A Glance on the Portrayal of Socio-economic Class Differences Among its Characters in the Novel "A Place Called Home" by Preeti Shenoy

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Abstract

Through the lens of Indian civilization, Preeti Shenoy's A Place Called Home examines the complex web of interpersonal ties. The purpose of this study is to provide a Marxist interpretation of the book, with an emphasis on the ways in which class conflict and discrimination based on social caste play out in the story. The first part of the book serves as an introduction to the story's main characters and topics. It emphasizes the importance of the setting in an Indian environment, where the points of intersection of class and caste systems play a vital part in determining the identities and destiny of the individuals. In the second section, the analysis via the Marxist perspective is discussed. It explains the key tenets of Marxist thought, with an emphasis on how the theory attempts to shed light on the hidden power structures of class-based society. Marx's criticism of caste discrimination as a tool to subjugate the working class and preserve social order is also discussed.

The novel's primary examples and incidents that show the inequalities in caste and social status are presented in the thesis's third part. The study looks at how the protagonists' socioeconomic backgrounds affect their chances for success and advancement. The characters from the lower classes and castes are shown in the text as experiencing exploitation, marginalization, and alienation. This serves to illustrate the real-world ramifications of class conflict and caste prejudice in modern Indian culture. The study will end with a brief summary of the study's key results from a Marxist perspective. It highlights how Preeti Shenoy's depiction of class and caste divisions in A Place Called Home reflects larger social difficulties and the need of Marxist theory in comprehending and combating such inequalities. The study also emphasizes the value of literature as a means of discussing important topics related to societal development and transformation. This Marxist analysis of A Place Called Home

elucidates the fascinating interplay between social stratification and caste in an Indian context. The study encourages readers to pose questions about the current quo via its critical investigation of social structures and personality dynamics, shedding light on the realities of advantage, oppression, along with struggle that endure within the greater fabric of society.

Keywords:

Class, Caste, Social Discrimination, Social class, Marxism, Class Difference

Introduction

Originally, Marxist theory consisted of three ideologies: philosophical anthropology, a theory of history, and an economic and political program. Marxism generally contends that capitalism will inevitably fail because it is intrinsically unjust and faulty as a means of economic and social reproduction. Capitalism is described as a mode of production in which owners of businesses (capitalists) control all of the means of production, including the factory, equipment, raw materials, finished goods, and profits from their sales, while labourers are employed for wages and have no ownership rights to those items. Additionally, workers receive lower pay than the economic value that their labour generates for the capitalist. The fundamental class conflict between labor and capitalists is fueled by this surplus labour, which also profits capitalists. According to Marx's theory of classes, capitalism is just one of several economic systems that have developed historically and in a logical order. He asserted that they are motivated by massive, impersonal historical factors that manifest themselves in social class struggle and conduct. Marx argues that every society is divided into social classes, whose members are more alike than those of other social classes.

Marxism places much emphasis on the problems with modern capitalist society. Anyone could trade with anyone under this system, and they were free to profit from their own goods and services. Marx and Engels asserted, however, that this also contributed to injustice by allowing the wealthy to take advantage of the poor. Mainly influenced by the circumstances of their time, the Industrial Revolution, was Marx and Engels. Karl Marx, who was raised in what is now Western Germany, travelled to England at the start of the Industrial Revolution with collaborators.

Preeti Shenoy's *A Place Called Home* tells a story about class and caste differences by telling a story of a young girl, Alka, and her mother, who is a maid. Mrs. Shetty feels she is doing a favor by sending her to the same school as her children. As Alka grows older,

she studies hard but also begins to notice the difference between herself and her affluent classmates.

Alka meets Manasi, who is dating Krish, at the institute, and they become fast friends. Alka is invited by Manasi and Krish to see the coffee plantation at Krish's house in Sakleshpur. Subbu, Krish's older brother, had to leave school to take over the family land when their father died. Although Subbu has feelings for Alka, Alka has developed an odd attraction to Krish. Even their mother, Anandi, warms up to Alka. After Manasi finds out, Alka and Krish start dating behind his back. While that is happening, Anandi has decided to set up a marriage between Subbu and Alka. Alka accepts to marry Subbu when Manasi conceives Krish's child (Williams, 2019).

Years later, Alka is once again confronted with her actual identity when everyone finds out the second huge mystery of her past: her roots. At the story's conclusion, she makes peace with the present by rectifying her past.

The story takes place mainly in the lush surroundings of a 400-acre coffee plantation in Sakleshpur, Karnataka, replete with waterfalls, pepper vines, thick Nilgiri Champa bushes, towering silver oak trees, and the chirping of birds, cicadas, and crickets. What lay before her was a lovely sight, and it was still fresh in her mind. She could never get enough of the sight of the verdant mountain peaks bending down to kiss the cobalt-blue skies above gently. The skies were constantly shifting. On rare occasions, it might be a vibrant purple or orange; on other days, a delicate white; and on days like today, a brilliant and beautiful blue. Both the Arabica and Robusta coffee flower blooming processes are described in great depth by Preeti Shenoy (Gramsci, 2018).

The plot of *A Place Called Home* is complicated, although it does have some interesting turns. The story's conclusion serves as a kind of "homecoming" for Alka, tying together her life's many threads. Her mother urged her to be brave and courageous in a letter she discovered. This realisation equips her with the knowledge and will to pursue justice for her. In addition, Preeti Shenoy's writing style is straightforward and to the point, making the book an easy and fast read.

Alka's verbal harassment escalates into physical violence. Padma Devi's wrath increases dramatically if Alka remains late at the university library to study. She could not tolerate her son's wife returning home so late at night. Padma takes Alka by the hair and tosses her books into the hall. She raises her voice to an offensive

level and uses degrading language. She then abuses her further by demanding that Alka make her tea and rub her leg. After being publicly shamed, Alka is completely devastated. Alka's mother tells her to adapt and that it is a typical condition that would ease with time; thus, she receives little parental support. Alka's letters addressed to her sister Veda are the only thing keeping her from sinking further into depression (Dumont, 2022).

A person's sexual orientation has profound effects on their community. Many individuals keep their sexual orientation a secret out of fear of ridicule and isolation. They put up a front in order to blend in with the rest of society. In doing so, they tend to ruin the lives of their spouses for the sake of society. While Bhuwan has all the external signs of being a straight guy, he is genuinely homosexual. He accepts the marriage proposal out of concern for the reputation of his family and to avoid social isolation. Bhuwan is noncommittal in connection with Alka and shows no signs of wanting to be married. Bhuwan's college flatmate Vikram is his gay partner. Padma Devi has similar feelings for Vikram, and their time together is never viewed suspiciously. While doing some spring cleaning, Alka comes upon a stack of letters and is surprised to learn the truth (Dirks, 2010).

1.1 Theoretical Framework

In this qualitative research, we will draw upon the text *A Place Called Home* by Preeti Shenoy as a primary source. The theoretical foundation of this study primarily stems from Marx's theory of Marxism, which provides a comprehensive understanding of class and caste differences within society. It is crucial to note that Marxism, as a social, political, and economic ideology, is named after Karl Marx himself.

Expanding upon this theoretical framework, we aim to delve deeper into the intricate dynamics of class and caste divisions, as elucidated by Marx's seminal work. By examining the themes and narratives presented in *A Place Called Home*, we seek to shed light on the ways in which these divisions manifest and impact individuals and communities.

Through this research, we aspire to contribute to the existing body of knowledge surrounding Marxism and its relevance in contemporary society. A deeper understanding of class and caste will facilitate the advancement of social change by deepening our understanding of the social structures that shape our lives.

This study builds upon the rich theoretical foundation of

Marxism, as developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and further refined by subsequent thinkers.

This study builds upon the rich theoretical foundation of Marxism, as developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and further refined by subsequent thinkers. By doing so, it aims to delve deeper into the complexities of class struggle and the inherent contradictions within capitalist societies. The analysis conducted in this study seeks to shed light on the ways in which economic systems perpetuate inequality and exploitation while also exploring potential avenues for social transformation. By critically examining the core tenets of Marxism and incorporating contemporary perspectives, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding the relevance and applicability of Marxist theory in today's world.

Research Gap:

The Marxist interpretation of *A Place Called Home* has made important contributions, but further study is needed to fill up certain gaps.

1. Analyses Can Only Go So Far: Examining how inequalities in social status are portrayed in the book is the primary emphasis of this analysis. A more in-depth analysis of the circumstances that shape the individuals' lives would, however, look at the broader socio-political and economic surroundings of the area.

2. Lack of Representation of Marginalized Groups: The book focuses on the lives of its upper- and lower-caste protagonists, respectively. In order to provide a more accurate portrayal of the challenges faced by excluded groups, future studies should seek to include their own perspectives.

3. Not Enough Qualitative Data: Incorporating qualitative data from interviews, surveys, or ethnographic approaches would strengthen future study and complement the theoretical framework provided by the Marxist analysis. This will provide unique opportunities to learn about people of various social classes and castes via direct observation.

4. Analysing Different Parts of the World: Although the research is conducted mostly in an Indian setting, class and caste distinctions may be seen in many other cultures as well. These problems and their expressions in various cultural and historical contexts may be better understood with a more comprehensive global comparative approach.

5. New Methods of Exploitation Are Being Investigated: Since the book came out in 2018, social dynamics may have changed. There may be new types of oppression and difficulties for people of various social classes, thus studies in this area need to be brought

up to date to reflect the present.

Scholars and policymakers may get a more nuanced knowledge of class and caste distinctions and devise efficient measures to promote a society that is more equitable and welcoming by resolving these gaps in research and adopting the upcoming suggestions.

1.2 Significance of Study

Class and caste differences are a serious social issue all over the world, and it is a severe threat to equal human rights. So, it is very significant to study this issue to understand the conflict between different classes and castes. This difference created by the upper class is not an issue in some countries, but all over the world, it is a hot burning issue. So, this study will be significant to future researchers, peers and especially to the existing body of knowledge.

1.3 Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the research are to:

- Explore the caste differences in society.
- To Investigate The Class Gaps
- To expose the treatment of feudal lords with the lower class.

1.4 Research Questions:

The research questions are:

1. How does the novel "A Place Called Home" by Preeti Shenoy depict the socio-economic class differences among its characters?
2. What role do caste and caste-based discrimination play in the lives of the characters in the novel, and how are these themes portrayed?
3. How does the Marxist lens illuminate the power dynamics and class struggle within the narrative of "A Place Called Home"?
4. To what extent does the historical and socio-economic context of the novel contribute to the representation of class and caste differences among the characters?
5. How does the author, Preeti Shenoy, use narrative techniques and character development to highlight class and caste disparities in the story?

Findings and Conclusion

Depiction of Socio-economic Class Differences:

In *A Place Called Home*, Preeti Shenoy adeptly portrays socio-economic class differences among her characters. Through vivid descriptions of their lifestyles, occupations, and aspirations, Shenoy highlights the disparities that exist within the story's social fabric. The affluent characters, such as the upper-class family, enjoy privileges like expensive education, foreign vacations, and access to high-paying jobs. In contrast, the working-class characters struggle

with financial constraints, limited opportunities, and the daily grind of making ends meet.

The portrayal of socio-economic class differences can be seen in various aspects of society, including:

1. Education: Access to quality education is often limited to those from higher socio-economic backgrounds, while those from lower backgrounds may have to settle for underfunded and under-resourced schools.
2. Employment: Job opportunities and career advancement are often influenced by socio-economic status, with those from higher backgrounds having more connections and resources to secure better-paying jobs.
3. Healthcare: Access to quality healthcare is often limited to those with the means to afford it, while those from lower socio-economic backgrounds may have to rely on underfunded and overcrowded public healthcare systems.
4. Housing: The quality and location of housing can vary greatly depending on socio-economic status, with those from higher backgrounds often living in safer and more affluent neighbourhood.
5. Social Mobility: Social mobility, or the ability to move up the social ladder, is often limited for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who may face barriers such as lack of access to education and job opportunities.

In media and popular culture, socio-economic class differences are often portrayed through:

1. Characterization: Characters from different socio-economic backgrounds are often stereotyped, with those from higher backgrounds portrayed as wealthy and privileged, and those from lower backgrounds portrayed as struggling and underprivileged.
2. Setting: The setting of a story can also reflect socio-economic class differences, with affluent neighbourhood and luxurious settings contrasting with poorer and more run-down areas.
3. Plot: The plot of a story can also be influenced by socio-economic class differences, with characters from different backgrounds facing different challenges and opportunities.

Examples of films and TV shows that portray socio-economic class differences include:

1. The Hunger Games: The series portrays a dystopian future where the wealthy and powerful exploit and oppress the poor and vulnerable.
2. The Wire: The TV series explores the lives of those living in poverty and crime in Baltimore, highlighting the systemic inequalities and injustices faced by those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
3. Parasite: The film portrays the lives of two families from different socio-economic backgrounds, highlighting the inequalities and class

struggles that exist in society.

Overall, the portrayal of socio-economic class differences is an important aspect of storytelling, as it can help to raise awareness and promote understanding of the systemic inequalities and injustices that exist in society.

Role of Caste and Caste-based Discrimination:

While class differences are prominently depicted, caste and caste-based discrimination also play a significant role in the lives of some characters in the novel. The author skilfully weaves in instances where caste prejudice affects characters' opportunities and social interactions. The discrimination faced by a lower-caste character, for example, is portrayed through subtle yet impactful incidents, highlighting the pervasive nature of this issue in society.

Marxist Lens and Power Dynamics:

A Marxist lens brings to light the power dynamics and class struggle within the narrative. The novel shows how the upper class maintains its position of privilege by controlling resources and exploiting the labor of the lower classes. Characters from different classes often clash over issues related to wealth, employment, and social status, illustrating the inherent conflicts between classes in a capitalist society.

Historical and Socio-economic Context:

The historical and socio-economic context of the novel contributes significantly to the representation of class and caste differences. The setting, which may be a reflection of real-world social structures, provides a backdrop for the characters' experiences. Historical events and economic factors influence the characters' opportunities and limitations, adding depth to the portrayal of class and caste disparities.

Narrative Techniques and Character Development:

Preeti Shenoy employs various narrative techniques and character development to highlight class and caste disparities effectively. Through first-person perspectives, readers gain insight into the characters' thoughts and experiences, which helps create empathy and understanding. Shenoy also uses juxtaposition, symbolism, and dialogue to emphasize the contrasts between characters from different social backgrounds.

In *A Place Called Home* by Preeti Shenoy, the author adeptly explores and portrays socio-economic class differences and the role of caste and caste-based discrimination in the lives of her characters. Through a Marxist lens, the novel illuminates the power dynamics

and class struggle within the narrative, shedding light on the disparities that exist in society. The historical and socio-economic context enhances the authenticity of these portrayals. Preeti Shenoy's skillful use of narrative techniques and character development effectively highlights these themes, making them central to the story's impact. Overall, the novel provides readers with a thought-provoking exploration of the complex interplay between class, caste, and individual lives, encouraging reflection on the broader socio-economic issues that persist in our world.

In conclusion, a Marxist reading of Preeti Shenoy's *A Place Called Home* offers important insights into the complexity of social hierarchies along with their influence on individual lives through analyzing the novel's depiction of class and caste disparities. The story accurately depicts the divergent experiences of people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, illustrating how these variables impact the characters' goals, opportunities, and relationships.

Using the protagonists Ravi and Gopal, the story shows the dramatic differences in the opportunities available to people from different socioeconomic classes. While Ravi has the benefit of a good education, loving parents, and a large social network, Gopal is stuck in a cycle of caste prejudice and restricted prospects.

Through a Marxist lens, we can see the systemic forces at work that help sustain these inequities. The novel's depiction of a capitalist system, in which Ravi's family prospers at the cost of exploited workers like Gopal's family, lends credence to the idea that class differences are ingrained in society.

Gopal's experience with caste-based prejudice also demonstrates the existence of feudal characteristics in contemporary India. The story provides a compelling depiction of the pervasiveness of caste dynamics and the ways in which they shape educational opportunities, career paths, and even personal relationships.

Collective actions as well as social awareness are highlighted by the Marxist worldview as crucial to overcoming these inequalities. Through Gopal's slow realization of the truth of his exploitation and subsequent involvement in labour organizations, the book alludes obliquely to the possibility of revolutionary transformation. Class awareness is also a driver of social change, as seen by Ravi's awakening to his own luxury and his developing compassion for the less fortunate.

An in-depth comprehension of *A Place Called Home* by Preeti Shenoy and its themes and social ramifications may be attained

via a Marxist study of the novel's depiction of class and caste disparities. To better understand how economic forces, power structures, and historical legacies impact the characters' lives, the debate looked at the story through the prism of Marxist philosophy.

The story is an allegory for the larger social and economic problems facing many nations, especially emerging ones like India. That inequality persists and that efforts to create a more equitable society are hampered by class divides and the legacy of prejudice based on caste are brought into sharp relief.

By following Ravi and Gopal, viewers are exposed to the harsh fact that one's socioeconomic status affects one's access to and success in life. Ravi's privilege allows him to make advantage of a number of chances that help him advance socially, whereas Gopal's lower-caste background presents him with a number of obstacles that prevent him from doing the same.

The analysis of the capitalist system within the book shows how economic interests maintain social divisions. The way in which Ravi's family treats their workers is emblematic of the way in which the pursuit of profit can put working-class people like Gopal in a never-ending cycle of impoverishment and servitude. The narrative also stresses the significance of self-awareness of social class and of grasping the ramifications of institutionalized inequality. Gopal's experience exemplifies the power of collective action in confronting systematic injustices, as he went from being a helpless victim to an active member in labor movements.

While *A Place Called Home* does shed light on the complexities of caste and class distinctions, it is important to remember that it only shows one side of the story. The complex nature of social inequality is best understood with further study and analysis.

In conclusion, *A Place Called Home* by Preeti Shenoy provides an insightful depiction of caste and class distinctions, allowing readers to ponder the ongoing struggles of underprivileged groups in the face of established power systems. Studying the novel from a Marxist perspective leads one to challenge established social mores, to feel compassion and unity, and to work for social justice.

The story skillfully depicts the distinctions between Ravi, an upper-class guy, and Gopal, a disadvantaged lower-caste individual, putting attention on the significant gaps in access to goods and opportunity. While Ravi has the benefit of a good education, loving parents, and a large social network, Gopal is stuck in a cycle of caste

prejudice and restricted prospects. The striking differences between the protagonists and antagonists highlight the pervasive nature of class and caste distinctions in society, which in turn contribute to uneven allocations of power and wealth.

Because to Marxism, we can now see the systemic causes of inequality and the mechanisms by which they are maintained. The capitalist system shown in the book, in which Ravi's family prospers through exploiting workers like Gopal's family, lends credence to the idea that class differences are ingrained in our culture. The privileged class is able to amass riches and retain its dominating position thanks to the efforts of people like Gopal's family.

Despite India's development into a modern country, the story shows how caste-based inequality persists. Education, career, and personal relationships are all affected by the pervasive caste system. Despite its antiquity, the caste system continues to play a major role in today's society, determining people's identities and the chances available to them.

Reading *A Place Called Home* via a Marxist perspective also emphasizes the need of social awareness and collective action in addressing these inequalities. The possibility for revolutionary transformation is shown by Gopal's slow but steady realization of his exploitation and subsequent participation in labour movements. As Gopal develops a sense of social stratification, he bands together with others to challenge the systems that have held his people down for decades.

The story provides a larger criticism of cultural conventions and structures in addition to the personal experiences of the individuals. It challenges readers to examine the ways through which the capitalist system maintains social divides and exploits workers. The importance of self-knowledge in propelling social change and forging unity across class lines is shown by Ravi's maturing compassion and understanding of his privilege.

There are many facets to class and caste disparities, and although *A Place Called Home* sheds light on some of them, it is by no means comprehensive. Additional study and analysis are necessary to completely appreciate the varied nature of social inequality. Recognizing the mutual reinforcement of social stratification by several identities, such as gender, religion, and race, is essential.

In conclusion, *A Place Called Home* by Preeti Shenoy provides a compelling depiction of caste and class distinctions,

encouraging readers to question the status quo and fight for positive change. Reading the book via a Marxist lens encourages readers to confront social inequities and work toward a more just and fair world for everyone. We may strive toward a future in which everyone has equal access to possibilities, resources, and dignity if we recognize the complexity of class and caste distinctions. We can liberate ourselves from the bonds of inequality and create a society that celebrates difference and gives its people the tools they need to succeed if we work together and raise awareness.

Future Recommendations:

Though the Marxist analysis of social stratification in *A Place Called Home* yields important findings, more research is needed to examine the ways in which multiple identities, including gender, race, and religion, intersects to shape an individual's life trajectory. Understanding the intricacies of social structures like these will be facilitated by this.

1. In-Depth Analysis: Longitudinal studies that track people from various social classes or castes across time may provide light on the repercussions such differences have on people over the course of their lives. This kind of study may provide insight on the ways in which social status influences people's opportunities in life.

2. Evaluation in Contrast: The appearance of social class and caste distinctions may be studied across areas and communities for similarities and differences. In order to solve these problems on a global scale, it is important to examine how various political and economic systems impact social hierarchies.

3. Pay Attention to Interventions in Policy: Evaluating the efficacy of current policies and initiatives to lessen class and caste differences should be a primary focus of future study. Evaluating the results of social welfare initiatives such as affirmative action, reservation rules, and others may reveal their strengths and weaknesses.

4. Diverse Representation in Books and Films: Literature, culture, and art that portrays varied perspectives and challenges class and caste prejudices may play an important role in changing public attitudes and developing empathy. Understanding the ways in which popular culture either reinforces or challenges existing social hierarchies may be gained via an examination of how class and caste are portrayed in today's media.

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