



Class Distinction in Zakia Mashhadi's The Cover Faces

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Abstract
Society is a combination of the upper and the lower class: The upper class or Bourgeoisie is busy in their worldly endeavours and their quest for 'more and more; whereas, in contrast, the lower class or proletariat strives for a proper one-time meal. Over time, this disparity between the classes gets horrible. The drastic consequences of this disparity become observable in society in hatred and injustice. Different authors of colonial India have jotted down social imbalances of the subcontinent, including Zakia Mashhadi. Her short story, 'The Cover Faces', extracted from an English translated collection 'In Search of Butterflies' by Saeed Naqvi (2017), was taken for qualitative textual analysis under Lois Tyson's (2006) 'Theory of Class Distinction'. Zakia Mashhadi showed the two parallel classes in society, where Bourgeoisie have almost everything; however, in the same society, Bourgeoisie even deprived the proletariat of the fundamental rights and necessities of life.

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Introduction

The unequal distribution of wealth in society leads to a horrible situation where only the lower poor class becomes the victim. Meredith (1914) said, "the difference of income is the fundamental cause of class distinction" (p. 46). This class distinction and injustice give a license to the elite class to enjoy their status without even noticing the problems of the lower poor class. In comparison, or response to this huge disparity leads to unequal wealth distribution. Karl Marx proposed the notion of equal distribution of wealth in society, which could turn society into a heaven on earth (Masood & Shafi, 2020).

Marx and Engels stated in the Communist Manifesto that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Bottomore, 1992, p. 75). There was a huge disparity between the upper, elite class; and the lower, poor, working-class from ancient times. The main cause behind this distinction is the unequal distribution of wealth in society, disturbing the harmony and balance of justice in

society. According to Karl Marx, the dominant class has power over all the production. They exploit and control society by keeping in view the huge difference between the status of the lower class and them. This class distinction takes the lower, poor class to the jaws of death (Britannica, 2019).

This very situation is portrayed in the various short stories by world-known authors. Very few female Indian Subcontinental authors put their surroundings on the paper (Hassan, Shafi, & Masood, 2021). A famous Urdu short story writer Zakia Mashhadi is also prominent among them. The short story taken here for analysis is *The* Cover Faces by Zakia Mashhadi (2017) from the English translated collection of short story book *In Search of Butterflies*, edited and translated by Saeed Nagvi, published by Oxford University Press Pakistan in 2017. Zakia Mashhadi parallelly offers the two classes in society. The upper class has everything but in the same culture. On the other hand, the lower class is deprived of life's necessities (Fatima, Ahmed, & Shafi, 2021).

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Problem Statement

A society becomes heaven when every member of it has equal rights. Instead of thinking of itself, the upper class takes care of the lower class and provides life necessities instead of running for heaps and heaps of gold. The situation causes an imbalance in society. The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. This distinction has severe consequences which lead the poor working class to the jaws of death (Fatima, Rahim, & Musaddiq. 2021). The present study analyzed the Englishtranslated short story *The Cover Faces* by Zakia Mashhadi, keeping in view the two extreme sides of the society. It highlighted the living style of both classes and showed the Marxist concept of "Haves and Have-nots."

Research Objectives

This research study aims to have the following objectives:

- To explore class distinction in *The Cover Faces* by Zakia Mashhadi
- To highlight the effects of class distinction on the lower class in *The Cover Faces* by *Takia Mashhadi*.

Research Question

The researcher aims at answering the following questions:

- i. How does the selected short story *The Cover Faces* by Zakia Mashhadi highlight class distinction?
- ii. How does class distinction affect the lower class in the selected Zakia Mashhadi's short story *The Cover Faces*?

Significance of the Study

Fewer researches were conducted on this particular story through this significant perspective so far. This current study serves as a piece of motivation to the young scholars to from analyze the short story different perspectives and angles. This study is significant because it highlighted the burning issue the poor face due to class distinction and unequal distribution of wealth. This research work would contribute to the field of literature, especially in understanding the translated short story of Zakia Mashhadi The Cover Faces from a Marxist perspective. Researchers can lead to similar themes in future studies in Pakistani and Indian

literature in English (Masood, Shafi, & Darwesh, 2020).

Delimitations

Some delimitations to this research study are:

- There are 18 short stories in In Search of Butterflies. However, this research study is limited to analyzing Marxist perspective textual content: Class distinction in the short story *The Cover Faces*.
- This research study is delimited to the element of Class distinction within Marxism.

Literature Review

This section deals with reviving the previous articles in the light of class distinction under the Marxist perspective. While describing classes, Bourdieu (1984) said, "(classes are) sets of agents who occupy the similar position and who, being placed in similar conditions and submitted to similar types of conditioning, have every chance of having similar interests, and thus of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances" (p. 231). It creates a difference in society as the Bourgeoisie considers themselves superior and hate the proletariat. Due to the upper class, they are forced to live under the poverty line in the vicious circle.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (18<u>20-1895),</u> a German philosopher sociologist, founded the Marxist school of thought. They wrote the Communist Manifesto (1848) and declared a rise in communism to confront ideology, business, and history. French theorist Louis Althusser (1918-1990) gave various Marxist perspectives such as Freud-Marxism and structuralism. Emerging from Marxist ideology, Althusser (1970) says that art is the mirror of society: it presents all the doings of society. It makes us conscious of our existence in society (Shafi, 2019). Marxist theory was extended to the academic literature on the theoretical level through this proposition.

Discourse analysis informs society (Hussain, Arif, & Saleem, 2021). In literary criticism, Marxism is considered a renowned social concept. It has numerous perspectives and concepts; particularly, Feudalism is a well-known Marxist concept. In the 19th-century first time, Karl Marx used this term. "Feudalism is not social or an economic system but a method of government which is revamped by the economic

and social environment. In this type of government, the relation is essential among lord and vassal, not within-subject and ruler nor state and citizen" (Coulbourn et al., 1956).

Karl Marx gave the concept of the proletariat, which describes the lower working class who earns money by selling their human resources at industries owned by the upper class (Azeri, 2013, pp. 2-3). Another major concept is the Bourgeoisie, described by Engels (1847) as "the class of the great capitalists who, in all developed countries, are now almost exclusively in possession of all the means of consumption, and the raw materials and instruments factories) (machines. necessary for production." The class of capitalists owns every production field, exploits the lower one for their vested interests, and maintains the class difference between the upper and lower class (Masood, Shafi, Rahim, & Darwesh, 2020).

In the wide domain of literary criticism. various researches in Marxism have been carried out and continue to be explored. Among them was one of the significant research carried out by Köseoğlu (2017). By following the qualitative approach, he did the textual analysis. He explored social class problems, social prejudice, and social conflicts between the upper and lower classes in society. This research also presented the living standards of both classes through data analysis. It showed how these two classes had different values, roles, and needs. The upper class put itself at a higher level. It maintained its status without considering the needs of the lower class (Roohi, Masood, & Mushtag, 2021).

Asci (2019) adopted the qualitative method for research to do the textual analysis of a novel to find out the elements of Marxism by focusing on the class difference and the suffering of the working class. He highlighted the exploitation of the upper class through several examples from the text. The upper class was owing all the means of production and exploiting the labour-power of the lower class worker. He showed that even the poor class, due to class distinction, cannot even divorce their partners because there must be a sum of money for that. Only the upper class can do this. The factory owners, the capitalist, gave less salary to their workers. They even did not permit the poor low-class people to feel and think. The researcher showed all the lower class suffering due to class discrimination and its consequences (Masood et al., 2020).

In their study, <u>Uddin and Ullah (2011)</u> figured out the class difference and class conflict between the two houses that represented the upper and lower class in society by following the textual analysis approach. They adopted the qualitative method and found out the bourgeois who had all the means of production kept the class difference with the proletariat. They also tried to oppress them in every possible way. They also showed a significant difference between the living styles of both classes. One class had dogs and weapons to protect the illgotten wealth and to oppress the lower class. In contrast, the other class lived under the poverty line (Ullah, Arif, & Qaisar, 2020).

In another study, Zanke (2019) showed the pathetic life of low cast poor people by following the qualitative research approach through the comparative analysis of India's two epic misery representable novels. He highlighted the class differences which led the low caste people to a miserable situation. Those low cast poor people only suffered due to the behaviour of the so-called noble high class. The study showed the life of both protagonists of the novels. One protagonist was a sweeper, and the other was labour at a textile mill. Both were exploited socially and economically. The high-class society did social injustice and put the low-class poor people in psychological conflict.

Scholars agreed that the Marxist idea related to class distinction is widely applicable to the literary works of the whole world. The study by following qualitative approach highlighted the social injustice, class discrimination, and ill-treatment with poor of the upper rich class due to class differences. This evil concept is very much dominant in the literary works of the subcontinent, which needs to be discovered. Based on this proposition, Zakia Mashhadi's story *The Cover Faces* needs a deep and detailed study and analysis from a Marxist perspective. As such, it offers a knowledge gap that is yet to be discovered.

Research Methodology

The main aim of this part is to provide an outline of the methodology used to carry out this research study. It consists of the sample used in this research study, research design, theoretical framework, and data analysis method. It also gives the details of the procedure followed by the researcher for conducting research. The

selected texts of Zakia Mashhadi's story *The Cover Faces* is taken for analysis and discussion. She has contributed a lot in the literary field. Her works present the real images and burning issues of the society for which it was necessary to explore them further.

The researcher adopts the content analysis technique for analyzing the selected data. According to <u>Titscher</u>, <u>Meyer</u>, <u>Wodak</u>, <u>and Vetter</u> (2000), "content analysis is the longest established method of text analysis among the set of empirical methods of social investigation" (p. 55). This analysis method is used for the selected instances in the text to explore the class distinction by keeping in view the Marxist idea of "Haves and Have-nots." This research follows the qualitative research approach for data analysis.

The framework of analysis is important in aspect in the research (Masood et al., 2021). As regards the theoretical framework, it is based on Lois Tyson's (2006) Critical Theory Today. He says: "From a Marxist perspective, differences in the socio-economic class divide people in ways that are much more significant than differences in religion, race, ethnicity, or gender. Real battle lines are drawn to put the matter simply, between the "haves" and the "have-nots," between the Bourgeoisie and the proletariat" (2006, p. 54).

Data Analysis

Chosen textual excerpts from *The Cover Faces* by Zakia Mashhadi, translated by <u>Saeed Naqvi (2017)</u>, were analyzed by following the Marxist perspective of class distinction in the current section of this study. In this chapter, the researchers have done text analysis. Text analysis reveals underline concepts in a writing (<u>Siddig et al., 2021</u>). Chosen textual examples from the short story *The Cover Faces* by Zakia Mashhadi translated by Saeed Naqvi are analyzed by following the Marxist perspective of class distinction.

Text 1 & 2:

"Walking past fountains, life-size marble statues, and flowered squares of green, Kulsoom was led to a drawing-room. Fairy castle, fairy castle, her mind echoed" (Mashhadi, 2017, p. 142).

"Her mother had died wishing for a small two-room house of her own" (Mashhadi, 2017, p. 142).

In the short story, *The Cover Faces*, Zakia Mashhadi shows the two extreme sides of society through her character: Kulsoom. , The upper class shows one extreme, and the poor class depicts the other extreme.

"Getting off the auto-rickshaw in front what looks like a fairy tale castle" (Mashhadi, 2017, p. 142).

Kulsoom, who belongs to a low-income family, takes an interview with an upper-class lady. She works for a magazine, and she must take the interviews of the high families of the society. Looking at the house, the very thought in her mind brings the concept of a fairy castle because it is not less than a fairy castle for the poor who do not have their own house. The upper class even has luxuries, as mentioned by the writer:

"Two foreign cars appeared behind each other and zipped out the gate past her" (Mashhadi, 2017, p. 142).

The upper class has imported cars, marble statues, fountains, and rows of flowers. However, on the other hand, the lower class cannot even afford their own house like Kulsoom's mother dies wishing for the two-room home. On the one hand, bourgeoisies have luxurious things and spend an extremely comfortable lifestyle. There are difficulties and hardships in proletariats who have nothing in their life, even their own two-room house. They only wish for the basic needs of life.

According to the Marxist perspective, this unequal distribution of wealth divides society into two groups. It is the root cause of class distinction in society. The rich who have everything to the next level of richness deprive the poor who have nothing even from life's necessities.

Text 3 & 4

"Kalsoom wanted to include many questions in her interview with Mrs. Singh: How does she remember how much she has? When she goes out, how does she decide what to wear? When she has used a dress once, and it becomes out of fashion before she can wear it again, what does she do with it?" (Mashhadi, 2017, p. 145).

"As some people chew bones so thoroughly that they are not even useful anymore to dogs, Kulsoom's mother used to continue wearing her clothes and sandals until they were useless for anyone else" (Mashhadi, 2017, p. 145).

Kulsoom has come to interview an upperclass lady, Mrs. Singh, who has every expensive thing in excess. While taking an interview, Kulsoom notices that the lady is wearing a branded expensive dress loaded with jewellery and the best diamond of the city. She has every luxurious thing as mentioned by the writer:

"Her soft, crafted, polished hands were a testament to the expensive beauty parlours and jewelers of the city" (Mashhadi, 2017, p. 144).

Mrs Singh has a collection of expensive branded clothes. It brings two questions to the mind of poor Kulsoom: How does she even manage to wear all those clothes? Furthermore, What she does with the suit after using it once? These questions arise in her mind because of the flashback of her low-income family. She seems on the screen of the mind that how her mother used to continue wearing her clothes and sandals until they were useless for anyone else as mentioned by the writer:

"When Kulsoom grew up, her mother would even wear her daughter's discarded clothes and slippers" (Mashhadi, 2017, p. 145).

With the help of Kulsoom flashback, the writer shows the extreme poverty of the poor that they wear old cheap clothes again and again because of the unableness of buying a new one. The writer shows the class distinction so clearly that the poor woman is wearing discarded clothes on the one hand. On the other hand, Mrs Singh, the elite class woman, has many clothing choices. The writer has compared the upper and the lower class of the same society and shows what the bourgeoisie "haves" and the proletariat "have-not". Marx's concept of class distinction is demonstrated in the quotes mentioned above that one class is living a very luxurious life. The other is struggling to meet their basic needs (Ahmed, Shafi, & Masood, 2021).

Text 5 & 6

"Life is one long holiday, the women [Mrs Singh] said in response to a question. Life is like a long vacation--- meaning fun, fun, and more fun. I went to Europe twice this year. London, France, and Switzerland. My daughter is studying in Switzerland. I know the streets in some cities there that are better than the Delhi streets" (Mashhadi, 2017, p. 153).

"Six years ago, I [poor old women] had a pair of slippers. It had so many nails that the thick skin of my soles became. But, yes, they saved me from the hot earth and from acacia thorns" (Mashhadi, 2017, p. 145).

Mashhadi grabs the readers' attention by showing both the upper and lower classes of society. For one class, life is just fun. They have everything in their life. Their living standards are above enough from the thoughts of lower-class people. They lavishly spend their money on the luxuries of life without even noticing the poor, who are deprived of even the basic living needs. On the one hand, an elite class lady, Mrs Singh, tells the easiness of her life and the spots where she used to spend her vacations.

On the other hand, Kulsoom thoughts about the poor older woman who had a pair of a slipper about six years ago. Many iron nails mended the pair of slippers. On the one hand, life is the name of joy, and on the other hand, life is the name of hardships, as shown by the author in the text:

"An old woman Kulsoom used to know could walk five miles of a dirt path, barefoot, from her village of Bahadurpur to Sultanpur" (Mashhadi, 2017, p. 144).

It clearly shows the class distinction that on one side, the older woman, just to earn a little money walked five miles, and Mrs Singh travelled from country to country just to spend her holidays. On the one hand, the poor older woman cannot buy new slippers to protect her feet from scorching heat and the thorns on the road. On the other hand, the elite class lady, Mrs Singh, has an excessive collection of various types of shoes, as mentioned by the author:

"In a large room, they [shoes] were displayed in glass cabinets, elegantly, as in a shop for its customers" (Mashhadi, 2017, p. 154).

The upper class has everything beyond their needs, and the lower class have nothing for their basic need. The writer shows the class distinction by describing what extra one class has and what the other class lacks. One is living a prosperous life, and the other is living under the poverty line.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, there are instances of class distinction in The Cover Faces by Zakia Mashhadi. This story is written under the Marxist concept of "Haves and Have-nots" which shows the extreme richness and extreme poorness in the selected short story The Cover Faces by Zakia Mashhadi. This study meets the desired objectives and research questions related to class distinction set at the beginning of the article. The concept of class distinction is evident in the society of the subcontinent, where the Bourgeoisie exploits the proletariat for their embedded financial, social, cultural and political interests. The researchers suggest the stylistic analysis of this short story to highlight different techniques used by the writer. Discourse analyses of the short story The Cover Faces can also lead to a new Marxist literature debate.

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