

NEWSLETTER

UNFETTERED

The Power of Pure Expression

THE HAUNTING REALITY OF 'PARASITE'

AARUSHI
B.A. ENGLISH HONOURS, 1ST YEAR

"The big fancy house close to the sun is just as dark as the structure near the gutter that's barely holding it together."

Shot with the ALEXA 65 by cinematographer Hong Kyung-pyo under the vision of director Bong Joon-ho, 'Parasite' is a 2019 masterpiece that exposes the reality of an idealized world. The movie masterfully explores class division in South Korea and is a pessimistic take on capitalism. There lies a strong motif behind the perfection in every frame of the movie, each structure standing as a metaphor for the towering socio-economic division established under the norms of a rat-race, essentially adapted as the Bible to run the world. Director Bong Joon-ho's genius follows intricate geometrical patterns, filled with a deeper sense of meaning— every window, every door, the presence of light and dark, and the clever use of "smell"— each minute detail is a symbol of contrast between the two families.

The Kim family— situated on the lower end of the socio-economic strata— finds an opportunity to infiltrate the wealthy Park family's residence, posing as professional workers, hence becoming the said "parasites" of the movie. The Kims' struggle with money is explicitly depicted in every aspect, moulding their surrounding physicality and mentality. From their semi-basement household situated at the very end of the hill near the gutter, to their lack of empathy for taking advantage of the Parks' vulnerability, exploiting their innocence on all levels becomes a reason for the audience to watch and analyse a point of view from the far end of this metaphorical food-chain in the realm of capitalism. The Kims have idealized the superficial existence of the Parks, that strips them off their human emotions and essentially turns them into mechanical beings devoid of any sentiments. This ambition however backfires on them as their struggles only increase multiple folds while they try to maintain this facade, concealing their actual identities.



There is a boundary that exists between the members of the two households— an invisible line that makes these families act differently under the same roof. Although the Kims enjoy the luxury and conveniences of the Park residence, yet they find themselves out of place. Every interaction of the Kims with the Parks reminds them of the fact that like their identities, this wealth is also not real. In truth, it will take them generations to cross this said abstract boundary that divides them and the Parks.

The overarching theme, however, follows the parasitism of the system that carries out on a bigger scale. The Parks are an innocent wealthy family, unknown to the dark reality that lies in the basement of their household, mooching off their capital. Mr. Park is the diligent businessman, and Mrs. Park is the dutiful wife who wishes the best for her family and goes to every extent to make it happen— albeit she does it on the backs of her workers.



There is no real struggle depicted within the Park family. At the end of the day, they just have to reach out and grab whatever they like, and it will be available the very next moment.

This lifestyle has accommodated itself so well that the Parks are numb to the actual struggles of the world and hold absolutely no sympathy for those who are across the line.

Everything is insensitively carried out under the name of "professionalism". Director Bong Joon-ho wanted his audience to see the world in a new perspective where they could identify the circumstance-driven decisions taken by an individual. The tattered and broken condition of the Kims, much contrary to the stable and luxurious lifestyle of the Parks, somehow makes it justifiable as to why there was a need for such infiltration.

The exploration of the depths of a superficial reality exposes the darkness of greed and selfishness that is inherent to the core functioning of capitalism. The brutal competition and the superior class ranks in society become a lure for one to keep chasing this dream of being at the top. The Kims meet their demise in the climactic scene of Mr. Park's murder by Ki-taek. His acceptance of his class rank and the bottled up anger for the heartless capitalist comes out in the form of violence, a theme running parallel to the desperation that comes with class inequality.

The haunting accuracy of Bong Joon-ho's representation of the opposite ends of the same rope is highly commendable. The entire existence of the Kim family is on the peril, and while they deceive themselves for a limited time period, their final showdown with their reality ensures their miserable end. The Parks on the other hand live in an empire where even their leftovers can support nearly ten families like the Kims'.

Thus, the Parks are the parasitical entity that feeds off the skills and obedience of their employees, making class disparity the ultimate parasite in the film that sets up a standard of aspirational wealth, compelling the poorer characters to become upwardly mobile and enjoy all the benefits of wealth— even if their efforts destroy their very existence.

"Thus, the big fancy house atop the hill stands calm and peaceful, yet it is just an exaggerated extension of the chaos that carries on down the hill."

CATS AND INTROSPECTION

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I may not be a cat parent right now or never find an opportunity to be one but I am certain about the fact that I can always be a person who cares for cats around me for as long as I want. It becomes difficult for me when I find cats to feed, to play with or simply, to be with for only a limited amount of time. A part of me always wants to take them home or be with them for some more time. It is easier to be wishful but I know that it is unimaginably difficult to take care of cats; not like it is impossible or unimaginable but it is not easy either. Caring for cats is accompanied by several responsibilities and one needs to be able to give consistent amount of time and energy. It is not quantum physics but at the same time, it is like caring for any human being. Cats are wonderful beings and I am glad I realised it and learnt it; although very late but is still better than not realizing this at all. I am grateful to the opportunities that I found and searched to meet cats, care for them and understand them. Some of the happiest and cherishable memories of my life have been around cats. When I started with college, cats and dogs provided me solace and company during the times I felt lonely and when I wanted to be left alone. There was a time when my head was filled with all kinds of superstitions that I had heard over the years from other people and I had made up on my own about cats. It took one moment and a cat to discard all of it. There's no going back now. I used to be a "dog person" and I now I laugh about it because I cannot seem to put myself in either of the boxes. There are days when I want to protect all the dogs and the cats in the world. On other days, I love cats more and get a little tired of dogs so I establish some boundaries for them but there are days when I have less love for cats.

THE 'PICK ME'

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The pick me phenomenon is by no means a new one. Prevalent as a trope and a meme since the 1990s, its roots are much older. But before we delve further into the topic, it would be prudent to define the term I have unceremoniously plopped into your laps. To keep things simple, a 'pick me' is a member of any community that purposefully separates themselves from it, believing themselves superior, often in hopes of gaining favour from members of the opposite community. The 'Not like other girls' girls are an example that gained much ridicule and infamy for the same. There are umpteen videos and memes mocking this very trope. The girl in the book who is simply not like other girls, men who are not like other men because they shun them, queer people who cater to their oppressors. The list of examples is inexhaustive. All of these are incredibly toxic and damaging behavioural tendencies to their communities in major way. This article focuses on the pick me girls for obvious reasons: they are the most ridiculed, and they exist in greater numbers. Easy as it is to poke fun at them, let us look past that base instinct and attempt to understand exactly how so many girls and women are under this misconception. To be blunt, it is an unfortunate product of internalised misogyny, an intended action by patriarchy to brainwash women. Since a tender age, we are taught to judge other women, either we judge them for not being traditional enough, or for not being progressive enough. This infighting distracts us from the obvious offender, patriarchy. The men before us, fancying themselves master puppeteers, pit everyone against everyone, not just women against women. The societal system we all have somehow contributed to keeping in power is the same system that makes everyone feel unsafe. Yes, even the men. What can we do then? Are we to lay down and accept our fate? Nay, most certainly not. This is where feminism and education come in. Start with yourself. Educate yourself on why everyone is valued, important, and equal.



Make it a habit to not make surface level judgements, and most importantly respect other people's decisions and lifestyles as long as they aren't hurting anyone. After that is done, educate those around you while keeping yourself safe (people can be stubborn against change, your wellbeing comes first). Studies have shown that sexual crimes go down by 70% when people, especially men, are taught about consent. Not only will they not engage in such vile behaviour, they are more likely to speak and act up if they see such incidents happen in public. So, I say to anyone who might read this article, not everyone is a teacher, but that doesn't mean you can't be an educator. Educate yourself and others. Don't be the friend or family member who "didn't know". Instead of assuming your friends and family would never engage in open, honest discussions, everyone involved might just learn something. Teach people who learn, and cut off those who don't. For in all honesty, do you really wish to surround yourself with those who refuse to accept people living their lives as equal? It might seem like I preach from a pedestal, removed from it all. Rest assured that isn't the case, for I too used to be a pick me. Unfortunately, most women are. The fabulous women whom I have had the fortune of having as peers and professors are the ones to thank for my speedy journey down this road of self-education and realisation. A blessing I wish upon you all, to be surrounded by supportive women to help, guide, and keep you company.

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