

## I. Critique of the Crisis of Celebrity Culture

This is the era of capitalist triumphalism and this is the era of critiquing against the evils of capitalism as well, basically after the collapsed of Soviet Union in 1991. This major claim, that is what my thesis primarily concerns with can be justified in terms of various modes including the anti-capitalist consciousness expressed through literary texts. It is viewed that critique of capitalism is the need of this century as capitalism is in the triumphalism at higher form of private ownership than before in the 'materialist dialectics' in Marx's term opposed to the collective ownership. The triumphalism of the capitalism has generated complex evils of criminalization in the modern cosmopolitan life of the people.

Paulo Coelho's *The Winner Stands Alone* dismantles and distorts the reality of the so-called idealist market world created around the capitalist ideology and exposes its underbelly. The idealist world for which people are crazy in this novel comprises of individuals who come to the International Cannes film festival every year. There is a mad rush to get stylishly and perfectly attired, and all these people seem to lead a good and proper life. It seems there is nothing to worry about as there are no woes and worries left in the world. However, this thesis explores and penetrates into the core of this sponsored truth and exposes the real notion of capitalist intentions. In this novel, the readers are introduced to the true identity of the phony world of art and cinema that is epitomized at Cannes annually. Here ideas and ethics are less important than the desire of materialistic possession. The postmodern world is free of ethical and societal values, where the only desire or aspiration is to be materially successful and resourceful. All the major and minor characters in this novel are possessed with self-centered idea that is developed due to the capitalist culture. This is the result of the gap between practice of capitalism and its professed ideals.

Igor Malev, a handsome Russian millionaire travels to the sensational Cannes International Film Festival in order to get his estranged wife and his lost love back. But, in the pursuit of all these, due to turn of events, he commits a series of murders. At the festival, the people of the moneyed class or the super rich aspire and desire to win the game of life. But here their obsession turns into violence and the question that arises is, why the upper class follow hedonism or pleasure-seeking, is a researchable issue. It is hypothesized that Igor's lost love is the cause of his obsession psychologically and the desire to get his lost love back for self relief. Similarly, the glamorous world of the rich is full of fame, power, money, etc. And the new super class follows self-gratification to get these things believing that these are the real values.

Coelho's depiction of Igor, the protagonist of the novel, creates an amazing mix of thrilling and chilling mystery woven around the capitalist structure. This thesis focuses on the role of Igor as a product of capitalist culture because by the time reality unfolds, he is exposed to the bitter truth that cannot be easily corrected. It is a crude portrait of truth and illusion of capitalist culture where Igor stands and what he always wants to be come as a complex situation. It examines the capitalistic structure and its assumed ideals in the way the conclusion is very pessimistic. It revolves around the real cost of being successful that reveals as a self-destructive act of the modern people. It could be anything, but the evils of capitalist culture whether it could be called a moral, value, spirituality even one's own life. All the material things in this world come with a price in the capitalist culture and the book seems to point out this critical issue of the contemporary cosmopolitan society.

Actually, Coelho is recognized for his powerful storytelling technique and the profound spiritual insights as he often blends seamlessly into his parables. The

Brazilian author has broken the sacred ground and crossed over into worldwide fame as an author with his symbolic masterpiece, *The Alchemist* before *The Winner Stands Alone*. After that, Coelho has dedicated his work to the ideal of helping people to follow their wildest dreams. In spite of belonging to different genres, his narratives and self-help books have the same fundamental effect. That is of freezing the alienated consciousness through the consoling reaffirmation of conventions and prevailing prejudices. Coelho is not only one of the most widely read, but also one the most influential authors writing today as he uses the contemporary issues like the evils of capitalism and the problems of modern people. His novels have a life enhancing impact on millions of people all over the world. The illusion readers have that Coelho is talking directly to and about them is enhanced by the fact that he has often borrowed materials for his writings from the real lives of the people matched to the present context despite the fact that he uses mythical elements as well. As Terry Eagleton believes, “Marxist criticism analyses literature in terms of the historical conditions which produce it; and it needs, similarly, to be aware of its historical conditions” (Marxism and Literary Criticism xi) Coelho has captured the contemporary history of consumerist culture and its impact on modern individuals. The world has turned a lot into the complexities as Crystel Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus states:

Global imbalances manifest themselves in a number of ways in the relations between metropolitans and non-metropolitans in intellectual life, through a density of mediations that make their intrication with political economy obscure, but not absolutely unreadable. (12)

Chiloe’s story is a profound meditation on personal power and innocent dreams that is manipulated or undone by success and at the same time he makes a

remarkable critique on contemporary issues. His one of the bestselling novels, *The Winner Stands Alone* is set in the exciting worlds of fashion and cinema of the capitalist cosmopolitan planet. Taking place over the course of twenty-four hours during the Cannes Film Festival, it is the story of Igor, a successful, driven Russian entrepreneur who will go to the darkest lengths to reclaim a lost love, his ex-wife, Ewa. Believing that his life with Ewa is divinely ordained, Igor once told her that he would destroy whole worlds to get her back as he knew that money in the capitalist world can be used as the best way of power exercise even through criminalization. The conflict between an individual evil force and society emerges, and as the novel unfolds, as an evil of the capitalist culture.

In this manner this thesis explores the issue of quest for obsessive desire in *The Winner Stands Alone* and its consequences when the obsession turns into self-destructive criminal act. Coelho very subtly reacts against the distortions of cultural thought and institutions that are made to demonstrate masquerades as tradition and culture.

According to Ben Fine and Alfred Saad-Filho, “Marx attempts to uncover the general process of historical change, to apply this understanding to particular types of societies, and to make concrete studies of specific historical situations” (1). Thus, this dissertation takes help of Marxism as its theoretical tool to prove the major hypothesis. Marxist criticism is materialist principle and vibrantly associated to the critique of capitalism and it has more in common with theories that focuses upon how literature functions within social, political and economic structures. Marxism may also be seen as a distinctive approach to the analysis of society, especially in terms of historical processes of change, which has had a dramatic impact on numerous fields of study within social sciences and humanities. To quote Althusser:

The failure of a kinder and gentler capitalism makes possible a revival of Marxist social theory not only by discrediting capitalist humanism as a viable political ideology but also by bringing into strong relief the existence of the professional middle class as a distinct and relatively privileged class, not a "life-style" more or less synonymous with citizenship. (7)

There is hardly any area of socio-economic, political, or cultural investigation which has not been examined by the techniques of Marxist analysis and is concerned with economic conditions. Marxism points out the level at which, the capitalist ideals fail. The obsession of a capitalist takes an individual from their real identity to which they can never relate to. In this sense, this study concerns basically on the issues of modern evils of capitalist society. It moves around how an individual can misuse the capitalist power and pave way towards the path of criminalization for fulfilling their obsessed interest.

Literature, from a Marxist point of view, is treated as the reflection of the socio-economic life. When we talk of the socio-economic life of a society, we can find distinct classes in struggle for the economic, political as well as social advantages. So literature for Marxism should reflect this dialectical totality of a society and the value of literature is judged on the basis of how far it has done this function.

Raymond Williams, a dominant British Marxist positively responds to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century developments in art and literature. He insists that 20<sup>th</sup> century novels whether it is of Woolf or any other authors still hold to reality. In his work *The Long Revolution* William writes:

No human experience is entirely subjective or objective. It is both

because we can't see things as they are apart from any reactions; it is inseparable process so it is wrong to relate science to object or psychological reality and art to subject or emotion. The conscience is part of the reality and reality is the part of consciousness, in the whole process of our living organization. (23)

Although Marxism is primarily a theory of social, economic, political and revolutionary activities, it treats art and literature with special care. A majority of these theoreticians believe that literature has social as well as political implications and it must be committed to the cause of people. It should be used for advancement of society. In order to capture reality, successfully, an author needs to have deep intellectual power and penetrating vision of the historical forces of the period. Outward, superficial depiction of the thing like that of naturalism and modernism which bracket off all the inner causes can never lead to reality.

Literature, for Marxist critics, should be assisting in spreading ideology of the working class so that the influence of the evils of the capitalist culture could be minimized. Marxist literary criticism in this sense analyses literature in terms of the historical conditions which produce it. David Forgacs in his essay *Marxist Literary Theories* observes thus, "To be reflected in literature reality has to pass through the creative form giving work of the writer. The result, in the case of correctly formed work, will be that the form of the literary work reflects the form of the real world" (171). For Marx, the external reality is prior to ideas in the mind, and that the material world is reflected in the mind of man and translated into forms of thought. From Marxist point of view, art is originated in the society and it must have some social significance. Marxist philosophy itself insists that literature closely corresponds to reality. It is explicitly stated that literature belongs to the superstructure as politics,

religion and philosophy which are based on socio-economical base. In this regards, what Terry Eagleton in the preface of his latest book *Why Marx Was Right* is significant here to quote:

What if all the most familiar objections to Marx's work are mistaken? Or at least, if not totally wrongheaded, mostly so? This is not to suggest that Marx never put a foot wrong. I am not of that leftist breed that piously proclaims that everything is open to criticism, and then, when asked to produce three major criticisms of Marx, lapses into truculent silence. That I have my own doubts about some of his ideas should be clear enough from his books. (ix)

Eagleton, alike to capitalist thinkers, is doubtful on some of the dreams of Marx and Marxists but he at the same time claims, "But he (Marx) was right enough of the time about enough important issues to make calling oneself a Marxist a reasonable self-description" (ix). He moreover believes that Marx's ideas not as perfect but as plausible as far as the crisis of the capitalism is concerned he further writes

That crisis has at least meant that the world 'capitalism', usually disguised under some such coy pseudonym as 'the modern age', 'industrialism' or 'the West', has become current once more. You can tell that the capitalist system is in trouble when people start talking about capitalism...so Marx unmasked our everyday life to reveal an imperceptible entity known as the capitalist mode of production. (xi)

This crisis of capitalism can vividly be seen in latest literary representations and more primarily Chloë's *The Winner Stands Alone* through the self-destructive actions of criminalization in the name of regaining his love. In the words of Vishesh Unni Raghunathan, the reason why he is still trying to make sense of this book is because

of the character Igor. He writes:

On one hand he is portrayed as a man of principle who becomes a serial killer, in hope to winning his wife back. On the other hand he is shown as Mr. Devil through the eyes of his ex-wife. Being the good and the bad is maybe what defines 'normal', maybe. We have 'the angle' and 'the devil' in us, yet who controls the hand is the question. The Stereotypes usually end with the bad guy being caught. Then there are those in which nothing about the bad guy is shown and he just escapes. The book will fall under the latter. (9-10)

In the capitalist culture the ones who have private property excessively can easily get escaped from the charges and the series of the crimes as well turn to be excusable or masked as the main character Igor is able to protect himself from the offense of criminal act which has been discussed more explicitly in the preceding chapters.

This study has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with an introductory aspect of the study. It incorporates the thesis title clarification, hypothesis elaboration, introduction to the playwright's background, works, themes, techniques, etc. It also explores the theoretical modality that is to be effectively applied in the analysis of the novel. Therefore, it provides an introduction of the tool that is Marxism, and its use in art and literature with reference to the novel *The Winner Stands Alone* by Paulo Coelho. The second chapter of the dissertation presents an analysis of the novel at considerable length on the theoretical modality defined and developed in the first chapter. The final chapter concludes the research work. With the analysis of the text done extensively in the third chapter, it tries to prove my hypothesis stated in the thesis proposal.



## II. Consumerist Culture and Obsessive Desire

This is the high time of consumerist culture and the modern people are severely affected by the obsessive desire of material gains. That is what basically Coelho's characters in his novel *The Winner Stands Alone* concerns with. The novel depicts a so called modern and exciting world of fashion and cinema which are the product of capitalist cosmopolitan culture. In this culture people are more obsessed for material gains and power through property. The advertising media plays a vital role for broadcasting the capitalist products and articulating obsessive desire to achieve it. Those who have private property can use and misuse the power to achieve their goal. That is what the story of Igor and his ex-wife Ewa is moving around the novel. The story takes place over the course of twenty-four hours during the period of the so-called grand Cannes Film Festival. The story progresses to the actions of Igor who is a successfully established Russian entrepreneur. As affected by the consumerist culture of celebrity and fanatical desires for achieving better place, his wife Ewa leaves him. He then is obsessed to go to the darkest lengths of criminality and misuse of power to reclaim a lost love of him towards his ex-wife, Ewa in such a manner that he forgets the whole world. He believes that his life attached with Ewa is perfect despite the fact that she is more ambitious and she could even leave him without much regret. Moreover, Igor takes actions for regaining her being determined that he could destroy the whole world to return her back to his life. He makes a self decision through criminal way because he knew that he could do whatever he wished in the way of returning back to his lost love, his ex-wife Ewa by the (mis)use of money. The beginning of the novel could be based on different ethos but the ending of the story gives an epiphany to the readers, that is the serious consequences of the consumerist culture and obsessive desires of the individuals.

The conflict between an individual's capitalist evil forces through the central characters Igor in particular and the broader society come at a point of purgation when the novel gradually unfolds stories of the individual characters in such a way that Chiloe's *The Winner Stands Alone* comes to be a text of critiquing capitalist culture with the contemporary modes of life that is more evil than human friendly. That is what the gist of Marxist philosophy based on public ownership of means of production instead of private ownership.

Marxism is a political theory that advocates class struggle of the proletariat against the ruling class until the political power is seized and socialist emancipatory society is established. Marxist criticism, in its diverse forms, grounds, its theory of economic and cultural theory of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and his fellow thinker Fredric Engel's (1820-1895) on three main points. The first is the material production of the society that largely determines the evolving history of humanity, of the social relations of its institutions, and of its ways of thinking or its overall economic organization. Second, are establishing in each era a dominant and subordinate class that engage in a struggle for economic, political and social advantages. The third claim is that human consciousness is constituted by an ideology, the beliefs, values and ways of thinking and feeling through which human beings perceive and by recourse to which they explain what they take to be reality.

Although Marx and Engel's have not left any systematic works entirely centered on art and literature, however, they have raised some basic questions about them to their discussion about 'base' and 'superstructure'. So, "the interpretation of the relevance of Marx's theory to literature is a matter of dispute not merely between Marxists and no Marxists (sociologist literature critics, philosophers) but has been and is still the subject is bitter controversy between those claiming to be Marxists"

(Slaughter 21). Therefore we find contrary views and literature among the Marxist critics and theorist themselves. Lukas treats literature as the reflection of outside reality.

Marxism treats literature as expression of socio- economic life and judges it on the basis of how far it has fulfilled this function. It strongly stresses that literature should be useful to life. Although Marxism is primarily a theory of social, economic, political and revolutionary activities, it treats art and literature with special care. Disproving the early concept of them Marxist theoreticians has developed their own theories which are known as Marxist theories of art and literature. Majorities of these theoreticians believe that literature has social as well as political implications and it must be committed to the cause of people. It should be used for advancement of society.

Adorno sees it as the negative knowledge of the actual world, talks about revolutionizing the whole sphere of art and literature and puts all efforts on bringing newness in theatrical production. Even so they all agree on the point that “literature can be properly understood within a larger framework of social reality” (Forgacs 167). The distinction between Marxist and not Marxist sociological realistic criticism is not so sharp. Till nineteenth century all criticism was sociological; there fore Marxist criticism is often said to have organized from quite earlier. Of course, it is closely associated to biographical, sociological and historical criticism the fundamental difference between them is that the Marxist criticism examines how far a literary work embodies ability in altering human existence and lead it in the path of progress, prosperity and emancipation whereas others give emphasis on interpretive function and examine whether a work is successful in interpreting life and world appropriately.

For this type of criticism, interpretation is the primary function of art and literature. But Marxism, a living body of thoughts, aims at revolutionizing the whole economic life establishing new political system led by proletariat. The Marxist theory of literature strongly insists that a work of literature should reflect the class relation and be committed to the cause of working class people. A writer's success or failure should be judged on the basis of his works which exhibits his insight of the socio-economic situation of the epoch. It demands the author's to produce reality objectively with special attention to class divisions especially the exploitation of the lower class by upper. Although Marxist theory of literature developed out of Marx's and Engel's general remarks concerning culture, art and literature in relation to their discussion about social, economic and political questions, as a literary theory it appeared for the first time in the last decade of nineteenth century and produced ample impact on the study of art and literature during the decades 1920-40. Therefore, Marxist criticism can be taken as twentieth century phenomenon.

Capitalism is not eternal or fixed. In fact, it is less fixed than any other socio-economic system in history. Chaitanya Mishra's claim is significant to quote here who states, "Capitalism is not immortal. It falls down sooner or later. It must fall down because the present pervasive capitalist culture cannot be the solution of contemporary problems" (My trans. 17). Like any other living organism it changes, evolves and therefore passes through a number of more or less clearly discernible stages. It has long outlived its turbulent infancy. Its confident and optimistic maturity lies in the past. The negative consequences of this will bear down hard on the shoulders of humanity. In this phase of capitalism, the periods of growth will not ameliorate the contradictions on a world scale, but only worsen them. Yet all history shows just how easy it is for men and women to change the way, in which they live,

think, work and act. Indeed, human history is nothing more than the chronicling of such transformations.

Paulo Coelho's novel *The Winner Stands Alone* is a story about the celebrity who have obsessed craze of the common people created artificially in present day capitalism. The main plot of the novel follows the life of Igor, who lives a lifestyle of complete conformity with the business world and gradually he moves to a period of rebellion through the means of the misuse of the capitalist power of money and commits series of crimes including murdering many people one after another. Throughout this journey of rebellion to regain his lost love, he enjoys all the modern conveniences available to a prosperous tycoon, yet he is dissatisfied with his life. He is frustrated and alienated despite the fact that he has high life standard in the world of consumerist culture. The more he commits blunders the more frustrated he is in the obsessed world of criminality.

As the novel opens, Igor has just landed at Cannes and is desperate about how to motivate to return home to his wife as he is obsessed for. Coelho skillfully highlights the lack of harmoniously compromising culture at the Cannes Film Festival and showcases the hypocrisy and corruption of people who want to be famous overnight by hook and crooked. The aspirant actresses at Cannes are always in look out for 'Perfumes,' as he writes:

'Perfume' is the slang term used by actresses because, as with perfumes, it's easy enough to change brands, but one of them might just turn out to be a real find. 'Perfumes' are sought out during the last two days of the Festival, if the actresses in question haven't managed to pick up anything or anyone of interesting in the movie industry. (17)

Coelho ridicules the crowd at Cannes where the studio owners, producers, directors, writers, and actors fake their behavior. It is an incestuous place for manipulators, film stars, lovers, pimps, producers, whores, gamblers, scriptwriters and cheats. The festival is the ultimate destination for people in the showbiz business. It comprises of name, fame, money, glamour and lots more. But to attain such a status, actors, actresses and others have to really slug it out in the festival working style. Coelho captures the hypocrisy of the consumerist society where society is to blame for the inconsistencies. The novel *The Winner Stands Alone*, in this regard, has chiefly been understood as a satire of the prosperous, superrich persons of consumerist culture of the contemporary society of which Igor is a prominent member and a perfect example. There is dialectics between individual and consumerist culture and the individual obviously comes to be severely affected by the obsession of the excessive desires of capitalist gains. The dialectics of Marxism is therefore still applicable as Terry Eagleton shows how Marxism was relevant and is relevant more at the time of the crisis of capitalism:

Not even Marx's most implacable critics would deny that he transformed our understanding of human history....Marxism, for long the most theoretically rich, politically uncompromising critique of that system, is now complacently consigned to the primeval past....Rather as Newton discovered the invisible forces known as the laws of gravity, and Freud laid bare the workings of an invisible phenomenon known as the unconscious, so Marx unmasked our everyday life to reveal an imperceptible entity known as the capitalist mode of production. (Why Marx Was Right, xi)

The story of the novel *The Winner Stands Alone* through the dialects of the individual with the consumerist culture of the contemporary cosmopolitan society justifies the value of dialectics of Marxism in this time as well as that Eagleton indicates in his latest critical book, *Why Marx Was Right*.

Based on the socialist and dialectical theories of Karl Marx, Marxist criticism views literary works as reflections of the social institutions out of which they are born. According to Marxists, even literature itself is a social institution and has a specific ideological function, based on the background and ideology of the author. In essence, Marxists believe that a work of literature is not a result of divine inspiration or pure artistic endeavor, but that it arises out of the economic and ideological circumstances surrounding its creation. For Marxist critics, works of literature often mirror the creator's own place in society, and they interpret most texts in relation to their relevance regarding issues of class struggle as depicted in a work of fiction. Although Marx did not write extensively on literature and its place in society, he did detail the relationship between economic determinism and the social superstructure where he stated, "The mode of production of material life determines altogether the social, political, and intellectual life process. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary their social being, that determines their consciousness" (14).

We see society arranged into complicated class structures. In medieval times there were feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices and serfs. Modern bourgeois society sprouted from the ruins of feudal society. Marxist perspective shows how the modern bourgeoisie is the product of several revolutions in the mode of production and of exchange. The development of the bourgeoisie began in the earliest towns, and gained momentum with the age of Exploration. Feudal

guilds could not provide for increasing markets, and the manufacturing middle class took its place. However; markets kept growing and demand kept increasing, and manufacture could not keep up. This led to the industrial revolution. Manufacture was replaced by “industrial millionaires,” the modern bourgeois.

With these developments, the bourgeoisie have become powerful, and have pushed medieval classes into the background. The development of the bourgeoisie as a class is accompanied by a series of political developments. With the development of modern industry and the world-market, the bourgeoisie have gained exclusive political sway. The state serves solely the bourgeoisie’s interests. Historically, this class has played revolutionary role. Whenever it has gained power, it had put to an end all “feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations.” It has dominated the relationship that bind people to their superiors, and now all remaining relations between men are characterized by self interest alone. Raymond Williams says that:

Socialist Realism was accepted as the highest form of literature, guiding both literary creation and official literary criticism in Russia. In the years since then, Russian literary theory has modified its extreme socialist stance to acknowledge that literary creation is a result of both subjective inspiration and the objective influence of the writer's surroundings. (64)

Religious commitment, chivalry and sentimentalism have all been sacrificed. Personal worth is now measured by exchange value, and the only freedom is that of ‘Free Trade.’ This, exploitation that used to be veiled by religious and political “illusions” is now direct, brutal and blatant. Marx writes in *The Communist Manifesto*, “The communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as



a whole” (49). The bourgeoisie has changed all occupations into wage-laboring professions, even those that were previously honored, such as that of the doctor. Similarly, family relations have lost their veil of sentimentality and have been reduced to pure money relations. In the past, industrial classes required the conservation of old mode of production in order to survive. The bourgeoisie are unique in that they cannot continue to exist without revolutionizing the instruments of production. This implies revolutionizing the relations of production, and with it, all of the relations in society.

The unique uncertainties and disturbances of the modern age have forced man to face his real condition in life, and his true relations with others. Because it needs a constantly expanding market, it settles and establishes connections all over the globe. Production and consumption have taken on a cosmopolitan character in every country. This is true both for materials and for intellectual production, as national sovereignty and isolationism becomes less and less possible to sustain. The bourgeoisie draws even the most barbaric nations into civilization and compels all nations to adopt its mode to production. It creates a world after its own image and power. To this concept of power, Tara Lal Shrestha in his seminal book *Shakti, Shrestha ra Subaltern*, opines that:

Power is essential. Without the application of power, the world cannot be run or function. While applying power, it is more abused than used. That is the reason the subaltern class (read proletariat in this context) has always been repressed, exploited and oppressed. The dilemma exists as to tell the truth or hide the truth from people who are in power (read bourgeois). (My trans. 37)

Shrestha seems to imply that power has always been misused by the powerful over the weaker sections of society. This notion can be applied in the case of Igor, the

protagonist of the novel *The Winner Stands Alone* who misuses the power of property through the means of criminal acts in the name of regaining his lost love, his ex-wife. In other words, power has always been concentrated on the bourgeoisie and that has increased political centralization. Marx says that modern bourgeois society is in the process of turning on itself. Modern productive forces are revolting against the modern conditions of production. Thus, the weapons by which the bourgeoisie overcame feudalism are now being turned on the bourgeoisie themselves. This development has, in its turn, reacted on the extension of industry and in the same proportion the bourgeoisie developed. Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character. He becomes an appendage to the machine and the state arose as a means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed classes. To this Lenin adds:

Clearly in order to abolish class completely it is not enough to overthrow the exploiters, the landlords and capitalists, not enough to abolish their rights of ownership; it is necessary also to abolish all private ownership of the mean of production, it is necessary to abolish the distinction between town and country as well as the distinction between manual workers and brain workers. (What Is To Be Done 13)

This class of people wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors”, and has left no other nexus between people than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment”. It has drowned out the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered

freedoms. The similar plight can be indicated in the situation of the characters and their actions in the novel *The Winner Stands Alone*.

Marx believed that from the time you seriously think about capitalism, you will see it plunged into dirt from the toy to the head and that means that capitalism is always in crisis. The so-called sophisticated capitalist culture is a phony world and the world of Cannes as well is the representative of phony cosmetic culture. The evils of the phony culture of capitalism have been vividly being represented in literary texts.

*The Winner Stands Alone* is Coelho's satiric take on the corruption and shallow life of modern people in the showbiz world. Set against the backdrop of the Cannes Film Festival, it is about the celebrity crowd that comes there annually. The festival is presented as a place of brutal injustice and heavy corruption, one in which the poor are always dispossessed and victimized by their age-old enemies, the rich or in this case the super rich. The province of the novel is what we read in our newspaper each morning or watch on our television at night. It makes the reader want to go out there and live life like to the fullest. Coelho has written the novel that would make him the voice of his generation. The novel is paralyzed by moral decay and cultural decline. It is an account of people in an immoral, selfish, venal, and generally corrupt society. The so called celebrities at Cannes rejoice their life by using their freewill and ignoring all their responsibilities without accepting the changes in society, which seem to suggest that they are running away from society. It tactfully captures the mood of people belonging to the super rich and other common people who become awestruck as they aspire to climb to that class. It explores the feelings, ideas, and experiences of restless, idealistic people who yearn for something more in a generally prosperous society.

Something extraordinary is happening between the rich and the poor in the

world. The gap between them is a vast, unbridgeable, ever-growing chasm, and that social redistribution policies are either unenforceable or have failed. This is a reflection of contemporary capitalism, calling attention to social justice in the wake of economic prosperity. With the coming of liberalization and the economic boom in many capitalist countries, there has been the creation of a Super class. This class forms the elites in their respective societies and helps to create the division between rich and poor. Coelho highlights the unpleasant reality of contemporary capitalist society that is revealed via various sketches of characters, from millionaires in their air-conditioned tower blocks to the unfortunates who are trapped in poverty. It is the hypocrisy and corruption of pro-business organizations, and the emptiness in typical celebrity lives. He writes that:

In the real world, the Powerful are, at this moment, locked in their rooms, checking their e-mails, complaining that these Festival parties are always the same, that their friend was wearing a bigger jewel than they were, and asking how come the yacht a competitor has just bought has a totally unique décor? It doesn't even occur to the hopefuls that the Powerful only talk to the Powerful. (17)

*The Winner Stands Alone* is not only a critical look into the makings of modern society dominated by pop culture, but also a tragic love story of a serial killer with a shocking outcome. Scattered throughout the story is curious factual aspects of the celebrity and film industry. Coelho has delved into the celebrity obsessed culture where both the audience and the celebrities are revealed to be victims of the system. His lifting of the curtain to give us a peek allows us to see the dirty underbelly of the Super class. After all, they are only human, just like common people. It is also about the thoughtful reflections on fame, fashion, jewelry, and money. The powerfully

described stars are revealed to be just as unhappy as the very audience they cater to. They seem to be trapped into contractual freedom less lives, with their luxurious lifestyles a well-masked lie and self-esteem only as high or low as their latest career performance.

While in Cannes, Coelho shows the two faces of Cannes. It is those who are eaten and those who eat, prey and predators. Through Igor, he decides he wants to be an eater, and the novel tracks the way in which this raw ambition plays out. It is a social commentary and a study of injustice and power in the form of a class struggle at Cannes. He exposes the rot behind the arch lights, reducing them to the tired clichés of a uncertain festival. He is telling us that Cannes is not shining and, despite its claims of a popular festival, it is still the near-heart of darkness, which it has been since time immemorial. It is a novel about the emptiness of capitalism which is pivoted on the great divide between the haves and have-nots with moral implications. The hollowness of the aspiring actors at Cannes is portrayed in the lines below as:

Every guest at every table is interested in but one thing: meeting the people with Power. Pretty women are waiting for a producer to fall in love with them and give them a major role in their next movie. A few actors are talking amongst themselves, laughing and pretending that the whole business is a matter of complete indifference to them- but they always keep one eye on the door. (6)

Set against the backdrop of the world's most prestigious film festival, *The Winner Stands Alone* is about the passion of the Cannes Film Festival. It is an annual film festival held in the south of France, where everyone who is anyone has to be seen. It is where every starlet is a would-be film star and where every budding director has the film script in his pocket. It is also where nobody wants to be a

celebrity and wants to join the glitterati. Here, countless male and female celebrities spend their time in front of the mirror, everything for the renowned red carpet. They want to see their dreams in the glossy magazines, know it is who they want to be.

The novel shows a cross section of high class aspiring people through the eyes of the materialist, Igor. What must be explored in Coelho's work is, why Igor is created the way he is, and why has he become a symbol of people at Cannes? It is a voyeuristic journey as to how the Super class gathers, those who have made it in the dream maker's world of fashion and cinema. The story shows us the dark side of what can become if everyone would give in to temptation and seek out self-indulgence at all costs. At Cannes the young and beautiful:

Actresses know that it's always best to leave the Festival with a new boyfriend than to move on to the next event and go through the same old ritual – drinking, smiling and pretending that you're not looking at anyone, while your heart beats furiously, time ticks rapidly on, and there are still gala nights to which you haven't yet been invited, but to which the 'perfumes' have. (41)

The Cannes Film Festival is always filled with glamorous and important people and this novel provides a peep hole entertainment, an inside glimpse into that world. The characters seem phony and everything is cosmetic without any real authenticity. The town of Cannes is all smoke and mirrors. The glamorous lives are on a treadmill. They do not know how to or dare not get off. Their lives are governed by the corporations that own them. Even their wealthy lifestyle is not their own but are mere puppets. They are fueled by a culture of film, fashion, money, and fame. Coelho takes us through the events of Cannes Film Festival, where backroom deals are brokered and the working of the film industry is presented. He feels the festival stands

on very shaky moral ground. He deplores glitz and glamour in all its distasteful excess. Thus, Brian Mac Skill writes that:

In this novel, the Cannes Film Festival serves as a platform for an exploration of a world obsessed with celebrity and the negative consequences of an insatiable desire for fame and power. The film industry is passed its sell-by-date and is now in terminal decline. We see Cannes through the eyes of the people there. (22)

Coelho investigates the contemporary world of celebrity and what is hidden underneath the facade. Set during twenty-four hours at the Cannes Film Festival, we are introduced to a culturally diverse set of characters. He showcases various members of the show business hierarchy such as its naive and exploited starlets. He also portrays professional workaholics who are hostages to their own ambitions, and Superclass celebrities who have made it to the top but are secretly terrified of fading into anonymity at any moment. Moreover, the book reminds us all that we have our limitations. It is not simple that the best things in life are free, the fact is all things in life has a price tag, because:

In Cannes there's no such thing as friends, only self-interest. There are no human beings, just crazy machines who mow down everything in their path in order to get where they want or else end up plowing into a lamppost. The people with power who do occasionally enter merely glance around, then go up to their rooms. They're not worried. They have nothing to fear. (72)

The novel also revolves around the theme of glamour and fashion, the materialistic things that now judge mortal standards. It tries to captivate readers with the extent to which ordinary people are lured to become celebrities. They give

everything to reach the top only to find nothing and to later realize that the thing for which they strived resulted in their own moral hollowness and solitude. The act to reach stardom results in deceit, loneliness and moral decay. Consequently, in the end, they realize that fame and money which they consider important are nothing compared to the love, faith, trust and joy they lose. However, when they acknowledge this fact, they come to know that nothing they do will bring back their past.

Coelho uses his main characters, Igor, Ewa, Hamid, Jasmine, and Gabriela, to take us into this high class world, and weaves them into a story exposing the superficiality of the Super class. Igor's quest for revenge interconnects the characters as well as questioning their own dreams and wants. His journey for vengeance forever alters not only his and Ewa's lives, but also the fate of the people he meets along the way. They are the innocent street-vendor Olivia, the superstar movie distributor, the aspiring movie-maker Maureen, and the unnamed troubled actor simply referenced to as the Star along with the Director of his new film. Everyone is miserable in the book, the businessman, the writer, the actors, the directors, the distributors, the journalists, and models, the assistants, the police officers, and the general public. Taking an example from Ewa's life and her sense of insecurity at the Festival:

Ewa keeps her fixed on the window, not that she's interested in what's going on outside. She knows the gentle, creative, determined, well-dressed man by her side very well. She knows that he desires her as no man has ever desired a woman, apart, that is, from the man she left. He wants to know how the girl will survive the pressures of an event in Cannes. If everything goes to plan, she'll be one of his star models at the Fashion Week in Paris set for October. (291)

Apart from Igor, at Cannes, there are also other characters. There is Gabriela,



an undiscovered actress who thinks all her hard work and graft is about to be rewarded. She is about to hit the big time as a star. There is also Savoy the local police inspector, who believes he has a serial killer on the loose. He reasons that if he solves the murders and apprehends the killer, will achieve fame before the world's media. And there is Jasmine, a stunning black model. She seems to be unfazed by what is happening around her and is able to keep her feet firmly planted on the ground. Only Jasmine values what is real in life, is not captivated by the shallowness of tinsel town. Mac Margolis writes that it invites multiple re-readings and a wealth of interpretations:

The Cannes Film Festival is always filled with glamorous and important people and getting an inside glimpse into that world is a lot of fun. The problem for me is that none of the characters seem very real or make any impression. They lack any real authenticity. Money, power, and fame are at stake, things for which most people are prepared to do anything to keep. (61)

Coelho ridicules the Super class community as hopelessly complacent, unable to think for itself. It is materialistic, concerned only with appearance and social status, uncultured in terms of art, hypocritical in its support of ethics, and religious only insofar as it helps the citizens' social standing. He portrays the people of the Super class community as treating everything like a business, motivated only by the desire for superficial things. He further points out that the Super class is unable to escape its hollow way of life, even though many individual members find themselves dissatisfied and bored with life.

Coelho's *The Winner Stands Alone* in one hand presents the hollow culture of celebrity of Cannes Film Festival and on the other attacks the phony world of

bourgeois. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation. The bourgeoisies has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation into a mere money relation. They cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. In this regard Marx and Engel's say:

In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end. (57)

Constant revolutionizing of production uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can become fixed. All that is solid melts into air, all which is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober sense his real condition of life and his relations with his kind. This exploitative class, through its exploitation of the world market, gives a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionaries, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood.

All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life

and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nation, and as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property.

National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature. This class, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of commodities are the heavy artillery with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves.

In one word, it creates a world after its own image. They have subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. The bourgeoisie class keeps more and more doing away with the scattered state of the population, of the means of production, and of property. It has agglomerated population, centralized the means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence

of this was political centralization. Independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments, and systems of taxation, became lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class interest, one frontier, and one customs tariff. Ramden Selden talks about the interdisciplinary aspect that Marxist critics have added to their approach as:

In recent years, literary criticism has expanded in scope to address issues of social and political significance. Marxist critics have expanded their realm of study to include cultural and political studies in their interpretations of literature. In this regard, Marxist critics, along with feminists, have begun studying literary criticism as an aspect of cultural sciences. (27)

During its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents, cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground – what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor? At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and of exchange, the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organization of agriculture and manufacturing industry, in one word, the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces: they became so many chains.

The proletariat is that class of society whose means of livelihood entirely depends on the sale of its labor and not on the profit derived from capital; whose existence depends on the demand for labor. The proletariat or class of proletarians is

in a word, the working class of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The industrial revolution took place with the invention of steam engine, various spinning machines, the power loom and a great number of other mechanical instruments. These machines were expensive and could only be installed by persons who had plenty of capital. Machinery could produce cheaper and better commodities than the craftsmen. Thus, these machines handed over industry entirely to the big capitalists and rendered the little property the workers possessed entirely worthless. Soon the capitalists got all in their hand and nothing remained for the workers. Those who are powerful in terms of the accumulation of the private property as well follow the way of criminalization as Igor does in the novel. Such criminal, like Igor may easily be saved by the use of the power of private property. The revolution of the exploited will only be able to transform present society gradually. Private property will be abolished only when the means of production have become available in sufficient quantities. Terry Eagleton says that:

Marxist literary critics tend to look for tensions and contradictions within literary works. This is appropriate because Marxism was originally formulated to analyze just such tensions and contradictions within society. Marxist literary critics also see literature as intimately linked to social power, and thus their analysis of literature is linked to larger social questions. Since Marxism is a belief system which can be used to analyze society at the grandest or most detailed level, Marxist literary criticism is ultimately part of a much larger effort to uncover the inner workings of society. (169)

*The Communist Manifesto* is a direct appeal to all workers. It defends the communist position that the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the

working class itself. According to Karl Marx, modern industry had established the world market. This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land. This development has, in its turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in the same proportion the bourgeoisie developed. Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character. He becomes an appendage to the machine. Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is really revolutionary class. We can feel similar situation of the main characters of the novel *The Winner Stands Alone* as they are servile to the phony world of bourgeois which entraps individuals with the various modes of modernization and sophistication.

### **The Underbelly of the Super class**

Coelho's *The Winner Stands Alone* is a look at desperate characters whose lives are constantly on the brink of failure and disgrace. Presently the novel is still remarkably contemporary in its evaluation of the underbelly of celebrity and success. In its portrayal of the edges of the movie business, its outsider hero, the decadent parties and strange characters, the novel is a model on how the movie business works. It is realistic, gritty yet almost loving and longing portrait of Cannes in all its glamour, hypocrisy, and ability to create and consume dreams and lives. Each character is facing life changing choices, temptations and corruption. Into this nightmare world of decadence arrive Igor, who basks in his success and the popularity it has brought him. He demands high moral standards from those around him while flirting with women, and he yearns for meaning in his hollow life. But his burning ambition begins to lose its edge. He is lured by greed and rules by weakness and he soon becomes disturbingly familiar with the dangerous life of slick compromises and sexual follies.

When common people come in contact with the popular group or start noticing celebrities, they think that they do not feel the same way they do. They feel that they do not get lonely, that they are certain of their greatness or value. In reality, people of every class in society are uncertain and often times unfulfilled. We live in a very sad and chaotic world. It is a world where the only thing people read is glossy magazines devoted to celebrities. It is where they watch utter garbage on television, where they themselves yearn to be celebrities. Similarly, the characters in this novel mingle with the super rich and super famous. There is glamour, fame and fortune for the taking, but behind this beautiful fairytale world is another. It is a degenerate world of excess and depravity, where hunger and obsession can destroy so easily.

Most people in today's world believe that a world full of money and fame is the right dispensation for their miseries. In *The Winner Stands Alone*, Coelho plunges into the bleak world of celebrities, fashion, movies and their obsession with money, fame and power. It is about the lives of the rich and famous and the superficial nature of their achievements. There is a small group of people called 'Superclass.' It is a term which describes the elite, the rich, the powerful and the famous. It presents to the readers the price one has to pay in order to achieve success. They have all the power, all the limos, all the private jets, those who dress in high fashion, drive Maybachs and who, if they are women, get regular injections of botox. We get a peek into lives of models, directors, actors, producers etc. Coelho makes the reader think hard about how much is the limit to excess and what are the boundaries of vanity in the world of glamour and fashion. It is so because:

People listen and accept because they have no option. The Superclass rules the world; their arguments are subtle, their voices soft, their smiles discreet, but their decisions are final. They know. They accept

or reject. They have the power. And power doesn't negotiate with anyone, only with itself. And yet every year it goes on, the trudging from place to place, the appointments. (187)

Somehow, we all crave for the betterment of our current situation. Ironically, however, the better might play out as the worse. It revolves around the real cost of being successful. It could be anything, it could be our morals, values, spirituality even our own life. All the material things in this world come with a price. It reminds us all that we have our limitations. It is not plain simple that the best things in life are free, the fact is all things in life has a price tag. And there is a price these celebrities have to pay. The novel is about the fascinating worlds of fortune and celebrity, where the commitment to luxury and success at any cost often prevents one from hearing what the heart actually desires.

We have to read it to understand the depths to which everyone in the festival goes towards trying to achieve their personal dream. They put their life on the line, doing everything possible to reach stardom, only many times to totally and utterly fail. Some of them have even reached the very top and are afraid to lose their lofty positions. It is very sad because parents tell children to trust in themselves and try their hardest every day, to get what you want. But the book underlines the inherent loneliness and uncertainty that every human feels. It disapproves mightily of the human folly on display in Cannes. The unchecked ambition, the thirst for fame and pretentious jewelry are what people seem to go blind over:

The celebrity syndrome. It can destroy careers, marriages and Christian values and can blind both the wise and the ignorant. When people forget who they are and start to believe what other people say about them. The Super class, everyone's dream, a world without shadows or



darkness, where 'Yes' is the only possible answer to any request. (171)

Igor is representative of the Super class who is at Cannes to flaunt his wealth. He is the Russian millionaire who travels to Cannes to get back his ex-wife, Ewa. He is misguided yet very successful businessman who is pursuing her in the hope of rekindling their romance. He believes that he must destroy whole worlds to win back her affection and is willing to do anything for her. He begins his killing spree and intimates Ewa, expecting her to come back to him and stop his destruction. His angst about the shallowness of celebrity-worship, ubiquitous mobile-phones and the maddening pursuit of money, power and fame are all evident throughout.

We get two completely different portraits of Igor. On one hand he is portrayed as a man of principle who becomes a serial killer. He is a no-nonsense figure and a husband who longs for love all these years. He thinks that his actions of killing people randomly will bring back his lost love but he is somehow confused on what is good and bad. On the other, he is shown as the Devil through the eyes of his ex-wife. She on her part is now married to a famous fashion magnate, Hamid Hussein. Coelho describes his protagonist saying that:

Igor is a powerful man. He has fought all his life to get where he is now. He worked day and night and weekends too, deep in discussions with lawyers, administrators, officials and press officers. He started with nothing just after the fall of the Communist regime and he reached the top. He has, moreover, managed to survive all the political and economic storms that swept his country during the first two decades of the new regime. (339)

Igor believes money can buy everything, until he finds it cannot buy the one thing he wants most, his ex-wife. For all his wealth, he is a thug because he is willing

to kill to get what he wants. He has promised to destroy whole worlds to get his wife back and usually he always keeps his word. He gradually becomes a social critic, a political critic and a critic of manners. His socially conscious reasoning clashes with his personal life. His character is rational and objective on the one hand, and wildly illogical on the other. He feels justified in murdering innocent people to prove his love for Ewa, despite that having no effect whatsoever. This blurring of ethics is the common thread throughout the novel. Sara Nelson lays emphasis and says that Coelho juxtaposes morality and immorality. His protagonist is a strong willed character, who is determined to succeed at any cost because:

Coelho offers a suspenseful novel about the fascinating worlds of fortune and celebrity, where the commitment to luxury and success at any cost often prevents one from hearing what the heart actually desires. There is a lot of action, not to mention murder, that transpires as each hour passes by. What strikes most about the book is morality or rather the lack of morality coming into play. (56)

So Igor, a psychotic Russian phone executive with his own private jet, comes to the film festival in pursuit of Ewa. He plans to kill a few people and notify Ewa on her cell phone, hoping this will motivate her to return to him. Over a period of about 24 hours, he does indeed manage to suffocate a young street vendor using the Russian martial art Sambo and off an important movie distributor using a needle soaked in curare, which Igor blows through a cocktail straw at a crowded lunch party on the beach. He spends the afternoon stabbing an independent film director and leaving a hermetically sealed envelope filled with hydrogen cyanide under an unknown person's door.

The conflict between love and work is best instilled in Igor with damaging

effect of insanity to ‘destroy worlds’ to get back the person he loves most. Although Igor deep down believes love is the most important thing in life, his actions speak the opposite. Furthermore, love to him is not a thing to be sacrificed. He can go to the extreme of destroying worlds, hoping that his beloved gets the message and returns to him. The action, however, sees no result for the fact that what is gone is gone and no deed can revive the past. Only after destroying four worlds does he realize that what he did to get his beloved back was in vain because she was “selfish, insensitive and completely indulged in wealth” (243). He also realizes that destroying the world means destroying a life. It is a whole universe gone, everything that a person sees and experiences. It is about all the good and the bad that come one’s way, all the dreams, hopes, defeats and victories ceasing to exist. Contemplating on his actions, Igor feels:

Was God punishing him for having loved a woman he did not deserve and had loved too much? His ex-wife had used his hands to strangle a young woman who had her whole life ahead of her, who might have gone on to discover a cure for cancer or a way of making humanity realize that it was destroying the planet. Ewa may have known nothing about the murder, but she it was who had made him use those poisons.

(327)

Igor very closely represents the bourgeois class with its high raw ambitions, but he is also a man, an individual, craving for freedom and peace. He is seen as a symbolic character who symbolizes the modern bourgeois of an industrialized country. Marx and Engels write in *The Communist Manifesto*, “Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionized industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, modern industry. It is the place of the industrial middle class, industrial millionaires, the leader of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois” (34). Igor

represents a self satisfied person who conforms readily to conventional bourgeois class ideas and ideals, especially of business and material success.

Though Coelho may not have consciously written the novel *The Winner Stands Alone* with the application of the Marxist notion of the class conflict, let's say dialectical materialistic notion. But this novel can be interpreted with the Marxist notion of class conflict and there were no characters like Igor and his lost lost Ewa. The society where we live is divided into the classes of oppressor and oppressed. The oppressors are the small handfuls while the oppressed from the overwhelming majority. But the society is not divided into classes in the primordial times when people lived in small kinship groups and were still at the lowest stage of development in a condition approximating to savagery and epoch from which modern civilized human society is separated by several thousands of years. They used to work together for their common necessities and there was no sign of oppression and exploitation at all. In many instances, women were superior to men in those times. Later the production in all branches increased which gave human labor power the capacity to produce a larger product than was necessary for its maintenance and it produced phony world of consumerist culture and individuals victim of it like Igor and Ewa and others.

Trotsky is part of substantial sections of left intellectuals from the theoretical framework and political outlook associated with the classical Marxism of which he is among the most outstanding and the last great representative. Trotsky traced the historical trajectory of the bourgeois revolution from its classical manifestation in the 18th century, through the vicissitudes of the 19th century, to the modern context of 1905. He explained how the profound change in historical conditions especially the development of world economy and the emergence of the international working class

has fundamentally altered the social and political dynamics of the bourgeois democratic revolution. Traditional political equations, based on the conditions that prevailed in the middle of the 19th century, were of little value in the new situation.

Trotsky insisted that there existed a revolutionary force within society, the working class that would overthrow the capitalist system and lay the foundations for world socialism. He is a determinist, an optimist, and an internationalist, convinced that the socialist revolution arose necessarily out of the insoluble contradictions of the world capitalist system. The crucial elements of his world view included an irreconcilable commitment to philosophical materialism, belief in the law-governed character of the historical process, confidence in the power of human reason and its ability to discover objective truth associated with the belief in the progressive role of science.

Trotsky conceived of Marxism as the science of perspective. He is the last great representative of a school of Marxist thought whose mastery of the dialectic revealed itself above all in a capacity to assess a political situation, to advance a political prognosis and to elaborate a strategic orientation. Using the necessary unfolding of the historic process as his measuring rod, Trotsky's criticisms were simply correct. His strength is his awareness of his position in history. This was the source of his political resistance against opportunism and all manner of pressures. The underlying and essential theme of Trotsky's writings is always revolution that expresses itself organically in every aspect of life. He delighted in drawing to the attention of his readers the unexpected forms in which the revolution manifests itself.

At the same time it increased the daily amount of work to be done by each member of the family which brings the new labor forces i.e. slaves provided by war.

Hence the first great social division of labor took place which cleaved the society into the classes of masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited. Frederick Engels writes:

The increase of production in all branches – cattle-raising, agriculture, domestic handicrafts- gave human labor power the capacity to produce a larger product than was necessary for its maintenance. At the same time it increased the daily amount of work to be done by each member of the household community or single family. It was now desirable to bring in new labor forces. War provided them; prisoners of war were turned into slaves. With its increase of the productivity of labor and therefore of wealth and its extension of the field of production the first great social division of labor was bound in the general historical conditions prevailing to bring slavery in its train. From the first great social division of labor arose the first great cleavage of society into two classes: masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited. (The origin 194)

Class-exploitation does not end until the classless society is formed and it cannot be possible to eliminate the classes completely only by overthrowing the exploiters, the landlords, capitalists and their rights of ownership but it is also necessary to abolish all forms of violence of man as well as the whole system of private ownership of the means of production. The theory of materialist dialectics holds the view that development arises from the contradictions inside a thing. This internal contradiction exists in every single thing hence its motion and development.

The class struggle is the internal contradiction of society which pushes its development forward. After the society divided into the classes of exploiters and exploited, the exploited classes have done many great revolts against the exploiter classes to throw off their oppression. The whole epoch of slavery is marked by the

constant uprisings of slaves against their masters to emancipate themselves from the chain of slavery. The modern society is the age of capitalism where a small handful of capitalists exploit the overwhelming majority of proletarians, a new class born from the womb of capitalism. Tarala Lal Shrestha looks at the class struggle from a slightly different perspective, as he writes:

Power, power and power. Till the present day of constructed world history, the role of power plays negatively and treachery is the maximum. In this world because of power, a lot of disasters have occurred. One power bloc has always tried to annihilate the other power bloc through deceit and betrayal. Treason and disloyalty have happened. Revolving on this power and the powerful equation, history has been continually constructed. (My trans. 32)

As the form of exploitation changed than feudalism the new forms of struggle in place of the old ones arose. Bourgeoisie and proletariat are the two great antagonistic classes directly facing each other in constant attempts of the proletariat to throw off the bourgeois society. The dictatorship of the proletariat is also a period of class struggle which is inevitable as long as classes have not been abolished completely. The proletariat continues the classes struggle until classes are abolished under different circumstances in different from and by different means. But those who are powerful through the misuse of private property keep on exercising their power even after they commit series of criminal acts as Igor does in the novel. In this dark society everyone is alienated; including the so called celebrity and tycoons-Igor and Ewa-also are alienated, let's not think of proletariats.

### **The Murky World of Igor**

The novel *The Winner Stands Alone* begins with the opening of the film

festival and ends when Igor kills his beloved and her new husband near the shore that overlooks a hotel. He stands alone like a winner. His nightmare is at an end. He displays a negative image, in which an otherwise normal individual develops a mindset where he crosses the dividing line between good and evil, and engages in evil action. An angel with dark eyebrows is watching over him and will teach him which path to follow from now on. Mixing social satire and sheer panic, *The Winner Stands Alone* drives to its breathtaking conclusion. Igor feels justified in murdering innocent people to prove his love for Ewa, despite that having no effect whatsoever. Igor has a terrifying history of violence, intent on reuniting or exacting revenge on Ewa. In the midst of this chaotic celebrity circus, he pursues his mission, darting through a motley cast of partiers and bit players. Before killing Ewa, Igor vents his ire against her, telling:

I said I would destroy a whole world to get you back. I started doing that, but was saved by an angel. I realized that you didn't deserve it. You're a selfish, implacable woman, interested only in acquiring more fame and more money. You refused all the good things I offered you because a house deep in the Russian countryside didn't fit in with your dream world, a world, by the way, to which you don't belong and never will. (355)

Coelho has gone back stage and explains the hardships and the pseudo lives that the people live. Igor's act of killing poor people because they cannot do anything and his belief that they should be redeemed from the earth to join the almighty show how the bourgeoisie suppresses the proletariat. It reflects the extent to which the rich go to undermine the poor, once again reinforcing capitalism. Consequently, the poor remain poor till the end, while the rich continue to prosper. Each character in the



novel tries to run away from the reality.

*The Winner Stands Alone* is a parody on the conformity, hypocrisy, and ignorance endemic to the Super class. Perhaps most damning, Coelho portrays the crowd at Cannes as similarly standard, completely circumscribed by their comfortable, homogenized world. Through the experiences of Igor, the novel's protagonist, Coelho seeks to expose the hypocrisy and emptiness underlying Super class life. There is intellectual bankruptcy and spiritual stagnation of its inhabitants. These people think in terms of production and consumption, judge people on the grounds of their purchasing power parity, and seek happiness in the earning and spending of money. On the one hand, the novel is a good description of the Cannes Film festival that is modern and economically vital. On the other hand, it has deep class divisions with all its strengths and weaknesses. In the end Igor says:

Destroying a life. A whole universe gone. Everything that person saw and experienced; all the good and the bad that came his way; all his dreams, hopes, defeats and victories ceasing to exist. As children, we learned by heart a passage which I only found out came from a protestant priest. It was supposed to teach us that we were responsible for creating the perfect society. (361)

Coelho is successful in narrating the life of the Superclass and that has since remained in cultural consciousness of the common people all over the world. The people who arrive at Cannes are depicted as hollow and empty. Individuality is discouraged. In fact, the struggle to keep up with the traditions and expectations of society can cause the individual to completely lose his place in the world. It is about the struggle of people, man caught in the turbulence of urban life. Igor is financially prosperous but unhappy with life and seeks freedom from the oppression that his daily

duties of ex-husband and businessman have bestowed upon him. For many people, present time ideology is that wealth and social status were the keys to success. Igor and the crowd at Cannes become synonymous with bourgeois mediocrity. Therefore, we can say convincingly say that *The Winner Stands Alone*, is a satire on the bourgeois Superclass lifestyle and attitude. Melanie Cole opines that Coelho disapproves mightily of the human folly on display in his novel and:

This is a hard book to pluck out a theme. It is really one that a reader needs to read for him or herself because it is the type of book that people relate to individually. Despite everything, even if the winner does stand alone, I bet everyone wants to be that winner. The people, whom we think are celebrated and believe to be successful have the same turmoil as every other person. Truth is, theirs' are worse. (33)

Coelho reiterates out that the crowd at Cannes is hopelessly complacent, unable to think for itself, materialistic, concerned only with appearance and social status, uncultured in terms of art, hypocritical in its support of ethics. He portrays the super rich as treating everything like a business, motivated only by the desire for superficial things. He further portrays the middle class as unable to escape its hollow way of life, even though many individual members of middle-class society find themselves dissatisfied and bored with life. Capitalism is not an eternal, God-given socio-economic system, as it appears to most people. The same illusion always existed in every period. Men and women always find it hard to imagine that people can live and work and think and act differently to how they do at the given moment. Yet all history shows just how easy it is for men and women to change the way, in which they live, think, work and act. Indeed, human history is nothing more than the chronicling of such transformations. The culture of capitalism is alien and

incomprehensible. Thus, the novel is realistic in that it not only demonstrates the alienating effects of industrialization and urban life. It highlights the major cultural transitions and contradictions of its own time and prophetically pinpoints the forces of class and capitalist industry as the forces that would change the face and nature of future society.

Coelho is known for a logical writing style and simple plot structure that encourage readers to insert them into his stories, but in *The Winner Stands Alone*, the generalizations often feel vague. This novel seems to speak to our time, about the problems each society and family mostly face. Even when they do achieve their dream, it is so easy to lose it. That is why people have to be happy with the process of following their dream just in case they never achieve it. Coelho intends for this book to present an image of the world from his perspective, but whether or not it serves as an accurate snapshot remains open for debate. The critique of capitalism continues as consumerist culture and discourse against it persists.

### **III. Reformist Ethos in Coelho's *Winner Stands Alone***

The present research work has analyzed the novel *The Winner Stands Alone* by Paulo Coelho from a Marxist perspective as a critique of capitalism in particular. The term 'obsessive' has been used to describe Igor, the central character and his habits that is representative of the 'Superclass' as Coelho calls them, the phony world of consumerist contemporary society. The economic boom in many countries of the world has ushered in a great rift between the haves and have-nots and it has led towards the crisis of capitalism that is what Terry Eagleton in *Why Marx Was Right* concerns with.

The Cannes Film Festival represents people from the Superclass, which is termed as bourgeois culture in Marxist language use. But on the other side, there is the class which remains invisible in the pomp and show of the Superclass. They are the people whose moral character seems to change by the minute, trustworthy one minute, but untrustworthy the next, who would embody the moral contradictions of life.

First and foremost, Igor, the central character of the novel is portrayed as the modern capitalist, who can do what he wants. He believes and tries to make us believe that pleasure is the most important thing in life. In his quest for Ewa, he murders many innocent people and in the end he gets away with it. The bourgeois controlled capitalism is at its most filthy form at the Cannes Film Festival, where Igor arrives to get Ewa, his ex-wife back. He is referred to as 'perfume,' because he has all the money to throw around. The book also offers a unique blend of fear and excitement along with the dialects of individual and consumerist culture. Fear of being eaten by the deceptive and harsh system of the Superclass and excitement of whether Igor and the other characters will get what they want.

Coelho's unprocessed representation of success in the film and fashion industries, challenges the trend of celebrity. We have the angel and the devil within us, yet who controls the hand is the question. The portrayal of the world of glamour, largely realistic, is very depressing. It is depicted as an arena in which under the glimmer of stars, what exists is deep darkness, an abyss of depression from which no return is possible. It examines deeper moral and spiritual questions that explores basis of a society obsessed with power, fame, celebrity and greedy need for stardom. Through them, the author visits the worlds of moviemaking and the world of fashion, while also scratching the surface to look behind the curtains. Here the dreams of common people are planted in their minds by market manipulators. Then, in order to achieve or aspire to that dream, people are willing to go to any extent to fulfill it and they take the wrong path. It is also about evoking glitz and glamour in all its distasteful excess. Coelho attempts to bust a lot of myths of celebrity lifestyle, its shallowness and superficiality.

Secondly, Igor's actions lead to the exposure of prevailing social conditions that raises social awareness. *The Winner Stands Alone* takes place at the Cannes Film Festival among the world of film and fashion. The Cannes film festival is something we all see on television. On the one hand, the novel is a voyeuristic view of the Festival. While on the other, the Festival pressurizes other common people to aspire to become like celebrities, the star they see on television. But Coelho goes behind the screen and tries to expose the underbelly that viewers do not get access to. He also introduces other characters who want to rise to the Superclass. He warns ordinary people not to fall in the trap of these celebrities. It is a world of deceit and loneliness. By depicting the phony world of celebrities of the consumerist culture and the obsessions of the people towards the phony worlds and their self-destructive actions,

the novelist has tried to extend the reformist ethos for communal ownership of means of production and establishment of the real life for harmony and rule of law.

Finally, Coelho provides a glimpse of the world of Superclass people. Though they are in a minority, it is they who call the shots and are the movers and shakers. They dictate the agendas and other people follow suit. The Superclass is the people who have made it in the dream maker's world of fashion and cinema. Some of them have even reached the very top and are afraid to lose their lofty positions. Money, power, and fame are at stake, things for which most people are prepared to do anything to keep. For people eating dinner at a late night event at Cannes are interested in just one thing. It is meeting the people with Power.

Scattered throughout the story are curious factual aspects of the industry, where both the audience and the celebrities are revealed to be victims of the system. These days, people visit pop concerts more than religious meetings and worship celebrities in different ways. The celebrity syndrome make people abandon what they believe in for fame, ego, and money. They become suffocated by lies, encouraged to put their faith in science instead of spiritual values. People feed their souls with what society tell them are important. As a result, they are unable to give up all these for true happiness.

The study has shown that the quest for obsessive desire of Igor leads him to the path of self destruction. Though, we have the angel and the devil in us, yet who controls the hand is the question. He is the symbol or the representative of capitalism in its most naked form. It seems to represent the knife edge which lots of people sit on. Not that there is anything wrong with that, but for most people it is immoral and therefore not acceptable. For Coelho, this novel is not a thriller, but a stark portrait of where we are now. Because, what we do not know is that, behind the scenes, the real

manipulators remain anonymous. They understand that the most effective power is the one that nobody can notice until it is too late. Again this reformist ethos can be related to the conclusion of Eagleton's conclusion of his latest book *Why Marx Was Right* as he writes, "The old communist slogan 'Socialism or barbarism' always seemed to some a touch too apocalyptic....If we do not act now, it seems that capitalism will be the death of us" (237). Moreover, Andrew Collier also states similar view as:

We have seen that Marx's 'predictions' are not prophecies, but are the identification of tendencies always inherent in capitalism, which develop as it progresses, and will continue to develop short of either revolution or catastrophic collapse. (150)

The question arises then that Coelho being a highly popular and tycoon writer of the world is trying to justify that Marx and his critique of capitalism is right as Terry Eagleton claims in the above mentioned his latest book *Why Marx Was Right*. As Eagleton further argues that "There has been no more staunch champion of women's emancipation, world peace, the fight against fascism or the struggle for colonial freedom than political movement to which Marx's work gave birth" (239), is Coelho also subtly trying to raise a rhetorical question like "was ever a thinker so traversed ?" (239). Nevertheless the novel *The Winner Stands Alone* has raised burning issues of critiquing the crisis of capitalism which is rightly apt at the contemporary era.

The novel has been set during the Cannes Film Festival, *The Winner Stands Alone* represent the present world of capitalist culture and its victim, the so-called celebrity and the tycoon who live an obsessive life of passion of phony world and misuse of power of the private property. It explores the hollowness of so-called super class and the underbelly of the success of the successful characters like Igor who is trapped in his own fame, money and destination paved through the act of the series of murders.

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