

Film Analysis of Parasite in the Light of Marxism

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To cite this article:

Sagar Samy. Film Analysis of Parasite in the Light of Marxism. *International Journal of Literature and Arts*. Vol. 11, No. 1, 2023, pp. 1-4. doi: 10.11648/j.ijla.20231101.11

Received: October 2, 2022; **Accepted:** November 18, 2022; **Published:** January 13, 2023

Abstract: The media text chosen for this research is the film “Parasite”. The purpose of the study is to correlate the film with Marxism. Marxism can be defined as the political, social, and economic philosophy. It was invented by Karl Marx that highlights the struggle between two classes of society; the bourgeoisie or capitalists, and the proletariat or working class. A critical analysis of the film has been done to distinguish where Marxist theory was observable. The findings showed that the film Parasite is a perfect illustration of Marxism. It gracefully depicts the class system, which can also be correlated to the real world. On one side, it showed an elite class, so, on the flip side, it exposed the lower class. Hence, both are standard social classes in today’s society. The film doesn't only depict Marxism but also shows the dark side of humanity. On one point, it gives hope to the Proletariat class by delivering a message that upward mobility is possible. So, on the next point, it also alerts the Bourgeoisie class that if the working class tries to become rich, they struggle for it, and are ready to cross all limits to achieve it. Henceforth, a powerful and substantial connection was observed between the film Parasite, Marxism, and the society.

Keywords: Parasite, Media Text, Film Analysis, Cultural Studies, Marxism, Karl Marx

1. Introduction

The story of the film “Parasite” revolves around Kim’s family, who live in a semi-basement of the town. They have been shown as the lower class in the film. The four members of The Kim Family include Ki-Teck (father), Chung-Sook (mother), Ki-Woo (son), and Ki-Jung (daughter). Ki-Woo plays the role of the protagonist in the film. His aim is to work hard to uplift his family from poverty.

2. Parasite and Marxism

The Marxism theory has been beautifully shown in the film. As Parasite shows a class depiction; upper class “Bourgeoisie” and lower class “Proletariat”. Hence, Bourgeoisie and Proletariat are the main classes in capitalism. Though, other classes such as landowners, petty bourgeoisie, farmers, and social scum also exist but are not significant in terms of the subtleties of capitalism [5]. The Kim Family occupies the proletariat class, while The Park Family inhabits the Bourgeoisie class. The class depiction is observable in terms of economy, wealth, lifestyle, influence, and status [3].

3. Marxism

Marxism is a political, social, and economic philosophy. It was invented by Karl Marx that highlights the struggle between two classes of society; the bourgeoisie or capitalists, and the proletariat or working class [14].

4. Parasite

Throughout the movie, the Marxist Theory was clearly visible. It evidently drew a line between The Park Family and The Kim Family. On one side, The Park Family was shown as wealthy, elite, and affluent commonly “Bourgeoisie” in terms of Marxism, which means the social order that is dominating the low or middle-class group in a society [10]. So, on the flip side, The Kim Family was presented as “Proletariat” which means the lowermost or one of the lowest economic and social working classes in a society [15]. The entire movie showed a relationship between two families, the wealthy Park family, and the poor Kim family which was jeopardized by selfishness and social prejudice [6].

5. Film Analysis

The movie starts with a cinematic shot and shows a semi-basement, where Ki-Woo is searching for a Wi-Fi password because the entire family depends on a public/open network. He states to his sister that the password has been changed, on which she suggests her brother to try “123456789”, but unfortunately no luck. Finally, they manage to get it from the window of their washroom. Similarly, the scene of the mother and father was established as she kicks Ki-Teck, who is lying on the floor. That’s how the introductory scene was disclosed to unveil the entire family; their living standards, activities, social class, and everything.

All the members of a family do small tasks to earn money like packing the pizza boxes etc. At the time of delivering boxes to Jung Yi-Seo (Pizza girl), Ki-Woo plays very smartly by not only interrogating money for the work done, but also enquiring about the job, and firing a current employee. Here, one thing was crystal clear: upward mobility is possible and Ki-Woo can do anything to make it happen, no matter what the consequences. At this point, it seems that he knows what he wants and what he is willing to get.

Min-Hyuk plays the role of a catalyst in the film. He was shown as Ki-Woo’s friend who gives him an opportunity for a well-paying job as a tutor of a wealthy family. Initially, Ki-Woo gets tense and doubts his abilities, but he eventually agrees. And here the second class of a family was officially revealed by showing a big house that exhibits the elite class; their high standards, healthy eating, and luxurious living. Talking about society Marx & Engels states that modern industrial society is divided into two parts; bourgeoisie and proletariat. The bourgeoisie depicts those who own the means of production. On the flip side, the proletariat delineates the working class of society. They can bring a revolution by obtaining control to destroy all the ownership of private properties, and different classes of society which will lead to the disappearance of all classes [8].

Now, Ki-Woo did not only get a job but also received an extra addition to the salary from Yeon-Kyo (Wife of Mr. Park). His ambitions for upward mobility become stronger and seems to come true by bringing the revolution. As mentioned above, the working class can actually bring a revolution by taking control of the upper class. Now, the point is how he is going to do this. Whether he would be successful in upgrading the class from working to elite, or not.

Class conflict occurs when there is direct and lasting animosity between the upper class and lower class in the social context, which is clearly visible at different points in the flick. According to Carew Hunt, the inherent opposition between an individual's and society's demands is what causes conflict in life. This conflict cannot be resolved by discourse because it is a result of unchangeable circumstances and cannot be reduced to a class struggle [1].

Working as a tutor for an elite family, he discovers that Yeon-Kyo and her son are into art. So here, he accelerates his plan by bringing his sister to the house. For now, his intentions illustrate that the endgame is to get all family

members employed at The Park house.

Directly or indirectly the ruling class dominates the mind of the working class which led them to work, polish, and impress the upper class. It shows that whenever a lower class tries to become rich, they struggle to achieve it. They set goals, look for multiple streams of income, and find ways to pursue a healthy lifestyle [4]. As it can be evidently seen in the film; the struggle of The Kim Family to impress The Park Family.

These visuals in the film are also supported by Blackwell, which affirms the idea of the ruling class in all societies and generations is to rule the ideas. It means that the class which is ruling the material force of the society is also ruling the psychological force. The class which owns the material production also dominates the mental force of an individual [2]. In the film, Ki-Teck was taught to learn to drive Mercedes, so he can get a job as a Chauffeur at The Park Family. On the flip side, Choong-Sook gets employed as a housekeeper for them.

The story can also be related to the base/superstructure of Marxism. As John Storey states in a book, “two terms are used in Marxism, namely; base and superstructure. The base represents forces and relations of the production. The forces of production refer to the technology, tools, workers, their skills, etc. While the relations of the production refer to the class that is being engaged to it. The particular relations of the production in the capitalist class produces bourgeois/proletariat relations. The superstructure consists of institutions like legal, political, educational, etc., and absolute forms of social consciousness including religious, philosophical, ethical, and cultural, etc. caused by these institutions [13].”

The mode of production is produced based on particular ways of fulfilling the necessities of life. It is exquisitely portrayed in the story of the film Parasite. Now, all the family members are in the elite house and enjoying their moments. As The Park Family has gone on night camping. As J. D. Roth also states in the book *Your Money: The Missing Manual*, there is a solid connection between wealth and happiness, the authors say: “Rich people and nations are happier than their poor counterparts; don’t let anyone tell you differently. [11].” Here the turning point of the story occurs while the Kim family was living a lavish life. It was a moment that completely changed The Kim Family’s life with the ring of a doorbell.

The celebration was interrupted by the return of Moon-Gwang (ex-housekeeper of the Park family). After that, the discovery of Moon-Gwang’s husband (Geun-Se) in the basement of the elite house, gives Choong-Sook the advantage to permanently kick them out. So, she starts scaring them to call the police.

A single slip of Choong-Sook’s family flips the coin in a second. Now, Moon-Gwang immediately records a video and starts blackmailing them. Both the lower-class families, who were planning to feed off the rich are now in the arena. It’s interesting to see which family emerges victorious.

During the violent struggle of both families, The Park Family

makes a surprise return home. Now, the mess was cleaned, Moon-Gwang and her husband were locked in a basement and Kim's family managed to hide before the Parks' return.

It shows how two families from a low-class fight to hit the milestone of the upper class. Indeed, an "epoch of social revolution" can commence, but it doesn't have to end with a revolutionary shift from one form of production to another. There must be a growing social class that may influence events and challenge the dominant class; only then the common destruction of the competing class is possible [9].

It was a dark and stormy night when the three members (except Choong-Sook) of the family returned home. The rain flooded their semi-basement house. And they have to spend a whole night in a government shelter. The urban flooding didn't only destroy the house but also its hopes of Ki-Teck.

The next morning, employees of Kim's family were called for their duties as it was a birthday party for Mr. and Mrs. Park's son Da-Song.

Ki-Woo decides to end this melodrama by killing Moon-Gwang and her husband Geun-Se. Here the climax takes place when Ki-Woo goes to the basement, and Geun-Se attacks him from the back and gives him a brain injury. Then after he takes a knife from the kitchen to kill other Kim family members for causing his wife's death. He appears in an open area where the party was taking place and he stabs a knife at Ki-Jung, on which Ki-Teck rushes towards his daughter, while the mother takes a Bar B Q stick to retaliate with Geun-Se. The son of the Park family faints on the spot to see this all happening.

Hence the class difference was once again so clear when elites and The Park Family (Bourgeoisies) were busy escaping, running, and shouting while Kim's family (Proletarians) were trying to save their daughter.

During this mess, Mr. Park was yelling and asking for keys to Ki-Teck, on which he throws keys, and when he tries to pick keys from the ground, he witnesses the same smell (the odor of a poor) and pinches his nose. This odor moment shows the clear discrimination between two classes as defined in Marxism theory. Body Odor discrimination usually occurs in a workroom that includes many people and it causes due to poor hygiene, minimum diet, or maybe by a medical condition [12]. This act makes Kim so furious, that he takes a knife and murders Mr. Park on spot. Then after he manages to escape to the basement for a long time.

The ending image of the film *Parasite* was the same as starting. The only difference was that this time it was dark and snowy, despite the bright and sunny apartment. Specifically talking about the ending, the director of the film stated in an interview that there are people who are making a significant effort to achieve change. He sympathizes with those individuals and supports them at all times. Cinema plays a vital role in evoking genuine and honest emotion inside the audience. While mentioning the synopsis of the flick, he said that instead of telling people how to act or to change the world just because something is wrong, this film aims to make you aware of the dreadful,

exploding force of reality [7].

6. Conclusion

There were so many points when Marxism was not only witnessed but also understood through this film. From elite to poor, semi-basement to the big house, daily wage to established business, ordinary/cheap food to healthy eating, body odor to fragrance, hard-living standards to luxury standards, and so on. The whole movie stunningly showed Marxism which was also supported by different authors as mentioned above. It also depicts a reality-based message of society, which can also be observed in the surrounding; especially educational institutes, professional institutes, government institutes, and almost every institute that is existing in society.

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