

**Film Review**  
**Pradip Biswas**

***Parasite: A Mirror to Korean Black Tale***



Bong Joon-ho this time has returned to Cannes with a more or realistic film *Parasite*, marked by satirical suspense drama. It moves with litotes to tell his viewers that South Korea in fact wears a mask failing people to know the inside of Korean reality as tenebrous as dark clouds. Song Kang-ho. Near protagonist looks as posh as anything but it is only cortical upside. *Parasite* in its treatment and content is nothing but a bizarre black comedy about social status, false hope, aspiration, materialism and the patriarchal family unit which the people who accept the idea of having a servant class.

In other words, *Parasite* is about a wealthy Korean family in a modern-day Downton Abbey containing upstairs-downstairs situation, one far more unstable than the patrician caste realizes. The film could perhaps be a bit straight rather than oblique and mean, and deliver its jeopardy and payoff with more catharsis. The film is made with an aim to be an enjoyable, elusive and scabrous flick

about a mix of servitude and blend of trickery that is a ridiculous theme in Korean cinema.



The film, it is believed, could be compared with, say, Park Chan-wook's *The Handmaiden*, an adaptation of the novel *Fingersmith* by Sarah Waters; and it also aims at Im Sang-son's 2010 Cannes entry *The Housemaid*, a remake of Kim Ki-Young's classic Korean thriller from 1960. It should be mentioned the body of the film seems notable as it remains the film's focus on poverty, desperation, moral turpitude and the phenomenon of those in debt having to vanish to escape creditors always haunting the victims who are the borrowers in huge debt. The noted actor Song Kang-ho portrays Ki-taek, a shiftless, unemployed man who lives in a chaotic, dingy, stinky and squalid basement with his wife, Chung-sook, his smart yet cynical twenty something daughter, Ki-jung (Park So-dam), and son, Ki-woo (Choi Woo-sik). The director without making any excuse cares to show us the social decadence badly affecting the majority of poor Koreans, asking for better living!! Korea is not a heaven as is depicted by the Govt. platform and the mercenary adds!

Bon Joon ho as a director manifests with courage the surface as well as the interior of Korea as a society where all are out of work and out of cash. Then Ki-woo gets a stroke of fortune: an old school-friend helps him get a lucrative tutoring job. With a fake college diploma created by Ki-jung, he shows up at the fabulously lavish home of the Park family. Wealthy entrepreneur Mr Park lives with his delicate, unworldly wife, Yeon-kyo, their teen daughter, Da-hye and her wacky kid brother, Da-song. They have a loyal, live-in housekeeper named Moon-gwang (Jeong-eun Lee).

Likable cunning Ki-woo is an instant hit with his new employers and his demure pupil Da-hye gets a crush on him, which the clever ruthless Ki-woo

does nothing to discourage. Then the distraught lady of the house, Yeon-kyo, reveals that she also needs an art tutor for her young son, to mould his painting talents; Ki-woo suggests his sister while concealing their relationship, and soon the brazen Ki-jung is also a success with these rich suckers. It looks as if the wealthy Parks could be a meal ticket for the whole crooked family, all pretending to be complete strangers to each other. But little-kid Da-song has come to notice something that the grownups haven't: he thinks and contemplates why do these people do have strange similarity that evades the big entrepreneur?



The servant is someone with an intimate knowledge of his or her employer, and yet this intimacy is so easily – and inevitably – poisoned with resentment. There is a licensed transgression in servitude, and this transgression is nightmarishly amplified when it is a question of a entire family seeking to get up close and personal.

When the game runs full circle, the poorer family see themselves in a distorting mirror that cruelly reveals to them how wretched they are by contrast and reveals the riches that could in a bizarre way be theirs. It is almost a supernatural and the director deliberately does it pin on an invasion of the lifestyle snatchers. Parasite in its stilted manner instills its tendrils into us, the large viewers!!! Bong Joon-ho is ruthless to manifest the ugly truths about social existence of Korae, boasting of high decibel growth of GDP!!!

*Parasite* is a film that seems to touch our raw nerves with a social revelation as yet unthinkable.

---

**Pradip Biswas is a Member of Fipresci-India. He is based in Kolkata.**