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A conflict between bourgeoisie culture and indigenous value system in *The Murder of Aziz Khan*: A Marxist Study

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Abstract: Issue of survival in a society obsessed with class difference and class conflict is a critical dilemma. The post-independence literature discusses the ideological, socio political and ethnic issues and indigenous value system of newly independent Pakistani society. A society's structure is always built on conflicts among social classes. The novel of Zulfikar Ghose also includes different characters from several socioeconomic classes, and the aim of my study is to explore the conflicted relationship among these social classes. I will examine the presence of social class in the novel and the effects it has on the lives of different characters. My analyses seek to explore the ideology of dominant class and how it controls and suppresses all action of those who belong to the working class. I will also focus on the elements of society affected by all these oppressions. Further my study will critically discuss capitalism and operation and accompanying ideologies of capitalism. This study will use Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's views to analyze Zulfikar Ghose's *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. My analyses will suggest that readers of *The Murder of Aziz Khan* might themselves become more interested in viewing and taking their own society in a more crucial and critical manner.

Keywords: Capitalism, Class conflict, economical control, Oppression, Ideology, Alienation,

Introduction

All human history can be predicted and explained by the competition among antagonistic classes different from each other on the basis of economy. The existence of classes is somehow connected with historical phases of development and enhancement in the means of production. Class struggle leads specifically to the dictatorship of working or proletariat and that this dictatorship by itself is the only stage leading to destruction of classes and to classless society. Karl Marx regards classes and class struggle as a historical phenomenon which took place at a given stage of historical development by carrying the fight on until it results in a socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Classes are a vast group of people different from each other on the basis of the relevant historical system and its relation to the ways of production.

This analysis will use Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's views to analyze Zulfikar Ghose's *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. The power structure in the novel is critiqued from a classically Marxist perspective, based on class theory. The novel addresses the issue of late capitalism and struggle on behalf of indigenous people living in a society to gain their rights and its influence on society.

With the emergence of Pakistan, the old world, the united India, was coming to an end with certain consequences. The country was in initial stages of development. That was the era when a new order was building the actions and destiny of millions of people in the whole of the subcontinent, people who were excited about the change they were expecting, on the other hand carrying up the thrilling holocaust which came in the wake of freedom. This duality of the time was a great challenge for writers to write about.

Zulfikar Ghose, an influential writer, poet, critic and educationalist captured the prevailing socio-political conditions of since 1947 in his novel *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, published in 1967, is the only significant fictional work representing the sudden existing post-Independence social reality and the emergence of capitalism in Pakistan in the 1960s. The novel depicts how the ruling

industrialist and capitalist society ruin the lives of proletariat class. The story is about the wealthy Shah Brothers who conspires to wholly destroy the farmer and land holder named Aziz Khan who has denied selling his property to them.

The Shah Brothers represents the Bourgeoisie. This term in the Marxist vocabulary simply means capitalist, or management. Those who control the means of production like Shah Brothers are the manipulators of economic process. On the other hand Aziz Khan represents the Proletariat. But Marxists look very carefully at who belongs here – no artisans, no peasants, and no farm laborers. The Proletariats are the workers, those who have nothing to do with but their hands. Shah Brothers, the capitalists, who represent the great power of the gross money, can wreck punishment on Aziz Khan who belongs to the general public of Pakistan, enlarging the Marxist theory that who so ever controls wealth, controls everything of the entire society.

This analysis will show how the presence of capitalist class disturbs the lives and economic system of proletariat class. This essay will critically discuss capitalism, its affairs and its accompanying ideologies. This analysis will reveals Aziz Khan's unwanted shift from a happy man to a man who has no home, relations, family and anything else which was once a part of his life, because of the rule of capitalism and arise of class distinction.

Literature Review

This portion will deal with the critical survey of the scholarly work already done with reference to the issue of class conflict, capitalism and its consequences.

Peter Berry in his book *Beginning Theory* (1996) says that Karl Marx is of the view that a society's culture is dominated by those who are rich and prestigious by means of reproduction. As every work of literature is the reflection of a culture, so it cannot be studied in isolation from the social background of the society. According to him society is divided into two different parts-one is upper or bourgeoisie and other is lower or proletariat. Marxism in general and Karl Marx in particular were in demand of a classless society.

In *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx* (1983) Alex Callinicos describes that Capitalism is a source to give rise to class conflict or class struggle. Apart from society capitalism also has an important role in shaping workers. The main aim of class struggle is to make the transformation of working class possible. This experience of struggle makes the difference of class possible in workers' mind. Callinicos makes it clear that the aim of Marxism is to make working class aware of their rights. International Working Man's Association by Marx begins with the idea of working class's emancipation, which must be conquered by the working class themselves.

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) is also about the same issue of class conflict and capitalist society. The novel very clearly makes a critique on the traditional caste and religious system that refers to the present industrializing India. Through the character of Balram Halwai and his quest to get rid of the troubling life obsessed with poverty and depressing Rooster Coop, the novel presents Marxist tendencies. It's a voice for the reawakening of the poorer class of India to realize the true rights of their own in a society. It also encourages the poorer class to make a rebel against the heartless and cruel ruling class against them. The novel imposes a Marxist aspect that the superstructure ruling in a society surly be challenged. The novel tells the reader about India's institutional corruption and criticism on the superstructure forced by Marxism.

In the Research article "Angela's Ashes: Class Struggle and the Dream of Betterment" (Farahmandian & Iseni 2013) it is mentioned that class struggle and the effects it has on society is a prominent concern of Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*. It's an Irish autobiographical novel which shows the social and financial hardships McCourt bears in his homeland United States and Ireland. Angela's Ashes is a story of a person's journey from hardships to freedom for the sake of betterment in life.

The Metamorphosis (1915) by Franz Kafka is about the dehumanization of human being done by capitalist economic perspective. Class distinction as bourgeoisie and proletariat is vividly present in *The Metamorphosis* in the face of Gregor Samsa's Boss as

one who own a prestigious business empire and Gregor himself along with his family as one who are bound to obey the command of those who are higher in rank than them. These distinctive social ranks are appropriately describing Marx's point of view. The Metamorphosis by the character of Gregor Samsa also describes the alienated life people in general and workers in particular are facing with the emergence of industrialization.

Research article "Impact of Class on Life: A Marxist Study of Thomas Hardy's Novel Tess of the D'Urbervilles" (Farkhnanda, 2013) refers that the role of class and class conflict is one of the central issues in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of The d'Urbervilles* (1891). Hardy by his protagonist Tess who belongs to the lower class shows how the social class of 19th century is exploited by those who have power and who belong to the upper class. The novel is a true depiction of lower rank of society as victim and higher rank as manipulator and exploiter.

Tariq Rehman in his book *A History of Pakistani Literature in English* (1991) declares the perspective of alienation in the novel *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. He has covered the issue of capitalism and its organizational mechanism and the consequences it had on people in the form of destructive fallout.

To sum up, the critical review of works about all relevant issues will facilitate to accomplish this study rigorously as an increment into the already existing critical material.

Conceptual Framework

Marxism is a world view based upon the socio-political and economic system of a society with an ideology to bring improvement and change in society. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are the earliest theorist of this movement that emerged in mid nineteenth century. In *The Communist Manifesto* (1847), co-authored by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, it is of the view that the capitalist or bourgeoisie had enslaved the proletariat or working class by control over goods production and economic policies. Marx and Engels declare that economic control of all economic resources including property must be

in the hands of government, so that they may treat all people with equality.

In his work *Das Kapital* (1867) Karl Marx presents the idea that economic conditions and social relationships are interrelated. Marx presented the idea of Ideology. He says that it is the ideology of Bourgeoisie or capitalist class by which they rule over the proletariat class. Marx asserts that Bourgeoisie because of their economic power finds the courage to exploit the lives of lower class economically. Marx gave the idea of base and superstructure. Relationship between both base and superstructure refers to capitalism. According to Marx the laborer's work is external to the workers. He has given the idea of alienation of workers as labors causing unhappiness among them and ruins their mind and body.

By considering these views of Karl Marx this study will investigate Zulfikar Ghose's *The Murder of Aziz Khan* which is an appropriate depiction of Marxism theory.

Analysis

Class is a certain group of people who differ from one another on the basis of occupied land, ways of production, social organization and its role and the shared dimensions of social wealth. The struggle among different classes of certain values determines the economic and social relations among individuals. Tension, problems and conflicts among these all classes lead to revolutionary and encouraging organization of society.

Emerging trends of mechanization and growing industrialization caused great changes in the lives of individuals and personal relation in early years of Pakistan's development after partition. Zulfikar Ghose in his novel *The Murder of Aziz Khan* depicts the material condition and its consequences on political circumstances and socio-cultural condition. In his novel Ghose highlighted the issue of the rise of capitalism and the emergence of capitalist ideology. He clearly reveals the ill treatment faced by ordinary people in the hand of rich and wealthy people who turned their heaven into hell.

A writer cannot be discussed in isolation from his social structure and the ideology which is dominating the society. Marxism also sees the writer as a product of social control in which he is living. Ghose's portrayal of the class distinction and social collapse based upon the economic resources shows that he himself have lived through a period of time which have these issues in society in actual. Ghose himself has personally experienced the economic crises faced by people in the early years of the independence of Pakistan when he came back from the foreign country he was living to visit his birth land after staying away from it for 20 years. He presented his all disappointment and disillusionment in his novel *The Murder of Aziz Khan* with a true essence.

The story of the novel revolves around the conflict among the Shah Brothers and a landlord and farmer Aziz Khan whose land the Shah's are determined to acquire and which he completely refuses to sell on any rate. Intricately plotted, the novel gradually moves and unfolds, exposing the emotions of different characters; it reveals the ruthless brutality and greed of the Shah brothers and the consequences of moral corruption on all of them; and then finally, in a significant brilliant prose filled with an astonishing, melodic and poetical intensity, the novel elaborates the suffering of the farmer Aziz Khan with so much poignancy that it seems a quite symbolic vision of a deep wound in the soul and heart of a new nation.

The novel is divided in four parts: The Argument, Afaq, Javed, and Aziz Khan. All these four parts cover many of the important incidents leading to the final catastrophe.

The novel opens with the first part 'The Argument'. This part of the novel shows that the whole of society is divided into two parts. First as capitalist or bourgeoisie class represented by Shah Brothers and the other one is proletariat class refers to the working class and farmer community. Aziz Khan is the person who is a landlord, a farmer and one who has been presented by Ghose as one to highlight the suffering faced by lower class in the hands of capitalist system. From the very beginning the novel portrays the difficulties farmers face with the emergence of capitalism. The setting is in Kalapur where the farmers

are contrived to sell their own land in the hands of Shah Brothers who are the one and only consumer and purchaser at that time. Helplessness and trouble on the farmers is shown here which is the result of capitalism and the evil part is that all capitalists are doing such things with the support of government, both morally and economically.

The Landlords were aware that in the hands of the Shah brothers, who had the money and the government connections with which to bring in foreign machinery, the land's output and consequently its value would multiply several times; but they also knew that they were in no position of bargain. (Ghose 1967, 13)

The landlords and farmers were cognizant of the situation that the only choice they have in front of them is to sell their land to Shah Brothers. Though they were not happily agreed to the offer Shah Brothers accorded to them, the fact was that they had no option to make an argument. They did so because of the continuous loss and passive output they were facing from their lands and properties. They were so much overwhelmed by the idea of submissiveness that despite of finding an alternate choice of hard work or so they sell their land to Shah Brothers.

The only rebellious character that emerges in the course of the novel is Aziz Khan, who refuses to sell his land to Shah Brothers. By doing so he instigates a big shock for Shah Brothers who consider themselves as owners of everything. The relation between capitalism and proletariat is shown by the conflict of Aziz Khan and Shah Brothers with seventy acres of Aziz's land as an object of conflict. In the novel Ghose highlights the shattered ideals and standards of the lives of people belonging to the lower class. It is shown by the affiliation and importance Aziz Khan gives to his land, which was not only a piece of land but a whole matter of life and existence to him:

And these seventy acres, this place of earth, this world of Aziz Khan, did not appear to him as land, as a property with a market value. It was a sufficiency of existence. So

that nobody could take the land away from him without first taking away his existence. (Ghose 1967, 16)

Aziz Khan's rejection of the proposal of Shah Brothers for his land is a matter of great annoyance for them, and later this annoyance will turn into a great sense of enmity and anger. This anger will ruin the whole asset and relations of Aziz Khan.

Class distinction is clearly presented in the novel, and it is quite appropriate according to the Marxists views about class distinction and class conflicts. It is shown through the difference of the ways of living and financial sources adopted by both bourgeoisie and proletariat class. Shah Brothers – Akram, Ayub and Afaq – are living a glorious and exaggerated lifestyle. The luxurious lifestyle, cars, jeeps, brands and imported artifacts are part of their life. On the other hand proletariat class in general and Aziz Khan and his family in particular are living a life completely opposite to that of Shah's ways of living.

The second part of the novel Afaq reflects how the Shah Brothers serve the role of manipulators to control the lives of others. In their greed to have more and more they use others as puppets and themselves as their lords. Views of Aziz Khan's wife Zakia against Shah Brothers are very appropriate when she says:

Some people can never have enough...They are greedy bunch. (Ghose 1967, 54)

Vast economic difference which divides the ruling and the ruled reflects the exploitation of the ruled on behalf of those who are ruling. This acts of manipulation show the reality of the deeds of capitalism which is completely against the apparent goals of capitalism to bring happiness and welfare. Corrupt attitude of Shah Brothers becomes quite worse when they wrongly tied Aziz Khan's son in the case of the murder of the peasant girl which is actually committed by Afaq, the youngest of Shah Brothers. He was the person who committed the rape of an innocent peasant girl leading to her death. And later the whole reality was turned against Aziz's son with the use of money and power by Shah Brothers. It was the money that makes it possible for Shah

Brothers to go for a best lawyer in order to protect their brother. They have the power to buy law and witness for their own benefit and they did so which ultimately instigate the death sentence for Aziz's son Rafiq. By showing this Ghose criticizes that capitalist has a power to turn any institution on their own choice and under their control law and judiciary is no more available for the lower class for justice. Despite of such a cruel act they are safe and enjoy their own life with their own rules. Afaq who was a sinner in reality went to England for his studies and left the mark of a murderer's father on the head of Aziz Khan:

Rafiq had been hanged. Jamila Bano was dead. And here he was, vermin, running to a hole in the darkness of an alien country. (Ghose 1967, 145)

Part three of the novel named Javed begins with the horrible incident of Rafiq's death in Aziz's family.

This part of the novel is a direct critique on the divergent system of income which reveals that all wealth and resources are for the capitalist society and rest of the deserving Pakistani population is far away from these resources. The greater part of the population is left off to the facilities like better education, health treatments, supply of water, means of earning and justice, etc. All of these facilities are for those who are powerful and belong to ruling parties.

Death of Rafiq causes a tragic condition on the mind of Aziz Khan. He was unable to bear his land as neglected one, this sort of condition left an element of helplessness Aziz Khan feels and it is just because of the attitude of Shah Brothers. Dual attitude of Shah Brothers is shown by Ghose when it comes to the point to buy Aziz's land when he and his son Javed are willing to sell it to Shah Brothers to fulfill their financial needs. Now Akram and Ayub treat Javed as if he is not a human being and they have no humanity to be concerned about the needs of those who are in any kind of trouble. Now their offer is totally opposite to that of the one they gave previously, it was two thousand per acre previously and now it is only two hundred per acre. Their careless attitude toward Javed and Aziz Khan represents the

dehumanization of proletariat in the hand of capitalism as it is clear from Ayub's words when Javed left the room after rejecting their offer:

He'll come crawling back, I tell you, he'll come on his hands and knees. And it'll be nothing. (Ghose 1967, 142)

Zakia's health issues and financial hardships ruin the health and mental condition of Aziz Khan. His condition was not bearable for Javed and he started a job under Shah Brothers. Ghose gives the details of the worker's routine and reactions against Shah's treatment towards them to highlight the issue that all process of production is workable because of all the workers and still they are being exploited by capitalist system. They are not given their rights and for the demand of their rights all the workers establish a union. This action against capitalist system is not acceptable for Shah Brothers and lead to the injustice and misbehavior towards Riaz and Saleem and later towards Javed. The three were dismissed by Shah Brothers. Akram and Ayub's attitude towards the union of workers is displayed in the words of Akram:

Don't worries we could dismiss ten times the men we employ and immediately find new labor to replace them. I don't think anyone who has a stomach to feed would want to strike. Not in this country. (Ghose 1967, 207)

These words of Akram reveal the post-independence scenario and the initial years of Pakistan's development. Through this Ghose also reveals the corrupt and manipulative strategies of capitalism. It presents a picture of Pakistani society in its earliest years in the persons of Aziz Khan, who represents ancient and traditional values, and the Shah Brothers, who are out to exploit the resources and people of the new country for their personal gains. According to Karl Marx the laborers' work is external to the workers. It is true to the attitude of Javed, Riza and Jameel's attitude towards their work. All three along with other workers working in Shah's mill are symbols of the issue Marx is grumbling about. They are feeling alienated from the system they are working in because they didn't own it. Javed is working in Shah's mill because he is in a problematic situation and he has to support his family at any rate and he has to pay his mother's hospital debts. This sense of

isolation and alienation prolongs until his death by the hands of Shah Brothers as a result of the conspiracy against Aziz Khan's Family. This is the same feeling of alienation which has been discussed by Marx in his views about alienation.

Troubles in the life of Aziz Khan are not ended even after the death of his sons. Still he has a long way to suffer. His search for justice to save his land from Shah Brothers shows the duality of judicial system towards the rich and the lower. Justice is available even for a lie in return of money when it comes to the rich and corruption does not matter then. But when it comes to people like Aziz Kahn, they cannot even have justice being on right side and when they ask questions judiciary says law and judiciary is incorruptible. By presenting this matter Ghose makes a critique on chaos, lawlessness, transgression, cruelty and inequality that characterize the capitalist rule in the early years of Pakistan's development.

Marxists presuppose that the economic base of any society restraints its superstructure. *The Murder of Aziz Khan* very clearly reveals how the base consists on certain forces and relation of different means of production. These bonds regulate other system and relationships of society known as superstructure. A society's culture, political system, rituals, institutions, and state come under the tag of superstructure.

Aziz khan as an evicted person viewing his own land while standing far away behind barbed wire shows the victory of capitalist rule over the working class. Ghose reveals the horrible impact of the system of capitalism and its ideology on human psyche and identity. Under the rule of capitalist ideology Aziz Khan who was once a landlord and a happy man living his life with his family remain empty handed. Now he has nothing in his life, neither his sons and wife nor his land. Capitalism has its own ideology and they imposed it on people to follow it willingly or unwillingly. And those who will not obey their ideology, they never forget to ruin his life as done by Shah Brothers to Aziz Khan. He is left as a person who is murdered by soul and this refers to the title of the novel as *The Murder of Aziz Khan*.

Conclusion

An analysis *The Murder of Aziz Khan* under the perspective of Karl Marx's views and Marxist theory reveals the impact and role of class in a person's life. The working or lower class is always being exploited by the elite under the shade of capitalism. Indigenous people remain under the suppressed influence of the bourgeoisie and this is an actual hurdle in their way of success and progress. The novel is a direct critique on the ideology of capitalism and it reveals the capitalist rule being disloyal to the actual duties towards people. The ruling elites and capitalist can do everything disregard to the tag of law and legality. It is obvious from the study of *The Murder of Aziz Khan* that in this novel Ghose makes a direct demand to the working of capitalism in a country or in a society, appropriate to the actual welfare of the people rather than their exploitation in all possible means.

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