

Treatment of Immorality in Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower*

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'People form a nation' – it is absolutely true. The temperament of the people determines the temperament of their nation. If they are immoral and corrupt, what will be the fate of their nation? Can we expect a noble society from them? Can we expect a developed nation from them? Certainly not. Sick people cannot make a nation healthy and strong. Only healthy and strong people can form a healthy and strong nation. The word 'health' bears a very comprehensive meaning as it has several aspects – mental, emotional, physical, moral, spiritual, social and economical. If any aspect of health is missing, a person or a nation cannot be considered to be completely healthy.

Adiga in his latest novel, *Last Man in Tower* raises one of the most burning issues of society – the growing immorality among modern people. Here the question rises – what kind of person is immoral? The very simple answer is – a person who is wicked, corrupt, unholy or unchaste can be called immoral i.e. one who behaves or works contrary to accepted moral principles is immoral. Adiga has shown his concern towards this problem in his latest work.

The novel tells the story of an apartment, Tower A of the Vishram Society, situated at Varsova in Mumbai, and its occupants. The residents of the building are a collection of middle class Indians who belong to different communities – Hindus, Muslims and Christian, but they live with a great harmony and brotherhood. These characters include Mrs. Puri, an elderly mother having an 18 year old son, Ramu afflicted with Down Syndrome; Mr. and Mrs. Pinto, elderly husband and wife; Ramesh Ajwani, a real estate broker with a great appetite for women; Ashvin Kothari, the secretary of the Society and Mrs. Rego, a communist - minded lady. There is also an alcoholic guard named Ram Khare, a poor, cleaning lady named Mary. The central figure of the story is Yogesh M. Murthy, a retired school teacher, who is popularly known as 'Master Ji'. He even after his retirement teaches science to the children of the Society free of cost. He enjoys much respect and honour from the residents of Tower A.

The apartment seems to be a village, and so there is love, there is dislike, there is bickering, and there is resentment. Really they live like a

big family with genuine human connections but, when a builder named Dharmen Shah intrudes into the family, the situation becomes worse and worse. He offers 250 times amount more than the actual worth to each occupant for vacating his flat as he wants to build his dream project, 'the Shanghai' after demolishing the old apartments of the Society. Some residents don't agree with the builder; they don't want to sell their flats but after getting 'sweetener' from the builder, they crouch down except Master Ji. The residents finding Master Ji a big stumbling block on their way to be rich, push him down from the roof and thus he dies. They now, taking the heavy amount from Shah, are enjoying their luxurious life and at last no one is accused of murder. Here Adiga presents the photographic picture of greedy, immoral people of corrupt, callous contemporary society.

Most of the residents think only of their own progress and they don't hesitate in taking the life of the innocent old man. Really Adiga has projected typical psychopaths. In "Behavioural Traits of Psychopaths" Jennifer Copley points out:

While most people's actions are guided by a number of factors, such as the desire to avoid hurting other people, the psychopath selects a course of action based on only one factor – what he can get out of it. This cold-blooded mode of reasoning enables the psychopath to commit acts that most people's consciences would not allow. (www.com/article)

Psychopaths are too deceitful, impulsive and lack self-restraint. They believe in taking great risks in order to meet their selfish ends. They stay focused until they achieve their goals. No values work for them. David B. Adams too, observes:

[They are] callous, deceitful, reckless, guiltless ... The psychopath understands the wishes and concerns of others; he simply does not care ... The psychopath believes that rules and morals are for others, weaker people who obey because they fear punishment. (www.geocities.com)

Dharmen Shah, a passionate builder is mad after money. He suffers from chronic bronchitis due to the constant visit of his construction sites. Though he gets frequent warning from his doctor but the lust for money and competition with other builders do not make him stay at home and take rest. Seeing the position of his disease, the doctor regretfully says:

It is a bit worse each time I see you,
Dharmen. That thing that is growing in
your chest and head is Chronic
bronchitis. Worse and worse each time.
You have infected mucus in your lungs
and in your sinuses. The next stage is that
you have trouble breathing. We may have
to put you in a hospital bed. Do you want
things to come to that? (*Last Man in
Tower 52*)

As a widower, Shah does not have any regret or a feeling of love for his dead wife. He starts enjoying with several girls and women in order to gratify his lusty desire. Adiga writes:

His wife had died five years ago. After a
year in which he kept to himself, he had
started taking women to hotel rooms.
Then he built his own hotel here, in the
seventh floor of this Varsova building.
Down pillows and cushions, pure white
bed sheets of 2.8 micron pore size to
repel allergens. Lights that turn
themselves on as you clap your hands, so
you don't even have to move from bed.
(89)

The builder shelters a beautiful girl named Rosie, 26 years younger than him. The girl is highly fashionable and ambitious for making her career in the Bollywood film industry. Shah gives her false assurance to get her introduced with some influential persons of the film industry and on this pretext he keeps on exploiting her sexually. She tolerates everything happily as she loves her career and her eyes are fixed also on his entire property. As his private mistress, she showers false love on him. She respects him much and calls him uncle. She always insists on meeting his son, Satish who is of her age, but the builder never does so. Here a curious mind can ask a few questions. Why does the girl want to see the builder's

son? Why does the rich man not get her introduced with his son? Perhaps Rosie wants to trap the boy and marry him as she is covetous for his entire property. On the other hand, the builder has a doubt that his realities may get exposed to his son and thus he will lose respect in his eyes. Here we find both the rich, lusty man and the greedy, ambitious girl are exploiting each other in their own ways in order to meet their selfish ends. The shocking fact is that the number of such people like Dharmen Shah and Rosie is increasing day by day in society. Pre-marital affairs, extra-marital affairs, live-in-relationships and homosexuality have become very common in this corrupt, immoral world. Today people can stoop to any level for money and sex. If the world does not wake up, every immoral and inhuman act soon will be the common norm of society, which will prove to be a great loss for the whole mankind.

Now-a-days the boys are attending gyms to make their body muscled with six packs. The girls are not far behind. They are wasting their precious time in order to look smart, slim and sexy rather than developing their inner beauty and quality. See, where are they heading towards? What can they expect from their own children? Dharmen Shah is a typical example of such a materialistic, modern man who is busy day and night in multiplying his money and finds no time for his only son whose mother is no more. The boy is always hungry for his father's love and affection. Due to lack of parental care, he falls into a bad company and he is more often arrested for this and that criminal activity. Really, he is totally a spoiled child now. When the builder gets to know that his son is again arrested, he rushes to the police station to make him free. While returning with his son, Shah scolds him and says that he has brought disgrace to his father's name. Then the boy laughs and takes him very lightly as he knows the reality of his father, and so, he proudly says to him:

All of us in the gang are builders' sons.
If you don't let us do these things now
... how will we become good builders
when we grow up? (405)

Here we find Shah more responsible in making his child spoiled. He doesn't care for his son as he is too busy in his business and managing with corrupt officials. As a father and guardian he gets less marks than Balram's father, a rickshaw puller in Adiga's *The White Tiger*. The poor rickshaw puller knows that he is illiterate and so he has to suffer perpetual poverty, disgrace and exploitation in society. Though Balram's

grandmother, the head member of the family is reluctant to send the boy to school as she wants to put him in some tea shop or hotel to support his family, Balram's father is rigid to send his son to school. He says :

My whole life, I have been treated like a donkey. All I want is that one son of mine at least one should live like a man. (*The White Tiger* 30)

There is no doubt that the parents' role is very crucial in shaping the future of their child. They can make him a good human being inculcating good habits in his very childhood. Really, ideal parents are the best assets of society and the moral values inculcated into him are the most valuable legacy for their child but it is a very regrettable fact that most of the parents are not paying heed for the development of the character of their child. They are satisfied merely with their ward's academic performance and have little concerns for the development of his character and other human values. Such thought of parents may prove very fatal for society.

Ramesh Ajwani, the 50 year old real estate broker had been very corrupt and immoral in his young days. He still sees women out of lusty passion. His eyes put a price on them. People visit his office from several countries. He often bargains and blackmails those women and gets chances to enjoy with them. He is very expert in dealing his business and trapping women. He warmly welcomes them, serves them food and drinks, and then starts his dealings. Really he is a very shrewd and cunning fellow. Adiga writes:

Africa, Ajwani said to himself, as he went among carts full of ripe watermelons. He had never been to Africa. Not America, Europe, Canada, Australia. Had never crossed the ocean. Women had been his Africa. They come into a real-estate broker's office all the time- air hostesses, models, sales girls, single girls, divorced women – looking for rooms in a hurry, sometimes in a desperate hurry. A broker can seem a fatherly figure to them – benevolent, decisive. In his younger days, Ajwani, while never resorting to coercion or blackmail, had slept with plenty of his clients. Plenty. At first there

was a hotel by the train station, the Wood Lands, that rented by the hour. Later he built an inner room in his office. A coconut to sip on, as they lay side by side in bed. The women were happy; he was happier than they were. That was how he liked his deals to be. (*Last Man in Tower* 134)

The world is full of such people. For modern people sensual and sexual pleasures find supreme place. They are always ready for transgression. They can commit any sin to enjoy the so-called greatest bliss of the world. Women are well-aware of the main weaknesses of modern men. They unhesitatingly encash their beauty and sexuality in order to climb the ladder of success in their life. They feel no shame in offering themselves as they think that it has become a new moral code of conduct to get success in today's world. But we should never forget that there are many people in this world, who are leading very pious life and serving humanity selflessly.

Indeed, immorality has proliferated throughout our society. We are losing our innocence, purity and modesty very fast. We should understand that happiness, prosperity and fulfilment will never result from immoral life styles. We need to remind ourselves that we are the children of God and piousness is our real identity, and so we need to check our inordinate, lusty desires in order to avoid all kinds of sins so that we can enjoy the perfect peace and true happiness even in this materialistic world.

Of course, Adiga has given a unique touch to the theme of immorality in his latest work, *Last Man In Tower*. The novel can be interpreted as a warning bell against the fatal consequences of growing immorality in our society.

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