**Workshop 06: The Application of Marxism to the Analysis of Literary Texts**

**1. Marxist Analysis of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice***

It is possible to do a Marxist reading of Austen’s work, just as one can look at how class conditions or economic problems function in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. In *Pride and Prejudice*, like the rest of her novels, it could be argued that Austen criticized the class system. According to Karl Marx, a class is determined by its relationship to the means of production. In other words, class is determined by its ownership, or non-ownership of the raw materials, factories, and land that make up the means of production. Though Marxism came later than the first published copy of *Pride and Prejudice*, it is interesting to note that much of the driving force of the plot centers on the very idea of class.

One of the main points of Marxism is class distinction or class struggle. The society of Austen’s time was influenced by Elites. The Bourgeoisie enjoys luxury while Proletariat does the labour. Members of the upper class do not marry members of the lower class because of their social condition. As we can read in the novel, Miss Bingley and Darcy do not want Bingley to marry Jane who is from lower class. Mr. Darcy himself does not want to marry Elizabeth because of socio-economic condition. Later on, the affection of Elizabeth changes mind of Darcy.

Because of the dominancy of the upper class, there are certain norms and rules set by the upper class. In the past, one’s social condition was known by the servants or luxuries one has. In the novel, we can read that Elizabeth walks from Longbourn to Netherfield and when she entered Netherfield Miss Bingley asked that if she had walked here. When Elizabeth replied that she has so, later on Miss Bingley makes fun of her saying that she is from medieval age. If someone does not travel in Cart as Elizabeth and walks in mud they are said to be medieval Ian. When the elites enter somewhere, much respect is given to them even no one could move. They are a little proud of their selves. As when in the first ball, Bingley, Darcy enter the room, the dance and music is stooped until they get to their position. But Elizabeth does not care about these norms; we can say she is a rebel against these social norms. She walks to Netherfield. She laughs when Darcy and Bingley passed her when everyone stands still.

Elites dominancy in the novel is shown through the character of Lady Catherine. In the families of elites, one is dominant when s/he has the money and resources. As we can see, Lady Catherine is ruling all the lands of Darcy. She forces Elizabeth not to marry Darcy but it is Elizabeth’s affection and her rebellious mind which does not allow her to accept Catherine’s words. She does not agree to Catherine and she gets married to Darcy. Darcy is also influenced by Catherine as she wants him to marry her daughter. But he is also strongly influenced by affection of Elizabeth. In addition, the lower class or the working class is not represented in *pride and prejudice*. This shows the reality of the time that no importance was given to the lower class. None of the servants has any dialogue. The supremacy of the upper class was attached to the army of servants they had. It is impossible that the upper class does not know about the existence of lower class but they chose to ignore it. Here the Reflectionism theory can be applied which says that the text represents the time which had produced it. The fact that the novel does not contain any dialogue between members of lower class shows how the society at that time was controlled by the upper class. Austen was attached to the lower class but she ignored them because the readership of hers was mainly from the upper class.

In Marxism, it is said that money and class runs the society. Most of the people try to have good relation with the upper class because of their money. In the novel, the character of Mrs. Bennet is the height of Marxism. Mrs. Bennet’s only goal is to keep good relation with the upper class so that she can marry her daughters to them. The Bennets have lived their lives with upper class carving for money and power which is rooted in their minds and hearts. They are independent but they have caged themselves in the social norms set by upper class. The best example of the influence of money on lower class is of Mr. Wickham. Darcy forces him with money to marry Lydia and if he ever abandons his wife then he would have to face the consequences.

According to Marxist theory of literature, society consists of two classes; one who controls the ideologies and system and rules them and the other group which remains out of power. In case of *Pride and Prejudice*, the two groups are men and women. Marriage is one of the main themes of the novel. Women had to marry men just for money to secure their future. The dominancy of male in the novel is clearly shown through the character of Mr. Bennet. When Bingley arrives at Netherfield, Mrs. Bennet tells her daughters that they can only visit the Bingley if their father first meets him. It clearly shows that women have no will for making their own decisions, the daughters cannot meet Bingley if their father does not meet him. Then if the daughter is not married she cannot have her share in the Bennet house. Clearly it can be seen that in the novel women are oppressed. If a girl can dance, sing, draw, and know modern languages and good walking style can be easily married. A girl having above qualities can easily be accomplished if she also has good social conditions. Mr. Darcy, for instance, says that he has only seen half dozen women whom are capable of accomplishment.

Austen had done her best to criticize the upper class of setting such norms that increases their wealth and power. The upper class does not want to distribute their property. That is why they do not marry the lower class and try their best to marry the upper class. She has tried her best to show that money does not matter, the materialistic things do not matter, but it needs love to care for someone.

**2. Marxist analysis of *Cinderella***

## Cinderella can be viewed from the Marxist criticism due to the conflicts of classes shown throughout the tale. This theory associates a close perspective between wealth and poverty. A hierarchy within the Kingdom shows the difference between the proletariat (working-class) and the bourgeoisie (upper-class). The king and the prince live in a castle while the working people live in old, run-down houses. The working class have to fend for themselves while the King lives in his castle having servants do everything for him; the king lives in riches while the working class have to work hard to survive. The higher economic status of the King controls the lower economic status of the common people which is considered hegemony. This fact is proven when the King declares every maiden of the kingdom, to come to the ball. In addition, this is proven when the King and Prince force every lady of the land to try on the shoe in order for the prince to find his love. People of the land are being forced into going or doing something they may not be interested in. This is the perfect example of capitalism because there is a higher power (The King) which controls the lower one. Marxism can also be applied to the class in Cinderella’s household. Hegemony can be shown in the household by Cinderella being a servant girl while her stepmother and sister are considered and treated like royalty.  She takes there orders without question and they give her nothing, including appreciation; they demand things to be done (cleaning, washing clothes, cooking, etc), and she does it. In a way, the household runs just as the kingdom does; proletariat’s work for the bourgeoisie while the bourgeoisie dictate the proletariat's life.

**3. Marxist Reading of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm***

George Orwell, English Essayist, Journalist, Critic and a Socialist, wrote to give awareness of social injustice and present opposition to totalitarianism. Althusser says, “Art ‘makes us see’, in a distanced way, ‘the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes’.” Orwell’s novella *Animal Farm* makes us see that.

In the novella, Mr. Jones, the owner of the Manor Farm, represents the ruling classes of society or the country’s governing elite. Consumerism is prevalent in him. He takes from the animals what they can offer and often forgets feeding them. Old Major Boar all the animals gather and are told, “Man is the only enemy we have. Remove man from the scene and the root cause is abolished forever.” His speech is, in a way, a classic Marxist criticism of capitalist exploitation in which the human (the farmers) own the means of production (the farm buildings and tools), while the animals slave away and receive in return just enough to keep working which is very similar to the privileged ones and the working animals, in this novella.

The pigs and dogs are the ‘privileged’ ones. They do little and take in more. They do what they wish to and their acts, no matter how evil, are justified. Power is maintained by ‘Repressive Structures’ and ‘Ideological Apparatuses’ as well. Other animals work and are exploited, specifically Boxer who is of use only until he can work, when he is hurt and fails to work and be of some use, he is given off. This is *“commodification”* according to Marx. Just as the people of the working class are treated, the animals are treated in this novella. Napoleon makes his ways straight: he kills if need be with the help of his ‘nine enormous dogs’. There is this ‘legitimate use of force’. Snowball is dashed out. Whatever Napoleon does is ‘made justified’ by Squealor, who represents the Press.

All the animals are made to believe that all is being done for their welfare but in reality the interests of the dominant class are secured. Ideological Power is greater than Material Power and Napoleon has both. Class discrimination is there and it gets to be because of Hegemony. The powerful ones exploit and those being exploited do not even whimper because they do not even know they are being exploited. The idea of “milk and apples” being good for pigs as they are the “brain-workers” is similar to the ideology put forth by the elite. The worker is made to feel foreign to the products of his/her own labour. According to Marx, the material interests of the dominant social class determine how people see existence, individual and collective.

By the end it is seen how the revolution fails and those who were to revolutionize become one with those who exploit. Pigs do everything they said was not to be done. The end and failure shows it is not possible to have a classless society which is the main aim of Marxism. Equality, comradeship, social and economic justice, freedom of thought, speech and action are curbed, all in all.