

An analysis of the socioeconomic culture and globalization shown in Aravind Adiga's novel The Last Man in the Tower

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Abstract

This paper examines Aravind Adiga's novel "Last Man in Tower" (2011) through the lens of socioeconomic culture and globalization in contemporary Mumbai. The study analyzes how Adiga portrays the transformation of urban India through the conflict between Masterji, a retired schoolteacher, and real estate developer Dharmen Shah over the Vishram Society apartment complex. The research explores the novel's depiction of moral corruption, community dissolution, and the human cost of rapid urbanization in globalizing India. Through close textual analysis, the paper demonstrates how Adiga uses the metaphor of real estate development to critique the changing values of middle-class Indian society. The study reveals how the novel illuminates the tension between tradition and progress, examining the ways in which economic pressures transform human relationships and moral frameworks. The research concludes that Adiga's work serves as a powerful commentary on the social and psychological impacts of globalization on urban Indian communities.

Keywords: Aravind Adiga, Last Man in Tower, globalization, urbanization, Mumbai, real estate development, middle-class India, community, socioeconomic change.

Introduction

The Indian-Australian writer Aravind Adiga was born in Chennai, India, on October 23, 1974. His first book, "The White Tiger," received the 2008 Man Booker Prize for Fiction and brought him widespread praise. The intricacies of contemporary India are often examined in Adiga's work, which touches on issues including social injustice, economic inequality, and cultural change. He is known for his sharp and provocative storytelling, and his writings provide

a critical analysis of modern Indian culture. His other well-known pieces, in addition to "The White Tiger," are "Between the Assassinations" and "Last Man in Tower." In light of India's rapid change, Adiga's work is distinguished by its incisive social critique and astute understanding of the human condition.

Last Man in Tower (2011), by Aravind Adiga, is set in Mumbai and centers around the Vishram Society, a once-close-knit apartment complex whose residents are offered large buyout deals to vacate for a luxury building project. The main character, Masterji, resists the offer, becoming the symbolic "last man in the tower" opposing modernization. The novel explores ambition, greed, morality, and the effects of socioeconomic change on relationships. Through diverse characters, Adiga examines the tension between tradition and progress, offering a powerful commentary on power dynamics, morality, and human struggles in a rapidly changing urban landscape.¹

The Last Man in the Tower by Aravind Adiga depicts socio-economic culture and globalization

Aravind Adiga is a renowned chronicler of Indian life, closely resembling the modern age in method and subject. His central theme is to question what we are leaving behind in a world of rapid progress. Adiga writes for the everydayman, focusing on anti-elitist basics of story and character. He loves the good in people and understands the bad. Adiga's uniqueness lies in his imagination in creating plot tropes.

Adiga shares his experiences about Mumbai in the novel. In an interview, he tells:

“From the day you.... arrive in Mumbai, you realize that real estate obsession here than anywhere else on the earth. Where you live, and how many square feet of living space you have, define you in a way than in any other city. People think of Mumbai as city of cinema, but the real dream merchants here are the developers, who convince people to pay crores of rupees for a tiny flat in a skyscraper.”

¹ Vipul C Dabhi, 'Aravind Adiga's Last Man in Tower: The Locus of Ambivalence in Modern India', *Vidhyayana*, 9.1 (2023), pp. 92–93.

Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* delves into the conflict between real estate developer Dharmen Shah and a retired teacher, Masterji, over a small flat in Mumbai's Vishram Society. The novel explores the contrasting motivations of these two men—Shah driven by ambition and money, and Masterji by memories and principles. As Shah offers residents a generous sum to vacate their homes for a development project, most accept, but Masterji stands firm, unwilling to let go of the place where his late wife and daughter once lived. This leads to growing tension as Shah and his associates use both persuasion and manipulation to sway the last holdouts. The novel portrays a city where property values outweigh human relationships, shedding light on how greed can transform even the most seemingly innocent individuals.

At its heart, the story examines deeper themes of urbanization, class struggles, and moral compromise. Masterji, once admired by his neighbors, becomes isolated as the deadline for the offer looms, turning the community against him. In a society where people are eager to improve their lives, Masterji's resistance makes him an obstacle to their dreams. The novel gradually builds suspense, questioning the limits of morality and the cost of holding onto one's values in a rapidly changing world. With echoes of *Lord of the Flies*, *Last Man in Tower* highlights the darkness in human nature when faced with the allure of wealth, offering a sharp critique of contemporary urban life and the price of progress.

"*Last Man in Tower*" takes place in Mumbai and is hence a tale set in the country. The protagonist, Dhiren Shaha, is a rich developer in Mumbai who tries to buy up the Vishram Cooperative Housing Society's land so he may refurbish it. The term "vishram" contradicts its literal meaning of "rest," causing a societal unease. Aiming for a worldwide quality of living, the article reveals that contemporary, progressive India aspires to alter the customs and norms of Mumbai residents. Even a middle-class family could never have afforded the developer's exorbitant offer. An ambitious construction company shatters the middle class's hopes of owning a pucca home in Mumbai, a situation that the book vividly depicts. The corruption, filth, starvation, crime, unclean living conditions, and slums that come from developers' attempts to transform Mumbai into a "Confident Shanghai" are also brought to light in the book. The story takes place in Mumbai and depicts the daily lives of individuals from various religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.

“The morning after the storm, Masterji paced about his living room. The compound was full of storm water and slush. He had just washed his brown trousers in the semi-autonomic washing machine, and they would be flecked with red and black if he took even a few steps outside.” He knocked on Mrs. Puri’s door, hoping for a cup of tea and some conversation.”

“You’ve become a stranger to us, Masterji, “ Mrs. Puri said, when she opened the door. But we have to go to Siddhi Vinayak temple soon. Ramu and I. Let us talk tomorrow.”

It was true that his neighbors had not seen much of Masterji lately”²

The novel "Development in terms of Globalised India" highlights the growing divide between the have and have-lesser in India. It depicts corruption, poor living conditions, and unhygienic conditions in slums. The novel highlights the persistent problems of visionless politicians and their unresolved issues, which have persisted since 1960 and after globalization. Even though it was constructed in 1950 with the intention of serving as "Good Housing for Good Indians," the tower nevertheless represents both the aspirational ideal of a "Developed India" and the misery of India's urban slums. The traditionalist and unyielding middle class, which is opposed to change, is portrayed by Yogesh A. Murthy, also known as masterji, and his circle of friends and neighbors on the other side of the border. Thanks to Adiga's deft direction, readers are able to access a variety of perspectives and experiences, and the tower stands for more than just land value. However, with the exception of Masterji, who stays alone in the tower, their togetherness is broken as a result of the concept of pride fading under the strain of intimidation and hard cash.

In words of Christopher Cyril,

“But it is also the nobility and willfulness of one who has nothing more to lose”.³

² Dr Shamenaz, ‘Book Review of Last Man In Tower by Arvind Adiga’, *Academia.Edu*, 2024, pp. 1–5 <https://www.academia.edu/2050871/Book_Review_of_Last_Man_In_Tower_by_Arvind_Adiga>.

³ Aravind Adiga, *Last Man In Tower* (Harper Collins, 2011), pp. 150.

“Last Man in Tower's subject matter is clearly ambitious. Contemporary Indian literature commonly depict Dickensian city life with stark contrasts between luxury and poverty. Adiga has a Dickensian cast. He gathers almost 20 people, mostly Vishram's inhabitants and servants, around his two major protagonists. The volatile social worker Georgina Rego, the insecure internet café owner Ibrahim Kudwa, Vishram's slum cleaner Mary, and the co-op's mystery administrative secretary Ashvin Kuthani are notable individuals”.⁴

The story told by Adiga centers on Masterji's haunting recollections of his late wife and daughter, who are ensnared in a Mumbaikar by the external forces exerting their influence. Developer Darmen Shah offers a massive sum of money to the residents, but their dreamland is short-lived. Shah, a real estate magnate, promises £210,000 per unit as compensation for demolishing old skyscrapers and constructing a glitzy new society he calls the Shanghai. Shah embodies the concepts of social mobility and global desire; he is bronchitis-stricken and showered in gold bangles. The Shanghai is to serve as his legacy as his health deteriorates, but Masterji is standing in his way. Except for the retired educator, who refuses to let go of the memories of his late wife and daughter, every other family opts to sell their apartment. Even though his daughter died away in a mutant train disaster, he carried her with him in his heart via her beloved memories, artwork, and bicycle. Masterji cultivates the affectionate recollection of his loving wife in this building. Masterji knows Gaurav's impulses and intentions, knowing that money matters more to Gaurav than sentiments and emotions.

“It must be Gaurav again. The moment he smells money on me, my son calls”.⁵

His love for his building is karmic, and he knows no one will understand it. He realizes his weird loneliness and frantic dependency on the past in a divine way that the world cannot comprehend. He has a special relationship with the past, a keen understanding of the present, and a delicate tolerance for what lies ahead. Neither his emotions nor his reverence can be obstructed by anybody.

⁴ Christopher Cyril, ‘Book Review of Last Man In Tower by Arvind Adiga’, *The Age: Book Review*, 2011.

⁵ Manisha Rai, ‘Human Relationships and Capitalism: Study of Changes in Aravind Adiga’s “The Last Man in Tower”’, *International Journal Of English and Studies*, 5.2 (2023), p. 47.

“Adiga offers a convincing if grim glimpse of human nature as these upstanding residents then turn on one another like stoats in a sack, maddened with greed and the prospect of losing their promised riches. His writing is rich and lush as when he describes tyre ruts “hardened and ridged like fossilized vertebrae”, or observes that “age had accumulated in fatty rings around Mrs. Puri” if, at times, lacking in subtlety”.⁶

The 18-year-old son of Mrs. Puri has Thistledown's syndrome. Adiga nearly often mentions the youngster with his “Friendly Duck” toy or beneath his “blue aeroplane duvet,” emphasizing his image as an innocent, dumb philosopher who grumbles when Masterji is turned on. A lighter touch may have been stronger.

Even yet, Adiga excels at bringing her characters to life, from “communist auntie” the social worker to Mary the slum cleaner.

“Adiga provides a detailed account of the ramshackle face of the Tower A as: The face of this tower, once pink, is now a rainwater-stained, fungus-licked grey, although veins of primordial pink show wherever the roofing has protected the walls from the monsoon rains. Every flat has iron grilles on the windows: geraniums, jasmines, and the spikes of cacti push through the rusty metal squares. Luxuriant ferns, green and reddish green, blur the corners of some windows, making them look like entrances to small caves”.⁷

Arthritic democracy is practiced at the Society's outdoor parliament, which dates back to 1950. The old trees, dozy guards, exploited cleaners, and the society's antiquity are all liked by them.

⁶ Arvind Adiga, ‘Last Man In Tower’, *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 98.

⁷ Dr. P. Karkuzhali, ‘Waning Humanity: A Study Of The Maddening Greed For Money And Growing Cold-Heartedness In Aravind Adiga’s Last Man In Tower’, *Research Scholar An International Refereed E-Journal of Literary Explorations*, 4.1 (2016), p. 149.

Mumbai is the key character in ‘The Last Man in Tower’ because its temples, cathedrals, mosques, shrines, public buildings, marketplaces, stores, stalls, and vendors are described in detail.

People from all walks of life in Mumbai's society—from slum dwellers and criminals to immigrants and lawyers—are given a voice in Adiga's work. The piece deftly depicts the nuclear family's fractured patriarchy, women's growing influence over husbands, and Mumbai's multicultural culture within the expanding Indian heritage in the wake of globalization. His story about the station is humorous and magnificent, demonstrating his pleasure in imaginative speech:

“Stone mastiffs flew out from the central dome; rams, wolves, peacocks, other nameless hysterical beasts, all thrusting out of the station, scream silently above the traffic and clutter. Multiplying the madness, a cordon of palm-trees fanned the building- frolicking. Sensual, pagan trees, taunting, almost tickling, the gargoyles”.⁸

Adiga makes excessive use of a kind of second division imagery:

“This place with sea view had palace-of-sin plushness’ doesn’t make much sense and ‘the ocean- storm swollen, its foam hissing thick like acid reflux, dissolving gravity and rock and charging up the ramps’ seems to contain four not very precise metaphors. Also, sometimes the jokiness of his imagery is at odds with the underlying seriousness of his project”.⁹

Following Indian English Writing's triumph over American and British English, there has been an astonishingly dynamic trend in the usage of metaphors.

The rise of materialism and consumerism due to globalization, flimsy political systems, capitalist economies, exclusive growth, elect bank politics, and the influence of the rich economic class has led to a rise in wealth and a sense of community sharing. Masterji, a man

⁸ Samra Saeed and Dr. Abrar Ahmed, ‘Anatomy of the Language in Aravind Adiga’s “Last Man in Tower”’, *Academia.Edu*, 40.3 (2020), p. 5285.

⁹ V.S. Sankara Rao Chinnam and Dr. S. K. Navin, ‘Cultural Space And Identity In The Novels Of Aravind Adiga’, *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research Review*, 1.26 (2017), p. 97.

who wants nothing at all, is a prime example of this phenomenon. Gangsters, attorneys, a Buddhist monk, and several schoolboys all play a role in his death.

The novel's comical and lyrical turns make readers feel like they are reflecting Mumbai's flashy wealth, hardened by teeming slums and poverty. A very coveted Mumbai housing co-op for middle-class families, the Vishram Society is central to the story. The Vishram will be demolished by property developer Dharmen Shah, who plans to build high-end condominiums on its site. Set in the late 1950s, on the occasion of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's birthday, the story centers on the revered and venerable Vishram Society.

The novel explores the conflict between community and development in Mumbai, with property development being an austere business and human life being cheap. The story centers on the Vishram Society, an iconic example of independence-minded idealism housed in a historic Mumbai apartment complex. The inhabitants exude an air of middle-class respectability in the midst of a rundown Mumbai area, making them seem like a big, happy family.

The property developer hopes to replace the decaying buildings with luxury flats in a highly desired area:

“Vishram Society is anchored like a dreadnought of middle-class respectability, ready to fire on anyone who might impugn the pucca quality of its inhabitants”.¹⁰

Never an investigation into the "pucca" vibe or suspicion of the "cooperative" vibe —

“Vishram is a building like the people living in it, middle class to its core. Improvement or failure, it is incapable of either extremity. The men have modest paunches, wear checked polyester shirts over white banyans, and keep their hair oiled and short. The older women wear saris, salwar kameez, or skirts, and the younger ones wear jeans. All of them pay taxes, support charities, and vote in local and general elections.

¹⁰ Shakuntala Vibhute, ‘Images of Women in Arvind Adiga’s Last Man in Tower’, *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, 9.4 (2018), p. 3.

Just one glance at Vishram in the evening, as its residents sit in white plastic chairs in the compound, chit-chatting, fanning themselves with the Times of India, and you know that this Society is - what else? pucca”.¹¹

Shanmugham, Dharmen Shah's "left hand man," interrupts with a suggestion to the Secretary, Mr. Kothari, ending this tranquility forever. The unfaithful Shah and pliable Shanmugam give the people a huge quantity of money and also a little 'sweetener' if they refuse to go. Whether a mystery 'accident' would occur if the opposition was too great was unknown. The wealthy and powerful developer Dharmen Shah wants to overthrow Vishram Society to construct a luxurious apartment tower and acquire the inhabitants with high offers. When Shah offers the Society members life-changing money, they turn him down since none of them are wealthy. A builder in Mumbai is in a condition of frantic need to acquire dilapidated structures so that he may construct ultra-modern, opulent flats for the rich, who will bolster their bank accounts at the expense of the middle class, who is down and out and has nowhere to go. Adiga paints a vivid picture of this contemporary real estate idea in Mumbai. The escalating cost of current Mumbai housing developments is a big issue, and Adiga expresses and understands it.

“One BHK (Bedroom Hall Kitchen) Two BHK (Two Bedroom Hall Kitchen) Three BHK (Three Bedroom Hall Kitchen) Deposit: Multiple of rent - up to six months 'Token' Money - must be paid NOC (No Objection Certificate, from Secretary of Society) - must be given Police Clearance Certificate (from local station) - broker will obtain. Passport-size photo (x2) - needed. Proof of Employment - a must. Carpet area; Built-up area; Super built-up area – know the difference Leave-and-Licence Agreement: who pays for stamp paper? Decide first Types of renters: Family, Single Bachelor, Company Bachelor, NRI, Foreign Passport - who are you?”.¹²

Mumbai real estate is like this: living is full of troubles and housing is suffering. Forgetting memories, avoiding connections, and hindering dreams from those many years of

¹¹ Shubha Mukherjee, 'The Final Verdict in Arvind Adiga's Last Man in Tower', *Online International Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 3 (2013), p. 287.

¹² Arvind Adiga, 'Last Man in Tower', *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 9.

blissful and tranquil life, inhabitants love other possibilities and recognize different attitudes. Egotism, resentment, and consumerism have overtaken Mumbai residents' emotions and thoughts. In Vishram Society, Shah's proposition destroys the residents' carefree and joyful existence, and everyone save the four families accepts it without objection. The offer cannot be accepted unless tenants agree since the tower is a co-operative. Four families' objection is a defect, so other neighbors steadily urge them to accept. The community is split between those who embrace Mr. Shah's proposition and the four families who believe the builders are fraudsters who don't pay the promised money.

A decades-long rehabilitation process has been accelerated following their example, thanks to the arrival of a financial center dubbed BKC. This hub has attracted global heavyweights like American Express and HSBC. "The wealth stashed away in their vaults," Adiga muses,

“like butter on a hotplate, was melting and trickling into the slums, enriching some and scorching others”.¹³

In its place, the butter disperses the Vishram in the form of Dharmen Shah, an attractive and crafty real estate entrepreneur who offers the six-story building's inhabitants \$330,000 each family to vacate the premises so that a lavish skyscraper named Shanghai may be built. The offer has almost euphorized the whole Vishram staff:

“Now all of us in this building, all of us good people, have been blessed by the Hand of God,” one happy mother declares”.¹⁴

However, 61-year-old Yogesh Murthy "Masterji" is opposed to the plan, and everyone's money is on hold since everyone in Shanghai has to give up the Vishram in order for the city to develop.

The type of inadequate, powerless wrath that such resistance may elicit is known to anybody who has ever had a significant request flat-out denied.

¹³ Aravind Adiga, 'Last Man in Tower', *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 72.

¹⁴ Aravind Adiga, 'Last Man in Tower', *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, pp. 37–38.

“There is so much anguish in the building over your strange actions,” one tenant tells Masterji”.¹⁵

On the other hand, the old science teacher is immune to such sentimental pleas because he is so used to abstract ideas, historical conceptions, and political idealism. Beyond the financial aspects, Adiga's "Last Man in Tower" delves into philosophical themes. Like Jean-Paul Sartre's "No Exit," it provides a glimpse into the lives of those trapped in a sealed chamber as they brutally try to persuade Masterji to join Mr. Shah in his lucrative downfall.

Gradually, Adiga reveals the characters' long-buried divides of fear, pride, greed, arrogance, and trust in themselves as decent people. They create a terrifying mob after turning on one another under duress, voicing long-suppressed grudges. Observing three of his neighbors' ladies, who were formerly his confidantes and flatterers but are now his downfall, Masterji ponders:

“Am I looking at good people or bad?”¹⁶

The novel "Masterji" by Adiga explores the complex relationship between Masterji, a fruitless, astute, and stubborn character, and Shah, a bully and ambitious man. The novel questions whether Masterji's refusal to provide more cash or change is rooted in honorable principle or dictatorial ego. The novel also explores the relationship between Masterji and his neighbors, who treat him with increasing scorn and viciousness. Adiga skillfully aligns Masterji's position with that of old India, with some of the most vehement actions taking place against patriotic songs and Mahatma Gandhi's birthday.

After sixty years of Nehru's political domination, the book implies that the former Independence Guard may have become a paternalistic dictator. Despite Adiga's depiction of Shah as a vicious, unruly parasite, the two men have surprising backstories that make them worthy of love and affection. Shah's desire represents the explosive force necessary to transform people's conditions, whereas Masterji's strictness is a kind of narcissism. The novel effectively

¹⁵ Aravind Adiga, 'Last Man in Tower', *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 75.

¹⁶ Aravind Adiga, 'Last Man in Tower', *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, pp. 103–4.

questions the motives behind Masterji's refusal and the impact of his actions on the rest of the civic body.

“Like a lizard I went up walls that were not mine to go up,”¹⁷

He reflects on his early efforts removing slums that were avoided by other developers.

The residents of the "unimpeachably pucca" apartment complex in Tower A of the Vishram Society take great delight in their exemplary behavior and "pucca" way of life. Tower A, once pink, may now be a “rainwater-stained, fungus-licked grey”; it may not have running water; it may sit in Vakola's slums in Mumbai's domestic airport flight path; and its indecisive secretary may be letting it fall disrepair. Vishram Society, a model of neighborliness and middle-class virtue, welcomes Hindus in the 1960s and “the better kind of Muslim” in the 1980s, demonstrating the possibility of cooperative living.

“Shah offers life-changing sums of money to shift the residents. Most are ready to bite his hand off, but four people demur. The offer can't be accepted unless the residents are unanimous: pressure slowly builds on the resisters to accept, until finally only one man, the retired teacher Masterji, holds out.... The novel evokes a rich, complex, buzzing society in the throes of change, with a huge cast of colourful characters, from the wealthy to the down-and-dirty. The story has something in common with Durrenmatt's play *The Visit*, with its sense of the gradual isolation of one character within a community”.¹⁸

That is the premise, at least; nonetheless, it is more swiftly dismantled by Aravind Adiga's agonizing tragicomedy than by Dharmen Shah, his merciless real estate developer, who unleashes his luxury redevelopments.

Describing a garbage tip, he writes:

¹⁷ Aravind Adiga, ‘Last Man in Tower’, *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 252.

¹⁸ Aravind Adiga, ‘Last Man in Tower’, *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 205.

“The rains had turned the pit into a marsh: cellophane, eggshell, politician’s face, banana leaf, sliced-off chicken’s feet and green crowns cut from pineapples. Ribbons of unspooled cassette-tape draped over everything like molten caramel”.¹⁹

Instead of hammering the reader with negative adjectives, he adopts a far more effective tactic, keeping to simple nouns and ending with a sentence that would be appetizing in isolation, but turns disgusting in the context.

"Last Man in Tower" by Aravind Adiga is a well-crafted homage to and critique of Mumbai, India's greatest city. The book, which spans over 400 pages, is a chunky work with a thin plot and a complex narrative. The story loses momentum midway, and its forward movement becomes a function of Newton's first law of motion. The novel could have been the definitive Mumbai-Bombay novel of the current era if the unrest in Vishram had been taken on a "Lord of the Flies" dimension, or if the author had orchestrated a confrontation between the central characters that raised the debate between Yes and No. Adiga's cast is extensive, with over 20 other characters, mainly Vishram's residents and their servants, forming the core of the story.

While Adiga still maintains his characteristic bleak outlook, this piece shows a tentative recognition of the advantages that India's rising middle class is enjoying. If Shah weren't present, another developer would entice the citizens of Vishram with wealth; the spread of luxury is both impersonal and broad. But he still has Satanic tendencies.

“You have to respect human greed”, he says,²⁰

He reorganizes Vishram's residents' environment around money, but what it can purchase is uncertain. In their new universe, materialism-haters are anachronistic and a barrier. At the Vishram Co-operative Housing Society, the 61-year-old retired science teacher is well-respected and enjoys a tranquil retirement socializing with residents and teaching youngsters.

¹⁹ Maneeta Kahlon, 'Conceptualising Bombay City as A Character in Arvind Adiga's Last Man in Tower', *Impressions*, 7.1 (2013), p. 2.

²⁰ Aravind Adiga, 'Last Man in Tower', *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 132.

“Masterji thought he was in a happy time of his life. The battles were over, the heat and light were dimmed”.²¹

The developer's offer is first rejected by Masterji and a few of others. He feels even more threatened when he realizes he is up against just himself.

Both the developer and Masterji's more gullible neighbors are perplexed by his true intentions. Everyone who attempts to persuade him to accept the sale does so on the false assumption that he is just demanding a higher price.

Developer Dharmen Shah, who considers himself a man, is not at all insecure about his moral fiber:

“With an instinct for fairness that taught him to prefer (unlike many others in his profession) the use of generosity over violence...always preferring to entice a recalcitrant tenant out of a building with a cheque rather than a knife”.²²

As his animosity for Masterji grows, he learns the hard way what it means to be a friend and faces some harsh realities about the character traits of his neighbors, loved ones, and acquaintances. He must also face aspects of his own history, such as the question of whether he was an effective educator:

“Masterji saw before him not just two bullying lawyers, but the primal presence of authority. Is this how my students saw me all those years? Beneath that low ceiling, an old teacher sat crushed under understanding”.²³

It becomes more clear to Masterji that he is not alone in his predicament as his efforts for support get broader. Eventually, not even his own kid stays at his side. Masterji finds courage in his seemingly hopeless situation, knowing that he is not alone in confronting the relentless march of development but that he is in the same boat as many other oppressed countrymen:

²¹ Aravind Adiga, ‘Last Man in Tower’, *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 68.

²² Aravind Adiga, ‘Last Man in Tower’, *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 287.

²³ Aravind Adiga, ‘Last Man in Tower’, *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 88.

“Until now he had only been conscious of fighting against someone: that builder. Now he sensed he was fighting for someone”.²⁴

There are a few nuggets of inverted Indian wisdom sprinkled throughout the book:

“You have to respect human greed”.²⁵

“A man’s past keeps growing, even when his future has come to a full stop”.²⁶

“But a man is what his neighbours say he is. In old buildings, truth is a communal thing, a consensus of opinion”.²⁷

Legal proceedings in India may become permanent actions when attorneys use jargon and procedures that only they are familiar with to hide behind. Adiga amuses us with this absurd aspect of the Indian legal system, which is based on British law.

A side from the court scenes, the book gives readers glimpses of Indian culture rather than a full account of it. “We see the social stratification, omnipresent slums, everyday superstition, religious adherence and the significance of family connections as snapshots rather than developed themes. Anyone looking for a detailed depiction of daily Indian life should be considered Gregory David Roberts’ *Shantaram*, a raw personal account of life, death, honor and corruption in the slums of Bombay”.²⁸

The timeless story *Last Man in the Tower* pits the tenacity of a single guy against the insatiable avarice of corporations and individuals. Despite its initial upsurge, the book fades to a limp finish. The story highlights the moral contradiction of everyday life and is skillfully written by Adiga. The book ends on an optimistic note, yet it seems that the characters' bad impulses were more compelling than their few good ones. The novel's fair view on urban growth and other pleasures more than make up for its shortcomings.

²⁴ Aravind Adiga, ‘Last Man in Tower’, *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 283.

²⁵ Aravind Adiga, ‘Last Man in Tower’, *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 301.

²⁶ Aravind Aadiga, ‘Last Man in Tower’, *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 107.

²⁷ Aravind Adiga, ‘Last Man in Tower’, *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 150.

²⁸ Aravind Adiga, ‘Last Man in Tower’, *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 216.

Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* combines comedic criticism of society's shortcomings with a wider, more tolerant tone than *The White Tiger*. Adiga's anger towards the rapid economic expansion in India, which comes at a high price for many, remains intact. His narrative addresses the slow progress of social equality, echoing the influence of writers like Orwell and Shaw, who explored the connection between individual and political will. Adiga continues to shed light on the evolving face of India, crafting a complex picture of a society caught between change and stagnation.

The novel centers on Yogesh Murthy, or "Masterji," a retired schoolteacher in the decaying Vishram Housing Society, once a symbol of middle-class stability. Masterji is the last man resisting a lucrative offer from real-estate mogul Shah, standing firm in his principles against the mounting pressure from his neighbors. As each resident succumbs to greed, the novel highlights the tension between personal beliefs and societal pressure, exploring themes of moral corruption and collusion.

Masterji's tragic downfall, orchestrated by the very people he once called friends, serves as a commentary on human nature's darker sides. His neighbors, desperate for financial gain, kill him and disguise the murder as a suicide, exposing the lengths people will go for self-interest. The narrative raises important questions about whose rights should prevail in a conflict between individual and collective desires.

Adiga's portrayal of Mumbai is vivid, capturing the contrasts between luxurious high-rises and surrounding slums. The city itself becomes a character, reflecting the socio-economic realities of globalization. Through *Last Man in Tower*, Adiga offers a rich, detailed exploration of Mumbai's real estate market, middle-class psyche, and the forces of greed that can destroy once-close communities.

Last Man in the Tower, by Adiga, depicts Mumbai as a setting for events that mirror the city: fragmented, desperate for quick riches, plagued by human misery and suffering, and unable to put an end to its disintegration. The question is addressed in the book as:

“What is Bombay? ... a window answers: banyan, maidan, stone, tile, tower, dome, sea, hawk, amaltas in bloom, smog on the horizon, gothic phantasmagoria (Victoria Terminus and the Municipal Building) emerging from the smog”.²⁹

Here, the author is trying to get over the idea that social and economic inequality, as well as casteism, communalism, and regionalism, are poisonous ideologies that stand in the way of development.

Conclusion

"Last Man in Tower" by Aravind Adiga is a comprehensive analysis of modern Indian society in transition, providing a nuanced criticism of the effects of globalization on urban areas. The story sheds light on the larger conflicts between Mumbai's traditional values and modernity via the microcosm of the Vishram Society and the struggle between Masterji and Dharmen Shah. A potent metaphor for the weakening of communal ties under economic strain is the conversion of once-close neighbors into enemies. The research demonstrates how Adiga deftly explores deeper issues of moral compromise, group duty, and human dignity via the real estate development story. Masterji's terrible death at the hands of his own neighbors for obstructing their financial progress serves as a metaphor for the human cost of unbridled materialism in India's globalization. With in-depth character analyses and a striking depiction of Mumbai's evolving environment, Adiga crafts a powerful indictment of the psychological and societal effects of fast urbanization. The study shows how the book presents a nuanced portrait of human nature under the strains of economic change, beyond straightforward moral judgments. Even though Dharmen Shah is a symbol of the forces of growth and change, his portrayal is surprisingly nuanced, implying that progress is neither wholly good nor wholly bad. Likewise, it is shown that Masterji's principled stance combines aspects of nobility and obstinate self-righteousness.

²⁹ Aravind Adiga, 'Last Man in Tower', *New Delhi. Harper Collins*, 2011, p. 51.