

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

The True Story of Ah Q as a Work of Social Realism

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Letter of Recommendation

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "*The True Story of Ah Q* as Work of Social Realism", submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by **Ghan Shyam Karki**, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

The True Story of Ah Q by Lu Shun undoubtedly stands as a great work of social realism in its attempt to revolutionize the late Qing Chinese society by attacking her age long conservatism, complacency, feudal exploitation and imperial aggression. It sharply criticizes the feudal reactionaries, shows a deep sympathy to the poor and expresses a bitter distress on their method of winning psychological victory. On the other hand, it critically analyses the socio-politico-cultural and economic situation of the early twentieth century Chinese society and advocates the revolutionary change as its underlying theme. It addresses the issues of class, class conflict, class consciousness and rebellion existing in society. It is a socio-historical document that reflects the social reality with the creation of fictional characters representing the two different classes: the proletariats and the bourgeoisies. The central character Ah Q, as a representative of the poor, works very hard in the households of feudal capitalists but he is led to a more and more deplorable situation. The Zhaos, Mr. Qian, the Provincial County Candidate as the representatives of feudal capitalists always behave Ah Q very cruelly. They unnecessarily thrash and fine him who finally gets trapped in the plot of reactionaries and is executed.

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I. Social Realism in *The True Story of Ah Q*

As a great social realist, Lu Shun in *The True Story of Ah Q* has captured the real lives and the worlds of the Chinese society of around the 1911 to the May Fourth Movement. He has exposed the socio-politico-economic and cultural realities of the early twentieth century Chinese society with his penetrating satire. Ah Q, the life like protagonist is characterized as a vagabond peasant, representative of the lower class people. He is a down trodden figure. He is a perfect man of the world and good worker except his ringworm scars on his head which seem to him quite dishonorable.

Due to his poor economic condition Ah Q sells his labor in the households of the feudal capitalists, Mr. Zhao, Mr. Qian, the Provincial County Candidate and some others, who always exploit him and consider him no more than a means of their production. These people in the text represent the upper class people who not only ignore Ah Q's human identity but also hardly ever value his labor positively. They never take him as a part of their society. Once he asserts to have belonged to the same family of the Zhaos, but he is bitterly thrashed and unnecessarily fined by them. He is always confronted with these people. He doesn't own any property nor has he anything in common with the bourgeoisie relations. He has been torn away from the family sentiments due to feudal capitalists. He is disrespected not only by the feudal capitalists but also by the same class people who reflect the conservatism and complacency of the then Chinese society.

The world Ah Q lives in appears quite hostile to him which leads him to a nearby town to be a worker in the household of another feudal capitalist, the Provincial County Candidate. As a revolt against the oppression he has to bear there, he joins robbery and escapes back to Weizhuang with some riches that give him exceptional regards not only

from the common folk but also from his oppressors. This event clearly points out money as a major determinant of the social status. His status does not last long after his money is over. Finally his class consciousness opens his eyes and he is determined to join the revolutionary groups as the only way to revenge against the oppression and exploitation laid upon him by the feudal capitalists and foreign imperialists. Although his earlier method of rebellion against the exploitation and aggression is self degrading and self deriding, his final attempt to join the revolution is undoubtedly a crucial revolutionary step to attack the feudal capitalists and foreign imperialists. But, unfortunately he becomes a victim in the hands of reactionaries created by the revolution. He sacrifices his life for the truth.

The society the text is written about is full of conflicts and contradictions. Lu Shun has presented the class conflict of his society where the upper class always exploits the class or the latter revolts against the former for a better socio-economic status. Ah Q leaves the households of the Zhaos where he only gets exploitation and cruel treatment. Homeless Ah Q wanders from places to places just for food and shelter. He goes to town for survival and lives in the household of another feudal capitalist, the Provincial County Candidate who is also not better than the Zhaos. Like the other feudal capitalists, Mr. Zhao, Mr. Qian and Imitation Foreign Devil, the Provincial County Candidate is also always interested in oppression and exploitation of the people like Ah Q. Ah Q's socio-economic condition is very pitiable because of capitalism. The final attempt of Ah Q to join the revolution is a reaction against those malpractices of the feudal capitalists and imperialists but he is mishandled by the false revolutionaries and is executed in the end. Thus, the people of different classes of the early twentieth century China are represented

by the two types of characters who reflect the dominant ideologies of their particular class.

Lu Shun's *The True Story of Ah Q* was first published serially in 1921 from May to December in *The Beijing Morning Post*. It covers the time setting from around the 1911 Revolution to the May fourth Movement of modern China which was marked by feudal capitalism and foreign imperialism. It was the time of national crises. The Chinese were troubled by own spiritual malaise. China was undergoing the modernizing phase where the Chinese were not willing to change accordingly. Similarly many writers during this revolutionary period were preoccupied with individualism and romanticism. In such a turmoil situation Lu Shun and his *The True Story of Ah Q* advocated the revolutionary spirit casting the frontal attack upon the feudal oppressions and imperial aggressions. Being a distinct satire upon its own social history, *The True Story of Ah Q* appears as "a rare historical phenomenon" (Bhattacharya 37).

Lu Shun undoubtedly stands as a forefront revolutionary writer for his in depth portrayal of the mentality and exploitation of the lower class Chinese public as well as the dilemma of the intelligentsias who had been suffering from the conspiracies of the feudal capitalists and imperialists. Lu Shun's original works were mostly satirical criticisms of Confucianism, feudalism and reflections on the past. He exposed his dissatisfaction with them which he considered merely the selfish and conservative forces to fulfill the political ambition of the power crazy politicians. His fictions are remarkable for the finest combination of the social protest and message. The sparks created in his fictions, expressions and persuasions drowned the Chinese youth into reading his work which enabled them to see the mockery of reality. He was an excellent literary technician.

His compact penetrating and sharp language and the blend of classical Chinese techniques with those of western fictions resulted into the modernity in Chinese literature.

He examined social tendencies through the actions of realistic characters. As he states, "My themes were the unfortunates of the abnormal society. My aim was to expose the disease and draw attention to it so that it might be cured" (Wang 7). Similarly his writing was to reveal the tough-mindedness of the nineteenth century Chinese people that prevented social progress in China as he wrote the *True Story of Ah Q* to "portray the silent soul of China's countrymen" (Wang 9). So, his greatness lies in his satire upon the traditional Chinese socio-politico-cultural and economic history, conservatism and superstition. So, he was truly a revolutionary realist who underlied the spirit of revolutionary changes to capture the social contradictions of the rural China as art for him was "merely a social phenomena, record of the life of the times" (25).

Most of his writing represents the "literature of the fourth class" (25), namely the revolutionary literature, literature of the struggle which is to awake the oppressed and the suffered to revolt against the feudal oppression, foreign aggression and class discrimination as an ultimate tool for the liberation and well being of the poor lower class Chinese public. Since 1918, he was wholeheartedly devoted to the creation of the revolutionary literature, involving himself in many revolutionary activities and organizations and protested against the oppressive policy of the Kuomintang government until his death in 1936. His unique successes lie in his pathological power to diagnose the social illness. So they can also come under the pathological fiction. "Passionate patriotism, firm conviction in truth and earnest desire to see fundamental changes in

China were three basic aspects of Lu Shun's intellectual search" (Bhattacharya 37).

Undoubtedly his art of fiction writing brought the trend of modernity in Chinese literature bearing the revolutionary spirit and encouraging many other prominent revolutionary writers for the promotion and development of the Chinese literature especially fiction.

In *The True Story of Ah Q*, Lu Shun has portrayed a detail synopsis of history of oppression carried out by the feudal capitalists and aggression of the foreign imperialists. There is a penetrating portrayal of the modern lower class Chinese people. Besides the text expresses a deep sympathy towards the oppressed and down trodden people as well as it carries the feeling of distress upon their method of winning psychological victory and also sharply criticizes the reactionaries which are the basic contents of the text that make it a work of social realism.

Right from its emergence *The True Story of Ah Q*, like Lu Shun, is "never free from controversy" (37). It has been analyzed by various scholars from different perspectives with diverse critical opinions. The famous Chinese critic, Feng Shue-Feng associates the text with literary as well as ideological assumptions of the writer. As he says:

Ah Q is a great work, expressing in the high degree the ideological and artistic characteristic of Lu Shun's earlier period. Here the thought of Lu Shun, the fighter and the advanced thinker is fully reflected. The authorial presence is dominant in the text. The writer's ideology is reflected. (94)

Some critics point out the success of the text only to its ability to have been able to point out the weaknesses of the Chinese society. They do not see the spirit of change, the

revolutionary spirit of the text. In this context, Qian Xingcun, the Chinese critic, comments:

Ah Q's image is successful only in pointing out certain weaknesses of the Chinese people. Thus it was only a portrayal of morbid national character. Both Ah Q and his ideas were limited to the period of the 1911 Revolution, which did not exist anymore. Ah Q's image has already become extinct. There was no longer any need for being infatuated with human skeleton. Ah Q's ideas along with his body should be buried. (57)

Here Qian Xingcun questions the existence of Ah Q's image. He doesn't see the validity of Ah Q ideas along with the text. However the writer has been successful in depiction of the reality of the Chinese people, their conservatism, complacency and civilization malaise which obstructed the then Chinese society to progress ahead.

Quite contrarily to the former critic, He Qifang defends Lu Shun's artistic creation of an image like Ah Q against those who doubt the success of creation of Ah Q's image.

As he opines that:

Literary characters too are being set in some social context. Lu Shun intended to expose the weaknesses of the Chinese nation but he couldn't find a single abstract representative which embodies common national vices. Therefore he couldn't restrict himself to writing only about Ah Q's ringworm scars, his tactics of winning psychological victory but had to depict the class relationship in rural China, characters other than Ah Q, how he was exploited, how he changed his attitude towards revolution etc Moreover he wrote about the unsuccessful revolution by clearly pointing

out to the fact that Ah Q was not only barred from participation in the revolution but also faced the tragic end at the hands of authorities created by the revolution. (7)

He Qifang truly depicts the realistic picture the text has portrayed. His approach to the text is quite convincing to prove Lu Shun's artistic greatness in creating such a masterpiece. Undoubtedly, Lu Shun's vision of understanding his society, culture and politics is well captured by the text.

Some critics analyze the text in relation to the revolutionary spirit it has embodied. They associate the greatness of the work with the roles the text played to bring about the changes in the then Chinese societies. Here in the similar context, Manik Bhattacharcharya comments that:

The True story of Ah Q is a very effective medicine that has cured the modern China from complacency and conservatism that has fulfilled Lu Shun's personal ambition of using literature to cure China's civilization malaise. Of course it's a bitter pill for the Chinese civilization to swallow. But after swallowing it China has become progressively active in shedding its civilization obesity although many Chinese intellectuals wouldn't grant this credit to *The True Story of Ah Q* or its author. (37)

The text sharply illustrates the socio-politico-economic and cultural problems which the Chinese people had not realized then. It was their own culture that was eating their flesh. Belief in conservatism and superstition had been a basic aspect of the Chinese lives which couldn't accept the concept of change. It was the main attack of Lu Shun and his *The True Story of Ah Q*.

Like Bhattacharya, one of the prominent Nepali literary critics, Victor Pradhan associates the text with its socio-historical circumstances. He comments that, "*The True Story of Ah Q* is a distinct satire upon own social history" (238). No doubt the text satires upon the then socio-historical situation so as to expose its revolutionary spirit of change.

The text covers the time setting and the socio-politico- economic and cultural upheavals of around the 1911 Revolution to the May Fourth Movement. Justine Wintle opines that the text not only exposes the 1911 Republican Revolution but also clearly depicts its essential failure. In this context she acutely points out, "*The True Story of Ah Q* also exposed the Republican Revolution for what it was a superficial deceptive change in the form of government that left the fabric of the Chinese society intact: the common people remained outside the effective political structure" (321). Certainly the 1911 Revolution could not bring about the changes it had promised to the public. The overthrow of the tyrannical rule was substituted by the Republican government but it was no more than a superficial change. The public were always out of the socio-politico-economic and cultural privileges.

Another prominent critic, Harry Kuoshu also associates the Ah Q mentality with the failure of revolution and incapability for the achievement of the modernity. As he justly comments, "This story is Lu Xun's dramatization of the Chinese cultures efforts to achieve incapability and modernity of revolution, asking what kind of revolution the Ah Q mentality is capable of" (Kuoshu 37).

Mao Tsetung, the Chinese Communist leader, praises the text for the message it gives to its readers. He recommends his comrades to read and reread it. As he writes that:

The True Story of Ah Q is a fine story. I would recommend comrades who have read it before to reread it and those who haven't to read it carefully. In this story Lu Shun writes mainly about a peasant who is backward and politically unawakened. He devotes a whole chapter, "Barred from the Revolution", to describing how a bogus foreign devil bars Ah Q from the revolution. Actually, all Ah Q understands by revolution is helping himself to a few things just like some others. But even this kind of revolution is denied him by the bogus foreign devil. (321)

These various responses on Lu Shun's *The True Story of Ah Q* are the evidences of its richness and complexity. Yet the text is not complete without exploring the revolutionary spirit the text has embodied. The present study is to prove *The True Story of Ah Q* as a work of social realism. So, it is a different response than the above ones. It holds the Marxist approach to analyze the socio-politico-economic and cultural realities, class conflict, class contradiction and ideology of the major characters. It also analyses the contribution the text has played in revolting against the age long established superstition and complacency which had been a stumbling block for the change of the then Chinese society. Therefore this research is unique and researchable.

As this research is going to approach the text as a work of social realism from the Marxist perspective, it is best to introduce Marxism here in brief. Marxism as formulated by Karl Marx and Engels sees any work of art in relation to the three fundamental principles. Firstly, the evolving history of humanity, its ways of thinking or its overall economic organizations are largely determined by the means of production of society. Secondly 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, shapes our consciousness. Similarly, historical changes in the social class structure established in each era are the outcome of the conflict between dominant and subordinate classes that engage in a constant struggle for socio-economic and political advantages. In any historical era, the dominant ideology embodies and serves to legitimate and perpetuate the interests of the dominant economic and social class of the time.

Literature, from a Marxist point of view, is taken as the reflection of the socio-economic life or a social reality. Disregarding Art for Art's Sake movement, it claims that any work of art is to be contributive to the social change and to the betterment of society. It stresses on the fact that literature should be useful to life and also be helpful in spreading the ideology of the working class. It favors revolution created by art that can be achieved by revolutionizing the technique itself. Marx focuses on the artist's needs to revolutionize the artistic forces of production of his time through the matter of techniques. The correct techniques will arise in response to the complex historical combination of social and technical changes. To understand Marxism, the production of ideas, concept, and consciousness are first of all directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man. The language of real life, conceiving, thinking and the spiritual intercourse of men appear here as the direct effuse of men's material behavior. It implies that life determines consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the socio-political and intellectual life process in general. Thus, it is not the consciousness but the social being determines men's consciousness. Moreover, men are not free to choose their social relations; they are constrained into them by material necessity.

The present work has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents a short historical background of the text and of Lu Shun in relation to his depiction of social realism in literature. It presents a brief summary of the text and an introductory outline of the present study. It introduces critical reviews of some critics who have criticized this text from different perspectives. It gives a bird's eye view of the whole work. The brief introduction of the writer, the text and its socio-historical setting give us a glimpse of miserable conditions of the Chinese lives and society where the issues of socio-politico-cultural and economic conditions of the time and conflicts among the different classes of people can be observed.

The second chapter aims at presenting the theoretical basis briefly. It attempts to introduce Marxist criticism. It exposes the interrelatedness between Marxism and literature. It also deals with the class conflict and revolutionary consciousness together with George Lukacs' concept of realism and his reflection theory of social reality in art.

On the basis of the theoretical modality discussed in the second chapter, the third chapter analyses the text, *The True Story of Ah Q* at a considerable length. It sorts out extracts of the text as an evidence to prove the hypothesis of the study. This part serves as the core of the work.

The fourth chapter is the conclusion of this research. On the basis of the textual analysis of the chapter three, it will conclude the explanations and arguments put forward from the preceding chapters and show social realism in *The True Story of Ah Q* in a nut shell. Thus, this research will give a balanced judgment of *The True Story of Ah Q* on the basis of its representation of social realism. On the one hand it will explore the basic features of social realism in the text and on the other hand judge the contribution the text

has played to revolutionize the society and the literature and it will finally prove its greatness to have helped for the creation and continuation of revolutionary literature.

II. Marxism: Social Realism

Marxist View of Literature

As a revolutionary as well as scientific theory, Marxism was formulated by Karl Marx along with his companion Fredric Engels. These two great personalities disapproved the bourgeoisie socio-political and economic system establishing their own philosophy of proletariats. Being a revolutionary and scientific theory Marxism not only analyses the life and the world but also aims to change them and always strives to lead the whole humanity to the path of liberation. It mainly aims to free all humans from all kinds of oppression carried out upon man by man by eradicating all kinds of malpractices and hazards of the capitalist system. It always attempts to establish the proletarian humanism ending the discriminating social tradition existed in the form of race, class and colors and so on. So this theory is proven to be helpful to life and the world. It advocates for the ever going class struggle of the proletariats against the ruling authority until the political power is ceased and the socialist emancipatory society is established. Marxism hit a strong blow at the bourgeoisies' ideology and also intensified the inevitable process of change bringing a considerable change in the concept of art and literature too.

In terms of literature Marxism stresses on the reflection of the dialectical totality of society which has two distinct classes found always in struggle for social, political and economic advantages. So according to this theory, literature has socio-politico-cultural implications and it must be committed to the betterment of society and its people at large. Unlike any other theories which focus on the interpretation of life and the world as their prime function, Marxism examines how far a literary work is able to embody the ability to alter the human existence and lead people to the path of progress, prosperity and

emancipation. Marxist critics consider art and literature as a living body of thought. It aims at revolutionizing the whole economic life by establishing a new political system led by the proletariats. The orthodox Marxist theory of literature insists that a work of literature should reflect the class relations and also should be committed to the working class people.

Marxists claim that a writer's work should be judged on the basis of the exposition of his insights of the socio-economic situation of the age. This theory demands the author to produce reality objectively with a special attention to the oppression and the aggression carried out upon the lower class by the upper one. So, it claims that literature should expose the inner causes instead of producing outward superficial appearance of reality. The author needs a deep intellectual power and a penetrating vision of the historical forces of the period. It is unlike naturalism and modernism which have merely an outward superficial depiction of the things that always push back all the inner causes and can never lead to the reality. So literature, for Marxist critics, should be helpful in spreading the ideology of working class people advocating and praising their revolutionary spirit.

Class Conflict and Revolutionary Consciousness

As Marx associates the existing history with "the history of class struggle" (21), the notion of conflict dominates the core of Marxism, not as a matter of problems to be solved but a state of domination and subjection to be ended by a complete transformation of the conditions that give its birth. So conflict is not always injurious but has many positive advantages too. It can contribute to the peaceful solution to the problems, produces new ideas, progress and make ever greater harmony. So it is a

practical, stabilizing force rather than a disruptive one. No doubt conflict may be attenuated, but only because the ruling class is able by one means or another – coercion, concessions, or persuasion to prevent subordinate classes from seeking emancipation. Finally stability is a matter of force not of reason. The antagonists are irreconcilable and the notion of genuine harmony is a deception and delusion: at least in relation to class societies. Protagonists of the conflict are individuals as members of social aggregates-classes. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx writes that:

Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand. As if someone was to say: Seen from the perspectives of society, there are no slaves and no citizens: both are human beings. Rather they are that outside society. To be a slave, to be a citizen are social characteristics, relations between human beings A and B. Human being A, as such, is not a slave. He is a slave in and through society. (265)

There may be the feeling of antagonism between the members of different classes which create mobility between classes too. But no matter whether conflicts occur or not, classes remain irreconcilably divided. Marxism sees the conflict as inherent in a class system, incapable of solution within that system. Eruptions, outbursts, revolts, revolutions are only the most visible manifestations of permanent alienation and conflict that indicate the on going contradictions in the social system and imply sharper or irrepressible forms of the struggle between contending classes. These contending classes are locked in a situation of domination and subjection from which there is no escape except through the total transformation of mode of production. Domination, like conflict, is inherent in class

societies, determined by the specific, concrete features of its mode of production. Both conflict and domination are "rooted in the process of extraction and appropriation of what is produced by human labor. Class domination is not simply a fact: it is a process, a conditioning endeavor on the part of dominant class or classes to maintain, strengthen, and extend or defend their domination" (Milband 20).

Marxism basically focuses on class, class antagonism and class conflict. The protagonists of class struggles have naturally varied through the ages from freeman and slaves, patricians and plebeians, lords and serfs, guild masters and journeymen, to bourgeoisie and proletariats in the epoch of capitalism. But throughout "oppressors and the oppressed have stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstruction of society at large, or in the common ruin of contending classes" ("The Communist" 21). So conflict basically comes out from the determination of the dominant classes to extract as much work as possible from the subject classes; and, conversely, from the attempts of these classes to change the terms and conditions of their subjection or to end it altogether.

The capitalist society has been reduced into two classes as Marx and Engels said that, "society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly: facing each other: bourgeoisie and proletariats" ("The Communist" 21). Whatever conflicts exist in the capitalist society, the primary conflict is between capitalists and wage earners. Such formulation of the conflict provided Marx and Engels with the belief in the inevitability of revolution, a decisive settlement of

accounts between bourgeoisie and proletariats; out of which a new social order and a mode of production, namely socialism would emerge.

The Marxist concept of class is closely attached to the early development of industrial capitalism. Talking about the early development of the English industrial capitalism, in his *The Poverty of Philosophy* Marx writes that:

Economic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers. The domination of capital has created for this mass a common situation and common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle...this mass becomes united and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interest. (145)

Obviously, Marx is indicating towards the proletariat, presupposing consciousness of its interests, who becomes a class for itself. He, along with Engels, went further to speak about the class in "The Communist Manifesto". Here they spoke of the "organization of the proletariats into a class and consequently into a political party" (27), and also they insisted that "the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled by the forces of circumstances, to organize itself as a class"(33). Now they attached the notion of the class with politics. Their focus is that the working class constitutes itself a party. The working class has to be capable to organize itself politically to be a class. So without consciousness, the working class is not more than a mass which has to acquire consciousness.

One of the main protagonists of this class struggle is the working class basically constituted by industrial wage earners, factory workers, and the modern proletariat. The

working class is that part of the collective labor which produces the surplus value, from a position of subordination, at the lower ends of the income scale. Another main protagonist of the class struggle in the capitalist society is the capitalist class which owns and controls the means of production and economic activity in general- the great manufacturing, financial and commercial interests of the capitalist enterprise. The capitalist class extends well beyond these interests and includes many people who fulfill specific professional and other functions on behalf of these interests and are associated with them by virtue of income, status, occupation, kinship etc-. It is this variegated totality which is also called the ruling class in mar lance. This capitalist class or bourgeoisie is practical, sociological with many different elements of fractions; and while the development of capitalism has fostered and ever greater interrelationship between different forms of capital, it has by no means obliterated their differences.

Class conflict is not a direct involvement of classes in the conflict. but of their elements. It involves a fight between groups of people who are the part of a given class, and possibly its representative. Class conflict is the antagonism between different classes. It may be present in various forms of expressions, in different levels of intensity and scope. It may be fought for immediate, particular and economic demands that form the part of normal patterns of relations between the employer and the wage earners. It can focus on the cultural level too, which is fought as a permanent struggle for the interaction of alternative and contradictory ideas, values and perspectives. Similarly it can be political struggle that questions the existing political arrangements, whether large or small. It may assume a violent or peaceful form, and move from one form or level to another. The class struggle can never be artificial of whatever forms or levels it is. Class

conflict includes and expresses all manifestations of social life- economic, cultural, ideological, social and political phenomenon- all permanently present in the permanent class conflict of the capitalist society.

A class to exist properly has to possess a certain kind of consciousness which is a crucially important element in Marxism. Class consciousness in Marxist Language implies the consciousness which the members of a class have of its true interests. In relation to the capitalist and bourgeoisie class, its true interests presumably consist in the maintenance and defense of capitalism: and its consciousness is very easy to achieve. As a matter of historical fact, privileged classes have always been perfectly class conscious. On the other hand, in Marxist terms, there is a sense in which the bourgeoisie is falsely conscious, not because it is unable due to its true interests, but because it proclaims and believes that these are partial and class interests have a universal and classless character. As Ralph Milband, in his *Marxism and Politics*, quotes the best idea of Marx and Engels about the class expressed in "The German Ideology" is that:

Each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it, is compelled merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interests as the common interests of all the members of the society, that is expressed in the ideal form; it has to give its ideas- the form of universality: and represent as the only rational, universally valid one. (63)

Here, Marx and Engels are basically focusing on the bourgeoisie's struggles against feudal rule and chiefly the French bourgeoisie's protracted struggles for the intellectual as well as economic and political ascendancy under the ancient regime.

The term ideology for them is accurately the attempt to universalize and give ideal form to what are no more than limited class bound ideas and interests. They use 'ideology' as a false representation of the reality. Engels clearly relates ideology to the illusion. He says that ideology functions as an illusion. Ideologies give people ideas about how to understand themselves and their lives, but these all disguise what is really going on. So for Engels, ideology as an illusion masks the real or objective situation. His claim is that the illusion produced by ideology creates false consciousness in people who easily believe the superficiality without perceiving how the world works and what the objective reality is. Such various false ideologies delude the workers into thinking that they are not exploited by the capitalist system hardly ever seeing what actually they are doing.

Illusion created by the ideology results into false consciousness in people who misperceive the ideological representations of the world and its real functioning. Vulgar Marxism views that all literature produces false consciousness since all literature produced in a capitalist society could only reflect the capitalist ideologies.

Ideology is closely associated with class consciousness. As there exist basically two distinct classes, they have their particular class consciousness. The proletarian class consciousness, as also taken as revolutionary consciousness, means the achievement of an understanding that the liberation of the proletariat and of society that needs the overthrow of capitalism and also it implies the entailing the will to overthrow it. The concept of class consciousness is not specified by even Marx and Engels.

Revolutionary consciousness is a certain understanding of the nature of the social order. It comprises many uncertainties, tensions, contradictions, open questions and possibilities of error and regression. Proletarian consciousness as interchangeably used

with revolutionary consciousness, denotes a commitment to the revolutionary transformation of society, an internalization of the need to achieve that most radical rupture with traditional property relations and traditional ideas of which Marx and Engels have been preoccupied. It is only the proletariat that can achieve class consciousness but also the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals and even the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeoisie's intelligentsias. Such instances have been very common in the history of working class movements and many of its leaders have come from bourgeoisie origin. Evidently what Marx and Engels said in this context in "The Communist Manifesto" is that:

In times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands... A portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat and in particular, a portion of the bourgeoisie ideologists who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole. (27)

Marxism claims that the working class should acquire revolutionary consciousness- the understanding that it must do away with capitalism to emancipate itself and society. It should accept the call to revolution unlike what Lenin and his followers advocated "trade union consciousness" meaning rejection the call to revolution and seeing reforms of various kinds within the loose confines of capitalism. Marx observes the close association

between emancipation and revolution. "In Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", Marx discusses the inability of the German bourgeoisie to make a through going revolution and questions; "where is the positive possibility of the German emancipation?", and his answer lies "in the formation of a class with radical chains, a class of social civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class which is the dissolution of all the classes, a sphere which has a universal character because of its universal suffering and which lays claim to no particular wrong but wrong in general..." (256).

The class he is indicating was the proletarian class and its role and the mission is to be an agent of emancipation. Even in the early formulations of Marx and Engels there is a concept of the proletariat as destined to become a revolutionary class because revolution is its only means of deliverance from the oppression, exploitation and alienation which existing society imposes upon it. The proletariat's role is not determined by any extra historical agency but by the nature of capitalism and by the concrete conditions which it imposes upon the working class and upon society at large.

The real argument is that capitalism is unable to do without exploitation, oppression, and dehumanization; and it can not create the truly human environment for which it has itself produced the material conditions. But on the other hand, the working class has not developed the class consciousness which turns it into the revolutionary class to react against all the diseases of the capitalist class. Revolutionary consciousness can be equated with the will to insurrection and absence of such a will in the working class demonstrates the lack of consciousness. Since Marx, too, believed that the abolition of capitalism would require its violent overthrow. Revolutionary consciousness and class consciousness must finally come to encompass a will to insurrection. But this will to

insurrection must be seen as an ultimate extension of revolutionary consciousness, as its final strategic manifestations, produced by specific and for the most part unforeseeable circumstances.

Lukacs, Realism and Reflection Theory

George Lukacs, a Hungarian Marxist has undoubtedly a great contribution in the Western Marxist critical tradition through the formulation of his reflection theory.. He also contributed the ideas of reification and class consciousness to Marxist philosophy and theory. In *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), he discussed the process of reification, reintroducing alienation as a central concept, and argued that bourgeois thought was 'false consciousnesses. He served briefly as Hungary's Minister of Culture following the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

Rejected by official socialist literati, he was an outsider to the dominant literary movements of the West. His literary criticism was influential in thinking about realism and about the novel as a genre. In terms of art and literature, we can see his thoughts mainly concerned with the problem of the form and the content, the artist and his world (society), and the historicity of the art forms as well as the dialectic mode of his discussion. The word dialectic is found to have been a central concept to his aesthetics. Since only through dialectics is it possible to overcome the incompleteness, the rigidity and the barrenness of any one-sided conception of reality. For Lukacs, the objectivity and the comprehensiveness of literature consists of the dialectics in its content, of its form and content, and between the literary subject and its world. The artist, therefore, depicts reality dialectically.

Lukacs was an anti modernist, anti romanticist and anti naturalist in terms of art and literature, favoring realism. For him a naturalist is merely a pseudo objectivist who contemporaries everything and levels them down to a series of static and monotonous pictures. Naturalism merely attempts to reproduce a photographic picture of life with equal vigor. Discussing about naturalism he observes that, “universality without mediation is necessarily abstract” (214). Naturalism which appears to be more realistic in its depiction of life is unmediated. He says that naturalist “kept strictly to an exact rendering of immediate reality [. . .]”, but fell into abstraction. Further he remarks that:

[. . .] the exclusion of historical determinants (Meditations) which in the everyday life of the average person are not, as a rule, reality perceptible, but which interacting in their totality with everyday existence from the concrete, essential features of an historical situation, transformed naturalist authenticity into abstraction. (Lukacs 215)

He says that, “the naturalist manner of portrayal inestimably blunts both popular movements and popular attitudes; it deprives one of historical objectivity and other of consciousness” (Lukacs 212). For Lukacs, naturalism is no more than the distortion of the reality which has a mere photographic reproduction and the superficial phenomena of society without its significant essence. Similarly, what another well-known Marxist Critic, Terry Eagleton opines about naturalism in his book *Marxism and Literary Criticism* is that:

As with naturalism, the dialectical unity between inner and outer worlds is destroyed, and both individual and society consequently emptied of meaning. Individuals are gripped by despair and angst, robbed of social

relations and so of authentic selfhood; history becomes pointless or cyclical dwindled to mere duration. (29)

Like Lukacs, Eagleton, too, disagrees with the naturalist's concept of art. For him, the naturalist writers have neglected the important questions of life and history. Naturalists in his view are alienated from comprehensive social problems. They lack the ability to apprehend the basic inner and constant antagonism between the classes by simply possessing superficial vision of life and history. They are unable to understand the fundamental historical truth.

A true realist presents characters concretely through actions and relates them to each other through plot, but the naturalist reduces the characters to inanimate objects or components of still lives. He merely reduces life and presents a pure internality. Bourgeois thought is repeated in naturalism and subjectivism. Naturalism as a degraded form of realism limits itself to a description instead of the narration. Subjectivist art elevates art simply as the product of the superior subjective consciousness of the creative artist.

As an anti romanticist Lukacs opposes the romantic art that separates it from social reality and its utility. For him, it is merely subjective and expresses only the purest feeling of the author. It is simply an ideal having no reflection of social realities. It lacks social implications. Basically romanticism deals with the feelings and emotions which are mere subjectivity of an author. We can observe such attitude even in the great romanticist, Wordsworth, for whom poetry is just a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and emotions recollected in tranquility" (271). Similarly what Shelly opines about a poet is "a nightingale who sits in darkness and says to cheer its own solitude with

sweet sounds" (272). So, romantic art and literature ignores the objectivity and it is more about merry making and nature such as landscape, lakes, birds and flowers etc which are quite subjective feelings. Therefore Lukacs views romanticism as an obvious reactionary movement since it quite ignores the objectivity and practicality of art and literature.

Lukacs appears to be an anti modernist too. He is of the opinion that the modernist art does not represent the age. He accuses the modernist writers of breaking the dialectical totality, the basic premise of art, without presenting history and social relations. As a true Marxist, he criticizes the modernist literary practice of presenting man ahistorical and solitary, separating him from social processes. He says that the modernists ignored the basic inherent dialectic of art rather they only focused on the formal problems. Although man is a product of society, modernists alienate or cut him off from the socio-political situation. What he writes in "The Ideology of Modernity" is that, "The human condition – man as a solitary being, in capable of meaningful relationship, is identified with reality itself, the distinction between abstract and concrete potentiality becomes null and void" ("The Ideology of Modernism" 295).

He says that the status of man in modernist art is insignificant and empty. Man, for such writers, is by nature, solitary, asocial, and unable to enter into the relationship with other human beings. He accuses the modernist writers of being obsessed with mere form and style. He does not reject the "stream of consciousness" as a narrative method but does not accept it as something absolute. For them, style is something absolute and they use it as an end in itself. They fail to understand style as only a technical device. He opines that a great work of art should have a dialectical totality between the form and the content. The form should be the product of the content and it is only the content that determines the

form. But on the contrary, the modernist focuses on the form neglecting the content which creates the unmediated type of reflection of reality.

In his view, the modernists' unmediated type of reflection of reality is erroneous. He objects such fragmentation and presentation of man as a solitary being unaffected by the social forces. He charges the modernist of presenting total subjectivity without any social objectivity. Lukacs strongly opposed the formal innovations of modernist writers like Kafka, James Joyce, and Samuel Beckett, preferring the traditional aesthetic of realism. His criticism of Beckett, Woolf, and Joyce is very sharp since they move far away towards the subjectivity merely focusing on form and style. He accepts their attempts to make the works life-like but points out their inability that what they depict is no objective reality. Their exclusion of the inner causes makes their work worthless. He observes the entire failure of the modernists to present reality is due to their overcoming of dynamic historical environment by their subjective impression. It results into cutting their characters away from the social historical process plunging them into inescapable flux.

Lukacs' major contribution to art and criticism lies in his concept of reflection theory which argues that literature reflects reality outside it. Lukacs' reflection theory is closely attached to the idea of Plato's and Aristotle's "mimesis of art". Plato claimed that all art should imitate the original or the art is impossible without the reflection of the original. Again he charged such reflections with being far removed from the truth and reason carrying an unhealthy aim without any positive utility except being the sources of idle amusement. On the other hand, Aristotle found fault with the charges laid upon art by Plato. He advocated for the positive implications of art. His claim was that the

imitation is not merely an imitation rather it is a new creation and a successful imitation of the original. So poetry expresses the universal truth for him. Here, Lukacs is quite near to Aristotle.

Although Lukacs originally derives his reflection theory from Plato, it can not be considered a mere elaboration. It is quite refined and more subtle than their theories. Moreover, being a true Marxist, he gives the Marxist touch to his theory. There lies the essence of dialectical materialism, the fundamental ideological basis of Marxism. Unlike Plato, Lukacs imposes social as well as political implications upon literature in his reflection theory as what most Marxists claim.

Reflection model as the heart of Lukacs theory of art and literature proposes that a realist work must expose the underlying pattern of conflicts and contradictions in a social order. Rejecting the down to earth naturalistic art, he reforms the old realist view, claiming that the novel reflects the reality, not by rendering its mere superficial appearance but by giving us a truer, more complete, more vivid and more dynamic reflection of reality. As a true Marxist theorist, for Lukacs, the production of ideas and feelings is not an individual phenomenon but it is directly related to the objective reality and that production is determined by it. Art, for him, is a socio-historical phenomenon. So reflection is not an individual phenomenon in isolation but it denotes the complete life process and it must be concrete too.

Opposing the photographic representation of art he argues that the truly realistic work provides us with a sense of artistic necessity of the images presented. They possess an intensive reality which corresponds to the extensive totality of the world itself. Art reflects the totality of the society. However, he insists that "the novel must be faithful to

history despite its invented hero and imagined plot" (152). Here he means to say that the thematic must be realistic whatever the description is. For him, "the aim of a novel is to present a particular social reality at a particular time, with all the colors and specific atmosphere of the time" (150). An artist is a sensitive creature, he has feelings and reactions. So, a picture presented in a literary work like novels, dramas, poems etc ultimately passes through the active and sensitive minds of the author and gets reflected objectively.

For Lukacs literary creation is a process of putting selected matters together. He views the world as a mere chaos from where an artist picks up the required materials that undergo the process of selection on the priority basis. Similarly, the objective external reality is mingled with the artist's feelings and emotions which are purely subjective. In the creation process, the objective reality which lies in the chaotic state is given a form and arranged in a sequence. The process of selection and combination imposes bound to the chaos of the objective reality. David Forgacs in his brilliant essay "Marxist Literary Theory" observes that according to Lukacs "to be reflected in literature, reality has to pass through the creative, from giving work of the writer. The result, in the case of correct form of work, will be that the form the literary work reflects the form of the real world" (Forgacs 171). Forgacs says, in Lukacs' view form is "the aesthetic shape given to content, a shape manifested through technical features such as time and the interrelationship of characters and situation in work" (Forgacs 171).

Lukacs' *The Historical Novel* examines various writers of English as well as non-English literature from the socio-historical point of view. It presents a detailed study of the works of Walter Scott (1771-1832) from the early 19th century. Lukacs famously

argued for the revolutionary character of the novels of Sir Walter Scott and Balzac. Lukacs felt that both authors' nostalgic, pro-aristocratic politics allowed them accurate and critical stances because of their opposition to the rising bourgeoisie. Scott was anti-romanticist and picked up the materials for his literary works from history. Being a historical novelist, he regrets the lost independence of Scotland through his literary works. In *The Historical Novel*, regarding Scott, Lukacs observes that, "we must admire... Scott's extraordinary realistic presentation of history, his ability to translate these new elements of economic and social change into human fates" (95).

Realism, for Lukacs, is the model of art as a dialectical depiction of reality. A realist shows his love of life and human being and so exposes in his art the wealth of human relationships but this reality is not just a flux, but possesses an 'order' which the novelist renders in an intensive form. Lukacs' realist writer does not impose an abstract order upon the life and the world rather presents the reader with an image of richness and complexity of lives from which emerges a sense of the order within the complexity and subtlety of lived experience. And it is possible only if all contradictions and tensions of social existence are realized in a formal whole as a reflection of reality. This model believes that art must reflect the outside world in an objective way. Lukacs says that a realist work must expose the underlying pattern of contradictions in a social order. He believes that reality reflected in a literary work should be similar to the one reflected in human consciousness and it is the duty of a critic to examine whether it is translated correctly or not in a literary work; and to judge whether a literary work is realistic or not.

The success or failure of an author depends on his capacity in capturing the objective reality through his work. Lukacs always focuses that there must be some formal

correspondence between the literary work and the dialectical totality. Not only Lukacs, the Marxist philosophy itself insists that literature closely corresponds to the reality. What Marxism explicitly states is that literature belongs to the superstructure as politics, religion and philosophy which are based on socio-economic base. So, from Marxist point of view, art is originated in the society and it must have some social significance. However, this reproduction of reality can not be always indifferent since it also carries the artist's attitude towards it.

Lukacs is against the art created under the influence of bourgeoisie society. He locates disharmony in such society that results into the loss of aesthetic pleasure. The attempt of earlier aestheticians to seek harmony under capitalism is merely illusory and superficial according to Lukacs. For such purposes, men cut themselves from society and its struggle which is not good. He firmly argues that art is not a superficial image of reality but a combination of form and content. He finds only a sense of integrity in enlightenment, idealism and realism. Critiquing about these movements, he says that they always feel nostalgic about the lost harmony and beauty. Realists forget the beauty and harmony by copying the reality. Similarly idealists focus on beauty and harmony from the society which basically lacks such things.

Lukacs sets the movement of Enlightenment, idealism and realism in Marxist version of history in which the old "harmony" of the ancient Greek is forever lost and only nostalgia remains for it. Both idealism and realism failed to capture the old "harmony" of Greek art but they were historically understandable and valuable for the response to this loss. But unfortunately both become one-sided. The idealist and realist both show the fragmentation of an individual in a bourgeoisie art. They show the literary

divorce between harmony and beauty. Realism proceeds to reject harmony and beauty as illusions. So Lukacs calls for a reawakened social humanism which would heal the breach between life and beauty and create a new harmony that would be worldly.

All great art is to depict a real picture in which the contradiction between appearance and reality, the particular and the general, the immediate and the conceptual etc merge together. These two factors converge into a spontaneous integrity and it remains as inseparable integrity in the work of art. Lukacs argues that the work of art reflects an objective reality but not by slavish copy. For Lukacs, the correct form is one that reflects reality in most objective way. In this ground, he finds the form of the novels of Scott, Balzac and Tolstoy to be corrected for embodying knowledge of the contradictory content of capitalist society. He found a significant form in the triangular configuration of three social classes: landed aristocracy, bourgeoisie and Peasantry. The conflict and contradiction between these classes was the form of the then society and it got reflected in the novel in the form of characters' interrelations. The shift from Balzac and Tolstoy to Zola and Flaubert was actually the shift from Realism to Naturalism. Lukacs argues that when presenting naturalistic details, the reflection becomes one-sided and unmediated totalities are present. In such a case, there can be no true reflection of the dialectical shape of society.

Lukacs' point is that to reflect the underlying pattern of contradictions in a society, the writer should maintain a certain distance with unmediated totalities which result in the one sided emphasis on minute details. This is the case with James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Beckett and many others as they emphasized on a particular aspect of life. Why Lukacs criticizes these writers is that these unmediated totalities have a political

significance because when we are always exposed to the only one side of society or social life we are in a way accustomed to that kind of perception, turning blind to the other aspects of life. The concept of type and typicality is a central component in Lukacs' reflection model. Art for him reflects the dynamic truth not by slavish copying but by the presentation of the concrete universal and formal integrity. Art exposes the integrity that is the out come of the solutions to the contradiction and conflict between appearance and reality, particular and general and immediate and conceptual.

Obviously Lukacs' interpretation of art is Marxist realistic perspective that does not accept all interesting writing as a work of art. Marxists believe that a true work of art should be committed to the objective truth with basic literary features. For Lukacs the duty of Marxist aesthetics is "not only to explain the impoverishment and inadequacy in a social genetic way but also to measure them aesthetically against the highest demands of artistic reflection of reality and to find them lacking" (Lukacs 334). So, for him, the critics are responsible to examine whether the historical or social reality is properly reflected or not.

Lukacs realizes the reality can not be reflected as it exists. He takes "reality as a whole is always richer and more varied than even the richest work of art, no detail, episode, etc. However exactly copied, however biographically authentic, however factual, can possibly compete with reality" (302). He focuses on the artist's endeavor to portray an all-round and comprehensive picture of his time. The universality of such picture depends on the variety of the characters depicted in a work. A true artist should attempt to include even such characters who are felt to be "the bearers of hostile principles" (330). All the characters, good or bad, should be "portrayed as living many sided human beings and not

as poster like caricatures" (330). An author's success or failure depends upon his greatness in capturing the objective reality through his work. In Lukacs view, a true artist is that who is successful in depicting the social and the historical reality objectively in his literary work. Without the exposure of outside reality, he can't copy life faithfully no matter what languages, styles, images, constructions of plot the writer uses. The universality of such picture depends upon the variety of the characters depicted objectively in a work.

Lukacs views the close relation between art and reality, the socio-historical situation of a specific period: The reality he talks about is not a reality in itself but only its knowledge. It is only the product of certain socio-historical situation of a particular time period. It is different to the reality of scientific thoughts and everyday activities. Unlike that reality, it is mingled with individual reactions of the writers. All artistic creations are inseparable from the socio-historical phenomenon. Therefore, art is a special form that reflects reality which is the sum total of socio-historical phenomenon. Marxists' claim is that as art and literature are created in society, they must have some social significance. Their claim implies that literature is closely interrelated to reality. Marxists explicitly state that literature belongs to the superstructure as politics, religion and philosophy and is dependent on socio-economic base. Lukacs stresses that there must be some formal correspondence between the literary work and dialectical totality. However, this reproduction of reality can not be always indifferent. It also carries the artist's attitude towards it.

The reflection model observes literature as a outward reflection of a reality. As a matter of fact, it is quite safe and rather conventional to treat literary works as something

referring to a reality outside them. Marx himself maintained against Hegel that external reality is prior to ideas in the mind and that the material world is reflected in the mind of man and gets translated into forms of thought

III. Social Reality in *The True Story of Ah Q*

As a true realist and social critic Lu Shun examines socio-politico-cultural tendencies through the actions of realistic characters in his revolutionary short novel *The True Story of Ah Q*. Written in 1921 *The True Story of Ah Q* portrays the silent soul of China's countrymen. The main protagonist, Ah Q is a typical peasant and worker from the early twentieth century Chinese society. He is a representative figure of the proletarian class. He has a very poor and miserable life. His existence comes under questions many times. He is bullied and mistreated by the feudal capitalists throughout the novel. In the end, he is publicly executed by accusing him of being involved in robbery by the false revolutionaries at the moment of liberation.

Art as a social phenomenon, Lu Shun covers the socio-politico-cultural and economic upheavals from around the 1911 to the May Fourth Movement of modern China in *The True Story of Ah Q*. The text vividly presents the impacts of feudal capitalism and imperialism upon the common Chinese people. Its central focus is on different classes existing in society where higher class bourgeois people always suppress the dignity of the lower ones. It presents the world of inequality, class conflict and class contradiction where poverty has dominated the lives of most of the Chinese people. It has depicted the reality not only of the poor like Ah Q but also of the feudal capitalists living in society.

Marxism as a socio-politico cultural theory, it believes in the reflection of the dominant time, society, culture and politics in a literary text. It associates the text with such extrinsic factors that significantly affect its production. No great work of art can

undermine the social dimensions as it does exist within a frame of a particular time and history. Besides, contemporary socio-politico-cultural and economic situation and time determine the writer's socio-economic being and consciousness. The duty of the writer is to mingle his real experience in his literary work as Lu Shun always claimed, "My aim was to expose the disease and draw attention to it so that it might be cured" (Wang 7). And his another goal was to reveal the tough-mindedness of the nineteenth century Chinese people that prevented social progress in China.

Lu Shun's *The True Story of Ah Q* reflects the social-historical situation and socio-economic relationship of the people in the late Qing Chinese society. The human relations and the social status were completely based on the economic status. The protagonist, Ah Q is a typical vagabond peasant from the early twentieth century China. He is a victim of the feudal capitalist society. He stands as an example for the exploitation carried out by the upper class people. As the early 20th Century Chinese society was fully dominated by the feudal capitalism and imperialism, they took over all human values, the sense of humanity and duty. All human relations were treated in terms of commodities. Family bonds, human sentiments, social prestige were all closely associated with the economic status. The protagonist, Ah Q loses all his kinship bondage and social position in Wuachang due to his poor and miserable life:

Once, he seemed to be named Zhao, but the next day there was some confusion about the matter again. This was after Mr. Zhao's son had passed the county examination, and, to the sound of gongs, his success was announced in the village. Ah Q, who had just drunk two bowls of yellow wine, began to prance about declaring that this reflected credit on

him too, since he belonged to the same clan as Mr. Zhao, and by an exact reckoning was three generations senior to the successful candidate. At the time several bystanders even began to stand slightly in awe of Ah Q. But the next day the bailiff summoned him to Mr. Zhao's house. When the old gentleman set eyes on him his face turned crimson with fury and he roared:

"Ah Q, you miserable wretch! Did you say I belonged to the same clan as you?"

Ah Q made no reply.

The more he looked at him the angrier Mr. Zhao became, and advancing menacingly a few steps he said, "How dare you talk such nonsense! How could I have such a relative as you? Is your surname Zhao?"

Ah Q made no reply, and was planning a retreat, when Mr. Zhao darted forward and gave him a slap on the face.

"How could you be named Zhao!—Do you think you are worthy of the name Zhao?"

Ah Q made no attempt to defend his right to the name Zhao, but rubbing his left cheek went out with the bailiff. Once outside, he had to listen to another torrent of abuse from the bailiff, and thank him to the tune of two hundred cash. (3-4)

All the characters presented in the text represent two different classes existing in society. The protagonist Ah Q, Whiskers Wang, Amah Wu, Young D, and all poor innocent Weichuang villagers represent the lower class people whereas the Zhaos, Mr. Qian, the

Imitation Foreign Devil, the Provincial Candidate named Pai and the bailiff represent the upper class people of society. These bourgeoisie people use Ah Q as a means of their production. He is taken as a medium of their property accumulation. Ah Q exemplifies the negative impacts of the feudal capitalist system:

In addition to the uncertainty regarding Ah Q's surname, personal name, and place of origin, there is even some uncertainty regarding his "background." This is because the people of Weichuang only made use of his services or treated him as a laughing-stock, without ever paying the slightest attention to his "background". (9)

Ah Q has no home and no family to live with. He is simply a down trodden worker whose identity is never regarded in the society. What the capitalists of that society are concerned about is no more than his labor that creates them profit:

Ah Q had no family but lived in the Tutelary God's Temple at Weichuang. He had no regular work either, simply doing odd jobs for others: were there wheat to be cut he would cut it, were there rice to be ground he would grind it, were there a boat to be punted he would punt it. If the work lasted for a considerable period he might stay in the house of his temporary employer, but as soon as it was finished he would leave. Thus whenever people had work to be done they would remember Ah Q, but what they remembered was his service and not his "background"; and by the time the job was done even Ah Q himself was forgotten, to say nothing of his "background". (10)

Ah Q is a representative character of the early twentieth century Chinese society. He represents the whole lower class Chinese people who suffered excessive exploitation, starvation and ill treatment of the feudal capitalist and imperialist. Ah Q's main problem is concerned with the maintenance of his daily needs. He is deprived of the very common basic needs of food, clothes and shelter.

Material conditions determine the consciousness of man in society. It is the capitalist consciousness that is always to exploit and suppress the poor. The capitalists as represented by the Zhaos, Mr. Qian, the Imitation Foreign Devil and the Provincial County Candidate always impose their power and hegemony over the poor people like Ah Q which reflects the real situation of the then Chinese society. These people want the poor like Ah Q to bear all kinds of exploitation for their economic benefits. Their treatment of the poor very clearly reflects the bourgeoisie consciousness. The text depicts the hostile relationship between the upper class people and the lower ones. The relation is fully determined by the mere money relations that further create their respective socio-economic status. Ah Q being very poor bears a proletarian consciousness and tries to resist the capitalist aggression though indirectly. Although he can not challenge openly, there exists a strong hatred within him towards his oppressors. He curses them though it is from behind:

Now this "Imitation Foreign Devil" was approaching.

"Baldhead—Ass—" In the past Ah Q had cursed under his breath only, inaudibly; but today, because he was in a bad temper and wanted to work off his feelings, the words slipped out involuntarily.

Unfortunately this "baldhead" was carrying a shiny, brown stick which Ah Q called a "staff carried by the mourner." With great strides he bore down on Ah Q who, guessing at once that a beating was impending, hastily braced himself to wait with a stiffened back. Sure enough, there was a resounding thwack which seemed to have alighted on his head.

"I meant him!" explained Ah Q, pointing to a nearby child.

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! (24-5)

Ah Q is well aware about the oppression of the feudal capitalists. He feels deep hatred towards them. Though uneducated he can feel the pain and suffering of the feudal capitalism which has made his life so miserable. It is the feudal capitalists that always haunt him under the pretense of his different wrongdoings. As a poor lonely being he is unable to challenge the aggression and exploitation rather he takes the means of psychological victory to claim himself victorious whenever misfortune is befallen upon him. Although he appears a loser, he claims himself a winner by taking the help of psychological victory.

Psychological victory is an essential part of his poor life to defend himself from suppression, exploitation and ill treatment in the capitalist society. Though he does not have a house he satisfies himself with the Tutelary God's Temple as his mansion. In several occasions when he is out of food, he satisfies himself as his full. Throughout the story he is beaten and thrashed but he satisfies himself claiming psychologically victorious. So psychological victory becomes for him a means of survival and resistance in a capitalist society. We can observe some instance for his psychological reaction:

Whatever Ah Q thought he was sure to tell people later; thus almost all who made fun of Ah Q knew that he had this means of winning a psychological victory. So after this anyone who pulled or twisted his brown pigtail would forestall him by saying: "Ah Q, this is not a son beating his father, it is a man beating a beast. Let's hear you say it: A man bearing a beast!"

Then Ah Q, clutching at the root of his pigtail, his head on one side, would say: "Beating an insect—how about that? I am an insect—now will you let me go?" (13)

From the above lines, we can analyze Ah Q's method of winning psychological victory as the tactics to exist in such of his oppressive society. It is Ah Q's proper understanding of the socio-politico cultural and economic system of his society that needs such tactics to survive and react against the oppression carried out against him.

In *The True Story of Ah Q*, Lu Shun as a true realist presents the realistic picture of the late Qing period dominated by exploitation, starvation, unemployment, conservatism, superstition, corruption and complacency through his critical perspective. It is the time of feudal capitalism and foreign imperialism that overtook all humanity, human relations, human sentiments and sense of duties. All these things were treated only in terms of money. Economic status became a major determinant of the social status and human relations. These all resulted into the formation of a gap among people that directly affected the poor. The rich became richer and richer through exploitation and suppression whereas the poor always struggled for existence. Despite being very conscious about the

socio economic status, the poor could not rise above and their lives revolved just around for the fulfillment of hands to mouth problems.

Through the very beginning of the story, Ah Q is found working hard in the households of the feudal capitalists. He is simply taken for his labor without the consideration of his human identity. He is soon forgotten after the work is performed. He does not have a clear identity. He has no any distinct back ground which represents the dehumanization of the capitalist system. His story is the representative real story of all the poor of his society who lack an identity and status. Ah Q though poor is conscious of his status. He also desires to have a proper social status and identity in his society but it is never completed. He is rather commodified by the capitalism.

The protagonist Ah Q is a very alienated figure which is the result of capitalism. He declares himself as connected to the Zhaos through some kinship but they are not ready to accept him as their relative. It clearly portrays the capitalist consciousness that is to believe in the economic relation. The poor Ah Q is bitterly thrashed and unnecessarily fined by the feudal capitalists:

"How could you be named Zhao!—Do you think you are worthy of the name Zhao?"

Ah Q made no attempt to defend his right to the name Zhao, but rubbing his left cheek went out with the bailiff. Once outside, he had to listen to another torrent of abuse from the bailiff, and thank him to the tune of two hundred cash. (4)

These lines clearly indicate the capitalists' mentality and determinants of human relations. This is the capitalist way of thinking that has no any place for purely human relations and

sentiments that can bind all the people- the poor and the rich. Capitalists' consciousness like that of the Zhaos divides the people into different classes subjected to inhumanity, exploitation and suppression.

Ah Q is alienated from not only his relatives, the Zhaos but also from getting married. He is unable to taste the happy marriage life since he is very poor and can not afford a supposed married partner. He also desires for marriage and the caresses of a soft and smooth hand but the capitalist system does not allow him. He realizes the real socio-economic situation as a reason for him to be unable for marriage. He really feels the need of a wife after he is back to his shelter meeting and leaving the nun. The haunting of a small nun drowns him into a sweet imagination and compulsion of the married life:

"Ah Q, may you die sonless!"

These words sounded again in Ah Q's ears, and he thought, "Quite right, I should take a wife; for if a man dies sonless he has no one to sacrifice a bowl of rice to his spirit . . . I ought to have a wife." (28)

It is his very basic need to have a wife so that he can share his ups and downs of his life. Besides for him it is a responsibility to have at least a son at the time of death but he becomes really unsuccessful in this respect too. He goes to Amah Wu and proposes but he is bitterly rejected by her. Again he meets his tragedy as he gets an unnecessary beating from the hand of successful County Candidate and also he has to bear a heavy fine as a penalty:

When Amah Wu, the only maidservant in the Zhao household, had finished washing the dishes, she sat down on the long bench too and started chatting to Ah Q:

"Our mistress hasn't eaten anything for two days, because the master wants to get a concubine. . . ."

"Woman . . . Amah Wu . . . this little widow," thought Ah Q.

(...) "Woman . . ." thought Ah Q.

He put down his pipe and stood up.

"Our young mistress—" Amah Wu chattered on.

"Sleep with me!" Ah Q suddenly rushed forward and threw himself at her feet. (31-2)

These lines perfectly stand as an evidence for the socio economic status as a determinant of his life, what we do and how we do it. These also show how capitalists are free to be indulged into luxury. Even after having a wife the capitalists enjoy bringing the concubine. On the other hand the poor Ah Q, though he is single and is in a serious need of a wife, is unable to get even one. It is his socio economic status that stands as a stumbling block. Now he can not manage to get married and is destined to live alone throughout his life.

After his proposal to Amah Wu and after her rejection, he is seriously thrashed and charged with an excessive fine that makes his life more pitiable. He runs away from the household of the Zhaos and reaches to the Tutelary God's Temple. As he has left his shirt at the Zhaos' he feels very cold but he has no other way than accept it. He is no sooner summoned by the bailiff and is bitterly abused. We can observe the maltreatment of the bailiff as a representative of the Zhaos' family from the following lines:

Then the bailiff came in.

"Curse you, Ah Q!" said the bailiff. "So you can't even keep your hands off the Zhao family servants, you rebel! You've made me lose my sleep, curse you! . . ."

Under this torrent of abuse Ah Q naturally had nothing to say. Finally, since it was night-time, Ah Q had to pay double and give the bailiff four hundred cash. Because he happened to have no ready money by him, he gave his felt hat as security, and agreed to the following five terms:

1. The next morning Ah Q must take a pair of red candles, weighing one pound, and a bundle of incense sticks to the Zhao family to atone for his misdeeds.
2. Ah Q must pay for the Taoist priests whom the Zhao family had called to exorcize evil spirits.
3. Ah Q must never again set foot in the Zhao household.
4. If anything unfortunate should happen to Amah Wu, Ah Q must be held responsible.
5. Ah Q must not go back for his wages or shirt.

Ah Q naturally agreed to everything, but unfortunately he had no ready money. Luckily it was already spring, so it was possible to do without his padded quilt which he pawned for two thousand cash to comply with the terms stipulated. After kowtowing with bare back he still had a few cash left, but instead of using these to redeem his felt hat from the bailiff, he spent them all on drink. (35-6)

These lines indicate on the one hand the capitalists' exploitation and the suppression upon the poor like Ah Q and on the other hand expose the reaction against them. There is no sharp reaction of Ah Q and it is the reality that most of the poor Chinese faced during the Qings' regime. There is no other alternative except the surrender of capitalists' ill treatment.

Although Ah Q suffers ill treatment, exploitation, suppression and aggression of the feudal capitalists and imperialists, he is not always a passive surrenderer. Though he is a loser and is defeated most of the time, he claims he is the winner and becomes exultant. He is never to feel defeated. He tries to find out the victory even behind his all defeat.

Lu Shun as a great revolutionary realist does not want his protagonist to be passive and submissive all the time. He makes him develop such tactics which help him to exist in such an exploitative society. Lu Shun does not want Ah Q to be static. Ah Q always wanders from his village to the town in search of work. He does not pass the time being idle. He works hard in the households of the feudal capitalists hoping for a good life. He also wants to have social respect and status like that of the feudal capitalists. He always strives for the better position in his society.

Ah Q is with a proletarian consciousness who believes in the revolution and the changes it can bring to the poor and to the society. Although he quite skeptical about the revolution in the beginning, he changes his mind later and sees his ultimate hope in it as he finds it really hard to uplift his status through hard work in the households of the feudal capitalists. He wants to join the revolution as he thinks it is a best means to fight against the exploitation and suppression of the capitalists. He wants to be a rebel so as to

challenge the feudal capitalist system. There is a revolutionary spirit in Ah Q who wants to rebel against the capitalists and for the support of the other poor people like him:

"Revolt? It would be fun. . . . A group of revolutionaries would come, all wearing white helmets and white armor, carrying swords, steel maces, bombs, foreign guns, double-edged knives with sharp points and spears with hooks. They would come to the Tutelary God's Temple and call out, 'Ah Q! Come with us, come with us!' And then I would go with them. . . .

"Then all those villagers would be in a laughable plight, kneeling down and pleading, 'Ah Q, spare our lives.' But who would listen to them! The first to die would be Young D and Mr. Zhao, then the successful county candidate and the Imitation Foreign Devil . . . but perhaps I would spare a few. I would once have spared Whiskers Wang, but now I don't even want him. . . . (62)

Thinking of joining the revolutionary groups makes Ah Q is really optimistic about his life and the world. He has new hopes and aspirations to flourish in his society with a respectable position and status. It is the last alternative, as he thinks, left so as to accomplish his long lost dream of becoming somebody in his society. But on the other hand he can not realize the fact that it is his capitalist society that always pulls his legs when he tries to go ahead. Before he joins the revolutionary group, the feudal capitalists have already organized a false revolutionary group so as to terrify the poor innocent people. These people hide their reactionary attitude under the disguise of being revolutionaries. Ah Q finally reaches them and appeals to them so as to let him be a revolutionary but he is denied by the Bogus Foreign Devil. Now all the hopes and dreams

of Ah Q get crushed which further lead him to the accusation of being involved in robbery despite being very innocent:

After the Zhao family was robbed most of the people in Weichuang felt pleased yet fearful, and Ah Q was no exception. But four days later Ah Q was suddenly dragged into town in the middle of the night. It happened to be a dark night. A squad of soldiers, a squad of militia, a squad of police and five secret servicemen made their way quietly to Weichuang, and, after posting a machine-gun opposite the entrance, under cover of darkness they surrounded the Tutelary God's Temple. Ah Q did not rush out. For a long time nothing stirred in the temple. The captain grew impatient and offered a reward of twenty thousand cash. Only then did two militiamen summon up courage to jump over the wall and enter. With their co-operation from within, the others rushed in and dragged Ah Q out. But not until he had been carried out of the temple to somewhere near the machine-gun did he begin to sober up. (77-8)

Ah Q though very innocent is charged with being involved in the robbery of the Zhaos households. He is a very true character. He does not lie the judges in the court. and also he can not realize that he is accused of robbery rather he relates his present guilt to his attempt of joining the revolutionaries. He answers the judges truly and very frankly as he is a down to earth figure:

"Slave!" exclaimed the long-coated men contemptuously. They did not insist on his getting up, however.

"Tell the truth and you will receive a lighter sentence," said the old man with the shaven head, in a low but clear voice, fixing his eyes on Ah Q. "I know everything already. When you have confessed, I will let you go".

"The fact is I wanted ... to come . . ." muttered Ah Q disjointedly, after a moment's confused thinking.

"In that case, why didn't you come?" asked the old man gently.

"The Imitation Foreign Devil wouldn't let me!"

"Nonsense! It is too late to talk now. Where are your accomplices?"

"What? . . ."

"The people who robbed the Zhao family that night."

"They didn't come to call me. They moved the things away themselves."

Mention of this made Ah Q indignant.

"Where did they go? When you have told me I will let you go,"...

"I don't know . . . they didn't come to call me. . . .". (79-80)

According to the reactionaries' accusation of Ah Q being involved in the robbery, he is imprisoned. It is under the feudal capitalist system that all kinds of misfortunes are made to fall upon the poor like Ah Q despite being truly innocent. Feudal capitalism as a reactionary system does not let him live easily. It makes him suffer and finally get executed.

Ah Q like his creator is very true to the reality. He does not lie the judges in the court. It is his consciousness that does not let him hide the truth. He speaks very frankly and truly that becomes the cause of his execution in the end. He rather accepts death than

be a liar. In a real sense his execution represents the truth, sincerity and reality of the proletariats which are the praiseworthy human qualities.

The True Story of Ah Q as an Allegory of Social Reality

Marxists view literature as a social reflection of reality. Literature for Marxists should be able to demonstrate the existing socio-historical circumstances of a particular time period. Although written in 1921, *The True Story of Ah Q* covers the time from around 1911 Chinese Revolution to the May fourth Movement when a great republican revolution took place that led to the Qing dynasty fall down.

The text as a whole allegorizes the degradation of the imperial China. It was that time when the worlds were dominated by the global culture whereas the imperial China was still practicing conservatism and superstition. But they did not have any choice than accepting this modernizing tendency. They had to avoid their own cultures to join the global trends and it was made possible after the fall of the Qing dynasty which gave the Chinese society a way to the modernizing phase. Now the modern Chinese people started to resist the Confucian view of the world as a moral universe and laid China's backwardness on traditions. The Chinese began westernizing and the dynasty began to crumble. Western philosophies began to override the old Chinese culture. Consequently there was an outburst of a great republican revolution that led to the overthrow the Qing dynasty in 1911.

Ah Q is an allegory for the decay of the Qing dynasty. The protagonist, Ah Q is bullied and mistreated throughout the story. He is continuously getting beaten up and hurt which are allegories for the attacks upon the Chinese culture during the late nineteenth century, for example, an invasion of Chinese territory by Japanese and Western Powers.

Ah Q is attributed with such qualities as his unwillingness to adapt to modernity, his Manchu hairstyle, his social status and attitude which all go with the Qing ideologies. Throughout the story, Ah Q always gets into fights or gets beaten up, but he tries to come out of the situation confident and with his head held high. He has a very high opinion of himself, like the Qing dynasty, even as it was decaying. He considers himself better and more conceited than the villagers or the townspeople. We can observe such of his mentality in the following lines which allegorically represent the Qing mentality:

Moreover, after Ah Q had been to town several times, he naturally became even more conceited, although at the same time he had the greatest contempt for townspeople. For instance, a bench made of a wooden plank three feet by three inches the Weichuang villagers called a "long bench." Ah Q called it a "long bench" too; but the townspeople called it a "straight bench," and he thought, "This is wrong. How ridiculous!" Again, when they fried large-headed fish in oil the Weichuang villagers all added shallot leaves sliced half an inch long, whereas the townspeople added finely shredded shallots, and he thought, "This is wrong too. How ridiculous!" But the Weichuang villagers were really ignorant rustics who had never seen fish fried in town! (11)

These lines clearly illustrate how Ah Q is an allegory of the old Chinese culture, society and the Qing dynasty. Like the Chinese culture during the late Qing, Ah Q has a consistent blindness to the reality throughout the story. Lu Shun's aim was to depict the soul of the people of the country and he also wanted to expose the weakness of the country folk. Ah Q becomes an allegory of the Chinese culture as it faces the challenge of

foreign powers. Ah Q believes himself to be better than everyone in society, even though he is a peasant. But it's only after his encounter with Whiskers Wong towards the end of the story when he starts to realize his social class in society. Ah Q, like the Chinese society, thinks that he can succeed but he is really outmatched. Like Ah Q, the Qing dynasty also couldn't accept the changes as it did not like them which eventually led to its downfall. Ah Q is finally executed by the false revolutionists at the end of the text. This execution of Ah Q represents the final decay of the Qing dynasty.

In spite of being unaware of the true meaning of the revolution Ah Q satisfies himself with the dream of joining the revolution at the beginning of the story. He associates it with the good social status and high respect. But when the time comes and he finally decides to get enlisted, Bogus Foreign Devil denies his entry. This damages Ah Q's ambitions, aims, hope and future all in one swoop. On the other hand Ah Q is also worried that gossips about this failure will spread out and he will be the laughingstock for fellow peasants like Whiskers Wong and Young D:

"Revolution is not a bad thing," thought Ah Q. "Finish off the whole lot of them . . . curse them! . . . I would like to go over to the revolutionaries myself."

Ah Q had been hard up recently, and was probably rather dissatisfied; added to this, he had drunk two bowls of wine at noon on an empty stomach. Consequently, he became drunk very quickly; and as he walked along thinking to himself, he felt again as if he were treading on air.

Suddenly, in some curious way, he felt as if the revolutionaries were

himself, and all the people in Weichuang were his captives. Unable to contain himself for joy, he could not help shouting loudly:

"Rebellion! Rebellion!" (59)

Ah Q's psychological response towards the revolution represents the collective hope of the Chinese people at that time when they were suffering from feudal oppression, imperial aggression and the cruel treatment of the Qings and they believed that the revolution would bring them a better life. Ah Q, like many ordinary people during this time period, intended on joining the "revolutionaries" without understanding the meaning of revolution. Similarly, Ah Q's thirst for revolution reflects the development of his character under the influence that takes place in society. Although China converted from a monarchy to the republic, it was only successful in chasing away the emperor but social structures and social problems still occurred. At the end of the execution Ah Q says, "In twenty years I shall be another" In his agitation Ah Q uttered half a saying which he had picked up himself but never used before. The crowd's roar "Good!!!" sounded like the growl of a wolf (85). These lines indirectly imply the fact that Ah Q's spirit and beliefs would continue to move on throughout society even after his execution although his execution represents the final decay or the final overthrow of the Qing dynasty. Now we can very acutely analyze the dominance of the negative ideas even after the success of the 1911 Revolution.

Ah Q also allegorizes the typical lower class peasant in the late Qing society. Like his other fellow peasants, he is depicted as ugly and unimportant. "The most annoying were some places on his scalp where in the past, at some uncertain date, shiny ringworm scars had appeared" (11). His only trait that is the same as the middle class Chinese

citizen is his traditional Manchu hairstyle, called a queue. The style consisted of shaved hair in the front and a braided ponytail in the back. This queue also represents the Chinese Manchu domination. Ah Q and his hairstyle become an allegory of the Qing dynasty because as the dynasty began to fall, a new style took place. For instance, Mr. Qian's eldest son whom Ah Q despised, was supposed to be a big official, but one night a peasant who was drunk cut his queue off. So Zhou had to wait until it grew back again in order for him to be an official. Ah Q had a huge problem with Zhou and his false queue. In Qing society when it came to having a false queue a man could barely be considered as human:

From the distance approached another of Ah Q's enemies. This was Mr. Qian's eldest son whom Ah Q also despised. After studying in a foreign school in the city, it seemed he had gone to Japan. When he came home half a year later his legs were straight and his pigtail had disappeared. His mother cried bitterly a dozen times, and his wife tried three times to jump into the well. Later his mother told everyone, "His pigtail was cut off by some scoundrel when he was drunk. He would have been able to be an official, but now he will have to wait until it has grown again before he thinks of that." Ah Q did not, however, believe this, and insisted on calling him "Imitation Foreign Devil" and "Traitor in Foreign Pay." As soon as Ah Q saw him he would start cursing under his breath. What Ah Q despised and detested most in him was his false pigtail. When it came to having a false pigtail, a man could scarcely be considered human; and the

fact that his wife had not attempted to jump into the well a fourth time showed that she was not a good woman either. (23-4)

The reason why Ah Q cared about Zhou not having a queue was because that was the only thing that Ah Q had and Zhou did not. Similarly the queue represents the decay of imperial China. One of the most significant instances for this representation is when Ah Q wants to join the revolution:

The front gate of the Qians house happened to be open, and Ah Q crept timidly in. [...]Ah Q tiptoed inside and stood behind Zhao Pai-yen, wanting to utter a greeting, but not knowing what to say. Obviously he could not call the man "Imitation Foreign Devil," and neither "Foreigner" nor "Revolutionary" seemed suitable. Perhaps the best form of address would be "Mr. Foreigner."

But Mr. Foreigner had not seen him, because with eyes raised he was saying with great animation: [...] "Er—er—" Ah Q waited for him to pause, and then screwed up his courage to speak. But for some reason or other he still did not call him Mr. Foreigner.

The four men who had been listening gave a start and turned to stare at Ah Q. Mr. Foreigner too caught sight of him for the first time.

"What?"

"I . . ."

"Clear out!"

"I want to join. . . ."

"Get out!" said Mr. Foreigner, lifting the "mourner's stick."

Then Zhao Pai-yen and the others shouted, "Mr. Qian tells you to get out, don't you hear!"

Ah Q put up his hands to protect his head, and without knowing what he was doing fled through the gate. All his ambition, aims, hope and future had been blasted at one stroke.[...] Never before had he felt so flat. Even coiling his pigtail on his head now struck him as pointless and ridiculous.

(71-3)

As we can see in the above lines that Ah Q goes to the Qians' house when he wants to join the revolution but gets denied by the Bogus Foreign Devil and the thought of having a queue now seems to him pointless and ridiculous. Ah Q letting his queue down shows his rejection by the revolutionaries and the downfall of the 20th century Qing dynasty.

Ah Q reflects the slavish mentality of the late Qing dynasty as well as the personality trait of many Chinese people of the early twentieth century. Like the late Qings and the most Chinese of that period, Ah Q has an attitude of cowering to those who are stronger and bullying those who are weaker. For example:

Just then, however, a small nun from the Convent of Quiet Self-improvement came walking towards him. The sight of a nun always made Ah Q swear; how much more so, then, after these humiliations? When he recalled what had happened, all his anger revived.

"So all my bad luck today was because I had to see you!" he thought to himself.

He went up to her and spat noisily. "Ugh! . . . Pah!"

The small nun paid not the least attention, but walked on with lowered head. Ah Q went up to her and shot out a hand to rub her newly shaved scalp, then laughing stupidly said, "Baldhead! Go back quickly, your monk is waiting for you. . . ."

"Who are you pawing? . . ." demanded the nun, blushing crimson as she began to hurry away.

The men in the wine shop roared with laughter. Seeing that his feat was admired, Ah Q began to feel elated.

"If the monk paws you, why can't I?" said he, pinching her cheek.

Again the men in the wine shop roared with laughter. Ah Q felt even more pleased, and in order to satisfy those who were expressing approval, he pinched her hard again before letting her go.

During this encounter he had already forgotten Whiskers Wang and the Imitation Foreign Devil, as if all the day's bad luck had been avenged.

And, strange to relate, even more relaxed than after the beating, he felt light and buoyant as if ready to float into the air.

"Ah Q, may you die sonless!" sounded the little nun's voice tearfully in the distance.

Ah Q roared with delighted laughter. (25-6)

These lines clearly portray the slavish mentality of Ah Q. After he gets beaten up by the Bogus Foreign Devil, he then goes to the nun who is nearby. He runs away to save himself from the hitting of the Bogus Foreign Devil who is stronger and more powerful than him whereas as he finds a weaker nun on his way, he starts hurting her without any

delay. In the final chapter, the judge who sentences Ah Q to his execution blames his downfall for having this type of mentality. This slavish mentality is a personality trait that many Chinese people had during that time period. Ah Q even goes as far as hitting himself to ensure that he will win the "psychological victory".

This is Ah Q's signature act of convincing himself that he has won, though really he has lost. Ah Q consistently tries to preserve a sense of self-respect through self-deception. He imagines he has won the battle, but literally he is defeated. This was the same attitude of the late Qing dynasty. Although Western Imperialism and the revolution were taking over China, the Qings still felt like they were winning psychologically. These means of winning psychologically reflect the traits of Ah Q as a peasant.

The protagonist Ah Q can also be allegorized as a representative of China's large urban masses. Anti-imperialism, a major concern and one of the major goals of the revolution during the time, was pushed aside and the domestic objectives became the focus. The cultural anxiety that resulted from a cross-cultural perspective was used to address domestic social issues. Lu Shun dramatizes the Chinese cultural efforts to achieve incapability and modernity of revolution, asking what kind of revolution the Ah Q mentality is capable of.

The True Story of Ah Q clearly exposés Lu Xun's disappointment with the ineffectiveness of the 1911 revolution and the constant change of the Chinese government. It allegorizes the reoccurring theme of social realism that is to reflect the socio-political-cultural and economic realities of society so as to bring the revolutionary changes in society. Lu Shun uses social realism as a means to refigure Ah Q in the context of Chinese Cultural Revolution. It exposes the large-scale problems of Chinese

society through somewhat fictional characters. Under the veil of such picture of the social reality, there is an obvious existence of Lu Shun's revolutionary spirit in the text.

Conflict and Socio-Historical Situation in *The True Story of Ah Q*

The text, *The True Story of Ah Q* truly presents the real socio historical situation of the late Qings' China. It acutely points out the failing and the weaknesses of the 1911 Chinese Revolution from the critical perspective too. The writer presents his dissatisfaction about the revolution which could not fulfill the promises of the poor people like Ah Q. It just appeared and went over with the superficial changes of the government. It simply substituted the Qing dynasty with the Republican system without any socio-cultural and economic changes. The social diseases as represented by conservatism, complacency, superstition and obsession to dynamism remained as it was. Thus it is a socio-historical document of the 1911 Revolution and the period around it:

The people of Weichuang became more reassured every day. From the news that was brought they knew that, although the revolutionaries had entered the town, their coming had not made a great deal of difference. The magistrate was still the highest official, it was only his title that had changed; and the successful provincial candidate also had some post—the Weichuang villagers could not remember these names clearly—some kind of official post; while the head of the military was still the same old captain. The only cause for alarm was that, the day after their arrival, some bad revolutionaries made trouble by cutting off people's pigtails. It was said that the boatman "Seven Pounder" from the next village had fallen into their clutches, and that he no longer looked presentable. Still, the

danger of this was not great, because the Weichuang villagers seldom went to town to begin with, and those who had been considering a trip to town at once changed their minds in order to avoid this risk. Ah Q had been thinking of going to town to look up his old friends, but as soon as he heard the news he became resigned and gave up the idea. (67-8)

As a true revolutionary realist, Lu Shun examines the social tendencies through the actions of realistic characters. He uses the unfortunates of the abnormal society as his themes. In *The True Story of Ah Q* he aims to expose the social diseases and draw attention to them so that they might be cured. He wants to reveal the tough-mindedness of the nineteenth century Chinese people that prevented social progress in China. Under the portrayal of the silent soul of the Chinese countrymen, Lu Shun in *The True Story of Ah Q* underlies the theme of the revolutionary spirit that strives for the socio politico cultural changes of the Chinese society.

Lu Shun in *The True Story of Ah Q* most significantly brings out the socio-politico-cultural and economic realities of his society where the people are divided into several hierarchies basically categorized under two different hostile classes-bourgeois and proletariats. Lu Shun, as a great realist, is well aware about the socio politico-cultural and economic reality of society in which he is living. He shapes these realities with his creative faculty into the form of literature. So his prime role here is to make the socio-politico-cultural and economic realities reflected in his writing as what true Marxists claim.

Lu Shun's realism mixed with the revolutionary spirit undoubtedly crowned him with the literary greatness. His realistic writing as a social criticism well captured the real

situation of the Chinese society. The various problems he raised through his either literary or critical writing do have a close affinity with the socio-politico-cultural and economic situations of the then China he was living. As a true social realist, in *The True Story of Ah Q* he tries to address the real socio-politico-cultural and economic situations with a revolutionary optimism of the change. *The True Story of Ah Q* is certainly a socio-politico-cultural and economic revolutionary document created with his masterful creativity so as to bring a revolutionary change in the conservative and complacent Chinese society of the time he was living. This text gets born in society, touches the various aspects of society and likewise finally strives for bringing the revolutionary changes in the society.

As The True Story of Ah Q portrays the socio-politico-cultural and economic realities; it clearly reveals the class conflict, rebellion and the socio historical situation. We can have a distinct visualization of the social conflict among the different classes of the people as a consequence of the unequal distribution of the property. The people are not equal in terms of socio economic status. This ultimately leads to the formation of the two sets of characters representing the two distinct classes-the bourgeoisies and the proletariats.

Lu Shun, as a great Marxist literary figure and socio-politico-cultural critic, points out the socio- cultural failings of his people. Undoubtedly he takes the Marxist stand in his representation of the socio-politico-cultural and economic situation. His stand is purely Marxist although he has depicted the miseries and hardships of the poor in *The True Story of Ah Q*. He has shown the poor and miserable lives under the feudal capitalist system in the Chinese society who are also haunted by the foreign aggression. He has

expressed his deep sympathy upon the poor, like his protagonist Ah Q. Through Ah Q he has tried to show how the poor like Ah Q are mistreated by the capitalists in a capitalist society. Under such portrayal he also underlies his sense of despise towards the feudal capitalists and foreign imperialists. His depiction of the weaknesses and failings of the poor is to take their sides, the sides of the oppressed though indirectly.

He expresses his hatred towards the reactionaries and feudal capitalists which indirectly implies his true service to the proletariats' interests. Under the portrayal of the social contradiction he has clearly created two different types of characters that represent the two different socio-economic classes of society. His characters as Ah Q, young D, Whiskers Wang, and Amah Wu are of the one type, the proletariats who work for the feudal capitalist and reactionaries. The characters of the other type as represented by the Zhaos, the Qians, the Provincial County Candidate possess immense means of production and are the owners-the bourgeoisie who always ail and exploit the poor working class people. Only these people have the accessibility of the property. They run not only society but also the lives of the poor according to their will. Only these are the people who enjoy the materialistic luxury on the basis of their higher economic status. Their economic status is very good. They employ the poor and exploit their labor. What they want is just the labor of the poor and the benefit their work produces. They commodify the poor people.

As the consciousness is determined by the socio- economic situation of society, these people behave in a capitalist way which is always to exploit the poor. Mr. Zhao and Bogus foreign Devil always haunt Ah Q. Without any wrongdoing he is thrashed and unnecessarily fined. As a vagabond laborer he works in the households of the feudal

capitalists just to avoid starvation. Like Ah Q, Whiskers Wang, Young D and Amah Wu also have very miserable lives as the lower class people. These all people suffer starvation and wander here and there just to keep their body and soul together.

Ah Q wanders from the village to the town in search of work. He desires for the respectable socio economic status in his society. So he works hard but it never makes him able to raise his socio-economic status. He is well aware of the fact that it is the only money that measures his status but knowingly he becomes a failure. Eventually he realizes that it is the revolution which will give him his long lost dream of becoming respectable in his society. So he plans of joining revolutionaries. He plans of fighting against the feudal capitalists as a revolutionary. But it is the same capitalist and reactionary social system that bars him from being a revolutionary and he is accused of being involved in robbery. Ultimately he is led to the execution by the false revolutionist and reactionaries.

No doubt Lu Shun has attempted to expose the socio-politico cultural and economic situation of the Chinese society of his time which was haunted by the superstition, complacency and conservatism. Besides he is to depict the class conflict and the class contradiction of his society. He exposes his readers how the feudal capitalists of his time would ail and torture the poor. The capitalists as the Zhaos, Mr. Qian, Bogus Foreign Devil and the Provincial County Candidate have a strong control over all the means of production. They always want the poor to be submissive and move according to their will. They always desire for the sweat and blood of the poor like Ah Q. But on the other hand the poor like Ah Q have a very pitiable living condition. He has neither a

house to live in nor a family to share his problems. He is alienated from the family relation and sentiments due to capitalism.

The influence of capitalism is so strong that wherever he goes he is crippled by it. Ah Q represents all the poor of his society who have a very unhealthy and unfair relationship with the capitalists as it is merely determined by economic status. It is the poor economic condition of Ah Q that stopped him from schooling, also from having a family and a respectable life. He is one for the thousands of the Chinese poor people that reflect the then situation of China. Lu Shun through his critical and creative faculty has well captured the socio-politico cultural and economic realities of his society that underlies his revolutionary spirit of changes of the Chinese society.

The True Story of Ah Q presents us the real like world of the late Qing Chinese society which is similar in various ways. As Marxists claim about the work of literature, this text is the combination of Lu Shun's subjective creativity and the objective selection of the events. As a believer of art as a social phenomenon of the times, Lu Shun opposes the one to one correspondence and photographic representation of society in art. But he does not undermine the aesthetic pleasure that art creates.

Lu shun is really capable of reflecting the socio-politico-cultural and economic reality of his society in his *The True Story of Ah Q* with the presentation of the totality of society which refers to the presentation of the completeness of the reality. He has analyzed the classes, class conflicts and class contradiction through his subjectivity mixed with objectivity. He has created the characters of the different classes and has mixed them with their relations to their respective work. His representation of the reality of society is not exact or photographic but it is similar to the different aspects of the

social reality in several ways. Thus, the world Lu Shun has created through *The True Story of Ah Q* presents the objective reality and the dialectical totality of social reality rather than the one-to-one correspondence to the reality outside.

Any work of art is the product of the imaginative and creative power of the artist but its fundamental source is the reality from which the artist picks up his subject and gives it a suitable shape. So literature too is a representation of reality with the subjectivity of the writer. It includes both the objective reality and the subjective mind of the writer. As a creative creature, the writer depicts the social reality with the help of his imaginative creativity of mind. It further leads to the non-photographic presentation of outward reality of society. As a means of an aesthetic pleasure, any work of art focuses on its coherent threads of words, situation, and sequence of events too and it is a fundamental structure of art. Lu Shun as an excellent literary technician and Marxist artist focuses on the presentation of dialectical totality in his work. He has confined the socio-political-cultural and economic reality of the Chinese society of the late Qing period in the literary form very well. The world created by his *The True Story of Ah Q* is no doubt non photographic to the reality outside of society rather its situation is life-like. It depicts the life like situation of the Chinese society with a creation of a good interaction between objective factors of the social situation and the writer's creative power.

Lu Shun's creation of two different types of characters represents the two distinct classes existed in his society. The Zhaos, Mr. Qian, Imitation Foreign Devil, the successful County Candidate, the Provincial County Candidate represent the feudal capitalists- the upper class people of that society whereas Ah Q, Amah Wu, Young D,

Whiskers Wang represent the poor working class people- the lower class people of that society.

Ah Q, Amah Wu, Young D, Whiskers Wang have very poor and miserable lives. They have the questions of their existence. These people wander from houses to houses in search of work. They meet exploitation and suppression wherever they go and whatever they do. Their overall situation may not be exactly the same as the people were facing in their real life but no doubt this reality is similar to the situation of numbers of working people in the society.

On the other hand, he presents the characters such as the Zhaos, Mr. Qian, the Imitation Foreign Devil, the Successful County Candidate, the Provincial County Candidate represent the feudal capitalists so as to reflect the bourgeoisie oppression, exploitation, suppression and ideologies. These characters represent the capitalist class of people. Lu Shun presents them with a certain kind of behaviors, position and ideologies to reflect the quality of bourgeois.

Thus, Lu Shun creates such characters so as to represent the socio- historical reality of his society and on the other hand fits them into a coherent pattern that further leads to the creation of a good work social realism.

IV. Conclusion

The True Story of Ah Q is undoubtedly a powerful work of social realism. The phrase social realism basically implies the reflection of the socio-politico-cultural and economic reality of any existing society. It is to depict the basic or underlying forces as the manifestations of the outward reality through any work of art. Believing dynamism as a basic feature of clashing of social forces, the work of social realism carries the theme of revolutionary spirit and the positive social changes for the betterment of the whole society.

In *The True Story of Ah Q*, Lu Shun basically examines the socio-politico-cultural and economic reality along with the true depiction of class conflicts and class contradictions that underlied the early twentieth century Chinese society. The text reflects the real lives and the worlds of the common people who are really miserable as a result of feudal capitalism and foreign imperialism. Lu Shun presents the lives and the social worlds as how they seem to the common reader with the true and real sense. He achieves this effect with the use of common places, very simple language with true sounding story and life like characters. The characters with mixed motives rooted in a social class, operating in a well developed social structure, interacting with many other characters and undergoing the convincing day to day experiences are the complete representation of reality. Lu Shun presents different characters in terms of socio-political and economic relations who can be classified as heroes or villains, masters or victims. However, the protagonist is often solitary and relatively isolated from a social context. The position of Ah Q who represents the lower class people is solitary in most of the instances and he is also relatively isolated from a socio-political and economic context.

This short novel takes its name from the protagonist character, Ah Q, who represents the whole lower class Chinese people. The whole story revolves around his life and the world he is living. Lu Shun exposes the then existed bitter exploitation upon the common Chinese, aggression of the foreign imperialists and also the conservatism and complacency of the Chinese public through a representative lower class character, Ah Q. He also points out the weaknesses of the Chinese culture as a stumbling block for the progress and prosperity. Similarly, on the one hand we can distinctly observe his sharp criticism and deep hatred towards the reactionaries and on the other hand he expresses his deep sympathy towards the oppressed down trodden people.

Lu Shun, as a great social critic, exposes the weaknesses and the ill effects of the feudal capitalist system and imperialism. He shows how there exist the fragmentation, disharmony and alienation of an individual in a capitalist society. Ah Q had to forget all about his kinship with the Zhaos because the human relations were merely determined by economic status in a feudal capitalist society. He had to live alone in the Tutelary God's Temple. He wanted a wife from his heart but it did not become possible for him because of his poverty. The historical condition of society and the reality of class consciousness are singled out as the ideological agenda of works of literature and the major source of their appeal. The protagonist, Ah Q, realizes the significance of consciousness, though in the end. He takes it as an ultimate tool of liberation of the poor. In spite of being very poor he wants to join the revolutionary groups so that he can rise a little higher but he fails. It is because capitalism in which an individual fails if he is alone. We can not find harmony and beauty in a bourgeoisie society as there only exist fragmentation and high exploitation upon one individual by another. Ah Q's life story very clearly reflects the

inhumanity of the feudal capitalist system in which all the harmony within man, his every creative expression, is being ruthlessly crushed.

Art as a social phenomenon, concept of art advocates for some formal correspondence between the literary work and "dialectical totality". Since art is a product of society, it needs to bear some social significance. Therefore the success of an artist depends on his touch to reality. No doubt Lu Shun is deeply concerned with the social reality in *The True Story of Ah Q*. The outward reality, for Lu Shun, is prior to ideas in the mind and that the material world is reflected in the mind of man and gets translated into a form of thought. He rejected the photocopied reflection of reality but took literature as a reflection of the knowledge of reality. Knowledge is not a matter of making one to one correspondence between things in the world outside and ideas in the head. *The True Story of Ah Q* follows the concept of the dialectical totality of the reality in the external world with all parts found in movements and contradictions.

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