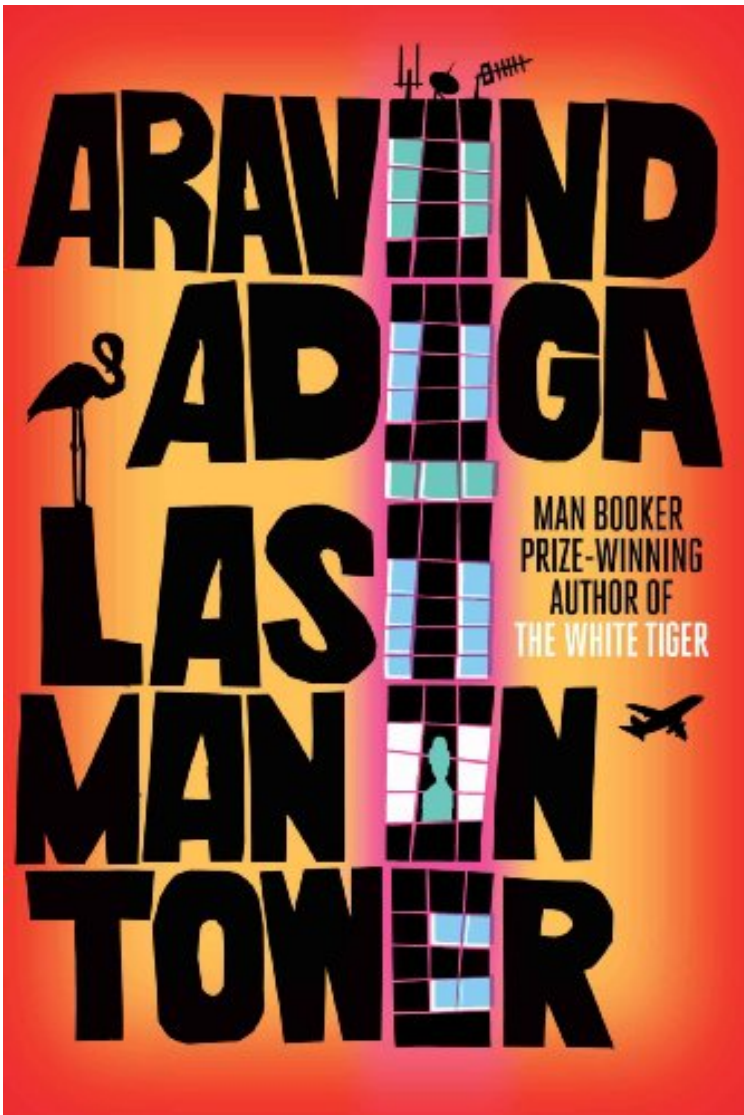


(Download free ebook) File size: 52.Mb

Last Man in Tower (English Edition)



Par Aravind Adiga

*DOC / *audiobook / ebooks / Download
PDF / ePub*

Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #156727 dans eBooksPubli le: 2011-06-16Sorti le: 2011-06-16Format: Ebook Kindle

(Download free ebook) Last Man in Tower (English Edition)

Par Aravind Adiga : Last Man in Tower (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Last Man in Tower (English Edition):

 Download

 Read Online

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAsk any Bombaywallah about Vishram Society - Tower A of the Vishram Co-operative Housing Society - and you will be told that it is unimpeachably pucca. Despite its location close to the airport, under the flight path of 747s and bordered by slums, it has been pucca for some fifty years. But Bombay has changed in half a century - not least its name - and the world in which Tower A was first built is giving way to a new city; a Mumbai of development and new money; of wealthy Indians returning with fortunes made abroad. When real estate developer Dharmen Shah offers to buy out the residents of Vishram Society, planning to use the site to build a luxury apartment complex, his offer is more than generous. Initially, though, not everyone wants to leave; many of the residents have lived in Vishram for years, many of them are no longer young. But none can benefit from the offer unless all agree to sell. As tensions rise

among the once civil neighbours, one by one those who oppose the offer give way to the majority, until only one man stands in Shah's way: Masterji, a retired schoolteacher, once the most respected man in the building. Shah is a dangerous man to refuse, but as the demolition deadline looms, Masterji's neighbours - friends who have become enemies, acquaintances turned co-conspirators - may stop at nothing to score their payday. A suspense-filled story of money and power, luxury and deprivation; a rich tapestry peopled by unforgettable characters, not least of which is Bombay itself, *Last Man in Tower* opens up the hearts and minds of the inhabitants of a great city - ordinary people pushed to their limits in a place that knows none.

Extrait If you are inquiring about Vishram Society, you will be told right away that it is pucca absolutely, unimpeachably pucca. This is important to note, because something is not quite pucca about the neighbourhood the toenail of Santa Cruz called Vakola. On a map of Mumbai, Vakola is a cluster of ambiguous dots that cling polyp-like to the underside of the domestic airport; on the ground, the polyps turn out to be slums, and spread out on every side of Vishram Society. At each election, when Mumbai takes stock of herself, it is reported that one-fourth of the city's slums are here, in the vicinity of the airport and many older Bombaywallahs are sure anything in or around Vakola must be slummy. (They are not sure how you even pronounce it: Va-KHO-la, or VAA-k-la?) In such a questionable neighbourhood, 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. For years it was the only good building which is to say, the only registered co-operative society in the neighbourhood; it was erected as an experiment in gentrification back in the late 1950s, when Vakola was semi-swamp, a few bright mansions amidst mangroves and malarial clouds. Wild boar and bands of dacoits were rumoured to prowl the banyan trees, and rickshaws and taxis refused to come here after sunset. In gratitude to Vishram Society's pioneers, who defied bandits and anopheles mosquitoes, braved the dirt lane on their cycles and Bajaj scooters, cut down the trees, built a thick compound wall and hung signs in English on it, the local politicians have decreed that the lane that winds down from the main road to the front gate of the building be called Vishram Society Lane. The mangroves are long gone. Other middle-class buildings have come up now the best of these, so local real-estate brokers say, is Gold Coin Society, but Marigold, Hibiscus, and White Rose grow and grow in reputation and with the recent arrival of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, a five-star, the area is on the verge of ripening into permanent middle-class propriety.

Yet none of this would have been possible without Vishram Society, and the grandmotherly building is spoken of with reverence throughout the neighbourhood. It is, strictly speaking, two distinct Societies enclosed within the same compound wall. Vishram Society Tower B, which was erected in the late 1970s, stands in the south-east corner of the original plot: seven storeys tall, it is the more desirable building to purchase or rent in, and many young executives who have found work in the nearby Bandra-Kurla financial complex live here with their families. Tower A is what the neighbours think of as Vishram Society. It stands in the centre of the compound, six storeys tall; a marble block set into the gate-post says in weathered lettering: This plaque was unveiled by Shri Krishna Menon, the honourable defence minister of India, on 14 November 1959, birthday of our beloved prime minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Here things become blurry; you must get down on your knees and peer to make out the last lines: . . . has asked Menon to convey his fondest hope that Vishram Society should serve as an example of good housing for good Indians. Erected by: Members of the Vishram Society Co-operative Housing Society Fully registered and incorporated in the city of Bombay 14-11-1959

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. The more enterprising of the residents have paid for improvements to this shabby exterior: hands have scrubbed around some of the windows, creating aureoles on the faade, further complicating the patchwork of pink, mildew-grey, black, cement-grey, rust-brown, fern-green, and floral red, to which, by midday, are added the patterns of bedsheets and saris put out to dry on the grilles and balconies. An old-fashioned building, Vishram has no lobby; you walk into a dark square entranceway and turn to your left (if you are, or are visiting, Mrs. Saldanha of 0C), or climb the dingy stairwell to the homes on the higher floors. (An Otis lift exists, but unreliably so.) Perforated with eight-pointed stars, the wall along the stairwell resembles the screen of the women's zenana in an old haveli, and hints at secretive, even sinister, goings-on inside. Outside, parked along the compound wall are a dozen scooters and motorbikes, three Maruti-Suzukis, two Tata Indicas, a battered Toyota Qualis, and a few children's bicycles. The main feature of this compound is a three-foot-tall polished black-stone cross, set inside a shrine of glazed blue-and-

white tiles and covered in fading flowers and wreaths a reminder that the building was originally meant for Roman Catholics. Hindus were admitted in the late 1960s, and in the 1980s the better kind of Muslim Bohra, Ismaili, college-educated. Vishram is now entirely cosmopolitan (i.e., ethnically and religiously mixed).

Diagonally across from the black cross stands the guards booth, on whose wall Ram Khare, the Hindu watchman, has stencilled in red a slogan adapted from the Bhagavad Gita: I was never born and I will never die; I do not hurt and cannot be hurt; I am invincible, immortal, indestructible. A blue register juts out of the open window of the guards booth. A sign hangs from the roof: All visitors must sign the log book and provide correct address and mobile phone number before entry by order of The Secretary Vishram Co-operative Housing Society. A banyan tree has grown through the compound wall next to the booth. Painted umber like the wall, and speckled with dirt, the stem of the tree bulges from the masonry like a camouflaged leopard; it lends an air of solidity and reliability to Ram Khare's booth that it perhaps does not deserve. The compound wall, which is set behind a gutter, has two dusty signs hanging from it: Visit Speed-Tek Cyber-Caf. Proprietor Ibrahim Kudwa Renaissance Real Estate. Honest and reliable. Near Vakola Market. The evening cricket games of the children of Vishram have left most of the compound bare of any flowering plants, although a clump of hibiscus plants flourishes near the back wall to ward off the stench of raw meat from a beef shop somewhere behind the Society. At night, dark shapes shoot up and down the dim Vishram Society Lane; rats and bandicoots dart like billiard balls struck around the narrow alley, crazed by the mysterious smell of fresh blood. On Sunday morning, the aroma is of fresh baking. There are Mangalorean stores here that cater to the Christian members of Vishram and other good Societies; on the morning of the Sabbath, ladies in long patterned dresses and girls with powdered faces and silk skirts returning from St. Antony Church will crowd these stores for bread and sunnas. In a little while, the smell of boiling broth and spicy chicken wafts out from the opened windows of Vishram Society into the neighbourhood. At such an hour of contentment, the spirit of Prime Minister Nehru, if it were to hover over the building, might well declare itself satisfied. Yet Vishram's residents are the first to point out that this Society is nothing like paradise. You know a community by the luxuries it can live without. Those in Vishram dispense with the most basic: self-deception. To any inquiring outsider they will freely admit the humiliations of life in their Society in their honest frustration, indeed, they may exaggerate these problems. Number one. The Society, like most buildings in Vakola, does not receive a 24-hour supply of running water. Since it is on the poorer, eastern side of the train tracks, Vakola is blessed only twice a day by the Municipality: water flows in the taps four to six in the morning, and 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. The residents have fitted storage tanks above their bathrooms, but these can only hold so much (larger tanks threaten the stability of a building this ancient). By five in the evening the taps have usually run dry; the residents come out to talk. A few minutes after seven thirty, the reviving vascular system of Vishram Society ends all talk; water is coursing at high pressure up the pipes, and kitchens and bathrooms are busy places. The residents know that their evening washing, bathing, and cooking all have to be timed to this hour and a half when the pressure in the taps is the greatest; as do ancillary activities that rely on the easy availability of running water. If the children of Vishram Society could trace a path back to their conceptions, they would generally find that they occurred between half past six and a quarter to eight. The second problem is the one that all of Santa Cruz, even the good part west of the railway line, is notorious for. Acute at night, it also becomes an issue on Sundays between 7 and 8 a.m. You open your window and there it is: a Boeing 747, flying right over your building. The residents insist that after the first month, the phrase noise pollution means nothing to you and this is probably true yet rental prices for Vishram Society and its neighbours are at least a fourth lower because of the domestic airports proximity. The final problem, existential in nature, is spelled out by the glass-faced noticeboard: NOTICE Vishram Co-operative Hsg Society Ltd, Tower A Minutes of the special meeting held on Saturday, 28 April Theme: Emergency nature of repair... Revue de presse I was absolutely mesmerized by this novel, and think that Aravind Adiga is already, with this, his second book, the most exciting novelist writing in English today. --A. N. Wilson Extraordinary and brilliant... Adiga is a real writer - that is to say, someone who forges an original voice and vision. --Sunday Times A funny yet deeply melancholic work, Last Man in Tower is a brilliant, and remarkably mature, second novel. A rare achievement. --The

Economist