

## **GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ: A MARXIST WRITER**

**VINODSINH VILASRAO PATIL**

ASSIT. PROF. AND HEAD,  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH,  
ARTS AND COMMERCE COLLEGE, PHONDAGHAT.  
SINDHUDURG (M.S.), INDIA

### **Abstract**

*Many economist and political thinkers comment that Marxism has come to an end, in political and economic sectors, at universal level, after downfall of USSR. As well some literary critics and academicians also remark that Marxist Literary theory has no significance in literary analysis of 21<sup>st</sup> century literature. But if someone reads keenly, he can find that there are authors like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and many others, who have continuously criticized Capitalism and Neo-Imperialism, in Latin America, through their literary works. The researcher thinks about the dread picture of the Fourth World; that the democratic, imperialist and even socialist countries are divided into opposite classes, i.e. privileged, rich, high class at one side and depressed, exploited, suffering masses at other. Twentieth Century Colombian author Gabriel Marquez was not only Marxist writer but also a Socialist Revolutionary. The winner of Nobel Prize in literature, Marquez, has presented the realistic picture of the society, and has supported the socialistic movement in Cuba and other Latin American countries. Hence, the researcher has tried to focus Gabriel Garcia Marquez as a Marxist writer, through this paper.*

**Key Words:** *Marxism, Marxist Literary theory, Marquez, Nobel, Imperialism, Capitalism.*

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### Prologue:

**L**iterature is mirror held to life'. Literature is universal, and it speaks to the readers. Literature is a creative work which includes poetry, drama, novel, essay and non-fiction forms. It represents the experiences of life but in imaginative form. Human being love to read literature of this or that form. The reader understands meaning of the text by looking at how the author has presented life in the text. Readers may interpret the text by applying various literary theories such as, Marxist, Feminist, Psychological, Sociological, historical, mythological and other approaches of study of Literature. Therefore how can one imagine human being live happily without literature?

The research student thinks that Marxist Criticism is rightly applicable to literature. He believes in the idea of 'Art for Social change' i.e. literature can function as a vehicle of social change. Cuba is the one of the socialist countries in the world, where people belonging to various races, religions and languages live together. The government of Cuba has opposed the Free Economic Policy in 1990s and the principles of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization, advocated by United States of America. But after not implementation of the Policy for a long period, USA hand banned trades with Cuba; the researcher thinks that yet Fidel Castro has never succumbed to USA. He fought at all the levels of agriculture and industrial sectors.

The researcher further observes that the social inequality is its peak in every corner of the universe, except few socialist countries, today. Isn't it social and economic inequality? Therefore, the researcher sees the dread picture of the Fourth World that the democratic and neo-imperialistic countries are divided into opposite classes, i.e. privileged, rich, high class at one side and depressed, exploited, suffering masses at other. Then question arises, are developing countries' economy marching towards superpower? Isn't a fake propaganda done by some of the capitalistic economists and media? This is applicable

not only for India but for many countries in the world. The world capital is much attracted towards such developing and underdeveloped countries and Fourth World countries through false, unstable and unequal development of information technology sector.

### **Hypothesis of the Study**

Winner of Nobel Prize in literature, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the Colombian writer, has presented the realistic picture of the society, and has supported the socialistic movement in Cuba and other Latin American countries. Hence, the researcher has tried to show that Gabriel Garcia Marquez as a Marxist Writer.

### **Theoretical Perspectives:**

- **Marxism:**

Marxism is the body of social doctrine worked out by Karl Marx (1818-1883), the German economist and socialist. The doctrine was worked out by Marx in cooperation with his friend Fredrick Engels and it was systematized later on by his followers. It is philosophy of history implemented by an elaborate economic theory. This philosophy proposes and demonstrates the inevitability of socialism. Socialism is interpreted as the collectivist order in which the social product is distributed according to the needs of all. The final objective is creation of society where 'all are equal'. There may neither any person rich or any poor; nor the charge of power in the hands of powerful ones or in the hands of those who have been the traditional rulers. Marxist philosophy focuses the optimistic thought 'live and let's live', which is the humanism proposed by Karl Marx.

Writer gives an expression to revolutionary ideas, thoughts even though unconsciously. Marx, Engels and Lenin had very little time to elaborate their ideas regarding art and literature, in the view of their theory of historical materialism. Marx and Engels valued the revolutionary content of Balzac; whereas Lenin appreciated the Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy. For Marx ideology is false consciousness, a way of understanding the world that appears true but actually obscures the fact that the world is dominated and exploited by the economic, social, and political materials or interests of the day. The

traditional interests of church and feudal society are replaced by the modern interests of capitalism and the nation-state. The universal history is also the story of class conflict.

Though people say Marxism is out of the sense since downfall of USSR, but Karl Marx and Marxism are still worth studying, till there is capitalism in the world. Marxism is useful till there are the problems like alienation, exploitation, class conflict, and oppression of working class. The ideal goal of a classless society, free of economic exploitation and social domination has not lost its appeal yet. It is true that there is importance of working class for any radical social transformation; hence Marx's method of social analysis remains useful. The people who are fighting against the Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization, and who are defending the interests of working classes can get much from the Marxist literature. Marx insisted that communism would give a profound human liberation, liberation of aesthetic capacities and potential.

Karl Marx thought that there would be more poets in communist society, with gift of poetry. Excessive specialization is the defect of capitalism, whereas communism offers all round development of various talents of an individual. Marxist literature reflects conflicts of capitalism and of capitalistic society. In capitalism there is pursuit of profit, related to market economy; there is economic competition which gives birth to imperialism and war. Marxist literary theory attends the content of literary texts and the form of literary texts. The basic of Marxist Literary theory is to study the ideological relationship at different times and places, between the form and content of text and their material and historical contexts.

- **Marxist Theory of Literature or Marxist Criticism:**

Marxist Literary Theory is not developed by Karl Marx but it is based on the economic and political theories explored by him. Marx states a new model of history, where economic and political conditions determine the social condition, in his books *The German Ideology* and *Communist Manifesto*. Marx and Engel have exposed the social problems emerging out of capitalism. These theories are the analysis of functions of society in constant change. Literature is studied in terms of gender, race, social class and nationality. Marxism is the political and economic theory that advocates class struggle is the major force behind historical change where the dominant class has exploited the other classes;



hence capitalism will be superseded by socialism and classless society. In literary criticism the term used to make evaluation of literature which supports this theory and plays the role as an instrument of creating classless society. Marxism and literature are thus related to each other by the tendency of thinking 'literature as vehicle of social change'.

Literature reflects contemporary social condition of the age, the class struggle and materialism. It reflects an author's own class or interpretation of class relations. Marxist criticism is related to the issues of power and money. According to Marxists, literature is a social institution and has a specific ideological function, based on background and ideology of the author. It raises the following kinds of questions:

What role does social class play in the literary work? What is the author's analysis of class relations? What are the vocational roles of all characters? What is their place in the system? How do characters in the work overcome oppression? What is the role of government in the work? Does that work serve as propaganda for the status quo; or does it try to undermine it? What is the opinion of the author reflected in work about oppression? Are social conflicts blamed or ignored? Does the work put some solutions to the social problem reflected in work?

There are different opinions of Marxist literary critics regarding relationship between ideology and literature. Soviet critics George Lukas and French theorist Louis Althusser have modified or expanded Marx's original concepts. According to them, literature reflects the economic base. George Lukas feels that only realistic forms of fiction are artistically and politically valid.

- **Gabriel Garcia Marquez:**

Colombian novelist, short story writer, journalist and screenwriter Gabriel Garcia Marquez was born on 06<sup>th</sup> March 1927, in a small town Aracataca, near the Caribbean Coast. His grandmother's tales become source for his fictional style. His grandfather also told him about the massacre of the banana workers which took place in Aracataca in the year when he was born. In this way his family influenced him towards rebellion rather than towards upholding the established order. He died on 17 April 2014 at the age of 87, by

cancer. On his death, the president of Colombia, Juan Samuel Santos described him as 'the greatest Colombian who ever lived'.

Gabriel Marquez was supporter of the Revolution in Cuba and Comrade Fidel Castro. He was not only writer but also politically influenced person who tried to help poor and helpless people. He was a socialist, a friend of Fidel Castro and a sharp critic of what he considered U.S. imperialism; so he was denied a visa to enter the U.S., for many years. He belonged to a unit of Communist Party for a short time when he was twenty, but hadn't done anything of interest. He was more of a sympathizer to the revolution than a real militant. Since then, there were many ups and downs in his relationship with the Communists. But he had never publicly condemned them, even at the worst moments. He earned the international recognition with the publication of the novel which led to work as mediator in several negotiations between the Government of Colombia and the guerrillas. The popularity of his writing also led to friendships with former Cuban president, Fidel Castro. Gabriel Marquez in an interview in 1982, notes his relationship with Castro is mostly based on literature: 'Ours is an intellectual friendship. It may not be widely known that Fidel is a very cultured man. When we're together, we talk a great deal about literature.'

Gabriel Marquez was greatly influenced by the assassination of a leftist presidential candidate, Jorge Eliecer Gaitan. He remained a committed communist, beginning with his early days of political formation, through Cuban revolution till his death. He was forced to move to Europe, when dictatorship took power in Colombia. Further he went to Paris, met many intellectuals and artists banned from contemporary Latin American dictatorships. After 1981 he was accused of sympathizing with M19 rebels and sending money to a Venezuelan guerrilla group. He returned to Cuba in 1975 and travelled through island and published three dispatches. He later wrote,

'My idea was to write about how the Cubans broke the blockade within their homes. Not the work of the government or the state, but how the people themselves resolved the problems of kitchen, of washing clothes, of the needle-to-stitch, all those quotidian difficulties.'

He further, wrote an epic chronicle of the Cuban expedition in Africa in 1976, the first time a 'third world' country had interposed itself in a conflict involving two superpowers.

Gabriel Marquez was dedicated to three careers in his life: fictional writer, cinema script writer and journalism. Foundation for New Iberoamerican Journalism, an institute of journalism was founded by him in 1994, with the help of UNESCO in Cartagena. He worked with the Cuban News agency, *Prensa Latina*, after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. He started a new political magazine *Alternativa*, along with a group of young Colombian intellectuals and journalists. Gabriel Marquez had love for cinema also, so he created his own institutions, the Foundation for New Latin American Cinema and the International School for Cinema and Television, in 1986.

South Americans were in dilemma to succumb to the capitalist ideals of the western world or to accept the communist ideals of Karl Marx and Engels. His literature was influenced by leftist political thoughts, forged in large part by a 1928 military attack near Aracataca of banana workers striking against the United Fruit Company. Marquez presents Marxist thoughts and socialist beliefs in his novel *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. He explains how capitalism is insensitive; through portrayal of bishop as distant and insensitive. He uses strong irony through diction to further his disapproval of the bishop.

***The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor:*** *Story of A Shipwrecked Sailor (1955)*, written by Marquez presents how government corruption contributed to the disaster. It was a series of 14 news articles, revealing the hidden story of shipwreck of Colombian Navy. He has composed the plot of this work by taking interviews with sailor who survived from shipwreck. Literary critic Bell-Villada noted, 'Owing to his hands on experiences in journalism, Gabriel Marquez is, of all the great living authors, the one who is closest to everyday reality.'

***Leaf Storm:*** *Leaf Storm* is the first novella which took seven years to find a publisher, finally being published in 1955. Gabriel Marquez notes that *Leaf Storm* was his favorite because he felt that it was the most sincere and spontaneous. It is the story of an old colonel, who tries to give a proper Christian burial to an unpopular French doctor. The colonel is supported only by his daughter and grandson. *Leaf Storm* recounts the arrival of

a US banana company, which enters like a whirlwind, builds a ghetto for the American personnel, prostitutes all the town's young women, exhausts the banana trees, then leaves as suddenly as it had arrived, leaving devastation in its wake.

***One Hundred Years of Solitude:*** Gabriel Marquez had wanted to write a novel based on his grandparents' house where he grew up. But, when the book was published in 1967 it became his most commercially successful novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which sold more than 30 million copies.

This novel was widely popular and led Gabriel Marquez to Nobel Prize as well as the Romulo Gallegos Prize in 1972. William Kennedy has called it 'the first piece of literature since the Book of Genesis that should be required reading for the entire human race,' and hundreds of articles and books of literary critique have been published in response to it. Despite the many accolades the book received, Gabriel Marquez tended to downplay its success. He once remarked:

'Most critics don't realize that a novel like *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a bit of a joke, full of signals to close friends; and so, with some pre-ordained right to pontificate they take on the responsibility of decoding the book and risk making terrible fools of themselves.'

At the end of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* Macondo collapses and disappears; but its (hi)story is left behind, to inspire those who come after. Since Marquez always writes about history as it echoes in popular understanding, then it will, one day, provide the means not only to mock or parody the history of the powerful, but to place those who have been marginalised for so long back at its very heart. The banana workers, who strike in, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* are massacred and their bodies are 'disappeared' a verb that is one of Latin America's few contributions to the universal language. Next day a plague of forgetfulness wipes their very existence away like the 500 students killed in Mexico on the eve of the 1968 Olympic Games.

***Autumn of the Patriarch:*** Gabriel Marquez was inspired to write a dictator novel when he witnessed the flight of Venezuelan dictator Marcos Perez Jimenez. He began writing *Autumn of the Patriarch* in 1968 and was finished in 1971; however, he continued to embellish the dictator novel until 1975 when it was published in Spain. According to



Gabriel Marquez, the novel is a 'poem on the solitude of power' as it follows the life of an eternal dictator known as the General. The novel is about a pathological fascist Caribbean dictator.

***Chronicle of a Death Foretold:*** *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* was published in 1981, the year before Gabriel Marquez was awarded the 1982 Nobel Prize in Literature. It recreates a murder that took place in Sucre, Colombia, in 1951. The character named Santiago Nasar is based on a good friend from Gabriel Marquez's childhood, Cayetano Gentile Chimento. Pelayo classifies this novel as a combination of journalism, realism and detective story. The town becomes the most corrupt region where there is inevitable death of Santiago Nasar, the protagonist. He criticizes and condemns the Church's influence and its relation to corruption and its treatment to the townspeople. Nasar's mother, Placida Linero is the moral idol of the novel, the symbol of integrity and traditional morals. The plot of the novel revolves around Santiago Nasar's murder. The narrator acts as a detective, uncovering the events of the murder second by second. Literary critic Ruben Pelayo notes that the story 'unfolds in an inverted fashion. Instead of moving forward... the plot moves backwards.'

***Love in the Time of Cholera:*** *Love in the Time of Cholera* was first published in 1985. It is considered a non-traditional love story as 'lovers find love in their 'golden years'—in their seventies, when death is all around them.' However, as he explains in an interview: 'The only difference is [my parents] married. And as soon as they were married, they were no longer interesting as literary figures.' The love of old people is based on a newspaper story about the death of two Americans, who were almost 80 years old, who met every year in Acapulco. They were out in a boat one day and were murdered by the boatman with his oars. Gabriel Marquez notes, 'Through their death, the story of their secret romance became known. I was fascinated by them. They were each married to other people.' *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985), is about two lovers thwarted in their youth who find each when they are close to 80.

***News of a Kidnapping:*** *News of a Kidnapping* was first published in 1996. It is a non-fiction book that examines a series of related kidnappings and Narco-terrorist actions committed in the early 1990s in Colombia by the Medellin Cartel, a drug cartel founded and

operated by Pablo Escobar. The text recounts the kidnapping, imprisonment, and eventual release of prominent figures in Colombia, including politicians and members of the press.

- **Epilogue:**

Gabriel Marquez was awarded Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 1972 and the Nobel Prize for literature in 1982, then he had described Latin America as a

‘Source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable.’

When he was awarded the Nobel Prize, the Swedish judges praised both his novels and short stories ‘in which the fantastic and the realistic are combined in a richly composed world of imagination, reflecting a continent's life and conflicts.’ He was popularly known as ‘Gabo’, he was not only the world’s best novelist but also a revolutionary. He was for several times exiled from Colombia for his political convictions. He has further clearly criticized Washington’s violent interventions from Vietnam to Chile. His works have got significant literary identity and commercial success also.

The theme of solitude runs through much of Gabriel Marquez works. As Pelayo notes, ‘*Love in the Time of Cholera*, like all of his works, explores the solitude of the individual and of humankind...portrayed through the solitude of love and of being in love’. In several of his works, he referenced La Viloenceia (the violence), ‘a brutal civil war between conservatives and liberals that lasted into the 1960s, causing the deaths of several hundred thousand Colombians.’

A number of Gabriel Marquez’s novels explore the relationship between American imperialism and the rise and fall of Latin American dictatorships. Their general weakness from the sociological point of view is that the working class is presented largely as the victim of exploitation, and not as an active revolutionary subject. Latin America’s long and bloody encounter with US capitalism and the vicious military dictatorships the latter

spawned was a central theme of the moving speech delivered by Gabriel Marquez in accepting the 1982 Nobel Prize speech.

Gabriel Marquez speaks honestly to Colombia's (and Latin America's) complex and contradictory social make-up. Colombian society is still affected by the horrific *violence* and caught in the vise of the struggle between the rapacious national bourgeoisie, an enduring feudal oligarchy and imperialism, on the one hand, and a developing, combative working class, together with the masses of the rural oppressed, on the other. His stories and novels also explore universal themes and relationships that go well beyond Latin America, well beyond the fictional Macondo of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. His work has been translated into dozens of languages, has won many thousands of readers and will continue to provide insights and inspiration to a new generation as it enters into the struggle to understand and transform society. The researcher concludes that through the critical study of Marquez and his works, Gabriel Marquez was a Marxist writer and Socialist activist.

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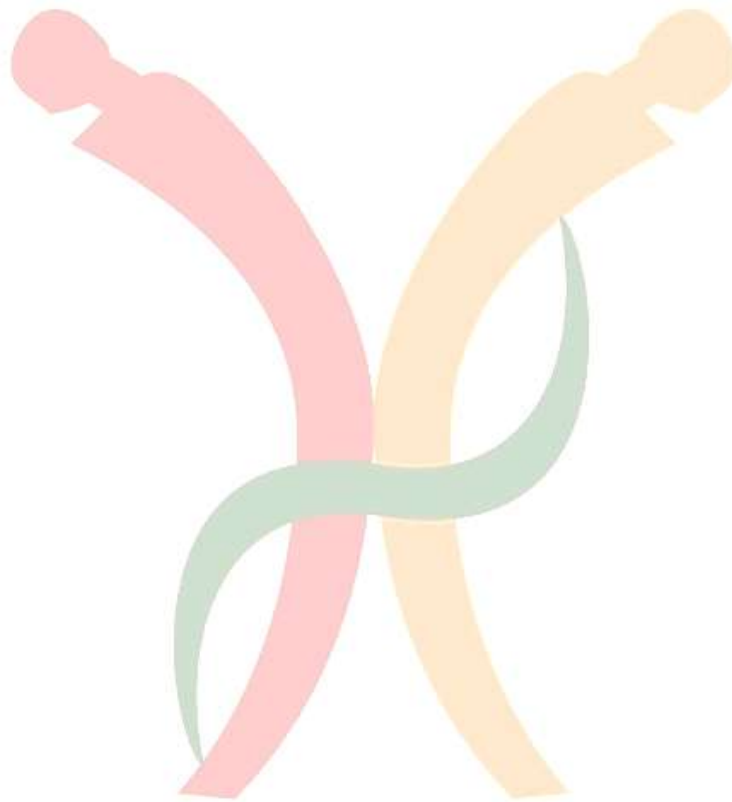
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