

Marxist Perspective in “*The Chimney Sweeper*” by William Blake

Filza Batool¹ , Muhammad Arfan Lodhi² 

¹M.Phil Scholar, Department of English, NCBA&E University Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

²Assistant Professor, Higher Education Department (Collegiate Wing) Punjab, Pakistan

Correspondence: samaritan_as@hotmail.com²

ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The study aims to delineate the idea that the ruling class exploits the working class. According to Marxist ideology, capitalism is the major cause of creating class differences. There is conflict between the two classes i.e. the bourgeoisie and proletariat. The working class is always exploited at the hands of the upper class. Therefore, the study deals with application of Marxist theory of ‘Exploitation of Labor’ to understand the poetic verses of William Blake’s poem the “*The Chimney Sweeper*”, which highlights the matter of child labor during the 18th century.

Methodology: The research adopts exploratory methods. The data is collected from William Blake’s poems *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. Only one poem is selected from the sample out of 19 poems. The data is qualitative in nature.

Findings: The findings of the study reveal sufferings of the oppressed children due to economic burden that befell during the Industrial Revolution. The speaker of the poem is a child who belongs to the downtrodden class and narrates the story of other children working as young sweepers. They all struggle for survival and suffer emotionally and physically.

Conclusion: The study seeks to conclude in the light of showing sympathy for the miseries of the poor children of the 18th century and cruelty of the ruling elites and capitalism. Blake blames the institutions of religion and government for enforcing child labor and showing no sympathy towards the innocent children. Blake reflects the ideas of Marxism through the voice of children.

Keywords: Capitalism; Exploitation of Labor; Bourgeoisie; Proletariat; False Consciousness.

Introduction

It is no wonder that the art of poetry paints with words that affect human emotions in different manners. According to Arnold, “great poetry could provide the superior character of truth and seriousness” (Poetry Foundation, 2009). While some poems are seen as depressing and uplifting, William Blake’s “*The Chimney Sweeper*” was published in 1789 in the collection of poems in *Songs of Innocence* and *Experience*, which is a blend of both. It presents the profound reality in a cynical way. The poem

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highlights the social issues which were residing in 18th century society after the Industrial Revolution. The most striking challenge was child labor. It had a devastating effect on the lives of children as they had to do laborious jobs at the age four to nine years. Blake through his poem criticizes child labor and the society that sees the miserable condition of the children but overlooks it. It reveals the change in the mindset of children who are forced to do such hard-handed work at a very early age. It shows the transition of a child from innocence to maturity.

Blake's poem not only talks about the hardships that come with working in the chimneys but it also supports the Marxist ideology of class conflict. In his poem, *The Chimney Sweeper*, Blake pays heed to the downcast urban life of a little chimney sweeper during the era of Industrial Revolution to ponder upon the theme of innocence with the glass of Marxist perspective and to spread awareness among people regarding the unbearable working conditions for child laborers. The poem attempts to reveal the social injustice imposed upon children by engaging the reader's conscience to escape from the chains of entrapment. It outlines the character's motivation to continue his work as a chimney sweeper. Marx's concern regarding social injustice and inequality is prevalent in Blake's poetry and both try to bring change in the society. The persona of a child is used as a vehicle to deliver the message of inhumanity. The persona is a young boy who has just lost his mother. He has no time given to mourn her death as his father has sold him into a life of filth and misery. His childhood has been taken by the economic burden. The concept of selling children further paved the way for Americans who followed this behavior as black Americans were dehumanized at the hands of the whites. They were not allowed to sit in the front, used separate facilities and even had to go to different schools. Blake in the poem, has outspoken the reality of the corrupted society.

Blake illustrates the meaningless life of two young boys who are entitled to sweep chimneys, he evokes a sense of pity and sympathy in front of the reader to talk up against the horrifying situation of children sweeping the soot. The soot that covers their body is so choking that it makes the boy feel as if in a coffin, in his dream. As it said by Freud, "Children see their dreams as a way of wish fulfillment (Cherry, 2022). The little boy seems to have a lack of sense for having parental love, care and support from them. He is in the position of not getting the nurture he needs. Furthermore, he finds it to be normal as in the daylight he sees everyone doing their jobs patiently then they need not to fear harm. Actually, this study explores the substandard mind of children and the false judgment of society with them.

Exploitation of Labor and Capitalism

Karl Marx 'concept of "exploitation of labor" revolves around Capitalism. Class relationships exist in every era. In pre- capitalist times, acquiring land and resources or enslaving people was seen as a major characteristic of capitalist society. According to Marx, exploitation is essential in economic relations under capitalism, as the owner (bourgeoisie) pays the workers (proletariat) less than the value of what the workers produce and the owner keeps the surplus amount that is the profit after the product is sold at a price that exceeds its total manufacturing amount. Supporters of capitalism are against this concept and believe that free exchange takes place, where the workers agree to sell their labor for the price that the capitalist employer offers. Critics view that the exchange is seldom "free" because the capitalist has the power and authority to use law for their own benefit in order to protect the interest of the capitalist class.

Marx further argues that the profit is the ultimate source which is a driving force behind capitalist production that leads to unpaid labor of workers. Exploitation is at peak in capitalist societies. The uneven distribution of factors of production leads to further conflict between classes. The society distinguishes classes into two main categories that are **bourgeoisies (exploiter class)** and the **proletariats (exploited class)**. The concept of Capitalism is different among chief forms of class societies. According to Marx, the basic concept of capitalist exploitation is a result of the production process and the need for equal distribution (Screpanti, 2019).

Issue of Child Labor in Chimney Sweeper

Child labor was a phenomenon that developed at the time of industrialization. Children at the time had to support their families in order to release economic burden. It was legalized that children over 7 years old can work: most of them worked as chimney sweepers and in textile industry.

William Blake's poem, *Chimney Sweeper* reflects the time when child labor was an acute social issue in society and children had to forgo their childhood to support their families. Children had no rights and most of them even did not have proper clothes to wear, as their knees and elbows hurt while sweeping the chimneys. Blake argues that those children lived their life in complete darkness with worse conditions such as; they cleaned during the day and in a black and very narrow room with all the other chimney sweepers. The conditions of the places where these children slept in were another issue that Blake raises. The child should sleep on the mothers' lap instead of soot. The child should be given care and protection but instead of this, it is sold and surrounded by filth.

The *Chimney Sweeper* by William Blake is pleading for social justice and a voice against such inhuman activities. He measures the height of harassment of these children through his work. In "*Nurse's Song*" the poet describes how children are allowed to play until it's almost night and time for sleep. The symbolic significance of this work is to reveal that Blake wants to highlight carefree play of human imagination. In his "*Songs of Experience*", sour and bitter emotions are revealed. In experience, the parents seemed to be indifferent to the sufferings of children and they sell them for money and leave them to work as chimney sweepers. In the sphere of Experience, the human heart becomes a "pebble of the book", and turns love into a selfish desire of lust.

This poem is from "*Songs of Innocence*", it has six stanzas divided into quatrains, 8-9 syllables each. The rhythm is similar to *The Lamb*, childish, sweet and naïve. The speaker is a child who works as a chimney sweeper and expresses his feeling as being captivated in a coffin. The repetition of the word *WEEP* in the poem displays the children that go for chimney sweeping cried a lot due to the hard job. The speaker describes how the children are forced to work in dirty and suffocating places. The child then tells about an event that happened to his fellow Tom Dacre. Tom constantly cries which show the sadness of the little sweepers; also, he is made bald so that soot and dirt does not stick to his hair. It tells about the condition of other children; like Tom the same treatment was given to the poor children of 18th century. Moreover, their lives were at risk because of the rainy weather that made the chimneys and rooftops wet, slippery and dangerous.

Despite all the miseries they face, the child tries to keep on being happy and hopeful that someday they will set free. It presents the hope of those children who had become small sweepers and they would only set free after death. In the last lines of the poem, the poet clearly condemns the institutions, saying that they made a fortune out of his issue. Blake opines that the institutions have turned a blind eye on the issue of child labor and he deplores cruelty of industrialization.

Introduction to William Blake

The Industrial Revolution was a period in the late 18th century and early 19th century when great changes were happening all over England as well as in other parts of the Europe. Although, it marked a new beginning of human development but it also gave birth to most horrible social effects such as the child labor. Romantic poet William Blake (1757-1827) and Victorian poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) both considered child labor a curse in society. As said by Galvin, William Blake was the creator of poems, paintings and engravings during the time when England suffered from political and social instability. His works aimed to empower nationalism and bring social change through his artwork (Study pool., n.d.). Blake expresses his view regarding child labor in his two poems "*The Chimney Sweeper*", written respectively in 1789 and 1794. The first one being published in *Songs of Innocence* and latter was included in *Songs of Experience*. His other notable works include: *There is no Natural Religion*, *All*

Religions Are One, Europe, America, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, The First Book of Urizen and Milton.

Research Questions

Primary Question

How does the poem “Chimney Sweeper” by William Blake reveal Marxist ideology in the late 18th century?

Secondary Questions

1. In what ways does the poem “Chimney Sweeper” highlight the issue of Child Labor.
2. How does William Blake reflect Capitalism in the poem “Chimney Sweeper”?
3. To what extent the labor exploitation is exposed by the dogmatic ideology of the religion and society in the poem.

Significance of the Study

Possession of private property, power and prestige define the social status and worth of an individual. Capitalism divides different groups based on material goods. The privileged class owns and control the means of production as well as the under privileged class. Marxism highlights the condition of workers who are exploited by the ruling class. It suggests some workable solution for empowerment of this oppressed class. This research attempts to study the struggle of deprived children of the 18th century who were forced to abandon their childhood in face of poverty and becoming preys at the hand of the privileged class. This paper aims to highlight the pitiable condition of children shown in Blake’s poem “Chimney Sweeper” in context of Marxist theory of ‘exploitation of labor’.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the role of children in 18th century society and how they are enforced to work in dangerous conditions. It aims to explore the Blake’s detest against child labor policies and his struggle to raise awareness to ward of this social issue from society. In presenting the nonjudgmental view of the children, Blake makes an emotional charge on society that exploits the weak and at the same time hypocritically uses moral clichés about duty and goodness to hide selfish interests. This study works on the social criticism presented in the poem. It juxtaposes two ideas: that of the poet, who attacks society aimlessly, and that of sweeper, who presents directly the mode of perception characteristic of innocence. Although, surrounded by evil these little angels retain their innocence, an innocence marked not so much by their own freedom from guilt but by their unawareness of the guilt of others.

The fact that Blake used children as central figure in his poem, it was to express his concern regarding exploitation of children during Industrial Revolution. He points out the same fact presented by Karl Marx in his Marxist theory that the working class is exploited at the hands of ruling class. The issue of child labor raises similar questions that Marxism wanted to put forward. A Child worker saves the factory owners from expending money more than what is needed. Children are payed low wages as contrast to adults. It is also noteworthy that some children are exploited to an extent that they are not even paid salary, instead food and shelter is provided in return. It is believed that this policy would lessen the number of homeless children from starvation. Children are seen as easily manipulated and controlled as compared to adults. In addition, their small size makes it possible to reach into small spaces where adults cannot reach. They are often hired as factory workers, chimney sweepers, coal miners and other positions that are labeled as dirty and dangerous which later could eventually lead them to encounter serious health problems. With the addition of terrible working conditions, it is not astonishing that numerous literary works are produced to oppose such ruthlessness. The Chimney Sweeper is one prime example that opposes child labor and raise voice for the innocent children.

This study also aims to highlight the limited choice given to working class that is to either work or die. The children of 18th century had no voice of their own. They were given limited choices such as working under horrible conditions and sharing financial burden of the family. They had to work or die while working as sweeps. Children were seen as commodities in the eyes of parents as they could get surplus value by making them work at such young age. Children had to accept in working in such awful conditions, as Blake presents this idea in Chimney Sweeper in Songs of Experience, the young boy accepts his situation to the point that those who force him to work, his parents, “think they have done me no injury.” Thus, Blake strongly condemns the cruelty towards children and reveal how acceptance of situation does not make it acceptable. The study further discusses the impact of child labor on the 18th century children and contribution of writers such as William Blake in propagating the anti child labor system. It also studies the poem Chimney Sweeper in accordance with Marxism and to what extent it is applicable on this literary piece of work.

Literature Review

Marxism is a political school of thought that deals in unchaining the shackles of oppression exercised by the ruling class using commodities like law, religion, race and factors of production. Marxism is Karl Marx analysis of the class conflict between the two classes known as bourgeois and proletarians. It is described as: “the political, economic, and social principles and policies advocated by Marx especially: a theory and practice of socialism including the labor theory of value, dialectical materialism, the class struggle, and dictatorship of the proletariat until the establishment of a classless society” (Merriam-Webster/Marxism, n.d.). Marxism opposes capitalism that is defined by Encarta as: “an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods, characterized by a free competitive market and motivation by profit.” Marx's view regarding capitalism is, “the workers, in order to support their families are paid a bare minimum wage or salary. The worker is alienated because he has no control over the labor or product, which he produces. The capitalists sell the products produced by the workers at a proportional value as related to the labor involved. Surplus value is the difference between what the worker is paid and the price for which the product is sold (Marx. K. 1844).” Marx believed that the ultimate driving force behind capitalism is the unpaid labor exploited at the hands of the elite. Exploitation forms the basis of capitalism. Marx presented that Capitalist system dehumanize workers, the capitalist methods of productivity “mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil.”

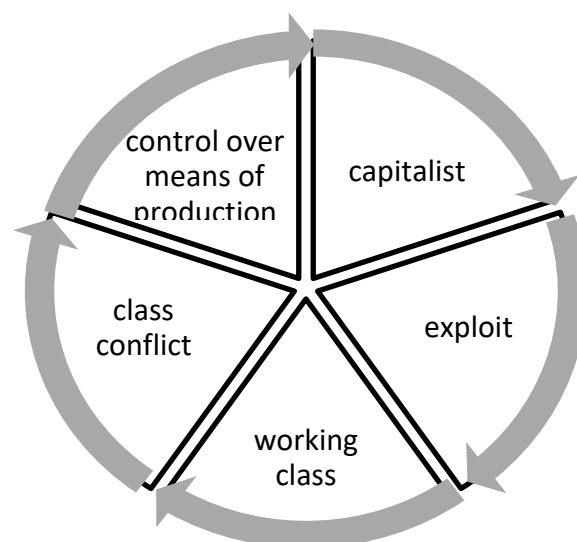


Figure 1

The anti-Capitalist Martin Luther King, Jr. in his final speech to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1967 said: "One day we must ask the question, 'Why are there forty million poor people in America?'"...When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalistic economy (Kelly, 2019). According to Eric Williams, The colonist system was the backbone of the capitalist economy, as is evident from the amount of wealth that was collected by Europeans from their colonies. The capital money was invested to pay for the industrialization. It is also said by Williams, in the middle of 18th century almost all the Britain was connected with transatlantic slave trade or under expatriate rule (Liverpool, n.d.).

The Industrial Revolution in the 18th century had spread its roots in almost the whole of Europe and North America. Historians believe that there are several causes for the Industrial Revolution, including the rise of capitalism, European imperialism, efforts to mine coal, and the effects of the Agricultural Revolution. Capitalism played an important role in the process of the Industrial Revolution. At the time of the Industrial Revolution, Britain gave much importance to its wealthy entrepreneurs because they used their investment to construct factories and mines. This investment from individuals, whose actions were in accordance to get as much surplus profits as possible, would not have been likely without the emergence of capitalism. Moreover, as the Industrial Revolution started the individualistic principles of capitalism created an atmosphere wherein industrialization boomed, and ultimately spread worldwide. One of the main reasons that led to the Industrial Revolution was the mining of resources such as coal which was seen as a major aspect in the process of Industrialization. For example, Great Britain was first in the list to create an immense amount of coal supplies and to start industry in the country. Coal was seen as an essential ingredient in the industrial process as it fueled the steam engines that were generally used in trains, ships and other types of machinery. Britain not only had large supplies of the resource, but it was also easily accessible. As compared to other European nations, coal in Britain was quite close to the surface and was therefore rather easy for miners to discover and extract it. This process was further improved and made easier after the invention of the steam engine by Thomas Newcomen, which was originally used to pump water out of coal mines. Although the revolution brought great changes all over England, it also gave rise to new challenges which had an immense effect on the lives of people of England. The most affected strata of society were the working class, which had been dumped under the pressure of financial burden. In order to release that burden children were forced to work for their families by getting extra income for better survival. They lived in very poor conditions: overcrowding, poor - sanitation, spread of diseases, and pollution. Child labor became a common issue in 18th century society. As the owners of factories and mines exploited children by saving their expenses such as paying 10-20% of wages in comparison to adults. In addition, children were obedient and easy to control as compared to adult workers. John Fairbrother, in an interview in 1819 commented that he had seen his master with a horse whip standing outside the mill when the children had come too late [and] he lashed them all the way to the mill (Beck, 2016). The children had to work in worse condition with no proper clothing provided to them. As this possibility was best evidenced in the 1828 Memoir of Robert Blincoe by John Brown: "In the memoir he remembers a horrifying scene in which a girl named Mary Richards, almost ten years old left the workhouse, attending a drawing frame. The incident happens on one evening, when her apron is caught by the shaft. She is badly dashed on the floor and she screams out. The factory attendant sees her dreadful condition as her whole body was in agony and pain but he could not do anything and her body is carried off quite lifelessly. These types of situations occurred because children were given clothing that did not fit (Doherty & Grove, 1832).

Overall, the movement that was started to end child labor corresponded with the rise of socialist ideologies such as utopian civilization and Marxism. For example, Robert Owen, a utopian socialist, believed it was necessary for business owners to make profits and increase their wealth; he also believed it was important that the workers in these businesses were treated fairly. In Owen's own mills he tried to improve the life of his employees in various ways including: creating a company store in which employees could buy goods, limiting the hours of workers, providing basic healthcare, education for both children and adults. Karl Marx, the famous socialist, was also highly opposed to child labor in the

Industrial Revolution. In the Communist Manifesto, which is the book that he wrote with fellow socialist, Friedrich Engels, he argued that the failing of capitalism and classical liberalism in relation to how the unfortunates in society were taken advantage of by the richest. He was critical of child labor as it seemed to be an exploitation of the poor by the wealthy. Charles Dickens, one of the famous British playwrights, condemned the use of child labor in several of his plays, including *A Christmas Carol* and *Oliver Twist*. Many of his writings were set in the time of the Industrial Revolution and often look into the gaps that existed between the rich and the poor working-class, especially in terms of how it obstructed children in British industrial society. William Blake, another famous writer like Charles Dickens, strictly opposed child labor in England and in his famous poetic series *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*, he openly expresses his distress towards child labor and cruelty of the factory owners. In his poem, *The Chimney Sweeper*, he presents the voice of the poor children who work as chimney sweeps and are forced by their parents to get extra income for their living. The despicable figure of the child sweep is a key emblem in Blake's poems, *The Chimney Sweeper*, which is regarded as a social protest against child labor. These innocent sweeps are not only the victims of the brutal exploitation but they are also covered with the smoke of industrialization, thus binding two central Romantic preoccupations: childhood; and the impact of the Industrial Revolution on the natural world. A report to a parliamentary committee on the employment of child sweeps in 1817 noted: "that 'the climbing boys' as young as four were sold by their parents to master-sweeps, or recruited from workhouses. As the average size of a London chimney was only seven inches square, to encourage the sweeps to climb more quickly, pins were 'forced into their feet' by the boy climbing behind; lighted straw was applied for the same purpose. 'Easy prey to those whose occupation is to delude the ignorant and entrap the unwary', a sweep might be shut up in a flue for six hours and expected to carry bags of soot weighing up to 30lbs. Many suffered 'deformity of the spine, legs and arms' or contracted testicular cancer." This practice was carried on until 1875, nearly 50 years after Blake's death.

In "Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Innocence*, Blake subtly constructs the concept of social hierarchy. He disapproves of the institution of the Church of England and the inflexible system of monarchy from the perspective of a child; he questions the social organization of classes. The persona is a chimney sweep whose "mother died when [he] was very young, (Blake, 1789) after which his "father sold [him]" into the chimney sweeping trade. From this line it can be concluded that the family of the child is part of the working class of British society, Blake's focal society, where it was common in families that most of the children did not survive due to health problems and lack of research in medicine. There is a great gap in the class system as the working class is under absolute poverty which forces them to send their children to work in an unhealthy environment and to give up the right to be educated. Children are traded for working under masters who exploit them to work more and give less wage. The persona uses the metaphor, "coffins of black" to refer to the chimneys boys like himself work in. These "coffins" symbolize death which represents the destiny of the chimney sweepers who eventually die from breathing carcinogenic soot into their lungs at such a young age. These children are waiting for their journey to end and reach their destination, which is death (Batoool & Lodhi, 2023). Blake points out the reality on which society and the structures stand. 18th century England was in the way of progression as people were in urge to make their social position to be better but the working class was still suppressed to remain in their domains. The social hierarchy Blake highlights in "Chimney Sweeper" of *Songs of Innocence* is discreetly constructed as the persona who has limited awareness of their position.

The poem of the same name in *Songs of Experience* openly speaks about 18th century Britain and the superior position of the Church as well as state, suppressing the masses and demanding their total subservience. The speaker of this poem is a more vocal social critic who is hopeless and in dismay. This is evident from the words such as his cry of "Weep! Weep!" to show the distressed emotions of the chimney sweepers. The word 'weep' is not incidentally being found within the word 'sweep'. Blake also aims to reveal the real face of The Church and its influence. The speaker of the poem tells the reader that his mother has gone to the church to pray, not considering her child to be with him rather to work and earn for them. It shows their lack of attention and affection towards their child by not caring about him dressed

“in the clothes of death.” Blake further suggests that the parents are the main culprit for the child's condition, as they force him to work every day in the unbearable workplace. The Church held a dominant position during 18th century society because they provided charity for struggling families and church leaders often held positions of power within government and communities. It became a need for the working class to have good terms with the religious members. Blake implies that the parents had no other choice rather to send their children to work. The Church was in favor of maintaining class distinction and cared more for better working of the society rather than protecting children. Blake ponders on the issue of how selfish these institutions are in filling their own pockets by enforcing work on small children. He shows his distaste towards the religion and state to be the reason for ruining the future of young boys. Whereas, the persona in this poem throws light on the importance of “Church and King”, the term ‘King’ metaphorically refers to the state, at this time closely aligned to the Church because the religion of British kings determined Britain’s religion – in Blake’s time, Christianity. The state has all the power and wealth to control people. Thus, in the darker and more overtly critical opinion “Chimney Sweeper” in *Songs of Experience*, elucidates that the social hierarchy is in support of the Church and State at the expense of the working classes.

Furthermore, Blake is addressing his audience to be fortunate enough to read as during the 18th century only the upper and middle class could get the opportunity to read and afford to go to public school. In the *Songs of Innocence* version of the poem, the persona addresses an unnamed new party, telling them, So your chimneys I sweep and in soot I sleep. The little sweeper is an outcast and so he speaks to the privileged ones to be able to afford chimneys and sweepers to clean them. It shows that those who had wealth controlled people and had power. The working class could not challenge their authority and so had to surrender in the urge to earn a living for the family. The powerful masters position is juxtaposed with the inferior status of chimney sweepers who are locked up in black coffins. Similarly, in the *Songs of Experience* it is shown that the chimney sweeper asks a way goer about his parents. As the sweeper is abandoned by his parents, he is curious to ask the anonymous person. The person is unaware of the cruelty against the sweepers and the way they are treated by the masters. The passer symbolizes the upper and middle class who have not witnessed the situation of the small workers like the other people of his status. Consequently, Blake speaks for the oppressed and the exploitation that has been commenced by the elites for creating more profit and progressing. He displays his consent for the inferior ones for not being provided with sufficient facilities and being manipulated at the hands of state and religious institutions.

Research Methodology

Research Methodology confers and gives detail of data that is collected and analyzed using different methods in any enquiry. It is a key part of the research thesis, paper or dissertation. This area deals with type and nature of research used as well as tells the reader to evaluate data in a reliable and valid way (McCombes & George, 2022). The study is conducted using exploratory design. It is a kind methodology approach that answers questions which have not been yet openly studied or there has been no in depth analysis conducted on it (George, 2021). The theoretical approach is used to identify the aspects of Marxist perspective that is prevalent in the poem “Chimney Sweeper” by William Blake. The research uses qualitative techniques to collect data in order to analyze key elements used in the poem. Qualitative research methodology encompasses collecting data and analyzing it non- numerical form to comprehend important concepts, features, opinions and experiences. It involves in depth analysis of a problem or finding new inventive ideas for the research (Bhandari, 2020).

The population in research denotes the entire group of members, objects or events that have particular features and are of interest to the researcher. It is based on the research objectives, elements and investigation parameters (Thomas, 2023). The study consists of a total population of 19 poems written by William Blake in his collection of *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*.

Sample of Study

Sample is a subset of the total population in research. It was selected from a larger group which is of interest to the researcher for the purpose of gathering data and to make conclusions (Thomas, 2023). The sample size selected from the total population in the research process is only one poem, which is “Chimney Sweeper” by William Blake out of his collection of 19 poems in *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*. The poem “Chimney Sweeper” discusses child labor in London and the little chimney sweepers working under a suffocated environment (Litspring, 2020). The poem seeks to highlight the issue of child labor and the capitalist ideology that overrules. The children are in wait to be rescued but they are destined to die as the only way of escape is death. They hope for peace which they get in the afterlife. In the *Songs of Innocence*, the persona is given the voice of a child who is suffering. While, in the second version, which is *Songs of Experience*, the persona is an adult speaker who encounters a boy abandoned in snow. The adult comes to know about the situation of the boy and is aware of society’s inequality and injustice. He comes as a savior to help the child.

Content-Analytic Framework

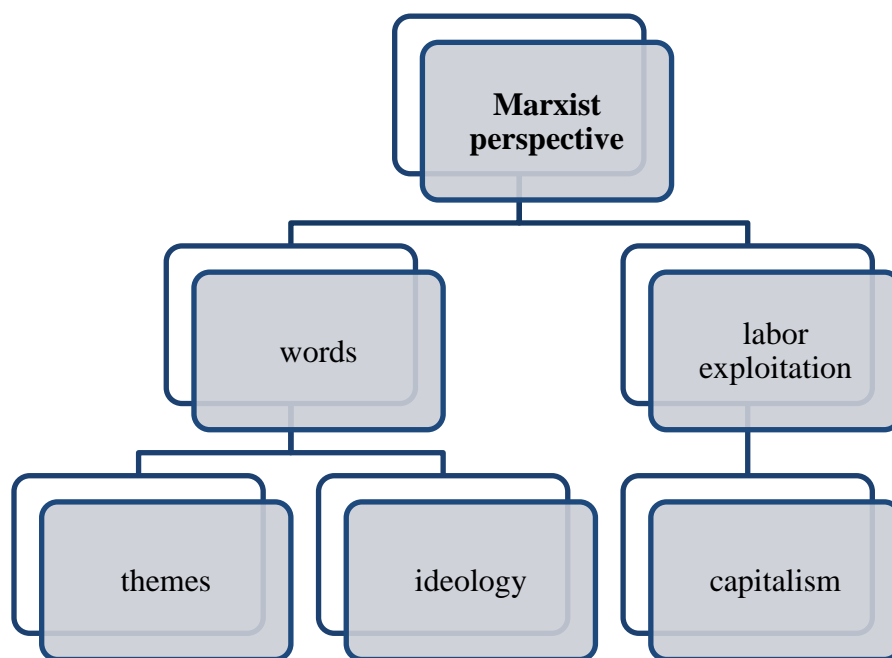


Figure 2

Content Analytic framework is a method used in research to classify patterns in particular pieces of text or recorded communication. In order conduct content analysis, the researcher collects data from specific pieces of texts, in written, oral or visual (Lou. A, 2019). The content analytic framework is qualitative in nature, which seeks to evaluate the text by careful reading and through a series of step by step processes. In the poem, “Chimney Sweeper” the issue of child labor and labor exploitation has been raised by Blake to reveal the Capitalist ideology that prevails in the late 18th century society. All these aspects are covered clearly in the text which depicts the dark phase of life at the time of the Industrial Revolution. Marxist Perspective covers the issues of Capitalism and Exploitation of labor in this poem. These problems are raised by Blake to reveal the inhumanity of society and religion who use power to dominate over the lower class masses. The poem revolves around the world of little Chimney Sweepers. The poet uses language that reveals the real condition of these laborers working under an unhealthy environment. Words

like “little black thing”, “church”, “Death”, “dark”, “weep”. These words represent what treatment these children receive working under chimneys to earn livelihood.

The poem deals with the themes of Exploitation of children, Power of Religion, role of Imagination and Dreams and corruption of society. These themes expose the cruelty and vicious treatment towards the children working in Chimneys to earn a living for their families. Blake highlights the physical and emotional pain to work as a laborer. Subsequently, he also gives a sense of hope to the little ones through their imagination. Dreams are from escaping from the shackles of prison that is the Chimney. The ideology behind the poem is Marxist perspective in which he points out capitalism to be the cause of class conflict and socio-ecological problems of humans. The working class is mostly oppressed under socialism. Capitalism, further, leads to capitalist exploitation, which benefits the upper class giving more power and control to utilize the energies of the working class to create surplus. The capital moves between the more powerful and the less powerful are least concerned.

Analysis and Discussion

Both of William Blake’s poem “*The Chimney Sweeper*”, published in *Songs of Innocence* and the *Songs of Experience*, sheds light upon the dark realities of society. By highlighting a prominent social problem of child labor in 18th and 19th century England, he tries to bring out the fact that was hidden for a long time which was finally brought towards the reader in the form of verses. This poem is Blake’s commentary upon the issue of child labor and his use of imagery visually portrays the brutality of the Industrial Revolution. As Wickteed proclaims, “Deeper knowledge of Blake will reveal no darkly buried meaning, only a deeper sense in the meaning obvious to all (Essays24, 2011), the fact that Blake used the persona of a child in his poem was express his concern towards the exploitation of little angels, who were victimized by the ruling elites. The Industrial Revolution not only affected the life of the individuals but it changed the way man used to live before. He also condemns the institutions of society by mentioning ‘church’ and tells that the chimney sweeper’s parents were there “to praise God and his priest and King” (line 11). During the Victorian Period, the Church had great influence upon the people and politics. As the Church was inseparable from the state, it led to the division of two classes. The Church was mostly in favor of the upper class, which was associated as an ‘elite hypocrite’. The doors of the Church were open for aristocracy but not for the poor and mediocre.

By applying the Marxist theory in accordance with “*The Chimney Sweeper*”, it is evident that the children’s innocence is ruined by the oppression of the Church. The Church or religion can be both seen as biased and promoting hegemony in the society. The Church and religion present the holy image and faith of the individuals. The capitalist or bourgeoisie abuses this faith in order to have hegemony over the lower class. The poem discusses the issue of child labor from the perspective of a young boy working in an unhygienic and asphyxiated environment. Also, child laborers had no other choice to work in order to help their parents earn a living to feed the family. The child labor laws at that time were ineffective and the only restriction was to wash the child once a week and they must not climb chimneys when fire was lit inside. Blake highlights the cruel nature of the society and government towards these little angels who worked day and night like slaves.

The study also answers the way children in “Chimney Sweeper” are exploited to the extent of being deprived of basic needs. They were given very low wages and had to sleep on bags of ashes while working under the soot. They also had to face punishment for not fulfilling the demands of the masters. Furthermore, the age at which they start to work was even less than eight years’ old, so it seems that they had no right to be protected.

The role of society and religion plays a great part in the poem. Likewise it was evident that the parents of these children are busy in Churches and are less concerned about their children. The religion has made them blind to see what torture these children face while working in chimney’s. Society is not working for the welfare of the little ones and is only functioning to make more profit to progress. The government did

not take any step to give proper health facilities to these children and they had to die out of untreatable diseases.

Conclusion

The study extends to the use of Marxist ideology in the poem “The Chimney Sweeper” highlights the aspects of labor exploitation in tackling the issue of child labor. The prospective study explores the concept of Capitalism in creating class differences and colonizing the minds of the working class. The chimney sweepers are the depiction of the lower class which is always neglected at the hands of the upper class. The poem illustrates the way labors are treated and manipulated by the Masters.

The children in the poem accept their fate and believe that one day they would be set free if they keep on working; it shows that they fall into a *false consciousness*. It is evident from the line “So if all do their duty they need not fear harm” (line 24). Although, he is aware that this work might cost his life, as what is directed in his dreams: “an angel who had a bright key”, “bright key” symbolizes the fire as the cause of their death, “he opened the coffins and set them all free” from the burden of being enslaved. The use of angel character exposes the capitalist disguised as a holy spirit. Thus, it is clear that the one that forces the children to fall into false consciousness is the oppression of the church by using religious faith to infiltrate the minds of tiny works.

Blake has portrayed two different aspects of describing the situation of children. Both types agree that the life of the child on the earth is miserable and unfulfilling, in a tyrant and uncharitable society as displayed by Blake in his use of symbolism. The poem “The Chimney Sweeper’ in *Songs of Experience* presents a very bleak and pessimistic picture of the world. It indicates that the innocent are corrupted by something evil. Blake’s aim is not to blame the parents who force their children to work but the rich and powerful people who exploit the poor and the weak. The Kings enjoy their wealth and power at the expense of the subjects. The Priest enjoys his work. The Creator of the world or the religion is responsible for this injustice to the poor masses. Thus, it can justifiably be stated that Blake tries to highlight the discrimination of both late 18th century British society and a world in which such injustice is exiting. It clearly shows that Blake wanted to expose the brutality of society and to make people aware of the suffering of these people at that time. Through this study, it can be analyzed that Blake’s poem “The Chimney Sweeper” is in accordance to Marxist ideology of exploitation of labor. As Blake pointed out the oppression caused to the poor people of the 18th century by making them work in poor conditions and offering very meager income or no wage for the work done.

So, it is evident that Blake presents a reflection of Marxist ideas through his mixture of beautiful verses and expressions. The poem is self-explanatory in telling the readers to be aware of the consequences these children face due to the industrialisation and economic changes. There is a great need for revolution for making change at the workplace and the importance of protecting labor rights. Blake seems to create awareness in society to stand against injustice and oppression.

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Conflict of Interest


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ORCID iDs

Filza Batool ¹ <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5017-7774>

Muhammad Arfan Lodhi ² <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5627-5666>

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