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Consuming Power: A Marxist Critique of Consumerism, Class, and Political Economy in Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Party Worker*

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Abstract

*This study examines the representation of consumerism, class hierarchy, and political economy in *The Party Worker* through a Marxist critical framework. Set within the socio-political environment of urban Pakistan, the novel exposes the ways capitalist power structures, ideological manipulation, and material desire shape political authority and social relations. Drawing upon the theories of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and Louis Althusser, this research explores concepts such as commodity fetishism, hegemony, ideology, and class struggle to analyze how consumer culture functions as a mechanism of domination and social control in the narrative. Using a qualitative textual analysis and interpretivist approach, the study investigates the relationship between economic privilege, political corruption, and urban capitalist structures portrayed in the novel. The findings suggest that consumerism operates not only as a cultural practice but also as an ideological force that reinforces class inequality, alienation, and exploitation within society. Furthermore, the study argues that the novel critiques the interconnectedness of capitalism and political violence by revealing how material aspirations and economic interests influence both individual identity and collective social structures. By situating *The Party Worker* within Marxist literary criticism and postcolonial political economy, this research contributes to contemporary scholarship on Pakistani literature, capitalist ideology, and class-based power relations in South Asian fiction.*

Keywords: *Marxism, Consumerism, Pakistani Literature, Class Struggle, Political Economy*

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of global capitalism and consumer culture has transformed social relations, political structures, and individual identities across contemporary societies. In late capitalist systems, consumerism no longer functions merely as an economic activity but operates as an ideological mechanism that shapes desires, reinforces class divisions, and sustains capitalist hegemony. Marxist theorists argue that capitalist societies commodify not only material goods but also human consciousness, social relationships, and political identities. Consumer culture therefore becomes deeply intertwined with class power, ideological control, and economic exploitation. Scholars working within Marxist political economy have emphasized that consumption is closely linked with the reproduction of capitalist structures and the maintenance of social inequality (Mulcahy, 2017). Karl Marx conceptualized capitalism as a system grounded in exploitation, commodity fetishism, and alienation, where material relations obscure the realities of labor and class oppression (Marx, 1867). Later Marxist thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser expanded this critique by explaining how ideology and hegemony

sustain capitalist domination through cultural and institutional apparatuses (Althusser, 1971; Gramsci, 1971). Contemporary scholarship further demonstrates that consumerism functions as a political and ideological force that normalizes exploitation while encouraging individuals to equate identity and social value with material consumption (Day, 2020).

Within postcolonial societies, the effects of capitalism and consumer culture are particularly visible in urban political structures shaped by inequality, corruption, and class fragmentation. Pakistan's metropolitan centers, especially Karachi, reflect the contradictions of neoliberal capitalism where economic privilege, political patronage, violence, and symbolic consumption intersect to sustain systems of power. Contemporary Pakistani English fiction increasingly engages with these socio-economic realities by exposing the relationship between class hierarchy, political economy, and ideological control. Among the significant voices in this literary landscape is Omar Shahid Hamid, whose fiction critically portrays the political and social complexities of urban Pakistan. His novels frequently examine corruption, violence, institutional decay, and the unequal distribution of power within capitalist society. *The Party Worker* presents a powerful depiction of Karachi's political culture where economic ambition, political loyalty, class privilege, and consumer desire become interconnected mechanisms of social domination. Through its representation of political elites, criminal networks, and marginalized communities, the novel foregrounds the material realities of capitalist urban life and exposes how power is accumulated and maintained through ideological and economic structures.

Marxist literary criticism provides a significant framework for examining the ideological dimensions of literary texts and their relationship with socio-economic conditions. Marxist critics view literature as both a reflection and critique of material realities shaped by class relations and historical forces. Concepts such as class struggle, commodity fetishism, hegemony, reification, and ideological interpellation allow scholars to investigate how literary narratives reproduce or resist dominant capitalist ideologies. Recent scholarship on Pakistani fiction has increasingly employed Marxist approaches to analyze themes of class inequality, state violence, urban marginalization, and capitalist exploitation. Studies on Omar Shahid Hamid's fiction have explored issues such as spatial injustice, ideological interpellation, and postcolonial class struggle, revealing how his works critique capitalist hegemony and institutional oppression (Zaidi et al., 2024). However, despite growing scholarly interest in Hamid's fiction, limited attention has been paid to the role of consumerism and political economy in *The Party Worker*. Existing studies largely focus on terrorism, state violence, or ideological extremism, while the relationship between capitalist consumer culture, class identity, and political power remains underexplored. This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive Marxist analysis of the novel that specifically examines how consumerism operates as an ideological and political force within Pakistan's urban capitalist environment.

The present study therefore investigates the representation of consumerism, class hierarchy, and political economy in *The Party Worker* through a Marxist critical framework. Drawing upon the theoretical perspectives of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and Louis Althusser, the research examines how capitalist ideology shapes political authority, social mobility, and individual consciousness within the novel. The study particularly focuses on the ways material desire, symbolic consumption, and economic power reinforce systems of exploitation and social inequality. By analyzing the novel through concepts such as commodity fetishism, hegemony, ideological state apparatuses, and class struggle, this research seeks to reveal how consumer culture functions as a mechanism of ideological domination in contemporary urban Pakistan. Furthermore, the study explores how the novel critiques the interconnectedness of capitalism,

political corruption, and violence, exposing the structural inequalities embedded within the socio-political order.

This research is significant because it contributes to the growing field of Marxist and postcolonial literary studies in South Asian literature. It expands scholarly discussions on Pakistani English fiction by examining the ideological dimensions of consumer culture and political economy in contemporary urban narratives. The study also contributes to broader debates concerning capitalism, class relations, and neoliberal modernity within postcolonial societies. By situating *The Party Worker* within Marxist literary criticism, the research demonstrates how literature functions as a critical site for exposing the contradictions of capitalist society and the ideological processes through which class power is maintained. In doing so, the study offers a deeper understanding of the relationship between consumerism, political authority, and social inequality in contemporary Pakistani fiction.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it contributes to the expanding field of Marxist literary criticism, postcolonial studies, and Pakistani English literature by offering a comprehensive analysis of consumerism and political economy in *The Party Worker*. Although contemporary Pakistani fiction has increasingly attracted scholarly attention for its engagement with terrorism, violence, and political instability, limited research has examined the role of capitalist consumer culture and class-based ideological structures in shaping social and political realities within these narratives. This research therefore fills an important scholarly gap by investigating how consumerism operates as a mechanism of ideological domination and class control in the novel. The study is also significant because it applies Marxist concepts such as class struggle, commodity fetishism, hegemony, and ideological state apparatuses to the analysis of urban Pakistani fiction. By employing the theoretical perspectives of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and Louis Althusser, the research provides a deeper understanding of how literature reflects and critiques capitalist power structures, social inequality, and political corruption in postcolonial societies. Furthermore, the study highlights the interconnectedness of consumer culture, economic privilege, and political authority, thereby demonstrating how capitalist ideology influences both individual identity and collective social relations.

This research contributes to contemporary debates concerning neoliberal capitalism, urban class divisions, and ideological manipulation within South Asian literary studies. It broadens critical discussions on Omar Shahid Hamid by examining dimensions of consumerism and political economy that remain underexplored in existing scholarship. The study may also serve as a useful source for future researchers interested in Marxist criticism, cultural studies, political economy, and contemporary Pakistani literature. In a broader context, the research underscores the importance of literature as a medium for exposing the contradictions of capitalist society and challenging systems of social and economic exploitation.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the representation of consumerism and capitalist ideology in *The Party Worker* through a Marxist critical framework.
2. To examine how class hierarchy, political power, and economic inequality shape social relations and ideological control in the novel.

Research Questions

1. How does *The Party Worker* portray consumerism and capitalist ideology within the socio-political structure of urban Pakistan?
2. In what ways does the novel represent class hierarchy, political power, and economic inequality through a Marxist perspective?

2. Literature Review

Marxist literary criticism has remained one of the most influential theoretical approaches in literary and cultural studies because of its emphasis on class relations, economic structures, ideology, and social power. Rooted in the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marxist criticism examines the relationship between literature and the material conditions of society. Marx argues that capitalist systems are fundamentally organized around class struggle, where the bourgeoisie controls economic production and exploits the proletariat for the accumulation of capital (Marx, 1867). Literature, according to Marxist critics, is not an isolated artistic product but rather a reflection of historical, political, and economic realities shaped by dominant class ideologies. Consequently, literary texts become important cultural spaces where social inequalities, capitalist exploitation, and ideological structures can be exposed and critically examined.

One of the major concerns within Marxist literary criticism is the role of ideology in maintaining capitalist domination. Antonio Gramsci introduced the concept of cultural hegemony to explain how ruling classes preserve power not merely through coercion but through ideological consent produced by institutions such as media, religion, education, and culture (Gramsci, 1971). Similarly, Louis Althusser argued that capitalist societies reproduce class relations through Ideological State Apparatuses that shape individual consciousness and normalize dominant ideologies (Althusser, 1971). These concepts have become central to literary criticism because they allow scholars to analyze how literary texts reproduce or resist systems of power, exploitation, and social control. Contemporary Marxist scholars continue to emphasize that ideology functions subtly within capitalist societies by shaping consumer behavior, political beliefs, and social identities (Wakeel & Khan, 2024). In postcolonial societies such as Pakistan, ideology often intersects with political corruption, class privilege, and economic inequality, thereby creating complex social structures reflected in literary narratives.

Another important dimension of Marxist criticism concerns consumerism and commodity culture within capitalist societies. Marx's concept of commodity fetishism explains how capitalist economies transform human labor and social relations into commodities, causing individuals to value objects more than human relationships (Marx, 1867). In capitalist societies, commodities acquire symbolic and ideological meanings that obscure exploitation and class inequality. Contemporary theorists such as Jean Baudrillard expanded this argument by claiming that modern consumer societies are driven by signs, symbols, and manufactured desires where consumption becomes central to identity formation (Baudrillard, 1998). Consumer culture therefore functions not only as an economic system but also as a mechanism of ideological control. Day (2020) argues that late capitalism encourages individuals to construct social identities through material consumption while concealing structural inequalities and labor exploitation. Similarly, Mulcahy (2017) contends that consumerism sustains capitalist accumulation by reproducing class divisions and reinforcing systems of economic power. These perspectives are particularly significant in contemporary urban societies where wealth, luxury, and symbolic consumption often determine social status and political authority.

Recent literary scholarship has increasingly focused on the relationship between capitalism, consumer culture, and postcolonial societies. Scholars argue that neoliberal capitalism has intensified socio-economic inequalities within developing countries, particularly in urban spaces shaped by globalization, privatization, and political corruption. Pakistani society reflects many contradictions of neoliberal capitalism where rapid urbanization, economic disparity, and consumer culture intersect with political instability and class fragmentation. Contemporary Pakistani English fiction frequently engages with these realities by portraying urban spaces as

sites of capitalist struggle, ideological conflict, and economic exploitation. Research on Pakistani literature demonstrates that class divisions and material inequalities remain central themes in postcolonial narratives because capitalist systems continue to shape social mobility, political influence, and cultural identity (Ashiq et al., 2024).

Within Pakistani Anglophone fiction, Marxist criticism has increasingly been applied to examine issues of class struggle, social inequality, and capitalist exploitation. Studies on Mohsin Hamid, for example, reveal how contemporary Pakistani novels portray the destructive consequences of neoliberal capitalism and material ambition. Ashiq et al. (2024), in their Marxist study of *Moth Smoke*, argue that capitalist inequality creates alienation, corruption, and moral collapse within urban Pakistani society. The study demonstrates how economic disparities generate social frustration and class conflict, particularly among marginalized groups struggling within capitalist systems. Similarly, Ilahi, Fraz, and Karam (2025) analyze *Moth Smoke* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* through a Marxist framework and conclude that neoliberal capitalism promotes exploitation, consumerism, and class oppression while privileging elite groups who control economic resources. Their study further argues that capitalist urban environments encourage material obsession and individualism, thereby weakening social solidarity and intensifying economic inequality.

The relationship between consumer culture and symbolic capital has also received scholarly attention in recent years. Hall and Taylor (2023) argue that consumer practices within Pakistani communities often function as markers of social prestige, status, and “izzat,” thereby reinforcing class hierarchies and cultural inequalities. Their study demonstrates that consumption in postcolonial societies extends beyond economic necessity and becomes associated with symbolic forms of power and social recognition. Such arguments are highly relevant for understanding contemporary Pakistani fiction where material desire, luxury, and social aspiration frequently shape character identities and political relationships. Consumerism in such contexts becomes deeply connected to ideological control because capitalist societies encourage individuals to measure social value through wealth, material success, and visible consumption. Marxist criticism has also been extended into feminist and eco-critical literary studies to examine the interconnectedness of capitalism, patriarchy, and exploitation. Marxist feminist scholars argue that capitalism depends upon gendered labor and patriarchal structures that sustain systems of economic production and social reproduction. Ali and Chandio (2024), in their Marxist feminist analysis of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, demonstrate how neoliberal capitalism exploits women’s labor and reinforces patriarchal power within postcolonial societies. Their study reveals that capitalist development often disguises exploitation as economic progress and social mobility. Similarly, eco-Marxist studies on Pakistani literature have explored how capitalism commodifies both human labor and environmental resources. Anwar et al. (2025) argue that capitalist patriarchy exploits women and nature simultaneously through systems of commodification, economic control, and neoliberal expansion. These studies collectively demonstrate the versatility of Marxist approaches in analyzing multiple dimensions of power, exploitation, and ideology within contemporary literature.

Urban space and political economy have emerged as important areas of discussion within Marxist literary scholarship, particularly in relation to postcolonial cities shaped by globalization and capitalist inequality. Marxist theorists argue that capitalist societies organize urban spaces according to economic interests and class privilege, thereby producing spatial divisions between elite and marginalized communities. Pakistani metropolitan cities such as Karachi represent these contradictions of capitalism where wealth, political influence, violence, and corruption coexist within highly unequal social structures. Contemporary Pakistani fiction frequently

portrays Karachi as a fragmented urban environment shaped by economic competition, political patronage, and institutional corruption. Research on urban representation in Pakistani fiction demonstrates that literary texts often expose how capitalist systems produce social alienation, marginalization, and political violence within metropolitan spaces (Zaidi et al., 2024).

Among contemporary Pakistani writers, Omar Shahid Hamid has gained significant scholarly attention for his portrayal of Karachi's socio-political complexities. His novels critically examine issues such as corruption, extremism, institutional decay, and urban violence within postcolonial Pakistan. Studies on Hamid's fiction increasingly reveal the relationship between state power, ideology, and socio-economic inequality. Zaidi, Saleem, and Aslam (2024), in their Marxist study of *The Prisoner*, argue that Hamid portrays Karachi as a city manipulated by capitalist hegemony and political structures that privilege elite groups while marginalizing vulnerable communities. Their research highlights how urban spaces become instruments of ideological and economic control within capitalist systems. Similarly, Zafar (2025), in a postcolonial Marxist analysis of *The Spinner's Tale*, argues that Hamid's fiction exposes the oppression of marginalized communities through class divisions, ideological manipulation, and state power. The study concludes that political violence and extremism emerge partly from socio-economic inequalities and systems of capitalist domination.

Other recent studies have examined Hamid's fiction from postcolonial and political perspectives. Munir, Cheema, and Bashir (2024) analyze *The Spinner's Tale* through a paracolonial framework and argue that Hamid portrays the continuing effects of colonialism on Pakistan's political and social structures. Their research emphasizes that postcolonial Pakistan remains deeply affected by corruption, institutional instability, and ideological fragmentation. Similarly, studies on contemporary Pakistani fiction have explored how neoliberal capitalism influences political authority, social identity, and urban culture within postcolonial societies (Wakeel & Khan, 2024). These studies collectively indicate that Pakistani literature increasingly engages with themes of class inequality, ideological control, and capitalist modernity.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on Pakistani fiction and Omar Shahid Hamid's works, limited research has specifically focused on consumerism and political economy in *The Party Worker*. Existing studies largely concentrate on terrorism, extremism, state violence, or postcolonial identity, while the ideological dimensions of consumer culture and capitalist materialism remain insufficiently explored. Furthermore, although Marxist criticism has been applied to several contemporary Pakistani novels, few studies investigate how consumer desire, symbolic consumption, and economic ambition contribute to political authority and class domination within urban Pakistani society. This gap is particularly important because contemporary capitalism increasingly operates through consumer culture, media representation, and material aspiration that shape individual consciousness and social identity. The present study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining *The Party Worker* through a Marxist critique of consumerism, class hierarchy, and political economy. Drawing upon the theoretical perspectives of Marx, Gramsci, Althusser, and Baudrillard, the study investigates how consumer culture functions as an ideological mechanism that reinforces capitalist domination and socio-economic inequality within the urban environment of Karachi. The research specifically explores how material desire, political corruption, economic privilege, and symbolic consumption intersect to sustain systems of exploitation and ideological control in the novel. Through this analysis, the study contributes to contemporary scholarship on Pakistani literature, Marxist criticism, and postcolonial political economy by highlighting the relationship between capitalism, consumer culture, and social power in contemporary urban fiction. Moreover, this study contributes to broader discussions concerning neoliberal capitalism and ideological control

within postcolonial societies. Marxist literary criticism emphasizes that literature reflects material realities and historical contradictions embedded within capitalist systems. In this regard, *The Party Worker* becomes an important literary text for understanding how urban capitalism, political corruption, and consumer culture shape contemporary Pakistani society. The novel exposes the contradictions of neoliberal modernity where wealth, symbolic consumption, and political influence determine social status and human relationships. By critically examining these issues through a Marxist framework, this research demonstrates how literature can reveal the hidden mechanisms of capitalist ideology and challenge structures of inequality, exploitation, and social domination.

Research Gap

Although contemporary Pakistani English fiction has received considerable scholarly attention for its engagement with terrorism, political instability, urban violence, and postcolonial identity, limited research has critically examined the role of consumerism and capitalist political economy in shaping socio-political relations within these narratives. Existing studies on Omar Shahid Hamid primarily focus on themes such as extremism, corruption, ideological conflict, spatial injustice, and state violence, particularly in novels such as *The Prisoner* and *The Spinner's Tale* (Zaidi et al., 2024; Zafar, 2025). While these studies successfully highlight issues of power and oppression, they largely overlook the significance of consumer culture, commodity fetishism, and material aspiration as mechanisms of ideological domination within capitalist society.

Recent Marxist studies on Pakistani fiction have mainly concentrated on class struggle, social inequality, and neoliberal exploitation in the works of writers such as Mohsin Hamid (Ashiq et al., 2024; Ilahi et al., 2025). However, insufficient attention has been given to how consumerism functions as an ideological force that shapes political authority, social identity, and economic power within urban Pakistani narratives. Existing scholarship rarely explores the interconnectedness of capitalist consumer culture, symbolic consumption, political corruption, and class hierarchy in *The Party Worker* specifically. Although Marxist concepts such as class conflict and ideology have been applied in Pakistani literary studies, there remains a lack of comprehensive research integrating theories of commodity fetishism, hegemony, and political economy to analyze consumer culture in contemporary Pakistani fiction. The ideological role of material desire, luxury, and consumption in sustaining capitalist domination within postcolonial urban society remains critically underexplored. Therefore, this study addresses an important scholarly gap by providing a Marxist critique of consumerism, class hierarchy, and political economy in *The Party Worker*. Through this approach, the research contributes to contemporary debates on capitalism, ideology, and social inequality in Pakistani English literature and expands existing scholarship on Omar Shahid Hamid's representation of urban political culture.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to critically examine consumerism, class hierarchy, and political economy in *The Party Worker*. The research is grounded in a Marxist literary framework and focuses on interpreting textual evidence to understand how capitalist ideology operates within the narrative. Since the study is concerned with meaning, ideology, and representation rather than numerical data, a qualitative interpretivist approach is considered most appropriate.

3.1 Research Design

The study follows a descriptive-analytical research design. It first describes key textual elements related to consumerism, class structure, and political power, and then critically analyzes them through a Marxist theoretical lens. This approach allows for a systematic examination of how ideological meanings are constructed and represented in the novel.

3.2 Research Approach

An interpretivist approach is used in this research. This approach assumes that meaning is socially constructed and can be interpreted through critical reading of texts. In this context, the novel is treated as a cultural and ideological product that reflects and critiques the socio-economic realities of capitalist society. The interpretivist approach enables a deeper understanding of how ideology, power, and class relations are embedded in literary representation.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

The study is based on Marxist literary theory. Key concepts such as class struggle, ideology, commodity fetishism, hegemony, and alienation are used as analytical tools. These concepts help in examining how consumerism and political economy function within the novel's narrative structure. The framework also allows for an exploration of how economic systems influence social relations and individual behavior in the text.

3.4 Data Collection

The primary source of data is the novel *The Party Worker*. Relevant excerpts, dialogues, character interactions, and narrative descriptions are selected for detailed analysis. These textual elements are chosen based on their relevance to themes of consumerism, class, political power, and ideology. No external numerical or statistical data is used in this study.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected textual data is analyzed through close reading and thematic analysis. Close reading involves a detailed examination of language, symbols, and narrative techniques used in the novel. Thematic analysis is used to identify recurring patterns related to consumerism, class hierarchy, and political economy.

The analysis is conducted in the following steps:

1. Identification of key themes related to capitalism, consumption, and class structure.
2. Interpretation of these themes using Marxist concepts such as ideology and commodity fetishism.
3. Examination of how characters and events reflect broader socio-economic and political structures.
4. Critical evaluation of how the novel portrays power relations and class inequalities.

3.6 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to a single literary text and focuses specifically on its representation of consumerism and political economy. It does not extend to comparative analysis with other novels. However, it draws broader theoretical implications for understanding capitalist ideology in South Asian fiction.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

The research is limited by its focus on a single novel, which may restrict generalizability. Additionally, as a qualitative textual analysis, the study is interpretive in nature, meaning that findings are based on critical reading and theoretical application rather than empirical measurement.

4. Analysis and Discussion

This section presents a Marxist reading of *The Party Worker* by examining how consumerism, class hierarchy, and political economy function as interrelated structures of power within the narrative. The analysis demonstrates that the novel does not merely depict political corruption and urban violence but also exposes the deeper capitalist ideology that sustains inequality, shapes identity, and normalizes exploitation in contemporary urban Pakistan.

4.1 Consumerism as Ideological Power

In the novel, consumerism is not represented as a neutral economic activity but as a symbolic system through which class identity and social status are constructed. Material possessions, lifestyle choices, and visible markers of wealth function as indicators of power and legitimacy. From a Marxist perspective, this reflects the logic of commodity fetishism, where social relations are disguised as relations between objects. The characters' aspiration toward luxury goods, elite spaces, and privileged lifestyles demonstrates how capitalist ideology reshapes desire and consciousness.

Consumer culture in the novel operates as an ideological force that encourages individuals to equate personal success with material accumulation. This creates a form of false consciousness in which structural inequality is normalized and internalized. As a result, consumerism becomes a mechanism through which capitalist society reproduces its own hierarchy without overt coercion. The narrative suggests that individuals participate willingly in systems that ultimately exploit them, reinforcing Marx's argument that ideology functions to obscure the realities of class domination.

4.2 Class Hierarchy and Social Stratification

Class structure is a central organizing principle in the novel, reflecting a deeply divided urban society where economic power determines access to opportunity, justice, and political influence. The distinction between elite and working-class characters is consistently reinforced through their living conditions, professional roles, and social mobility. The bourgeois class occupies positions of authority and control, while lower-class individuals remain trapped within systems of economic dependency and social marginalization.

From a Marxist perspective, this reflects the fundamental contradiction of capitalist society: the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and the systematic exploitation of the majority. The novel illustrates how class boundaries are maintained not only through economic inequality but also through cultural and ideological mechanisms. Education, social networks, and political affiliations become tools for sustaining class privilege, making upward mobility difficult for marginalized groups. The representation of class hierarchy in the narrative demonstrates that inequality is not accidental but structurally embedded within the political economy of urban Pakistan. The novel thereby reinforces the Marxist idea that class struggle is a defining feature of capitalist society.

4.3 Political Economy and Corruption

The political system in the novel is deeply intertwined with capitalist economic interests. Political authority is shown to be influenced by wealth, patronage, and economic alliances rather than democratic principles or public welfare. This reflects a political economy in which state power functions as an extension of class power.

Corruption in the narrative is not presented as isolated individual misconduct but as a structural outcome of capitalist relations. Political actors, bureaucrats, and intermediaries operate within networks that prioritize economic gain over social responsibility. This system reinforces the dominance of elite classes while marginalizing those without economic capital. From a Marxist perspective, the state functions as a tool for maintaining bourgeois interests. The novel reflects this by illustrating how political decisions are shaped by economic incentives and class alliances. As a result, governance becomes a mechanism for sustaining inequality rather than addressing it.

4.4 Commodity Fetishism and Ideological Consciousness

The novel strongly illustrates the Marxist concept of commodity fetishism, where objects and material goods acquire symbolic meanings that obscure the labor and social relations behind

their production. Luxury goods, branded commodities, and elite lifestyles are presented as markers of success and identity.

Characters often define their worth through consumption, reinforcing the idea that identity is constructed through material possession. This creates a distorted perception of reality in which economic structures remain invisible, while commodities appear as sources of value in themselves. The narrative demonstrates how capitalist ideology transforms human relationships into transactional and material forms. This fetishization of commodities also contributes to ideological control, as individuals become preoccupied with consumption rather than recognizing structural inequality. The novel thus reveals how capitalism shapes not only economic relations but also perception, desire, and consciousness.

4.5 Hegemony and Ideological Control

The ruling class in the novel maintains its dominance not solely through force but through ideological consent, reflecting Gramscian hegemony. Social norms, media representation, and institutional practices all contribute to the normalization of inequality and elite privilege. The acceptance of hierarchical social order by subordinate groups demonstrates the effectiveness of ideological control. Education, career aspirations, and political loyalty are shown to be shaped by dominant ideologies that encourage conformity rather than resistance. Even marginalized characters often internalize the values of the ruling class, aspiring toward the same systems that oppress them. This reflects the Althusserian idea that ideology functions through everyday practices that shape individual subjectivity.

The novel thereby suggests that power in capitalist society is sustained not only through repression but also through consent, making ideological domination more effective and difficult to challenge.

4.6 Urban Space and Capitalist Modernity

Urban space in the novel functions as a reflection of capitalist modernity, where economic inequality is spatially organized. Wealthy areas are associated with security, luxury, and political influence, while marginalized communities experience exclusion, violence, and neglect. The city becomes a site of economic stratification, where access to space reflects access to power.

This spatial division reinforces class hierarchy and highlights the material consequences of capitalist development. Urban life is characterized by competition, insecurity, and social fragmentation, reflecting the contradictions of neoliberal modernization. The novel presents the city as both a site of opportunity and exploitation, where capitalist forces shape every aspect of social existence.

5. Conclusion

This study critically examined consumerism, class hierarchy, and political economy in *The Party Worker* through a Marxist theoretical framework. The analysis demonstrates that the novel extends beyond a conventional portrayal of political corruption and urban violence by exposing the deeper capitalist structures that shape social relations, ideological consciousness, and power distribution in contemporary urban Pakistan. By applying Marxist concepts such as ideology, commodity fetishism, hegemony, and class struggle, the research highlights how capitalist systems operate both materially and ideologically to sustain inequality and reinforce elite dominance.

The findings indicate that consumerism in the novel functions as an ideological mechanism that shapes identity, desire, and social aspiration. Material consumption is portrayed not merely as economic behavior but as a marker of class identity and social legitimacy. This reflects how capitalist ideology transforms commodities into symbols of status, thereby obscuring underlying structures of exploitation. The analysis of class hierarchy reveals a deeply stratified society where

economic privilege determines access to political influence, social mobility, and institutional power. The novel consistently portrays class divisions as structurally embedded rather than accidental, reinforcing the Marxist view that inequality is a fundamental feature of capitalist systems. The discussion of political economy shows that political institutions are closely aligned with capitalist interests. Bureaucratic structures, governance systems, and elite networks operate in coordination with economic power, resulting in systemic corruption and unequal distribution of resources. The state is represented as an instrument through which dominant classes maintain control, rather than as a neutral authority serving public welfare. This perspective aligns with Marxist arguments regarding the connection between state power and economic dominance.

The study also demonstrates that ideological control in the novel is sustained through both coercion and consent. Through mechanisms of hegemony and ideological conditioning, individuals internalize dominant values and participate in reproducing the very systems that marginalize them. Ideology therefore operates at structural and psychological levels, shaping perception, ambition, and behavior in ways that reinforce capitalist order. The findings confirm that *The Party Worker* presents a critical representation of capitalist modernity in urban Pakistan. The novel illustrates how consumer culture, class inequality, and political corruption function as interconnected components of a broader ideological system that sustains exploitation and domination. By situating the text within Marxist literary criticism, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how contemporary Pakistani fiction reflects and critiques socio-economic realities shaped by neoliberal capitalism. The study highlights the need for further Marxist literary investigations of South Asian fiction with attention to consumer culture and political economy.

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