare:

“Thou art not.”

For the same reasons

For which

The owls hoot:

“There is no sun.”( III:25)

BalramHalwai is, indeed, an owl that hoots and denies the existences of the Ganga as a sacred river. His demeaning nature does not stop here. Such mean and low people could be found in tea – shops near Ganga. “go to a tea shop any where along the Ganga, sir,and look at the men working in the tea shop-men, I say, but better to call them human spiders that go crawling inbetween and under the tables with rag in their hands, crushed humans in crushed uniforms, sluggish, unshaven, in their thirties or forties or fifties but still ‘boys’ ”(WT 51).

Men who work near the Ganga do not seem to be men but human spiders. Men become insects for him not because they are workers or servants but because of their

association with the Ganga, the river that he hates somewhere even at his subconscious level. He is so much obsessed with the hatred for the Ganga that even when he learns driving and the things related with it, this river is also present in his mind. His own depiction of himself a pig from sewage and his dipping into Ganga of black invite attention: "I emerged from under a taxi like a pig from sewage, my face black with grease, my hands shiny with engine oil. I dipped into a Ganga of black- and came out a driver"(WT 57). When he thinks of his marriage and children, the river Ganga is not absent from his mind. He hates the Ganga to such an extent that in spite of his attempts he is unable to forgets her.

BalramHalwi feels that he is a part of all that is changing this country and thinks that he has done a lot for every poor man who will not make an end of his life while rotting in the black mud of Mother Ganga. His hypocritical nature is reflected in his attitude towards the Ganga whom he calls Mother. The truth is otherwise. "why not? Am I not a part of all that is changing this country? Haven't I succeeded in the struggle that every poor man here should be making- the struggle not to take the lashes your father took, not to end up in a mound of indistinguishable bodies that will rot in the black mud of Mother Ganga"(WT 318).

There are two sentences that have come out from Adiga's pen that is dipped in ironical ink. BalramHalwai whose nose because of its capacity for smelling the stench works better than his eyes which do not see anything except faces and swimming half-burnt dead bodies. But, sometimes, his mind's eyes are able to see what his physical eyes fail. His mind's eye sees an island of white sand, which shines brighter because of the sun light. He imagines that his mother's soul might have gone here to take rest. "In the distance, an island of white sand glistened in the sunlight, and boats full of people where heading to the island. I wondered if my mothers soul had flown there, to

the shining place in the river”(WT 17). It is the love of Halwai for his mother that he imagines her heavenly abode glistening with sun light while seeing the white sand. As the river is associated with a deliverance, somehow, his minds eye imagines what the physical eyes fail to see.

The Ganga, known as Bhagirathi because of Bhagirath who brought her on earth for the deliverance of his ancestors, has become polluted not of her own but because of the materialistic attitude of man who has exploited her to the maximum for his benefits irrespective of the acids and poisonous stuff that he pours in to her flow. India has her own identity because of the rishis and munies who got enlightenment on her bank. It is the Ganga who keep the Indian cultural heritage alive and the portrayal of Ganga as seen by Balram tells more of his own deterioration than of the river.

In his journey from the village to city, from Laxmangarh to Delhi, Balram crosses many provincial towns that have the pollution and traffic of the big city. This journey from the village to city is a revelation for him. It looks like the whole world immigrating from darkness to Delhi. Amidst the cockroaches and call-centers, the 36,000,004 gods, the slums, the shopping malls and the crippling traffic jams, Balram’s re-education brings about modern India into existence.

The novel also describes the materialistic life style the rich lead and how the homeless servants suffer during the winter. The rich lead a luxurious life and make lots of money and spend it extravagantly. Caught between his instincts to be a loyal son and servant, and his desire to better himself, Balram learns of a new morality at the heart of the new India. Balram the killer, metamorphoses into his masters replica as Ashok Sharma after his heinous crime. He is an embodiment of the contradictions

inherent in modern Indian society where a huge increase in prosperity co-exist with terrible poverty.

Materialism has blinded the souls of people and made them immune to their innate goodness.

In spite of all the pulls from behind, Balram or the white tiger is out of the coop. He was woken up while the rest of them are sleeping. He is a colonised, downtrodden person who has liberated himself through violence. After the murder of his master Mr. Ashok, Balram seems to be apologetic: "But I do think about him a lot – and, believe it or not, I do miss him. He didn't deserve his fate. I should have cut the mongoose's neck" (WT 317).

What he says will remind one about Lady Macbeth who will be wondering if all the perfumes of Arabia can sweeten her unclean hands. "True, there was a matter of murder-which is wrong thing to do, no questions about it. It darkened my soul. All the skin whitening creams sold in the markets of India won't clean my hands again" (WT 318). No doubt Balram knows the consequences of his attempt of murder, which bring a blot on his character but he is helpless. As one observes, towards the close of the novel Balram discloses more of his disgraceful deeds.

The world is moving fast and the growth of the nations is valued in terms of economy, trade, science and political power. The social, cultural, moral and spiritual values are of no value in this modern world. Adiga told the *Times of India*. "Money itself is a moral. It can liberate people as easily as it can destroy them" (*Times of India*). In the novel *Last Man In Tower* the once extended family changes into a ruthless murderous mob. Values reflect a person's sense of right and wrong or what

“ought” to be. *Last Man In Tower* brings out the old and the new voices of Indian values.

Adiga says that the two chief characters Dharmen Shah and Masterji reflect ‘who he is and who he wants to be’. Shah represents the modern India in transition and development and Masterji the old India of values. *Last Man in Tower* details Masterji’s refusal to let builder Dharmen Shah demolish Vishram Co-operative Society and build a skyscraper called Confidence Shanghai in its place. It’s a curious contest of wills. The two combatants never come face to face. The fight seems to be one-sided initially. Shah has money and his assistant, Shanmugham has a bag of tricks that includes everything from bribes to thugs brandishing hockey sticks. In contrast, Masterji has nothing but his determination that the building, replete with memories of his dead wife and daughter, will not be torn down.

Adiga obviously loves his native India and is rightfully concerned about what is happening to its culture, citizens and to the ethos of the nation. His chief concern is to address the evil rife in India and strike a dagger in the hearts of all of those who choose to value the material at the cost of the spiritual, human and the humane. Just as Dickens looked with mordant eye upon the morals and mores of the straight-laced but sometimes conflicted Victorian society he was part of, Adiga explores the victimisation of the passive resisters and paints an intimate portrait of the human heart.

The novel *Last Man in Tower* covers the entire gamut of lives that are affected in various ways by a project brought in by one Mr. Dharmen Shah. A successful and powerful builder, he makes a generous offer to the inhabitants of Vishram, an old building in Mumbai middle class neighbourhood, to leave the building so that it can be demolished to make way for a new glitzy tower, Shah’s dream project. The offer is nearly 250 percent of the current value. Most of the people accept the project and

some refuse. But as time goes by, the dissenters drop their opposition. One person alone however, refuses to change his mind.

The background to the events of the novel is the suburbs of Mumbai, Vakola, which is perceived as a hotspot of construction. Vakola is a cluster of ambiguous spots that cling like polyps to the domestic airport; on the ground, the polyps turn out to be slums, and they spread out on every side of Vishram Society. The tower in the title is dilapidated, its wall plastered cheaply and too thin to provide privacy. Water leakages from flats above cause distress and residents complain of never ending repairs to be done. Adding to their woes is the lack of continuous water supply. A city like Mumbai, has a number of people coming from outside. They make the city their own. They have their own culture and ways to live in the city. Elbowing people ruthlessly to get ahead in the race of success is often tastelessly justified as the competitive spirit of the city.

It is not only the cheap housing society that is being demolished but the values of India that are disintegrating. The death of Masterji symbolizes the death of values. The principles of the man, who thought the world and its people to be good, faces his end in the brutal hand of the India that is more materialistic and thinks in terms of personal development. Masterji with his faith in the old tradition and values is considered a hindrance stalling progress towards the rapidly developing modern world steeped in western wealth and ease. Shah is a self-made man who has hard earned his wealth, knows the way to do his business. He would give bribe, and felt every man as a price and there is no one who wants nothing. As Shah feels, a man lives in a village as a social animal pleasing his father, grandfather, brothers, cousins, his caste, his community. But a man when he comes to the city is free.

A city like Mumbai has a number of people coming from outside. They make the city their own. They have their own culture and ways to live in the city. Their mechanical and materialistic attitude makes them more of machines. They have no remorse for the wrongs committed by them to others. Losing their spirituality Masterji is undeterred by the difficulties faced by long-time building friends like Mr. Pinto and Mrs. Puri. Dharmen Shah seems to have a heroic battle to bring Confidence Shanghai to reality. Though, Shah describes Masterji at one point of time as a “weak man who has found a place where he feels strong”, Masterji doesn’t give up. It’s interesting to know that another person who ultimately doesn’t take Shah’s money and shows some sense of morality is Ajwani, a real estate broker who was one of Shah’s first allies against Masterji.

The novel presents various characters of the future, for instance, the Masterji’s son Gaurav who is without any affection and even rejects his father to avenge the hurt that was inflicted in his childhood by his father. Shah’s son continues to rebel and get caught by the police. He wants to be strong for the future by doing all these.

All the people in the society—the Pintos, Ajwani, Ibbi, the secretary, the Puris including Shah’s holly Shanmugam represent the transitional India that wants both the goodness of the old values and also the success of the future. Masterji’s own family declares him to be insane and cuts off relationship when he needs it most. The clergy too refuses to help the old man perform the last rites to his deceased wife. The police and the lawyers who promise to help him also forsake him leaving him to fight his struggle alone. The very neighbors who are appreciative of him in the beginning declare him to be selfish, insane and start hating him enough to kill him. The novel showcases the disintegration of the old moral, religious, social, ethical, and cultural

values in the place of which a new set of values are formed for the sustenance in the world. Masterji too may be called insensitive to the sentiments of his neighbors.

When Shah first makes his offer, the residents are not convinced by the Shanghai dream include a communist single mother. Everyone except Mrs. Rego, and an elderly couple, the Pintos is thrilled at the idea of getting out of the badly-maintained Vishram Society. Ashwin Kothari, the secretary of the society, dreams of living in Sewri and seeing flamingos. Mrs. Puri, who has a son with Down Syndrome, imagines living in a spacious house with nice woodwork. But Mrs. Rego doesn't trust the promises of builders and the blind Mrs. Pinto is terrified by the thought of having to learn her way around a new building. Masterji shows solidarity with the Pintos but when they and Mrs. Rego decide they'd rather take Shah's offer, he is obdurate. Little by little, Masterji becomes the villain of the piece in the eyes of Vishram Society. Everyone wants the money that Shah has. They want to get out of the gloom of the tottering Vishram Society. Only Masterji stands in their way. The more entrenched Masterji gets in his stand, the more desperate the other residents become. All their attempts to make Masterji change his mind are unsuccessful. This culminates in a rather gruesome climax.

Masterji who perhaps ironically, is a teacher of physics, amuses himself with Rubik's cube and uses his giant volume of the *Illustrated history of science* as a weapon when attacked. He is not a sentimentalist but, unlike his neighbours, refuses to consider the past meaningless. Adiga gives us a story that is exemplary of the adage that "The Love of Money is the root of all evil." For in this book it is the deep love of money that drives all the residents to their actions, which include all manner of inducements and punishments to force Masterji to change his mind. *Last Man in Tower*, centering on Vishram Society, a bastion of middle class stolidity in Mumbai

has familiar reflections on development, globalization, class, respectability, and inequality within its well woven narrative. "Here in this beach is this posh suburb of northern Mumbai, half the sand was reserved for the rich, who defeated in their tower, the other half for slum dwellers, who did so near the waves" (LMT 83).

As part of his Dickensian experiment Adiga writes some wonderful vignettes:

Three goats had come out from an alley, and one of them rubbed against his left leg. Day-labourers slept on the pavement, oblivious to the moving feet around them. The wooden carts that they had been pulling all day long lay beside them; from beneath one, a dog's claws jutted out, as if the cart were relaxing its animal digits in the cool of the evening. An old man sat beside stacks of newspapers held down by rocks: each rock looking like a crystallization of some hard truth in the newsprint. Masterji stopped to watch the newspapers. (WT 300)

Great writers understand that by portraying a city's crowd they can reveal to the reader a surprising array of individuality. Adiga has a keen eye for detail and his prose easily captures the essence and intimacy of a single moment.

The magnetic stickers of Kali before which each day Balram used to pray before starting his daily duty for his fortune and goodness, is pulled out after murdering his master Ashok. "I [Balram] pulled out all the stickers of the goddess and threw them on Mr. Ashok's body – just in the case they would help his soul go to heaven" (WT 286). Even in this he thinks about his master only in terms of money. Later he wonders whether the goddess will hear his prayers. "I thought there was no need to offer a prayer to the gods for him, because his family would be offering very expensive prayers all along the Ganga for his soul. What can a poor man's prayers mean to the 36,000,004 gods in comparison with those of the rich?" (WT 317)

Aravind Adiga's powerful novel *Last Man in Tower* is a stunning story of greed and power. It is not only about communities and how they form, but also about the way they oppose each other. "People were forced to adjust; temporary compromises congealed" (LMT 17). Masterji first seems the irrefutable hero of the piece: Shah is a merciless villain, destroying homes and livelihoods in pursuit of empty profit, which he tends to spend on fast women and luxurious cars; Masterji, on the other hand, is humble and spends his days teaching children, reading books, and dispensing homely wisdom. He is the quiet man who stands up against the rampant corporate greed. In *Last Man in Tower* Adiga beautifully exposes people's thirst for material wealth and forgetting spiritual values. Dharmen Shah is portrayed as a materialist, who does not have any spiritual values in life. This is a story about the corrupting power of money in a rapidly changing world. No one is the hero, but no one is the ultimate villain either, because life is rarely that simple.

Adiga by adding these environmental issues, draws the readers' attention towards the environmental degradation. The natural calamities, which are the signs of ill-health of environment, are the wake-up calls for human beings to take special efforts for improving the surroundings as well as environment. They also give a warning to the human beings to analyse themselves introspectively. When man realizes the need to establish genuine relationship with others and live in harmony with nature, he will be able to scale greater heights. It is high time positive endeavors are taken in this direction so that the healthy environment would pave way for the betterment of humanity.

# CHAPTER 5



## **Chapter-5**

### **Conclusion**

Adiga through his novel portrays the modern India which is brutal, totally corrupt and unjust, where people behave like animals and everything is for sale; far distant from the shining India often talked about. The modern India is beset by a lot of problems like illegal activities, corruption, injustice, illiteracy, discrimination based on caste, religion and race and this is poignantly pointed out as the main theme of Aravind Adiga's novels. Adiga unfolds the difference between what India really is and what it appears to be. He states in an interview to the Hindu: "I tried to tell a very real story about India on the brink of unrest. I tried to challenge the assumptions that many in middle class India hold about poor: that they are stupid, easily manipulated, excessively religious bound by caste and family." He feels compelled to highlight brutal injustices of society. India is going through a lot of changes.

On the contrary, their integrity shall be determined by the extent to which they acknowledge the bad sides of their past rather than gloat on their good sides alone. What is suggested is the writer's attempt towards an objective appraisal of his nation while holding back the temptation to extol the good points of his past and pretending that the bad never existed.

For Adiga, the village is as flat as a piece of ground as hardly any growth can be observed there. At the same time Dhanbad serves as an horizontal location as it gives space to the protagonist to spread out of his vision, calibre and expertise. Balram master Ashok introduced him for the first time to a sweet smell: "One day, as I was driving my ex- employers Mr. Ashok and Pinky Madam in their Honda City car, Mr. Ashok put a

hand on my shoulder, and Said, "Pull over to the side". Following this command, he leaned forward so close that I could smell his aftershave – it was a delicious, fruitlike smell that day." (WT 9)

This is the place where he first grows his dreams and looks forward for a vertical growth. Delhi, however, is the place which rises like towering buildings. Aspiring careers, flourishing money and soaring dreams transform the city into a vertical space for the protagonist. In fact he gets training from another driver to rise above others:

Listen', the old driver said when I was handing him over the hundred rupees he had been promised as a bonus. "It's not enough to drive. You've got to become a driver. You've got to get the right attitude, understand? Any one tries to overtake you on the road, do this' – he clenched his fist and shook it- 'and call him a sister – fucker a few times. The road is a jungle, get it? A good driver must roar to get ahead on it (WT 57).

For him the flat and horizontal spaces are like darkness and Delhi stands for Light: "Those who live in this place call it the Darkness. Please understand Your Excellency that India is two Countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness. The ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near the ocean is well off. But the river brings darkness to India – the black river." (WH 14)

The repertoire of language forms used in the post colonial novels play an important role as the novelists have used it as a vehicle to express contest in ideological differences between classes, castes, generations, religions and races in the contemporary societal framework. The present day world is replete with darkness, disharmony, suffering, injustice and violence. Indians hate politicians and love politics: that's the great

paradox of the Indian democracy. The novel uncovers the shady deals of the corrupt politicians. The unusual journey of Balram Halwai is the major theme of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. It is a brave yet dark story of his escape from the rooster coop. In this story one can observe protest, anger, disgust and sense of compassion so typical of those who have suffered a marginalised muted existence and are longing to gain their voice and place under the sun.

*The White Tiger* is an animal fable in a tradition that is ancient to both India and Europe. Such tales often combine with the kind of satire in which servants plot against their masters, as in Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (1606), or, on a different scale, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945). Adiga updates this lineage through the self-realising voice of an invented 'native informant' narrator. Tropes of Indian life familiar from reportage and tabloid journalism are reworked with cartoon-like energy. Animal caricatures co-exist with real animals in a world where the water buffalo is 'the most important member' of the village family and a white tiger in a zoo cage conveys the wisdom of the ancient Urdu poet: '*You were looking for the key for years/But the door was always open*' (WT 253). Balram, ridiculed with the nickname White Tiger during his short school career, is thus prompted to slay his master and escape to a new life, leaving his unloving family to pay the price for his criminality and insubordination. He prays to the multiplicity of gods to shine light on his dark story, all 36,000,004 Muslim, Christian and Hindu deities, having a bet every way. "The Indian entrepreneur has to be straight and crooked, mocking and believing, sly and sincere, at the same time', he advises, exultantly making himself an 'orphan', free of the ties that bind." (WT 9)

Adiga's novel remixes Indian English fiction for a new cuthroat era of economic dynamism. He is a generation away from Anita Desai's fastidious cultural melancholy or Salman Rushdie's rich magic realist rendering of history. The Darkness is Balram's term for the impoverished rural Bihar he comes from, the India that will suck a person down like the black mud of Mother Ganga: "Everywhere this river flows, that area is the Darkness" (WT 15). He echoes here the title of the book in which V.S. Naipaul first ventured into his ancestral homeland: *An Area of Darkness* (1964

In his third book, *Last Man In Tower* Adiga digs deeper into the realities of urban life. A Real Estate Moghul named Shah offers the residents an unbelievable amount of money so that he can get rid of the old buildings and construct a glitzy new structure named Shanghai. *Last Man in the Tower* makes a great and entertaining read. Adiga paints a picture of the real estate jungle where ambition, money are predators seeking to dig their fangs into the soft flesh of sentiments and grow stronger and stronger in time. The strong battle that rages between heart rending sentiments and apathy of ambition is the unique selling point of the literary piece.

The plot construction is ingeniously uncomplicated as if Adiga deliberately wanted it to come as foil to the complexity of the intellection that runs through the veins of the whole story. In the novel, the real estate giant, Dharmen Shah is a man who "earned a reputation as a man who made other men rich," as Adiga writes. Shah dreams of creating his tower of fortune, Shanghai over this half a century old housing complex. He sends his left-hand man, Shanmugham to go downtown offering an enticing sum of money to grab the fancy of people living in Vishram Housing Society. Tower B of the housing complex is inhabited by young executives who fall for this mouth-watering deal

almost instantly, people in Tower A prove to be slightly more rigid. Eventually they too meet their nemesis, all excepting the last man in the tower, Yogesh Murthy. Although the people of the housing society do have unity yet their individual history, sentiments and sensibilities prove to be the weak link in the team, this is where Shah and his men aspire to en cash in. Despite all endeavours from Shah and company, Masterji stands up against all odds.

There's no doubt that *Last Man in Tower* belongs in the "Bombay Books" shelf, spine to spine with the best of that sub-genre. Adiga's vivid descriptions of the city are wonderfully observed and will resonate with readers, whether or not they're familiar with the disconsolate neighbourhood of Vakola which is where Vishram Society is located. The book is filled with wit, insight and clever turns of phrases. For the better part of the novel, the characters feel comfortably real. They live modest, unexceptional lives. The veil of normalcy slips steadily as the novel progresses and reveals a horrifying malevolence. The conversion from good to evil is brilliantly charted, highlighting both the subtlety as well as the eagerness with which people like Kothari and Mrs. Puri go over to the dark side. We are still haunted by the image of the flamingo-loving Kothari crushing a baby bird's head underfoot.

*Last Man in Tower* stands apart from most other books about Mumbai, and not just because few are as well-written as this one. Unusually for a "Bombay Book", there's no nostalgia for the old world in Adiga's novel. His admiration is for the new dream merchants of Mumbai, those who hustle and force change upon this city and have little patience for the past. *Last Man in Tower* attacks a number of romantic notions, like the

idea that the old buildings and neighbourhoods have a sense of community, that new developments are clinical and characterless.

Masterji's nostalgia is a quagmire and although Shah is no beacon of righteousness, the good people of Vishram Society take on far more frightening proportions than the wrongdoers. There is a streak of ferocious cruelty in them that is only matched by Mumbai's determination to change. At the end of the novel, Adiga writes, "Nothing can stop a living thing that wants to be free". It is this unbending will and the ambitions it fosters that he commemorates in *Last Man in Tower*.

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga focused on skewering modern India's obsession with acquisition and commercial success; in *Last Man in Tower* he is more aware of the opportunity for change that dynamism might offer. The moral conundrum is that communities are meant to stand for more than utilitarian convenience: "if one person says no," an inhabitant of Tower A opines, "you can't tear down the Society. That's the whole idea of a Co-operative Housing Society. One for all, all for one" (LMT 95).

The novels taken for the study, thus deal with characters who remain with their integrity or who lose their values because of their attitude to life as they grab the opportunities that come their way and try to climb the ladder of success. The characters are also analysed as strong and weak in terms of money, physical fitness and morality. The analysis drives home the point that when man loses his faith in God, and when he loses his spirituality, all his material wealth and success cannot help him. He cannot be at peace either with himself or his fellow beings.

Adiga has a keen eye for detail and his prose easily captures the essence and intimacy of a single moment. However, the novels under study provide an interesting portrayal of subaltern who are ostracized for no fault of theirs and who respond to their challenges in different ways. These responses turn out to be life altering lessons for the readers and researchers who realise the multifarious dimensions and layers of challenges thrown at the common man on a daily basis. The novels by chronicling beautifully the lives of the subalterns offering channels to deal with their marginalization and exploitation, urging the common man to cultivate the most important thing in life namely belief in oneself.

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