

Politics in Society and Literature: A Marxist Perspective



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Abstract: *One of the political theory ever formulated was The Communist Manifesto by Marx was an epoch-making philosophy that was presented before us; a war of class and materialism. The theory changed the dynamics of the 20th century. Marx gives an account of communism where they visualize a society devoid of class, state, and property that envisaged the theory of capitalism which has a huge impact on the life of million of which the genesis is the modernism. Marx crucial remarks "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness". There had been constant conflict between classes when it comes to marginalized. The question arises if there is any aesthetic of the marginalized or the oppressed that lived in the slum area. Not a single play from 1900-1920 was based on the life of marginalized. Marx as a philosopher believes that a human defines himself/herself through his consciousness and that the individual consciousness is not separate from the social group or a class. The consciousness of the social group defines the consciousness of man. Economically it's between people who are in power and the people who are deprived of it and that money is synonymous with power. The paper discusses how the "marginalized" is an ideological perspective with an extinction of progress and there is a constant conflict of war in both politics and literature when it comes to marginalized.*

KEYWORDS: *Marxism, Class, Distinction, Consciousness, Marginalization*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Marxist criticism looks at literature from the historical point of view taking into consideration the social and material condition of the period in which the literary pieces were written. The marginalized are socially and economically backward in all sense. There was a politics in the representation of ideas that impacted the marginalized. According to Marx, it is not the conflict of the idea but our conflict with our material needs to be known as dialectical materialism produced for personal survival. The world without class division without money could be a utopian thought. Capitals are owned by individual and maximizing their profit leads to heavy concentration of wealth and this economic system of capitalist flourishes on exploitation which Marx names it as "alienation" where the workers are deprived of happiness that must be paid a little more.

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On the contrary workers are abandoned from the fruit of labor. The labor he gives is returned to the in form of wages where they become a commodity themselves. The worker doesn't see himself in the fruit of labor.

The capitalist alienates the worker as they are in constant competition with each other for their jobs. It is interesting to note that war was never a creation of the marginalized. In order to understand Marx theory, we must understand the cultural materialism. "Cultural Materialism" is an anthropological theory that understands human nature where it gives more priority to material condition.

II. OBJECTIVE

- To understand Cultural materialism.
- To fill the gap creating a consciousness through Marxist reading of literature.
- To highlight the subsistence of liberty that overrides historical conversation
- To illustrate the period of artistic and social change

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Society often conceals the face of tyranny behind the mask of freedom. Class struggle is a feuding our society since ages. As per Marx, there are two classes of people, bourgeois and proletariat. Our history is a witness to the struggle between classes. Fractured Times: Culture and Society in the 20th Century was a collection of essays by Eric Hobsbawm illustrate a period of artistic and social change. Hobsbawm's understanding of art and Literature draws him towards the Marxist theory. The main goal of his essay is to trace the decline of the bourgeois class. "For a Marxist of Hobsbawm's generation, these changes made it possible for the revolutionary working class to create a new kind of society. In the present situation, evident throughout the fractured times, no clear alternatives exists. The result is a world of barely organized chaos". (Dworkin June 30, 2014). Morality slipped from sociological writing after the post-war era. Instrumentality replaced morality as a constitutive of social behaviors. Craig Calhoun remarks " It is one of the illusions of the both Marxism and Liberalism that they can escape from the work of imagination of pure rationality. (59) Marxism portrayed the basis of the revolutionary behavior of the working class towards the capitalist with a vision towards scientific progress which in turn led to the social progress. New Social Movement was class based which was focused on labor class. An analysis of progress and tradition was central to Calhoun's study.

IV. ANALYSIS

Darwin's theory (1858) and Marxist theory developed our understanding of the society in a scientific way.



They challenged the creation of supernatural ideas from the historical point of view. Darwin challenged the religious sentiment. An intellectual climate generated by rationalism and enlightenment. Championing the theory of Darwin we had Aldous Huxley that everything is God said. *New Brave World* spoke about the historical material and the politics behind it. Darwin and Marx spoke about the historical pattern of evolution. The novel *New Brave World* by Aldous Huxley (1932) was written during the beginning of Great Depression just after the Industrial Revolution started. The play depicts the dystopian society. The play focuses on polarization of classes and the value of community. The World war witnessed the damage that led to the destruction of the people due to the technological advancement and industrialization. The damage caused sparked debate on environmental protection and morality. *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley applies the Marx criticism with a pertinent question who actually was benefited in the society? The play opens a window where readers are asked to peep through in order to understand Huxley's dystopian novel. Huxley speaks about social stratification through layers of rocks Alpha, beta, delta Gamma Epilions. He finally comes to the point that in a stable society the only one benefited is the lower class as they are tuned to hardship and suffering. The play is more a sort of political writing.

Theater plays an important role in representing the political philosophy if we go back to the plays of ancient Greece. "The task of steering audience reception is one of the key considerations of the dramatic text" (Wallace & Shephard 9). Gerhart Hauptman's *The Weavers* 1892 brings the sharp focus on the conflict between have and have not. The play has no protagonist. The community represents the protagonist and their relationship with the manufacturer. The play is in four acts that clearly reflects the disgruntlement of the community against the manufacturers. The play seeks for the sympathies of the audiences for the weaver community, their poverty, and their misery. At the end, the reactionary weaver has shot accidentally which is the irony of fate. The story remains just news. The climax of the play conveys the message that unless and until someone faces the misery individually, people do not react. They react only when it happens to them. The masterpiece of Hauptmann's play *The Weaver* conveys the politics of poverty where the courageous poor rose against the rich.

The *Ecstasy of Rita Joe* was a controversial play and widely discussed. This play is described by many as the first Canadian play and the very first play that opens the national art center in 1969. The most incredible about the play is the work of art and how the work remains as a pertinent play. The play depicts the plight of Rita Joe, the young aboriginal woman who becomes a victim of both self and the society which she belongs i.e. the Canadian aboriginals who travels to the city for freedom only to be doomed. Rita Joe travels to Vancouver with her boyfriend. She goes through a series of flashbacks, the experiences of her city, the courtroom scenes and ultimate that leads to her death. The word ecstasy is her capacity for her ability to love, her passion for life and her incredible memories of her grandfather and family. Her challenging experiences in her life raises above the tragedy of her life and reminds her of the real value of human life, human experiences along with the injustices faced on the streets. The play is in a stream of consciousness style. Joe's death is a result of the exploitation

and imposition of colonialization on indigenous people. The play further focuses the helplessness of Rita Joe who is trapped between two cultures and faces both political and social pressure. The play is lyrical and full of songs. She further depicts the injustices of the country's legal system and it also looks at the human capacity to overcome these. She confronts a white racist magistrate and faces a series of charges from a vagabond to prostitute. Rita Joe was marginalized everywhere she went may it be a church, social center, neighborhood, workplace, schools etc. *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* strikingly presents the societal pressure which threatened the lives of the poor Indians in Canada and how Reeta Joe, David Joe and Jamie Paul try their level best to liberate themselves from it" (Balachandran, *The Atlantic Critical Review* 66). The play is, therefore, it is a major historical document of Canadian Literature that could be viewed under the Marxist lens.

Ibsen's Nora in *Doll's House* does not represent a woman rather a society. She is an example of every woman in this society who is subdued, subservient, submissive, unnoticed, marginalized and to whom society takes for granted. This is one of the ways looking at the Marxist philosophy of life. Nora represents the challenges every woman faces since ages. A capitalist attitude of the society who has taken women for granted. Templeton describes Nora's marriage to Torvald as "a pan-cultural ideal, a relation of superior and inferior which the wife is a creature of little intellectual and moral capacity whose right and a proper station is subordination to her husband" (Templeton 138). It is said that the sound of the door that Nora slammed disturbed the peace of millions of houses and the sound echoed all over Europe. Nora's perceptive is the Marxist perspective of life that confronts the capitalistic ideology. The play depicts how money has affected the society and the social problems and can be clearly visualized through the Marxist lens. The ramification faced by the society by Nora's decision was beyond the marriage beds. The main doctrine of Marxist criticism is that the social condition of an individual; is because of his consciousness and the relationships between humans are tainted by their economic consideration.

Can Subaltern Speak? Spivak stood in favor of the subaltern woman and creating a consciousness among all in the world forum as a revolution of working class and the rural peasantry. As per Spivak, Bhubaneswari was historically muted. Her suicide was diagnosed by people as a result of her illicit affair which was absolutely baseless. She was menstruating when she hanged herself. Thus could never be a case of illicit pregnancy. Bhubaneswari suicide was a result of political motivation, not the romantic failure. Though could not be called as a purely political act, her suicide could be understood as a case of the subaltern speech that could never be understood. The language becomes obscure, her suicide while menstruating was an impulse to go off and fight certain battles of her own spirit. Bhubaneswari was a part of the Indian Independent struggle and was assigned a job of assassinator which was a nightmare for her. She was unable to handle the pressure and the suicide was the result of it. In the Marxist point of view, there is a relationship of the historical condition and the reaction of an individual to the circumstances.

The work is an analysis of the historical base of the culture in a postcolonial period in the Marxist framework, is an inscription of subaltern studies.

Color has played a vital role in exploitation in a U.S Society. Racism prevailed in terms of class division based on color by dividing the black and white workers. The racial oppression in U.S is a systematic oppression. No one really mourns for the crime committed to them. There was the capitalist oppression of Women. The woman who nurtured and saved the life is treated as a commodity but is not a part of commodity production. The Marxist feminism focuses on how women were exploited in a capitalist economy where women labor is not compensated. Capitalism was synonymous with oppression. "Women's work in biological and social reproduction is a necessary element of all modes of production and one often ignored by Marxist economist" (Bensten 1969). *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State in the light of Researches of Lewis H.Morgan (1884)*, is regarded as one of the historical document on family economics that studies family from economical aspect s like marriage, fertility, social security, dowry, mate selection etc. Toni Morrison is considered to be a Marxist Feminist of Afro-American Literature. "Marxist Feminists have also attempted to access the world economic development of capitalism as a contradictory force for the liberation of women" (Federics 2004). The characters of *Beloved* (a narrative experience of 19th century slave experience) are subject to historical slavery and their detrimental effect of stigmas on black women of class war from the Marxist point of view. The play was set during a time just before the Civil Right Movement. One of the main ideology of Marxist theory was the "dialectical materialism" that was to elucidate the complex process of historical development. The white idealism was imposed on the Afro-American communities. On the other hand Black men were not even family oriented. They left their families causing degeneration. In the process, it was the women who suffered the wrath of the circumstances. The division of classes is one of the major elements of Marxist criticism where money was synonymous to power. A Marxist critic looks at this division of classes where people with no money were less privileged. People were treated like slaves as they had no money and therefore their masters had full right on them. Racism and hegemony played a significant role in Morrisons play *Beloved*. "According to the source *Interdisciplinary Studies, Racism and Hegemony 2004*, by Penn Stated Press, *Sethe* is defined "animal like" due to her skin color and is used as a form of "humiliation, sexual harassment" and a view "no other than a cow to be milked" ultimately signifying a "breeder for livestock" to the oppressive American group. In the novel *Sethe* expresses this and further expands on the power whites had by stating "anybody white could take your whole self for anything that comes to mind. Not just work, kill or maim you , but dirty you" (*Beloved* 251) (qtd. Morales Oct 28, 2015)

V. CONCLUSION

Literature is a product of time to which it belongs. The Marxist perspective analyses Literature in terms of its historical context and conflict of socio-economic classes. The conflict between classes was a result of much literary works whether it is music, art, literature, visual art etc. Marx saw the world in a different perspective. He was a thinker

who ranked with Plato, Aristotle, Galileo, and Copernicus. Till date Marxism is one of the most powerful ideologies that moved the world. The paper studied and highlighted the subsistence of liberty that the overriding historical conversation have failed to explore and tries to fill the gap creating a consciousness through Marxist reading of literature.

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AUTHORS PROFILE



Dr. Itishri Sarangi is a well known feminist-turned -professor turned author. She is a poet, editor, and critic rolled into one. She is an independent warm-hearted visionary who believes in the beauty of her dreams and full of life 24x7. The basic aim of her creations is its analytical aspect is to reach the truth, which is both vital and universal. Dr. Sarangi has served as an honorary member of the Juvenile Justice Board. She had presented a paper at Harvard University, USA. PhD's have been awarded under her guidance. She is invited as the resource person to several Universities and Colleges. At present, she is working as an Associate Professor of English at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology, Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.



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