

**Human Relationships and Capitalism: Study of Changes in Aravind Adiga's 'The Last Man in Tower'**

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**Article Received:** 02/01/2022,

**Article Accepted:** 03/02/2023,

**Published Online:** 05/02/2023,

**DOI:**10.47311/IJOES.2023.5.02.34

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**Abstract**

Change is the most critical aspect of human relationships, for it becomes crucial for a relationship to undergo various transformations owing to the moderation in human society. It has often been witnessed that human bonds are influenced by multiple factors that exist in society. Human society is constantly evolving and transforming according to the need of time. Even a tiny ripple in human thought tends to create a vast wave of change in human society and human bonds, often leading to an assortment of transformations according to the turmoil. Capitalism in the contemporary era has greatly impacted-pact in culture and human life in general. The transformation of society under the influence of the capitalist economy has created such significant changes in human life that it has influenced the course of human thought, ultimately impacting human bonds in many ways. Human relationships influenced by capitalist thinking and lifestyle have taken a different twist. Emotion and attachment have taken a different turn and are perceived differently in the age of capitalism. With these changes, the whole concept of relationships is viewed through entirely new lenses of thought.

The novel *The Last Man in Tower*(2011)by Aravind Adiga is taken for studying human relationships and the outcome of changes in society under the influence of capitalism. A new lifestyle that came along with marketing and the capitalist economy, which greatly influenced human relationships/ bonds, is considered.

**Keywords:** Human Relationships, Friendship, Family, Capitalism, Marketing, Society, Changes.

**Introduction:**

This paper tries to bring forward the changes and transformations that human relationships underwent under capitalism's influence. The dawn of the twenty-first century witnessed the significant impact of the capitalist system, which transformed society regarding lifestyle and marketing. It became inevitable for human beings to resist the

changes in the community due to the rise of marketing and the capitalist system. It presents human beings with multiple choices, often creating a fissure in a human bond due to an individual's preference that contrasts with societal expectations. Human relationships in the age of the capitalist system became detached from emotion and ethics, which resulted in relationships based on the mutual interest of people rather than an emotional attachment. With the rise of material interest, which came along with the increase of marketing, there came such tumult in human society that not just transformed the lifestyle of people. Still, it also changed the perspective of an individual. People living in the capitalist system came up with a different point of view on the ethics of society. Morals and values that once guided a community lost their position and self-interest in an individual-driven human society. Human relationships in the era of transition could only go with changes. It became a necessity for the human being to change their perception and was made to act according to the need of time. The situation and circumstances became such that people were to act according to the flow of time brought by the capitalist system. And these changes in society ultimately transformed human bonds.

### **Human Relationship and Capitalism**

Human Relationships are the bonds that humans exchange in different spheres of life. The bonds among human being come in various forms and thus are interacted accordingly. These bonds among human being help in the functioning of human society. Robert Owen opines, 'human relationship is interaction and cooperation of people in a group.' These groups in the contemporary era include; institutions and organizations like families, homes, businesses, companies, government, associations, universities, hospitals, churches, and trusts. The functioning of these groups depends on the relationships that humans share.

Human society is subject to transformation; along with it, human relationships change accordingly. The continuous societal changes in society influenced human relationships from various perspectives. These changes formulate social and ideological norms by which humans are subjected to accept or reject changes according to their convenience. Keith Davis, in his book *Human Behavior at Work- Human Relations and Organizational Behavior* (1972), says, "Human relations are motivating people in organizational settings to develop teamwork that accomplishes the individual as well as organizations goals efficiently." (12). It is through a human relationship that the development of any organization or institution is possible. It becomes essential to have a bond with one another to accomplish a goal.

The socially, ideologically driven, and inexplicably loaded bond humans share with other humans are always in transformative mode and function as a tool to bring changes in societal values. The conflicting and turbulent ideas changed the method and way of communication/ interaction among humans, becoming the basis of multiple socio and psycho-interchanges in human relationships in the contemporary era. Changes in human relationships have many factors behind them; the chaotic and topsy-turvy nature of development, globalization, and its discontents are among many such suggestive reasons.

The wake of the twenty-first century witnessed capitalism at its pinnacle. Materialism became the most deserving phenomenon. Every aspect of life under the influence of capitalism was materialized. It became unavoidable to view the world through the lens of material perspective. The new way of perceiving the world transformed the common understanding of society. Due to capitalism, human society came across different forms of change, and it became worthwhile to witness the development in various fields. Fredric Jameson, one of the renowned social and literary critics, has accurately represented the social and psychological condition of the age in his book *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) writes;

Capitalism, and the modern age, is a period in which, with the extinction of the sacred and the "spiritual," the deep underlying materiality of all things has finally risen, dripping and convulsive into the light of day. Culture is one of that fundamental materiality for us, not merely evidence but quite inescapable. This has, however, also been a history lesson: it is because culture has become material that we are now in the position to understand that it always was material; or materialistic in its structure and functions. (66)

Human relationships during such periods witnessed various ups and downs as it became inevitable to overlook the changes that came in human society which directly influenced human relationships. The influence of capitalism overshadowed the previously perceived knowledge, and it became one of the most recurring phenomena, for it took the whole globe under its influence. Capital became a crucial factor in human life, and the economy played a vital role in society. Commercialization and materialization became inescapable under the influence of capitalism, and marketing became the only goal. With such materialization, human bonds with each other transformed drastically. It became unavoidable for human beings to change their lives under such circumstances levied by the capitalist economy. In the grip of capitalism, materialistic needs became more critical than intact human relationships and emotional attachment.

Societal changes have always been influential in the transformation of human relationships. with the changes that came on society due to various factors, one being capitalism, human relationship witness multiple changes in the bond people share in different spheres of life. Capitalism brought various developments in many sectors of human society. With the emergence of global markets, various international enterprises came into existence. The flow of these goods and commodities to multiple countries assisted in the booming of the business. Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) was established to meet the rapidly growing necessities of the people. The establishment of Multinational Enterprises changed the whole scenario of the market economy. When marketing took over the world due to capitalism, global development, and profit became capitalism's goal. All the sectors of society came under the influence of such change, which created differences and transformed entire relationships. Capitalist power in the community challenged the moral stand of society. Ethics that guided organizations were often compromised under the influence of capitalism. It is often witnessed that human values that were the keeper of

community intact were rejected in the capitalist society. People began to follow new ways of guidance in a society where material needs were given priority.

The capitalist system attributed competition as vital, starting the global competition trend. And in this race to outsmart the rival, various provisions and methods came to achieve the set profit target. The profit-oriented business establishment often ignores the other factors necessary for society. The functioning of society under the influence of capitalism is ironic, for it believes in maximum profit under less investment. And in the process concept that prevailed in the community also changed, and people started thinking in the same *mantra* of the capitalist economy.

Karl Marx, in his book *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production* (1867), "Just as man is governed, in religion, by the products of his brain, so, in capitalist production, he is governed by the products of his hand." (265) Living in the capitalist economy, it has come to notice that capitalism is unavoidable and one is to come under its fold. Society has become such that people living in such communities are aware of the terms and conditions brought up by the need for time. When marketing became society's most critical aspect, it became clear that people were to live accordingly. The global competition for profit became a way of life, and under this influence, human society changed, ultimately changing human bonds.

The functioning of society under the grip of capitalism has become more complex and complicated. When marketing took over the world, it also inclined people towards various material needs. To gain more profit, people were placed with many options, and often these options are hidden coercion where it is shown that people have the choice, but in reality, people are forced to choose from the said option. And in such circumstances, human society went in a different direction where people primarily focused on their interests rather than the interest of the community or society. And this thought in society often degenerates the moral and ethics of humanity that was the pillar holding society for so long. Capitalism often clashes with society's morality, creating a gap in the community and human relationships.

The principle of ethics and morality often binds Human Relationships. And when such clashes happen in society, it becomes problematic for the human bond. The result of which could be more coherent and clear. Capitalism affected human life differently, for it created circumstances in society that could not be denied, and there arose different questions among people. The way it was received by others vastly differed because of the difference in values and ethics. Capitalism is an inescapable phenomenon of the twenty-first century as all the spheres of society come under the direct influence of it. And in such a situation, human relationships are affected primarily by it. Undoubtedly, people stayed the same under the capitalist economy as it became necessary for changes.

It is visible that the changes that came in society due to capitalism became the reason for the changes that came in human relationships, for it created different kinds of bonds among people in the community. More than emotional attachment, capitalist society created a bond based on mutual understanding for the common interest. When profit became a

primary concern in the capitalist economy, people tended to change their bonds according to their interests. It became the need of the hour to bond under different circumstances in the name of individual benefit. These bonding of people with one another for other reasons transformed human relationships drastically. It became difficult in society to withhold ethics and moral that has been guiding for so long when such bonding came into existence. Along with the social order, the human relationship also underwent a drastic transformation under the influence of capitalism.

**Study of changes in Aravind Adiga's *The Last Man in Tower***

The novel *The Last Man in Tower*(2011)by Aravind Adiga depicts the transformation in human relationships. The impact of capitalism in society, along with its effect on human connection, is portrayed in the novel. The influence of capitalism and marketing in the mind of people and their reactions to it is shown in the story through various characters. It records the effects, owing to changes, that society underwent with the emanation of new ideological orders and its aftermath effects on human relationships. The constant struggle of people and the hardship of people living in the community are beautifully depicted in the novel. It shows the tumult that came into the life of people under the influence of capital and how people responded to it, which changed not only the life of people but also the relationships they shared.

In the novel, Adiga represents Vishram society as a microcosm representing a modern and globalized space reflecting changes that human civilization has encountered. Examining the relationships of people living in society and their way of life, it is visible that the capitalist economy and marketing have not just transformed the community but also created tumult in human relationships, which changed human bonds and emotional attachment among the people. The wave of change came to Vishram society with the arrival proposal made by 'Confidence Group' (78) for the redevelopment project "offer to the Vishram Societies (A and B Tower) for the outright purchase of all the flats in the said societies...a generous offer is made to all the owners at the uniform rate of the Rs 19, 000 a square foot." (79)

Yogesh A. Murty, also known as Materji's relationship with his son Gaurav in the novel, is complex and complicated when their perspective and ideas contradict. Father-son association which is an emotional connection has taken a different form. The redevelopment project brought further by the builder isolated Masterji from society and his friends and got him abandoned by his son. Gaurav's reaction to the offer and his circumstance where he wanted easy money for his lifestyle by selling an old apartment to the builder where his father was residing is the outcome of the capitalist economy where money played a vital role in shaping an individual's character.Gaurav and his wife Sonal have often taken materialistic possession to be an essential part of life.

A month after her death, Gaurav called to ask for her diamond necklace, which she had bought at the Vummidi store in Chennai; Sonal was eager that her mother-in-law's jewel shouldn't be lost. Masterji said he did not remember such a necklace but

promised to look in the cupboards. His son's coldness, he was sure, had started from this time. (76-77)

Masterji refusing the builder's offer of his emotional attachment to the house, which had the memories of his deceased wife and daughter, indicates that Masterji's perspective differed from the rest of the people who wanted to accept the offer and benefit from the money that builder was offering them which was more than the market value of the place. Even his son wanted to get the offer. "It must be Gaurav again; the moment he smells money on me, my son calls." (98). Despite such higher value, Masterji's refusal and choice to keep the memory intact can be viewed as a mind that does not give much weight to capital and is more inclined towards values and sentiment. Though his son severed his relationship with Masterji, he stood unmoved by what he believed in, which finally became the reason for his death. When his kin disowned him, he tried taking help from the police, but in vain police were not of much help because they were also the ones who were under the influence of the system which governed them all. Masterji's helplessness in such a system and also the way his neighbor 'boycott' him by the refusal to speak to him and excluding him can be seen as manipulation of money over the mind of people where all they can think was acquiring it without taking consideration of anyone else rather than their interest.

Gaurav's decision to disown his father is the consequence of manipulation. People could not resist the money the builder offered them and worked on manipulating their son against his father. How Gaurav viewed this money as an opportunity for him and his family for a better future made him turn against his father.

To: the Resident of Vishram Society Tower A

I, GAURAV MURTHY, SON OF Y.A. MURTHY, AM PUTTING THIS NOTICE TO SAY I HAVE NO FATHER. I am ashamed of the action of the present occupant of flat 3A, Vishram. After promising my wife and me that he would sign the proposal, he lied to us. (320)

As for the builder Mr. Dharmen Shah who made an offer to the Vishram society, he was competing with his rival to reach the top. He wasted to achieve his dream of creating a "new super-luxury residential project." (79). In the era where luxury and comfort have become the primary concern of people, Mr. Shah wanted to be the one who provides it. His redevelopment project and how he used the high sum of money as bait for people to leave behind their homes gives a glimpse of the working of society under capitalism. Mr. Shah's offer for some was seen as a blessing as the people residing in the Vishram society were mostly middle-class, and difficulty and struggle are not new for this section of society. It became hard to resist the offer of such a considerable amount of money the builder offered. Mr. Shah, on the other hand, had a different outlook. He is a true representative of the capitalist society where even after knowing about his deteriorating health, all he cared about was money. "How can I take a holiday when J.J. Chacko doesn't? Does his doctor tell him to slow down?" (54)



His dream project was everything to him, visible through his negligence toward his son. He was so concerned with his project that he did not give time to his son. The effect on father-son relationship is affected in a different way when it comes to Mr. Shah and his son. Lack of money created distance in Gaurav and Masterji's association; in the case of Mr. Shah, an abundance of cash and a craze for earning more became the reason for the split between father and son.

Apart from the familial bond, even friendship could not withhold the burden that came along with capitalism. The bond among people is formed under mutual interest. Material needs and the financial crisis have made people bond over uncommon circumstances and with the most unexpected people in the contemporary situation. Masterji's friendship with Pintos is ancient, and they have seen some good and bad days together over a long time. They have shared a fair part of their lives in the Vishram society.

After his wife's death, Mr. Pinto came to him and said, 'You will eat with us from now on.' Three times a day he went down the stairs to sit at Pintos' dining table, covered with a red-and-white checkered oilcloth they had brought back from Chicago. They did not have to announce that food was served. (46)

When the builder made an offer, the only people Masterji could rely on were Pintos, for they were in the notion not to accept the builder's request, for Shelly Pinto was blind, and it would be difficult for her to adjust anywhere else. For this reason, Pintos needed more time to be ready to accept the offer from the builder. And Masterji also supported this decision of his friends. These friends faced several harassments over phone calls "As soon as he put his phone down, he heard the phone ringing in the Pintos' living room. Then his rang again, and the moment he picked it up, it went dead, and the Pintos' was ringing again." (231) But they were reluctant about their decision of not accepting money from the builder. "I have a lesson for you, old man: if you don't leave the flat, there will be trouble for you... There will be trouble for you and your friends. So leave. Take the money and sign the paper." (233) But the circumstance changed when goons hired by the builder threatened Mr. Pinto. When the power of manipulation did not work on people, the option of violence worked. It ended the friendship between Masterji and Pintos as they agreed to leave Vishram society by selling their apartment to the builder.

Mrs. Rego and Mrs. Puri bonded over the fact that they both needed money despite their differences for years. They were one another's a severe critic, but when the offer was made, Mrs. Puri convinced Mrs. Rego that they all sailed in the same boat and they were to understand one another's needs and bond over mutual interest, which is not just helpful for one but for the both. 'I know you don't like builders. Please don't do it for Mr. Shah. Please do it for your children; when small people like us compromise, it is the same as when big people refuse to compromise. The world becomes a better place.' (183) her circumstances were such that she needed money for her son, who had Down syndrome. With the builder's offer, she hoped her life situation would be better, and she could do something for her son. Belonging to a middle-class family with less income, she could not do anything for her son, but with the money she might get from the builder, she was hopeful of bettering her

circumstances. Mrs. Puri's friendship with Masterji degraded when she learned that Masterji had refused to accept the offer.

Mrs. Puri was at her window, watching him from behind her grille.

'Mrs. Puri,' he shouted, 'will you listen to what Ram Khare just said? He said I should be worried about what you and my neighbors will do to me.'

As he watched, she shut the window and pulled down her blinds. (207)

Mrs. Puri's situation in life has always been miserable, for she dedicated her life to looking after her son suffering from a disease that could not be treated. She was ready to go to the extreme when she got the opportunity to make a difference. She did not think of anyone else but her need and took the significant step of creating a rift between father and son. She was the one who came up with the idea of 'Boycott Masterji' (210) in society. Her friendship with Masterji could not withstand the wave of the builder's offer, and it succumbed under the weight of money. Though there was a time when Masterji helped Mrs. Puri in every way possible, and she used to call him "an English gentleman"(97), it changed with his refusal of the builder's offer by Masterji.

Mr. Ajwani is very different from the people living in Vishram society. He was more inclined towards the material aspect of life. For him, money has always taken an important place in his life, and he did many odd things to boost his income. He is a man who worships money, and for him, money is everything, "Money – the money had been his India" (134). His life situation and the struggle he has faced have created a perception of money that led him to do anything to acquire money. Mr. Ajwani was not only a money-minded person but also an opportunist who exploited many women who came to him for help. As a broker, he was well acquainted with people and how to use them. People in the contemporary era have become as such that they are more focused on their gain without having thoughts on the means of achieving this goal. Mr. Ajwani is not concerned about his ways of dealing with people, for he considers them a means of earning money. Social ethics were of no concern regarding money making, and people were ready to go to any extreme to make money for them.

Mr. Kothari, Secretary of Vishram society Tower A is a mysterious man. His relationship with his neighbors is shrouded with mystery, like his business. His neighbors needed to be made aware of his nature and his profession. His company, like his own personality, was mysterious.

"From his movements, his neighbors had deduced the existence of a 'business' that did not require a man's presence for more than two or three hours a day and yet somehow funded a respectable existence.

He was the laziest Secretary they had ever had, which made him the best Secretary they had ever had.

...he was so secretive, indeed, that you feared one day he would dissolve among his papers like a bar of Pears' Soap. He had no known 'nature.' (17)



Despite flaws and differences, Vishram society was working at its own pace, gradually accepting changes and moving on with time. But everything in Vishram Society Tower A changed after the builder's offer. Money offered by the builder was hard to resist for the resident of Vishram society, for they were all middle-class people struggling for the betterment of life. The offer was seen as an opportunity for better living which made them abandon their moral character and kill their neighbor with whom they shared a fair amount of life. The cold-blooded murder of Masterji by his neighbor cannot be justified, for this was the inhumane and utterly insane step taken by his neighbor to get money from the builder.

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