

### HUMANISTIC VALUES IN HINDUISM AS REFLECTED IN ARVIND ADIGA'S *LAST MAN IN TOWER*

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Hinduism has been called the oldest religion in the world. Some practitioners and scholars regard Hinduism as a fusion of various Indian cultures and traditions. The second vice president of India Servepalli Radakrishnan states that Hinduism is not just a faith but is itself related to the union of reason and intuition. Gavin D. Flood quotes Jawahar Lal Nehru's statement, "Hinduism is all things to all men."<sup>1</sup> Though Hinduism contains a broad range of philosophies, concepts, rituals and major scriptures which play an important role yet there is need to deepen the understanding of truths and further development of the tradition. Therefore, the present paper will discuss some humanistic values regarding Hinduism: Law of Karma (action), polytheism, freedom of religion, Yoga, concept of cow as mother and other humanistic values through the closer study of Arvind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower*.

As far as law of karma is concerned, since immemorial times so many scholars, writers have explained it in their scriptures and writings. Goswami Tulsidasji in his *Racharit Manas* writes, 'Karma pradhan vishwa rachi rakha, Jo jas karai so tas fal chakha'. It is said 'As you sow, so shall you reap'. It means results or fruit of actions depends on deeds and actions. In Bollywood, filmmakers also tried to show the wonder of actions in their films like 'Jaisi Karni Vaisi Bharni'.

Aravind Adiga (23 October 1974 - ) Booker Prize winner in 2008 for his debut novel, *The White Tiger* also made an attempt to show the universal law of Karma (action) what in Bhagwat Gita Lord Krishna said to Arjun, 'Karmanyevadhikaraste mahafaleshu kadachan'. Ram Khare who is a security guard of Vishram Society Tower A. He lives on ground floor in his booth. He is a religious man who keeps a holy digest of the Bhagwat Gita that is read by him. One day a salesman came to his booth and entered his details into the visitors' register. When the visitor requested to permit him to go into the Vishram Society at that time he was reading the lines of the Bhagwat Gita, "...never over a man's actions, said Lord Krishna, but only over the fruit of a man's actions, is..."<sup>2</sup> On other hand, in a meeting on asking of Kothari's citizenship, Ashwin Kothari, secretary of the Society was sharing his past moments with Mr. Dharmen Shah, a builder that he is not Indian in born but African because an African-born cousin lured his father from Jamnagar to Kenya. His father had set up a grocery shop in Nairobi and worked hard too much and then he became a prosper man. In meanwhile, the secretary felt the importance of

karma in his life when at the age of ten he had recited the famous lines from the Ramayan in the words of Maricha:

Do as you will, evil king:  
I, for my part, know right from wrong  
And will never follow you,  
Said the virtuous demon Maricha  
When the lord of Lanka  
Asked him to steal Rama's wife"<sup>3</sup>.

Religion is also an integral part of Hinduism. Generally, religion is a faith in the existence of a Supernatural Being which people follow for attaining salvation since many centuries ago. Still it has been dominating man and his way of thinking and behaviour. Therefore religion is a very personal matter in man and his life. So People convert from one religion to another due to myriad reasons. In this context Gandhiji declared: "Conversion without a clean heart is a denial of God and religion."<sup>4</sup> The conversion of religion can be found in *Last Man in Tower*. Ibrahim Kudwa, a lead singer in a rock-and-roll band at university did not want "to remain in the muslim-only building in Bandra East where his brothers and sisters still lived. Though Vishram Society was old but he wanted to mix with Hindus and Christians".<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Arjun, a Hindu is a long assistant of Ibrahim Kudwa, "had apparently converted to christianity some years ago; last Christmas, he won the banyan tree over to his religion and placed a private crib with toy figures, arranged in a splendor of cotton-snow, at its roof".<sup>6</sup>

The concept of polytheism philosophically or theologically affirms that the source and continuing ground of all things is in gods and goddesses which are regarded as the deities. India is such country in that there is more than one god or deity worshiped at a time or ever, and another may be worthy of worship at another time or place. The faith in gods in the novelist's characters can be worked out in various ways through stickers, paintings and photographs. Ms. Meenakshi, a journalist lives in 3B of Vishram Society. She has affixed "a sticker of Jesus Christ" on the door of her room. Renaissance Real-Estate Agency is "the most attractive, spacious, bright, its glass door painted with an image of Lord Krishna playing his flute in the magic gardens of Brindavan"<sup>7</sup>. Renaissance Real-Estate broker, Ramesh Ajwani highlights his agency's merits to a working and unmarried woman who lives with her parents in a double bedroom and says, "Please look at the wall. My three gods are up there. The young woman saw a full length framed portrait of the Sai Baba and another one of the god Balaji in his 24-carat-gold costume at Tirupati."<sup>8</sup> Yogesh A. Murthy known as Masterji retired school teacher. He is living alone after the recent *death* of his wife Purnima whose favourite god was Lord Balaji. In his room "A glow-in-the-dark portrait of the Lord Balaji at Tirupati, his late wife's favourite deity, hung from a hook on the wall of Masterji's bedroom."<sup>9</sup> Even the secretary worship to the Lord Krishna "saying the name of Lord Krishna three times the secretary switched off the bed lamp."<sup>10</sup> Dharmen *Shah* is a worshiper of Lord Ganesha A medallion of a golden Lord Ganesha sat on the lintel above the builder's home."<sup>11</sup>

And Yoga had been such kind of humanistic value in India that influenced Hinduism. Yoga is a Hindu religious and spiritual tradition and also the state of union with inner-self. In his *The Secret of Self-Transformation: A Synthesis of Tantra and Yoga* Rohit Mehta writes that Yoga is considered as "a state of equilibrium"<sup>12</sup>. Shri Aurobindo calls yoga as a process of rising above from our animal nature to divinity. Yoga is said to be giving qualities of compassion, love,

harmony, sensitivity and discretion in a person. Baba Ramdev known as yoga guru established the Patanjali Yog Peeth (UK) Trust in 2006 in Haridwar (Uttarakhand) with the aim of promoting yoga in the UK. Arvind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* exists the concept to engross and to be practiced. In the novel, the most people go to Versova beach of Mumbai to take deep breath of early-morning ocean breeze. In this beach half sand was reserved for the rich, the other half for slum dwellers. Residents were squatting by the water, defecating. There was a invisible line in the middle of the beach and beyond this line "the bankers, models, and film producers of versova were engaged in tai-chi, yoga, or spot jogging".<sup>13</sup> When Masterji, Mr. Pinto and his wife, Shelly gather in the compound Mr. Pinto said, "Let's do breathing exercises together and gave Shelley his arm. It makes you feel young again. The three of them practiced inhaling-exhaling".<sup>14</sup>

The concept of cow is unique in India. It is said that there are seven mothers of man in India. They are One's mother, the wife of the *guru*, the wife of a saint, the wife of a king, the nurse, the earth and the cow. But cow is a mother which not only nourishes but also protects her child from present and prospective future dangers. There are myriad injunctions in Vedic scriptures glorifying cows and her worth in this regard. Cow gives countless gifts in the form of milk, ghee, dung and urine which are necessary for economic and spiritual advancement of human society. In his *The Myth of the Holy Cow* Dwijendra Narayan Jha quotes, "Mother cow is in many ways better than the mother who gave us birth. Our mother gives us milk for a couple of years and then expects us to serve her when we grow up. Mother cow expects from us nothing but grass and grain. Our mother often falls ill and expects service from us. Mother cow rarely falls ill. Our mother when she dies means expenses of burial or cremation. Mother cow is as useful dead as when alive".<sup>15</sup> In the novel Arvind Adiga showed the concept of cow in Hinduism which depicts that a small village had developed around the construction work. Some migrants from north India and some workers had recreated the old home where some cows were swatting away flies. Hitching up his trousers, Shah walked up "to the cow; he touched its forehead three times for good luck and touched his own".<sup>16</sup>

Concluding, Humanism is a label for a certain range of beliefs and values which constitute a view of the world of philosophy by which many people live their lives. These humanistic values inspire humanists in their interpersonal relations and their behavior towards other people. The concept of karma affirms that if one's thoughts and deeds are kind and compassionate, the soul will reap positive results one should never show disrespect for cows in any way. Cows should never be killed in any type of sacrifice or slaughtered in any way for food as the killing of cows constitutes the most heinous of all sins inexistence. Therefore every value is important and beneficial for our healthy and pleasant life whether it is related to Yoga and father- mother concept or polytheism etc.

### References

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