

## IMPACTS OF ECONOMY ON SOCIAL FABRIC: A MARXIST STUDY OF ZULFIKAR GHOSE'S *THE MURDER OF AZIZ KHAN*

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### ABSTRACT

*The capitalist system exacerbates the disparity between the material affluence of a privileged minority and the socio-economic deprivation of the majority. It functions to benefit a select few, while relegating the masses to enduring hardship and adversity. This research, utilizing a qualitative approach, applies Marxist literary theory to conduct a critical analysis of Zulfikar Ghose's *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. As a distinguished novelist, Ghose critiques the capitalist system, revealing its detrimental effects on societal norms and values. He illustrates how capitalism disrupts pre-capitalist social equilibrium, leading to class conflict and socio-economic exploitation. The research further demonstrates how economic forces profoundly influence socio-familial dynamics, with the relentless pursuit of wealth eroding moral and ethical standards. Additionally, it examines the ways in which capitalism fosters corruption, unchecked ambition, and emotional distress, thereby destabilizing social structures. The research concludes by asserting that economic inequality is a fundamental source of social unrest, advocating for systemic changes to establish a more equitable, harmonious, and prosperous society.*

**Key words:** Zulfikar Ghose, *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, Marxism, Economic determinism, Class struggle

### Introduction

Eagleton (2002) asserts that Marxism views history as an ongoing and dynamic process shaped by class struggle. It stands in opposition to class divisions and advocates for the creation of an egalitarian society. By aiming to raise the consciousness of the masses regarding their social, economic, and political rights, Marxism seeks to empower the proletariat to confront the injustices and inequalities imposed by the bourgeoisie. Through this collective awareness and activism, marginalized groups can free themselves from the dominance of the privileged elite. This collective struggle is regarded as the sole viable path toward achieving a fair and progressive society. "Marxism is a scientific theory of human societies and the practice of transforming them," which essentially means that the narrative of Marxism must convey the story of the struggles of men and women to "free themselves from certain forms of exploitation and oppression" (Eagleton, 2002, p. 65). Marxism highlights the importance of literature that centers on the struggles and aspirations of the working classes. Rather than being regarded as a mere indulgence or a passive source of entertainment, literature should serve as an active and dynamic force. It holds the potential to inspire resistance, catalyze transformative change, and advocate for progress and revolutionary ideals, making it an essential instrument in the pursuit of social justice. Eagleton (2002) asserts that Marxist critique is "not merely a sociology of literature", focused solely on the publication of novels or their references to the working class. Rather, its goal is to "explain the literary work more fully", which necessitates a nuanced consideration of its forms, styles, and meanings. Furthermore, this approach requires understanding those forms, styles, and meanings as products of a specific historical context (p. 3).

Committed authors possess the capacity to challenge ideological constructs by critically engaging with the realities surrounding them. Ghose is a Pakistani writer whose works possess the capacity to challenge dominant ideologies by reflecting on the societal conditions that surround him. Through his writing, he engages with critical issues such as moral decline, the erosion of traditional values, corruption, and the various forms of exploitation inherent in capitalist culture. *The Murder of Aziz Khan* offers a pungent critique of the impacts of economy on social fabric of capitalism in Pakistan. It portrays how economic structures shape and often disrupt socio-familial dynamics. It highlights the inherent class tensions and economic inequalities present in the text, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of class divisions and conflicts. By doing so, it aspires to raise awareness among the masses and encourage initiatives, aimed at establishing a more just and exploitation-free society.

Set in the early years following Pakistan's independence, the story of the novel illustrates how capitalist structures began to entrench themselves in society, undermining local values and disrupting the fabric of postcolonial life. It deals with the extensive influence of capitalism, highlighting its negative effects on various social and cultural aspects of life in Pakistan. The Shah brothers, who represent the capitalist elite, expand their economic power by establishing industries and mills across the country, often using both legal and illegal means. They systematically oppress the working class, exemplifying the novel's central theme of class conflict. Set against the backdrop of postcolonial Pakistani society, the novel reveals the deep-seated class divisions, contrasting the wealthy capitalist class with the impoverished laboring class. This division is primarily illustrated through the conflict between the Shah brothers and Aziz Khan, along with the farmers of Kalapur, who represent the exploited working class. The Shah brothers, as symbols of economic dominance, are portrayed as agents of exploitation, worsening the hardships faced by those like Aziz, who embody the economically marginalized. For them, poverty, hardship, and suffering are inescapable, while concepts like democracy, justice, and fairness hold little relevance. Conversely, the Shah brothers lead lives of comfort and luxury, often at the expense of the underprivileged, using their wealth to manipulate systems and perpetuate social inequalities, highlighting the entrenched power imbalance.

The exploitation of economically marginalized individuals, such as those represented by Aziz, by figures akin to the Shah brothers, is emblematic of societies dominated by capitalist hegemony. In such systems, the dehumanization of the lower class by the materially powerful reaches its peak. The affluent, symbolized by the Shah brothers, display an insensitivity towards the struggles and suffering of the impoverished, exercising control over various societal institutions to serve their own interests. Their actions are primarily driven by the relentless pursuit of wealth, often achieved through both legitimate and illicit means, with little regard for the welfare of the broader community. The novel illustrates how materialistic pursuits shape the socio-political fabric of society, reflecting the Marxist idea that economic factors underpin and dictate the superstructure. It suggests that an excessive obsession with material prosperity disrupts social relations, fostering an environment where capitalism undermines socialism in favor of individualism. This shift is portrayed as contributing to the decline of social collectivity, with capitalist individualism emerging as a dominant theme within the text. The novel demonstrates how traditional values, particularly the joint family system, are eroded, supplanted by a culture that prioritizes individual gain. It also addresses the increasing sense of alienation, the rise of urbanization, the influence of Western cultural norms, the prevalence of dominant ideologies, and the erosion of moral values.

## Literature Review

The generation of new knowledge is intrinsically linked to existing knowledge. Consequently, a thorough exploration of prior research is essential, prior to initiating any investigative endeavor. It is through this review of the literature that researchers can identify significant gaps in the current understanding of a particular field, thus providing a robust foundation for further inquiry.

The entrance of *The Murder of Aziz Khan* on the map of literary world brought immense fame for its writer at national as well as international levels. Ghose completed *The Murder of Aziz Khan* in 1967--the year when the industry-culture was in its initial stages in Pakistan, and when Pakistan was wrapped by turmoil politically. The publications of his novel not only achieved recognition at international level but also promised a new period in the Pakistani English literature. His novel was analyzed from different angles by the researches and critics. Rehman (1991) explores how the novel reflects the sense of alienation and isolation experienced by individuals within a capitalist society. He also briefly touches upon the issue of capitalism, examining its detrimental effects on both individuals and various societal structures.

Hashmi (1994) identifies land as a central theme and metaphor in *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. He argues that the protagonist, Aziz Khan, experiences both humiliation and the dispossession of his land at the hands of the emerging industrialist class in post-colonial Pakistani society. Ahmed (2009) analyzes the socio-political landscape of post-independence Pakistan in *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. He argues that the novel presents a realistic portrayal of the exploitation faced by the working class and the socio-economic inequalities that were prevalent in 1960s Pakistani society. The novel serves as a reflection of the deep-rooted class disparities and the systemic exploitation of labor, capturing the challenges of a society in transition. Ali (2016) focuses on the issue of class conflict and its impact on various characters in *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. She argues that the Shah brothers represent the capitalist class, while Aziz Khan embodies the working class. The ongoing class conflict creates turmoil across all sectors of society and the dominant capitalist class seeks to control and manipulate the actions of the laboring class, further exacerbating social tensions and inequalities.

To sum up, the existing literature on *The Murder of Aziz Khan* lacks a comprehensive examination of how the novel critiques capitalist structures, class struggle, and socio-economic exploitation through a Marxist lens. Hence, there lies a research gap in this regard.

## Research Methodology

This research is situated within the qualitative research paradigm, employing an analytical, interpretive, and deductive approach. Its theoretical framework is grounded in Marxist theory, which views literature as an ideological construct. This perspective encourages a materialistic reading of literary works, revealing the underlying class struggles present in the text. Through this lens, the research seeks to examine the influence of economic structures on social dynamics, class relations, and the exploitation of marginalized groups.

## Theoretical Framework

Grounded in materialist philosophy, Marxism perceives human history as an ongoing struggle between conflicting social classes. "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 14). The dialectical interplay between dominant and subjugated classes drives human progress, with economic determinism highlighting how material conditions shape social relations. When production means are

concentrated within the ruling class, it perpetuates exploitation and inequality, while the subjugated class, deprived of resources, remains trapped in a cycle of oppression.

Marxism fundamentally rejects class division and critiques the capitalist system as inherently exploitative. It argues that capitalism thrives by extracting labor from oppressed classes, concentrating economic power in the hands of a small elite. The rise of industrialization led to the formation of two distinct classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. According to Marx and Engels (1888), the bourgeoisie are the owners of the means of production, including factories, machinery, and resources, vital for generating economic value. “The bourgeoisie, class of the big capitalists, who in all advanced countries are in almost exclusive possession of the means of subsistence and those means (machines, factories, workshops, etc.) by which these means of subsistence are produced” (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 38). In contrast, the proletariat comprises propertyless laborers who are forced to sell their labor to survive, both socially and economically. They are subject to the demands of the bourgeoisie, often deprived of their fundamental rights and vulnerable to exploitation. Marx and Engels (1888) emphasize this disparity, asserting that that “the propertyless must submit to the bad conditions laid down by the bourgeois” (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 38). Furthermore, they highlight the erosion of workers’ independence, noting that that “the workers were deprived of the last remnants of their independence” (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 38).

Marx and Engels (1998) argue that the bourgeoisie regard the proletariat not as individuals, but as mere objects or commodities, exploiting their labor solely for personal profit. They view everyone as an object, a possession, or a subordinate being under their [capitalist] control (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 313). This perspective highlights the dehumanizing tendencies of capitalist society, where individuals are treated as mere instruments for the accumulation of wealth and power. This commodification of the proletariat is central to the functioning of capitalism. The bourgeoisie prioritize the accumulation of wealth at the expense of human welfare, which results in the exploitation of the working class. “The proletariat is sacrificed to wealth” (Marx, 1863, p. 420). As the wealth of the bourgeoisie increases, the condition of the proletariat becomes “more wretched and intolerable” (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 48). A central contradiction in the capitalist system, as noted by Marx and Engels (1888), is the concentration of private property in the hands of a few, while the vast majority is deprived of such ownership.

Marx and Engels (1998) assert that the economy is not just one facet of society but rather the foundational bedrock from which all social relations and institutions arise. “The social organization evolving directly out of production and intercourse... forms the basis of the state and of the rest of the idealistic superstructure” (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 98). This foundational relationship underscores the deep connection between existing social relations and the economic underpinnings of society, as they declare that that “there lies the connection of all existing relations with the economic foundations of society” (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 438). Bourgeois society is inherently anchored in financial interests, resulting in widespread economic competition among its constituents. In this framework, individuals are often prepared to make considerable sacrifices to establish and maintain their economic status. Marx and Engels (1888) critique bourgeois society, arguing that, a will whose fundamental nature and direction are shaped by the economic conditions of existence, results in distorted family dynamics. The economic structure of capitalism influences personal relationships, often distorting them in ways that prioritize economic interests over human connections. Historical changes in property relationships have altered familial bonds, leading to the



disintegration of the proletarian family unit. In this context, the connections that bind family members are increasingly weakened, and the children of the proletariat become objectified.

Marx (1993) argues that the mode of production of material life shapes the overall process of social, political, and intellectual life. The economic base of society profoundly influences its social structures, political systems, and cultural ideologies. It is not individual consciousness that shapes one's existence, but rather the material conditions that influence consciousness. Marx (1993) asserts that alterations in the economic base will inevitably result in changes to the entire superstructure, thereby reinforcing the idea that economic relationships govern social, political, and intellectual evolution. Marx and Engels (1888) propose a vision of a communist society as a remedy for the exploitative capitalist system, where individuals can fully develop their potential in an environment of absolute freedom, all while adhering to the fundamental principles of that society. They assert that the function of Communism is "to organize society in such a way that every member of it can develop and use all his capabilities and powers in complete freedom" (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 37). This vision highlights their belief that current economic structures sustain systemic inequalities and hinder individual potential. They argue that the source of societal issues is rooted in the economic sphere, and therefore, the dismantling of these foundations is essential for the emergence of a communist society.

### Textual Analysis and Discussion

*The Murder of Aziz Khan* is deeply rooted in Marxist theory, reflecting the division of society into two main classes: the proletariat (working class) and the bourgeoisie (capitalist class). Ghose (1967), the novelist, effectively portrays this societal division, emphasizing the corrosive effects of money in a capitalist society. He critiques the moral decay and social injustices perpetrated by the wealthy class, highlighting their greed, corruption, and exploitation. Those, from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, are often regarded as the 'other,' while individuals belonging to the upper strata of society assume positions of authority. The privileged class consistently seeks to exploit and manipulate the innocent dreams and aspirations of the impoverished masses. The novel deals with the theme of class conflict through the tensions between the Shah brothers and Aziz Khan. The Shah brothers embody the capitalist class, while Aziz Khan and the other villagers represent the working class and agrarian community. Aziz Khan himself is depicted as a modest landowner, cultivating a 70-acre tract of land. Ghose (1967) portrays the struggles and hardships endured by the working class under the domination of the capitalist elite through the character of Aziz Khan. From the beginning of the novel, the novelist illustrates the challenges faced by farmers with the rise of capitalist influence. The farmers of Kalapur are compelled to sell their land to the Shah brothers, a consequence of the encroaching capitalist culture in Pakistan.

The [farmers] 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, p. 13)

The Shah brothers exploit the poverty of Kalapur's farmers, offering minimal prices for their ancestral land due to their financial desperation and collusion with the ruling classes. The farmers' submissiveness and debt compel them to sell, even as they dream of urban

business opportunities. Aziz Khan's refusal to sell his cherished seventy-acre land becomes a focal point of conflict, symbolizing the struggle between the capitalist Shah brothers and the proletariat. For Aziz Khan, the land is not just property but a vital part of his identity, representing his existence, which he fiercely defends. The Shah brothers are determined to purchase Aziz Khan's land to alleviate their financial burdens and streamline their cotton transport, as the longer route to their mills incurs significant expenses. However, Aziz Khan steadfastly refuses to sell, provoking increasing annoyance and hostility from the Shah brothers.

Ghose (1969) portrays class struggle by highlighting the significant disparity in the living standards and economic power of the Shah brothers, who symbolize the capitalist upper class, and Aziz Khan, who represents the proletariat. The Shah brothers—Akram, Ayub, and Afaq—lead opulent lives, characterized by frequent visits to clubs, dining at five-star establishments, and engaging in leisure activities such as dancing and drinking. Their affluent lifestyle, rooted in a robust economic foundation, aligns with Marx's (1848) and Lukacs' (1971) theories on the influence of economic conditions on social behavior. The novelist further emphasizes the Shah brothers' interests, as evidenced by their discussions about the game of bridge: "Come, you silent lovers, we're going to Mansur's for a game of bridge" (Ghose, 1967, p. 49).

The Shah brothers travel on luxury vehicles, highlighting their wealth, while the impoverished residents of Kalapur rely on walking, public transport, or animals such as camels and horses for mobility. Afaq, the youngest of the brothers, particularly, revels in driving his jeep, further underscoring the stark disparity between their privileged lifestyle and that of the local poor. "Driving soothed [Afaq], especially in a jeep" (Ghose, 1967, p. 40). Aziz Khan, embodying the impoverished community, rides on a horse, contrasting sharply with the Shah brothers, who can afford to travel between cities and countries by plane or in luxury vehicles such as jeeps and cars. Their opulent lifestyle, filled with lavish cars, jeeps, and extravagant possessions, stands in stark opposition to the working class's existence, devoid of resources and opportunities, reflecting the deep socioeconomic divide in society. The materially privileged Shah brothers can afford to provide their children with a quality education, while the impoverished population, represented by Aziz Khan, lacks the financial resources necessary for literacy and access to educational institutions. Aziz Khan, as a spokesperson for the poor, is illiterate, and reflects the broader struggles of his community, who cannot access the same opportunities. In stark contrast, the Shah family has the means to send their children abroad for education in prestigious institutions in countries like England and Switzerland, further highlighting the disparities between the classes.

Under a capitalist culture, the poor are systematically deprived of their economic rights, while the wealthy possess the financial means to establish businesses wherever they choose. The Shah brothers exemplify this disparity, amassing enough wealth to set up mills in various cities across Pakistan. They have constructed two textile mills in Kalapur after acquiring land from the local farming community through questionable means. Their ambitions extend beyond Kalapur, as evidenced by Ayub's conversation with Afaq in the novel, in which they discuss plans to open additional mills, factories, and industries both within Pakistan and internationally: "We're planning to enter the soap industry in East Pakistan" (Ghose, 1967, p. 36). The impoverished workers are condemned to toil in the Shah brothers' factories, where they face economic exploitation. "Workers in the Shah mills are reduced to mere instruments, stripped of autonomy and basic rights. Riaz, Javed, and Salim,

among the mill's earliest laborers, are dismissed simply for voicing resistance to these oppressive capitalist practices" (Afzal et al., 2024, p. 777). Riaz, Salim, and Javed exemplify the plight of laborers who labor tirelessly day and night to make ends meet, yet their opportunities for economic advancement are severely limited by the capitalist practices of the Shah brothers.

(Ghose) highlights the oppressive conditions imposed upon the poor by powerful figures, who subject them to multifaceted exploitation—economic, political, and even sexual. The Shah brothers epitomize this exploitation: Akram, the eldest, coerces farmers into surrendering their ancestral land to the Shah family, while Ayub systematically undermines worker rights within the family mills. (Afzal et al., 2024, p.777)

"The capitalist system widens the gap between the material prosperity of a privileged few and the socio-economic degradation of the majority. It facilitates a select few while consigning the masses to lives of struggle and suffering" (Din et al., 2024, p. 318). The novelist illustrates class conflict through the unequal enforcement of laws, with the impoverished being rigorously constrained, while the wealthy Shah brothers enjoy immunity. Drawing on Marx's view that power stems from economic relations, the Shah brothers exploit their status as production owners to manipulate the legal system, leading to the wrongful execution of Aziz Khan's son, and inflicting further suffering on him. They falsely accuse Aziz's son of murdering a thirteen-year-old girl, a crime committed by Afaq, whom they protect through bribery. Ghose (1967) critiques this capitalist exploitation, revealing how the judiciary fails the poor, while Afaq escapes punishment by moving to England. Rafiq has been hanged, Jamila Bano is dead, and Afaq finds himself "in the darkness of an alien country" (Ghose, 1967, p. 145).

Marx (1848) asserts that the bourgeoisie exploits the proletariat by perpetuating an unequal distribution of wealth, where the more one class accumulates, the less remains for the other, highlighting the exploitative nature of capitalism. Ghose (1967) exposes the mistreatment of ordinary people by the wealthy, illustrating the economic, political, and sexual exploitation faced by characters like Aziz Khan, Riaz, Salim, and Javed under the Shah brothers' capitalist regime. Akram coerces farmers into selling their land, while Ayub suppresses workers' rights and unions. The dismissals of Riaz, Salim, and Javed highlight their inhumane treatment, as they advocate for workers' solidarity against exploitation, reflecting a broader critique of the capitalistic culture in Pakistan that devalues labor and agency. "The worker has no identity" (Ghose, 1967, p. 209). This line emphasizes the devaluation and exploitation of workers within a capitalist framework, showcasing the indifference of capitalists towards the working class. Drawing on Marx's critiques, the novelist illustrates the manipulative strategies of the Shah brothers, who exploit resources for personal gain, contrasting them with Aziz Khan, a figure of local values.

The dehumanization of the impoverished community peaks within a capitalist system, where the wealthy show indifference to the struggles of the poor. The Shah brothers exemplify this attitude in their treatment of Aziz Khan and Javed, when negotiating for Aziz Khan's land. Despite their need, Akram and Ayub reduce their offer from 2000 to 200 per acre, treating Javed as a mere tool, highlighting the broader exploitation and humiliation faced by the working class. "[Aziz Khan] 'll come crawling back, I tell you, he'll come on his hands and knees. And it'll be nothing" (Ghose, 1967, p. 142). The quotation highlights the

inhumane treatment of workers by capitalists, indicating that capitalism strips laborers of value and compassion, aligning with Marx's assertion that such conditions lead to their misery, mental distress, and physical exhaustion.

Ghose (1967) critiques how the common masses are systematically deprived of their resources to benefit the capitalist class, linking their suffering to the destructive alliance of primitive capitalism, military dictators, and an authoritarian priesthood. This coalition hinders Pakistan's potential for liberal democracy. Through Aziz Khan, a small farmer, the narrative illustrates how the capitalist elite, represented by the Shah brothers, dispossess the impoverished with corrupt rulers' support. Despite initially leading a fulfilling life, Aziz Khan ultimately loses everything, revealing that local elites can be more oppressive than former colonizers, as the Shah brothers exploit tactics of greed reminiscent of historical moneylenders---- "middle men, narrow-eyed, tight-lipped who produce nothing...yet acquire fortune for themselves" (Ghose, 1967, p. 20). In this line, the novelist highlights the capitalists' relentless ambition to amass wealth, characterizing them as miserly and unyielding in their pursuit of financial gain.

Ghose (1967) underscores the Marxist principle that the economic base influences the socio-political and cultural superstructure of society. He argues that, those who control wealth, shape historical contexts, affecting social relations. The Shah brothers, with significant economic power, establish connections with the ruling elite, illustrating the alliance between capitalists and rulers. Through financial means and government support, they acquire land from Kalapur farmers. Ghose (1967) critiques this dynamic, revealing the detrimental societal impact of the ruling elite's wealth-driven motives, particularly embodied in Akram's unwavering belief in the power of money. "For [Akram], any problem, which could have been embodied by a human being, could be solved either by the offer of cash" (Ghose, 1967, p. 34). Pakistan presented Akram with a new opportunity for success that he could not achieve in India, allowing him to earn fifty thousand rupees. He approaches District Commissioner Muhammad Karim in a car to express his intention to establish a textile mill, bribing the Commissioner to secure his signature on various documents. This thing enables Akram to acquire possession of some government-owned, unfertile land. The political figures like the District Commissioner exhibit a profound disinterest in governance, contributing to the nation's drift towards anarchy. Their primary focus lies in amassing wealth, rendering them oblivious to the hardships endured by the general populace. Instead of addressing societal issues, they prioritize the consolidation of their financial resources. Ghose (1967) characterizes the ruling elite and ministers as thugs and mercenaries, engaging in disputes over the spoils of power. He critiques the declining political landscape by depicting politicians as individuals driven by self-interest and greed, having "neither ideas nor ideals neither a sense of justice nor a sense of humanity but [are] aflame with the burning ambition at once to make their fortune, men whose mentality [is] no different from that of thugs" (Ghose, 1967, p. 26). The referenced excerpt from the novel highlights the absence of humanitarian concern and justice for the impoverished, as demonstrated by societal political figures. It underscores that selfishness prevails in a capitalist culture, where influential individuals are, primarily, focused on enhancing their wealth.

Marx (1968) points out that capitalistic culture has "centralized means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands" (Marx, 1968, p. 36). Ghose (1967) offers a scathing critique of capitalistic culture, particularly as it operates under the aegis of the ruling elite. He illustrates how this class is motivated by an insatiable desire to accumulate wealth



and commodities, solely for their exchange value. The Shah brothers, in conjunction with the elite of society, symbolize the concentration of wealth in the hands of a privileged few. They embody the exploitation and plundering of the working class's hard-earned resources. This scenario illustrates the socio-political landscape of postcolonial Pakistan, characterized by a capitalistic culture that perpetuates inequality and subjugation among the poorer segments of society. The Shah brothers epitomize manipulation, exerting control over the lives of others through their extreme greed. Their primary objective is the accumulation of wealth, property, and land, achieved through any means necessary, whether legal or illegal. Driven by an insatiable desire for riches, they treat others as mere puppets, positioning themselves as the ultimate masters of their own exploitative game. Zakia's views about the greedy nature of the Shah brothers are very apt when she remarks that "some people can never have enough... they are greedy bunch" (Ghose 1967, p. 54). The aforementioned lines highlight the greedy and avaricious nature of the Shah brothers, illustrating that capitalistic culture is, inherently, corrupt driven by greed and a worship of money, and intent on economically exploiting the laboring class. The Shah brothers symbolize the shrewd manipulators of the economic processes in postcolonial societies, embodying the ruthless pursuit of wealth at the expense of others.

Ghose (1967) illustrates the profound influence of material considerations on the socio-political landscape of society. The Shah brothers, as affluent members of the community, exert control over various departments and institutions, prioritizing the accumulation of wealth—whether through legal or illicit means—over the welfare of the general populace. For them, wealth represents the ultimate goal. Akram, a former moneylender prior to the subcontinent's partition, transitions to a businessman in Pakistan, engaging in transactions involving interest. His relentless pursuit of wealth drives him to envision the establishment of mills and industries across various cities in Pakistan. The dialogue between Afaq and Ayub reveals their ambitions to set up industries in different regions of the country: "We're planning to enter the soap industry in East Pakistan. We're planning to take over the cosmetics industry in Karachi" (Ghose, 1967, p. 36). The aforementioned lines from the novel highlight the capitalists' obsessive pursuit of material prosperity, illustrating their relentless focus on business advancement. They underscore the capitalists' disregard for the plight of the impoverished, as their attention remains fixed on amassing wealth, through both ethical and unethical means.

Marx (1844) argues that individuals experience profound alienation in a capitalist society, leading to disconnection from various aspects of their lives, including their fellow human beings, their labor, personal possessions, and ultimately their true selves. This state of alienation manifests as a sense of uprootedness, wherein individuals become estranged from their inherent identities, and the products of their labor. Under capitalism, this alienation not only diminishes their sense of community and belonging but also reinforces their subjugation to the economic system, rendering them mere commodities within a broader market-driven framework. Lukacs (1971) cites Marx who observes that "The property-owning class and the class of the proletariat represent the same human self-alienation" (Lukacs, 1971, p. 149). The Shah family, emblematic of the property-owning class, also experiences alienation, as their obsession with accumulating wealth prevents them from sharing time together, even during meals. Afaq, the youngest of the Shah brothers, describes his brothers to Rafiq in these words, "You know that my brothers don't like me. My brothers are bastards. I can tell you, bastards" (Ghose, 1967, p. 80). Zarina embodies the profound sense of alienation, as her emotional needs go unacknowledged, leaving her yearning for love from Afaq while

remaining unable to express her feelings. Her silent affection for Afaq is compounded by her lack of awareness regarding her past, identity, and parentage, rendering her existence devoid of a coherent sense of self. The novelist, poignantly, captures Zarina's fragmented identity in the following line: "Having no past other than being in an alien family, she increasingly dreamed of a future which would be creatively her own" (Ghose, 1967, p. 60).

Under capitalistic culture, economic forces and social status exert a significant influence on love, marriage, and other social relationships. While individuals may perceive their interactions as rooted in humanitarian principles, they often fail to acknowledge that these connections are, fundamentally, shaped by economic considerations. Lukacs (1971) references Marx, who emphasizes that the structure of capitalist society inherently fosters alienation among individuals, leading to a disconnection from their work, each other, and their true selves. "People fail to realize that these definite social relations are just as much the products of men as linen, flax, etc." (Lukacs, 1971, p. 48). He, further, elaborates on the significant influence of economic conditions and social status on communal relationships in society, citing Marx's insights, "not a thing but a social relation between persons mediated through things" (Lukacs, 1971, p. 49). The marriages of the Shah brothers exemplify a lack of genuine affection, as they are primarily founded on material interests and economic considerations. This prioritization of economic factors over the sanctity of marriage underscores the notion that the economic base holds greater significance than the sacred bond of matrimony. Razia, Ayub's wife, perceives her marriage as an ordeal she must endure to further her family's legacy, fully aware of the discomfort caused by her husband's presence. The absence of love in Ayub's relationship with his wife is, vividly, illustrated as follows: "Though sometimes she found Ayub an ordeal she must suffer for the sake of advancing her own designs of establishing a dynasty" (Ghose, 1967, p. 68).

Razia perceives her husband as a bully and gets engaged in an adulterous affair with her husband's younger brother, Afaq. Meanwhile, Akram, the elder sibling, exhibits no genuine affection for his wife, as his marriage to Faridah is primarily motivated by the desire for dowry and property from her family to augment his wealth. Their public appearances, such as dancing at the club, are merely performative gestures, aimed at maintaining appearances rather than expressions of true intimacy, especially considering that Faridah is not conventionally attractive. The novelist states that "Akram had married [Faridah] in the hope that a reasonable dowry might enhance his capital and give him a chance to speculate in the stock market" (Ghose, 1967, p. 65). This statement highlights that relationships are rooted in material gains rather than emotional connections, as capitalistic culture prioritizes material prosperity over interpersonal bonds. This reflects the Marxist perspective that in a capitalist society, economic considerations overshadow the significance of human relationships. The emphasis on commodities diminishes the value of love, as exemplified by Akram's marriage to Faridah, which is motivated by her property, dowry, and land.

The relentless pursuit of wealth is eroding personal relationships, leading to conflict among the members of the Shah family. Ayub and his wife take pleasure in Afaq's disinheritance, recognizing it as an opportunity to increase their own share of the family estate. Their anticipation of inheriting a substantial portion of the property is bolstered by the understanding that Akram, being childless, will not be able to pass on his wealth. As Ayub and his wife already have two daughters and are expecting a third child, their hopes for financial gain are intertwined with their growing family. The novelist illustrates Razia's triumph over Afaq's disowning from the family's assets in the following lines: "She

congratulated herself that she had fulfilled all her expectations from her love and at the same time not only maintained her marital dignity but also turned the episode to the advantage of her own family” (Ghose, 1967, p. 272). The materialistic mindset of Ayub’s family fuels tensions and disputes between Akram and Ayub, particularly regarding the ownership of the mills. Their quarrels reflect the underlying greed and competition for financial dominance, as illustrated in the novel: “Well, who is the boss here? Who began the mills? Who raised the money? Who organized the Manufacture, promotion and distribution of textiles” (Ghose, 1967, p. 283)? All members of the Shah family are engulfed in an atmosphere of conflict and animosity. Afaq articulates the prevailing hatred among the Shah brothers to Ayub’s wife, when he says that “[Akram] hates me” (Ghose, 1967, p. 101).

The joint family system is experiencing a significant decline due to the influences of capitalistic culture. In his critique of bourgeois hegemony, Marx (1968) observes that the disintegration of the family unit reflects the broader societal shift towards individualism and materialism, where familial bonds are increasingly overshadowed by economic interests and personal gain, and that “the bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced family relation to a mere money relation” (Marx, 1968, p. 34). The Shah family disintegrates under the overwhelming influence of materialism, as each member pursues individual economic gain. They become preoccupied with wealth, leading to immoral behaviors and the erosion of familial sanctity. Afaq, the youngest brother, exemplifies this decay by engaging in an adulterous relationship with his sister-in-law, reflecting the pervasive spread of Western norms, regarding illicit relationships among the affluent class. Similarly, Akram’s sexual exploits result in the birth of Zarina, further illustrating the detrimental effects of capitalist culture on personal relationships and moral values within the family structure.

As self-centeredness emerges as a defining characteristic of individuals under capitalist culture, the pursuit of wealth—whether through legitimate or illegitimate means—takes precedence. This self-interest leads to the fragmentation of the Shah brothers’ family unity, emblematic of the broader capitalist class. Consequently, capitalism fosters individualism at the expense of socialism, replacing familial solidarity with a culture of self-worship that erodes cultural bonds and ties. The strain on relationships among the Shah brothers is, poignantly, captured in Akram’s reflections, emphasizing the detrimental effects of capitalism on familial cohesion: “It will never be the same integrated family and business. A moral weakness has been exposed; it will never be the same again” (Ghose, 1967, p. 307). The aforementioned quotation from the novel illustrates the fragmentation of the Shah family unit under the influence of capitalist culture. It echoes Roemer’s (1988) assertion that capitalism engenders immorality within society, indicating that capitalist individualism disrupts familial and social relationships.

Capitalistic culture, as a product of Western influence, propagates Western customs wherever it takes root. This results in the rapid infiltration of Western practices, such as dancing, clubbing, and drinking, into the local cultures of postcolonial societies, leading to their delocalization and westernization. Members of the affluent class, in particular, have become susceptible to these Western influences. The Shah brothers exemplify this trend, devoting significant portions of their daily lives to activities such as clubbing, dining at five-star hotels, dancing, drinking, and playing cards. The novelist states the interest of the Shah brothers in game of bridge through the talking of Ayub with the family-members: “Come, you silent lovers, we’re going to Mansur’s for a game of bridge” (Ghose, 1967, p. 49).

Ghose (1967) provides a scathing critique of the operation of capitalistic culture under the influence of corrupt rulers, highlighting its devastating impact on a significant portion of the population, which is deprived of its rights, liberties, and the means for a decent life. The Shah brothers wrongfully implicate Aziz Khan's youngest son, Rafiq, in the murder of a peasant girl, despite Afaq being the actual perpetrator. Leveraging their wealth, the Shah brothers manipulate the legal system by hiring a competent lawyer to shield Afaq from capital punishment, and employing bribes to secure favorable testimonies. Ultimately, Rafiq is wrongfully sentenced to death due to their corrupt influence, while Afaq escapes to London to indulge in a lavish lifestyle surrounded by young women. The novelist highlights how the power of wealth enables capitalists to exert control over various institutions, including the police and judiciary, thereby facilitating their dominance over society and allowing them to evade punishment for their actions. The Shah brothers announce the departure of Afaq for London. Afaq does not have any degree but he is granted one by his empire, and he leaves for London for "higher studies" and "Rafiq was dead. Jumila Bano was dead. And here he was riding the air like a vulture" (Ghose, 1967, p. 144). The Shah brothers are not content with the judicial execution of Rafiq, the elder son of Aziz Khan; they are also intent on punishing Aziz Khan for his refusal to sell his land. With their wealth, they are able to hire assassins to murder Aziz Khan's second son, Javed. Even after the tragic loss of both sons, Aziz Khan's troubles persist, compounded by financial difficulties and the deteriorating health of his wife, Zakia, which takes a toll on his own well-being—physically, mentally, and psychologically. Aziz Khan's relentless pursuit of justice to protect his land from the Shah brothers highlights the judicial system's bias, revealing a stark contrast in its treatment of the wealthy and the impoverished. His efforts for justice, ultimately, lead him to despair and defeat.

Capitalistic culture profoundly affects individuals' mindsets, stripping the poor of happiness, and instilling a pervasive sense of disappointment in their lives. Ghose (1967) illustrates the detrimental effects of capitalistic culture on human mentality and psyche. Under its dominance, Aziz Khan, once a content and fulfilled individual, finds himself destitute and defeated by the capitalists. He loses everything—his wife, his sons, his property, and his land—primarily due to his refusal to sell his land to the Shah brothers. This dispossession symbolizes the broader defeat of socialism and traditional values within postcolonial Pakistani society. Ultimately, Aziz Khan's downfall represents the triumph of capitalistic culture, embodied by the Shah brothers, over the working class. Capitalistic culture operates under a distinct ideology that capitalists enforce upon the common masses, compelling adherence at all costs. Those, who resist this ideology, inevitably face suffering and destruction in their lives. The Shah brothers epitomize this destructive force, bringing devastation to Aziz, who staunchly opposes their ideological impositions. When individuals like Aziz Khan challenge the status quo, the judiciary asserts that the law and judicial system are incorruptible. Through this narrative, the novelist delivers a sharp critique of the lawlessness, indiscipline, anarchy, cruelty, brutality, and inequality that pervade a society dominated by capitalistic culture.

## Conclusion

Ghose (1967) critiques capitalism through the lens of Marxist theory, depicting class divide between the wealthy Shah brothers and the impoverished farmers of Kalapur. He illustrates how economic determinism shapes social relationships, highlighting the exploitation of the working class as the Shah brothers leverage their wealth and government connections to manipulate the legal system and oppress the local populace. Aziz Khan



symbolizes the struggle against capitalist encroachment, embodying the dignity and identity tied to land. Ghose (1967) highlights systemic inequalities and the moral bankruptcy of the capitalist elite, exposing the detrimental impact of capitalism on the marginalized. He critiques capitalism's dehumanizing effects on the impoverished, exemplified by the Shah brothers' exploitation of Aziz Khan and Javed during land negotiations. He highlights the collusion between the capitalist elite and corrupt rulers, illustrating how the Shah brothers' relentless greed and ambition perpetuate inequality in postcolonial Pakistan. Through Aziz Khan's struggles, the novelist exposes how wealth concentration in a few hands leads to systemic exploitation, revealing the moral decay of both capitalists and political figures, indifferent to the suffering of the masses. Ghose (1967) critiques the impact of capitalism on familial bonds and societal values, illustrating how economic forces overshadow human relationships and contribute to injustice and suffering in postcolonial society. Capitalist culture results in profound alienation and disconnection within the Shah family. Marriages among the Shah brothers are devoid of love, driven, instead, by financial gain. The pursuit of wealth fosters conflict, corruption, and moral decay, culminating in tragic consequences for the impoverished Aziz Khan and his family. Ultimately, the novel not only critiques the corrosive effects of capitalism but also highlights the potential for transformation through collective action and moral courage. It envisions a path toward resistance, where committed individuals can break free from the clutches of exploitation and work towards a society rooted in justice, equality and prosperity.

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