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**Echoes of Capital: A Marxist Comparative Analysis of *The Great Gatsby*  
and *The Last Man in Tower***

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Paper Received on 11-06-2025, Accepted on 13-07-2025  
Published on 13-07-25; DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2025.10.3.137

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**Abstract**

This research paper, "The Echoes of Capital: A Marxist Comparative Analysis of *The Great Gatsby* and *The Last Man in Tower*," provides a critical analysis of capitalism and class conflict depicted in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower*. Drawing on Marxist literary criticism that highlights the struggles between capitalist and worker social classes and the effects of capitalism on labour, productivity, and economic development, this research reveals the ways in which both novels, although set in different times and locations, offer strong criticisms of power relationships in society.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald sheds light on the debilitating effects of capitalism on individual values and the disillusionment associated with the American Dream, illustrating how the chase for wealth erodes personal morals and reveals the superficiality of the affluent. The narrative examines the commodification of individuals and the allure of luxury, reinforcing the principles of capitalism. It also emphasizes glaring socioeconomic class differences, contrasting "old money" and "new money" and underscoring the plight of the underclass, highlighting how money dictates social status and reinforces inequality. In a similar vein, Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* offers a critique of capitalism through the perspective of rapid urban development and metropolitan living in Mumbai, depicting these cities as embodiments of capitalism where the rich impose an exorbitantly priced lifestyle that subjugates the working class. The story dramatizes the exploitation faced by the middle and working classes at the hands of corporate developers who wield economic and legal terminology to manipulate residents and seize property. Masterji's futile stand against the powerful builder Shah highlights the might of a corrupt capitalist system overwhelming an individual, demonstrating that a single person cannot effectively oppose the expansive corrupt framework.

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his paper, through comparative analysis of such narratives, illustrates how both the authors, through their characters and storylines, reveal the destructive "echoes of capital," thus showing that an unregulated economic system will inevitably result in social injustice, alienation, and curtailment of individual autonomy for people in different cultures and from different time periods.

**Keywords:** Adiga, Last Man in Tower, materialism, F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby, materialism, socio-political, Marxist framework.

## Introduction

The far-reaching influence of capitalism and its transformative impact on society, individual identity, and moral values is a significant theme in literary analyses. This paper undertakes a Marxist comparative analysis of F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), and Aravind Adiga's award-winning *Last Man in Tower* (2011). While these novels take place in different historical eras and cultures the Jazz Age in America and 'post-liberalization India', respectively both novels offer biting criticisms of the dominant "echoes of capital" and their profound social consequences. Marxist critique, based on the theories of Karl Marx, contends that economic arrangements shape social relationships, power structures, and human consciousness. It examines the struggle of social classes capitalists (bourgeoisie) and workers (proletariat) and how powerful ideologies, usually referred to as "false consciousness," often further the interests of the powerful. Fitzgerald and Adiga both masterfully show how the never-ending pursuit of money and social status can lead to rampant corruption, moral degradation, and the commodification of human relationships and values. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* convincingly captures the disillusionment with the American Dream of the 1920s as an endeavor marred by materialism and class differences. It explores the dichotomy between "old money" and "new money," highlighting how inherited wealth determines social integration and besmirches individual ambitions. On the other hand, Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* decries the socio-cultural changes in contemporary India after the liberalization reforms of 1991. The novel specifically targets urban growth and the real estate boom in Mumbai and demonstrates the clash between the old communal values and capitalist desires. It portrays the dilemmas faced by people and communities as they grapple with the brunt of modernization, resulting in the breakdown of intimate ties and the giving way of moral values to monetary interests. By comparing these stories, this paper will examine how both authors reflect and critique the socio-cultural changes brought about by dominant economic systems. The study will demonstrate how the principles of "ethical fluidity" due to capitalist pressures and "moral debt" occur in both contexts. Through a Marxist lens, this research seeks to bring to light the systemic issues that compel characters to commit unethical acts in order to survive and succeed, ultimately disclosing the consequential and oftentimes destructive "echoes of capital" that can be heard throughout different societies.

## Analysis

Both Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* offer astute analyses of class strife and social hierarchy in capitalist societies, although they approach them in distinct historical and cultural contexts. A Marxist critical analysis of these two novels uncovers how economic structures fundamentally condition

social relations, political power, and individual identities, often resulting in moral decadence and commodification of human values.

**Class Conflict and Social Hierarchy in *The Great Gatsby***

Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* probes the deeply entrenched class divide of 1920s America, where wealth is the ultimate goal, creating an artificial world that is deeply "immersed in Capitalism." The novel defines three primary social classes, each with differing challenges and characteristics:

"Old Money" (East Egg): This old money, embodied by Tom and Daisy Buchanan, has inherited their considerable fortunes over generations, enabling them to "flourish from the privileges of the industrial society rather than within it" with no requirement for work. Their generation wealth grants them ample social influence and defines their acceptance. Tom Buchanan is often characterized as the "richest character in the story," seeing everything and everyone as assets. The Buchanans are characterized as "careless persons" who "destroy things and beings, then withdraw into their wealth or their vast indifference." This indicates how immense wealth can bring about apathy and an unsettling lack of empathy, seeing those beneath them as disposable. Their inherent arrogance and belief in their superior position render it "incredibly difficult, if not impossible, for others to escape" social stratification.

"New Money" (West Egg): Jay Gatsby embodies this class, composed of recently wealthy self-made people who have earned their fortunes in questionable or illegal pursuits like bootlegging and selling counterfeit bonds. Though living lives of extravagance, the people of "new money" are not accorded the same respect as those of "old money" and are seen to be missing their "elegance, insight, and taste." Gatsby's extravagant parties, while only a "theatrical show," are a futile attempt to find social approval and win back Daisy, who is the very embodiment of wealth and status. His pursuit finally highlights the elusiveness and unattainability of the American Dream for those without inherited privilege.

"No Money"/Working Class (Valley of Ashes): George and Myrtle Wilson represent the impoverished working class, existent in victimhood to the capitalist system. Their world is limited to the squalid industrial wasteland between the Eggs and New York City, regulated by unforgiving socioeconomic realities. Myrtle's desire for upward mobility thrusts her into an exploitative relationship with Tom, in which she is treated as a "simple possession." The novel condemns the callous presentation of such characters, highlighting how their "unpleasant representations. detract from their victimization by the capitalist system."

The story suggests that the American Dream, previously an aspiration for opportunity and autonomy, gets increasingly sullied by the pursuit of monetary riches, resulting in pervasive corruption and moral degeneracy. Even the "middle-class" Nick Carraway, an initial admirer of the rich person's lifestyle, soon gets

"repulsed" and "disenchanted," ultimately standing for the insight that the American Dream is a "fantasy."

### **Class Conflict and Societal Stratification in *Last Man in Tower***

Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* provides a biting social critique of the socio-cultural transformations in post-liberalization India. The novel shrewdly analyzes the conflicts between tradition vs. progress, wealth vs. poverty, and ethics vs. ambition. Economic liberalization from 1991 has led to significant social and cultural change, reshaping class dynamics and widening disparities. The account critically discusses the impact of urban development and the real estate boom in Mumbai, portraying it as one of "creative destruction" wherein city spaces are reconfigured into "commodified spaces" for capital accumulation. The core class struggle is centered around:

**Real Estate Developers (Capitalists/Neo-colonizers):** These characters like Dharmen Shah reflect limitless desire and aggressive greed, viewing Mumbai as "filled with wealth". Shah dreams of converting "shared interests into selfish ends", buying land for massive modern skyscrapers. The story proves how the system "empowers and enables local micro-agents of neocolonialism".

**Middle-Class Citizens (Vishram Society):** Residents of the Vishram Society, traditionally a symbol of middle-class stability, are faced with the ethical dilemma of selling their homes for a large payment. Some consider it an opportunity for a better life, whereas others, such as Masterji, an old-school teacher, refuse, "refusing to lose their neighborhood and values". Such resistance highlights the erosion of communal values in the face of modernization and egotistical greed. Adiga presents the concepts of "Ethical Fluidity under Capitalist Pressures" and "Moral Debt", exemplifying how people and groups change their morals and suffer repercussions in face of monetary pressures. Masterji's firm moral stance ultimately results in his solitude, illustrating how opposing capitalist lures can lead to "personal destruction". The novel criticizes how the ambition for money transforms people into "self-absorbed and inhumane" individuals.

### **Comparative Insights into Class Struggle**

Both *The Great Gatsby* and *Last Man in Tower* give profound social critiques of the far-reaching effects of capital on class dynamics and individual morality. The illusion of social mobility: Both books lay bare the fiction that mere hard work can guarantee one's achievement under capital-driven regimes. Gatsby's wealth, gained unfairly, does not win him true acceptance among the "old money" aristocracy, representing the "myth of social mobility". In a similar vein, in *Last Man in Tower*, the "inescapable desire for wealth drives the middle and lower orders to indulge in undeserving acts" highlighting how financial progress often worsens the gap between the rich and the poor. Decay of Morals and Commodification: The never-ending pursuit of wealth consequently results in moral compromise and commodification of personal relationships. In Gatsby, the Buchanans' "recklessness" enables them to treat

people as disposable commodities, while Gatsby himself commodifies Daisy, hearing her "voice as rich with money.". In *Last Man in Tower*, the erstwhile "close-knit community" of Vishram Society betrays Masterji for financial gain, showing how "financial incentives can erode communal unity". Adiga directly argues that "morality within a capitalist framework is frequently a negotiable asset rather than an absolute principle". Systemic Critique and Ideology: Fitzgerald criticizes the deep-rooted class system of America during the Jazz Age, while Adiga critiques the "socio-cultural changes" of post-liberalization India. Both authors, from a Marxist perspective, reveal how dominant economic systems compel characters to sacrifice their values for material success. Marxism asserts that ideology, which generally favors the ruling class, influences human consciousness and social interactions. This can be seen in the incessant pursuit of the American Dream in Gatsby and the pursuit of modernization and riches in *Last Man in Tower*, both in an exploration of the hurtful repercussions of capitalism on communities and individuals. Both F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* offer biting critiques of the commodification of human relationships, illustrating ways in which capitalist structures reduce people and their interactions to mere commodities for economic gain, social status, or personal desire. This Marxist understanding views human connections as transactional relationships more so than as authentic ones.

### **Commodification of Human Relationships in *The Great Gatsby***

In *The Great Gatsby*, the post-World War I economic boom and the "Jazz Age" provided a cultural emphasis on wealth and materialism, leading to the widespread commodification of human relationships. Tom Buchanan is representative of this commodification, regarding individuals as commodities or tools for upholding his control or increasing his prestige. Born into "old money," he enjoys "the fruits of the industrial community rather than within it," i.e., he profits from others' labor without working himself. His privilege and power enable him to be "careless" with others, "crushing things and beings and then retreating back into their money or their boundless carelessness." He treats Myrtle Wilson as an object, enabling her to think that he may marry her because of her "sexual favors," while his reluctance is spuriously put down to Daisy's alleged Catholic concepts instead of his own reluctance. Tom takes advantage of Myrtle and George Wilson, taking advantage of them because of their "low social status." His "dominance as the aristocratic clique" allows society to believe what he says, as evidenced when he convinces George that Gatsby was accountable for Myrtle's death without George verifying anything. Daisy Buchanan is also caught up in and a result of this commodification. Her voice is traditionally described as "full of money," which suggests that her beauty is irrevocably tied to her wealth and position. Accepting expensive pearls from Tom can be seen as an act of "commoditization." Daisy's relationships, including her affair with Gatsby, are founded on a "commoditized view of life." Ultimately, she opts to stay with Tom for the sake of "comfortable privilege" and "social security" rather than any authentic "magnificent romance with Gatsby," favoring material security over emotional closeness. Her "surface glamour hides an interior emptiness,"

portraying her as "selfish, careless, and destructible." Their common "arrogance" both contribute to emphasizing how little they "value other people's lives." Jay Gatsby, too, while lovingly romantic in his dreams, "commodifies his world" in his relentless pursuit of Daisy. His whole luxurious lifestyle, from his large house and extravagant parties, is an intricately constructed veneer designed to make an impression on and reclaim Daisy's affections, whom he views as a "commodity symbol" that would help him join the ranks of the "old money" society. His large financial assets, accrued from "illicit pursuits" such as "bootlegging" or "selling grain alcohol illegally" and "smuggling and selling spurious bonds," highlights the ethically suspect nature of his goals. The guests at Gatsby's parties are "ephemeral" and "illusions" and "no purpose other than filling up space" in his quest for Daisy. Gatsby's perception of Daisy, which readers are encouraged to read as "love," is portrayed as a "twisted and obsessive form." The novel indicates that Gatsby's conception of the American Dream, combined with wealth and love, ultimately results in his demise. Even Myrtle Wilson, a working-class character, tries to commodify herself. She is motivated by her desire to "rise in the world" and "become a girl of the upper class," to get away from her "unpleasant reality" through "various material possessions." But she ends up being victimized by Tom's commodification and is killed as a consequence of the upper class's carelessness. Her desire for "self-improvement" and a "better life" eventually leads to her death.

The novel suggests that this pervasive commodification leads to "moral emptiness" and also points to the "debilitating effects of capitalism" both on the "winners" (Tom, Daisy, Gatsby) and "losers" (George, Myrtle) in society. The rich are described as "unpleasant and superficial" people whose pursuit of money "corrodes personal values."

### **Commodification of Human Relationships in *Last Man in Tower***

Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* denounces the commercialization of human relationships in post-liberalization India, as the real estate boom and capitalist drives displace "traditional values and community bonds." The novel probes how "financial motivations all too often override traditional moral considerations." Dharmen Shah, the developer, represents the capitalist drive that views city life as "commodified spaces" and attempts to "translate collective interests into individual benefit" for the accumulation of profit. His "ambition and greed" prioritize profit over human relationships. Shah's pursuit of riches compels him to "procure people, bought politicians, manipulated officials, and hired thugs." He is shown to have faith in his "moral integrity," choosing "generosity over violence" in order to convince apprehensive tenants, suggesting a check instead of a gun. But this "generosity" is also a form of commodification, equating people's homes and lives to monetary figures. The Vishram Society residents, who were originally a "close-knit community" with "strong relationships" and "deep connections," turn against each other when they are tempted with an "unbelievable amount of money" for their apartments. Their "ambition for wealth and fear of missing out" cause them to



"abandon their long-established relationships and values." This marks the "downfall of community values amidst modern-day development and personal greed." The novel explores ideas such as "Ethical Fluidity under Capitalist Pressures," where people "modify their moral codes according to financial incentives and systemic corruption," and "Moral Debt," where "cumulative ethical sacrifices shape future choice." The "desire to achieve wealth makes people less compassionate and humane, performing unthinkable things against their fellow beings." This involves plotting against Masterji, who is seen as an "obstacle" to their achievement. Masterji, the elderly school master, resolutely refuses to sell, viewing his apartment building, Vishram Society, as a "cultural landmark" and "a reservoir of conservative principles" and not merely a home. His disobedience makes him an "obstacle to their aspirations." His "refusal to sell marks a last desperate effort to maintain the integrity of the community." Masterji is ever more alienated, having faced hostility "even from fellow residents." His murder, disguised as suicide, is the ultimate commodification act, a direct consequence of the residents' "shocking greed for wealth," exemplifying the extreme lengths people will go when human relations are fully commodified. Masterji's "moral principles cannot endure in a neoliberal economy," where success benefits those willing to shift their "ethical boundaries." His tragic end underscores how "refusal to engage with capitalist inducements can culminate in personal ruin."

#### **Comparative Insights into the Commodification of Human Relationships**

Both novels emphasize the damaging effects of capitalist structures on human relationships, transforming them into transactional values. In *Gatsby* as well as *Last Man in Tower*, the quest for economic prosperity actively destroys genuine human relationships. In *Gatsby*, the "immense wealth" of the Buchanans allows them to be "careless people," shattering "things and creatures" without repercussions. In *Last Man in Tower*, temptation from the real estate deal "fractures a cohesive community," converting long-standing friendships into enmity and betrayal, eventually resulting in the isolation and death of Masterji." The authors represent how people are boiled down to their "exchange value" or symbolic value. *Gatsby's* lavish way of life becomes the tool to obtain Daisy, regarding his guests as mere accessories, whereas Tom "buys" Myrtle's "sexual favors" and treats her like a possession. In *Last Man in Tower*, Masterji is seen by the people around him as an "obstacle" to their economic dreams, bringing his being and values down to an obstacle to their "dreams". His loyalty to traditional values is seen as a form of resistance to "modernization and individualism". Both narratives point to the moral degradation and ethical compromise inherent in this commodification. Fitzgerald describes how the "quest for wealth" causes a "decline in individual values" among the wealthy, making them "unpleasant and superficial". Adiga is assertive that "morality in a capitalist world is often an asset to be bargained, not a fixed philosophy," since people adjust their ethics according to "economic incentives". The tragic consequences of *Gatsby* and *Masterji* illustrate the human cost that is obtained when values and relationships are compromised for financial incentives. The "illusion of social mobility" or the temptation of a "better life" usually compels this commodification in both stories.

Gatsby is sure that money can get him Daisy and the social status he desires, even if it means committing illegal acts. Similarly, the residents of Vishram Society, considering the real estate deal as an opportunity for "immediate improvement" and a "better life," are willing to sacrifice their community bonds and ethical values in order to gain economic security.

Both F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* explore the complex relationships between resistance, compliance, and ideological control, showcasing how capitalist frameworks influence individuals and communities, often shaping their choices and questioning their ethical principles. From a Marxist viewpoint, ideological control signifies how the economic structure of a society (the 'base') influences its cultural and intellectual aspects (the 'superstructure'), including beliefs, values, and social constructs, which can be utilized by those in power to sustain their dominance. Compliance appears when individuals accept or conform to these dominant ideologies and the societal norms they endorse. In contrast, resistance entails opposing or challenging these prevailing forces and their oppressive effects.

### **Conclusions**

The readings of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* show the extensive nature of ideological control, the various forms of compliance that it causes, and the challenging acts of resistance that emerge in capitalist regimes, all without arriving at a definitive outlook over their social critiques. Both novels respond critically to the transformations ushered in by economic systems, exploring questions of class struggle, corruption, power dynamics, and changing personal identities.

In *The Great Gatsby*, ideological control is largely exercised through a distorted American Dream, which in the 1920s came to be identified with material wealth and social status. This fantasy, as a "false consciousness," promises equal opportunity and bliss through diligence, but is inherently designed to accommodate the interests of those who are already in power. Conformity to this ideology is represented by figures such as Jay Gatsby, who strives with meticulous attention to detail to fashion his entire self and lavish lifestyle to attain wealth and status, hoping it will let him "repeat the past" and reclaim Daisy. His wealth, which is usually gained illegally, symbolizes the degeneration of this dream in the period. Daisy Buchanan portrays conformity by finally prioritizing "comfortable privilege" and "social security" over love ambitions, with her voice being "full of money," symbolizing her strong association with wealth and the "hollow and shallow" nature of the ruling class. Myrtle Wilson, the working-class character, appeals to obedience by having an affair with Tom in a bid to climb socially and gain material possessions, only to become a victim of the "carelessness" of the wealthy. The novel's "rich language" and warm descriptions of extravagant living, whilst Fitzgerald's intention is one of condemnation, can unwittingly promote capitalism's "repressive ideology" by making



this world attractive. Resistance in *The Great Gatsby* is subtle but effective. Fitzgerald's gesture of exposing "class inequality, dubious ethics, and the illusory charm of the Dream" as an aesthetic critique of the establishment. Nick Carraway's transformation from first awe to "disgust" with the "shallow and ignorant capitalist values" of the ruling class represents a form of moral resistance, culminating in his departure from the East. Gatsby's tragic demise is seen to be an inevitable consequence of this tainted dream and a condemnation of its failure and corrupting influence. The "Valley of Ashes" itself is also a powerful symbol of the "destructive implications of industrial capitalism" and the moral decay it spawns, most hurtfully affecting the working man. George Wilson's suicidal act of murdering Gatsby, although tragic, can be seen as a retaliatory, self-destructive act in response to the severe social injustices and futility of the upper class that had directly led to the killing of his wife.

In *Last Man in Tower*, control of ideology is displayed by the capitalist ambitions that run parallel with the idea of "modernization" and financial success resulting from India's economic liberalization. The real estate developer, Dharmen Shah, embodies this influence, using "financial incentives" to "neglect traditional moral values" and commodify homes. He deliberately encourages an ostentatious lifestyle as a "necessary one," forcing the middle class to take loans and become "financial victims." Compliance is brought out vividly through the residents of Vishram Society, who, though initially a "tight-knit community," gradually succumb to the "desire for wealth and fear of loss." Their willingness to abandon "long-established relationships and values" in favor of material gains portrays "ethical fluidity under capitalist pressure." They start considering Masterji as a "hindrance" to their collective prosperity, showing how "the desire for wealth makes people less caring and humane." Resistance is mostly symbolized by Masterji, the retired schoolteacher, who "stoutly opposes the sale." He views Vishram Society as a "heritage point" and a "storehouse of conservative values," not just an apartment. His refusal is portrayed as a "trace of genuine rebellion," emphasizing a "moral steadfastness" that is found to be "unsustainable in a neoliberal economy." His increasing solitude and opposition he encounters "even from fellow residents" emphasize the strong potential for conformity. The novel satirically exposes the inadequacies of official institutions such as the police, the media, and the legal system in backing Masterji's resistance to dominant capitalist forces, revealing their "ambiguity" and "corruption." Masterji's murder, which was orchestrated by his neighbors for profit, personifies the final tragic consequence of their "atrocious greed for wealth," demonstrating the extreme effects that commodified human relationships can inflict. Even Mrs. Rego, who is a social activist, at first resists it but eventually "yields to Shah's special offer," symbolizing the overwhelming influence of capitalist pressures.

Both books continually highlight the way in which dominant capitalist ideologies, whether in the guise of the American Dream or rapid modernization, lead to a moral corruption in which "financial success is often sought at the expense of ethical integrity." The books also continually expose the fictitious nature of the claimed success and progress, suggesting that by frequently implying a dreadful human price, such achievements rather disproportionately benefit a privileged few while victimizing or ruining thousands more. In the end, both writers expose the fact that the dominant economic classes wield immense power, shaping social norms, exploiting the laborers, and frequently escaping responsibility for their harmful deeds. Though single instances of resistance are ethically important, in most cases they become ineffective in the face of tough systemic forces, resulting in calamitous outcomes that emphasize the enormity of challenging long-established capitalist systems.

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