



## SOCIAL CHANGES IN MODERN INDIAN SOCIETY: A STUDY OF ARAVIND ADIGA'S NOVEL *THE LAST MAN IN TOWER*

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**Abstract:** Aravind Adiga himself says that the hero of the novel is neither Masterji nor the builder, rather Mumbai. His focus is on the life of Mumbai pertaining to the global developments. After India's independence in the year 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of modern India was shaped by the policies of industrialization and urbanization. Despite the fact that India faced religious and political crisis during the early decades of post-independence, it achieved modern developments in the recent years. Adiga in his fiction creates India as two countries, the one as: 'India of darkness' and the other as: 'India of light.' His depiction about 'India of light' projects Mumbai as India's global city, where in it he highlights the India's fast growing economy, industrial development, and other global achievements.

**Key words:** Adiga, Mumbai, Global achievements, Real estate business, Rapid growth, India of Light.

Arvind Adiga's portrayal of 'modern India' in the present novel highlights rise of Indian middle class in business, education and entrepreneurship. It can be said that the process of socio-economic changes under the impact of liberalization, privatization and globalization given roads to the structural changes in Indian society. These rapid changes in economic sector brought great mobility in each individual, caste, community and family of Indian society, mainly the Indian middle class emerged as the strong entrepreneurship in the global market. Yogendra Singh, an Indian sociologist writes about this:

"The rapid growth of the new middle class in India during the last decade of twentieth century and its growing influence in many parts of the public sphere form the most important changes in the history of contemporary India."<sup>1</sup>

Similar to Yogendra Singh's description of Indian middle class, Arvind Adiga's novel revolves around the life of Indian middleclass, his depiction of Vishram society at Vokola itself stands as middle class society surrounded by pollution and slum, "anything in and around Vokola is slummy". "The society, like most other buildings in

Vokala."(TLMT:P.7). But it is a respectable middleclass housing society where it accommodates various religious and professionals like the hardware specialist, chemist George lobo, timber merchant, shopkeeper Sandeep Ganguly and the real estate broker, Ramsa Ajawani all these people live together as if they belong to one family. It may be said that the Indian middle class rose as powerful force in business and market. Expansion of education and global opportunities generated new aspirations in middle class. As a result of the new opportunities and global market the middle class began to aspire for the luxury life, more income and more properties.

Changing lifestyle and degradation of moral values in urban society is other major concern of Adiga's novel. Socio-cultural heterogeneity, economic freedom and nuclear family system are the characteristics of modern Indian city. As a result of global opportunities and industrialization the urban people especially the young people are changing their lifestyle according to the modern culture. The young people who are supposed to be monitored by the head of the family are simply rejecting the authority of the head, family values as well as moral values and occupations of the middle class.

In Vishram society, tower A represents the old society where most of the women are housewives and stick to household things, tower B represents the modern society where both men and women are engaged in different professions. The conversation of Mr. Pinto where he discusses the above issues with Mrs. Puri explain this difference:

“Among young people today, it is a common thing for boy and girl to live without marriage,” he said. “At the end, one says to the other, you go your way, I go my way. There is no sense of shame in the modern way of life, what do you expect me to do about it?” (TLMT: p.22)

Adiga explains the modern way of life in urban society and how the young generations follow their individual choices in selecting the marriage partner, it is true that there are many radical changes that have taken place in urban marriage system. The youths, grown up in cosmopolitan cities, wish to enjoy the individual freedom due to the heterogeneity and cultural freedom. The selection of a marriage partner a girl or boy is made on the basis of individual choice rather than selected or decided by the family head.

Adiga’s depiction of modern India in the novel further focuses on the changing situation and mobility of Indian woman. Ms. Meenakshi’s character in the novel represents the changed positions of modern women where she works as journalist whereas the women in traditional Indian society restricted to homelike the women portrayed in the novel, *A Suitable Boy*. Here Ms. Meenakshi’s live-in relationship indicates a new way of lifestyle of the modern women where the partners in modern Indian cities are living together before the marriage. Adiga, in the novel refers to Meenakshi’s characters as “modern Indian girl”. But Mrs. Puri treats her as ‘the modern shame-free way of living’ (TLMT: p.22) Adiga, in the novel, portrays Bombay as modern Indian city where it is shown as the busiest place of commercial hub and highly industrialized town. Mumbai is formerly known Bombay. Mumbai is the capital city of Maharashtra located on the coast of

Arabian Sea and it is the dream city of every Indian. Since many years, the city of Mumbai is known for the entertainment and commercial capital of India. In the novel Mr. Dharma Shah explains about Mumbai’s recent development:

There is a golden line in this city: a line that makes men rich.’ now he dotted three points on it. “You have Santa Cruz airport there, you have the Bandra-Kurla complex there and you have the Dharavari slums there. Why is the line golden? Air travel is booming. More planes, more visitors. Then’ he moved his finger- the financial center at Bandra-Kurla is expanding by the hour. Then the government is straight redevelopment in Dharavi. Asia’s biggest slum will become Asia’s richest slum. This area is boiling with money. People arrive daily and have nowhere to live.” (TLMT: P.54-55)

By depicting the super luxurious apartments, airports, road facilities and trains facilities, Adiga explains the everyday life and changing society of modern India. In his interview, Adiga himself says that the hero of the novel is neither Masterji nor the builder, rather Mumbai.

To conclude Adiga’s depiction of Vishram society showed as a microcosm of modern Indian society where the residents maintain religious prosperity and respect every person living in that society, these societal changes shown as part of understanding the modern Indian society. The middle class occupies the prominent position in modern India’s market business and education and how the middle class establishes itself as a consuming class. Masterji’s character stands as fine example to understand a man of modern India who sticks to morality throughout his life. Portraying the changing lifestyles, religious beliefs and degradation of moral values is other major concern where the young people like Mrs. Puri’s children reject the family values and select their life partners themselves without the support of their parents. The growing status of women in modern India is also understated as the essential part of modern India where it is

imperative to consult his wife to take business advises.

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### Footnote:

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