

Aspirations and Frustrations due to Social Hierarchies in 400 Days

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Abstract

The present study examines the novel 400 Days from the perspective of Marxism. The class system, social status, and power are highlighted in this novel. Chetan Baghat explores the connection between the power of social status and society. He shows how characters from the elite class and the highest caste use characters from the lower caste for their purposes, like the character of Alia Arora the female protagonist of the story. Her character undergoes a significant transformation in the novel. In the beginning, she is portrayed as a naive and sheltered individual. However, as the story progresses, she faces various obstacles, challenges, and suppression of society that push her to grow and become stronger. There is a significant transition in her character from lower class to upper class after marrying Manish Arora. Discrimination and otherization of the society based on her caste and economic background destroy her children's lives as well. Later she approaches Keshav Rajput, a middle-class boy who works in a detective agency. Alia wants his help to find her kidnapped daughter Siya. He also highlights how Indian society looks down upon people from the lower caste or the middle class and exploits them based on the class system. Like Alia herself has been exploited by society, before her marriage she has been insulted by Manish's family, however as Manish's wife, her character presents her power of victim in this story. Since the class system and social status are serious issues in India, the purpose of this study is to understand social status and its impacts on Indian society. It is also to investigate the connection between society and literature through the lives of different characters and their influence on other people.

Keywords: Exploitation, Influence, Inequality, Opportunities, Power.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

"Everywhere he looked, he saw divisions. Between the rich and the poor. Between the powerful and the powerless. Between the educated and the ignorant" (Perner, 2010, pp. 1). According to Kelvin, Von Essen, and Ranehill, social status is "the honor or prestige attached to one's position in society" (Essen, 2013, p. 1,3). Similarly, according to Dubois and Ordabayeva, "Social status is the position or rank of an individual or group within a social hierarchy. This hierarchy is often based on various factors such as wealth, occupation, education, ancestry, and other markers of prestige or power" (Dubois, 2015, pp. 1). "We were just a bunch of kids who had no idea that one day our lives would be defined by our birth, our caste, our religion. Especially Indian women who can face the world in their stride." (Chandra, 2022, pp. 3). Social status is significant in shaping social hierarchies, inequality, and power distribution within a community. It is a social structure that categorizes individuals into different castes based on their birth occupation and social status. This system has influenced various aspects of society, including marriage, occupation, and social interactions. cultural traditions, religious practices, and caste systems, all of which significantly impact social hierarchies.

Literature and social status are closely related to each other. This relation influences various aspects of life such as access to resources, opportunities, and social connections. social status can impact how humans are perceived and treated, as well as their divisions in their communities. This can also affect relationships, decision-making, and overall well-being of people. Literature is the reflection of society; therefore, it is considered as the mirror of society. Literature explores themes related to social status, such as class struggle, upward mobility, discrimination, and privilege. By using narratives and characters authors shed light on the experiences of individuals from various social levels. Literature can confront social norms by presenting alternative perspectives for social change. Similarly, Chetan Baghat uses his writings to challenge social structures. A good example is the character of Alia challenging the social structure by making forbidden love with the detector. Moreover, she is the victim of wealth and caste here non-conformity is the way she stands against it and overcomes it.

In his writings, he addresses social issues that are common in contemporary Indian society. His novels touch upon topics such as societal expectations, cultural clashes, and the struggles of the middle class. His famous novels are *One Indian Girl*, *The Girl in Room 105*, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*. He focuses on youth and urban India, the struggles of youth in the modern age, and the mindset, and response toward societal norms and values. It shows his own life experiences living in Indian society. Growing up in India and experiencing its culture has shaped Bhagat's understanding of society, family values, and traditions. In this novel, his characters and settings reflect this cultural backdrop and various aspects of Indian life.

In *400 Days*, Chetan Bhagat sheds light on the social and cultural issues prevalent in contemporary Indian society. He is famous for exploring various themes related to modern Indian society, including love, relationships, social issues, cultural clashes aspirations, and challenges faced by young people in India. The caste system, which is the traditional class system in India, creates complexity in society. In this study, we will explore the theme of the class system, power of social status, and Caste system, and their impacts on characters in the novel *400 Days*. Suppression and exploitation that comes with wealth and power are highlighted through Alia's character. The hypocrisy of religion is another matter connected to social status and, the use of religious beliefs to gain social acceptance, is highlighted through Pandit's character. Religion plays a central role in shaping social norms and values in South Asian societies. Religious beliefs and practices often dictate social roles and behaviors, influencing interactions and relationships.

This story is about a mysterious kidnapping case of Syia, a thirteen-year-old girl. This character is the reflection of the young generation or a millennial culture and society and its disadvantages. A generation who has the familiarity with Internet and social media. In this story, there is a hidden root

of problems for all the complexities of society. That root is social status based on caste and class system. It is worse if a female is a victim, Alia Arora's mother of Syia, and wife of wealthy husband Manish Aroa. She belongs to the lower class and caste on the other hand Manish belongs to a wealthy family and the highest caste, he falls in love with his model Alia, and they struggle a lot to get married. She has been exploited in her marital life. In this story another important factor is power manipulation, Alia manipulates Keshav during the trial and has an illicit relationship with him, she has been rejected by her poverty, and she does the same with Keshav rejecting him based on his poverty (Chrisman, 2015, pp. 15).

This study is the analysis of the novel through the lens of Marxism, it is a social, political, and economic theory developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th century. It provides a scheme for understanding society, and economics, and also focuses on class struggle and the power struggle. According to Agrawal and Sinha, in this theory, society is divided into two different parts based on wealth, occupation, and social status. Those in higher social positions have more power and influence, while those in lower positions face disadvantages and limited opportunities. It provides a lens to analyze social and caste systems in South Asia, particularly in countries like India where the caste system is deeply rooted. Marxism interprets society through the lens of class struggle, highlighting the exploitation of the middle class by the upper class. In this story, the character of Alia is the victim of power, the one from the lower class is suppressed by society. The mother of Manish creates problems for Alia and does not accept her as a part of Manish's family. The character of Alia is both a power victim and a power manipulator. Later in this story, she victimizes Keshav, she chooses Manish over her love for Keshav (Agrawal and Sinha, 2003, pp.1).

400 Days, is a novel that primarily explores themes of love, relationships, and personal growth against the backdrop of contemporary Indian society. While Marxism might not be a central theme in the novel, there are connections between Marxist theory and the main themes of the story. The Marxist theory focuses on the struggles of the lower class against upper-class exploitation and oppression. In 400 Days, there are some of the characters and their interactions could be analyzed through Marxism to examine issues such as class disparity, economic inequality, and effects on personal relations (Kurupati and Nagarjuna, PP. 18).

For example, the character Keshav with a weak socioeconomic background could reflect inequalities within Indian society, representing the working class or marginalized communities, while others may symbolize the elite or privileged classes. Like Manish and his family, Pandit and later in this story, Alia represents the elite class. The characters of Alia, Keshav, and Pandith may not be directly related to Marxist principles, but their interactions and experiences can be examined through the lens of social status and power dynamics. Alia's experiences of privilege or marginalization could shed light on how social status influences individual agency and opportunities. Keshav's character examines economic struggles and aspirations for upward mobility. His efforts to improve his circumstances and challenge existing power structures may reflect elements of class consciousness and resistance. Pandith's character can be analyzed in terms of social status and power dynamics. Depending on his position within the social hierarchy, Pandith may use power over other characters and shape their experiences. His interactions with characters from different social backgrounds could reveal how social status influences relationships and opportunities (Chakravarti, 1993, pp. 583).

1.2. Thesis Statement

This study aims to explore social dynamics, caste, and class systems, and frustrations caused by these aspects in the social fabric, by analyzing the experiences and interactions of the characters within the novel 400 Days, using Karl Marx's theory of Marxism.

1.3. Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of this research;

1. To explore the intertwining dynamics between social status, interpersonal relationships, and decision-making processes within social interactions in 400 Days.
2. To explore how societal norms and power dynamics shaped by social status influence strategies for promoting social mobility and reducing inequalities in 400 Days.

1.4. Research Questions

The following are the questions of this research

1. How does social status influence the characters' personal growth and development, relations, and decisions throughout the story in 400 Days?
2. How do social norms and power dynamics shaped by differences in social status influence strategies for social mobility and reducing inequalities?

1.5. Significance of the study

This study aims to provide an understanding of the connections between social status, interpersonal relationships, decision-making processes, social norms, power dynamics, social mobility, and inequality in 400 Days. By looking into how social status influences characters' growth, relationships, and choices. This research can unveil the behavioral impacts of social hierarchies through the lens of Marxism.

2. Literature review

The concept of Marxism is first used by Karl Marx in his book "Communist Manifesto" (Hurley, 1948, pp.76). Karl Marx was a German philosopher, economist, and revolutionary sociologist. He was one of the prominent figures in the 19th century. He is famous for his contributions to different fields like philosophy, economics, and political theory. He is best known for his works on capitalism and communism. He is the one who is known for class division in society, working class (Proletariat) and business class (Bourgeoisie). "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains" (Hurley, 1948, pp. 76). According to him, the upper class is using the working class. In this book, the main philosophy that has been discussed by Karl Marx with the contribution of his friend Friedrich Engels, is the class struggle. According to him, there is a constant struggle between the working class and business owners. His philosophy is that the working class should unite and take over the means of production and create a society that follows the rule of equality and shares everything equally. The theory of the Communists may be summed up in a single sentence: Abolition of private property" (Hurley 76). He also talked about historical materialism, that societies have been made throughout history because of the conflicts between the upper and working classes. The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Hurley, 1948, pp. 76). Marx's foundational ideas about class struggle and the critique of capitalist society are the groundwork for a broader application of Marxist theory beyond economics and politics. Later scholars began to explore how Marxist principles could be applied to various cultural and intellectual fields. This exploration extended to literature, where this theory provides a new lens on how literature reflects the socio-economic structure of the time. Raymond Williams, a key figure in this development, advanced Marxist theory's application to literature and culture.

In his book *Marxism and Literature* (Williams, 1977, pp. 32), the title of the book is self-explanatory the relation between Marxism and literature is explained. According to this book, Marxism is a big umbrella term focusing on social, economic, and political analysis. On the other hand, literature is a body of work and artistic expression. Marxism provides a framework for understanding society, history, and power dynamics while literature offers a platform for creative expression, storytelling, and reflection on human experiences. Both Marxism and Literature established bodies of knowledge. Marxist literary criticism examines how literature can challenge social status, critique capitalist society, and advocate for changes. It examines how literary works reflect power dynamics, class struggles, and economic

inequalities. It also helps to understand culture and ideological dimensions in society. According to this book Marxism and literature are two different poles but after study and experiments the author has found the relation between Marxism and so many other fields, The study first started from aspects like language, cultural ideology, and literature later with history. As a result of the study done by Raymond Williams intricate relationship between culture and Marxism, relation with language. According to William culture is not only the reflection of economic relations but it also a site where dominant ideologies are reproduced. William highlights the role of literature in challenging and reflecting power structure. Spreading the roots of Marxism from literature to psychology Kraus provides a psychological perspective on how these power structure or social class influences cognition and behavior. However, the similarity between these two studies is that both are related to humans' real experiences (Williams, 1977, pp. 32).

In the article "The Social Ladder: A Rank-based Perspective on Social Class" (Kraus et al. 2013, p. 81). Michael examines "how class is signaled in interactions, influences social cognition and health, is shaped by global economic inequality trends, and changes across the life course." (Kraus et al. 2013, p. 81). According to this statement, social class can be signaled in interactions through language, education level occupation, and lifestyle choices. This helps an individual to place in a high rank and influence others. Moreover, this study says that social class has a relationship with cognition and health. Individuals from different social classes have distinct cognitive attitudes leads to having different experiences that influence how people perceive and interact with each other. Economic status has a great impact on shaping rank in society. more income or wealth, the higher the rank. In this study, the author has used a different perspective to see the wide topic, social status. Using social cognitive theory, the author gives a psychological lens to examine social status. Individuals are socialized into their respective cultures and societies. It involves learning norms, values, and beliefs that influence cognitive development.

"The most prominent of these perspectives is a cultural perspective on social class" (Kraus et al. 2013, pp. 82). This shows that the most important perspective on social status is culture. Cultural norms and values that are desirable within a society, these norms and values influence how the person should be treated. In conclusion, this study provides a gap in research by working on the cognitive perspective of social status, according to which "perceptions of lower rank at a university can create an extra cognitive burden for lower-class students, which can lead to reduced performance in classrooms and increased alienation from the larger academic community. The influence of lower-class rank perceptions may extend to reduced engagement with professors or administrators and trust in the university" (Kraus et al. 2013, pp. 82).

Kraus's research focuses on the cognitive and social implications of social class. Explaining how one can influence academic performance, social interactions, and psychological burdens. In contrast, Landeghem and Vandeplas's study offers an empirical analysis of happiness about caste status in India, demonstrating how social stratification correlates with overall life satisfaction. Such as in the article "The Relationship between Status and Happiness: Evidence from the Caste System in Rural India" (Van Landeghem and Vandeplas, 2018, pp. 77), Landeghem, and Vandeplas, use a primary source of data collection method gives a lens of comparing social status and happiness to study the caste system in India. "The Indian caste system is now more than 2000 years old, and one's caste is predetermined from birth". It is one of the unsolvable problems of society, previous reviews are the evidence of it. This study helps to understand the relationship between social status and happiness, happiness is a positive emotion of satisfaction.

According to this study, there are three classes in society upper, middle, and lower. the upper class has to be the happiest class among the three classes. Two surveys of households have been done (N=1000 in each) in rural Punjab and Andhra Pradesh. "We find that the castes at the top are more satisfied than the lower and middle castes" (Van Landeghem and Vandeplas, 2018, pp. 77). It says that the higher the

class the more you are satisfied and happy. from the survey of two parts, the results show that the upper class is the most satisfied group. The relationship between the lower class, middle class, and happiness is complex but according to the results in Panjab, it is clear that the middle class is the unhappiest. it is the bridge between the lower and upper; this class does not want to be a part of the lower class and also cannot beat the upper class. This study aims to draw attention to the relationship between human emotions the materialistic world and opportunities that one can have only when a person belongs to the upper class.

Landeghem and Vandeplas highlight the current state of satisfaction and happiness among different caste groups, illustrating that upper-caste individuals generally experience higher levels of contentment. On the other hand, Sharma's work provides a historical perspective on how the caste system has evolved. Sharma's examination of the shifting characteristics of the caste system shows that the rigid boundaries and discriminatory practices of the past have undergone significant changes. This historical context is essential for interpreting the current data on happiness and social status, as it reflects how long-standing societal structures have influenced and continue to shape individual experiences and perceptions of well-being. By understanding the historical evolution and ongoing transformations of the caste system, one can better appreciate how these changes impact contemporary social dynamics and individual happiness in rural India.

In the article "Changing Characteristics of the caste System in India" by (D. A. P. Sharma, 1994, pp. 10). This study helps to understand the caste system and the changes that occurred over time in Indian society. A quantitative methodology has been used to shed light on the history of the caste system in India. According to this study the caste system, exploitation, and discrimination were not the same in the past. One of the objectives of this paper is to clarify the difference between the varna and caste systems. The caste system is the classification of people based on social status. Varna means color, race, tribe, nature, characteristics, quality, and property. It is the difference between them, but it is taken similarly. Another objective of this study is to examine the different stages of the caste system. The word Jati (Caste) originates from the Sanskrit word "Jan" which means "being born or being produced." "It was used for identity. the very low caste or the people with low birth were called "untouchable," which means not even deserve to be touched. Low lifestyle having restrictions on food, consuming leftovers. Few castes were considered pure and respectable. This idea changes with the anti-caste notion in (6th-5th BCE), resistance, and reformation against the caste system. According to it, all humans should be treated equally. Moreover, the movements continued, in the 17 century it was the first time the low caste started writing and speaking fearlessly about equality and their rights. According to this study, the new generation is not interested in the caste system.

The previous study of Sharma about changing characteristics in India. This helps to understand the gap between history and modernity in the area of the caste system. In particular, the examination of novels like Chetan Bhagat's 400 Days (Kurupati and Nagarjuna 18), reveals how modern literature mirrors and critiques ongoing social changes, including those related to caste, societal expectations, and the impact of technology. In the article "Cultural Reflections and Historical Echoes: Literature's Role in Shaping Social Consciousness": An analysis of novels by Paulo Coelho and Chetan Baghat, 400 Days is one of the centers to focus. The focus of this study is sociocultural themes, including male-dominated society, social pressure, and expectations. The significance of this paper is to highlight the role of literature in shaping social consciousness.

This paper shows the relationship between literature and social norms. It provides a view to understand human experiences and social changes. The author of this article sheds light on contemporary novels to explain how contemporary literature is the mirror of society. By giving a reference to "The Function of Criticism" and "Marxism and Literature," written by Eagleton and Williams (Eagleton, 2006, p. 6). According to (Eagleton, 2006, pp. 6), literature is not only a mirror of society but also brings change. In this paper, the authors (Kurupati and Nagarjuna 18) have given a lens to examine one of Chetan

Baghat's novels 400 Days from the perspectives of sociocultural, the role of literature in shaping society and also social expectations. In this novel with the help of a child missing case, Baghat highlights the social problems like the impact of the digital world or technology on relationships. Parents struggle in this modern world. This novel reflects contemporary Indian society where there is a clash between traditional values and modernity (Eagleton, 2006, pp. 6).

Similar to Bhagat, Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* (Seftina, 2023, pp. 23), also focuses on contemporary issues related to caste base exploitation and socioeconomic disparities in Indian society. In the article "Human Exploitation in Aravind Adiga's Novel *The White Tiger*" (Seftina, 2023, pp. 23), the author highlights exploitation based on the caste system in Indian society. There are two main problems of this study one is the exploitation based on the caste system, and the second is challenging the old notion of society "rich are getting richer, poor are getting poorer". With the help of the main character of the novel, it is highlighted how to fight against poverty. It shows how a character from a lower caste can become a rich person. To analyze the character this study uses a psychological approach. Using the theory of psychology and the research library method, the author has highlighted the division of human groups into four different castes with the rank of power, wealth, religion, and historical background of the group. This division influences some social conditions including discrimination, poverty, health issues, and low salaries. The main purpose of this article is to draw attention to the serious problem in Indian society that all human beings are the same and deserve equal human rights through the lens of human psychology.

According to (Mishra et al. 2009, pp. 53), the caste system in India is the result of the Mughal emperor and colonialism. When the society was divided based on master-slave relations. In conclusion, this study helps to understand the division of caste in Indian society through the lens of psychology.

All the above works are related to the area of my research study, this study will help to understand the theory of the study. Likewise, Soren Mau has used the theory of Marxism in his article "Mute compulsion: A Marxist theory of the economic power of capital" (Mau, 2023, pp. 3).

The theory of Marxism from the perspective of economic power, and also gives a lens to examine from the opposite perspective "mute compulsion". In this article, the author represents a question. "How does capitalism sustain itself over time?", to answer this there are two approaches one is historical materialism in which the economic power of production reaches the point of setting a new society. The second approach is the use of power and violence (Mau, 2023, pp. 3). As Maurejects both ideas "against technological determinism, he holds that social relations, not productive forces, are most fundamental to reproducing capitalism over time; yet he insists also that the preeminent relations in question are not the political and cultural forces of violence and ideology, but the economic power of 'mute compulsion'" (Mau, 2023, pp. 3). The "mute compulsion" in the context of Marxist theory could manifest in various ways. It includes the subtle yet strong influence that capital holds over economic decisions and behaviors. Examples of mute compulsion could be the pressure to prioritize profits over other considerations, the need to constantly expand and grow businesses to compete in the market, and the drive to maximize efficiency and productivity to increase returns on investment. These silent forces shape how businesses operate and how resources are allocated within a capitalist system.

This article is unique because the focus is not a business but on mute compulsion in a contemporary political theory. According to Motta, in contemporary political theory, "mute compulsion" is the minute but powerful influence that certain political structures, ideologies, or systems apply to individuals and societies. It refers to the unuttered pressures, norms, and expectations that shape political behavior and decision-making without direct commands. This concept focuses on how political forces can impact people's actions and choices without direct communication, influencing the direction of political systems and societies. This article is similar to my study based on a similar theory the difference is my approach to literature instead of politics (Motta, 2022, pp.8).

3. Methodology

The nature of this research is qualitative, this study embraces a textual analysis approach for its methodology through three different areas such as characters, language, and society. In this study, the focus is on two main characters, a critical study of their lives and decisions in the novel *400 Days*. How the main character faces challenges in different fields of life like economics, family, and love relations.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

Marxism is a social, political, and economic theory founded by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. They first published this theory in the book *Communist Manifesto* (Hurley, 1948, pp. 78) and started writing in 1847. This theory analyzes different aspects of society, economics, and politics. It was given by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th century, focusing on struggling between different classes. According to Marxism society is divided into two main classes, the bourgeoisie (the wealthy upper class who own the means of production) and the proletariat (the working class who sell their hard work or labor).

The background of this theory, when Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels developed the theory of Marxism in the mid-19th century, society was dealing with major changes due to the Industrial Revolution. Industrialization gives rise to factories, urbanization, and the working class. The situation of the working class was miserable, with long hours, low wages, and harsh conditions. This period identifies growing social inequalities, class struggles, and an increasing gap between the elite and the working class. The social conditions led Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to develop Marxism (Jones, 1975, pp. 35).

According to Jones, Karl's initial focus was on looking at capitalism and analyzing the social and economic implications of the capitalist system. How rich people earn money using the hard work of regular folk, it leads to big effect on society and the economy (Jones, 1975, pp.35). He was interested in understanding the exploitation of the lower class by the elite class, according to him, this exploitation leads to increased inequalities in the society. He also said that we can achieve a fair society through socialism. Socialism refers to an economic system where means of production are under the control of the whole community reducing income inequality. It is more flexible than communism, it allows private ownership at some level within a domestic framework. Socialism was the second main focus of Karl Marx, understanding the transition from capitalism to socialism by establishing a more just and equal society. Today China, Cuba Laos, north Korea, and Vietnam are the only nations that have communist systems. There is no chance of owning private property. (Jones, 1975, pp. 35). In my research, I aspire to use the theory of Marxism to focus on exploitation and oppression based on the class system and the caste system.

Marxism primarily focuses on economic inequality and struggle between classes, caste system in societies like India is a social hierarchy based on birth, social status, and occupation. I intended to use Marxism theory to analyze the text *400 Days* to highlight exploitation, inequality, and influence faced by characters in the novel. This study will examine how the female protagonist overpowers the opposition and challenges to become strong and empowered. How after competing with the challenges, she uses her power over another character in this story.

Inequality, exploitation, and power based on social status are pervasive in our society. In our society, we see that a person is always judged by class and caste he or she belongs to. Here very few opportunities for a person who belongs to a lower class and caste are considered lower by society. Respect, opportunities, and love relationships always depend on which class or caste you belong to. In this way, females are double marginalized, because society has certain expectations for females. Women are expected to play an important role in the family and society. This includes following cultural traditions and values, education, motherhood, domestic responsibility, appearance, and beauty standards. Challenging these standards, society will not accept a woman. If a female belongs to a lower class she will always be judged by her beauty and appearance. Female objectification is there in our

society, a male from the upper class can have a relationship with a female from the lower class and caste but cannot marry her. Reason is not only gender but also the caste system, the class system, and the background matter.

In the novel 400 Days, Alia the protagonist is portrayed as a woman who is a victim of power and wealth. At the beginning of the story, she is poor and belongs to a lower caste. For society, and the upper class she is just a source of entertainment because of her social status but she could not marry in an elite class. Later in the story, she nonconform all the social expectations and is portrayed as a strong educated woman. Her transition leads her to face challenges in her personal life and interactions. The Climax of this story is to prioritize being wealthy over loving Keshav, whom she has been using to find her missing daughter.

4. Textual analysis

4.1. Impact of the Power of Social Status on Character's Development

Chetan Baghat's novel 400 Days is a compelling analysis of contemporary Indian society, intertwining the concept of the caste and class system into the narrative structure. This story revolves around the main character Alia, she is portrayed as a manifold and complex character, having different facets. She is portrayed as a naive victim of power, rooted deeply in social expectations. However, as the story unfolds Alia's character becomes complicated, it becomes a reflection of contemporary societal challenges. Alia belongs to a lower-middle-class family. Her father passed away, and she lives with her mother in Kochi. She is a seventeen-year-old model. In a fashion show, she is the most beautiful model, and the jewelry company owner falls in love with her. He gifts her a diamond necklace but she refuses to take it as she does not even know the owner. She asks "Who said I could keep this? This must be very expensive. It costs two lakh rupees" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 136). Manish is the owner of Navratna Jewels a diamond company, he belongs to a Panjabi high-class family. Diamond is a symbol of wealth and power, it symbolizes wealth and power because diamonds are often associated with luxury, status, and prosperity. In many cultures, diamonds are considered valuable and rare, symbolizing affluence and influence.

The character of Manish in this novel uses the diamond to represent success, social status, and dominance. He proudly tells the stories of their business as he tries to impress her. Such as Marxism also "focuses on the dynamics of class conflict, the exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie (the capitalist class), and how material wealth and social status are used to maintain and perpetuate class hierarchies" (Engels and Marx, 2004, pp. 10). Diamonds, as symbols of luxury, status, and prosperity, are commodities that are fetishized within capitalist societies. According to Marx, "commodity fetishism occurs when the social relationships involved in production are masked by the perceived value of the commodities themselves" (Engels and Marx, 2004, pp.15). In this case, the diamonds represent not just wealth, but also the social power and dominance that come with being part of the ruling class. Manish's stories about his business and his attempts to impress others with his wealth are examples of how the bourgeoisie uses material possessions to assert their superiority and maintain their position within the social hierarchy. It is very common in contemporary society, for people to try to impress others by flaunting their wealth and material possessions. "This behavior is very common nowadays, where an individual may show their wealth through luxury items, like expensive cars, clothes, and a lavish lifestyle" (Solomon, 1983, pp. 1).

Moreover, in relationships, particularly when trying to attract or maintain a partner, people may use their wealth as a tool to impress others, especially women. The display of wealth in relationships can sometimes be used as a means to signal financial stability, generosity, or social status because people think it will enhance their relationship. Manish is doing the same presenting her with a diamond necklace by saying, "It will never look as beautiful in my warehouse as it does around your neck. Please, accept it with my compliments" (Bhagat, 2021, p. 137). He dismisses the real value of a diamond in its

unused state, instead displaying it in public. It also reflects the commodification of relationships in a capitalist society, where personal interactions are often mediated by the exchange of goods.

Additionally, the class and caste system have a long history in India, dating back thousands of years. These systems have been deeply planted in Indian society and have influenced social structures, relationships, and opportunities. This caste system particularly categorizes individuals into groups based on birth, occupation, and social status, leading to discrimination, inequality, and social stratification. "In many societies, the choice of a marriage partner is heavily influenced by considerations of caste, class, religion, and ethnicity, all of which are markers of social status. Marriages within the same social class or caste help to maintain social order by ensuring that wealth, power, and social capital remain within certain groups" (Rahimi and Bose, 2018, pp. 2).

In this novel, the protagonist, Alia is a Rajasthani who belongs to Kochi also known as Cochin, the famous city of India, rich in rituals and traditions. Despite belonging to a rich culture, she has been judged based on her caste. She is Rajasthani and dating thirty years old Panjabi man. Manish is in love with her beauty, just like nowadays every female is always judged by her physical beauty. If she is beautiful, she is acceptable everywhere, but here when Manish forces Alia to meet his mother, his mother says "Wow, you are so beautiful. Kini soni hai" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 1430). She seems beautiful to her, appreciating her beauty in a happy tone. Moreover, his mother asks about her caste and belongings Alia says "Half-Keralite and Half-Rajasthani" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 134). His mother is even okay with that but when it comes to the marriage proposal, she is shocked. Alia says "Mummyji's dining chair creaked as shifted her position. Her elbow hit the bowl of Kadhi. The yellow yogurt-based curry spilled all over the dining table. A rivulet of kadhi flowed towards me and fell on my white shalwar kameez" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 145). It was the reaction of his mother to hearing about marriage.

It is very common to be proud of own caste and class, the high class can date and use middle-class girls but cannot marry them. According to Murdock, the idea that high-class individuals can date middle-class girls but cannot marry them underscores a significant double standard (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 63). Dating, in this context, may be seen as a casual or temporary relationship that does not threaten the social status or caste purity of the higher-class individual. However, marriage is a formal, long-term commitment that often involves the merging of families, wealth, and social standing. Marrying someone from a lower caste or class could be seen as "diluting" the family's status and could lead to social ostracism or loss of prestige. In the context of marriage, this means selecting partners who can either maintain or elevate one's social standing, often leading to the exclusion of those from lower classes or castes.) It hurts their honor to have a middle-class daughter-in-law. Manish's mother has a strong belief about social status and the importance of class and the caste system. In this novel, she thinks that these factors maintain the family's honor and status. This mindset reflects the idea of Marxism, people from the lower class are only for entertainment and take advantage of them. Alia despite being well educated and beautiful model comes from a background that Manish's mother considers inferior and looks down upon. His mother says "Girlfriends-virlfriends when did I stop you and Timmy from having? But what is this? Proposing like this? Offering a two-carat ring?" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 145). She thinks marrying someone from a lower caste or class could ruin the honor, reputation, and other social values of the family. She insults Alia by rejecting her as suitable for a romantic relationship but not for marriage. This reflects exploitation and discrimination, where Alia's worth is judged by her status rather than her qualities.

"Classism refers to the systemic oppression of individuals based on their social class or economic status. Insulting someone because they belong to the middle class often involves demeaning their lifestyle, financial limitations, or social capital. This kind of insult underscores the belief that wealthier individuals are inherently superior, while those with less economic power are viewed as inferior or less capable" (Murdock, 2010, pp. 63). In this novel, Alia, in this part of the story insulted due to her economic status, when Manish's mother says, she is comparing her economic status with Alia, by saying, "Who is she?"

Some small-time model you picked up? So many like her roaming around in Delhi” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 146). The classist behavior of Mummyji toward Alia diminishes her professional status and social standing. The phrase suggests that her work is insignificant and not prestige, thereby placing her in a lower social or economic category. This reflects a classist mentality where individuals are judged and valued based on their social status, profession, and perceived economic worth. Manish tries his best to convince his mother and stands against his mother's classist behavior and the insult of his girlfriend, south Asian son is fighting for his love. when he says, “Mummyji, stop talking like that she is my girlfriend, She's a decorated army officer's daughter, (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 146). Manish mentions all that matters to her. By asserting his girlfriend's respectful family background trying to equalize the power dynamics in the conversation. The mother's disapproval likely stems from her perceived authority over her son's choices, particularly in matters of love and marriage. She prioritizes her status more than her son's happiness.

In Chetan Bhagat's novel 400 Days, the character of Alia experiences significant marginalization and insult based on her class and caste, particularly at the hands of her mother-in-law, Manish's mother. This treatment reflects broader societal prejudices that are deeply established in the values of the upper class, and it plays an important role in shaping Alia's character development throughout the novel. The quote, “She and her mother must have planned to trap you” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 147), summarizes the doubt and contempt of Manish's mother's intentions toward Alia and her family. This statement reveals a common stereotype held by the upper class: that women from lower social and economic backgrounds are scheming and opportunistic, seeking to “trap” wealthier men for financial benefits. “This attitude is rooted in classism and casteism, where the wealthy often think of those from lower classes with suspicion, assuming their intentions are always selfish” (Levinson, 2015, pp. 1). Alia's response, “I could take pointless insults aimed at me. I could not take a word against my mother” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 147) shows her resilience and her strong sense of self-respect, particularly when it comes to defending her family's honor. This response from Alia also marks a turning point in her character development. From naïve to a strong woman who actively resists the unjust treatment of her in-laws. Further Alia says, “Don't insult the poor animals please” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 147). This line is deeply ironic. By asking not to insult “poor animals,” Alia says that even animals, who do not get the best treatment in society, should not be compared to the kind of baseless things. She is not accepting the rude comment by her mother-in-law. Her response supports the argument that transition, facing discrimination leads her to development.

In the development of Alia's character some of the events play a vital role. It starts with the exploitation due to her class and background, and further the influence of status and power dynamics over marriage institutions. When mummyji rejects Alia, Manish and Alia come up with the idea that “Mummyji has someone she believes in more than anyone else. We have to get Pandit Shastri's blessings first” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 150). These lines suggest that Mummyji has strong faith in someone religious and spiritual. In this situation, Pandit Shastri is mentioned whose approval and blessings are important before making any decision. After revealing the pregnancy Manish comes up with the idea that they can ask Pandith (priest) for help, to convince his mother. The Pandit's role in reconciling the situation and facilitating Alia's marriage to Manish highlights the manipulation of religious power to maintain social harmony. Pandit says, “Don't worry Durgaji. Things will be okay. God came in my dreams. He told me everything will be okay.” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 154). These lines show the manipulation of religious beliefs to secure the marriage, further illustrating how those in power (whether economic or spiritual) exploit their positions to maintain control. Pandith tells a lie to Durgaji to help Manish and Alia, Manish offers him money but he refuses to take it and says, “Not at any price” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 152). He refuses because he is the one who puts Alia in trouble by kidnapping her thirteen-year-old daughter, Siya. He helps them on the price of Siya. He uses religion as a cover to help them, he also uses religion as a cover after keeping Siya locked for 400 days. When Siya says,

"Why have you brought me here?"

You don't understand. This is God's will. God instructed me.

You see I had a dream. You are to be my wife. That's my destiny.

I helped your mother get married to your father so you could come into this world. If I was not there who knows, they would abort you" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 324).

By saying that God told me that the baby in Alia's womb is going to be your wife in the future. He abuses her and gets married to her as if he is obeying God's orders. Priests in India are very respectful and hold significant positions for their knowledge and spiritual guidance. Priests are experts in religious practices, traditions, and rituals. They have the power to play with the minds of people just like in this novel priest is abusing his power. He kidnaps Siya, he sexually abuses her. He has power and status so he is using it on the weaker party. Pandith gives the reason that he has not kidnapped her rather it was a message from God.

"After marriage, a troubling aspect of gender discrimination exists in certain societies where the birth of a female child is devalued compared to a male child. The underlying issue stems from deeply ingrained patriarchal values that place higher importance on male offspring, often viewing them as bearers of the family name, potential earners, and caretakers of parents in old age. In contrast, female children may be seen as financial burdens due to cultural practices such as dowry, which can lead to their devaluation. The torture or mistreatment of daughters-in-law for giving birth to female children is a manifestation of these harmful beliefs of gender-based violence" (Krishnaraj, 2016, pp. 42). In this story, after marriage the Alia faces exploitation on the birth of Siya, as her mother-in-law is not happy with her granddaughter. Because she had hoped for a grandson, her reaction is a mix of disappointment and criticism, reflecting traditional gender discrimination. In the hospital when the nurse says it's a beautiful baby girl, mother-in-law says "Hmm, okay. Never mind, koi gal nahi" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 158). This reaction shows the lack of happiness and enthusiasm for the birth of the first child of her daughter-in-law. Alia, however, handles the situation with grace and confidence. Despite her mother-in-law's disapproval, Alia reminds her that this is the great day of her life, which she does not want to ruin. She refuses negativity and focuses on the well-being of Siya. Alia's response highlights the strength and determination to challenge gender discrimination. By saying, "I didn't want anger to seethe through me right after delivering a child" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 158).

Another event of this novel is the approval of exploitation, Alia faces due to her class and background. She is now the daughter-in-law of a wealthy Arora family, the owner of a diamond business, and a part of the elite class. Alia is still not accepted by heart. Whenever something bad happens they think of Alia as the reason behind it. "The business has dropped ninety percent to almost nothing" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 160). This line shows the business instability of the Arora family. The downturn in the business performance showcases major challenges and financial difficulties. The point is, that Alia is considered as a reason behind this loss. The quote that supports this argument is, "You think this cate-eyed bahu wishes well for us?" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 161). According to this line, Alia has an evil eye on this house, and her arrival in the house has bad luck. It is because of her class and caste, that she is considered a bad nazar because she is not from the elite class. This shows the imbalance of power between different classes, as according to Marxism power is the conflict between the bourgeoisie (ruling class) and the proletariat (working class). The daughter-in-law's lower status represents the proletariat, while the in-laws represent the bourgeoisie. The belief that she brings "bad luck" is a form of class oppression, where the ruling class seeks to maintain its dominance by stigmatizing and devaluing the working class. "Let's do a puja at home to get rid of the bad nazar" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 160). In these lines, the mother-in-law is expressing her hate towards Alia and considers her and her daughters as a bit of bad luck for this family and business. This belief is very common in Indian society, that behind every issue and problem, there is a cause of someone or something. Here in this novel, she thinks, her own daughter-

in-law is the cause of bad luck. There are other members too living in this house, so why only Alia and her daughters? It is because, she thinks her background doesn't match to their class, and she doesn't deserve to be a part of the Arora family. She does puja a religious ritual to remove the effects of her evil eye.

All the above discrimination and otherization affect Alia and her daughters. Alia knows the hate of Mummyji for Alia and her daughters. She is bearing every taunt as a good daughter-in-law who never raises her voice for herself. Alia tolerates everything even being called a stroke of bad luck as discussed earlier. But she cannot tolerate it for her daughters, being an educated modern woman, she does not want her kids to be raised in such an environment. It is motherhood that gives her strength to demand a separate place, where she can live in peace and also give a good life to her daughters. Because their mother-in-law shows the same hate to her granddaughters, just because they are responsible for bringing Alia to this home. When Papaji asks, "You taunt her. You are rude to her all the time. In the last nine years, have you ever been genuinely nice to her? Or even to her daughters? They are your granddaughters." (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 161). These lines are the evidence of the argument that Mummyji has a problem with Alia and her daughters. The evidence of Alia's sufferings and exploitation, it also shows the impact of the mother's class over the child. Her hate towards Alia is not hidden and this hate, exploitation, and discrimination she shows towards kids helps Alia to think that Siya must be kidnapped by someone nearer.

Mummyji exploits her granddaughters, when she says, "Why should I be nice to them? The elder one is the reason the reason her mother even entered this house. The two girls she dumped on us, apart from invading our house herself" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 161). These lines show the clear reason for not loving Alia's daughters because Alia was pregnant before marriage, she thinks of her as the reason for Alia's arrival in their life. In this response, Alia feels overwhelmed and trapped by her mother-in-law's exploitation of her and her daughters. She experiences a sense of being controlled by her. This situation may create feelings of powerlessness and frustration for Alia. When she says, "She is doing this to hurt me and show me my place. I feel helpless and alone" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 163). These lines show that Alia is tired of being criticized. She suffers a lot at every stage of her life, she feels helpless and alone because nobody understands her. She experiences a lot in her life and no one supports her. It shows the pain of her suffering. She doesn't want her daughters to suffer, she was a naïve but now it is the life of her kids that why she tries to convince Manish by presenting the puja as a reason. "You bought a flat in the Icon, right? Let's move there" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 160). Alia tolerates everything even being called a stroke of bad luck but she cannot tolerate it for her daughters, being an educated modern woman, she does not want her kids to be raised in such an environment. It is the motherhood that gives her strength to demand a separate place in Icon, where she could live in peace and also give a good life to her daughters.

"In India, society plays a significant role in shaping the lives of individuals, often making life more challenging, especially for women and marginalized communities. This influence is deeply rooted in cultural norms, traditions, and expectations that are difficult to escape or challenge. The societal pressures in India manifest in various forms, from the expectations placed on individuals based on gender roles to the caste system, and the importance of family honor" (Thorat and Newman, 2007, pp. 4121). In this novel, Bhagat also sheds light on the role of society in creating more troubles and making life challenging. It is not only Alia's in-laws, but also society plays a vital role in the exploitation of Alia and her daughters.

The societal norms, expectations, and pressure contribute to the challenges faced by Alia. When she says, "Five years ago. Some neighbors saw Siya and Suhana together. Told my mother-in-law "Suhana is a copy of Manish, but Siya doesn't like him. She filled Manish's head with all this. He started suspecting me as well" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 229). The passage highlights the insidious nature of gossip and how it can act as a catalyst for suspicion and mistrust within families. In this context, the neighbors'

casual observation that Siya doesn't resemble her father, Manish, immediately raises doubts about her paternity. The fact that such a comment is taken seriously enough to cause suspicion highlights the deeply ingrained societal obsession with physical resemblance as a marker of legitimacy and fidelity. This scenario illustrates how neighbors, relatives, and others feel entitled to comment on private matters which can easily impact personal lives. This comment the society creates a rift because it implies that Siya is not Manish's daughter, she might have relation before marriage. For example, "Manish did a DNA test for himself and Siy" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 229). This line shows the influence of that comment leads Manish to suspect Alia, it breaks the trust in their relationship. Manish is in doubt that's why he decided to go for a DNA test of his and Siya. It is a mistrust created by society to make Alia's life more challenging. "Manish didn't just doubt me; he doubted our entire relationship. It wasn't just about Siya anymore; it was about everything we had built together. I felt like I was constantly on trial, having to prove my innocence over and over again" (Bhagat, 2021, pp.231). For Alia, this situation is emotionally and psychologically taxing. She finds herself in a position where she must defend her integrity against unfounded accusations. The social and familial pressures she faces are overwhelming, as they not only challenge her role as a wife but also as a mother. The mere suggestion that her child might not be Manish's brings into question her entire identity within the family structure. This suspicion not only strains her relationship with Manish but also places her in a vulnerable position where she must fight to maintain her dignity and the trust of her loved ones. Applying Marxist theory to the situation described in Chetan Bhagat's "400 Days" involves analyzing the power dynamics, class relations, and ideological structures that contribute to Alia's exploitation and the challenges she faces.

When she finally moved from her in-law's house to her own house in Icon she started her life in peace. It is a great decision she takes for her daughters this decision showcases the transition in her character. "You bought a flat in the Icon, right? Let's move there" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 160). At the beginning of the story, her character is portrayed as a weak woman who is unable to answer her insults. Now she is enough strong to decide to move. Decision-making symbolizes that you are now strong enough to choose a path for yourself. She feels a sense of liberation and relief on moving to her place, she starts to focus on her personal growth and aspirations. She says, "I loved Suhana and Siya spending time with their cousins. This was the only thing I missed about my in-laws' house since we moved to the Icon two years ago" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 20). This line shows that she has no good memories of living with her in-laws, and that's why she missed the only thing playing with her kids with their cousins. Alia comes to Gurugram to her in-law's house to spend some time with family.

It is the time when Pandit Shastri a very trustable man for their family, kidnapped Siya. He is the one who helped Siya's parents get married when Siya was in her mother's womb. He takes advantage of her helplessness because she was pregnant before marriage and Manish's mother was not ready to accept her due to her status and background. Alia feels devastated and heartbroken when she realizes that Siya is missing from her in-law's house. The title of this novel is 400 Days because Siya lived for 400 days in Pandit's grip. "I saw a bad man. He had a knife that he kept on Didi's neck like this, Suhana said, placing her hand sideways on her neck to show the position" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 33). Suhana describes a moment when she saw a man threatening her sister with a knife. She demonstrates the position of the knife on her neck to show how serious the threat was. Siya is missing the condition is worse, when she says, "I would not eat until I found Siya" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 48). In this line, Alia shows her care and love for her daughter as she is willing to forego her basic needs, like eating, in pursuit of finding Siyar. Siya is suffering due to the sin of her mother to be from a lower caste, and not accepted in this family. Even in this situation, everyone judges Siya based on her mother especially Mummyji, who still thinks that she is not kidnapped rather she ran away with someone. "Alia you sure she didn't run off her own?" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 44). This line supports the argument that she is paying for her mother's mistake' Mummyji is questioning the character of her grandchild, who is just a thirteen-year-old girl. Alia stands for her daughter and she thinks, "Will the world stop judging my child and help find her?" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 47). According to her, she is just thirteen years old why would she run off, instead of offering support

and assistance, people are focusing on judging the child, which adds to the character's distress. The discrimination, exploitation, and otherization discussed in all the above study, she faced in this family put her into doubt, that mummyji could do it.

The upper class has pride in wealth and caste is rooted in the notion that social hierarchies and economic status significantly influence individuals' self-perception and behavior. In many societies, wealth often translates into higher social status. This status is not only a "symbol of financial success but also becomes intertwined with personal identity and pride. Individuals in the upper class may exhibit a sense of superiority because their wealth affords them privileges and access to exclusive resources and opportunities" (Sharma, 1994, pp.33). In this novel, 400 Days, Bhagat sheds light on the important theme is showing wealth and class pride to be elite. During the kidnapping case of Siya, Alia feels like nobody is trying to find her daughter. Everybody is busy with their own concerns, when Mummyji says, "The seven crore rupees Shamsher offered. Do you even know what is seven crores?" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 84). These lines portray how mummyji is showing her power of wealth, insulting her, and also looking down upon her. this line emphasizes the overwhelming power of wealth and shows control and influence.

Mummyji is class-conscious that's the reason she could not accept Alia as her daughter-in-law. According to Mummyji, they spent money and also took help from the police, yet they could not find her, which is evidence she ran off with someone. In this response, Alia stands for her daughter, and says, "I could take a million insults but I could not hear anything against my child. I stood up to the level with my mother-in-law. I wagged a finger at her. Not my daughter, mummyji" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 84, 85). These lines show a strong version of Alia's character. To support the argument, of wealth over Siya's findings. The tone in these lines shows the grace and strength in her nature, it also showcases the developed personality of Alia.

To support the statement of Aliya that for her family wealth is more important than any other thing, Manish says, "business needs the money" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 96). This line shows Manish's priority, for him business is more important, and that's why it makes Alia feel he is not trying to find his daughter but worried about his money and making wealth." But you are not helping find Siya" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 96). From this conversation, Alia feels the reputation of the family and the state of business is more important. On the other hand, Alia says, "But where is Siya? I thought I had screamed, but I was barely audible" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 62). highlights the intensity of her emotions, and the pain in her tone for her missing daughter. The care for the wealth and business of other characters makes her feel that it is only she who is suffering for her daughter.

Moreover, she says that when the police learned nothing about this case called it a cold case but Alia never lost hope. She feels that nobody put effort into finding her, she even wants to die and says, that if is gone, nobody will look for Siya. I am the only one still trying to find her" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 103). Alia says this when everyone in the family including the police stops looking for Siya and she keeps on searching. At this stage, she approaches Keshav a detector to help her daughter. The struggles, exploitation, and discrimination due to her class and background lead Alia towards growth, development, and transition from a naïve to a graceful woman. Kar Marx in the theory of Marxism focuses on the struggle between classes. According to him, the upper class exploits the lower class. It supports the argument of this study where Alia has been exploited by her elite in-laws even after becoming part of this family. The thing is that she did not let herself be down, at every stage of her life she stands against it, making her strong and well-defended. All the above analysis is the description of her sufferings due to class and its impact on her daughters' lives and experiences. All the sufferings bring a positive change in her character. and how she makes herself make decisions.

4.2. Impact of the Power of Social Status on Love Relationships

Another focus of this study is to analyze the character of Keshav, focusing on his life journey and

development being a middle-class person. what troubles he faces, and how his class affects his love relationship with Alia.

“Relationships and love are the factors affected by power and social status, in many societies social class can influence how individuals perceive themselves and others, impacting their values, lifestyle, and opportunities. Class differences can sometimes create barriers or challenges in relationships, affecting experiences and societal expectations. These differences could be in income, education, background, and social status” (Rosenthal and Levy, 2010, pp. 21). It is one of the contemporary and complex themes of the novel 400 Days. This study highlights the love relationship between Alia and Keshav. How their social standings influence their interaction, feelings, and connection. The character of Keshav is the representation of resilience, a sense of Purpose, and the ability to control challenges. He is portrayed as a hardworking and ambitious character who faces challenges in his journey and belongs to a middle-class family. “I wanted to be an IPS officer instead of running a tiny detective agency like T was doing at present. As a senior cop, I could solve a lot more crimes and help society. Noble, right? The problem is the tough UPSC exam for civil services doesn't give a game about nobility. Over a million people apply. Among those, a general category student like me has to achieve a top 500 rank if they want an IPS seat. (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 1). These lines represent the struggles of a new generation to become successful in the economic world. The struggle of pursuing a career within the competitive world. In this modern world, man is nothing without money, he has to prove himself successful for the family and society. passing these exams represents a significant step up the social ladder. It offers an opportunity to attain higher social and economic status, improving one's position within the social hierarchy. These lines also show the disconnection between personal and ideal career. Keshav is happy in his detective job, but he is forced by his family to become a successful IPS officer.

This Novel starts with this struggling stage of Keshav to pass this exam and end the burden of expectations of his parents he is carrying. It is what every individual is struggling in contemporary society. Keshav belongs to Rajput and lives in Gurugram with his parents, his best friend Saurabh works in the cyber safe of a computer company and Keshav works in a detective agency. He is not happy with his life because his parents are not happy with his current status. When he says “Let's fix Keshav's package. My parents keep telling me how I should a) get married, b) get a job, c) meet more people, d) close this detective agency business (not that we have much business anyway), e) keep my room clean, f) talk more (when I don't talk to them), g) talk less (when I talk back to them), or whatever else they feel is wrong with me that day. Saurabh, a sell-out, always agrees with my parents. My mother would make kheer or halwa for him, and he'd join the LFK tirade, telling me to get serious about life” (Bhagat 3). These lines are the evidence of torture and stress that a middle-class boy faces in his life. Keshav is feeling the pressure from his family and friend. His parents have a laundry list of expectations for him, and it seems like he's struggling to meet all of them while also managing his aspirations and challenges. “It is very common in South Asian society, to stress academic and career success to achieve financial stability and social status. In this culture, family have high expectations for their children to strive for traditional professions like medical engineering, and law. Societal norms and expectations contribute to the stress experienced by the young generation, starving to meet expectations and be accepted by society. Expectations and the competitive nature of education and jobs are the reasons to increase class consciousness” (Jamim et al. 2022, pp. 113).

Keshav's journey of self-discovery starts when he meets Alia for the first time. To prove that Alia uses Keshav in this story the analysis of their interaction and the outcome of their relationship is critical. In the first meeting with Alia when she says “Aunty told me you are a detective? Tell me about your detective business. What exactly do you do?” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 7). These lines show a normal interaction between them. It portrays that she is curious to know about Keshav and his work. It also shows that she must have some problem that's why she is approaching a detective. On the other hand, Keshav and his parents are thinking about finding a girl for Keshav. Keshav in his first meeting impressed

by the beauty of Alia, a great disappointment for them is when they come to know she is married. "Marriage, ha, what a joke! She would be way beyond you even if she were single. She won't look at you twice" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 10). These lines reveal the influence of social status on perceptions and relationships. The comment underscores how social status can shape, how individuals are viewed and valued. It suggests that someone's social standing can determine their worthiness in romantic contexts. These lines have double interpretations, one that she is beyond because she is alluring and elegant, it also portrays that she belongs to a strong background, she is wealthy from the elite class, which is why she will not marry him even if she is single. It is one of the faults of our society that the marriage institution is influenced by wealth and status. "It is very common in South Asian society, that individuals from the upper class always try to get married within their social circle" (Al-Salim, 2015, pp. 27). As previously studied, according to society Alia cannot marry Manish because he is from the lower class. The same is true here, Keshav cannot marry Alia because of her beauty and high class. that's the reason she is beyond to get.

In the second meeting of Keshav with Alia, she demonstrates her intentions in approaching him. when she says "Someone told me your son is a detective. That's why I approached you, actually" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 15). In this meeting, the relationship between these two characters is a detective-client relationship. Here Alia brings the case of her missing daughter Siya. Nine months ago, she was taken away by someone from her grandmother's house. Alia starts telling every information about this case and everything the police have done to find her daughter. With all the pain she has gone through being a mother of a missing daughter, she concludes her story that the police ended this case calling it a cold case but she is not giving up on searching for her. It is the portrayal of genuine intentions of Alia towards Keshav, she just needs help to find her daughter. When everyone stopped searching for her, Alia as a strong mother still hoped that she could help her daughter. On the other hand, Keshav also does not have any greed for money to take her daughter's case. When he says "She pulled out a wad of 2,000-rupees notes from it. I needed the money. I had no real income or savings. Yet, I could not get myself to take it. Not like this at least" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 18). These lines portray offering and receiving money can symbols of power and control. Alia offering the money likely holds a higher social status or more financial power, which gives them the ability to influence or dominate others. Keshav's refusal to take the money "not like this at least" reflects an awareness of this power imbalance and a desire to maintain some level of autonomy or self-respect, even in the face of financial need.

The purpose of analyzing their interaction is to support the problem statement that the pure intentions of Alia shifted to her manipulative behavior because of her growth and societal pressure. In this part of the study the focus is on the power of social status and its impacts on love relations, The characters of this story Alia and Keshav, their relationship is started, but it is started as a genuine relationship. One of the arguments of this study is that Alia approaches Keshav to find her daughter with genuine positive intentions but when the case progresses, she manipulates Keshav. She shows him her wealth trying to convince him to help her, she knows the weak point of the middle class when she says "How about I give you an advance of one lakh rupees? Or two lakhs?" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 106). This offer of Alia even convinced his mother to take this case. This is the point where middle-class person melts, this is the weak point of this class, it is because of the fear of poverty and being a lower class. Supporting the argument of Alia's manipulation some of her dialogues show that she trying to get Keshav's sympathy by discussing her personal life with Keshav, though he is a detective and she is just a client. She says that her husband has slapped her for looking at Siya, she is showing the careless and unloving father and husband. She is crying in front of him and saying "Manish slapped me" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 125). Moreover, she is showing him her marriage problem to him, when she says "he asked me to choose between him and search, he said, I will divorce you if you keep looking for Siya. Choose now?" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 125). These lines show that she is trying to win Keshav's sympathy by revealing hardships and vulnerabilities. this is one of the themes of this novel; in literature, it is a technique used by characters to emotionally manipulate other characters by telling stories to get their motive or benefits. In these

lines, Alia's dialogue shows, that she is telling a story of her husband proving him not a supportive husband. It is just to trap him, it seems, she did not approach him for searching Siya, she is also using him as emotional support. She is trying to heal the wounds of Siya. On the other hand, Keshav is easily attracted to her when he says "I place my hands on her arm. Please don't cry. You are not alone. I am with you. I will do my best" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 125). These lines portray how Keshav is drawn to Alia when she reveals her struggles, he empathizes with her emotional vulnerability. This attraction shows how individuals from the upper classes sometimes exploit those from the lower class, these class differences lead people to manipulate to use from the lower class for their purposes including emotional support. Marxist theory of class exploitation supports the argument that 'those in power (the bourgeoisie) exploit the labor and resources of the working class (the proletariat). This exploitation isn't just economic but can also be emotional, as the working class often provides support without equitable return'. Likewise, to support the claim that Alia is manipulating Keshav the behavior of Alia how she is treating him differently from other characters shows the exploitation nature of their connection. She is the client but she is not treating him as a detective only, she is relaxed with him, Keshav himself feels this when he says "She gave me a hug" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 128). It shows her informal behavior towards Keshav. Alia is treating him in this way for her gain, and using a gesture of hug for the detective being a client makes the interaction complex. It is confusing their relationship when they meet as clients but in the salon. This meeting takes place to keep the case private but meeting in the salon makes it complex and also confusing for Keshav. When she says "I am going to Maraco Aldany. "Come there? A salon in South Point Mall" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 130). This complex treatment of Alia makes their interaction more Sophisticated. Alia's behavior gives him complicated feelings.

Keshav is obsessed with her beauty but he is trying his best to clear the case. He and his friend reopen the case that has been closed by police calling it a cold case after getting the parcel of Siya's clothes with blood stains to Siya's parents. "He sat next to me, flicked open his switchblade knife, and cut a lock of my hair" (Bhagat 328). In these lines, Aiya says that when everyone was searching for me, Pandit sat next to me cut my hair, and sent it to my parents so that they stopped searching. After Listing the story Keshav takes all the previous data and tries to find some clues by checking the interviews, testimony, and mobile data. In the salon, he shares all the tasks he has done, in response the behavior of Alia is even more triggering in his emotions towards her when she says, "I never even told my mother my marital issues. Didn't want to stress her out. You are the first person I ever shared this with. I feel so much better after talking to you. Thank you.' She came forward and gave me a long, somewhat tight hug before walking to her car" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 166). In these lines Alia is assuring him that he is special and near to her that's why she shares her life issues with him. It is the behavior of Alia towards Keshav and how he is emotionally attracted to her. "This relationship is forbidden because in South Asian society a married woman cannot have a relationship with another man even if it is a formal relationship. It is forbidden because of religious, cultural, and societal norms, a woman is not allowed to have illicit relations" (Sethi, 2002, pp. 1).

In this novel everybody is alerting Keshav that she is married, reminding him he cannot have a relationship with a married woman. His friend says, "Be careful, bhai. Alia is married" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 171). This line means that he is aware of the consequences of having a relationship with a married, moreover a high-class woman. This relation brings destruction for both or any of them. The behavior of Alia attracts Keshav, he falls in love with her, when he thinks about her in the middle of the night, "My eyes went to the tower opposite mine, about twenty meters away. I could identify Alia's apartment, exactly one floor below ours. One of the rooms had its light on. Questions formed in my head again was it her bedroom? Where is she and Manish talking? Were they fighting? Or were they making love?" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 172). These lines are evidence of Keshav's trap, it shows his love and feelings for Alia. Being a detector, he is thinking about his client in the middle of the night indicates that Keshav is now in Alia's control. She is successful in getting his attention and sympathy. It is the behavior of Alia which

makes him feel like this. The conversation between the two of them is evidence of Keshav's confusion about their relationship. He wonders how a client could communicate like this. The unusual conversation from Alia's side is proof of manipulation and influence over him.

"How are your feet? Alia messaged.

This isn't connected to the case, I wanted to tell her" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 174).

All the above study is about the behavior of Alia, and how she treats Keshav, which is a flash of her manipulation. To study their relationship based on social status, a question arises as to whether her intentions are genuine or not. Also, what are the impacts on Keshav how does it lead him towards change and development? In this story Keshav's character is portrayed as a hardworking and ambitious individual; his character development and transformation give the theme of perseverance and self-belief. He is working hard to deal with Siya's case. He is trying every possible way to reach the clue. At the same time, he is preparing for the IPS test to pursue a brighter career, but Alia is distracting him from his path. When he says, "Good morning!" Alia messaged, along with a smiley emoji. I shut my boring textbook and picked up my phone. 'Good morning', I replied "(Bhagat, 2021, pp. 177).

He loves her and nothing else is important to him. Keshav is hard working but she is distracting him as he is calling his studies boring. Alia's character is portrayed as she is the one who is trying to influence Keshav which deviates him from professional aspiration. This adds complexity to the story exploring the themes of personal goals and love relations. It is the choice of Keshav to choose her over his career. It is one of the aspects of Karl Marx's theory of Marxism, "upper class can impact the growth and success of the lower class" (Marx, 2004, pp. 15). From the behavior of Alia, it is proved that she is manipulative, to find out her intentions the self-centered actions of Alia require careful attention. Alia is portrayed as self-centered based on her actions and interactions with Keshav. She only prioritizes her own needs and desires over Keshav's career aspirations. On the other hand, he is genuine with her which is why he blindly does whatever she says. They both are thinking about meeting to discuss the case, the idea of Alia about meeting is one of her self-centered actions. She invites him to her home secretly without letting her husband know about this. When she says "Can you sign in as some random repairman? Like you came to fix something in my place?" Say you have to check the Wi-Fi. You can definitely pass off as a good IT guy" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 177). These lines show Alia is thinking about her benefits, it is impacting the emotional well-being of Keshav. She knows that he is now in her hands, she makes him do whatever she wants to do. All these meetings set between them are to discuss the case and new information he has got. Keshav's role as the investigator is central to the novel. He digs deeper into Siya's case, attempting to uncover aspects that the police have missed or ignored, emphasizing the novel's theme of seeking truth in the face of official indifference. He and his friend got the data of Siya's phone and all the conversations she had had before the kidnapping. She has been in contact with a guy Roy, Siya and Roy's conversation is about Siya's parents, and the fight about Manish dating his colleague.

It is one of the important themes of this novel, parents are too busy in making money and following social values, and they neglect their kids. In this unrest environment kids find outsiders to be listened to. The relationship between Siya and Roy is something the police have not come up with. Keshav is trying to find out more about this case. "It is one of the contemporary issues with a new generation. In a technologically advanced era, an individual is alone among family members. That's why they find the wrong ways to avoid being alone" (Graham, 2007, pp. 64). Another self-centered act of Alia is when she invites him to her hometown Kochi to spend time with her second daughter Suhana, as she is the only one who has seen what happened the night when Siya was kidnapped. When she says, "She is seven. Kids that young don't open up easily. You have to spend a lot of time with them. You could always come to Kochi" (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 183,184). These lines create a suspicious effect in Alia's nature as she is trying to come close to Keshav. In these lines, she is allowing him to come at any time as she is not dealing with this case formally. Keshav does what is said to him he comes to her house to meet Suhana

to get more information about the case. In Kochi, she is frank as she is trying to grab his attention towards physical relation when she says “Do feelings always come based on what is right and wrong? In fact, do they ever?” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 188). In these lines finally, she shows her feelings towards him, she knows that they cannot live together but still, she tries to do so, it shows that she is using him not only to find her daughter but for her emotional support as well. Keshav is avoiding her though he loves her but he knows that this love is forbidden, when she asks, ‘Are you avoiding me?’ (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 193). This line shows he wants to help her out only in case. She is trying to fill the gap in her life and she is using Keshav when These are the signals she is giving him for a relationship, to be more than a client. In Kochi, Keshav lives in a hotel and is working on the conversational data he has gotten from Siya’s phone. He makes fake accounts to approach him. He finds that he is an adult man who used to trap girls for inappropriate pictures. About Roy, he concludes that he is not behind the kidnapping. Meanwhile, in the investigation Alia and Keshav are in an illicit relationship, their relationship showcases that Alia is planting a seed of love in his mind, and she makes him jealous of her husband Manish. This proves that she is taking advantage of him, by telling him her issues she makes him more into her and also makes him more sympathetic. When she says, “Manish didn’t want to listen to it anymore. He had threatened divorce instead. I will get a good lawyer” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 224). These lines show that Alia is giving hope to Keshav for their relationship, the stress she has in her marital life is releasing on Keshav by using him. She is telling the stories of her broken relationship with Manish but coming up with the idea of divorce is a clear signal for Keshav. He is very naïve falling for her when, he says, “I fell more in love with her with every passing second. I even loved the way she sipped her coffee, wrapping both palms around the cup” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 229). A deep emotional connection of Keshav with Alia, the way his adoring her is his love for Alia. But after making love in the hotel, he says “Thank you,’ she said in a soft voice. Thank you what the hell was that? Did I just provide a service or what?” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 227). These lines show that she taking advantage of him without thinking about the emotional damage of Keshav. Keshav feels it too, the tension and anger are visible in his tone. When they both confront love for each other and decide to be together, after finding Siya she will divorce her husband. When Keshav finds Siya after solving the case and catching the Pandith feels changes in Alia’s behavior as she got what she wanted now she has no concern about him. That is why she asks for time to think about it. When she says, “Will you give me one month? What date is today? 29 October, right? Let’s meet here at Anya again after exactly one month, 29 November” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 335). Asking for time to think is evidence of her confusion between Manish and Keshav. Alia’s priority is to be with Manish, as she does not want to leave her status and wealth. According to Marxists, “economic factors and social conditions heavily influence personal decisions, including relationships and wealth”. During this period, Keshav realized that she was not ready to leave her family, and he also could not make her take this step. This is the transformation in Keshav’s character, he understands that this love is forbidden. He is hurt because he is genuine to his feelings, and Alia, when he says, “There’s no us. There’s no us anymore. We both know it. Alia, I love you. We can’t do this” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 340). Keshav understands the nature of Alia and comprehends that they could not live together. She does not stop him as she knows it has to happen; it breaks not only Keshav but also leads him to development. He is strong enough to sacrifice his love for peace and her happiness. “Sometimes true love means sacrificing your own happiness” (Bhagat, 2021, pp. 344). It highlights the selfless nature of true love. In many relationships, there may be moments where your happiness or desires come into conflict with what is best for your partner. Choosing to put their happiness first is an act of love that goes beyond selfish desires. All the above analysis concludes that Alia being a strong wealthy woman manipulates Keshav, she uses him for her purpose. She takes advantage of his emotional and physical availability. She was aware of the outcome of their interaction still she made him into her and left him alone after finding her missing daughter. “Sometimes, love makes you do things you never thought you would. It can be a force for creation or destruction” (Hamid, 2000, pp. 222). These lines are from the novel *Moth Smoke*. In this novel, the same argument has been discussed. The male protagonist of this novel Darashikoh Shezad (Daru) falls in love with his friend Ozi’s wife, Mumtaz, which leads him to

destruction. The title of this novel represents the character of Daru the way Moth is attracted to smoke knowing that it could burn him. The similarity between Alia and Mumtaz is that they both attract males from the lower class and leave at the end. When Daru says, "There was a time when I thought love was enough, but now I see that it's not, not really. There are so many other things you need." (Hamid, 2000, pp. 153). In the end, Daru realizes that for a relationship love is not enough, it also needs money and status. The same realization is for Keshav in the novel 400 Days but the difference is Keshav just lets her use him, he does not let him destroy like Daru. The above analysis leads us to know that the stereotype system of class division is still rooted in our society, exploitation due to class and caste contributes to the protagonist, Alia's development in Chetan Bhagat's novel 400 Days. Exploitation, social expectations, and the impact of class division made Alia's journey from a weak to a strong woman. This study also focuses on the complex character of Alia and how she implies the same thing to Keshav from the middle class. The struggles of Keshav to set his career, easily manipulated by Alia, all these factors set the journey.

5. Conclusion

This research explores the exploitation, influence, and power based on social status giving depth to the analysis of the novel 400 Days. Using Marxism by Karl Marx, this theory portrays the struggle between different classes, upper middle, and lower. This study highlights how literature portrays class struggles and conflicts between different classes. It explores how characters' experiences and relationships reflect class systems and power dynamics. This study reveals the development and inner growth of two characters, Alia and Keshav, under the influence of power and social status. This research also highlights the struggle to reduce inequalities and exploitation throughout the analysis. This study sheds light on the impacts of power and social status on a character's development by analyzing Alia's journey and its impact on love relationships and the decision-making process. Also, the journey of Keshav from hard-working middle-class person to being manipulated by Alia convinces Keshav to do what primarily benefits her without considering his feelings and emotions. The main aim of this study is to explore how social status influences characters. through characters, Bhagat criticizes societal norms and power dynamics, offering a reflection on the complexities of social stratification in contemporary India. In this study, the critical analysis of the character Alia portrays her journey and struggles due to her class and background. She faces exploitation in the institute of marriage, rejected because of her class or economic status. Her character challenges the social norm, that middle-class females cannot marry in the upper class. This challenge leads her to face discrimination in the family system and marital life. Moreover, due to her background even though her kids suffer, her missing case is one of the consequences of social status and power dynamics. During this phase of the protagonist's journey, she confronts and transcends the limitations imposed by social status, eventually emerging as an empowered figure. This transformation highlights the theme of self-empowerment and the struggle against restrictive social norms. The critical analysis of another character Keshav portrays the power cycle of social status. Alia has been a victim of power and marginalization and subsequently becomes powerful and uses power to exploit the weaker. This research on the power of social status in the novel 400 Days focuses on Alia and Keshav's journey and gives a message about the transformative effects of social status and power dynamics on individuals. It also illuminates the profound impact of social status on personal growth and relationships.

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