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~Editor's Note~

Dear Readers & Contributors,

Welcome to the October 2021 issue of IJELLS.

From the references to Ramayana in the 'Adventurous Return before Lockdown' to the representation of Ravan in Annadurai's The Swooning of the God of Justice, the modern scholarship engages with the cultural encyclopaedia of Ramayana in an attempt to decode it. The papers on 'Dark Humour' and 'Gamification' are interesting to read along with the other papers.

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Happy Reading and Happy Sharing!

Dr. Mrudula Lakkaraju
Chief Editor

~ Chief Editor~

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~English Creative Section~

Idiomatically and Poetically Speaking

ES Chandrasekaran

There is an age-old dispute over using idioms in communication, be it spoken or written. Sometime back, a colleague of mine, who was passionate for idioms, sent his resignation letter to the Head of the Department stating “As I am under the weather, also I am the Cinderella of the department; I want to resign at once”. No doubt he has conveyed whatever he wanted to say except that the boss would have to run for a dictionary or curse him for the hidden codes.

Though it is time for celebrations of the birth anniversary, Shakespeare, who has inexorably played with many idiomatic usages besides coining some more, dowry is his own invention used in King Lear, a sea change, take the crown, put a tongue to name a few, one can't make use of them in a normal communication.

Thus, using such idioms would certainly invite the wrath of the receiver, who either does not have time to enjoy the richness of the language or have no ears for it. No doubt idioms and poetry being different genres, add more pep to the language. I came across one such idiomatic expression in the newspaper headline as: ‘Hobson’s Choice for Gavaskar’. Being impatient for tracing what the reporter wanted to convey here, I referred to a standard dictionary and found out that ‘Hobson’ was a horse hirer in England and he would number the horses and tell the customers to take only through his number order, so to say, the customer did not have his own choice of choosing the best horse from the stable. Gavaskar had no other choice but to be an opening batsman on that particular day. My God! I am sure the reporter must have waited for one such occasion to be show off. I wonder myself as to how many readers would have cursed him rather than appreciating his sense for such usage.

When a student of class 12 was asked to write a sentence using the idiomatic phrase ‘Made for’, he quickly wrote, “The husband and wife are made for each other” Of course, he was right except that it does not convey idiomatically, for ‘made for’ means ‘move toward’. In the phrase ‘drop out’ for instance, “He was a school dropout”, which means literally he discontinued going to school. If used idiomatically, then it is remove or eliminate someone as in the sentence, “He was dropped out of the team” sure enough to make the learners or even the readers get confounded in arriving at the meaning. Do we have poetry as an effective way of easy communication? I presume this too will cause an ulcer to the learners, who feel safe with a limited number of words both for their spoken and written usage.

If an average reader comes across a sentence “India’s economic condition has gone to dogs”, I am sure he will break his head if he literally focuses the meaning. Imagine if one gets a letter from a friend or from someone close to the family “Trust this finds you all in the pink

of health and I hope your parents are alive and kicking”, I am pretty sure one’s temperature would shoot through the roof.

The argument that poetry as a literary genre without which elegance of the language is lost may not hold good today as the user wants the language to be user-friendly. G.S. Mill said, “Language is the dress of the human thought”. Let us take a line or two of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, ‘The garden of Eden is much better than where the King Solomon held dalliance with his spare Egyptian spouse’ or his famous lines: ‘For good unknown is sure not had, or had but unknown is not had at all’ can’t be understood sans the help of a teacher of English, for dictionary helps you out only literally and not contextually. If you accept my defense of idioms and poetry, you would be ostracised by the easy-going readers of today. So, reserve your idioms and poetic expressions only if the occasion demands, will you?

Adventurous Return before Lockdown

Seema Sarkar

Sapna was an Associate Professor, in a girls' college in Lucknow and at this time in March, 2020, there were exams in the college and she was assigned the duty of a Proctor. She was a hard task master and was known for her discipline. On the first day, after doing her work efficiently till 9.30 am, she asked permission from her Superior for calling her son in Hyderabad, who was undergoing a surgery for shoulder dislocation. Everyone, along with the Principal was stunned to find her so composed while performing her duties. They proposed to her to take leave, and a flight to be with her son Soumilya.

To her good luck or the bad luck, the pandemic COVID-19 crisis started to spread in India and the exams were postponed, until further Government Orders. She then decided to reach her son for post operative care, the next day. Soumilya had already gone through a successful surgery in the hands of the specialist, two days back with his roommate, who accompanied from morning to evening. Then the other friend pitched in to be with him until his discharge the next evening. When he was planning this surgery, he discussed it with his mother, but he didn't want his 71 year grandmother to travel, and be exposed to the disease, while accompanying his mother. Sapna with a heavy heart was convinced to stay at Lucknow and connected with him on voice and video calls.

After her husband's untimely death, when Soumilya was barely 2 years old, she stayed with her parents and was independently carrying on her responsibilities. Soumilya was also groomed into a fine person under the supervision of her grandparents. Like her brilliant mother, he also maintained the record of topper in School and after his Intermediate course he was selected into IIT and then through the campus selections started a job with a multinational company in Hyderabad. First he started living as a paying guest with one of his friends. Later on, he shifted to his own place. Although he was careful in gym or swimming sessions, accidents do occur. So, when he felt pain in his right shoulder, he consulted the doctors and finally a shoulder specialist. He was advised to undergo surgery and he decided to schedule it as per his convenience and his leave approval.

Sapna made arrangements for her mother with the maids and flatmates, booked the next day flight and left to meet her son. When she landed, the weather changed from sunny to cloudy and on the way home and it started raining. In the hour-long journey, she called her mother and brother about her landing safely and continued to get directions from her son to reach the destination safely. The mother-son duo was elated to meet after a long time. After having dinner with Soumilya and his friend, Sapna went to sleep, planning to rearrange the room and kitchen the next day. When the maid came, Sapna got the cleaning done, prepared breakfast and lunch, helped her son with the cold compress, body bath etc. Soumilya had learnt to eat with a spoon in left hand.

On the day of get united against the spreading pandemic, our prime minister Modi gave the call for 'thali' beating and everywhere there was the conch blowing and bell ringing. The mother-son duo sat together for meditation peacefully. It was for inner peace, good health and well being of all. It was a rejuvenating experience for both.

Then suddenly 'The Lockdown News' was in the air. She had her return flight on 26 and by midnight of 24 the domestic flights were to be stopped. Now, she started rescheduling her flight, and got one via Goa, which was auto cancelled in the morning. She was now tense as her mother was alone at Lucknow and her younger brother from Greater Noida started pestering her regarding her safety. She finally could book a direct flight by 3 pm and was prepared to leave. Now was the tough task to reach the airport. As Soumilya had a scooter as a mode of transport, but he was not in a condition to drive and his mother had luggage along which could not be transported on a two wheeler. All local friends sought help but in vain. Then the emergency number 112 was dialled. To communicate in the local language, the maid's help was sought and were asked to reach a nearby police station. How does one reach a nearby police station to get help to reach the airport was the million dollar question now.

By 12 noon, both mother and son came down and literally started to signal for lift to the few vehicles passing by. With each passing minute, there was increasing anxiety. Then she entered the gate of a nearby hospital, in the hope, that the ambulance going somewhere could drop her. But the staff could not help. Then as a ray of hope, two young boys going out of the hospital premises after a check up were requested to drop them to the nearby police station. The two angels helped her generously and Soumilya returned to his flat with mixed emotions. He prayed for her safe landing home now by reaching the airport in time.

Reaching to the next square, seeing policemen there, they stopped the car so that Sapna could get help, but they simply directed for the next square ahead. They were so courteous that for her sake detoured, to see her helplessness. At the next stop there was a police jeep and they directed her to another kilometre ahead of the taxi stand across the road. Now the young men left her and she thanked those angels wholeheartedly. They turned their car towards their home and she walked with her trolley luggage crossing the road to the taxis visible for the airport. She now called her son to know rates and then bargained for 500/- front seat for safety measures. Now the wait started for 3 more passengers for the back seat. One young man came with a backpack and settled but as time passed, both of us panicked. But we were helpless; as the driver seemed to be of a union, and got into heated argument with the boy. She also took pictures of his number plate. Another taxi came, she requested the new driver to talk to the other driver and shift them with him, as he had two passengers already. Maa Vindhyaivasini was merciful to her as the negotiation was successful and her journey towards the airport finally started.

At the airport entry, the security check, and other formalities were completed well in time. Sapna informed her mother, son and brother and the wait for the flight started. Sapna prayed for the safe landing and above all no cancellation of the flight now. To kill the time and tension, she took out Sita of Amish and tried to read the story. She wanted to enhance her

knowledge on interpretation of Sita, for her teaching in Post graduate Classes on Ramayana. Then came the announcement to board the plane and she took a sigh of relief. While waiting in the lobby, she made arrangements to reach home at Lucknow, which was also a herculean task. When she called a known taxi to take her home, he said he can't go out as per restrictions. Then she called her evening walk partner Bhabhiji on the first floor for help and by God's grace, her son agreed and the return journey was fixed. The flight reached on time and as per talk to Rohit, he was there at the airport to receive her. She finally completed her adventurous journey back home safe and sound. By 12 midnight, the domestic flights were stopped as per lockdown.

Sapna thanked God and her father in heaven, as she had a strong belief now that her father was with her in this crisis as he always did, when he was alive. She was in the right time with her son to help him post surgery and back to her mother well in time only with her father's blessings.



The Ghost in the Kitchen

Sharmila Deshmukh



Since my childhood I have heard weird stories about ghosts but never did I experience one! It was during the 'Dussehra' holidays that I planned to visit my ancestral and inherited mansion lest would I leave this world without having the last glimpse of it. I was pretty enthusiastic and thrilled at the thought of visiting and was also a little apprehensive because it was not the beautiful and well maintained mansion I remembered from my childhood days. My so called cousins had declared that I had no right over it as daughters are not the legal heirs to it! It was a journey which had secret destinations unknown to me with my inner voice silent and ignorant of those strange things. It is said that the saddest thing about betrayal is that it never comes from your enemies but from our own people. I consider that people to whom I have been sympathetic and kind have deceived me more. The beast in me was sleeping not dead!

Still, my passion and emotion articulated my entire life decisions and my soul believed that no one had the right to tell me about my responsibility, rights and duties. I decided that I would visit my roots and take my legal possession of it. None of my Kin agreed to accompany me as they too felt that daughters should not even think or talk about legal matters pertaining to their rights. Their glances articulated that I was committing some blasphemy and I would be punished for it. Nonetheless my conviction and strength drove me to cross the threshold of the antique legacy of my ancestors. The thought of going to my palace was thrilling and exciting as the visuals of the beautiful mansion clouded my eyes.

The ancestral castle came into our life for a reason. Like a season to add an essence of virtuous flavour and worthy spices to our life, sometimes an immoral flavour and bad spices also is essential for our life. It is the thoughts that come into mind no matter how respectable or how sad a role they played taught us something that will disclose itself to us at a particular point. I had trust that everything happens for a purpose, even if we are not sensible and wise enough to comprehend and appreciate it. As I believed that whatever happens is best and this idea was locked in my mind. What ensued is the nine days of festival which marked the tenth day 'Dussehra'.

As such, the very first day of the nine days festival, I stepped into the courtyard of the mansion. The view sent waves of shock to my veins and for a few seconds I was numb without any idea of where I was standing. The mansion was in shambles as was my right over it! The veranda where I played with my various toys and soft pebbles had lost its charm and beauty. The jasmine plant that intertwined the staircase to the terrace had vanished and only the dead barks looked at me with hope, the hope which had climbed the ladders of death. The hope that lived in my heart for years seem to join the dead barks of the once fragrant jasmine plant

that was withered and dead! The terrace was wailing in pain. As I had climbed up, footsteps were heard to my astonishment and I heard wailing from someone in the dim and dark alley. Looking back I realised that it was an illusion! My logic did not give any kind of intelligence and wisdom to it. I could judge if someone was playing with my mind and heart.

My inquisitiveness and fear were at its height when the villagers and the family members had announced that there was a ghost in the kitchen. At first I did not believe what they said, but slowly I could sense there was a presence or group of apparitions in the house. I could sense it. The whole castle was filled with bats, cats, spiders etc. My heart skipped and my mind lost its own intelligence. The kitchen was my favourite place in the mansion. I had always cherished the delicious dishes that the family would prepare. Each day was like a festival. I never believed in ghosts and the very thought that my favourite place in the mansion was haunted by the presence of a ghost was unsettling. I made up my mind that I will not only battle for my right but also combat with the darkness that breathed into the mansion.

I entered the mansion, washed my legs and hands and tried to peep into the kitchen where my grandmother used to prepare delicious food. I could still feel and smell the nourishment that had kept me healthy and strong till date. I did not find any kind of creepy and scary thing in the kitchen. I glanced and scanned at every wall and also 'The Well' that was there in the kitchen. The other side of the well was open to the villagers to draw water. It was learned that the villagers stopped drawing water from that well because they had seen the ghost at the other end of the well, and that was in the kitchen. Moreover, the well was dry and a wall was built on the other side so that the villagers could not see the ghost.

In the evening, I went for a walk and enquired about the entity that had trespassed into my ancestral home that I was fighting for. I was told how the ghost looked. The villagers tried their best to exhibit their knowledge in the use of adjectives and the visual effects. The visuals were life threatening but that did not hold back me to enter the kitchen that night. I just made a mug of tea and sat in the veranda and enjoyed the myriad stars in the sky. I was just trying to find in the stars my people who were in a hurry to reach the sky, leaving me alone to fight against all the odds of life. I sat there for so long that I didn't realize when the dawn knocked at the window of my mind and eyes.

It was 4.30am. I opened my eyes to the smell of the cow dung smeared at the entrance of the veranda as was the local morning routine of many households with striking and beautifully 'rangolis' drawn. I did not feel anything weird because I thought that the villagers must have taken the pain to provide me these basic morning rituals in my home. I was thankful to God that at least, in a way, they acknowledged and admitted my legal right over the mansion. Everything seems to appear as it was thirty years ago. I entered the wash area and found that there was hot water and a towel. I washed my face and then took bath. I really wanted to thank the people who were arranging things for me and making me feel at home in my home. Till then I had not entered or looked into the Puja chamber. I recollected that four years ago, the Idols and other things were stolen and there was nothing left in the Puja room. With an expectation of an empty room, I opened the doors of the room with the chanting and

humming of our family deity. I was dead dumb at the vision of my eyesight. The idols were standing in their places, beautifully decorated with jasmine flowers and the lamps lit on both the sides. I wiped both my eyes again and again but when I opened them they were still standing with glittering jewellery.

The fear that was submerged in the waves of confidence and strength began to gradually rise. I convinced my mind and heart that there isn't anything that I need to fear. With this, I made a positive attempt to enter into the kitchen. I saw that everything was very clean. The kitchen was washed and water was drawn and kept. There were vegetables and fruits in a basket. There was a kettle accompanied by a cup and saucer. The recognised that the saucer was mine as it bore my name on the back. I remembered that I had sketched it on the saucer thirty years ago. I poured the tea from the kettle and went to the veranda. I sat in the veranda relishing the jaggery tea. I could feel the jasmine flowers smile at me with mocking pride and beauty. The branches creatively intertwined along the staircase to the terrace. I suddenly realized that the plant was dead when I had entered the mansion the previous day. Was it my illusion or imagination, then or now?

Confused, I checked all the rooms in the mansion and by evening I came out with an idea of renovation of the mansion for my future generations to live in protected and secured with happiness.

In the evening, the stars visited me from the window of my grandfather's room. The whole day I survived on tea and I was famished. I was not in a mood to cook food and hoped that some villagers would bring me food as they had arranged other things. As I was waiting, I planned to eat fruits and listen to the radio. I thought of my grandmother who was married at young age, probably when she was 10 years. She was the most magical, generous, princely and charitable person that I had ever met.

I was about to go into the kitchen to get the fruits when I heard a very familiar voice coming from the kitchen. With a racing heart mixed with fear and excitement I tried to recollect the voice that was calling me again and again to come into the kitchen and have my dinner.

“Shammi, come to the kitchen and have your food. I have made your favourite Huli. Eat and sleep, you have to go back to Hyderabad tomorrow early in the morning” said the voice. “Go back to Hyderabad?” I said to myself.

Is there really a ghost in the kitchen? My conscience did its best to convince me. I dared not enter the kitchen. I was wondering how the ghost knew my name! With heavy heart and stiff steps, I went out of the mansion and tried to call few villagers to come and help me. None of them responded to my request. They behaved as if they did not hear me.

The voice reached the veranda calling my name along with names of my father, uncle, aunt, brother and all those who had left this earthly abode. The voice made me numb with fear. I felt isolated from the living world. The voice that seemed familiar, I realised, was that of my grandmother's!

Oh God! The ghost of my grandmother was there in the kitchen. She was very possessive of the kitchen as was I of the entire mansion. She made delicious 'Huli' that I liked very much. Everything was transparent now. The Gods in the puja room, the 'rangolis' outside the veranda, fruits and vegetables, the water in the bucket and the tea were all the work of the ghost. My grandmother was modest, humble and kind when she was alive. Is she the same now? These thoughts were running through my veins. If she is the same now, she would have not been a ghost then! Why is she calling me into kitchen? The thoughts numbed all my senses. For a minute I closed my eyes and prayed God to clear the silent dark clouds around me.

My grandmother came out of the kitchen. She had the charisma and beauty that reflected in the tinkling anklets that she wore, in the emerald glass bangles that adored her wrists, in the black beads that bound her to the mansion. She had echoed my vision of my thirst and passion.

She said, "Shammi, you are still here? We are all waiting for you in the kitchen. Come, have your food."

I walked with her to the kitchen as if I was under her magic charm. To my shock, I found my father, my brother, my aunt, my uncle and my grandfather sitting down on the floor in the kitchen having their food from a plantain leaf. I was offered the place beside my brother who had already started eating.

He said to me, "Shammi, you won one and me one. Let's play another game of chess. Let it be the best of three. Finish your food fast. Meanwhile, I will arrange the board."

What was happening? I couldn't understand a thing. Everything around appeared real. All the dead were living in the kitchen and without the technologically advanced vision, I was seeing them clearly. I felt that it is not a ghost but ghosts in the mansion and such a fool I was to assert my right over it! As I was drowned in these thoughts, I sensed a hand on my shoulder which sent chills down my spine. Was it a hallucination or a dream?

The voice whispered in my ears, "No one can take what is yours. What belongs to you fairly rightfully will be yours. In the mortal world, you own it temporarily. But in the immortal world, it is forever yours!"

I turned to look and was shocked to see myself smiling at me! Yes. It was true. The mansion was mine. I realized that I too had left my earthly abode and had reached my people in the heaven!

Finally, the ghost was at peace!

~English Literature~

Iconic and Historic Mea Culpa in CN Annadurai's *The Swooning of the God of Justice*

V Anbarasi Sundaram

Abstract

This article explores initially into the dynamic power of the most emphatic expressive form of art namely 'drama' and then briefly analyses the various evolutions that took place in the same from the past. Aringer Annadurai's writings are noted for their sincerity and authenticity in depicting the inexplicable and mute woes of the marginalized identified under all nomenclatures. This uncompromising social activist was also an astute defender of rationality. He took injecting rational sense in the minds of his ignorant brethren as his life's mission. He was a proclaimed and mind blowing orator and he used his writing skills to perform plays that would be highly revealing and thought provoking. Annadurai's literary scholarship evolved him into both a silver-tongued and sharp-witted scholarly speaker and writer. Resultantly he critically and with clinical accuracy assessed the age-old concepts held dear in connection with the epics and triggered the thought process of his audience to think rationally. The myth about the qualitative degradation stamped with the name of Ravana, Emperor of Sri Lanka, as a merciless ogre is taken to task in this play *The Swooning of the God of Justice* and with logical arguments, Ravana proved himself to be as innocent as the other characters meant to be embodiments of all positive virtues. This paper aspires to rivet this play under the theatre of ideas and its constructive, central and crucial role in the process of social sanitation.

Keywords: Theatre of Ideas, Rationality, Logical Argument, Social Sanitation

Theatre is life. There is no art, no craft, no learning, no yoga, and no action, which cannot be seen in it. (Bharata qtd. in Rangacharya 268)

Theatre, a large energetic public activity, is revelation. It is creative expression emerging in performance. Drama, a performing, co-operative, and collaborative art is an immediate, intense, and a communal form of literature. Dramas are, in fact, cultural constructs and represent ways of perceiving, structuring, and re-structuring reality. The ability and power of drama to create an emotional experience of the utmost intensity, akin to religious or mystical ecstasy, an experience that may bring a climactic turning point in an individual's metamorphosis or conversely a deep unsettling feeling or experience "is the true measure of its importance in the fabric of our lives, our society and our culture, the true extent of the 'very cunning of the scene' " (Esslin 178).

An important objective of dramatic performance according to Esslin is "the release of deep emotion and profound insights (whether religious experience, moral uplift, political

propaganda or indeed, the arousing of feelings of guilt)" (133). The act of theatre is a live and an interactive process. Hasmukh Baradi's overwhelming response is: "It is concrete, touchable, "most humane action", and a part of societal processes, from time immemorial" (313-14). It unfolds scene by scene, act by act, the variegated saga of human life in all its complexity and colour, giving total aesthetic experience culminating into feelings like joy and sense of relief. The theatre is "a simulacrum - at its highest level, ordered and elevated to the status of art - of the real world and real life" (Esslin 176). In the hands of an efficient playwright, drama becomes one of the principal vehicles of information and the prevailing methods of thinking about life and its situation. Having grasped the potentialities of this literary genre, dramatists aspire for "efficacy oriented theatre" rather than "entertainment oriented theatre". The major function of the theatre being edutainment, playwrights strive to enlighten their spectators on exploitation, educate on rights and privileges, and evolve them into fine, sensitive, and sensible human beings. It is an instrument for developing their minds. It has a positive function which is delineated in 'Natya Sastra' as follows:

To those inclined towards righteousness and duty, it teaches righteousness and duty. To those whose minds run on passions, desires and worldly goods, it serves desires and worldly goods. It teaches modesty to the arrogant, self-discipline and control to the violently intemperate, courage to the effeminate, valour to the proud and the brave. It imparts knowledge to the ignorant and refinement to scholars. To the lordly, it is luxury but those who sorrow, it provides stability. It adds internal wealth to those who already possess it but to those distracted with envy and worry, the theatre brings peace and composure. (Kale 109-10)

Kurt Vonnegut too insists that, "Artists should serve society by being agents of change and introducing new ideas" (Thomas 24). Drama can certainly be an effective means towards true education. The whole gamut of staged events that fall under the description of drama can provide the audience with "strong emotional experiences 'strike us to our soul' and produce powerful effects upon their lives, thinking and behaviour" (Esslin 22). As Hamlet has effectively deployed the 'mouse trap' to catch the conscience of the king, dramatists, with their theatre texts, endeavour to shake vigorously the numb conscience of human beings by cultivating a public conscience regarding the existing but ignored patterns of life.

Drama tends to exercise its most powerful and lasting moral impact by "reflecting the attitudes of the more advanced groups among the population, exposing them to public outrage and discussion and thus gradually penetrating the consciousness of society" (Esslin 172-73). The changing views reflected in drama, in turn change the moral climate of society and prepare the stage for the next phase of change.

The impact of the naturalistic drama of playwrights like Ibsen, Hauptman or Shaw, which contributed a great deal towards changing public attitudes to women, the working classes and sexual mores, was a gradual and an indirect one. The gradual humanization of attitudes towards racial and sexual minorities, and the opening up of hitherto taboo subject matters to public discussion owe a great deal to drama on stage and screen. Aringer C.N. Annadurai, a multifaceted genius par excellence, directed all his talents towards society's

uplift. His aspiration had been to drag out his people from the drudgery of ignorance and to create awareness regarding one's own capabilities, rights and responsibilities. He could not endure the bitter fact that his fellow human beings allowed themselves to be slaves of superstitions and refused to employ their sixth sense to think or analyze anything rationally or critically. Sensing the scope and potential of the most expressive trait and the vast accessibility of this literary art, drama, he made an effective use of the dramatic form to trigger the thought process of his brethren.

Aringer Annadurai's literary craftsmanship and intellectual acumen is best exemplified by the title conferred on him as 'India's Bernard Shaw'. His writings are noted for their sincerity and authenticity in depicting the inexplicable and mute woes of the marginalized lot identified under all nomenclatures. Whether it comes to *Velaikaari*, or *Oor Iravu*, or any other social dramas of Anna, his genuine concern for women and his uncontrollable anger for their subordinated and subjugated state could be sensed. This uncompromising social activist was also an astute defender of rationality. He took injecting rational sense in the minds of his ignorant brethren as his life's mission. He was a proclaimed and mind blowing orator and he used his writing skills to perform plays that would be highly revealing and thought provoking.

Annadurai's literary scholarship evolved him into both a silver-tongued and sharp-witted scholarly speaker and writer. Resultantly he critically and with clinical accuracy assessed the age-old concepts held dear in connection with the epics and triggered the thought process of his audience towards rationality. The myth about the qualitative degradation stamped with the name of Ravana, Emperor of Sri Lanka, as merciless ogre is taken to task in this play *The Swooning of the God of Justice* and with logical arguments, Ravana proved himself to be as innocent as the other characters meant to be embodiments of all positive virtues.

'Drama of Ideas', pioneered by George Bernard Shaw, is a type of discussion play in which there is purposefully constituted clash of ideas and hostile ideologies that "reveals the most acute problems of social and personal morality. In a Drama of Ideas there is a little action but discussion. Characters are only the vehicles of ideas"

(<https://englishliterature24.blogspot.com/drama-of-ideas>).

The conflict which is the essence of drama is reached through the opposing ideas of different characters. The aim of 'Drama of Ideas' is to educate people through entertainment.

In accordance with the patterns of Theatre of Ideas, Annadurai in all his social dramas took up the most prevalent issue or crippling practices just to create awareness regarding the improper notions and practices held dear for the sustenance of class hierarchy. The inhuman treatment meted by the socially and economically backward and lower classes suppressed them ever preventing them from realizing their worth. The superstitious beliefs blindfolded them and the class, caste and creed divisions endowed them with traits said to be specific and characteristic only of them. The practices were so vehemently practiced that people were blissfully doused in those concepts and never raised any question regarding the taboos as they were absolutely ignorant of it.

The greatest epics also only strengthen the convictions and there was no kindling of the thought process of the public. Any quantum of writing will once again reach only the elite and the educated. Theatre is not an escapist entertainment. It exposes the artist's "rage for order" and offers an "insight experience" to all and sundry. Sensing this dynamic trait of the literary form, Annadurai had wielded his verbal sword and unleashed the haughtiness of the authoritarians with his verbal darts revealing simultaneously the hypocrisy of the upper class and the ignorance of the under dogs. The honesty, righteousness and supremacy of the so called higher races were taken to task in the present play.

The content of the play in a nutshell follows. Owing to the change of notions, God instructed the Lord of Justice to re-conduct and enquire various cases of historical importance. The first one is to prove that the destruction of Ravana and his empire in Sri Lanka is the natural outcome of his inhuman mercilessness, and is a well deserved and justifiable punishment. Ravana, standing on the dock, subjects to enquiry legendary characters noted for their virtuousness. His definition of mercy and the examples cited to substantiate his stand reveal his prudence and wisdom. Perplexed at his clarity of thought, efficient handling, and unperturbed attitude and above all his unfailing proof, both the God of Justice and Kambar, the epic poet who had sung the glory of Lord Rama and belittled the meritorious Ravana into merciless ogre, are unable to establish themselves. Ravana's crystal clear arguments throw different light on the hitherto unidentified traits of the so called merciful and kind hearted. Unable to tackle Ravana's verbal darts, the God of Justice swoons and the curtain drops concluding the play with open-endedness as having got entangled in a moral dilemma the God of Justice could only be indecisive.

The playwright Anna possesses a very exceptional share of dominating ability, quick wit, critical thinking, relevant knowledge, and sharp pungent and piercing verbal structures at his disposal. They become Ravana's potent instruments with the help of which he is effortlessly able to sweep off all opponents. His logical arguments one after the other is not to disprove the charge against him but to prove that if he was deemed arrogant, atrocious, malicious, inhuman, discourteous and cruel in the eye of the world, why people with the same traits in superlative degree were not being condemned, punished and denounced the way he had been done so.

Every act of Ravana had been strictly in accordance with the norms, laws or rules of his country. Being a law abiding king is to be appreciated and not reprimanded. By placing the human evidence into the dock, the accused makes it dawn on everyone that he is inhumanly wronged and more sinned than sinning. All those who had indulged into the same offence or crime or sin, were let scot-free, rather glorified as paragons of virtues, embodiment of divinity and exemplary humans. As "the best governors will not accept any control except that of their own consciences" (Shaw 3), Ravana flatly refuses to accommodate himself within the pattern and image woven by Kambar. The negative perception got indelibly tattooed in the minds of the people. Ravana did not even seem to care about this image of him as an uncompassionate, pitiless and merciless giant.

Ravana surprises his accusers by openly admitting his guilt. He lists out by elaborately citing the numerous events during the course of which his haughty arrogant and merciless nature thoroughly and vividly exemplified itself. His argument has been that many persons identified as sacred, virtuous, compassionate and innocent have in truth exhibited

inconceivable forms of verbal, physical and psychological brutality but till date hailed as super human beings. He summons into the witness box his sister Soorpanagai, Queen Kaigeyee, devoted penance observer Sambugan, purest God of Fire, renowned saints Dhronar and Vishwamithrar and high acclaimed devotee Kotpuli and also a scene between Agalya and Sita.

The playwright has deftly juxtaposed the so called crime of the accused and the meticulous act of the others to make his audience understand, ruminant, perceive and compare the severity or the serenity of the act in which the two compared are indulged and above all to realise the truth on their own. Three events are concerned with the female gender in which the epic hero is directly involved in one as the victim and in the other two as the victimizer. Soorpanagai, sister of King Ravana, falls head over heels in love with Ravana. This (immoral) desire, as Ravana has no place for anyone except his legally wedded Sita in his life, is vehemently condemned and resultantly Soorpanagai is so crudely disfigured that she could not physically present herself in any forum. Ravana feelingly marks that Soorpanagai's single encounter with Ravana brothers resulted in this irrevocable damage whereas Sita's innumerable encounters with Ravana enabled her to remain forever the same perfect beauty and chaste. The thought provoking discussion between Agalya and Sita once again projects glaringly the inhuman attitude of Ravana towards his pregnant Queen Sita. His query is to identify now who is bereft of mercy.

In the case of one of the Queens of Ayodhya, Kaigeyee, she has conducted herself as a cut throat when she was so adamant about sending Sri Ravana to the jungle. The entire country was shell shocked to know about this move. Kambar's touching depiction of the sorrow-woven living creatures that encompass the single-sensed plant to the six-sensed human is so heart rendering. The pleadings, cries and mentions about the impending inexplicable struggles due in the jungle did not in the least shake the tough and rough minded Queen. It need not be openly stated that in Kaigeyee pity or mercy is absolutely absent. If failure to administer mercy in the case of Sita is the root cause for the destruction of Sri Lanka and Ravana's race, his contention is that why was not the same justice extended to the Kingdom of Ayodhya in which the case is at its worst.

Sri Ravana is an emblem of only virtuousness. His abiding concern for his subjects in fact made people of other places to long for such a king. Such is the benevolent spirit of Sri Ravana. One of his citizens Sambugan by name is non-Aryan but sincerely aspires to obtain God's blessings through severe penance. Neither his peace emanating face nor his austerity induced Ravana to alter his view and true to his conviction and unmindful of the repercussion and pleadings, he chops off Sambugan's head to save the principle of righteousness as per their norms. This event proves beyond doubt Ravana's helplessness and discourteousness. Ravana through this event stresses that people are governed by rules and principles and become inevitable victims of circumstances.

The next persons to be enquired are Saints Vishwamithrar and Dhronachariyar. Vishwamithrar in order to examine Harichandra's firmness in upholding truth at any cost trapped him and the royal king became a cremator. The inexplicable woes of his wife Dhamayanthi and the untimely death of the son did not in the least affect the psyche of the saint. When enquired about this cruelty Vishwamithrar says: "My mercilessness and tortures only helped to proclaim the glory of Harichandra to the wider world" (Anna 89). Despite this

open admission, Vishwamithrar was never regarded by any including Kambar to be a monster. Ravanaan roars:

I am not a sage. So I will not deceive by saying that in order to disclose to the world – the glory of Janaki, bravery of Rama, powerful valour of Hanuman, and the devotion of Vibhishanan to Azhwars which prompted him to even quit his own brother –that I forgot mercy.

There is distinction between my heritage and that of the hermitage. (Anna 89)

The next saint Dhronachariyar is unparalleled in the art of archery. He has taught the subtle nuances of this art to all the sons of the royal family and Arjuna is his most favourite student. Drawn genuinely towards this, Ekalaiyan from a tribal community observed the way the art was taught and in front of the statue of Dhronar, he on his own evolved into an unprecedented archer. Brimming with a sense of achievement, he displayed all his talents in front of his till then unseen guru and owed all his abilities on the feet of his teacher. Sensing that he would prove to be a tough competitor to Arjuna, Dhronar demanded his thumb as the offering to the guru. To practice archery, thumb is the most inevitable tool and by claiming that as the fees for the art he did not teach, Dhronar has blatantly revealed his self-centred mercilessness, cruelty and tactfulness. In his intense anxiety to keep at bay any emerging force against Arjuna and to ensure the non-existence of rivals to him, Dhronar brushes aside the sense of righteousness, hushes his conscience and exceeds the moral etiquette when demanded the thumb and morally speaking he could not exercise his claim over Ekalaiyan as he served only as his virtual and not real teacher. Such acts of third rate treachery are hailed as marks of diplomacy whereas Ravanaan's act of mercilessness despite the genuine grounds were strongly denounced as sins and crimes and he was regarded not a human but a demon.

Kotpuli, an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva, is one among the Naayanaar. When his people struggled and suffered beyond measures due to famine, this devotee, who ought to have practiced 'Love is God' as his life's dictum, has indulged into inconceivable cruelty. As his palace was the store house of granary, the hungry people used the sacks of rice to feed their hunger and consequently, Kotpuli, the religious fanatic, is unable to digest the rice meant to be offering to God being used by common people. With malicious and vengeful anger, he literally killed all those said to have used the rice. His anger did not subside even after killing innumerable men, women and senior people. A small new-born infant too became a victim of his wrath. The milk suckled by the babe would be from the rice consumed by the mother. That milk would have contained God Shiva's property and the baby rightly deserved to be murdered. That was his contention and he executed his will by executing the innocent infant. Such was the audacity but he was never condemned in offensive terms.

Mother and father are said to be the divine incarnates on earth for every child. Parasuraman though is well aware of this notion, chopped off his mother's head in compliance with his father's instruction. This is never earmarked as contemptuous and disagreeable. All these activities which are highly repulsive are only highlighted to sing the glory of the performers. All the citations quoted above at least have human beings as the performer and to err is human. Ravanaan next brings to observation the illegal, immoral and unacceptable acts of Lord Triumvirates and through light over their criminalities, he forces to

the dock Lord of Fire. Fire is always regarded sacred and is worshipped as symbol of purity. Whenever an ablation is undertaken, the blessing of Fire is devotedly sought and with all serenity they invite and invoke its blessings. The burner of passions has burnt with insatiable passion and fallen himself victim to the carnal desire. Such is the quality of the so called great and pure lives.

Ravanan finally sums up the magnitude of the crimes of all those and proves that the intensity of his crime is indeed insignificant and highly justifiable compared to that of others. To quote his words from the play:

Kotpuli, unafraid of committing murders, had unsympathetically killed. He is Naayanaar, Devotee!

Dhronar received the thumb as an offering – Parasuraman, who beheaded his mother, is dharmar or righteousness incarnate-

Vishwamithrar had boldly deserted his own baby and beloved sweetheart.

All of them are Hermits! Seers! Graced with Lord's blessing – But I am an ogre.

They are the juries in the Court of Justice where my enquiry is going on. Is this the deserving position for this unmerciful lot?

They ought to be in the dock. Are these persons, absolutely ignorant of benefaction and love, juries?

(He angrily gets down from the witness box and goes to the place of juries)

Is this the place for these unsympathetic persons?

(As he began to shake their seats, they all shouted. The God of Justice swoons again...). (Anna 107-108)

The play ends at this point. The playwright has focused his lingual lens on the irrefutable logic and with the most accurate use of that he is able to create not only an indelible impact on his viewers/audience but has triggered their analytical thought process to delve deep into the governing concepts to detect the truth. Thiruvalluvar in his Kural No. 423 states “to discern the truth in everything, by whomsoever spoken, is wisdom”. True to his statement, Anna inculcated the necessary acumen in Ravanan and the “accused” with his greater astuteness “has the ace of trumps in his hand and knows when to play it. As the prettiest player of all he has the sympathy of the audience” (Shaw 4). The ways Ravanan used to magnanimously admit his ‘guilt’, to unfold the ‘guilt’ of others and above all the revelatory lengthy arguments and the vigorous as well as dynamic dramatic monologues employed to strip open the true faces of individuals under the masque of serenity and hermitage make not only Ravanan's fellow participants but the lookers on to be baffled and dumbstruck. The wise arguments of Ravanan are as convincing, compelling and logical as that of Portia's discourse on mercy in *Merchant of Venice*, as influential and arresting as Antonio's oration in *Julius Ceasar*, and as meritorious and successful as that of King Magnus in Shaw's *The Apple Cart*. Such is the literary skill and genius of CN Annadurai.

This paper rivets this play under the theatre of ideas and its constructive, central and crucial role in the process of social sanitation. There is not only aesthetic gratification for the audience but inner illumination and clear comprehension of cause and effect. There is not

merely emotional relief but the emotions, purified of the excess and defect, train and direct the lookers on towards right objectives turning them to be virtuous and good. Under the excitation of art, the transport of human pity and fear might be dissolved in joy and the pain might escape in the purified tide of human sympathy. This kind of "insight experience" pleases the audience because it has enabled them to grasp the true relation between the incidents on the stage and the universal laws of human life. That is how theatre remains to be the most powerful and highly influential social institution. The audience will naturally feel attracted if they have affinity in situation, identity with characters, and familiarity with the speech pattern. In the end of such a dramatic performance, the spectator should emerge "perhaps as great as, perhaps even greater than one of the pivotal, decisive experiences of his or her 'real' life" (Esslin 177). That is what Artaud meant when he dreamt of a theatre that would shake its audience to the very core of their personality. This is the manner in which drama can truly enhance people's existence and can play an immensely valuable part in enriching this globe, extending the scope of people's experience and understanding of the human condition.

Anna's finely cultivated theatrical sensibility searches for forms that would enable his audience simultaneously to get entangled with as well as remain estranged from the actions displayed on the stage. He has gone in search of proper and appropriate devices that would rivet the attention of his audience on the stage, plunge them deep into the action yet induce them to be contemplative and analytical. In this aspect he resembles Brecht. Just like Brecht Anna's aim is to effect a "radical transformation of the theatre into a productive critique of society" (Chatterji xxii). He wants to create with his theatre a new realism which would be objective, critical, and socially relevant. He does not want the audience to be doused with emotion and sensation and reduced to a 'hypnotized mass'. He expects his audience to lie critically detached, alert yet relaxed. The theatre should not present a "mirror reflection of life but a re-presentation, a critical reproduction of reality" (Chatterji xxvii) and in every play of his, Anna achieved a high success rate.

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Domestic Violence against Women during COVID Pandemic- An Analysis

Clara B Reshma

Abstract:

Domestic violence is a social evil which is not a product of modern society but one which has been part of society since ancient times. It is an offshoot of male dominance perpetrated within families and societies that do not value women's rights. Though the corona virus pandemic continues to draw widespread public attention, rising rates of domestic abuse, rape and femicide suggest that women are experiencing a dangerous and deadlier pandemic of their own, misogyny. In the current scenario of the COVID pandemic situation when many men lost their jobs rupturing the financial stability of their micro haven, the caging due to enforced quarantine led to unprecedented emotional stress. The outbreak of the corona virus and the ensuing pandemic situation which confined people to their homes has intensified domestic violence. This paper seeks to explore a feminist reading of increased domestic violence in the COVID pandemic situation.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Feminism, Oppression, Quarantine, COVID, Domestic Violence

In patriarchal societies around the world, women have been considered as subservient, secondary and marginalized, whereas the men held dominant roles. Patriarchy is a social outcome which views woman as the property of the male. They are treated as inferior to men on many levels: intellectually, emotionally, physically, sexually and even spiritually. Domestic violence is an offshoot of male dominance perpetrated within families and societies that do not value women's rights. Domestic violence is a social evil which is not a product of modern society but one which has been part of society since ancient times. The Greek philosopher Aristotle's spoke of women thus: "the male is by nature superior, and female inferior; and the one rules; and the other is ruled; this principle of necessity extends to all mankind.... The courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying".

Domestic violence is divided into four types (1) Physical abuse (2) Sexual abuse and Marital rape (3) Emotional abuse (psychological abuse or mental abuse) and (4) Economic abuse. Physical abuse is a type of abuse which intends to create a feeling of intimidation, pain, injury or other physical suffering or bodily harm by means of hitting, slapping, choking, pushing, burning and other types of contact that results in physical injury to the victims. In sexual abuse a person is forced or coerced to participate in sexual activities against their will. Emotional abuse, which is also called psychological abuse or mental abuse, is created by means of humiliating or abusing the victim privately or publicly. Economic abuse is a form of abuse when an intimate partner has control over the other partner's access to economic resources.

Domestic violence is a wide spread problem that occurs at alarming rates, with 1 in 3 women worldwide having experienced physical or sexual violence during their life time.

Unemployment, economic instability and stress may lead offenders to feel a loss of their power, which in turn may exacerbate the frequency and severity of their abusive behavior. The outbreak of the corona virus and the ensuing pandemic situation which confined people to their homes has intensified domestic violence. Quarantine has been an effective measure of controlling infections since middle ages. Way back in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries physicians were able to establish a link between the emergence of symptoms and duration of time. The 'Quarantine' is rooted back to the period of plague in 1377 AD, when ships were isolated for 30 days and travellers were confined for 40 days in Ragusa. The Quarantine paradox witnessed drastic alteration in the day-to-day life of individuals: loss of jobs, economic vulnerabilities, and psychological health issues ensuing from isolation, loneliness and uncertainty among others. A study of history brings to light how the Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire suffered during the plague pandemic and subsequent quarantine in 165 AD. According to Hawryluk L and Reynolds DL, a longer duration of quarantine was found to be associated with increased symptoms of PTSD. Another outcome of quarantine is the increased case of gender-based violence especially domestic violence. It is a combination of sexual, physical and emotional violence and neglect and deprivation.

Feminist theory as a body of literary, philosophical and sociological analysis explores the inequality that exists between men and women in societies around the world. Specifically, this theoretical body of knowledge examines gender-based aspects that affect politics, power relations and sexuality. Feminist theory consists of numerous subcategories that explain gender disparity through differing causal factors. What feminist theorists tried to propagate is the equality between men and women in political, economic, sexual and social spheres of society. The history of feministic movements can be traced back to the seminal work *A Vindication of rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft published in the eighteenth century that underscored the fact that women were neglected and overlooked in almost all aspects of society, including literary and scholarly circles.

Various waves of feminism like 'first wave' of feminism ultimately centered round acquisition of political rights with right to vote being its primary goal. This wave began in around the 1920s and lasted until the nineteenth amendment guaranteed woman suffrage. Later 'Second wave' feminism emerged during the 1960's and was referred to as women liberation movement. During this period, advocates of feminist movements held that true equality consists of more than a mere ability to vote, hold a job, or engage in other activities. Rather it should ensure equality in legitimate access to such opportunities. The 'third wave' feminism started in the mid to late 1980's and focused on issues of patriarchy. The basic contention of this movement was that men inherently sought to dominate and exploit women. While third world feminists desired to overcome the systemic subjugation of women, the women's movement had grown to encompass a wide variety of different and often conflicting subgroups of membership.

Liberal feminism concentrates on issues such as equality in the workplace, in education and in political rights. It focuses on how private life impedes or enhances public equality, it sought to end domestic violence and sexual harassment and tried to eliminate obstacles to women's achievements. Liberal feminists tend to support marriage as an equal partnership and they advocate more male involvement in childcare and demand support for abortion and asserted that reproductive care rights as control of one's life and autonomy.

Liberal feminists worked for women's equality without aiming at changing the structures of existing institutions.

Social feminists contend that men maintain power in society largely because they are engaged in the world of work. Employment translates into remuneration which is a tangible outcome for their efforts. The production of goods and services translates into material wealth that is directly owned and controlled by the male rather than the female. Domestic work is seldom remunerated and often undervalued. According to social feminists' gender roles are pliable provided there is social conditioning and sufficient incentives. True equality can occur only through complete elimination of class and gender distinctions. They advocate a basic uni-gender where male and female distinction does not exist.

Bell hooks in her seminal work *Understanding Patriarchy* defines patriarchy as a socio-political system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak especially females, and endowed with the rights to dominate and to rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence.(2-3)

The problem underlying patriarchy is not men; it is the way of thinking embedded in our social system, religious teachings and politics that shapes our culture. Patriarchy replaces intimacy with dominance and manipulation and deforms the male-female relationship. The distinction of the role of woman as reproducer and man as producer has to be eliminated for equality to be established.

Considering the emotional and passionate nature of women, the liberal feminist Wollstonecraft said that if men were also caged in as women are, they too would be pleasure seeking and loving, overtly emotional and passionate. In the current pandemic situation both men and women are caged but an increase of sexual assault and domestic violence ensued instead of mere seeking of pleasure. Wollstonecraft's concept of 'caging' the masculinity reverses the natural order and becomes the reason in increasing the level of PTSD in men as well as women.

Though the corona virus pandemic continues to draw widespread public attention, rising rates of domestic abuse, rape and femicide suggest that women are experiencing a dangerous and deadlier pandemic of their own misogyny. Women are hugely overrepresented in intimate partner deaths making up 84% total of the data provided by WHO. Murderers are overwhelmingly male regardless of the victim's sex. Infidelity or perceived infidelity is a risk factor for femicide and women are at highest risk within the first 12 months of leaving an abusive partner. This indicates that the notion of women as the exclusive property of her husband or partner plays an important role in femicide motivation. The prevalence of female infanticide is further evidence that violence against women and girls has a definite sexed characteristic. It's time for a 'sex blind' approach to violence against women or an approach which attempts to re-categorize crime according to "gender identity which fails to understand the sexual politics of violence". Marxist feminists believe that women are oppressed by capitalism and that gender equality will disappear when capitalism is replaced by socialism and a classless society. Marxist analysis of women's oppression ensures that our response to violence against women and girls (VAWG) is not emotional or reactive, but radical, revolutionary and transformative. It is imperative that we recognize the historical and material circumstances that create patterns of misogyny and sexed violence.

For many women the immediacy and severity of the threat that men pose to them outweighs their interest in the long-term political and economic goals of their respective nations. Male violence against women is a gargantuan obstacle in the progress of a nation and must be addressed as a priority. Domestic violence is quite often perpetrated by men of the same socioeconomic class as their victim and as such domestic violence, sexual abuse and femicide do not fit neatly into the class of reductionist narrative. It is shocking to acknowledge that working class men commit majority of violent crimes against women. The existence of continual and consistent women's oppression across the globe regardless of race, class or religion evidences that misogyny is the universal ideology of the ruling gender. Violence objectification, dehumanization and degradation against women, is open for assimilation by the masses on a daily basis through popular culture propagated by diverse media such as film, television, internet. Sexist ideologies permeate all levels of society and men of all classes consider women as inferiors. The twenty first century has ushered in an age of vicious contemptuous misogyny that outwitted the past era. The universal social and political backdrop serves to cement the dominance of capitalist ideologies and it is no surprise that violence against women and girls is also on the rise. Charnie Guettal in her work *Marxism and Feminism* argued that what women do as housework does not contribute to the formal economy of a family. Jobs performed outside the home are valued as productive as they earn profit in a capitalist society while the unpaid consumption work devoured by the family, contributed by a woman is regarded as unproductive. Engels has put it across rightly stating that within a family the man represents the bourgeois and woman represents the proletariat. In the current scenario of the corona pandemic situation when many men lost their jobs rupturing the financial stability of their micro haven, the caging due to enforced quarantine led to unprecedented emotional stress. Women rose to the occasion dipping into the meager savings accumulated over time, managing to run the household including innovations in cooking with available ingredients while most men felt incompetent robbed of their office space, frustrated being confined to the four walls of the home, accelerating the recurrence of domestic violence. The home was never the turf for most men and they felt totally inadequate remaining there day in and day out. These negative emotions catalyzed domestic violence at least in some cases.

The experiences and consequences of the covid-19 pandemic are gendered to a certain extent. Despite the fact that men appear to be more vulnerable in losing their lives to the virus (Polglase et al), women are disproportionately affected by the political, economic and social repercussions of the pandemic. Women who are the unpaid care providers in most families experience a sharp increase in their care burden. Along with child bearing and rearing, caring for the sick and age, cleaning, lack of paid domestic help they have to bear the brunt of the deflated egos of their partners. Many a woman has to be available to satisfy the sexual urges of their partners at any time and hour of the livelong day. Forced sex and unwanted pregnancies were the lot of many a woman. Woman's sexuality was forcefully controlled by man and they lacked control over their own bodies. During the covid-19 pandemic the world witnessed a mass baby boom which drew the attention of radical feminists. The pregnant woman has to undergo untold stress concerning her own health and the health of her offspring which fails to draw any attention whatsoever.

Helen Lewis in her article *The Corona Virus is a disaster to Feminism in the Atlantic states* “Stress, alcohol consumption and financial difficulties are all considered triggers for violence in the home, and the quarantine measures being imposed around the world will increase all three”. Her assessment resonates with feminist campaigners and activists who report significant increase in domestic violence. Intimate partner violence has been reported by feminist activists all around the world. The legal mechanism for protection is less available during the pandemic and many victims retreat into silence. Self-isolation closes the roads to safety and security. Quarantine measures open up vistas of increased physical and verbal violence with no hope of escape for the woman. Some are unwilling to go to their parents’ house because of the fear of passing infection. Male partners warn women of dire consequences if they pass on the infection, women were totally baffled what if they happen to become hapless victims of the deadly virus. The quarantine increases the abusive nature of man as he finds authority slipping away from him and not having an outlet for his pent-up emotions. We find women subjected to all types of domestic violence during the pandemic.

A pandemic whatever be its nature magnifies the existing inequalities and changes the way we think. Covid-19 will do the same. Scholars, academicians and researchers who are engaged in the study of this virus are all of the opinion that the pandemic had an abysmal long-term effect on gender equality and the distorting effects would remain for several years. Physical and psychological empowerment of women along with financial stability is crucial to counter domestic violence. Through an ideological system of apparatus (ISA) applied at the micro level, patriarchal violence and oppression can be reduced in coming generations.

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Exploration of 'Black' in Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*

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Abstract

The misconceptions, the derogatory phrases and false ideologies about the Blacks represent them a different, inferior, slavish and uncivilized within Western culture and civilization. The present attempt explains the meaning of Black explored in Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*. It also states that the Black people face the economic, political and social inequalities in white society. Their experiences are of segregation and of ghettoisation. Socially backward Blacks aspire for the European materialism. In England, the Blacks live as a second class citizen and are denied the accommodation for their Blackness. Black woman's struggle for equal treatment, self-identity and dignity in patriarchal society occupies the prominent place in this artistic creation.

Key-words: Black, Uncivilized, Segregation, White, Buchi Emecheta, *Second-Class Citizen*, Ibo

Black writing produced by postcolonial African societies addresses the issues of racial discrimination, economic exploitation, and social backwardness. At its core lies the assertion of the distinctive qualities of black culture and identity. Black writings reveal "the idea of race as a major feature of economic and political discrimination and draws together writers of the African Diaspora whatever their nationality- African American, Afro-Caribbean and writers from African nations"(Ashcroft Bill 19). Florence Onyebuchi Emecheta popularly known as Buchi Emecheta belongs to black British women's literary tradition. Her contemporary women writers are Flora Nwapa Christina Aidoo, Grace Ogot, and Bessie Head. Being born in Lagos Nigeria in 1944, her writings deal with the difficult and unequal role of women in both immigrant and African societies. Her novels *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *Destination Biafra* (1982), and *Double Yoke* (1982) are the realistic works set in Nigeria. They explore the tension between tradition and modernity. Her *Second Class Citizen* (1974) is a powerful fiction about black life. Black woman's struggle for equal treatment, self-identity and dignity in patriarchal society occupies the prominent place in this artistic creation. Here Adah Ofili, the Ibo tigress and the protagonist of novel, breaks out the cultural prison and hopes to pursue her dreams of independence and success in England.

In Africa, the British colonization accompanied by missionary schools, Christianity and white culture alters the ways of living of Africans. The process of colonization brings it with both the means of enlightenment as well as the various modes of subjugation and exploitation to the colonized nations. Untouched by the joys of civilization and unaware of the tools of industrialization, the African people realize their social backwardness. The presence of the indignities of poverty and deadly diseases trouble them. The Ibos with reforming zeal resulted from the western education begin to discard their savagery and

primitiveness. Their aspirations to acquire the prosperity and posh jobs in independent Nigeria induce them to study in Europe. To emerge as an elite group, they desire to gain the western-oriented values. Trends towards modernization, stipulated by European-style education, attract the indigenous tribes like Ibo. The educational aspirations of local populations in colonial Africa set up their roots towards England.

The Ibos migrated from Ebuza and settled down in Lagos in the pre- independence of Nigeria builds up the Ibo community and the strong cultural tradition. With the age-old patriarchy, social taboos and superstitions the Ibo community controls the behavior of Ibo women. In African Ibo community, the birth of girl is not welcomed. It is regarded as a “disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, and to her tribe” (Second Class Citizen, 07). Every member of community expects only a boy child. In it women are treated as insignificant creatures. Adah, a representative of postcolonial generation of the Ibos, learns English alphabets in the Methodist school for her poverty. The Ibos highly motivated by middle class values give first preference to the expensive schooling than the cheaper education of the Methodist school. With great difficulty and hardships Adah completes her schooling and gets a job of a librarian in the American Consulate library at Campbell Street in Nigeria. To fulfill one of the criteria to get the passport of England, she marries to Francis reading to be an accountant. She earns the money and turns herself as a middle-class woman. She emerges with a fantastic sum in Lagos and she dreams to go to London for further studies. She determines that her children will go to English schools and English universities and will receive the treatment of an elite in English environment. To go to the land of her dreams, the United Kingdom, she requests her mother-in-law, quite, beautiful and motherly lady. She believes that her stay in England will transform her young family into a family of Ibo elites just like Lawyer Nweze of Ibuza who has become a minister in northern Nigeria. Her father in-law rejects her plea for going to abroad to read but permits his son to fulfill his dreams in England. Even Francis prevents Adah from joining to him in London. He warns her that coming to England is seeking after materialism which is not only evil but unnecessary to woman. Emecheta brings to notice that African outlook of life seems not much more civilized. African-ness still dominated by the supremacy of male devalues the female contribution to the family. Man decides what his wife should do. Attraction of the western materialistic values and eagerness to acquire an elite status in the Ibo community, Adah forces her in-laws to grant her permission to fulfill her dream. Her appealing narration of luxurious and prosperous future that can be offered to her in-laws in Nigeria moves them to sanction her plea.

Emecheta reveals that In England, the most of the Nigerians live in the ghettos created by the colonial discourse. As Homi Bhabha aptly puts that “the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (70). The Ghettos are the result of the slave trade and the colonization. The men from middle class strata of Nigerian society having well educational qualifications run towards England for the eligibility to get prosperity, the opportunity for self-rule, posy vacant jobs, money and plenty of things created by independence. The race to achieve the passport to prosperity from the British colonizers proves deadly among the Africans. The wealthy and responsible Africans by discarding all their valuable means begin to reach to the United

Kingdom in search of education, in search of eligibility. Blacks believe that the eligibility may make them free, free to rule country, free to go into the prestigious jobs with long shiny American cars. The eligibility that would sanction the black Africans declaring their old illiterate wives redundant and would not frown on their taking one of the newly emerging graduate females in Nigeria as a wife.

In search of this dream the blacks abandoned their wives, status, jobs and the children and settled in London. The successful blacks who obtained the law degrees and acquired great skill of oratory transform themselves into the politicians in their country. But the blacks or Nigerians who failed to acquire eligibility in England sought consolation in the pubs, got themselves involved with the type of women who frequented the pubs. Consequently, they receive goodbye to their laws studies and a happy welcome to a house full of half- caste children. The disillusionment and failure convert Africans automatically to a black and a second class citizen in England. They see their marriage to white women, an impossible thing at their home, another opportunity to do well and to avoid themselves from the pangs of guilt about their families at home. They feel that it is the only way of boosting their egos and expressing the consolation for their lost dreams. They bury their original dream of reading law and becoming elite in their newly independent country deep in their bitter hearts. As Buchi Emecheta observes, that “It was such a disappointment, too bitter to put into words. When these men fail so disastrously, their dreams were crushed within them. The dream of becoming an aristocracy became a reality of being a black, a nobody, a second class citizen” (SCC, 81).

In the white gaze, the immigrants- the West Indians, the Pakistanis, the Indians and the Africans are all Blacks. They live grouped together in the horrible houses in England. The blacks consider themselves as a second class citizen and endure the adversities of life. They not only live but enjoy with the status of second class. Francis, a person of African descent, explores the process of becoming a second class in London to his wife Adah. He says that “in Lagos you may be a million publicity officer for the Americans; you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants, you may be living like an elite, but the day you land in England, you are a second class citizen”(39). In fact, the blacks accept the superiority and hegemony of the whites in the areas of culture, politics, and economy. Through their economic power, the white Britons subjugate the ‘others’. Blacks work in the factories and they cannot speak English properly. The illiterate laborers have to do any type of work in England. Their children have been fostered and kept away to foster-parents. No sane couple can dream of keeping their children with them. In England, the Nigerian children have the natal mother and the social mother. For their black babies, the Africans accept only white woman as a foster mother ignoring her character and hygienic measures of her house. No African child lives with his parents. Only first class citizens leave with their children, not the blacks. The lack of suitable accommodation for children produces the need of a foster mother. So most Nigerian children born to the so-called students are condemned to be fostered away. To the African wife the appointment of the foster-mother offers the real freedom from the hindering influences of the kith and kin. It permits the real mother to work and earn money.

In England, blackness keeps the Africans away from the accommodation in a clean and desirable neighborhood. The white people consider the black as an inferior and uncivilized.

The blacks have been conditioned to accept their inferior status. This particular way of seeing the world results from the British colonialism. As John McLeod states, “under colonialism, a colonized people are made subservient to ways regarding the world which reflect and support colonialist values. A particular value-system is taught as the best, truest world-view. The cultural values of the colonized peoples are deemed as lacking in value, or even as being ‘uncivilised’, from which they must be rescued” (19). They learn that their color is a great hindrance in the path of getting the house. Their color makes them ashamed of and ignites the feelings of inferiority among the blacks. It affects psychologically on them. The advertisements and notices carrying “sorry, no coloured” display that the blacks are forbidden thing in the white world. The blacks believe that being black means being inferior. In search of a place for living, Adah and Francis come to know that the blacks with their children are unwanted in the white man's country. No human compassion has been seen in the heart of white landlady and the landlord. The blacks change their African accent to hide their identity to get the house on rent. But Adah's changed African American accent and her plight never help her in getting the place to live. The disappointment resulted from homelessness makes the blacks defeated and pessimistic. Even the places like a burial ground are denied to the blacks. The views of Adah are suggestive of the condition of coloured in white country. “Adah did not mind the ruins and demolition, because the more insalubrious the place was, the more likely the landlady would be to take blacks” (SCC, 76). To Adah, the rooms have been directly rejected by the white landlady. “Rejection by this shrunken peace of humanity, with a shaky body and mopy hair, loose, dirty and unkempt, who tried to tell them that they were unsuitable for half derelict and probably condemned house with creaky stairs. Just because they were blacks?” (77-78).

The immigration of Nigerians, in the late 1940s, to England has created a settlement of coloured. Leaving behind everything valuable to their own country, these middle class indigenous Nigerians find England as the only place to secure the eligibility of an elite status. But the acquisition of colonial education as Ngugi Wa Thiong'O sees “especially in Africa, is as the creation of an alienated elites. They never ever give anything back to the community by putting that knowledge into the languages available to the people themselves” (Ngugi, 390). The ghettos where the blacks have settled down are separated from the houses of white people in England. The difference between the gloomy and dirty houses of blacks and the cheerful, clean, and beautiful houses of whites is the projection of a different divided world. As Emecheta tells:

Willes Road was narrow, curving into Prince of Wales Road. Approaching the street from the Queen's Crescent side, it had a gloomy and unwelcoming look, but the part that joined Prince of Wales Road widened into a cheerful set of well-kept Edwardian terrace houses with beautifully tended front gardens. Those houses, the clean, beautiful ones, seemed to belong to a different neighborhood; in fact, a different world” (87).

The ghettos exhibit the poverty and degradation of human life. Its existence is an evidence of the division between the poor and the rich, the houses and the ghettos, the whites and the blacks, the cheerful and the gloomy, and the good side and the forbidden side. These social

divisions are solid, visible, and unmovable. Blacks want their children to start speaking only in English. They believe that ‘an intelligent man is judged by the way he speaks English, no matter whether the English (whites) could speak the languages of the people they ruled’ (54). In England, the poor as well as middle class blacks have separate hospitals and schools. The African blacks think that the restaurants are not meant for them. The feeling of inferiority firmly rooted in the minds of black prevents them from walking straight into the restaurants in London. For their blackness, a whole way of life grounded in perceived unique African qualities, the Black Africans have been discriminated all over the Europe. Adah realises that England is a dangerous place to be happy in. They are segregated and alienated. They have nobody to pour out their troubles to so that the loneliest African students usually have emotional breakdowns. To their displacement, they have no one to share their troubles and pains with.

The African youngsters experience the various forms of materialism in England. Francis, Mr. Noble, Mr. Babalola, Mr. Okpara and Adah mould themselves by the principles of Western philosophy, the vast body of world views and thought systems. “For the black man there is only one destiny and it is white, black men aspire to prove themselves to white men the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect” (Fanon, 10). The Western values contrive to inhibit the consciousness of the majority of Africans and to determine a fundamental attachment on their part to a traditional way of life, a situation that commands their attention and makes demands of their philosophical loyalties. The traditional Africans bear the cultural and social tensions in London. They live confronted and lured by Western culture. Adah, a black tigress, with her hardships and struggle to survive discovers that in England not just women but all Africans and blacks are second class citizens. The blacks are victimized for their feeling of inferiority. In Britain, Adah realises that the real discrimination of blacks results from the work of her fellow-countrymen than of the whites. She thinks that the togetherness of blacks can boost the brotherhood. As Emecheta states: “Maybe if the blacks could learn to live harmoniously with one another, maybe if a West Indian landlords could learn not to look down on the Africans, and the African learn to boast less of his country’s natural wealth, there would be fewer inferiority feelings among the blacks” (70). Adah cheers herself up for her blackness. She celebrates her otherness in England. As Buchi Emecheta aptly puts, “She was different. Her children were go to be different. They were all going to be black, they were going to enjoy being black, be proud of being black, a black of a different bred. That’s what they were going to be” (141). Black is a ‘different individual’ and s/he has proud of his or her blackness.

The black men treat their women as the silent obedient slaves though they enjoy the full freedom in England. They never give up their typical Ibo psychology. It highlights that the men never do wrong, only the women; they have to beg for forgiveness, because they are bought, paid for and must remain like that, silent obedient slaves. Once a man’s wife, always a man’s wife unite she dies. She cannot escape. She is bound to him. Adah highly motivated by the middle class values denies the jobs considered suitable for black housewives. Mostly the black housewives work in the factories. Adah having proficiency in English and the British Literary Association Professional Certificate searches for a standard job. She gets the job of a senior library assistant at North Finchley Library in London. Her first class job makes her happy but disappoints her fellow-countrymen. In the company of European

missionaries and white people she gains all the niceties of life. Adah's understanding of the whites as 'remote, happy in an aloof way, but determined to keep their distance' builds up her insights that project her as a powerful black woman. Her experience with Trudy, a white woman, breaks the myth that she has been brought up to believe that the white man never lies. She learns that the whites are just as fallible as everyone else. There are bad whites and good whites, just as there are bad blacks and good blacks, so she asks, why the whites then claim to be superior in the world. "She had grown up among white missionaries who were dedicated to their work, she had then worked among American diplomats who were working for their country in Nigeria, and since she came to England the only whites she had actually mixed with were the girls in the library and Janet. She had never met the like of Trudy before. In fact she could not believe her ears; she just gaped in astonishment" (52-53). To the English people, the blacks are the inferior and slavish. Their rejection of blacks results from their racial mind set. Proving for her growing family, struggling to survive and negotiating everyday injustice along the way, Adah still resolves that she will never give up her dream of becoming a writer. To nourish her brainchild, a piece of literary art, she ignores the rubbish thinking of her husband who discourages her saying that she will never become a writer because she is a black and a woman. A woman writer in her man's house and in a white man's country is unbearable thing. "The white man can barely tolerate us men, to say nothing of brainless females like you who could think of nothing except how to breastfeed her baby" (167). Adah alters the notion of 'brainless female' with her courage, intelligence and the extremely powerful sense of self. Her modernization brings to her the ability to conquer the pains and the urge to write. The misconceptions, the derogatory phrases and false ideologies like 'Africans have tails', 'Africans are strong', 'noble savages', 'tamed savage' and 'Nigger' constitute the white gaze that is the justification of Blacks' subjugation. The misconceptions, the derogatory phrases and false ideologies put the Blacks out of Western culture and civilization. The Black people experience the continuing economic, political and social inequalities in white society. Their experiences are of segregation and of ghettoisation. Socially backward Blacks aspire for the European materialism. In England, the Blacks live as a second class citizen and are denied the accommodation for their Blackness. To the whites, the Black is a different, inferior, slavish and uncivilized.

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Religion as a political instrument in Aziz's *The Queue*

Jishnu Prasad

Abstract

This paper attempts to find how the religion act as a political tool in the oppression of common people especially woman in Aziz's *The Queue*. *The Queue* is a clamour of a great many those individuals living in the Middle East and North African area where the idea of democracy is eclipsed by the religion and tyrant regimes. Human rights violations in the MENA region are a real concern for every individual across the world. The religious fundamentalism and terrorism is a real threat to the struggle for existence of the ordinary citizens. Fanatics and the patriarchal system make things worse for women.

Keywords: Ideological State Apparatus, Shariya, Galabaya, Oppression, Democracy, Arab Spring, State, Religion

Basma Abdel Aziz is a writer and psychologist from Egypt. Her debut novel *The Queue* is written in the context of the Arab Spring that set off the search for democratic values in the Middle East in 2010. Even though the uprising had been suppressed by the authorities in several nations, the confidence of the presidency had already changed in at least four nations. We live in a world where nations and nationalistic ideals are more important than people and humanity. The State limits all kinds of human rights in the name of national security. The denial of human rights in the name of nationalism is even more than any other assault from across borders. In the post Arab Springtime, Aziz portrays the plot of this novel. The Arabic version of the novel was published in 2013 and the English translation by Elizabeth Jaquette in 2016. The starting point of Arab spring protest in Egypt happened in 2011. After the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, demonstrations started in the streets of Egypt, and President Hosni Mubarak left the presidency after 28 days. But in the initial point, the president is attempting to suppress the protesters with an iron fist. His police violently beat and fired the demonstrators, cut off the power and the internet. But it just gave the protest extra mileage.

The Queue is a clamour of a great many those individuals living in the Middle East and North African area where the idea of democracy is eclipsed by the religion and tyrant regimes. The religious fundamentalism and the military just give the authorities more capacity to mistreat the normal individuals. Aziz all through this dystopian novel portrays the situation of residents in a definitive country, where everything is under the gaze of the state. At one point in time individuals attempt to defeat this concealment and they rebel against the authority. But the state machinery crushed the popular awakening. The state named the famous dissent as 'Disgraceful events'. They attempt to normalize every type of cruel moves made by the authorities to persecute the uprising.

Religion is used in the novel as a political weapon. The Middle East is considered to be the birthplace of the three main religions of the world. Islam, Christianity and Judaism have found their origins in this part of the world. Numerous ethnic and social contrasts make

this area critical. Religious views and geo-political interconnection further, contribute to this ambiguity. The fall of the Ottoman Empire, World War I and the Sykes-Picot Agreement fuelled the problems. After the war, the colonial masters Britain and France, without understanding the truth of the land, divided the people and traced lines around maps giving birth to nations such as Iraq, Trans Jordan, Palestine (Britain), Syria and Lebanon (France).

The structure and characteristics of political fascism and religious fascism is very much the same. Most oppressive states use all of these to oppress their people. Religion plays a key role in the development of the subject in the Althusserian principles. By institutionalising faith itself, it serves as an effective weapon for making obedient people. It serves as an ideological state mechanism in society, and most of the time it supports the state machinery. Then the interrogation of the religious leaders and the terms would be regarded as morally and politically impermissible. But the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the participation of the Brotherhood in the Egyptian revolutions are indicators of the tension between the state and religion. Religion has a significant influence in the lives of individuals in the Middle East. Culture, costumes, food, language and any means of human life in the regions are intertwined with the religious beliefs of the people of these countries. Much of the nations obey the law of Shariya. Fundamentalist movements like Wahabism and Salafism are only seeking to enforce more strictness to fulfil the religious values of the state and culture.

In her debut novel, Aziz depicts the double oppression of women in a religious patriarchal society. Throughout the novel religion, it acts as a major authoritarian political weapon. Every life is amalgamated in the vigilance of the various dimensions of the religious gaze. 'The Greater Book' which is the most reverent religious text is quoted by different people according to their needs and it contextualises the plight of common people around. Um Mabrouk whose woes are never-ending consults the High sheik who is a priest asks her to follow the religious path more fervently and demand to do all prayers according to the text visualizes. We find the risks of a lower-class working woman like Um Mabrouk, who was unable to render her prayers because of her hectic duty in the office and at home. Her husband is a drunkard, and many of her children are victims of a variety of illnesses. She works day and night in shifts to support her family in an economically collapsed state. She was abused by a stranger in a metro car, and other passengers never attempted to take care of her. "Someone else quoted a passage from 'The Greater Book', and although she couldn't make out what he said, she sensed from his tone that it was directed at her" (19). Patriarchy took aid of 'The Greater Book' not to help her or any other woman but clearly search for the 'divine quotes' to make her shut inside the four walls of the house.

The man in 'Galabaya' who always favoured the state and its machinery is a 'religious man' who always quotes 'The Greater Book' publically shows political allegiance towards 'The Gate' and those who are in power. He blesses those who favoured the state in the elections. He exploits the fear and anguish of the common people in the queue. He conducted a prayer section near the queue. He woos Ines and in the end out of compulsion she agrees to marry him. He always talks about modesty and chastity ".....announces how displeased he was with the disgraceful mingling between men and women" (117). He always keeps a special eye on Ines and advice her "not to lean forward or bend over".

The transformation of Ines from a regular school teacher with a moderate political and religious outlook to a traditional religious woman is very important in this work. In her early

days in the queue, she somehow managed to open up her points of view, but later her fear of religion and state overwhelmed her will. Her dress code also changes significantly as the man in Galabaya demands that she observe religious traditions more strictly. Later “she wore a drab *isdal* over her everyday clothes, and it fell from the middle of her forehead down to her toes, so that every hill and valley of her body was concealed” (185). Religious leaders also emphasise the importance of good wives and mothers. These age old trap is constructed exclusively for women. The shift in dress shows the full surrender of her identity and self to religion and the man in Galabaya. She started to become more active in religious events, such as meetings and prayer groups. She feels a lot of relief, and her worries have begun to disappear.

These religious leaders, with the aid of religious adherents and the interpretation of divine scriptures, are attempting to suppress women. Often it may be a clear rejection of freedom of speech and expression, but most of the time they cover up this very injustice under care and defence. The man in Galabaya is looking for both ways according to his preference. The short-haired woman is a symbolic character of the modern feminist self. She challenges and even mocks the foolish preaching of man.

The High Sheikh intervenes when the boycott campaign against the Violet telecom gathers momentum. When rumours spread about Violet telecom that the company is secretly spying the customers and they are using their surveillance technology to monitor their users. The people began to protest against and boycott the company. Then “The High Sheikh issued a fatwa declaring it impermissible to harm the economic interest of the country and its people. It also criminalized boycotts that negatively affected business owned by God-fearing believers” (132). He also argues that it is the religious duty of every citizen to aid and encourage the Violet telecom company. The man in Galabaya who owned a large amount of stock in the company was the first to embrace the High Sheikh’s fatwa. The fatwa also states, “A believer who is weak of faith, and does not join his brothers, is guilty of a sin, which shall be weighed on judgement day. This sin can be absolved by fasting, or by making seven consecutive phone calls, each one not separated by more than a month”(133).

Fear is the most potent tool that the religious leaders frequently uses and exploits. The man in Galabaya is no different. He preached about Satan, hell, religious duties, eternal damnation etc. “ He didn’t say a word without supporting it with passages from the scriptures and he won most people over, especially those who had come from beyond the queue for the first time”(134). Many who heard his speech think that it was because of their own faults and lack of proper attention and following the religious duties is the sole cause of their agonies and problems. Many cried and promised that they won’t bypass religious duties any more.

The High Sheik in an interview given to the newspaper says about the importance of complete submission to the God’s will. He insists that all citizens should follow this. This very method used by the ancient and modern religious leaders alike. They didn’t encourage questioning the beliefs, they only asks then to follow blindly. He also suggests that “A wounded believer should not despair or oppose God’s will” (181).

Every authoritarian state tries a different method of channelling the anguish and rage of the common people when the country is economically collapsed and people's aspirations are not fulfilled. Mostly, with the aid of the newspapers, propaganda is cooked in the

newsrooms and launched into the public domain, which will aid the rulers to avoid the wrath of their people. Here, too, when the High Sheik was interviewed by the newspaper and distress over his statement against the 'believers' became a major issue, and some people founded a group called the 'Disgraceful Events Victims Organization.' As a result, the real concerns of the people are sidelined and the misinformation has come to the forefront of the political scene. Aziz presents, how religion controls and oppress every fabric of human interventions.

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Victimization of the 'other' Gender in Shobha De's *Second Thoughts*

Alapati Purnachandra Rao & G Nageswara Rao

Abstract:

Indeed, a woman gets ready for marriage in the hope of fulfilling all her dreams about love and pleasures of life. When she fails to get this marital bliss, she starts developing aloofness with her partner. It leads to dislocation and displacement of relations between wife and husband. In Shobha De's novel, *Second Thoughts*, Maya and Ranjan's marital life is disturbed by marital indifference. Maya thinks that her husband understands little of her aspirations. She fails to maintain a balance between fantasy and reality. In *Second Thoughts*, Shobha De narrates the story of Maya, a young and attractive middle-class woman who agrees to an arranged marriage with Ranjan. She indulges in a strange relationship with Nikhil when her partner becomes a cold sexual partner by breaking the chains of social morality even though the experience of freedom is of short duration.

Keywords: Marriage, Dreams, Dislocation, Displacement, Indifference, Freedom, Chains

Introduction

The most significant social issue that Shobha De focuses on is the infidelity of the other gender in the institution of marriage. It is observed that the colourful dream melts slowly whenever a woman is caught in the web of marriage. In this situation, every woman attempts to redefine her identity, but it always ends up in dissatisfaction in marital life. As a result, she feels loneliness though she is surrounded by many people. In order to search for a suitable companion, she considers another man as a substitute to share her love. De Beauvoir opines that while it is quite natural for humans to understand themselves in opposition to others, this process is flawed when applied to the genders. In defining woman exclusively as 'The Other', man effectively denies her humanity.

Discussion on Victimization

In 'Second Thoughts', Maya is married to Ranjan, who is indifferent to understand her whims and fancies. She considers her husband as the 'other' person who is found in the wedlock. Maya waits for Ranjan to respond to her advances, her biological needs and her claims. When he does not fulfill her erotic fantasies, she becomes unhappy and frustrated. When a woman is frustrated in her conjugal relationship, she is painfully and helplessly pulled into a relative and parallel relationship with another man. Then she feels that her emotional cravings are answered by her neighbouring boy, Nikhil. She deems Ranjan as another person whom she meets accidentally in her path of life. She blames her husband for his lack of sexual interest. Hence, she takes refuge in the company of Nikhil.

Shobha De wants to reveal the fact that the desires of a woman should be answered in wedlock. When Maya realizes that the wedlock hinders her aspirations, she tries to escape from it. In the hope of getting an answer for her unanswered questions, she revolts against the denial of life and seeks shelter in the lap of another man. In some of the upper-class families of the urban society, the woman has little patience to bear the passive and cold attitude of her husband. Hence, she takes the resort of second thoughts to satisfy the urges of her inner self. In the case of Maya, she comforts her inner self under the canopy of Nikhil's presence. Unfortunately, she feels Nikhil as her true lover. In the pursuit of searching for the husband substitute, she loses her husband, Ranjan, to some extent. In the end, she is forced to confront reality when her dreams are cracked up.

Though the world has changed a lot, it is very difficult to absorb some customs in India that depicts women as dolls in the market. Maya is surprised and disappointed by Ranjan's lack of common courtesy and comments on it to Chitra, her mother, at times. When Ranjan's mother says that both wife and husband have to work to live well, he declares that he is earning well; and it is the women's duty to run a good home. It is clear that women in this novel also suffer from financial insecurity. NK Neb in his article, "Feminist Stance in Shobha De's Novels" states: "Maya in *Second Thoughts* suffers due to her financial dependence on Ranjan. Similarly, traditional Indian women like Maya's mother have to request their husbands for money, even for their daily needs. Financial security is the basis for women's emancipation" (Neb, 178). In this Globalized world, the status of women is consolidated due to the proliferation of job opportunities which makes her achieve financial freedom liberating her from the monetary dependence on men.

When women are alone, some men always deem it an opportunity to exploit them. One day Nikhil Verma, her fourth-floor neighbour boy, asks whether she will be able to come out of the house. He is different from his family members, unlike his mother, Pushpa, who invites Maya up for coffee on the day after she moves into the building. When she introduces her son, Maya's impression is slightly insipid - Pushpa is oval, whereas Nikhil is slender. At that moment, Nikhil asks twenty rupees to pay for the cab. When his mother hesitates, Maya gives him the required money; in return, he pays thanks to her calling 'aunty'. She feels like an 'elder' to him though he may be just five or six years younger than her. The salesman, while showing mops, comments that Nikhil is a boy who gets mixed up with girls like Nalini Mehta. Yet, unreasonable jealousy immobilizes her.

In Indian society, a woman is objectified as a being that is meant for shouldering the domestic chores only. One day, Maya asks Ranjan to go out together on weekends; he replies that life is not a picnic, and as a married woman, she has to come up with responsibilities. She urges him that she can find a job as she has a degree in textile designing. He explodes: "In our families, the only sort of work ladies do is social work. Our relatives criticize us if you suddenly take up a job" (29). Still, husbands in India are unable to accept the domination of women in their inner hearts. In her article, Alka Saxena comments: "Shobha De captures the middle-class psyche by exposing various facets of Ranjan - his attitude to hold on tight to the purse strings so as to control his woman, his lectures on wifely duties, and his complete control even on the use of the air-conditioner" (Saxena, 262). It is the passive attitude of the husband which an Indian wife cannot bear. That night, she creeps into bed as silently as possible, but he seems to be in a deep sleep. She lies awake, marveling how to induce sleep.

She tries resorting to pleasantly contorted memories of college days, but nothing has worked till Nikhil comes into her dream. It is an instance that makes her think of an alternative to satiate her inner soul.

Generally, women yearn for sharing their emotions mentally and physically with their male counterparts. When it fails, she is likely to seek out pleasure from some other sources. A year after their marriage, Maya tells Ranjan that they ought to talk about something. He, with a defensive look, announces that wives should realize that when a man comes home dead tired, he craves a little peace in the house. At times, his attitude and his tone have changed her. She never feels wanted or invited in the bedroom as it remains Ranjan's room, whereas the kitchen is an area that belongs inclusively to her. It shows male chauvinism and indifference, which make women bear the inhibition imposed by society for years. When Ranjan insults her, she washes her face with guilt watching her image in the mirror over the washbasin. Suddenly, she dreams of Nikhil tasting her and a small secret smile dances around her mouth with mirth.

It is Ranjan who fails to understand the personal self of Maya. GD Barche, in the article, "Maya: Another eve in *Second Thoughts*", presents the plight of Maya how she is humiliated in the web of a family, saying: "Maya's tragedy is that she is treated like a figure made of an 'alabaster' and not of 'flesh and blood' before marriage by her mother and after marriage by her husband" (Barche, 275). It shows the sheer indifference of a husband towards woman's sexual urges though she may be the spouse to him.

It is observed that some men are passive to fulfill the simple desires of their female partners. Ranjan fails to treat Maya as a woman having her own dreams. Maya often tempts to pick up the phone and speak to her mother or an old school friend called Aarti in Calcutta. After their marriage, Ranjan gives her a guided tour of the flat and points to the phone. In many ways, she is more like her father, an observer, not a participant. Maya and her mother have a strange relationship, as they are bored of each other most of the time. Since her parents scarcely talk to each other, quarrels are out of the question. These sorts of incidents are very common in most families in India, where women are considered to be passive objects to obey the orders of their spouses.

It is very difficult for women to maintain equilibrium in life when they are involved in extramarital relationships. When the predicament of a woman is unnoticed by her husband, she finds consolation from others. Maya listens to Nikhil's tape one day when Ranjan leaves the house exactly twelve minutes later than usual. He makes a fixation out of punctuality all his life, which frightens her very much. His exit always generates a sense of exhilaration, not because she does not want him around, but she feels free to breathe normally. Ranjan is nervous, who can seldom find things even if they happen to be under his nose. Then, she feels she must have heard 'lonely Lady' of Nikhil twenty times in a row. It is viewed that the Indian husband has a 'mother fixation' so that he considers his spouse only as a substitute for his mother.

Maya's occasional cravings include an unending sadness in her, as she knows that will never materialize either with Ranjan or with Nikhil. When Ranjan is away for a trip, Maya experiences a strange blankness. She thinks of her mother as she stares at the luminous star. Then the world becomes a vacuum for her. Ranjan locks the out-station phone facility before leaving because he is afraid of bills which indicates his rigid attitude in giving economic

freedom to her. He gives a thousand rupees for her, saying not to spend more than fifty rupees a day. He continues if there is an emergency, she has to contact his mother. She sits around dully, having a feeling of relief in his absence which she should not feel. This guilt that she possesses in her is horrible. She feels: "Was I really such an uncaring, cold and selfish person? Why was I not longing for my husband's return like a loyal, loving wife?" (163). Ranjan has his follies, but he is not an evil man. Then she goes out onto the balcony to get some fresh air. Alka Saxena, in her article, "*Second Thoughts: A Slice of Urban Life*", comments:

Freedom is permitted in a very restricted manner; it is the ancient story of sacrifice and adjustment that a woman is destined to. Sooner or later, she learns to adjust, as there is no other alternative if she needs to live a respectful life. Maya, too, accepts to remain enveloped in loneliness and sadness. On second thoughts, she learns to survive the sultriness of not only Bombay but also of her marriage. (Saxena, 271)

Though Indian men and women begin adopting the changing trends in society recently, it is an obligation for them to act within the wheel of traditional customs, which we are aping for centuries. The modern woman is not an exception to perform domestic chores in countries like India, even in the changing world of globalization.

It is observed that women long for the necessary kick of companionship when their physical urges are unfulfilled. She wants to be alone, to relive the morning and to recreate the invaluable moments Nikhil and she has shared recently. She feels that she takes risks during the outing with Nikhil. She likes having Nikhil around. L Sonia Ningthoujam in an article, "Realism: Lifelike characters", states: "*Second Thoughts* is the only De novel which sketches the life of the higher middle class and in the character of Maya presents a woman who apparently conforms to the norms of the society but secretly breaks them when she finds them unjust and unacceptable" (Ningthoujam, 99).

Maya wishes to express to Nikhil in a letter how she feels during the outing. She feels guilty because of the way she has felt. Though she enjoys that unique feeling, she feels bad as she betrays Ranjan. When she gets married to Ranjan, everybody is happy and a little jealous as she is leaving for Bombay. She still believes that she is very lucky to have become Mrs Ranjan Malik. She confesses it is wrong for a married woman to go out with a man, especially in her husband's absence. If Nikhil invites her to come out with him again, she probably does with less guilt. Though she comments on all these things, she is unsure whether to give it to Nikhil or not. She keeps her head tiredly and falls into a light sleep. GD Barche in his article, "Maya: Another Eve in *Second Thoughts*", asserts:

We see particularly with regard to projecting the psyche of an Indian married woman who is caught and crushed between nature-culture wheels on the one hand and pulled apart by the centrifugal acts of Ranjan, her husband and those of centripetal of Nikhil, her lover, on the other. (Barche, 280)

The predicament of an Indian middle-class woman reflects the conflict of the female psyche when she is oppressed in the hands of her husband, who never allows her to enjoy freedom all through her life. Maya's flirtations with Nikhil rejuvenate her spirits beyond measure.

It is true that some husbands are passive to listen to the emotional cravings of their partners. But they suspect the acts of their wives every moment. In this helpless situation, Nikhil's shadowy figure rolling on and off his battered bike continues to dominate Maya's thoughts. She recollects how he appears once unexpectedly as always, waving in her face. Ranjan's absence affects her in a strange way when her slow, dull daily routine life down still further. She thinks she will feel free of various duties like cooking the moment he has left for the airport. Maya does not realize till that point how strongly he feels about Nikhil and his mother. She wishes to defend 'that boy' and explain that he is not as much of a no-good. Ranjan looks into her face and obviously waits for some type of reaction. She is cautious that her expression remains neutral.

It is a matter of fact that some women question the existing morals when they fail to conform to their desires and dreams. On seeing Ranjan's genuine lack of interest in her, Maya sometimes wonders whether he fancies any women. But it is not a deliberate act of neglect. He views women only in context to men and family life. They enjoy their physical closeness and the warmth of his body. She craves for these moments and cherishes them for days afterwards. This aspect of Ranjan is so pleasing, and it is a pity she does not see more of it. He shows his fascination for another woman quite openly in her presence. Then, tears roll down in her eyes, which lead to some disturbance between her and Ranjan.

Then she feels that he marries her to satisfy his mother, and she marries him to get away from Calcutta. They are locked together in a relationship that does not satisfy either of them. Priya Wanjari, in her article, "De-Analysis of Marital Relationships" criticizes: "The husband-wife relationship in *Second Thoughts* is in no way different from the one expressed in the earlier novels. Though all kinds of necessary things for a successful life are available in the family, both husband and wife drift away in different directions" (Wanjari, 201). It is the urgency for the postmodern husband to look into the psychological and physical needs of his wife, which she is unable to demonstrate at times. Unfortunately, most husbands fail to attend to the needs of their partners. It leads to developing apathy towards marital life for her. As a result, she takes diversion in order to seek pleasure from another pore.

One night, as Maya lies beside her husband, she starts thinking about sex. Once or twice, when she raises the subject, he shouts: "Are you that Sex-Starved? Nothing else on your mind? How can sex be so important to anybody, I've never understood" (257). Here Ranjan utterly fails to understand the physical needs of his wife. He makes her feel so ashamed of herself for possessing such thoughts. She wonders what Ranjan does to satisfy his desires. Occasionally, Maya thinks she should take the initiative and try her luck with him. That night she wants to behave like a prostitute so that she does not get any sleep. When she reaches out for him, he objects, saying that he needs rest after a hectic tour. She attempts her level best to coax him but fails. She does not want to blame Ranjan as she absurdly coaxes him. D Murali Manohar, in his article, "Rejecting the Hegemony: The 1990s" points out:

The main reason for Maya to think in this manner is Ranjan's indifference to her emotional and sexual desires. One has to blame Ranjan for his lack of

understanding about his wife. Ranjan thinks that he is providing everything to his wife. He is providing material things. What about personal care, tenderness, affection, emotional expressions and romantic feelings? That does not mean Nikhil is providing all that. He is only an opportunist exploiting her. (Manohar, 162)

The licentious nature of a woman cannot be objected to in some cases today, where the husband becomes cold and passive to her emotional responses though he provides everything to lead the material life.

On some occasions, Maya can feel Nikhil distinctly as she becomes a captive to his advances. Fifteen minutes later, Nikhil goes out of her house. She has no desire to move, as she wants to taste the sweet delight in her mind. She wants to lie there for the rest of her life, relishing what takes place between her and Nikhil. L Sonia Ningthoujam, in her article, "Traditional Woman Versus Modern Woman: A Study of Shobha De's Novels" describes how Maya searches for a solution to her inevitable problems, saying: "The real solution to her could not be found. The traditional woman suffered a disadvantage. In De's novels, the disadvantaged women break all those bonds and norms that delimit their freedom to fulfill their dreams and desires" (Ningthoujam, 40).

It is observed that women resort to extramarital relations when their carnal pleasures are completely neglected by their husbands. As a result, they protest against the social customs to satiate their self. L Sonia Ningthoujam, in her article, "Traditional woman versus modern woman: A study of Shobha De's Novels" says: "Maya's frustration and her rebellious nature cannot allow her to take her husband's indifference lying down. Maya decides to seek the fulfillment of her dreams elsewhere, however sinful it might be" (Ningthoujam, 40). In order to escape from the dry experience in her married life, she follows her own order to accomplish her dreams. When Maya is involved in a sexual encounter with Nikhil, she forgets herself having lost her original identity. It is the struggle how some women face when they involve in promiscuity, but they never realize that they have been exploited by another man at the expense of her life.

It is observed that women demonstrate much courage to fulfill their desires when men restrict them, robbing their freedom. For the next ten days, Maya plays the entirely unused role of full-time nursemaid to her mildly ailing mother-in-law. Between her sick-bed duties and routine domestic chores, she does not have a single moment for herself. Each and every action of hers involves Nikhil in some way. She is alive to every aspect of living because she knows she has Nikhil in her life. One day night, when she is making chicken soup, Nikhil's mother, Pushpa, comes with sweets in her hand, announcing that Nikhil's marriage is arranged and gets a seat at Rochester University. Then a loud cry emanates from her constricted throat, holding Nikhil's engagement invitation. Maya stands transfixed till Ranjan comes out of the kitchen to inform her that the chicken sour has been burnt. She leans against the refrigerator to steady herself as her body is shaking with glee. Then she looks at the spilt soup; she knows she will have to make it again from scratch as she has all the time in the world. Jaydipsinh Dodia, in his article, "*Second Thoughts: A critique*" criticizes the institution of marriage in India as: "In *Second Thoughts*, Shobha De vividly presents an "explosive tale of love and betrayal" at the surface level and the "hollowness and hypocrisy"

lurking behind Indian traditional marriages at the deeper level. Thus the novel focuses on the hollowness of Indian marriage” (*The Fiction of Shobha De*, 281). It is very unfortunate that some women are victimized at the hands of men, either they may be a husband or boyfriend.

Conclusion

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) emphasizes that it is impossible to think independently of sexuality as humans are sexual bodies right from childhood. Dani Cavallaro, in the book, *The Body for Beginners*, argues: Freudian thought draws a troubling distinction between men and women. Men apparently leave the polymorphous body completely behind. Their sexual instincts acquire a clear direction and well-defined aims. Their guiding purpose is the discharge of sexual products. But things are different for women. They don't have such a definite purpose and gain sexual satisfaction in rather 'Mysterious' ways (Cavallaro, 70). It is not easy for an Indian woman writer like Shobha De, who has explored the reality concealed in Indian marriages by exposing wives' adaptability according to the existing norms. When she is fettered in the clutches of her husband, devoid of freedom all through her life, it leads to estrangement in the traditionally enveloped society.

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‘Almost Ridiculous’- Dark Humor in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *The Revenge of the Non-Vegetarian*

Rekha Karini and Rama NH Alapati

Abstract

Few critics like Mathew Winston and Brom Weber opined that the term black/dark humor has been imported from France – “*L’humor noir*” which in English translation become black humor. It functioned as a central doctrine of French surrealism almost from its inception in the 1920’s. In 1939 Andre Breton, the French surrealist writer coined the term Black humor and defined it as “a superior revolt of the mind” (xvi). It exposes the absurdity/ ridiculousness of value systems, human life, and insanities by juxtaposing melancholic elements with comical ones as is portrayed deftly in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *The Revenge of the Non-Vegetarian*. The protagonist, Madhusudan Sen, in this novella is so blinded by vengeance, incapable of showing mercy even to a person who spent twenty-three years in prison for an act committed in anger. This study intends to explore how the author exploits dark humor in portraying the sluggishness of judicial system and prejudiced moralities over meat in *The Revenge of the Non-Vegetarian* by presenting violent or traumatic events and questions the values and perceptions of its readers.

Keywords: Dark Humor, Revenge, Murder, Non-Vegetarian Food, Judicial System, Existential Crisis

To a large extent dark/black humor can be defined as a literary mode to describe the absurdity/ ridiculousness of value systems, human life, insanities, and contradictions of modern society in which the events are often comic and painful as well. It is the humor which laughs at the ‘blacker’ sides of life like grief, despair, death, murder or insanity. Popular themes of this genre are violence, discrimination, murder, abuse, religion, war, and death, which are treated in styles that thwart the reader’s expectations of solemnity. The present study is to analyze how the novelist has exploited Dark/Black humor in portraying the class differences and sluggishness of judicial system in *The Revenge of the Non-Vegetarian*, Upamanyu Chatterjee’s seventh book. It is a novella which presents the ills of modern India like class disparities, prejudiced moralities over meat and sluggishness of judicial system with bleak and black comedy.

Though the story is set in a period between 1949 and 1973, it is timeless and relevant even to the present time. The plot of the novella is a simple linear storyline where a family of six members and their dog were burnt to death in a fire where “the flames had swallowed up the entire single-storey building and rose, with a frightful rustle and roar, fifteen feet in the air” in a town Batia, in a state called Narmada Pradesh (*The Revenge of the Non-Vegetarian*¹⁰). The novelist presents it with wit and wry narrative voice.

As the title suggests, it seems to be the revenge of the Non-vegetarian Madhusudan, ICS, on another non-vegetarian Basant Kumar Bal for killing the entire family of Nadim Dalvi. It is also the revenge of servant Basant on his master for depriving him of sustenance. It begins with the murder investigation and leads to beef politics leaving the reader to ponder over his own prejudices. The protagonist of the novella, Madhusudan Sen, an ICS officer, is the Sub-divisional Magistrate of Batia, and a connoisseur of non-vegetarian food whose typical breakfast in Calcutta consists of “eggs and sausages, liver, toast, fruit and tea”(TRNV 28). Unlike Agastya Sen, Madhusudan Sen’s son whom one has met in Chatterjee’s debut novel *English August: An Indian Story*, Madhusudan seems to be more accommodating. He says “well, frankly, I like the bungalow that’s been allotted to me, those centurial trees, those arches, that picturesque well”, to his Muslim mamlatdar Nadeem Dalvi (TRNV 35).

He lives in a “rather charming late-nineteenth-century bungalow on Temple Road in the Civil Lines area” which is part of an unofficial no-meat zone due to its proximity to Dayasagar Adinath Temple which is of great significance to the locals (TRNV 25). But he sets up a discreet method to get himself a ‘non-veg’ meal every evening through his mamlatdar. An unlikely bond forms between these two because of food. Food as the central theme, the author discusses many serious issues like beef politics and cow vigilantism. Sen, walks back daily from the magistrate’s court to his Civil Lines bungalow, followed by a glass of Cutty Sark whiskey and a single Gold Flake cigarette. He leads a dull bureaucratic life in a provincial posting, surrounded by punkhahs, peons and other eavesdropping functionaries.

Dalvi lives with his family and a dog in a huge house. Basant Kumar Bal is Dalvi’s servant who lives in the outhouse and does all the household chores like “ferrying in water and wood and coal, washing up, rushing to the bazaar to buy sugar and eggs, tending to the cows, clearing the clothesline... Never a moment’s rest for him” (TRNV 18). Although Bal is settled in Batia, he is a native of Purulia, a place he had left “on the death of his mother, some twelve years ago”, and has no family (TRNV 74). The humor of the novel darkens when Basant Kumar Bal sets fire “destroying life and property in the most inhumanly cruel manner” (TRNV 65). Max Schulz defines black humor fiction as “nontraditional” relationship to the history of novelistic storytelling (x). It “seeks . . . the comic perspective on both tragic fact and moralistic certitude” (13).

Colletta rightly points out that “Dark humour is characterized by the very concerns of Modernism. It is generally defined by ambivalence, confused chronology, plots that seem to go nowhere, and a conflicting, or even unreliable, narrative stance. It presents violent or traumatic events and questions the values and perceptions of its readers as it represents, simultaneously, the horrifying and the humorous” (2). When Basant Kumar Bal was questioned about his employers he says, “They always ate well,” (TRNV 19) and “they had non-vegetarian almost every day, saab, goat or chicken or fish or egg. They ate like rakshasas themselves and always left only two small pieces of meat in the pot, one each for the sister-in-law and her daughter” (TRNV 20). Each day after the Dalvi family has gone to bed Bal “had his dinner in the shed, whatever was left over for him by the sister-in-law and her daughter [who were treated like servants in the Dalvi house-hold] from whatever had been left over for them”(TRNV 19). Bal got only “the scrapings of the pot, some gobs of curry, some grains of rice and a couple of chapatis ... have to filch two green chillis and one raw onion to complete” his meal (TRNV 20). As he was not even given adequate food, out of anger

he murders Nadeem Dalvi and his family for an innocuous reason which seems almost ridiculous. Burton Feldman, an American professor finds that Black Humor is not audacious enough as the world outside is too worse and remarks: The truth is that Black Humor disappoints because it is not as pitilessly black or comic as it pretends to be... Far from being too audacious, Black Humor is not audacious enough for a world like ours...the world is surely worse than Black Humor is telling... (Feldman 102)

One cannot find any change in the character of Bal from the beginning to the end. The same uncertainty “that gaze of the unstable temperament hadn’t changed” in his face even after twenty-one years because a typical black humor character shows no capacity to grow or change (*TRNV* 113). He appears both ridiculous and pathetic. One laughs at him and at the same time shudder at his predicament.

As Bal murders Nadeem Dalvi’s family just for the sake of meat, an outraged Sen decides to investigate the death of his “principal protein and cholesterol supplier” and vows to turn vegetarian till justice has been done (*TRNV* 39). Also, he uses the letter of the law to close an illegal slaughterhouse, which was unknown to him, until he chanced upon the foul stench emanating from there on one of his road trips. This forces the entire town of Batia to go vegetarian as well. This shows the selfish nature of higher officials. The author portrays the present scenario of religious intolerance in our country, where people are targeted for being Muslim or eating beef.

While explaining the lengthy entwined criminal proceedings, the novelist remarks:

then you will appear before a Judicial Magistrate who will take cognizance of the crime, a charge sheet would be prepared, you’d have to spend some time in judicial custody in prison awaiting trial, and the hearing itself in the court of sessions- all that you may expect in the days- I should say years- to come. (*TRNV* 70)

After the court proceedings, Bal was put in jail with three other men who called him Gomaas Kumar as they were all vegetarians. They were kind to him and enlighten him of the delay of court proceedings where the “judges take so long to examine and take stock that it gives potatoes and other tubers enough time to grow between their Honourable toes”(*TRNV* 103-104). The author scores a brownie point in portraying the Judicial system in a darkly comical way.

When Bal was summoned to the court, he feels strange and unprotected outside the jail. The author satires the media and portrays the journalists “like stray dogs about to attack a cur who has wandered into their territory” (*TRNV* 76-77). After the trial, Bal returns to “prison in the late afternoon exhausted and afraid, less of death somehow than of living...” (*TRNV* 77) This reflects the central dilemma of black humor novels i.e., the terror of existing without reason, of wandering in the postmodern chaos. The author tries to explain the predicament of modern man who is more afraid of living than dying.

The author says the lawyers are even dirtier than a non-vegetarian’s excrement as “they suck you dry of whatever money you have” (*TRNV* 104). When Bal applies for Special Leave Petition in the Supreme Court, other prisoner says “you can sit that corner and relax and masturbate for the next four years, give or take another five” (*TRNV* 106). Also, he says

“the Supreme court will not be moved to tears by your whining” so if “I am around, we shall draft a mercy petition to the President of India. Never say die” (*TRNV* 106). The author presents the sluggishness of judicial system but doesn’t hope for any reform in the system because the black humorists point out the failings of society but do not expect any change, reform or improvement in them. As Alan R Pratt, a professor, contends “Black humor involves the humorous treatment of what is grotesque, morbid, or terrifying. And while it bitterly ridicules institutions, value systems, and traditions, black humor offers neither explicit nor implicit proposals for improving, reforming, or changing the painful realities on which it focuses”(Pratt xix).

After the trial the verdict is given by Judge Shyamlal on February 7, 1956 that Bal, “heartless and satanic”, who sat down amidst the corpses to make a meal of their non-vegetarian dinner “is to be hanged by the neck till he is dead” (*TRNV* 98).According to Mathew Winston, a critic “The literature of black humor frequently depicts horrible events, unhappy people, anarchy, and chaos” (Winston, “Black Humor” 258).

Chatterjee draws a parallel between killing of animals for food, and killing of humans as a penal consequence. Sen, hovering over acceptability of death penalty, ponders over vegetarians deeming death penalty as a fit penal consequence. He asks Mr Daftari “would all vegetarians, for instance, be opposed to the death penalty for even the most despicable murderer?” (*TRNV* 89).If death penalty is acceptable, then why isn’t killing of animals for food acceptable to vegetarians, and vice-versa, if death penalty is not acceptable, then why is killing of animals acceptable for non-vegetarians.

One can observe how the author draws a parallel between animals subjected to cruelty while awaiting their eventual slaughter with that of the death row convict who waits for often a decade or two until the eventuality finally dawns upon him. Also, he compares the hapless animals that grow up in closed confines, never having seen the world outside, and never knowing what it is to be like in the open, with the death row convict in the story, who is not bothered about what happens in the outside world as he is written as “not that kind of human being” (*TRNV* 74).It shows modern man’s mechanical, detached outlook on life and death which is mostly reflected in black humor novels. Black humor is not only about emotional detachment from the horrors of existence; it is also about the acceptance of the historical and moral disorientation of human existence.

The author mocks the government which works only when there are some inspections or visits and remarks “the prisoners are scrubbing floors, cleaning toilets, placing potted plants in corridors and sprucing themselves up in readiness for the visit of the new Inspector General of Prisons, Madhusudan Sen” (*TRNV* 107). A death row inmate, who is seeking presidential pardon, addresses the letter to King George VI, instead to the President. “That’s the template, sir, used by several dozen prisoners ever since the forties”, the subordinate informs the Inspector General and “it will serve its purpose, sir” he adds reassuringly (*TRNV* 111). No matter how grave the theme is, the novelist makes the best of it from a comic perspective.

Speaking about the delay in judicial system the author remarks, “Justice delayed is justice denied; true, but justice delayed for twenty-one years is also a gift of two decades of life to a recipient unworthy of even a moment of it” (*TRNV* 110). Sen reads the telex stating the decision of President to commute the sentence of death to imprisonment for life to Basant.

He carefully “tears the letter off the machine, all the while murmuring to himself, absentmindedly, a sort of refrain: ‘The quality of justice is not strained, the-quality-of-justice-is-not-strained’” (*TRNV* 124). He neatly rearranges the paper on the machine which looks “as though the order was never received”. Back in his room he “drinks his horrible tea” and on the way home stops “by Qayamat’s for a minute to pick up some kebabs” (*TRNV* 124). Sen’s action that may have led to the servant’s execution leaves the readers in moral turmoil.

The readers could draw the parallels in the delay of the judicial system in punishing the accused in Nirbhaya’ case and of the recent Hyderabad Disha case. In the latter case, the four accused in the rape and brutal murder of the veterinary doctor Disha were killed in an alleged ‘encounter’ early Friday morning near Shadnagar, while they were trying to flee after snatching weapons from the police. This incident has sparked a polarized debate - one side arguing that vigilantism is no substitute for due process of law; and the other citing the delay in punishing the accused in another high profile ‘Nirbhaya’ case as justification for summary ‘justice’.

With humour and a realistic representation of legal proceedings, this novella shows how a powerful, high-caste man took the life of someone he saw as an inferior to avenge the murder of another wealthy guy. Retribution that appeared to be non-vegetarian is actually privileged retaliation. Sen’s own thirst for vengeance also restricts others dietary freedom – after going vegetarian, Sen forces the entire town of Batia to follow suit by closing the abattoirs on the suggestion of a member of the temple trust.

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Observance and Violation of Cooperative Principle in *The Sunset Club*

Rohidas Nitonde & Chandrakant R. Patil

Abstract:

Cooperative Principle in communication, as advocated by H P Grice, involves four maxims viz. quantity, quality, relation and manner. These maxims are utilized by the characters in a novel in conversations that need to be studied carefully from the perspective of pragmatics. The reader arrives at convincing interpretation considering the context, speech situation, speech event, and the actual utterances having locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions. In the novel *The Sunset Club* by Khushwant Singh, one comes across varied and typical conversations of the characters in which certain maxims are either observed or violated for specific purposes. The three main characters of the novel are Boota, a Sikh; Baig, a Muslim; and Sharma, a Hindu. When they form the Sunset Club, they are in the evening of their lives. The characters either observe or violate certain maxims to fulfill their communicative goals. The observance and violation of certain maxim is an inevitable part of the Cooperative Principle. It is not true that the violation of any maxim amounts to arrogance or impoliteness of the interlocutors. The present article is devoted to the study of observance and violation of the Cooperative Principle.

Keywords: Cooperative Principle, Maxims, Quantity, Quality, Relation, Manner, Observance, Violation, Locutionary, Illocutionary, Perlocutionary, Interlocutors, Intentionality, Communicative Goals

Introduction

The present article offers an analysis of interesting conversations from Khushwant Singh's last novel, *The Sunset Club* (2010), in which romantic experiences of the three retired old friends residing in Delhi's posh localities are depicted. Here, an attempt is being made to elucidate the selected pieces of conversations of the characters involving either the observance or violation of certain maxims of the Cooperative Principle depending on the context. It is the contextual knowledge of the talk exchanges of the characters that play a pivotal role in interpreting the novel from pragmatics. The strategy of code-mixing and code-switching adopted by the novelist plays a significant role in the observance and violation of certain maxims. The deictic expressions are inseparable parts of the maxims utilized by the characters.

Critical Review of the novel 'The Sunset Club.'

In the 'Apologia' of the novel *The Sunset Club*, it has been acknowledged by Khushwant Singh himself, that he started writing this novel at the age of ninety-five, and he was not sure

whether he would be able to complete the same in his lifetime. Having nothing to do, he became restless. On the advice of Sheela Reddy, a famous journalist that time associated with the magazine titled *Outlook*, he began to write on his dead friends about whom he often talked too much. The writer has also acknowledged that the novel he was writing would be unacceptable in the polite society since its contents were replete with verbal obscenity. He was gratefully thankful to Diya Kar Hazra and Nandini Mehta of Penguin Books to make the book into a readable shape.

The members of the Sunset Club are Sardar Buta Singh (a Shikh), Pandit Preetam Sharma (a Hindu) and Nawab Barakatulla (a Muslim), who often meet at the sunset time in the Lodhi Garden, sit on a particular bench and endlessly engage themselves in talk exchanges that include love, lust, sex, domestic politics, current events, international politics and the activities taking place in the vicinity. Anuradha Goyal (2010), in her online book review, remarks:

Very aptly named, this book *The Sunset Club* is about a year in the life of three friends in the late eighties who have been meeting at a particular bench in Lodhi Gardens for more than 40 years. The author takes you through the 12 months of Delhi, through the conversations between three of them.”¹ (p.1)

The novel is a romantic trajectory of the lives of three friends of the said club who do not hide anything secret. The plot of the novel begins on the 26th January 2009 and ends on the 26th January 2010. The writer sketches the characteristic features of their personalities in minute details. The readers get to know about their idiosyncrasies, fantasies of old age, psychology and physical appearance. Khushwant Singh leaves no stone unturned in describing their illicit relations with the women and their sex life.

To put it in a nutshell, the novel explores the inevitable old age and the fantasies associated with it. The friendship of all the three friends Sardar Buta Singh (a Shikh), Pandit Preetam Sharma (a Hindu) and Nawab Barakatulla (a Muslim) spanning more than four decades, has been the focal point in the novel. Their past experiences, recollection of past memories and their opinions about the past, present and the future are described in the tongue-in-cheek narrative. Nimny Chacko (2011), while reviewing the book on her blog, said:

As is apparent from their names, each of them belongs to a different religion; and therefore quite understandably, they allow squabbles over matters of faith to creep now and then into their colourful conversations while maintaining their staunch friendship.”²(p.1)

Indian political leaders of their times also figure in their long conversations while they meet at the Sunset Club meetings in the Lodhi Garden of Delhi. There are references to eminent personalities such as Manmohan Singh, M. F. Husain, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Menka Gandhi, Varun Gandhi and many others. The historical incidents during the Mughal period, British Raj in India and the Nehru era also form the inevitable part of this novel.

Observance and Violation of Cooperative Principle in the Novel *The Sunset Club*

On scrutiny of the utterances of the interlocutors in the glaring conversations, one realizes that they are fully loaded with pragmatic meaning. It is interesting to note that the utterances considered as speech acts fall in the category of Cooperative principle, for they contain the philosophy of laughing and violation of maxims. There are indirect forms of expressions that are used in British society to show politeness to others. Therefore, G. N. Leech has suggested four categories of maxims to be observed by the participants in a conversation such as Tact maxim, Generosity maxim, Approbation maxim and Modesty maxim.

This maxim expects the conversational partners of the ongoing conversation to provide the required information neither less nor more to achieve the communication goal. Grice H. P. (1975) has put it in the following words:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.”³ (p.46)

Now, let us discuss Grice’s Cooperative Principle and its four maxims, viz. Quantity, Quality, Manner and Relation maxims through the novel *The Sunset Club* as follows:

On the evening of the 14th February 2009, Sharma is in a hurry to disclose to the members of the Sunset Club that he had received Valentine cards from four women declaring their love for him. The following conversation takes place between Boota and Sharma:

Boota: So did you make love to them?

Sharma: I went to Khan Market and got four Valentine Day cards. I tell you, it was quite a problem. They keep them hidden in their drawers lest these goondas of the Shiv Sena and Bajrang Dal smash up their shops. They think it is against Indian culture and should be put up down by force, if necessary. The fellow sold me the card because he knows me. I sent them by courier to all the four ladies”.⁴ (p.54)

In reply to the question asked by the first speaker, the second speaker uses too many sentences as a violation of the quantity maxim of the Cooperative Principle. Sharma has violated this maxim for the simple reason that his answer does not ensemble the question asked by his friend Boota. The question asked by Boota is straightforward. He asked whether his conversational partner had made love to the four women in the context. The personal deixis ‘them’ refers to the four women from whom Sharma had received Valentine Day cards which are treated as a symbol of love between man and woman. It is customary to celebrate Valentine Day on the 14th February every year to commemorate the Christian saint by the said name. Boota’s question here demands either a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ reply from his conversational partner. But instead of answering the question put forward by Boota either positively or negatively, Sharma provides more information than is needed in the context. Sharma’s violation of the quantity maxim speaks profusely about his emotional world. He is so excited that he takes pride in telling his old friends about the love letters he had received from the

four ladies. His utterances also reveal the attitude of the political organizations such as Shiv Sena and Bajarang Dal, which are associated with hardcore Hinduism. These organizations oppose Christen saints such as St. Valentine. They do not like open forms of expressions of love. Openly sending love letters, according to them, is against their religion and culture. Even though Sharma has violated the maxim of quantity, his utterances have deep meaning if interpreted from the perspective of pragmatics. The cultural clash between the Hindus and the Christians is implicated in the utterances of Sharma. He belongs to the Hindu religion but scared of the Shiv Sena and Bajarang Dal because he is afraid that the members of these political organizations might thrash him for violating their dogma. Regarding culture-specific context, George Yule (1996) observes:

It is possible to treat politeness as a fixed concept, as in the idea of ‘polite social behaviour, or etiquette, within a culture.’⁵(p.60)

All three friends met on the 15th February 2009. Thereafter, the attendance at the Sunset Club became irregular. The next day Boota did not turn up. The following conversation took place between Sharma and Baig:

Baig: What has happened to the Sardar?

Sharma: No idea. I will send my servants across to find out.⁶ (p.56)

On noticing Boota’s absence on that day, the first speaker asks a simple question to his conversational partner about the reason for the Sardar’s non-attendance. The reply given by the second speaker is a glaring example of the observance of quantity and relation maxims of the Cooperative Principle. The utterance of Sharma is apt and precise. Therefore, it is treated as the observance of the quantity maxim. It is also an instance of the observance of relation maxim because it is absolutely relevant in the context of the above conversation. The conversation is viewed from pragmatics; one realizes that both the conversational partners are concerned about their friend Boota. They want to know the reason for Boota’s absentee. Sharma is ready to send one of his servants to the house of Boota to know his whereabouts. One comes to know that there is a strong bond of solidarity in their friendship.

All the three members of the Sunset Club know each other very well. The commissive speech act of sending servants to Boota’s house indicates Sharma is also worried about him. The next day also Boota does not attend the regular meeting of the Sunset Club. It was Sharma who tells Baig the reason for Boot’s nonappearance at Lodhi Gardens. He informs Baig that Boota’s elder brother was no more. His elder brother was three years older than him. He had been in the wheelchair for over five years. When he died, his daughter came from America to attend the funeral. She was holding her father’s hand when he breathed his last.

On the 2nd of March, all the members of the Sunset Club meet and begin the conversation on the general parliamentary elections in India due to the ending of the five-year tenure of Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister. There are references to Sonia Gandhi, the chief of the Congress Party, Narasimha Rao, former prime minister, etc. Sharma and Boota go on admiring Manmohan Singh’s personality. In Sharma’s opinion, Singh was a scholarly

student at Cambridge University. He also informs his conversational partner that Singh wanted to become a professor of economics at Chandigarh University. However, he got a job in the UN that fetched him a fat dollar salary. It was Prime Minister Narasimha Rao who made Singh finance minister. In Boota's opinion, Manmohan Singh was the best Prime Minister of India because he was scholarly, highly experienced and very polite in his behaviour. When he underwent heart surgery, there were prayers in temples, mosques, churches, gurudwaras all over the country. Boota wanted to know Baig more about Manmohan Singh. Let us study the following piece of conversation from the perspective of pragmatics in general and Cooperative Principle in particular:

Boota: What do you have to say, Baig?

Baig: Bhai, I don't involve myself in politics. I go along with my Begum: she says Manmohan is a *bhalamanas*, *sharif* and *mita hua*- a good man, a gentleman and self-effacing. What more can you ask of a prime minister? ⁷
(p.58)

In reply to Boota's question on the qualities of Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister, Baig holds his wife's comment in high esteem. Baig addresses his conversational partner using the honour term 'Bhai', which means 'brother' in the Indian context. The term 'Bhai' is respectfully used while addressing the males in the Hindi language. Baig seems to be very honest in admitting that he goes by his wife's opinion as he does not indulge in the politics of the country. Here, Baig has observed the relation maxim of the Cooperative Principle as his statements are relevant in the context of the above conversation. It is a pragmatic value because his thoughts on politics are genuine as he holds Manmohan Singh in high esteem. He tells Boota that the former Prime Minister is a thorough gentleman from top to toe. The conversation throws light on the qualifications of Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister of India. From the pragmatic perspective, Baig's analysis of the personality of Manmohan Singh is a representative opinion of the Muslim community in India. All the Muslims generally support the secular political parties such as the Congress of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. Muslims in India support the congress because it is an all-inclusive political organization in India. Therefore, the people from the Muslim community prefer the Congress Party to Janata Party in general.

The Congress Party made Manmohan Singh the Prime Minister of the country because of his merit and polite behaviour. The qualifications of Manmohan Singh are the central point in the above conversation, which speaks volumes about his unblemished personality. Baig uses the strategy of code-mixing in his conversation with Boota. The Hindi words such as '*a bhalamanas*', '*sharif*' and '*mita hua*' have been inserted in the English sentences to establish the validity of Manmohan Singh's personality helm of affairs. There are many instances in the novel where the characters use the strategy of code-mixing and code-switching as a tool of the pragmatics of Indian English. For instance, when the members of the Sunset Club met on the 9th March 2009, Baig announced that he would not come the next day for the meeting of the club. Study the following conversation:

Baig: I will be not able to come tomorrow evening.

Sharma: *Khair to hai*- all is well?

Baig: *Allah ka shukar hai*-God be thanked.⁸ (p.64)

On close examination of the above conversation between Baig and Sharma at the Sunset Club in Lodhi Gardens, Delhi, it appears that both have adopted the strategy of code-switching as they make use of the Hindi expressions followed by English sentences. The use of Hindi expressions in the Indian English novel is a collective phenomenon that adds to the beauty of Indian English. The linguistic strategy of code-mixing and code switching is like ornaments of Indian English, broadly known as the pragmatics of Indian English. It has been observed that when the characters become emotional, they tend to use the strategy of code-mixing and code-switching. Therefore, Raja Rao, a famous Indian writer in English, once said that English is the language of our intellectual makeup, whereas; mother tongue is our emotional makeup. When it comes to express strong emotions, the characters in the Indian English novels take the help of their regional language to display their emotional world. The linguistic strategy of code-mixing and code-switching is a vital tool used by the writer to show Indianness. In the above conversation, in response to Baig's statement, Sharma uses the Hindi expression, "*Khair to hai*", meaning whether all is well with his conversational partner. Baig also responds to Sharma's remark using the Hindi expression, "*Allah ka shukar hai*," meaning it is due to God's blessing that everything is well in his life. Both the conversational partners have observed the manner and relation maxims of the Cooperative Principle as their utterances are unambiguous and relevant respectively as far as the topic of the conversation is concerned. There is clarity in what they are trying to say. Similarly, the use of a code-switching strategy is absolutely relevant in the context of the conversation.

As the novel progresses, the readers are acquainted with the son of Boota, who comes to visit his old father once in a blue month. The son hardly has time to talk to his old father. As he comes back home at midnight and gets up at 10.30 a.m., he does not have time to spend with his father. Once, the old man fell from his bed at midnight, and the doctor was called for immediate examination and treatment. Dr. Malhotra came to his house at 7a.m. as his clinic was nearby and began to give treatment. He took his BP and found that it was normal. As he pricked the finger of the patient, the following conversation took place:

Dr. Malhotra: What happened?

Boota: Nothing. I fell off my bed at midnight."⁹ (p.85)

In the above conversation, Boota seems to have observed the quality, quantity, relation, and manner maxims of the Cooperative Principle for the simple reason that his answer to the question asked by the doctor is precise, truthful, relevant and unambiguous, respectively in the present context. It has been observed that Boota, the old man in his late eighties, seems to be very cooperative in the ongoing conversation with his doctor while being treated. It goes without saying that one is expected to give truthful answers to the questions asked by a doctor so that one can get the proper treatment. The relation between the doctor and the patient seems to be congenial as far as the above short conversation is concerned. After imparting

certain instructions to his son regarding his father's sleeping position, the doctor leaves the place. He charges fifteen hundred rupees for his visit. Boota thinks that it was not necessary to call the doctor at his house. The son was reluctant to spend more money for his old father's sleeping arrangement as suggested by the visiting doctor, for he could not afford to buy some furniture needed to avoid the fall of his old father from the bed.

Conclusion

From the previous discussion, it becomes crystal clear that the characters in the novel *The Sunset Club* either observe or violate certain maxims of the Cooperative Principle as a linguistic strategy to fulfill the very purpose of their communicative goals. Khushwant Singh's characters occasionally use linguistic strategies such as code-mixing and code-switching to show Indianness. One finds some expressions of Hindi in the continuation of Indian English sentences in the novel. The contextual background helps to analyze the utterances of the characters in a more convincing way. The characters utilize the four maxims-quantity, quality, relation and manner for the smooth communication between the interlocutors against the backdrop of the prevailing speech situation and speech event.

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Exploring 'In-betweenness' in Manjushree Thapa's *Tilled Earth*

Shalini Shah & Tamishra Swain

Abstract

Manjushree Thapa's short story collection *Tilled Earth* carries the various narrations of different characters that have fallen in the state of "in-betweenness" because they have been acquainted with the different opposing cultures. These cultures seem to be innovative sites of both collaboration and contestation. Because of the encounter of different cultures at one level, the characters face confusion, ambiguity and difficulty along with the enhancement of the double vision. By gaining the insights of both cultural aspects and the differences underlying there, on the one hand, they have been conscious about the crisis that has emerged in their original identity and on the other hand they even have found themselves with the options signaling the new signs of identity. This paper tries to find out various cultural encounters faced by the different characters of the text and how these encounters shape up their new identities. These new hybrid identities are the reality of the contemporary age. All the diasporic writers including Manjushree Thapa envisions the concepts of hybrid identity and Transnationalism through their writings.

Keywords: Diaspora, Cultural studies, Nepali Writings, Transnationalism, Identity

Introduction

In the globalization period people don't stick to one place rather movement from one place to another, one geographical location to another, one country to another is a common phenomenon. These movements are done sometimes for education, sometimes for earning livelihood etc. But what may be the reason of movements, people's migration from homeland to host land brings certain changes. The migrants go with their own culture, belief system, rites, rituals, food habits, language, ideologies and encounter another culture in the host land and there begins the crisis of identity and the notion of in-betweenness. These clashes between two cultures create a space for a new identity.

Creating Diaspora

Diaspora is originally a Greek term which means "a scattering or sowing of seeds." The word 'Diaspora' is derived from a Greek word, which means dispersal and was originally applied to describe the condition of the Jewish people living outside Palestine. The term has been extended to cover a range of different cultural or religious commitment that gives the sense of exile from a place or state of origin or belonging. James Clifford posits: "Diasporas usually presuppose longer distances and a separation more like exile: a constitutive taboo on return, or its postponement to a remote future" (p.246). Diaspora, the voluntary or forcible

movements or people from their homelands into new regions, is a central historical fact. Further, Dayal in "Diaspora and Double Consciousness" quotes James Clifford: "we are seeing the emergence of new maps: broad land cultural areas, populated by strong, diasporic ethnicities assimilated to dominant nation states" (p.46). But the hope to get back to the homeland is always there in the minds of the migrants. So, Diaspora created because of displacement of large number of people sometimes forcible migration and sometimes voluntary. But the hope to get back to the homeland is always there in the minds of the migrants.

Nepal and its language

Nepal was ruled by the Shah dynasty. Prithvi Narayan Shah, who conquered Kathmandu Valley in (1768) and established Shah Dynasty in Nepal, like many South- Asian languages, Nepali language has also its root in Sanskrit. Nepali language becomes the national language of Nepal in 1958 A.D. So, at present Nepal is a Federal Democratic Republic country sharing its border with China in the North and India in the South.

Nepali literature: A Brief Introduction

The literature of Nepal in-terms of chronological division can be studied under five eras. In the first era, i.e., Pre-Bhanubhakta era (1872 B.S.), Sanskrit was the language accessible only by high-caste Brahmins. In the second era, i.e., Bhanubhakta era (1872- 1936 B.S.), is about Bhanubhakta as the most famous poet of the literary era, but also the all-time legend of Nepali literature and known as the Adikavi of Nepali language. In third era which is Moti Ram era (1940- 1976 B.S.), where Moti ram re-established the legacy of Bhanubhakta. Reputation and fame of Bhanubhakta is simply the result of Moti Ram intellect. In fourth era, the Pre-Revolution era (1977-2007 B.S.), Lekhnath Paudyal, is the most prominent writer who brings modern attitude in Nepali literature and into the fifth era (2007- present) Nepali literature which has also seen an increase in publications with writers like Samrat Upadhyay, and many others. There has been a significant growth in Nepali narrative from different corners of the globe.

Writings of Manjushree Thapa

Manjushree Thapa is known as contemporary writer in global arena. She is not only an essayist but also a writer, translator and editor of Nepal. Thapa came to limelight after her debut work *The Tutor of History* published in 2001. After that she has published many fictional and non-fictional works to her credit. Thapa's collection of stories named *Tilled Earth* (2007), analyzed the trivial things and day to day events of Nepali society. It also explores the role played by women within Nepali society. Her writings reflect the Diasporic experiences, political turmoil of Nepal, the concept of nation and nationalism, issues of patriarchal dominance, and many more. Through her writings she brings Nepali literature to the forefront.

Summary of the Short story

The story “Sounds that the Tongue Learns to Make” in the collection presents the difficulties of Sarah, an American woman who comes to Nepal and faces linguistic difficulties. She really finds it difficult to master the new language that her tongue was not habituated to. She cannot articulate her emotions through Nepali language though she desperately attempts to do so. As a result of this, communication cannot go forward in a lucid way. It is because of that she, many a times, has to converse with silences and gaps with her boyfriend. She is not being able to continue her relation with her boyfriend Keshab who is from a different cultural background because of the cultural gap and the linguistic problem. Cultural encounter is sure to happen when two different cultures come near. Due to the cultural differences, there emerges the situation of conflict between the cultures. Sometimes through this conflict emerge a new hybrid culture altogether.

Cultural Clashes

Cultural encounter is sure to happen when two different cultures come near. Due to the cultural differences, there emerges the situation of conflict between the cultures. According to Homi K. Bhabha, “every culture is an original mixedness within every form of identity. He states that the cultures are not discrete phenomena, but being always in contact with one another, we find mixedness in cultures” (p.81) “Sounds that the Tongue Learns to Make” is a story that talks about the relationship between Sarah and Keshab. Sarah being an American woman in Nepal, experiences the difficulties and problems created by cultural differences. In the company of her lover, she travels to Jomsom. This journey is where their relationship reaches great emotional and psychological altitudes. Nepal and American culture are totally different. So, Sarah is encountering the unusual behavior of Keshab even though she is tired, Keshab is not helping her climbing the hills in the fearing that he might catch the attention of Nepali people moving with a girl without marriage. “In Kathmandu they were circumspect about touching each other in public.”(p.18). This story is a clear example of what happens when people leave their own cultures and move into new cultural territories. In such cultural encounter, people find that the cultural and linguistic categories that they have insufficient using the frameworks of another culture and language are very uncomfortable experiences. Sarah tries to learn the Nepali language after reaching Nepal. She uses many Nepali words and phrases and translates them into English though she may be able to make sounds belonging to a different culture. “Sarah responded for him. ‘Ma American ho.’ Keshab corrected her: ‘Ma American hun.’ (p.18) Keshab comes from Nepal and he is not acquainted with American ways of living. His cultural differences make his relationship with Sarah incompatible. The following lines show the difficulty and problems created by cultural differences:

Once, at the American club in Kathmandu, which she visited for weekly burgers-and-fries, an expat had warned her about the insidious methods Nepali used to seduce American woman. ‘They’ll use any means to get a visa.’ the woman had sneered. Sarah had wondered if the woman had known about

Keshab and her. Her superior tone had repelled Sarah. Her entire attitude had. Us and them. The rich and the poor. The white woman and the brown man. The highly paid consultant and the poorly paid language teacher.” (p.29)

From these lines we come to know that since Keshab has a very Nepali life, where Sarah could not enter into it. She does not know what that Nepalese used insincere methods to seduce American woman. This negative image of Nepalese is because of unbridgeable cultural gaps. However, things are not so bad despite, cultural differences Sarah understands Keshab. She was loving and sympathetic towards Keshab. However, it is not without confusion. The awkwardness and moral confusion experienced by Keshab is clearly brought out by the following lines:

We must. It was unreasonable of her to resent this, she knew. Keshab lived by the rules of his society and had to keep up appearances. He was too caught up in Nepali mores to be truly free. He could not be seen to be sleeping with an American woman. Which was only part of all that was askew in their relationship. Perhaps, dinner was the right time to talk, Sarah thought, to establish the fact that their relationship was going to end when she left Nepal.” (p.31)

Despite their love and intimate relationship, the rules of their society are different since Keshab was brought up as a Nepali, he was caught up in Nepali cultural values. He has a fear that people might see him waking and sleeping with an American woman. Since Nepali society is orthodox, Nepalese cannot act as freely as an Americans. That's why Keshab and Sarah's face obstacles.

Keshab and Sarah move together and during those walks they have to face many awkward situations because of cultural differences. They exchange things among themselves which can also be taken as an example of cultural exchange. The mixture of Nepali and English words in their speech is also a kind of hybridity resulting from cultural encounter. Though Sarah hopes to speak Nepali well in future, she realizes that Keshab is the only person with whom she shares its intimate silences. This shows how difficult is to master a foreign language:

When Keshab returned in the late afternoon, the two of them went for a short stroll through the town. They were careful not to walk too close, to keep up appearances. They did not say much, but they were content. At a small bookstore crammed with romances and thrillers, she bought him a *Newsweek*. For her he bought a Mars bar.
'Bholi djaane?' Keshab asked at one point. Are we going tomorrow?
'Djaane,' She said, realizing that though in the years to come she might well speak the Nepali language with others, he was the only person with whom she would share its intimate silences.” (p.40)

From these lines it is clear that cultural differences create different confusing situations. The

cross-cultural exchanges enrich the perspectives of the people of the concerned cultures. One realizes that no matter how hard one tries, one cannot master a foreign language the way natives do. There are certain silences in the foreign language and one should accept its truth and reality. “She loved to listen to him talking, Kati, Silently, Sarah mouthed the soft 'ta' that didn't exist in English. ‘Barsa’: the purr of the ra. How many years old? Ka, kha, ga, gha, nga. Sounds that her tongue had learned to make this year.”

Early in the next morning, Keshab reached over and whispered for her to wake up. She felt him slip out of bed and the next thing she knew; he was calling out her name again. ‘Saa’rah. Saa’rah’. He had told her that in Nepali her name meant entirety; he often strung the word into a sentence that said she was his entire world. Timi mero saa'rah sansar hau.” (p.19)

This story describes the relationship between Sarah, an American woman, and Keshab, her Nepali boyfriend. The couple trek through the picturesque mountain route to reach Jomsom; an emotional as well as a psychological peak in their relationship. The story is full of Nepali words and phrases that Sarah translates into English, including the sentence that Keshab uses to describe his love for her: “timi mero saa'rah sansar hau” (You are my entire world). However, while the tongue might be able to make sounds belonging to a different culture, cultural identities remain untranslatable, just as cultural gaps remain unbridgeable. It seems fitting that the story ends with an anticipation of their eventual separation. Even though they share some moments of silent contentment at the picturesque heights of Jomsom, however, both know that those moments are temporary.

Being an American woman, Sarah felt difficulty to utter the Nepali words. She can't produce these sounds as comfortably and as easily as a Nepalese themselves do. Her name is incidentally a Nepali word, *Sarah* means entirety. This story with the meaning of a word highlights the realities, difficulties and ambiguities that result from cultural encounter and interaction. The following lines support the statement:

He helped her up and guided her across a wet, mossy plank that served as a bridge over a steep gully. She held on to his hand as they walked further on the trail. To distract her, he declared, 'We take Nepali lesson now. Chiplo'. He pointed at the path ahead. 'Means slippy'.
Sarah smiled, feeling like a child. 'Slippery', she said. 'Not slippy'.
'Repeat: Yobatochplotcha'.” (p.27)

Thus, Keshab and Sarah are in the space of cultural in-betweenness. Sarah's knowledge of Nepali is not adequate and she experiences some difficulties while learning to make some Nepali sounds. However, the advantage of this in-betweenness is that they realize one thing that learning somebody else's language is quite difficult. And at the same time this in-betweenness gives a space for a hybrid identity.

Conclusion

Manjushree Thapa's *Tilled Earth* presents various characters going from one locale to other terrains and facing different sorts of cultural difficulties and ultimately finding themselves in the state of in-betweenness. Thapa's stories bring forward the issues of hybridity, cultural mixture and double consciousness. The characters in the stories no longer can totally detach themselves from the memory of their original/ origin culture which is layered in their psyche in such a way that it is in their present behaviour and dealings time to time thereby making them feel that they can neither adept fully themselves to the alien culture nor can they forget the previous one. They find their identity swinging in-between.

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Ecological Perspectives in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

Mamidyala Srinivas

Abstract

Post colonialism today deals with the aspects of migration, cultural clashes, globalization and Diaspora. The immigration process involves separation from family, familiar culture of the own country and pass through unfamiliar physical, cultural context. It offers wide range of problems to the immigrant. Jhumpa Lahiri has been narrating the problems of Indian immigrants like nostalgia and crisis of cultural national identity, assimilation in her novels. Her "The Lowland" is a masterly novel deals with the protagonist's fate and will, exile and return. Immigrant Psychology offers various theories and models to understand the immigrants well. Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework is the most prominent of the various models. This model is applied in the current study to understand the migration and acculturation experiences and assimilation efforts of the protagonist Gauri in *The Lowland*.

Keywords: Immigration, Acculturation, Alienation, Assimilation

Introduction

The Indian Diaspora is estimated to be second largest in the world. The Diaspora, estimated at over 30 million, is spread across more than 200 countries. Indian migrants began arriving in the United States as early as 1820. Though few in number at the time, the Indian population has surged since the 1990s to become the second-largest immigrant group in the country after Mexicans, and ahead of those born in China, the Philippine, and Vietnam. Statistics reveal that there are more than 2 million Indian-born immigrants resided in the United States, accounting for 4.7 percent of the 41.3 million foreign-born populations.

'Diaspora Studies' is an emerging area of research. Diaspora has been dealt in various perspectives. Dealing in psychological point of view will give more authentic pictures of the characters and their struggle. Hence, an attempt has been made in this paper to examine the characters and their plight under the new perspectives in Immigrant Psychology.

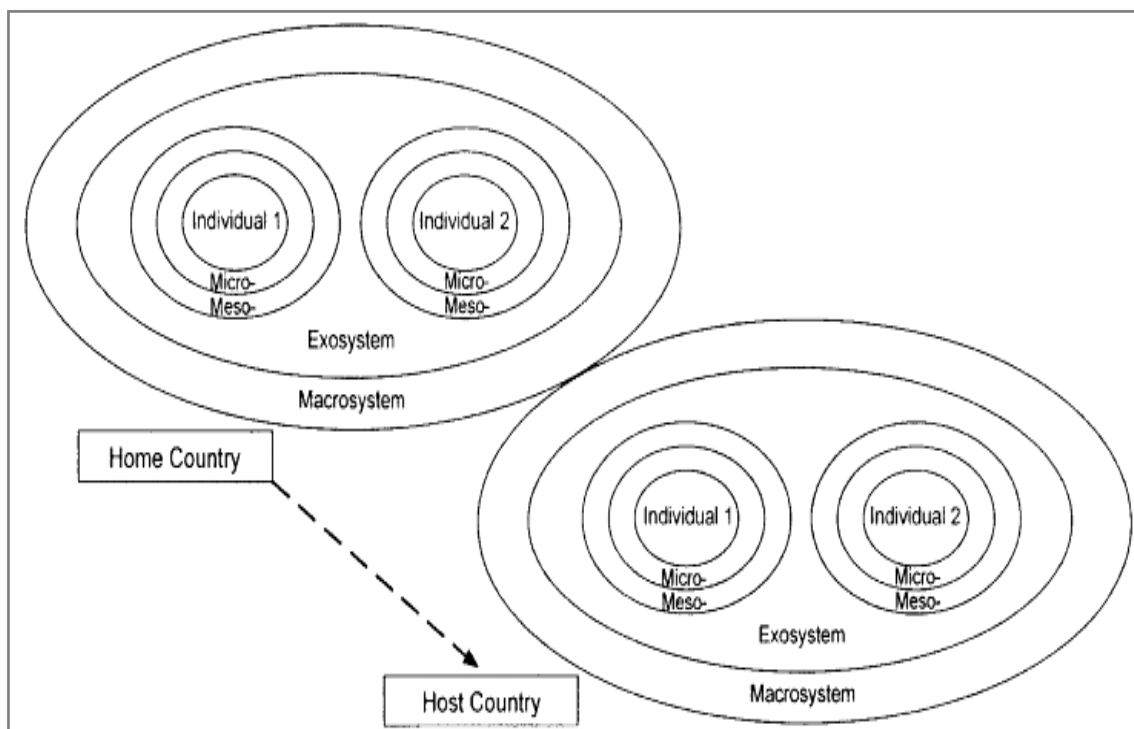
Psychology has its own approaches in research. In recent times, much focused research has been going in immigrant Psychology. Since countries like the USA has more immigrant population, estimated to be 61% of the immigrants and their offspring by 2050 has created necessity to develop strategies to look after mental health of the immigrants as they constitute larger part of the country. Many of the problems of the immigrants are linked to the experiences of acculturation, discrimination, and trauma. Reports of the various committees, multicultural psychologists recommended 'Ecological framework' as the 'best model' to understand and work for the mental health of immigrants.

Among the various research models, the most successful frame work to understand immigrant psychology is 'Ecological Frame work of Urie Bronfenbrenner'. According to

this model, behaviours don't occur in vacuum but is affected by the larger culture and society, the local community, and its institutions. Culture is an essential element in examining the experiences of immigrants.

Ecological system theory also called development in context or human ecological theory identifies five environmental systems with which an individual interacts.

Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989)



The five levels of ecology which form the ecological framework are Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem and Chronosystem. First, the 'Microsystem' consists of communities as well as people with whom the single individual comes into immediate contact. The 'Microsystem' factors consist of family members, school, religious institutions, neighbourhood and peers. Communities and people in the 'Microsystem' typically exert a direct and frequent impact on individual development. Second, the 'Mesosystem' belongs to the kind as well as quality of interactions among 'Microsystems', but doesn't include the person. Third, the 'Exosystem' consists of the interconnections between one or more settings in which the individual is not directly involved. Public policy and government activities, economic system, mass media, social settings are examples. Individuals have no role to play in this system. Fourth, the 'Macrosystem' represents social blueprint, and consists of values, cultural beliefs and norms, social structures, gender role, socialization, race relations and global resources. Finally, the 'Cronosystem' consists of socio-historical circumstances, environmental events and transitions over the life course.

Ecological framework of Urie Bronfenbrenner gives insights into the immigrants' upbringing, psycho-social aspects and cultural background. Immigrants' experiences like migration and acculturation are better understood. It functions as a guide to study cross cultural comparative studies. Hence, this model is taken to examine the plight of the protagonist in the novel *The Lowland*.

The major themes of the novel *The Lowland* are migration, isolation and guilt, marriage bond, fate and will, alienation and assimilation. The protagonist Gouri undergoes a series of events and her pursuit for self identity.

Subhash and Udayan are brothers. Udayan is charismatic and impulsive, drawn to Naxalbari movement. Subhash left home to pursue his education in America. Udayan fell in love with Gouri and married her. Unfortunately, he was shot dead by the police, leaving Gouri a widow. Subhash took Gouri to America to give her a new life and to protect his brother's child. Gouri left her daughter and Subhash in pursuit of her career.

The 'Microsystem' of Gouri speaks of poor parental support and weak relations with neighbours and peers. She left countryside at the age of 5, as her mother was bedridden and was taken care by her sisters. She lived with grandparents. Rural life held no appeal to her. She lost her parents when she was 16yrs old and also lost grandparents soon. 'She had no memory of spending a moment, ever alone with mother or father' (p60) and lived in the shadow of the others.

The 'Mesosystem' is the interaction between the Microsystems, family, religion, neighbourhood and school. Religious norms during the time were strictly followed. Calcutta being a cultural centre, Bengali traditions were observed by the majority of the population. By the advent of colonial culture, church, missionary schools had come. It was the time of Naxalbari movement; there were protests against the government policies.

The 'Exosystem' is about public policy and government activities, economic system and social setting. In Gouri's 'Exosystem', it is seen economic inequalities and inadequate public policy. Naxalbari movement was in progress; as a result Udayan was attracted to this moment. He carried secret work against the government and its policies. In his pursuit he lost his life. Gouri too was attracted to it and supported Udayan. As a consequence, she lost him forever and lived a miserable life unable to forget his memories.

The 'Macrosystem' is about cultural beliefs and norms, values, social structures, gender role, and socialization. Gouri remained helpless in Calcutta after the death of Udayan. As a widowed young girl she had to follow the orthodox mandates of her mother-in-law and confine herself in the conservative circumference of the society. She chose to escape her traditional burden even if it meant marrying her brother-in-law, Subhash. In an attempt to adapt to the American society, she transforms herself both physically and mentally. She avoids sari and wears jeans. She cut off her hair. She even didn't refrain from committing a sexual relation with her female student.

The 'Cronosystem' is about socio-historical circumstances, environmental events and transitions over the life course. Gouri tried to self discover and emancipate from the assigned identities of bereaved widow, dutiful daughter-in-law, mere wife and mother. With the exception of losing Udayan, she had actively chosen to take these steps.

She had married Subhash, she had abandoned Bela. She had generated alternative versions of herself. Layering her life only to strip it bare, only to be alone in the end.’ (p.240)

As their interactions in these systems are weak, the protagonist suffered loss of self. She feels alienated. Her journey from grandparents’ death, marriage with Udayan, becoming a widow, having an unsatisfactory marital life, keeping always Udayan in mind, leaving Bela and family, insulted by her daughter, all these have torn Gouri. She always felt lonely and disappointed. On the other side, Gouri didn’t give up the hope; she left Calcutta and moved to America with Subhash as his wife. She made efforts to follow the customs of the new society, by changed her hair style, her dress, she learnt to speak English. She started her studies and career and in the process she left her daughter and family. She made efforts to assimilate into the host culture and society and was successful to a greater extent.

Conclusion

Jhumpa Lahiri has been narrating the problems of Indian immigrants like nostalgia and crisis of cultural national identity, and also the issues related to assimilation. Immigrants also show greater inclination to assimilate into the host country. When their aspirations are not met, unable to forget their past and find difficulty adjusting to the new environment and culture. In their desperate attempts to assimilate, many feel alienated, experience expatriate sensibility. Mirsad [et al 2005] speaks ‘Acculturation as a complex, multi dimensional, cyclical and oscillating process. An individual immigrant can go towards each end of the spectrum, from maladjustment to adjustment and change several times, depending upon multiple factors like ecological influences and personal development.’ Gouri, too oscillated from alienation to assimilation. At the end, she prefers her career and self as most important. Gouri never looks back at her ‘home’ culture and totally assimilates with California's cosmopolitan cultures.

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Scaffolding in Gamification: ‘Metroidvania’ and Cognitive Behaviorism

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Abstract

This paper delves into the platform-based video gaming (select platformers) in an effort to isolate their approach to scaffolding and an approximate degree to which they may find success in accordance to education theorists such as Skinner, Tolman and others. With the advent of the NEP 2021 and increased emphasis on digital and virtual learning in a post-pandemic world, the latent gamification which is inherent to academia needs to be addressed, understood and consciously implemented. This in turn can be benefitted through an understanding of how interactive narratives such as games themselves gamify the act of teaching and scaffolding.

Keywords: Video Games, Narratology, Ludology, Gamification, Scaffolding, Education, Metroidvania, Cognitive Behaviorism.

What is Gamification and how does it apply to education?

Juho Hamari differentiates gamification on the basis of whether it is “Intentional” or “Emergent”, and defines it as:

. . . [a] technological, economic, cultural, and societal developments in which reality is becoming more gameful, and thus to a greater extent can afford the accruing of skills, motivational benefits, creativity, playfulness, engagement, and overall positive growth and happiness (2019).

Sebastian Deterding et al propose to define gamification as “the use of game design elements in non-game context” (2011).

While preexisting definitions seek to equate gamification with positive growth, benefits, playfulness, gestalt awareness and commercial utilization – to mention a few – in academia gamification refers to the act of attributing definitive markers to the steps within a curriculum in order to quantify them. As in sports or games, quantification serves the underlying function of determining S.W.O.T. and assessing the success rates of students as well as curriculum designs and teaching methodologies, in turn making gamification an integral part of any grade or score-based instruction-assessment system.

However, as a part of the traditional curriculum based teaching system, students and teachers are often introduced to the ludic interface of academia without access to or understanding of the meta-structure which underlies the gamified system, resulting in the emergence of divergent techniques and tactics on the part of both in order to manipulate the system and its outcomes, to varying degrees of success as well. Instructors are induced into

the act of teaching through theoretical frameworks and under suppositions of an ideal scenario, instead of a more practical approach with sufficient training to jury-rig the system as befits a developing country with little infrastructural support such as India. Therefore this paper seeks to study video games as an immediately verifiable visual metaphor for the act of teaching and learning in an attempt to translate the findings into first-hand experience of trying to understand and deconstruct a system with tools that are at hand.

Games studied:

In order to retain greater focus on the interactive nature of scaffolding, two games have been selected with attention to the degree of complexity in gameplay, tools and information required to successfully progress within the game, and lack of textual cues. The selection is comprised of the following:

1. *Ori and the Bling Forest* (2015) by Moon Studios for PC.
2. *Ori and the Will of the Wisps* (2020) by Moon Studios for PC.

Both offerings by Moon Studios are based on the late-twentieth century video game genre commonly known as Metroidvania. The genre hosts a vast and growing collection of entries of different nature and characteristics, but they are unified within the genre-heading by the following recurring elements:

- Two dimensional sidescroller. There have been entries that have embraced either a three dimensional game-scene or alternatively a three dimensional model and texture system, but the genre hosts predominantly two dimensional games, which remains true for both the entries under consideration. This typically entails a greater emphasis on linear movement along the x axis, with occasional verticality, and a complete absence of depth or z axis.
- Platforming. The term Metroidvania is an amalgamation of *Metroid* and *Castlevania*, both games initially released for the Nintendo Entertainment System and later continued serially over other consoles by Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo respectively. Both the source games were known for their Platforming gameplay, which entails the player-character's ability to jump and alternately climb in order to traverse vertical terrain alongside horizontal movement, in order to reach areas, progress along the game, and solve puzzles.
- Rogue like elements. Derived from the game *Rogue*, rogue like elements typically refer to procedurally generated maps and areas and items within said maps which can be obtained or reached only after the player-character fulfills certain requirements or gains certain tools with which they can navigate the environment. *Metroid*, *Castlevania*, and in present context both the *Ori* games do not utilize procedurally generated maps unlike other entries within the genre, but they do include areas and objects which cannot be reached unless the player-character fulfills certain conditions.
- Character growth. Metroidvania games typically incorporate RPG (Role Playing Game) elements such as itemization and skill-getting/skill-learning, and the games under consideration are no different. As the game progresses, the player character will gain items

and skills which can be customized according to the requirements of the levels or as per the player's desire, giving the game open-endedness and an element of choice.

Due to the depth of choice-driven gameplay and complexities within the level design, Metroidvanias have a greater learning curve than other genres of sidescrolling games. However, unlike both older, genre-defining entries as well as contemporary offerings, Moon Studio dedicates large segments within their games towards familiarizing the player with the game mechanics, in essence creating a scaffolding system which is absent in the vast majority of the genre.

How the games approach Scaffolding:

The games under consideration each utilize the interactive medium and with a few exceptions, avoid verbal or textual instructions. The players are introduced to the tools at their disposal through placement of obstacles which require usage of specific tools in order to overcome. These tools in turn make up the vocabulary of the game, such that any future scenario can and must be negotiated through the use of these tools in specific combinations of sequences. There is also a significant degree of leaning toward Tolman's Sign Gestalt theory of learning (Pappas, 2016) due to the very nature of the interactivity inherent in video or otherwise gaming.

Ori and the Blind Forest:

Ori and the Blind Forest begins with an instance of Signal Learning wherein the player is given control of a player-character who is facing to the right – which is also the only traversable direction available to the player at the moment. Instead of merely building upon the player's possible familiarity with the Sign Gestalt which historically informs two dimensional ludological design elements, *OBF* visually defines the basic traversal toolset for the player by restricting movement towards the immediate left with a cliff which cannot be stepped or jumped off of. There are no options presented to the player, just as the player – an initiate – has no tools to interact with the options that may be available within this specific ludological construct.

OBF follows a segment of basic left-to-right movement at a ponderous pace by creating an instance of cognitive mapping by introducing a bit of the environment to which the player is introduced for the first time – an elevated plane which cannot be accessed through the act of simple linear movement. The entire gamut of motor skills acquired and utilized by the player-character in *OBF* are linear movement, jumping, and attacking. The game offers a safe and slow initial pace and introduces the player to both linear movement and jumping during the first segment of the game.

This is followed by an instance of Association, Adaptation and Assimilation (McLeod, 2020) which requires the player to update their schema. The familiar slow and ponderous character is replaced by the titular Ori, who is much lighter and controls faster. There is a sudden change in the game's pacing, and yet the actions the player needs to perform are the same – namely, linear movement from left to right, and jumping. The player has ample time

and scope to update their Schema with the information about the game they have previously acquired and relate to the change in weight and pace in order to make required adjustments to their Cognitive Behaviorism. In order to control the pacing of the game's scaffolding, the player is once again given control of the first controllable character after Ori executes a successful jump. In keeping with Tolman's theory of Sign Gestalt, the player is then presented with a change in the environment similar to the ones previously presented – both navigated as a faster and slower character in turn – with a slight further change which raises the elevation to one which cannot be solved through linear movement or jumping. The player is forced to explore the environmental tools within the given scenario and execute a number of jumps coupled with linear movement in order to navigate this segment, following which *OBF* concludes the basic scaffolding phase of the game. The player is also incentivized to move from right to left for the first time since the beginning of the game, adding greater number of options within the linear movement aspect. This is done through Cognitive Mapping and offering choices of which only one is correct. The pattern thus created is further highlighted through the use of Sign Gestalt by associating non-interactive cues such as bright lights with contextually important environmental elements.

Following this, *OBF* places the player outside the hereto safe zone and into an environment which contains negative reinforcement, penalties, and requires active implementation of Cognitive Behaviorism. In other words, a portion of the scaffolding that initially was in place now gets removed in order to push the player to utilize the environmental tools and the skills previously assimilated.

The game offers its first textual cue at this point in what can be perceived as the instructor's decision to add instructions in the absence of environmental signs which can act as appropriate cues for the player. This also adds the notion of textual cues to the Sign Gestalt of the game, which after the initial scaffolding phase, replace scaffolding entirely and only occur to provide non-environmental signs and cues to the player.

The game then introduces the first negative reinforcement with associated penalty to the scaffolding (McLeod. 2020) as well as the Sign Gestalt. The sign structure of lights and colors find more added depth as subsequent exposure to both positive and negative reinforcement introduces the player to the appropriate interpretation of brighter and darker colors, the former associated with positive stimulus and the latter with negative stimulus. Reaching the points of positive reinforcement and avoiding points of negative reinforcement both require systematic implementation of the player's assimilated tools. Further textual cues introduce the player to the notion of sequential and systematic combination of actions that contribute towards solving complex environmental obstacles. Each of these cues are spaced so that one can only be reached after the player has undergone a trial and error sequence and has finally executed the correct sequence of previously assimilated actions. Failure sends the player to a checkpoint which requires a successful execution of the action sequence to progress from and not until the player's Schema has assimilated the required actions completely.

Before the player can reach the next checkpoint. The game presents a point of assessment, an environment which incorporates an amalgamation of the environmental changes over which the player has been taught to safely traverse during the scaffolding phase. Upon successfully executing a sequence of correct actions, the player is rewarded with a

positive reinforcement in the form of extra lives and a checkpoint which mitigates the penalty of failure from this point onwards.

Shortcomings

However, detached from the traditional Sign Gestalt and arguably universal vocabulary of gaming, a player could be misguided due to some questionable aspect within the initial scaffolding. The first textual cue instructs the player to press the button assigned to jump longer in order to jump higher. However, the environmental change which faces the player only allows the player to progress upon executing a jump at one particular point after accelerating over a certain distance. Additionally, the difference caused by pressing the button longer – both analog and non-analog – is not significant enough to affect the action unless the environmental cue is first observed – a fact that may or may not be perceivable due to the first textual cue occurring in-game to highlight only one aspect of the obstacle.

Similarly, the final assessment which requires the player to execute all previously assimilated actions in a correct sequence in order to progress, utilizes a negative reinforcement which uses different visual and environmental cues compared to the elements of negative reinforcement which were used during the scaffolding phase. Both the element and visual design may result in repeated failure due to the player's unfamiliarity with the element as opposed to their inability to execute the required sequence of actions.

Second Stage of Scaffolding

OBF follows the player's successful progress through the first assessment segment by introducing the final fundamental tool – combat. It breaks the action down into two subdivisions of action sequences. The first – namely Active Avoidance (McLeod, 2018) – is introduced to the player immediately with the help of an enemy which can be considered an active negative stimulus. The player is required to execute the previously assimilated actions in order to survive the encounter – while death is negligibly penalized due to the immediacy of the previous checkpoint – and the process continues until the player is forced to adapt the movement skills as well as the behavior of the enemy in order to interact with an environmental sign that is a breakable wall – to be incorporated within the Sign Gestalt henceforth. Several environmental cues are used in order to instantiate Escape Learning in the player, such as visual cue in the form of a shaking screen, tactile cue in the form of vibration within the controller – no equivalent for mouse and keyboard users exist however – and audio cue in the form of threatening growls. No textual cues are offered, indicating the fact that the instructor is confident in the environmental cues and the action and feedback loop.

Following this the game introduces the combat tool through textual cue and further combat ensues. However, the combat tool alone being used results in the player-character's death. The game allows the player to progress only after a successful sequential execution of both the previously assimilated movement and jumping skills in tandem with the combat skill.

Shortcomings

OBF rushes into introducing different enemy types at this point and as a result the player may find it difficult to associate the action sequence required during the first combat segment. The enemy introduced previously had a different movement pattern compared to the ones the player is expected to combat immediately after receiving the combat tool. The second enemy requires a different movement and jump sequence to avoid, which may require more dexterity and hand-eye-coordination that the player may have had the chance to acquire immediately after being given a new tool.

Ori and the Will of the Wisp

Scaffolding

The follow-up to *Ori and the Blind Forest*, is *Ori and the Will of the Wisp* which improves upon its predecessor in almost every way, including visual quality, depth of narration, combat, variation within gameplay, and scaffolding offered to the player in early game. It retains the familiar gameplay loop of linear movement, jumping and combat, but adds several small improvements to these fundamental actions which enrich them and in turn the gameplay to even greater levels.

The initial scaffolding in *OWW* is identical to *OBF*; it even mirrors the starting segment of the game by offering the player the option to only move in a linear fashion, but instead of left to right it has now been flipped and is from right to left. The right is made inaccessible via a cliff, harkening back to the previous game's opening. However, unlike *OBF*, here the player gets a much larger play-pen within which environmental changes, signs and tools can be assimilated. There are fewer instances where the player is given control over a player-character other than the titular Ori, resulting in less disparate experiences while using the same skills and tools.

The first environmental cue offered is one that once again, like in *OBF*, requires the player to include sequences of jumping with linear movement. Following this, however, *OWW* introduces the player to an extension of the movement and jump tools that of climbing appropriate environmental obstacles. The game uses its first textual cue as a means of direct instruction, in order to introduce climbing as an action. This is followed by repetitions of similar environmental changes, to allow the player to experiment and incorporate climbing within the movement and jump sequences. The previous game had left actual practice to the post-scaffolding phase, but here players could familiarize themselves with the tools, signs and environmental changes without the fear of a penalty.

The game introduces greater visual storytelling as well, a part of which includes – although rudimentary – visual-narrative cues which act directional signs without involving textual or environmental signs. At times visual narrative is used to reinforce the player's interpretation of environmental signs, for example, Ori may be pushed or pointed towards a direction, or he may turn his head towards a direction to indicate that the player should explore said direction, all the while environmental signs may or may not act to reinforce the player's interpretation of said narratological cues. Although they are not consistent and

constant like other environmental signs, their existence enhances the Sign Gestalt of the game and merges 'Narratology' and 'Ludology' in a comprehensive manner.

OWW also introduces environmental interactions early in the game and within the safe confines of the scaffolding phase. Complex environmental movement sequences which work on the basis of the player being able to execute several elements of the fundamental tools in tandem with interpretation of different signs and the way in which they occur in sequential order – such as opening doors by climbing and manipulating levers, gliding with the assistance of acquired tools, flying with the assistance of non-player characters, are also introduced through a combination of environmental, narratological, and textual cues. Lights and seemingly unimportant environmental objects are made available so that the player can incorporate them in their Schema. As a result, the player can execute more complex movement sequences in *OWW* compared to *OBF* at a much earlier stage, giving the learning and executing process more impetus and momentum as well.

Beyond the initial scaffolding phase, *OWW* starts at a much faster pace than its predecessor, introducing positive visual cues in the form of bright lights and colors – signifying rewards for successful execution of tools and skills – as well as negative reinforcements in the form of environmental hazards and enemies which require active avoidance on the part of the player. These elements, unlike in *OBF* are introduced and implemented simultaneously and in tandem, requiring greater and faster assimilation.

The game offers a larger world than its predecessor and therefore needs to create a greater pathing Schema in order to facilitate a proper Cognitive Map. It does so with the aforementioned layers of positive and negative reinforcement, escalating both to insurmountable degrees in order to encourage or discourage players from seeking out certain paths before and after appropriate tools are acquired. The final fundamental tool, namely combat, is given to the player only after a series of successful environmental navigations during which the game encourages trial and error through checkpoints and a more demanding requirement for sequential actions. Combat in turn is significantly improved over the previous game and requires greater assimilation in tandem with the other fundamental tools. Escape Learning is prioritized in order to push the player forward at a greater pace.

Shortcomings

A larger world with more options, sometimes hinder the ludological flow due to greater visual design interfering with environmental Sign Gestalt. Despite repeated penalties, the player may not always realize the correct sequence of Cognitive Mapping and implementation of tools which can yield different results. The game also introduces a larger number of negative reinforcements and negative stimuli at an early stage following the scaffolding phase, which may result in the player's inability to develop a Schema at sufficient pace and ultimately grow frustrated. The overall pacing appears closer to an intermediate learning stage, although the relatively developed scaffolding suggests that the game wishes to consider its players to be at a beginner level in terms of sidescrolling gestalt.

Conclusion

Both games implement significant efforts in creating and facilitating a scaffolding system and in the process act both as models of interactive instructions with minimal textual or non-ludological instructions, as well as examples of how ludological cognitive behaviorism can be implemented with restrictive tools in the present era of game design. They avoid the risk of excessive hand-holding, yet refuse to immerse the player into an alien world without allowing them the opportunity to develop a cognitive map. Though not perfect, there are elements of scaffolding – and assessment – in both games which can be adapted and assimilated within the Sign Gestalt of classroom and otherwise education, just as much as education theories and praxis can be further implemented in the sphere of gaming and sports.

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***Kanthapura*: The Manifestation of Caste, Nation and Spirituality**

B Venkat Rao

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to analyse and examine the manifestations of Caste, Nation and Spirituality in Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* (1938) from a historical and subaltern perspective. A huge corpus of literary articles was widely published on the significance of this novel from Gandhian and Vedic spiritual paradigm. The novel is the story of how Gandhi's and Congress Party's struggle for independence from the British, came to *Kanthapura* village. Apart from a major demand for political independence from the British, there were significant internal social issues raised and addressed in the novel such as the problem of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity, women's rights through Gandhian initiatives such as Satyagraha, non-violence, spirituality and Bhajans. This is to point out that these ideals had privileged the elite interests, and appallingly undermined the very pluralistic nature of the Indian subcontinent and its rich diversity in terms of socio-cultural and political positions. Fascinatingly, this novel was published during the hype of the nationalist movement. By 1930 to 1940 India had witnessed a politically vibrant leaders, reformers and scholars who had visualised the modern nation differently from Gandhi. Among them prominently are Rabindranath Tagore, Subhash Chandra Bose, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Periyar, Dr. Ambedkar and Pandit Nehru etc. It is also an attempt to explain how the novelist, through the narrator Achakka and the protagonist Moorthy, presents the monopoly of the Vedic spirituality and Gandhian political world view while completely ignoring the pluralistic perspectives of the subcontinent. The novelist ostensibly obsessed with his cultural upbringing and therefore, he imagined India from his Vedic philosophical mindset. He further clarifies in his preface how the immemorial past mingles with the present, and the gods mingle with men – was an indication to resuscitate the Aryan Vedic past in the process of gaining an independence from the British.

Keywords: Caste, Social hierarchies, Nation, Independence, Religion, Spirituality, Myths, Politics

Raja Rao Life and Works

Raja Rao (1909-2006) was born in 1909 in Hassan, a village in Karnataka. He was born into a Brahmin family which shared a deep-rooted belief in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. Raja Rao was educated at Osmania University, Hyderabad and at Aligarh Muslim University. These religious texts themselves were a formative influence on Raja Rao when he grew up. In fact, his grandfather Ramakrishna was a Vedantin and that was the chief source of the influence of this kind upon him. We will witness this impact in his novel *Kanthapura* also. He went for higher studies to Montpellier and Sorbonne in France where he came to live for nearly thirty years before joining the University of Texas, Austin (USA) as Professor of Philosophy.

Though he was genuine fondness for America, he feels his roots are in India and visits country frequently. His first novel, *Kanthapura* (1938) was hailed by E.M. Forster as the finest of its kind about India that had appeared till then. His next work was the collection of short stories, *The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stores* (1947). Thirteen Years later appeared his most ambitious and mature work, *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), which won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1966 and Padma Bhushan in 1969. It was followed by *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965), *Comrade Kirillov* (1976) and *The Chess master and his Moves* (1988).

Caste, Nation and Spirituality

MK Naik and many other literary historians regard the 1930s as the period of the flowering of the Indian English novel- a reflection of “the epoch-making developments in Indian life” and the “miracle that was Gandhi”. The fiction seemed to find its necessary soil and climate in the political, social-and, thanks to Gandhi, even spiritual- resurgence of the Indian people in the nationalist era (Meenakshi Sharma, 2003, p. 197). *Kanthapura*, one of the most remarkable Indian novels in English, brings out the social and political concerns which Raja Rao shared with other Indian writers of the thirties (Cawasjee, 1981, p.137). CD Narasimhaiah points out in his introduction to the novel that in fact, an outstanding contribution of Raja Rao to Indian writing in English is to have struck new paths for sensibility which is essentially Indian. Indian fiction in English can make headway by continuing the Raja Rao line, which is to say one must have not merely his technique, but his amazingly high intellectual equipment and awareness of the Indian tradition. Raja Rao’s first novel *Kanthapura* (1938) was published and aptly fits into the discussion raised by Meenakshi Sharma, Cawasjee and CD Narasimhaiah. We will also study about what was the problem with Gandhian approach in the novel and with an essentially Brahmanical Indian tradition. Achakka, the narrator opens the novel with panorama of Kanthapura village and how it was graciously covered with ghats, steep mountains, ponds, and the Malabar Coast with its rich agricultural production of cardamom, coffee, rice and sugar cane crops. She also mentions how, the colonial Red-men entered, and pillaged these valuable crops and send them by ships to their country. Particularly, the Skeffington Coffee Estate was the centre for institutional exploitation of the local resources and the workers. Achakka feels highly proud that she belongs to the ‘Veda Sastra Praveen’ Krishna Sastri’s family who had deeply delved into Veda Sastras. She introduces us about the Brahmin quarters of four-and-twenty houses. She deferentially provides a nuance of all details of every Brahmin family and addresses Brahmins as ‘ours’ and the rest of the communities as ‘others’ as potters, weavers, and pariahs.

Our Patwari Nanjundia had a veranda with two rooms built on to the old house. He had even put glass panes to the windows, which even Postmaster Suryanarayana could not boast of. Then there were the Kannayya-House people, who had a high veranda, and though the house was I know not how many generations old, it was still as fresh and new as though it had been built only yesterday... (p.4)

Our Sastri also a poet. You know, the Maharaja of Mysore had already honoured him with a Palace Shawl, and Sastri had just sent his Highness an epic on the sojourn of Rama and Sita in the Hill country...And he is a fine singer, too. He is even grander Harikatha-man. And never has anyone made a grander Harikatha on Parvati's winning of Siva. He had poetry on his tongue, sister. (p.11)

Achakka fairly acknowledges that she does not know the minimum physical details of the 'other' Sudra communities. The novelist realistically presents the limited understanding of the Brahmins about other communities' locations, living space and their occupations to the development of the village economy. Moreover, the Brahmins sternly believe that the social segregations on the basis of Caste and Varna are sanctified by Sastras. They feel that it is their ordained duty to protect, promote and preserve the Sastras. Meenakshi Mukherjee points out that "Indian writers in English have for a long time been engaged—though not always self-consciously—in the construction of a clearly defined and recognizable India. Raja Rao's definition had a Brahmanic frame" (Meenakshi Mukherjee, 2000. p.199). They, therefore, uphold the purity and hierarchy principles in all walks of their life. Let us particularly notice how disparagingly addressed about the Pariahs.

Our village had a Pariah quarter too, a Potters' quarter, a Weavers' quarter, and a Sudra quarter. How many huts had we there? I do not know. There may have been ninety or a hundred — though a hundred may be the right number. Of course, you wouldn't expect me to go to the Pariah quarter (p.7)

CD Narasimhaiah points out that "Indeed, the author's own self is projected in the character of Moorthy; and considering the circumstances and the temptations, the identification of the young author (he was then only twenty-six) with the young Moorthy appears to be inescapable. There is a good deal of idealization of the character he admires". The novelist introduces Moorthy, the protagonist and galvanises his persona by illustrating that "Moorthy, who had gone through life like a noble cow, quiet, generous, serene, deferent and Brahmanic, a very prince, I tell you. We loved him" (p.6). Being tremendously inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's messages for independence from the British, Moorthy renounces his education and comes back to his village. He tried to organise all castes of Kanthapura and bring them together by bhajans and festivals. Like Gandhi Moorthy was uncritical on traditions and cultures, further he also wants to avail cultural festivals for a political cause. He therefore, had mixed the social and spiritual issues together. He proposes to hold a series of Rama festival, the Krishna festival and the Ganesh festival for a month's long and concurrently to keep the party activities going.

So Moorthy goes from house to house, and from younger brother to elder brother, and from elder brother to the grandfather himself — he even goes to the Potters' quarter and the Weavers' quarter and the Sudra quarter, and I closed my ears when I heard he went to the Pariah quarter. We said to

ourselves, he is one of these Gandhi-men, who say there is neither caste nor clan nor family, and yet they pray like us and they live like us (p.13)

The renowned Harikathas narrator, Jayaramchar was invited on the occasion of these festivals. Mahatma Gandhi's personality and his politics were glorified. Hindu-Muslim unity was propagated. Jayaramchar adroitly narrates that Mahatma Gandhi was born as incarnation of the Lord Rama and the Lord Krishna to emancipate our subcontinent from the yokes of the British.

Today he says, 'it will be the story of Siva and Parvati.' And Parvati in penance becomes the country and Siva becomes heaven knows what! 'Siva is the three-eyed/ he says, 'and Swaraj too is three-eyed: Self-purification, Hindu-Moslem unity, Khaddar.' And then he talks of Damayanthi and Sakunthala and Yasodha and everywhere there is something about our country and something about Swaraj. Never had we heard Harikathas like this...'It is neither about Rama nor Krishna...', 'but, Mother, the Mahatma is a saint, a holy man...He is a saint, ... You know how he fasts and prays. And even his enemies fall at his feet (p.14)

Jayaramchar Harikathas made an indelible impression on the minds of the villagers. Moorthy was actively awakening and organising all the communities. Subsequently he was being targeted by the colonial police. To spy on the activities of Moorthy, Bade Khan was sent to Kanthapura as police. Here, we can understand the prevailed communal stereotypes when he approached the village Patel Range Gowda for his accommodation, Bade Khan was suspected and ridiculed by the villagers as well as the village Patel. Bade Khan was insulted on two grounds. At first, he was a Muslim; therefore, he was not committed to the nationalist cause as much as a Hindu. Secondly, he was appointed by the British, therefore, he was doubly suspected as a British agent.

Being a Mohomedan he could stay neither in the Potters' Street nor in the Sudra Street, and you don't of course expect him to live in the Brahmin Street. (p.19)

M.R.T. argues that a Congress nationalist is at heart a rank Hindu communalist and he can never be expected to be fair and just towards Muslims on a matter in which the interests of Hindus come into conflict with those of Muslims. Truly it may be said that Congress nationalism is another name for pan-Hinduism (M.R.T, p.307). Similarly, Bade Khan was forced to stay at Skeffington Coffee Estate. At the same time, two young Brahmins Gangadhar and Vasudev were also working at the Skeffington estate. In fact, overwhelmingly Brahmins were working with colonial administration. Whereas these two Brahmins were presented as convicted youngsters for the nationalist cause and being closely working with Moorthy. Moorthy was spearheading the Gandhian initiatives and spreading his messages in the village through bhajans'. Bhatta, who had been a pontifical Brahmin, upholds the conservative religious rituals. He strongly opposes Moorthy particularly as he was interacting

with the Pariah's. He even warns Rangamma, who is known as a staunch supporter of Moorthy, not to take part along with Moorthy.

Pariahs now come to the temple door and tomorrow they could like to be in the heart of it. They will one day put themselves in the place of the Brahmins and begin to teach the Vedas. I heard only the other day that in the Mysore Sanskrit College some pariahs sought admission. Why, our Beadle Timmayya will come one of these days to ask my daughter in marriage! Why shouldn't he?

But Rangamma whispers again from the corner

'Has the Mahatma approved it? I don't think so. He always says let the castes exist, let the separate-eating exist, let not one community marry with the other — no, no, Bhattare, the Mahatma is not for all this pollution.(p.38)

Bhatta spreads smear campaign against Moorthy among all Brahmin families that their community Swami who stays at Karwar town, may excommunicate him for being associated with the Pariahs. Old Narsamma, Moorthy's mother came to know about her son's meetings with Pariahs. She also could not receive her son's unusual association with them in the name of Gandhi business. She was worried so much that her son might be socially ostracised by the community Swami. Once she was going by the Aloe Lane, she grew so violent with Pariah Badayya, because he could not stand aside to let her pass by. She became furious and spat on him and shouted at him and said it was all her son's fault, that he had brought shame on her family and on the community and on the village. When his mother expressed her fear that her family might be excommunicated by Bhatta and Swami, Moorthy reacted and questioned the credibility of Swami only on the grounds of human relations without going into the complexity of Vedic texts how they had sanctified the caste hierarchies and conspicuously contaminated the Brahmins mindset. Dr Ambedkar explains to us that "the effect of caste on the ethics of the Hindus is simply deplorable. Caste has killed public spirit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible. A Hindu's public is his caste. His responsibility is only to his caste. His loyalty is restricted only to his caste. Virtue has become caste-ridden and morality has become caste-bound". (Dr. Ambedkar. P.46)

Moorthy says, "Let the Swami do what he likes. I will go and do more and more pariah work. I will go and eat with them if necessary. Why not? Are they not men like us? And the Swami, who is he? A self- chosen fool. He may be learned in the Vedas and all that. But he has no heart. He has no thinking power. (p.59)

Gangadhar and Vasudev brought to the notice of Moorthy about the pathetic conditions of the workers and the sexual exploitation of the women at the Skeffington estate. Moorthy visits the estate and eventually there was a clash and violence took place. Bade Khan, who was waiting for an opportunity brutishly had beaten even the kids, women and old men. Moorthy could not expect this atrocious act from the colonial police. As a satyagrahi he does not want

to encourage this type of agitation. He had taken to spiritual recourse to penance of himself. He went on fasting for three days by meditating without taking any food.

That evening Moorthy speaks to Rangamma on the veranda and tells her he will fast for three days in the temple, and Rangamma says, 'What for, Moorthy?' and Moorthy says that much violence had been done because of him, and that were he full of the radiance of ahimsa such things should never have happened, but Rangamma says, 'That was not your fault, Moorthy!' to which he replies, 'The fault of others, Rangamma, is the fruit of one's own disharmony,' and silently he walks down the steps, and walks up to the temple, where, seated beside the central pillar of the mandap, he begins to meditate. Moorthy said his Gayatri thrice a thousand and eight times, and when the sanctum lights began to flicker, he spread out his upper cloth on the floor and laid himself down (p.87)

After pious fasting and meditation at the temple for three days, Moorthy emerged as a politically and mentally strong leader. By following Mahatma Gandhi's Swadeshi call, Moorthy developed his connections with Karwar City Congress Committee. He decided to form a Panchayat Congress Committee at Kanthapura. At first, he went to Patel Range Gowda who was known as a tiger of the village. Moorthy requested him to form the Congress Committee and also to take part in the committee. Range Gowda believes in Moorthy's sincere efforts in the village and accepts his request with humbleness.

Do what you like, learned master. You know things better than I do, and I, I know you are not a man to spit on our confidence in you. If you think I should become a member of the Congress, let me be a member of the Congress. If you want me to be a slave, I shall be your slave. (p.100)

Moorthy wanted all community elders to be informed about the duties and responsibilities of the Congress Committee. He went to Weavers' community elder Ramayya, Potters' elder Siddayya and convinced them to take part in the Committee. As a Brahmin, Moorthy did not feel much difficulty to visit artisan quarters and freely interact with the community elders respectively. But he had to visit the Pariah colony the one he had never seen before. With unknown apprehensions Moorthy went to pariah's elder Rachanna's house. Rachanna was not at his home. Rachanna's wife was exceedingly happy to see Moorthy visiting her colony and her house. She invited him into her house. But Moorthy stood trembling and undecided, and he suddenly hurried up the steps and crossed the threshold and got confused. His conscious upbringing of the principles of purity and hierarchy definitively blocking him to have an interaction with Pariahs. This was a concerted contestation between Gandhi and Ambedkar. The former believed that the political cause should precede the social reform and the later believed in just opposite to Gandhi:

Moorthy, confused, blurts out, 'No, no, no, no,' he looks this side and that and thinks surely there is a carcass in the back yard, and it's surely being skinned, and he smells the stench of hide and the stench of pickled pigs, and the roof seems to shake, and all the gods and all the manes of heaven seem to cry out against him, and his hands steal mechanically to the holy thread, and holding

it, he feels he would like to say, Hari-Om, Hari-Om. All the women and all the children of the pariah quarter come and sit in Rachanna's central veranda and they all gaze silently at Moorthy, as though the sacred eagle had suddenly appeared in the heavens. (p.102)

The novelist realistically presents the mindset of the Brahmins. This is how the caste of mind operates. It thoroughly divides the people into multitudes of castes. Is this Brahmanical hierarchy and Vedic spirituality only essentially 'Indian tradition' that needs to be continued as C.D. Narasimhaiah proposes for the next generation of creative writers? While all pariahs receive Moorthy as a fellow human being, and Moorthy being a Brahmin, and also a Gandhian follower struggles in his mind to have social interaction with Pariahs. EV Ramasamy Periyar also repeatedly explained how the majority people of the subcontinent were systematically despised, degraded and distorted within the Brahmanical Varna scheme in and through history and more so though the collusive machinations of British colonialism. Within Aryan-Brahmanical religion, the mass of people were considered and treated as the Sudras, with all their despicable attributes; those who resisted were thrown out of the society itself. (Aloysius, 2016, p.55). Then, Moorthy rushes back to Rangamma's house and calls out to her. He informed to her that he had gone to pariah house for the first time and asks her whether he was permitted to enter her house.

Rangamma says, 'Just come the other way round, Moorthy, and there's still hot water in the cauldron and fresh clothes for the meal So Moorthy goes by the back yard, and when he has taken his bath and clothed himself, Rangamma says, maybe you'd better change your holy thread,' ...Rangamma says only, 'I shall at least give you a little Ganges water, and you can take a spoonful of it each time you've touched them, can't you?' So Moorthy says, 'As you will,' and taking the Ganges water he feels a fresher breath flowing through him, and lest anyone should ask about his new adventure, he goes to the riverside after dinner to sit and think and pray. After all a Brahmin is a Brahmin, sister! (p.104)

For the finalisation of members for the Panchayat Congress Committee, the Temple became the centre. All the elders of all the communities were invited to the temple. Rachanna, an elder of the pariah was stating out of the temple. But all the elders were inside temple. Rachanna did not venture to enter into the temple. When he was invited formally into inside by Moorthy, Range Gowda stated that God was everywhere and let Rachanna would remain outside only. Further, Range Gowda fondly proclaims about Moorthy "You are our Gandhi,' He is our Gandhi. The state of Mysore has a Maharaja, but that Maharaja has another Maharaja who is in London, and that one has another one in Heaven, and so everybody has his own Mahatma, and this Moorthy, who has been caught in our knees playing as a child, is now grown-up and great, and he has wisdom in him and he will be our Mahatma" (p.71).

Finally, Moorthy, Range Gowda, Rangamma, Rachanna and Seenu became the Congress panchayat committee of Kanthapura. The issue of proportional representation was a concerted contesting debate between Ambedkar and Gandhi at three round table conferences

from 1930-1932. Gandhi vehemently disagreed for the untouchables representation while agreeing to other religious minorities. He even went fast on to death by opposing the untouchable representations. In the interest of the nation, there was a Poona pact between Gandhi and Ambedkar. The novelist was aware of all political and historical developments of the time, but he did not even venture creatively in his art of writing to break the statuesque of the caste hierarchy, rather tried to promote the orthodoxy of the existing system. Moorthy exhorts the committee how to obediently follow Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress party directions:

we'll build a thousand-pillared temple, a temple more firm than any that hath yet been built, and each one of you be ye pillars in it, and when the temple is built, stone by stone, and man by man, and the bell hung to the roof and the Eagle-tower shaped and planted, we shall invoke the Mother to reside with us in dream and in life. India then will live in a temple of our making...

Meanwhile, brothers and sisters let us get strong. The Congress men will have to swear again to speak Truth, to spin their daily one hundred yards, and put aside the idea of the holy Brahmin and the untouchable pariah. You know, brothers and sisters, we are here in a temple, and the temple is the temple of the One, and we are one with everything that is in the One, and who shall say he is at the head of the One and another at the foot? Brothers, and this too ye shall remember, whether Brahmin or bangle-seller, pariah or priest, we are all one. (p.169)

Moorthy called for a non-co-operation movement and declared self-government by inspiring Gandhi's messages. He identified the serious problems that toddy booths were there to exploit the poor and heavy tax was laid on the peasants. On these issues, he prepared the Committee to fight against the local colonial revenue officers only with the Gandhian principles such as the spirit of truth, non-violence and love. They marched out to Borann's toddy grove. The main gate of Borann's toddy grove was closed and protected by the police. Moorthy and Rang Gowda tried hard to push and open the gate of the grove, the police stood before them and pushed them back, and Pariah Rachanna cried out, ' Mahatma Gandhi ki jai! They all cried out too, 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!', while trying hard to enter the toddy grove. The Police surrounded and tried to push them back, and suddenly Pariah Rachanna slipped out and with one leap he had crossed the ditch and the lantana fence — and he fell and he rose, and as he rushed to climb a toddy tree the police made towards him, but he was already half-way up the tree when the lathis banged against his legs. They all cried out 'Vande Mataram! (p.183). The British police brutally attacked and had taken all the members and men into custody. Moorthy was mainly targeted and tortured by the colonial police. When the popular lawyer Sankaran met Moorthy in the jail and wanted to argue his case in the court Moorthy rejects that the truth does not need to be defended by any lawyer. With an undaunted spirit and vigour Ratna led the movement along with other women by holding Satyanarayana Puja. Kanthapura lands were grabbed in auction and all villagers were forcefully thrown out by the colonial police. The villagers were arranged a shelter at Kasipura by the city Congress activists. People at Kasipura were anxious of Moorthy's whereabouts.

Moorthy who was in the prison was released since Mahatma Gandhi had pact with the Viceroy. Moorthy becomes disillusioned with the Gandhi's approach towards nationalist movement. He believes in Jawaharlal Nehru's ideology. He thinks that Gandhian approach may not resolve the social issues such as caste discrimination and class exploitation between the poor and the rich. Ratna got a letter from Moorthy. She read it out to the villagers. It said:

Since I am out of prison, I met this Satyagrahi and that, and we discussed many a problem, and they all say the Mahatma is a noble person, a saint, but the English will know how to cheat him, and he will let himself be cheated. Have faith in your enemy, he says, have faith in him and convert him... And I have come to realize bit by bit, and bit by bit... there will always be pariahs and poverty. Ratna, things must change. The youths here say they will change it. Jawaharlal will change it. You know Jawaharlal is like a Bharatha to the Mahatma, and he, too, is for non-violence and he, too, is a Satyagrahi, but he says in Swaraj there shall be neither the rich nor the poor. And he calls himself an 'equal-distributionist' and I am with him and his men. (p.257)

The novelist ends with a turn towards the Nehruvian modern socialist model. The idea of spiritual and Hindu nation state (Rama Rajya) proposed by Gandhi was contested by a luminary of scholars, intellectuals and activities of the time. For example, EV Ramasamy Periyar explicated that Nationalism, it was agreed upon by all sides to the controversy, is about production and projection of harmony and unity among all people. How could one bring about such harmony and unity among a people who were divided in terms of caste and religion? The elite way was to preach to the people to forget their differences because they were all Indians, fall behind the Brahmanical leadership and thus strengthen the anti-colonial nationalism. The warring groups, on the other hand, were aware that coming into being of the nation and modern state is about the formation of a new kind of society, a society in which people are all homogenised and given equal rights and liabilities as citizens; the warring people clearly saw that the Brahmanical 'governing class' was not at all ready to do away with the traditionally and religiously ordained discriminatory differences, but on the other hand, was doing all it could to perpetuate the differences. (G Aloysius, 2016, p.40). Ranjit Guha also points out that "...making of the Indian nation and the development of the consciousness-nationalism, which informed this process, were exclusively or predominantly elite achievement" (Guha, 1982 p.1).

The novelists' approach to caste, nation and spirituality comes from the Gandhian stand. For Gandhi, nation means Hindu nation (Ram Raj). On the question of caste, he contradicts the public by stating that Varna system is good, but caste system is a blot to the Hindu religion. At the same time, he possesses and practices the Vedic philosophy. Thus, he totally approves the Brahminical system. Ambedkar, a staunch critic of Gandhism and Congress nationalism, argues, "I am of the opinion that in believing that we are a nation, we are cherishing a great delusion. How can people divided into several thousands of castes be a nation? The sooner we realize that we are not as yet a nation in the social and psychological sense of the word, the better for us. For then only we shall realize the necessity of becoming a nation and seriously think ways and means of realizing the goal" (Dr. Ambedkar.p.1217). On

the other hand, Mr MA Jinnah also differs from Gandhian idea of one nation, but seeks for two nations. He makes note that “India of modern conception with its so -called present geographical unity is entirely the creation of the British who hold it as one administrative unit by a system of bureaucratic government. India is a vast subcontinent. It is neither a country not a nation. It is composed of nationalities and races... the two major nations being the Hindus and the Muslims whose culture and civilisation, language and literature, art and architecture, name and nomenclatures, sense of value and proportion, laws and jurisprudence, social and moral codes, customs and cullenders, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions, outlook on life and of life are fundamentally different, may in many respects antagonistic.”(M.R.T, p.3) Similarly in relation to the early Indian fictions as a whole, Snehal Shingavi’s expounded us that the novels of 1930s and 1940s to be seen as allied to a variant of Congress Party politics and the agendas of its leaders, principally Gandhi: the novels continued to be perceived as homogenising or flattening out the differences in the Indian nation in favour of a mythic or imagined national unity which could only be in the service of stamping out the rights and identities of minorities.(Hans Harder, 2010.p.355)

The novel begins perceptibly with a spirited agenda from Gandhian perspective to bring together different social groups for the independence’s sake while addressing the complex social and political issues of Hindu-Muslim unity, Untouchability, and women empowerment, but it ends up ambiguously without succeeding its objectives. Moreover, the depiction of Bade Khan becomes another example for how demonization of the Muslim policeman falls in the narrative. Surely, this ambiguity did not unfold in a comprehensive conclusion since the novelist had profusely possessed the Gandhian as well Brahmanical spiritual ideals. On the top of it, he feels that the Brahmins are only inherently qualified to rebuild a modern nation state by reviving the Vedantic philosophical perspective. The idea of modern nation state was spiritualised, the factors of caste discrimination and patriarchy were neutralised and rather naturalised and the Muslim’s factor was demonised from Brahmanical perspective. Thus, the complex questions of caste, nation and spiritually assorted problems of the subcontinent were completely undercut with orthodoxy of the Brahmanical hegemony.

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~English Language Teaching~

Gender and English Language Classrooms

Asma Rasheed

Abstract

This paper looks at what it means to inculcate a gender attentive pedagogy. It briefly examines the various policy documents and schemes in India in recent times that have tried to institutionalize a more gender-just teaching-learning environment. The paper also looks at how a critical reflection about 'gender' can be developed in a classroom, get incorporated into classroom materials and transactions. The paper argues that careful and grounded attention to lived experiences of discrimination, to the micro- and macro-levels is required in order to build a more equitable learning environment around us.

Keywords: Gender, Pedagogy, Policy, Curriculum, NEP, Caste

1.0 Introduction

The issue of gender in the field of education has received a great deal of attention, in terms of the materials in use, classroom interaction, teacher education, and of course larger socio-cultural decisions and attitudes. Research in feminist and gender-sensitive educational thinking has focused centrally on how the micro- and macro-politics inform and shape, and are in turn shaped by, the intersection of education and gender. This paper focuses on discussions on the intersectionality of gender and education, with particular reference to how this may operate in English language classrooms.

It must be acknowledged at the outset that gender, in earlier frameworks of thinking, was understood solely in terms of the category 'woman'. However, research from humanities, social sciences as well as the sciences has complicated the notion of gender as a more fluid category in the last few decades. The contemporary understanding of gender acknowledges questions around gender assigning, identification and orientation and its relationality to social and cultural contexts. In other words, it signals an understanding that we need to draw into any discussion of pedagogy and gender questions over a heteronormative binary (such as those pertaining to sexuality and queer identity/politics) and its relationality to caste, community, race, etc. However, an inquiry of such a nature is outside the scope of this paper.

1.1 Gender attentive pedagogy

The notion of empowerment through education has often meant that enrolment in schools, particular of girls, gets equated similarly. The assumption is that removing a disparity in primary or secondary education will lead to a gender equality. It is, in the words of Manjrekar (2003), an 'objectifying' of girls and women within a 'narrow range of subject positions' and locating them 'as mere instruments in the narrative of national progress' (4577).

However, scholars have argued that if pedagogic initiatives are to work with a critical thoughtfulness, then abstract concepts need to be connected to live experiences. It would not be enough to read about oppression in abstract terms, in the world outside. Rather, it needs to be connected to the lived experiences of learners inside classrooms. An engagement with the social and political conditions of the world must happen in, through and outside textbooks and other teaching-learning materials. They must be able to ask the question ‘why?’: why are some more equal than others, or why does society view certain categories of gender, caste, community, sexual orientation as inferior, or why do institutionalized structures work to exclude such minorities? The training to connect impersonal intellectual categories with personal, grounded and material realities will help learners to engage with their life-worlds more critically. It will help all those invested in such pedagogical transactions to illustrate the social and political ideas espoused and discussed in the classroom/materials with their everyday lives. Such a point of departure will thus work better at communicating and building an awareness of ideas such as ‘patriarchy’, ‘discrimination’, and so on.

Apart from being attentive to gender and its relationality within a classroom context, an intersectional perspective also has to contextualize the impact of globalisation, market forces and techno-managerial approaches which have altered the sites as well as the understanding of education in the last three or four decades. As the editors of the *Feminist Educational Thinking* series point out in their introduction (2001), ‘feminist educational thinking views the intersection of education and gender through a variety of lenses’ (2001). In other words, it is the micro-politics of the classroom transactions and the macro-politics outside the classroom act on inform and shape each other in space produced by the intersection of education and gender. The shifts outside the field of education also combined with theoretical shifts such as post-structuralism, post-colonialism and gender studies to shape understandings of policy matters, classroom transactions, etc.

1.2 Gender and policy

The undeniable arrival of a market-oriented pedagogy post-1990s has gradually led to a shift in planning for education from a social welfarist’s perspective towards a more consumer-client, techno-managerial orientation. However, the discussions on education in India from the perspective of policy and planning have acknowledged gender disparities and tried to address them.

Among several such initiatives are the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) enacted by the Government of India (GOI) in 2009. This Act guarantees every child in India child aged 6 to 14 the right to enrol and to complete eight years elementary schooling. Along with global campaigns for school enrolment, the RTE helped increase the enrolment of girls to 28.1 million from about 10.7 million (an increase of 17.4 million) between 2000 and 2014 (Government of India 2014).

Similarly, other statistics of the GOI reflect a likewise upward trend in girls accessing education at all levels. For instance, the literacy rate amongst females aged 7 years and above is 65.5 percent, as compared to 82.1 percent of the comparable male population according to the 2011 Census of India. This shows that the 21.6 percent gap in male to female literacy rates of the 2001 census is down to 16.7 percent gap.

In 2005, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 produced a position paper on gender issues to address actively at schools. It began by acknowledging that 'Gender is not a woman's issue, it's a people's issue.' About a decade later the Central Board of Secondary Education offered courses on human rights and gender studies as elective courses at Class 12; the courses were scrapped a year later because there were not enough enrolments.

The various National Education Policy statements offer a comprehensive framework for developing educational policies throughout India. In 1986, the NEP stated

Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralise accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The National Educational system will play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women.

In terms of policies and schemes, governmental intervention has been quite rigorous. The Government of India launched a National Scheme for Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (2008) with the objective of reducing dropouts and promoting the enrolment of the girl child belonging mainly to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) communities, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015) to improve the efficiency of welfare services for girls, address a declining child sex ratio and eradicate female feticide. States such as Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh have 'bicycle schemes' to provide funds to eligible female students to purchase a bicycle. Rajasthan provides girls with travel vouchers if the distance between their school and village is too long. There are also initiatives such as the Scheme for Construction and Running of Girls' Hostels (2008) for students of Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools implemented from 2009-2010; the idea was that safe accommodation would help increase girls' secondary school completion rates.

In 2020, the NEP too recommended several measures to ensure the safety and rights, such as hostels (10) or 'free boarding facilities' (26) that will help ensure the retention of 'girls as well as transgender students' especially from the socially and economically disadvantaged communities (SEDG) (26) in the educational system.

However, there are at least two aspects to be considered with such schemes. One is the implementation aspect, which has always remained a challenge. Second is the assumption that offering access and resources will suffice to help female students complete their secondary education and thereby become empowered and gain gender equality. Such an assumption fails to sufficiently account for a larger, deep-rooted societal prejudice against education and girls as well as a patriarchal mindset that refuses to educate boys about it as well.

The Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (2020) looks at gender inequality across 162 countries; India is ranked at 131. Among its various parameters is the proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education: the data for 2015-2019 shows this to be 27% and 47% respectively.

While policy documents do acknowledge and try to plan to be more inclusive going forward, the statistics on the ground and the qualitative data continue to expose an abysmal

failure/ Girls continue to drop out of school at higher rates than their male counterparts, there is a taboo around a few issues, structural gender biases exist, the textbooks are discriminatory and most classroom instruction is accused of being rhetorical.

1.3 Gender and language classroom transactions

In a 2018 policy document on mainstreaming gender equality in India, Urvashi Sahni commented on the need to focus on ‘process, content, and curricula that critically address inequitable social norms and structures’. In other words, it is not enough to focus simply on enrolling girls into schools but also ensure awareness and sensitivity towards proper pedagogies, processes, structures, and teacher training is structured into it.

1.3.1 A critical literacy

One of the important challenges in instituting suitable pedagogic practices is the need to have teachers with training and to carefully develop a critical awareness about issues in the classroom. There can be several approaches to do this. Kumashiro (2002) discusses some of these: one, ‘education for the Other’, is where a teacher identifies ‘different’ or marginalised identities and is able to make space for them within the school and curriculum. This will ensure that ‘different’ identities are not seen as somehow suffering from a ‘lack’; rather, this will help to help offer a support system that is respectful of difference (32-39). Two, ‘education about the Other’ may need information or education about the marginalized community which could contribute to an anthropological gaze and therefore requires proper vigilance against it (39–44). Three, ‘education that is critical of privileging and Othering’ includes ‘a critical awareness of oppressive structures and ideologies, and strategies to change them’ (44-50). Here, teachers and learners must unpack the privileges of normative social-cultural patterns or constructs in order to understand how power works in their own contexts. Four, ‘education that changes students and society’ labours to respond to the problem of social action (50–54). This kind of critical thinking understands that ‘oppression is produced by discourse, and in particular, is produced when certain discourses (especially ways of thinking that privilege certain identities and marginalize others) are cited over and over’ (50).

1.3.2 Classroom materials

This section will look at some aspects of how language learning materials incorporate questions of gender. An inclusive representation of gender has been a heartening trend in most English language textbooks of recent years. Following the guidelines outlined in various policy documents as discussed above, materials in the Indian context too have become by and large ‘neutral’ and progressive in the representation of genders in their materials.

However, in some contexts, larger socio-cultural factors may continue to frame the representation of gender in classroom materials in a conventional manner. For instance, in an analysis of the representation of gender in the English language textbooks used in Iran, Mehran Samadikhah & Mohsen Shahrokhi (2015) point out that classroom materials are enmeshed in a social construction of identities. They analysed two textbook series (*Summit* and *Top Notch*) used in their classrooms. They looked at factors such as a) gender relations in conversation parts, b) total relations, and c) male/female subject positions and analyzed the

textbooks along several dimensions, such as a) female and male characters, b) female and male’s pictorial representation, c) firstness of female and male in the mixed gender dialogues, d) female and male’s titles, and e) activities. The descriptive and inferential statistics that they obtained suggested both series did not have a ‘neutral’ perspective. The researchers opined that while sometimes both male and female genders were represented in a manner that reinforced stereotypical norms, male figures ‘usually’ had a larger share in conversations and pictorial representations.


Nonetheless, even when the representations of gender become less skewed than earlier, the question of how such materials are used in a classroom situation makes a substantial difference.

1.3.3 Teaching-learning activities


Govender (2019) offers a useful discussion of how materials may be used in a classroom in order to start off a discussion, deconstruct a popular understanding, avoid some other kinds of discussions or engage with ‘subversive’ kinds of issues from a South African context. One of the activities uses the figure given below.

Gender and sexuality Sheet 1


Activity 1. Write the meaning of the words in the shapes



Gender




Accessory



Sexuality

The usage of accessories (gender and sexuality)

Society seems to be concerned about the use of accessories. These (accessories) range from shoes, jewellery, bags, make-up, tattoos to hair styles and they enhance the beauty of people but they are non-essential (see Appendix) ✓



[http://www.shutterstock.com/pictures:](http://www.shutterstock.com/pictures) <http://www.bigstockphoto.com/search/cowboy-boots/http://www.clarks.co.uk>

Activity 2: a) Name the type of shoe and place it on the appropriate section on the table. ✓

Female	Male	Unisex	Other (state)

A3/C2 ✓


Activity 3: What was your criterion for placing the shoes and other accessories? Gender or sexuality? Give reason. (Appropriate X) ✓

N/B Write the meanings of the following words, Straight, bisexual, gay, lesbian, androgynous, asexual and any other type of sexuality not mentioned. ✓

In this activity, as Govender points out, a learner in the English language classroom would have to identify the biological sex and/or gender markers, though they may not have to consider the ways in which such categories are formed or constructed. Therefore, such an activity will need to be followed by a 'critical reflection' on how such markers are used habitually to portray particular ideas about gender (136). Another set of materials that uses questions about sex and gender to deconstruct mainstream assumptions about families, the roles of each member, etc. as cited in Govender is the picture below.

Part A: Grade 5

What makes a family?




Retrieved 28/09/2013 from <http://thinkprogress.org/lgbt/2013/06/26/2218921/how-the-supreme-court-acknowledged-that-gay-people-and-their-families-exist/>

1. Individual activity

Write a paragraph describing what you see in this picture. Who do you think each person could be in this picture?

2. Group activity

Get into groups of five and read your paragraph to the group. Share what you thought of the picture. Did the other people in your group have paragraphs that said the same thing you did?



Retrieved 28/09/2013 from http://www.cairns.com.au/article/2013/01/19/238544_local-news.html

3. Group activity

3.1 What is this picture of?

3.2 How do you know? Describe what you see.

3.3 What is 'gender' and 'sex'? (Use dictionary to help you)

3.4 Who says that this how moms, dads, boys and girls should dress?

3.5 Do the clothes drawn in this picture show us gender, sex or both? Explain. *How are gender & sex represented?*

3.6 Do you agree that this is what a family should look like? Discuss. ✓

4. Individual activity

4.1 Draw a picture of your own family.

4.2 Write a paragraph describing each person in your picture and who they are in your family.

Homework activity:
Find pictures of families and family members in magazines and bring them to class with you.

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Activities such as the above, open out the stereotypical understanding of everyday notions around gender. Moreover, when markers of identities— caste, community, ethnicity, race, orientation, and so on—complicate discussions on gender, the questions become far more complex.

Writing about race, class and gender in educational research, Michele Foster (2005) comments that scholars 'rarely turn the critical lens to examine the institutions they themselves inhabit' (175). Issues have been explored with greater attention to their intersectionality with other factors in the recent decades. Nonetheless, decisions such as what

or how gets published and/or cited continue to be influenced by such considerations. Foster also points out that educational research traditionally rested on psychology, which was grounded in social and behavioural sciences. These fields measured those from the working classes, women, and persons of colour against a standard of ability or achievement of white, middle-class males. To quote Foster, 'Until criticized by other scholars, research in child and human development considered males the standard against which women were measured' (177). Until about fifty or sixty years ago, research would tend to assert that children from particular minority communities—'especially those of color and from working-class backgrounds'—would be dismissed as linguistically and cognitively deficit, 'incapable' of academic achievements, thereby hardening ideas about white, male superiority (177). Foster further notes that only when critical approaches are attentive to the intersectionality of gender, class, race and power that research will become more nuanced in its collation and interpretation of data and not 'normalize White, male, colonialist discourses' (178).

There has been a significant body of research into education from the perspective of Dalits (Rege 2010, Paik 2014, Paik 2016) in recent years. Rege (2010) cites the experiences of Kumud Pawade and her story of Sanskrit, Pragnya Daya Pawar and an interrogation of the power of the printed word over the spoken word and Meena Kandaswamy's dream of a global English in small letters offer immense possibilities for wedging open the 'language question' (91). Rege argues that the larger number of Dalits entering into educational institutions with 'new vocabularies and moral economy' and 'Dalit imaginations on language' are 'interrogating the assumed hierarchy of different knowledges, archives and methods of knowledge' (92). It is clearly time for more research, grounded with greater attentiveness to such concerns, to emerge from the English language teaching contexts in India.

1.4 Conclusion

The hegemonic embeddedness of gender in our pedagogic assumptions, practices and materials can be recognized and unpacked through a critical literacy about heteronormativity, caste, community, race and so on. This paper discussed some of the issues related to this in terms of policies and schemes of the government, the classroom materials that can be used and the practices that we need to adopt in our language classrooms.

Given the close association of language and representation, an English language teaching classroom is well-positioned to develop a critical and self-reflective perspective. This will enable teachers and learners to engage with socially sensitive issues in the language classroom and learn to question the ways in which language constructs and conveys meaning. Thus, English language teaching can empower a more inclusive, transformative understanding and practice of gender in our worlds.

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