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The concept of control manifests itself in various ways. Through the idea of superiority. Superiority of religion. Superiority of region. Superiority of sex, of colour, of origin and of culture. To be superior one has to create the concept of inferior. Inferiority of religion. Inferiority of region. Inferiority of sex, of colour, of origin and of culture. What do the so-called superiors have that the so-called inferiors do not? They have control over resources. This control gives them power to control others. Power to control thoughts, control dreams, control words, control movement, control creation and control destruction. What is needed to sustain this control? Fear, force, greed, dilution, fantasy, support, consent....and many more tools.

They create wars, they create borders, they lay the rules. And they are the ones who call it peace. For peace is as much a part of the business as war.

To Those Born After

By **BERTOLT BRECHT**



(10 February 1898 – 14 August 1956)

To the cities I came in a time of disorder
That was ruled by hunger.
I sheltered with the people in a time of uproar
And then I joined in their rebellion.
That's how I passed my time that was given to me on this Earth.

I ate my dinners between the battles,
I lay down to sleep among the murderers,
I didn't care for much for love
And for nature's beauties I had little patience.
That's how I passed my time that was given to me on this Earth.

The city streets all led to foul swamps in my time,
My speech betrayed me to the butchers.
I could do only little
But without me those that ruled could not sleep so easily:
That's what I hoped.
That's how I passed my time that was given to me on this Earth.

Our forces were slight and small,
Our goal lay in the far distance
Clearly in our sights,
If for me myself beyond my reaching.
That's how I passed my time that was given to me on this Earth.

II

You who will come to the surface
From the flood that's overwhelmed us and drowned us all
Must think, when you speak of our weakness in times of darkness
That you've not had to face:

Days when we were used to changing countries
More often than shoes,
Through the war of the classes despairing
That there was only injustice and no outrage.

Even so we realised
Hatred of oppression still distorts the features,
Anger at injustice still makes voices raised and ugly.
Oh we, who wished to lay for the foundations for peace and friendliness,
Could never be friendly ourselves.

And in the future when no longer
Do human beings still treat themselves as animals,
Look back on us with indulgence.

A Page from My Diary, My Personal Composite Heritage

Mahnaz Rahman

PAKISTAN

My parents represented the Muslim youth that took part directly or indirectly in the formation of Pakistan. However, not all of them studied in Aligarh but they all were 'modern' and westernized. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was their leader because he was a modern Muslim. My father migrated all alone from Delhi. He was in his early twenties and was working as a personal assistant to Mussarat Husain Zuberi who later rose to fame as the chair of RCD (Regional Cooperation for Development, an alliance of Pakistan, Turkey and Iran). My mother migrated from Amritsar with her elder sister and widowed mother. She was studying in 10th grade. My aunt was a government servant and was allotted a quarter in Jet line, Karachi. My father was looking for accommodation and one of his senior colleagues who happened to be a relative of my mother, requested my grand mother to let him stay as a paying guest as he found my father trust worthy. I forgot to tell you that my mother's side hails from Kashmir and both sisters were very beautiful so it did not come as a surprise to anyone when after some months my father asked for my mother's hand. They got married on 30 January 1948. When their marriage was being solemnized, radio Pakistan announced the news of Gandhi's assassination. My mother used to tell us that all the guests ran outside and left the bride alone in her room. Everyone was so scared that now Hindu Muslim riots will erupt, it was a relief to know that the assassin was a Hindu not a Muslim. Many years after that when I was reading Sardar Jafri number of monthly Afkar, a well reputed literary magazine edited by Sehba Lucknavi, I came to know that he also got married on the same day in Bombay and guests who were mostly progressive writers and poets including Ismat Chughtai could not go back to their homes and spent night in flats of their friends. Sometimes I think had Gandhi and Jinnah lived longer, the history of Indo-Pak relationship would have been different.

I do not know why my father left the government job and went to Wah with a French company, which was given the contract to build an ordinance factory. I do not have any memories of Wah but mother used to tell us that my brother was born there and they had purchased a cow for him as my mother was not able to breastfeed him. The French company had to wind up its business.

Years later, Abi wrote this in Urdu Digest (January 1969), 'it happened in 1950. The construction of Pakistan's first ordinance factory began in Wah. A British officer was appointed as it's director. As Pakistan had got independence few years ago and there were many Britishers still working on important posts. The engineer in chief in the general head quarters was also a British and usually the British Companies got the big tenders.'

My father shifted to Lahore with his family. We stayed there with the children of his late aunt who was married to a famous Kakezai family of Lahore. Both Uncle and Aunt had died. Their three children, two daughters and one son were in their teens. I was three or four years old at that time and have hazed memories of the Lahore of early fifties. This house was situated in a narrow lane at the corner of which magnificent Wazir Khan Mosque was situated. There were small shops of milk, yogurt, snacks (pakodas) and beverages (soda bottles). Lahore men used to wear dhoti and banyan and often used to quarrel with each other, the weapons used by them were knife (chaqu) and broken soda bottles. In my reminiscences, I can still see a man in dhoti and banyan brandishing a broken soda water bottle in his hand running after another man. Another vivid memory is of processions of political people, either their garlanded leader whom one of them had picked up on his shoulders had won the elections or had become minister, there were lot of such processions in those days as ministers used to lose their seats too often .

Another vivid memory is of Muharram processions that used to pass through that lane. It used to be such a sensation for the whole family; we used to wait anxiously and watched the

procession from our rooftop. One of such processions used to pass at midnight and I can still see myself requesting my aunt to wake me up at that time which she used to do and I used to run towards the window to watch the procession.

Lahore in 1952 saw a bloody riot against a sect of Islam represented by the Ahmadiyya, whom orthodox Muslims refer to as “heretics” and therefore outside the faith. As a result of the riot, martial law was declared in the city of Lahore - Pakistan’s first flavour of this form of rule.

My father was a creative and innovative person. He decided to start a business in partnership with one acquaintance. He opened up a shop which he named as “Common’s Pride”. It was a tailoring and readymade garments shop, first of its kind in Lahore. Gents’ suits were prepared in one day and readymade suits were available.

I remember he often took me to his shop which was located within a stone’s throw from our place. My father was a ‘Delhi Wala’ and had the habit of chewing paan (betel leaf). I still vaguely remember that old woman who used to sit on the footpath and sold betel leaves. Every day we used to stop by her and she used to prepare a special big paan glori for me as well. I always thought that she gave it to me as a gift. I never knew that my father used to pay for it along with his own paan glories. I never saw my father spitting the saliva of paan, which all paan eaters do and make the roads and walls look awful, he instead preferred to swallow it.

I do not remember many details but my father fell sick and was bed ridden for many days. His partner took advantage of his absence and embezzled money, took loans in his name and disappeared. My father had to pay back the loans and his business collapsed.

He found a job in a renowned textile mill, Koh-i-Noor Mill in Lyallpur and our family shifted there. I had three brothers by then. My second and third brother both were born in Lahore. My second brother was the most beautiful child among us, we all had fair complexion but he had blonde hair and rosy cheeks as well. My parents shifted to Lyallpur with their four kids. My father was allotted a residential quarter and later on a senior set in Koh-i-Noor Colony. We kids had a superb childhood. Our School, dispensary, playgrounds, club, and everything was within the premises of Kohinoor colony and guards were

deployed on entrance gates so outsiders could not come in. It was a safe, healthy and clean environment for children, we used to play until night and our parents had no fear about our safety. We watched Laurel and Hardy’s movies in the club, I remember once a magic show was also arranged for the kids, the magician took out a golden yellow snake and put it on the carpet, the snake started moving towards me, there was a pindrop silence in the room, I froze on my chair but he picked up the snake before it could reach me.

Our school building was very spacious. Mrs. Daniel, our headmistress was a well-built, old woman. Our medium of study was Urdu but in primary classes, we had English as a subject. Our English books were the same as were taught in Convent Schools. The people, who could afford, sent their children to Sacred Heart Convent School. Mrs. Daniel was a strict disciplinarian. We had to say good morning to anyone we came across in the morning. I remember once my two younger brothers bunked the school. Mrs. Daniel sent two school maids to bring them back to school. Both the maids entered the house like policewomen and started searching for my brothers who were hiding under a bed. It did not take them long to find them and took them back to school. Those were really the golden days. For girls there was a period of sewing and embroidery and in middle section, we had a cooking class once in a week. I remember, I felt very uncomfortable in sewing class. We were required to hand stitch the margins of a handkerchief and learnt various embroidery stitches. My hands sweated a lot whenever I held needle and thread. I knew from my childhood that I am not fit for these chores yet after some years I did practice embroidery but my passion had always been reading books. I was so fond of reading; I used to read every book and magazine that I could get hold of. Up till primary grades, there was coeducation. In sixth class boys had to take admission in some other school while the girls of another primary school joined us in class sixth. They had not read a single word of English by then. From sixth grade it was an Urdu medium school and we had to read very simple English text book, it was very easy for us but very difficult for our new class fellows. Neither they nor us tried to mix up with each other. There was a kind

of invisible wall between us which no party tried to break or cross but we believed in peaceful coexistence.

We used to idealize our teachers, they all were so good, and we were impressed by the girls of tenth grade as well. They all were our Bajis and seemed so grown up and stylish to us.

PRIMARY SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP EXAM

I will never forget two girls who joined our class at two different times. Both were quite older than all of us. One came in class three, she was double of our age and had boy cut hairstyle but what made her unforgettable was she had no arms; she used to write with her foot. She performed all her chores with her feet. The other girl was Shamshad Baji, quite older than us. She joined us in class five. She was very tall and had long hair. She made our class win in basket ball matches because of her height. It was an advantage to have her in our class. Everyone says that student life is a golden period but now when I look back, we were really far more privileged than the later generations of Pakistan.

Perween was my best friend. Someone told me that her family has been converted from Hinduism to Islam. Of course it did not matter to me at all. But many years later, when my family had shifted to Karachi, one day I read her letter in Akhbar-e-khawateen. She had written that people who brought marriage proposals for her elder sister withdrew their proposals after knowing that they were converted Muslims not original or pure Muslims like them. This was unbelievable but people were like this even in late 60s and early 70s that are considered to be modern periods in the history of Pakistan. The bright side of the picture is that after publication of that letter, Perween's parents received so many proposals that not only her elder sister but she also got married.

Those were the days when cultural activities were not considered a taboo, I still remember once a cultural troupe from East Pakistan came to perform in Lyallpur. The venue was Kohinoor colony and the hall of our very own school. My mother got an entrance pass for me as well for she did not believe in attending and enjoying any event without her children. I wore my best suit but I could not find my party shoes, I looked everywhere and wasted lot of

time before I could find them. Although a new pair of shoes was lying in my drawer, but how could I touch it, those shoes were meant for Eid and I as a child had no concept of wearing any already used thing on Eid. Everything had to be new on Eid.

I still remember one verse of a song that I heard that day:

“Allah megh de pani de chhaya dede tu, Allah megh de” (God give us water and shade, you are the one who is giver of these things.)

Two dance performances were also fascinating. One was Peacock dance and another in which dancer bent her back parallel to ground, I thought I will never be able to do this and from next day, I started practicing it at home and was able to do it after some days. Usually on weekends our group of friends had dance sessions. Shahida was very fond of cooking and every Sunday we used to prepare one dish and I always had a fight with my brothers who always wanted to participate in my all such activities. I had to struggle hard to keep them away. It was always the bone of contention among us. I wanted to spend time with my girl friends but my brothers would always try to infiltrate in our programs. I used to hate it. Officers' wives had parties and as a child I overheard gossips going on in those parties.

Once Sikander Mirza and his wife visited Saigols in Lyallpur. I remember my mother and other officers' wives were very excited and they wrote a letter to chairman's wife that they want to meet Naheed Mirza (Iranian wife of President Sikander Mirza). The chairman's wife obliged them by arranging an exclusive tea party for the ladies. The gossip that took round after this party was that Saigols presented a diamond necklace to Naheed Mirza. Nobody knew that one day the couple will have to flee from Pakistan and will lead a modest life in an exile in London. During my college and university days, I opted for progressive and leftist organizations and raised slogans against capitalism and capitalists but now when I look back, I think that Saigols were better than present capitalists/industrialists of Pakistan. Just imagine how many facilities Saigols provided to their managerial staff, free and furnished accommodation, free schooling for their children, free medical facilities and free entertainment and sports facilities.

The Indian Social Structure. Importance of the Group

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

Discovery of India

Almost everyone who knows anything at all about India has heard of the caste system; almost every outsider and many people in India condemn it or criticize it as a whole. Probably there is hardly anyone left even in India who approves of it in all its present ramifications and developments, though there are undoubtedly many still who accept its basic theory and large numbers of Hindus adhere to it in their lives. Some confusion arises in the use of the word caste for different people attach different meaning to it. The average European, or an Indian who is allied to him in thought and approach, thinks of it as just a petrification of classes, an ingenious method to preserve a certain hierarchy of classes, to keep the upper classes permanently at the top and the lower ones permanently at the bottom of the scale. There is truth in that and in its origin it was probably a device to keep the Aryan conquerors apart from and above the conquered peoples. Undoubtedly in its growth it has acted in that way, though originally there may have been a good deal of flexibility about it. Yet that is only a part of the truth and it does not explain its power and cohesiveness and the way it has lasted down to our present day. It survived not only the powerful impact of Buddhism and many centuries of Afghan and Mughal rule and the spread of Islam, but also the strenuous efforts of innumerable Hindu reformers who raised their voices against it. It is only today that it is seriously threatened and its very basis has been attacked. That is not chiefly because of some powerful urge to reform itself which has arisen in Hindu society, though such urge is undoubtedly present, nor is it because of ideas from the west, though such ideas have certainly exerted their influence. The change that is taking place before our eyes is due essentially to basic economic changes which have shaken up the whole fabric of Indian society and are likely to upset it completely. Conditions of life have changed and thought-patterns are changing so much that it seems impossible for the caste system to endure. What will take its place is more than I can say, for

something much more than the caste system is at stake. The conflict is between two approaches to the problem of social organisation, which are diametrically opposed to each other: the old Hindu conception of the group being the basic unit of organisation, and the excessive individualism of the west, emphasizing the individual above the group.

That conflict is not of India only; it is of the west also and of the entire world, though it takes different forms there. The nineteenth century civilization of Europe, taking shape in democratic liberalism and its extensions in the economic and social fields, represented the high-water mark of that individualism. That nineteenth-century ideology with its social and political organization has extended itself and flowed into the twentieth century, but it seems wholly out of date now and is cracking under stress of crisis and war. The importance of the group and the community is emphasized more now, and the problem is to reconcile the respective claims of the individual and the group. The solution of that problem may take different forms in different countries, yet there will be an ever-increasing tendency for one basic solution to apply to all.

The caste system does not stand by itself; it is a part, and an integral part, of a much larger scheme of social organization. It may be possible to remove some of its obvious abuses and to lessen its rigidity, and yet to leave the system intact. But that is highly unlikely, as the social and economic forces at play are not much concerned with this superstructure; they are attacking it at the base and undermining the other supports which held it up. Indeed, great parts of these are already gone or are rapidly going, and more and more the caste system is left stranded by itself. It has ceased to be a question of whether we like caste or dislike it. Changes are taking place in spite of our likes and dislikes. But it is certainly in our power to mould those changes and direct them, so that we can take full advantage of the character and genius of the Indian people as a whole, which have been so evident in the cohesiveness and stability of the social organization they built up.

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Gender and Violence

Ms. Suramya Smriti Kujur

INDIA

I was having a discussion with a friend about how the condition of women and the atrocities meted out to them are becoming alarming with every passing second. Pondering over the discussion I decided to conduct a little experiment of my own. I took a popular national daily and scouted for all the news that were talking about the of atrocities against women and girls children. The result as you all must have guessed was alarming! **This is what I found...**

- **Two rapes every hour in India in last 13 years**
- **One rape every 30 minutes in India**
- **DU student says Gzb man raped her**
- **Girl abducted from shelter**
- **Woman, son murdered in south delhi**
- **TCs strip-search 65-yr-old woman on Mumbai train**
- **IIM professor accused of sexual harassment**
- **Park street rape witness molested**
- **Stalker attacks DU student with knife**
- **Rapists hammer nails into survivor's body**

Alarming??? Very!!!

Needless to say something is very wrong with what is happening and many (hopefully) have been racking their brains trying to understand this phenomenon, trying to make sense of all the violence. Has this epidemic cropped up recently or is it a brutal manifestation of something that has been in existence for centuries or is it that finally everything is unwrapping and unfolding from what was previously hidden under wraps?

Gender policing has been offered as one of the main reasons that cause so much violence against women. **Gender policing** is defined as

the 'imposition or enforcement of normative gender expressions on an individual who is perceived as not adequately performing, through appearance or behaviour, the sex that was assigned to them at birth (Gender binary)¹. Gender policing serves to devalue or delegitimize expressions that deviate from normative conceptions of gender, thus reinforcing the gender binary. According to Judith Butler, rejection of individuals who are non-normatively gendered is a component of creating one's own gender identity.'

The concept of gender policing is based on the notion that there are set rules that define and confine genders and any deviation from them is warranted with punishment. So a women who is not submissive and obedient to her husband (because that is the defined role of a wife), she is liable to an appropriate punishment which can range from anything to physical, mental torture and even death. Similarly if a girl is out with a man late at night she deserves to be eve-teased, molested, raped and even murdered. This works the other way round as well where a man is encouraged and applauded for being aggressive and dominating.

What is gender and how does normative conception of gender develop?

Gender and gender role is one aspect of the term *gender binary* which describes the system in which a society splits people into male and female gender roles, gender identities and attributes. While gender normative is conforming with social standards about what is appropriate feminine and masculine behaviour.

Gender is everywhere around us. It is fed to us, from the moment we are born. Gender expectations and messages bombard us constantly. Upbringing, culture, peers, community, media, and religion, are some of the many influences that shape our understanding of this core aspect of identity. In short, gender is a socially constructed concept.

Like other social constructs, gender is closely monitored by society. Practically everything in society is assigned a gender—toys,

colours, clothes and behaviours are some of the more obvious examples. Accepted social gender roles and expectations are so entrenched in our culture that most people cannot imagine any other way.

So how does normative conception of gender develop and get so entrenched in our culture? More importantly, how do these gender roles become so skewed to favour one and absolutely enslave the other? Who decides what is conventionally appropriate to ones assigned gender. To understand 'deviation from normative conception of gender' one needs to understand the 'formation or creation of the normative conceptions of gender'. Who decides gender roles?

In India many thinkers hold the view that the creation of a number of Hindu religious books, including the Manusmriti, and the strict compliance to them by the Brahmins, led to a society in which equality between men and women was far from existent [Agarwal, S. (1999)]. Books like the Manusmriti divide people into a stratified varna system² and promote inequality between the different strata as well as between men and women (Thind [2000]; Agarwal [1999]). According to the Manusmriti, women have no right to education, independence, or wealth. It not only justifies the treatment of women as a sex objects and promotes child marriage, but also justifies a number of violent atrocities on women.

The above mentioned dictats have been through the ages accepted, propagated and encouraged through the ages, so much so that even a thousand years of change and so called development has not been able to dilute them. Infact they keep cropping up in more and more heinous and horrific manifestations.

But why is it so? Can a couple of dictacts sanctioned by religion and accepted by culture and traditions render a whole population illogical, imbalanced and even inhuman?

Needless to say we need immediate answer to these questions and an even more urgent solution to this alarming phenomenon. Obviously the solution to this problem is not an easy one. Something which is so deeply entrenched and a part of a person's and a society's psyche, way of life, habit cannot be transformed overnight, at

the same time that is the exact place one has to start. One cannot expect a radical change in the character of a society without individual growth and transformation. Maybe this theory is a very simplistic way of looking at and explaining violence against women and that there are several other factors and nuances that add on to this dreadful phenomenon. Yet one cannot but hope that at least we can try and make a start towards understanding and eradicating it.

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¹ The term *gender binary* describes the system in which a society splits people into male and female gender roles, gender identities and attributes.

² **Varna** is the term for the four broad ranks into which traditional Hindu society is divided. The four varnas (*chatur varna*) are, in order of precedence, first - the Brahmins: priests and scholars; second - the Kshatriya: kings, governors, warriors and soldiers; third - the Vaishyas: cattle herders, agriculturists, artisans and merchants.; and fourth - the Shudras: labourers and service providers.

‘Orthodox of All Religions Unite’ - Who is Celebrating the Judgment on Article 377 !

Subhash Gatade

INDIA

Our India is a religious country whose overwhelming majority believes in religion and upholds traditions of the east. All religions emphasize on construction of a family through marital relation between men and women, on which depend not only the existence of human race and lasting peace and tranquillity in the society but it also establishes the respected and central position of woman in the society.

The Constitution of the country has rightly described homosexuality as a punishable offence. It is because homosexuality not only prevents evolution and progress of human race but also destroys family system and social relations. Moreover, it is a great danger to public health. Medical research has also found it as a basic reason for the spread of AIDS...

(Signatories : Maulana Syed Jalaluddin Umari – Ameer (National President), Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Maulana Mufti Mukarram Ahmed – Shahi Imam, Fatehpuri Masjid, Jagat Guru Swami Omkar Anand- Sanatan Dharm, Gyani Ranjit Singh-Chief Priest, Bangla Saheb, Fr. Dominic Emmanuel, Lokesh Muni-Jain Dharm, <http://jamaateislamihind.org/eng/joint-statement-of-religious-leaders-on-supreme-court-order-on-article-377/>

The recent judgment by the Supreme Court which has recriminalised homosexuality might have baffled a broad section of peace and justice loving people but it has definitely emboldened many a self proclaimed leaders of religion and purveyors of morality who today feel vindicated. For them it is a moment of celebration. It was only last month that few of their representatives had held a press conference proclaiming their support to the decision of the Supreme Court on Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code as it was '[n]ot only in line with the eastern traditions of this country, moral values and religious teachings but it also removes apprehensions about invasion

of western culture and disintegration of family system and fabric of social life – the inevitable fallouts of the Delhi High Court order of 2009 wherein it decriminalized homosexuality."

The bonhomie exhibited by the 'holy of different faiths' then was for everyone to see. Rare have been such occasions when they exhibited similar eagerness to come together over any real material concern of their own followers or when hatred oozing out of their own understanding of faith filled out on streets dividing people into camps of 'us' versus 'them'.

Definitely they were not concerned over the curious fact that there was nothing 'western' about same sex relations and like most ancient societies; here also it was accepted as one dimension of a wide erotic spectrum. As Ruth Vanita in one of her write-ups gives instances from pre-colonial Indian literature and art which depict incidents of sex-change (now termed transgender/ transsexual) and erotic love between two men or two women (now termed gay, lesbian or bisexual). According to her :

One version of the 14th-century Krittivasa Ramayana tells the story of two women, Chandra and Mala, who make love in the rainy season, inspired by Kamadeva; one becomes pregnant with divine blessing and has a heroic son. Major poets, such as Mir Taqi Mir and Najmuddin Shah Mubarak Abru wrote about male-male romances and sexual relationships, while others wrote about female-female amours that were explicitly sexual.

In fact, anti-sodomy laws were a western import which became a part of jurisprudence here, as part of Victorian morality which was much in vogue then. The British introduced Section 377 during those times as they feared "their army and daughters would be tainted by Oriental vices" and it has been around fifty years that they themselves removed this obnoxious provision from their statute books. Today gay sex by consenting adults is not a crime in all of Europe and the US.

It is a different matter that today, India has

joined some sort of bizarre competition with countries which are ready to embrace state sponsored homophobia, thanks to the Supreme Court verdict which, instead of affirming the fundamental constitutional principle of non-discrimination between citizens has decided to re-criminalise homosexuality. Infact it need be mentioned here that India today is an important member of the emerging club of 'homophobic' countries represented by Russia, Nigeria and Uganda. While much is known about Russia's new anti-gay law banning "homosexual propoganda", which has rightly raised concerns over the safety of gay athletes in Russia who would be there to participate in Winter Olympics at Sochi, developments in Nigeria and Uganda have largely gone unreported. It was on January 13 that Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan signed a decree criminalising same sex relationships which is much harsher than India's Section 377 the Ugandan legislation seems to be the most draconian one, where under the bill punishing "aggravated homosexuality" which was ratified by the Parliament in December itself, one can face a life sentence. Two years back Ugandan gay rights activist Pasikali Kashusbe was brutally murdered by one of those fanatic groups which opposed homosexuality.

While the 'holy men' are entitled to their views on what does or does not constitute a sin, they seem to have faint realisation of the fact that in a democracy punishments are only prescribed for crimes, not for sins. Thus while a theocracy or a country where particular religion seems to play a larger role in the state functioning, can condemn someone to death supposedly for committing the 'sin' of declaring herself/himself an atheist, a secular democracy moves in an utterly different domain. It was a pity to see that their limited world view (*weltanschauung*) prohibited them from even comprehending the fact that how the high court judgement which decriminalised homosexuality had tried to reinvigorate the principles of constitutional morality to expand freedoms, choices available under constitution and tried to counterpose it with the ideas of public morality which is a carrier of the dominant viewpoint in the society.

This coming together of the 'holy men' of their communities against a step which had the

possibility of expanding human freedoms reminded one of a similar episode which unfolded before us 80 years back when India was still under the yoke of the colonial government. While the context is definitely different and the issues at hand are different but the manner in which 'religious teachings,' tradition and culture' and 'opinion of the overwhelming majority of the people' is invoked seems quite similar.

It was a period when there was talk of enacting Sarada act - which prohibited marriages of girls under fourteen - and this idea itself had agitated a large section of religious minded groups and individuals. A section of the nationalists had also felt agitated and had claimed that 'outsiders/ Britishers' have no right to interfere in the internal affairs of the people. Not very many people would remember today that the initial impetus to enact the act had come from the revulsion felt by the articulate sections of our society over the death of Phulmoni, a child bride who had died after her marriage to a man much elder than her age was consummated. While the conservative section of the nationalist opposed the act in their own way, the 'pious' and the 'holy of both faiths' namely Hindu and Muslim had then come together to declare that they would not allow this 'outrage on their deepest convictions and their most cherished rights..'. They had even declared that they would not allow the colonial government to infringe upon their 'glorious tradition and culture'.

Here is an episode of those times described by Jawaharlal Nehru himself which had appeared in 'Modern Review' (December 1935) which discussed how representatives of the clergy had behaved then.

'Some years ago I happened to be in Benaras... We saw Brahmins..marching shoulder to shoulder with bearded Moulavies .. and one of the standards they carried in triumph bore the flaming device 'Hindu-Muslim ekta ki Jai (Victory to Hindu-Muslim unity)! Very gratifying, we thought. But still, what was all this about ? .. This was a joint protest by the orthodox of both religions against the Sarada act.'

He adds "Offensive slogans were hurled at us and there was some jostling about. Just then, the procession arrived at the Town Hall and, for some reason or other, started stone throwing. A bright young person thereupon pulled some

crackers and this had an extraordinary effect on the serried ranks of the orthodox. Evidently thinking that the police or the military had opened fire, they dispersed and managed (this) with extraordinary rapidity. A few crackers were enough to put the procession to flight..' (Social and Religious Reform, Amiya P Sen, OUP, Page 118).

Nehru further describes how the British government in India surrendered on this issue and how a little shouting was 'enough to kill and bury the Sarda act' and how 'child marriages continued as before, and government and magistrates looked the other way while the Sarda act was torn to shreds and cast to the dogs'.

There is no doubt that times are different. The Britishers are long gone and we have ushered into a republic more than sixty years back.

But a similar moment awaits us.

It has been more than sixty years that we decided that henceforth there won't be any discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, race, religion, nationality and similar other categories which have been made a basis of discrimination against minorities of various types. But of late we are realising that there seems to be a great hiatus between our noble intentions and the situation on the ground. If yesterday or the day before or the day earlier than that, dalits, women, religious minorities etc were at the receiving end, today seems to be the turn of the sexual minorities of various kinds.

Whether we will be able to transcend what Fahad Hashmi calls the 'ironies of democracies' where 'minorities of all shades are always in the crosshairs of majoritarianism.' that is the crucial question before us today.

The Indian Social Structure. Importance of the Group

Continued from page 6

Sir George Birdwood has said somewhere: 'So long as the Hindus hold to the caste system, India will be India; but from the day they break from it, there will be no more India. That glorious peninsula will be degraded to the position of a bitter "East End" of the Anglo-Saxon Empire.' With caste or without it, we have long been degraded to that position in the British Empire; and, in any event, whatever our future position is likely to be, it will not be confined within the bounds of that empire. But there is some truth in what Sir George Birdwood said, though probably he did not look at it from this point of view. The break-up of a huge and long standing social organization may well lead to a complete disruption of social life, resulting in absence of cohesion, mass suffering and the development on a vast scale of abnormalities in individual behaviour, unless some other social structure, more suited to the times and to the genius of the people, takes its place. Perhaps disruption is inevitable during the transition period; there is enough of this disruption all over the world today. Perhaps it is only through the pain and suffering that accompany such disruption that people grow and learn the lessons of life and adapt themselves anew to changing conditions.

Nevertheless, we cannot just disrupt and

hope for something better without having some vision of the future we are working for, however vague that vision may be. We cannot just create a vacuum, or else that vacuum will fill itself up in a way that we may have to deplore. In the constructive schemes that we may make, we have to pay attention to the human material we have to deal with, to the background of its thought and urges, and to the environment in which we have to function. To ignore all this and to fashion some idealistic scheme in the air, or merely to think in terms of imitating what others have done elsewhere, would be folly. It becomes desirable therefore to examine and understand the old Indian social structure which has so powerfully influenced our people.

This structure was based on three concepts: the autonomous village community, caste, and the joint family system. In all *mir* might be comparable in some way to the Indian village community. Caste has been essentially functional and similar to the medieval trade guilds of Europe. The Chinese family system bears a strong resemblance to the Hindu joint family. I do not know enough of all these to carry the comparison far, and, in any case, it is not important for my purpose. Taken as a whole the entire Indian structure was certainly unique and, as it developed, it became more so.

Eidgah by Munshi Premchand

Translated by Late Khushwant Singh

INDIA

A full thirty days after Ramazan comes Eid. How wonderful and beautiful is the morning of Eid! The trees look greener, the fields more festive, the sky has a 'lovely pink glow. Look at the sun! It comes up brighter and more dazzling than before to wish the world a very happy Eid. The village is agog with excitement. Everyone is up early to go to the Eidgah mosque. One finds a button missing from his shirt and is hurrying to his neighbour's house for thread and needle. Another finds that the leather of his shoes has become hard and is running to the oil-press for oil to grease it. They are dumping fodder before their oxen because by the time they get back from the Eidgah it may be late afternoon. It is a good three miles from the village. There will also be hundreds of people to greet and chat with; they would certainly not be finished before midday.

The boys are more excited than the others. Some of them kept only one fast - and that only till noon. Some didn't even do that. But no one can deny them the joy of going to the Eidgah. Fasting is for the grown-ups and the aged. For the boys it is only the day of Eid. They have been talking about it all the time. At long last the day has come. And now they are impatient with people for not hurrying up. They have no concern with things that have to be done. They are not bothered whether or not there is enough milk and sugar for the vermicelli pudding. All they want is to eat the pudding. They have no idea why Abbajan is out of breath running to the house of Chaudhri Karim Ali. They don't know that if the Chaudhri were to change his mind he could turn the festive day of Eid into a day of mourning. Their pockets bulge with coins like the stomach of the pot-bellied Kubera, the Hindu God of Wealth. They are forever taking the treasure out of their pockets, counting and recounting it before putting it back. Mahmood counts "One, two, ten, twelve" - he has twelve pice. Mohsin has "One, two, three, eight, nine, fifteen" pice. Out of this countless hoard they will buy countless things; toys, sweets, paper-pipes,

rubber balls - and much else.

The happiest of the boys is Hamid. He is only four, poorly dressed, thin and famished-looking. His father died last year of cholera. Then his mother wasted away and, without anyone finding out what had ailed her she also died. Now Hamid sleeps in Granny Ameena's lap and is as happy as a lark. She tells him that his father has gone to earn money and will return with sackloads of silver. And that his mother has gone to Allah to get lovely gifts for him. This makes Hamid very happy. It is great to live on hope; for a child there is nothing like hope. A child's imagination can turn a mustard seed into a mountain. Hamid has no shoes on his feet; the cap on his head is soiled and tattered; its gold thread has turned black. Nevertheless Hamid is happy. He knows that when his father comes back with sacks full of silver and his mother with gifts from Allah will be able to fulfill all his heart's desires. Then he will have more than Mahmood, Mohsin, Noorey and Sammi.

In her hovel the unfortunate Ameena sheds bitter tears. It is Eid and she does not have even a handful of grain. Only if her Abid were there, it would have been a different kind of Eid!

Hamid goes to his grandmother and says, "Granny, don't you fret over me! I will be the first to get back. Don't worry!"

Ameena is sad. Other boys are going out with their fathers. She is the only 'father' Hamid has. How can she let him go to the fair all by himself? What if he gets lost in the crowd? No, she must not lose her precious little soul! How can he walk three miles? He doesn't even have a pair of shoes. He will get blisters on his feet. If she went along with him she could pick him up now and then. But then who would be there to cook the vermicelli? If only she had the money she could have bought the ingredients on the way back and quickly made the pudding. In the village it would take her many hours to get everything. The only way out was to ask someone for them.

The villagers leave in one party. With the boys is Hamid. They run on ahead of the elders and wait for them under a tree. Why do the oldies drag their feet? And Hamid is like one with wings

on his feet. How could anyone think he would get tired?

They reach the suburbs of the town. On both sides of the road are mansions of the rich enclosed all around by thick, high walls. In the gardens mango and leeches trees are laden with fruit. A boy hurls a stone at a mango tree. The gardener rushes out screaming abuses at them. By then the boys are a furlong out of his reach and roaring with laughter. What a silly ass they make of the gardener!

Then come big buildings : the law courts, the college and the club. How many boys would there be in this big college? No sir, they are not all boys! Some are grown-up men. They sport enormous moustaches. What are such grown-up men going on studying for? How long will they go on doing so? What will they do with all their knowledge? There are only two or three grown-up boys in Hamid's school. Absolute duds they are too! They get a thrashing every day because they do not work at all. These college fellows must be the same type - why else should they be there! And the Masonic Lodge. They perform magic there. It is rumoured that they make human skulls move about and do other kinds of weird things. No wonder they don't let in outsiders! And the white folk play games in the evenings. Grown-up men, men with moustaches and beards playing games! And not only they, but even their Memsahibs! That's the honest truth! You give my Granny that something they call a racket; she wouldn't know how to hold it. And if she tried to wave it about she would collapse.

Mahmood says, "My mother's hands would shake; I swear by Allah they would!"

Mohsin says, "Mine can grind maunds of grain. Her hand would never shake holding a miserable racket. She draws hundreds of pitchers full of water from the well every day. My buffalo drinks up five pitcher. If a Memsahib had to draw one pitcher, she would go blue in the face."

Mahmood interrupts, "But your mother couldn't run and leap about, could she?"

"That's right," replies Mohsin, "she couldn't leap or jump. But one day our cow got loose and began grazing in the Chaudhri's fields. My mother ran so fast after it that I couldn't catch up with her. Honest to God, I could not!"

So we proceed to the stores of the sweet-

meat vendors. All so gaily decorated! Who can eat all these delicacies? Just look! Every store has them piled up in mountain heaps. They say that after nightfall, Jinns come and buy up everything. "My Abba says that at midnight there is a Jinn at every stall. He has all that remains weighed and pays in real rupees, just the sort of rupees we have," says Mohsin.

Hamid is not convinced. "Where would the Jinns come by rupees?"

"Jinns are never short of money," replied Mohsin. "They can get into any treasury they want. Mister, don't you know no iron bars can stop them? They have all the diamonds and rubies they want. If they are pleased with anyone they will give him baskets full of diamonds. They are here one moment and five minutes later they can be in Calcutta."

Hamid asks again, "Are these Jinns very big?"

"Each one is as big as the sky," asserts Mohsin. "He has his feet on the ground, his head touches the sky. But if he so wanted, he could get into a tiny brass pot."

"How do people make Jinns happy?" asks Hamid. "If anyone taught me the secret, I would make at least one Jinn happy with me."

"I do not know," replies Mohsin, "but the Chaudhri Sahib has a lot of Jinns under his control. If anything is stolen, he can trace it and even tell you the name of the thief. Jinns tell him everything that is going on in the world."

Hamid understands how Chaudhri Sahib has come by his wealth and why people hold him in so much respect.

It begins to get crowded. Parties heading for the Eidgah are coming into town from different sides - each one dressed better than the other. Some on tongas and ekkas; some in motor-cars. All wearing perfume; all bursting with excitement. Our small party of village rustics is not bothered about the poor show they make. They are a calm, contented lot.

For village children everything in the town is strange. Whatever catches their eye, they stand and gape at it with wonder. Cars hoot frantically to get them out of the way, but they couldn't care less. Hamid is nearly run over by a car.

At long last the Eidgah comes in view. Above it are massive tamarind trees casting their shade

on the cemented floor on which carpets have been spread. And there are row upon row of worshippers as far as the eye can see, spilling well beyond the mosque courtyard. Newcomers line themselves behind the others. Here neither wealth nor status matter because in the eyes of Islam all men are equal. Our villagers wash their hands and feet and make their own line behind the others. What a beautiful, heart-moving sight it is! What perfect coordination of movements! A hundred thousand heads bow together in prayer! And then all together they stand erect; bow down and sit on their knees! Many times they repeat these movements-exactly as if a hundred thousand electric bulbs were switched on and off at the same time again and again. What a wonderful spectacle it is!

The prayer is over. Men embrace each other. They descend on the sweet and toy-vendors' stores like an army moving to an assault. In this matter the grown-up rustic is no less eager than the boys. Look, here is a swing! Pay a pice and enjoy riding up to the heavens and then plummeting down to the earth. And here is the roundabout strung with wooden elephants, horses, and camels! Pay one pice and have twenty-five rounds of fun. Mahmood and Mohsin and Noorey and other boys mount the horses and camels.

Hamid watches them from a distance. All he had are three pice. He couldn't afford to part with a third of his treasure for a few miserable rounds.

They've finished with the roundabouts; now it is time for the toys. There is a row of stalls on one side with all kinds of toys; soldiers and milkmaids, kings and ministers, water-carriers and washer-women and holy men. Splendid display! How lifelike! All they need are tongues to speak. Mahmood buys a policeman in khaki with a red turban on his head and a gun on his shoulder. Looks as if he is marching in a parade. Mohsin likes the water-carrier with his back bent under the weight of the water-bag. He holds the handle of the bag in one hand and looks pleased with himself. Perhaps, he is singing. It seems as if the water is about to pour out of the bag. Noorey has fallen for the lawyer. What an expression of learning he has on his face! A black gown over a long, white coat with a gold watch chain going into a pocket, a fat volume of some law book in his hand. Appears as if he has just finished arguing a

case in a court of law.

These toys cost two pice each. All Hamid has are three pice; how can he afford to buy such expensive toys? If they dropped out of his hand, they would be smashed to bits. If a drop of water fell on them, the paint would run. What would he do with toys like these? They'd be of no use to him.

Mohsin says, "My water-carrier will sprinkle water every day, morning and evening."

Mahmood says, "My policeman will guard my house. If a thief comes near, he will shoot him with his gun."

Noorey says, "My lawyer will fight my cases."

Sammi says, "My washer-woman will wash my clothes every day."

Hamid pooh poohs their toys - they're made of clay - one fall and they'll break in pieces. But his eyes look at them hungrily and he wishes he could hold them in his hands for just a moment or two. His hands stretch without his wanting to stretch them. But young boys are not givers, particularly when it is something new. Poor Hamid doesn't get to touch the toys.

After the toys it is sweets. Someone buys sesame seed candy, others *gulab-jammuns* or halva. They smack their lips with relish. Only Hamid is left out. The luckless boy has at least three pice; why doesn't he also buy something to eat? He looks with hungry eyes at the others.

Mohsin says, "Hamid, take this sesame candy, it smells good."

Hamid suspects it is a cruel joke; he knows Mohsin doesn't have so big a heart. But knowing this Hamid goes to Mohsin. Mohsin takes a piece out of his leaf-wrap and holds it towards Hamid. Hamid stretches out his hand. Mohsin puts the candy in his own mouth. Mahmood, Noorey and Sammi clap their hands with glee and have a jolly good laugh. Hamid is crestfallen.

Mohsin says, "This time I will let you have it. I swear by Allah! I will give it to you. Come and take it."

Hamid replies, "You keep your sweets. Don't I have the money?"

"All you have are three pice," says Sammi. "What can you buy for three pice?"

Mahmood says, "Mohsin is a rascal. Hamid you come to me and I will give you *gulab-jammun*."

Hamid replies, "What is there to rave about sweets? Books are full of bad things about eating

sweets.”

“In your heart you must be saying: “If I could get it I would eat it,” says Mohsin. “Why don’t you take the money out of your pocket?”

“I know what this clever fellow is up to,” says Mahmood. “When we’ve spent all our money, he will buy sweets and tease us.”

After the sweet-vendors there are a few hardware stores and shops of real and artificial jewellery. There is nothing there to attract the boys’ attention. So they go ahead - all of them except Hamid who stops to see a pile of tongs. It occurs to him that his granny does not have a pair of tongs. Each time she bakes *chappatis*, the iron plate burns her hands. If he were to buy her a pair of tongs she would be very pleased. She would never burn her fingers; it would be a useful thing to have in the house. What use are toys? They are waste of money. You can have some fun with them but only for a very short time. Then you forget all about them.

Hamid’s friends have gone ahead. They are at a stall drinking *sherbet*. How selfish they are! They bought so many sweets but did not give him one. And then they want him to play with them; they want him to do odd jobs for them. Now if any of them asked him to do something, he would tell them, “Go suck your lollipop, it will burn your mouth; it will give you a rash of pimples and boils; your tongue will always crave for sweets; you will have to steal money to buy them and get a thrashing in the bargain. It’s all written in books. Nothing will happen to my tongs. No sooner my granny sees my pair of tongs she will run up to take it from me and say, “My child has brought me a pair of tongs,’ and shower me with a thousand blessings. She will show it off to the neighbours’ womenfolk. Soon the whole village will be saying, “Hamid has brought his granny a pair of tongs, how nice he is!’ No one will bless the other boys for the toys they have got for themselves. Blessings of elders are heard in the court of Allah and are immediately acted on. Because I have no money Mohsin and Mahmood adopt such airs towards me. I will teach them a lesson. Let them play with their toys and eat all the sweets they can. I will not play with toys. I will not stand any nonsense from anyone. And one day my father will return. And also my mother. Then I will ask these chaps, ‘Do you want any toys? How many?’ I will give each one a

basket full of toys and teach them how to treat friends. I am not the sort who buys a pice worth of lollipops to tease others by sucking them myself. I know they will laugh and say Hamid has brought a pair of tongs. They can go to the Devil!”

Hamid asks the shopkeeper, “How much for this pair of tongs?”

The Shopkeeper looks at him and seeing no older person with him replies, “It’s not for you.”

“Is it for sale or not?”

“Why should it not be for sale? Why else should I have bothered to bring it here?”

“Why then don’t you tell me how much it is!”

It will cost you six pice.

Hamid’s heart sinks. “Let me have the correct price.”

“All right, it will be five pice, bottom price. Take it or leave it.” Hamid steels his heart and says, “Will you give it to me for three?” And proceeds to walk away lest the shopkeeper screams at him. But the shopkeeper does not scream. On the contrary, he calls Hamid back and gives him the pair of tongs. Hamid carries it on his shoulder as if it were a gun and struts up proudly to show it to his friends. Let us hear what they have to say.

Mohsin laughs and says, “Are you crazy? What will you do with the tongs?” Hamid flings the tongs on the ground and replies, try and throw your water-carrier on the ground. Every bone in his body will break.”

Mahmood says, “Are these tongs some kind of toy?”

“Why not?” retorts Hamid. “Place them across your shoulders and it is a gun; wields them in your hands and it is like the tongs carried by singing mendicants - they can make the same clanging as a pair of cymbals. One smack and they will reduce all your toys to dust. And much as your toys may try they could not bend a hair on the heads of my tongs. My tongs are like a brave tiger.”

Sammi who had bought a small tambourine asks, “Will you exchange them for my tambourine? It is worth eight pice.”

Hamid pretends not to look at the tambourine. “My tongs if they wanted to could tear out the bowels of your tambourine. All it has is a leather skin and all it can say is *dhub, dhub*. A drop of water could silence it forever. My brave pair of tongs can weather water and storms, without

budging an inch.”

The pair of tongs wins over everyone to its side. But now no one has any money left and the fairground has been left far behind. It is well past 9 a.m. and the sun is getting hotter every minute. Everyone is in a hurry to get home. Even if they talked their fathers into it, they could not get the tongs. This Hamid is a bit of a rascal. He saved up his money for the tongs.

The boys divide into two factions. Mohsin, Mahmood, Sammi and Noorey on the one side, and Hamid by himself on the other. They are engaged in hot argument. Sammi has defected to the other side. But Mohsin, Mahmood and Noorey, though they are a year or two older than Hamid, are reluctant to take him on in debate. Right is on Hamid’s side. Also it’s moral force on the one side, clay on the other. Hamid has iron now calling itself steel, unconquerable and lethal. If a tiger was to spring on them the water-carrier would be out of his wits; mister constable would drop his clay gun and take to his heels; the lawyer would hide his face in his gown, lie down on the ground and wail as if his mother’s mother had died. But the tongs, the pair of tongs, Champion of India would leap and grab the tiger by its neck and gouge out its eyes.

Mohsin puts all he has in his plea, “But they cannot go and fetch water, can they?”

Hamid raises the tongs and replies, “One angry word of command from my tongs and your water-carrier will hasten to fetch the water and sprinkle it at any doorstep he is ordered to.”

Mohsin has no answer. Mahmood comes to his rescue. “If we are caught, we are caught. We will have to do the rounds of the law courts in chains. Then we will be at the lawyer’s feet asking for help.”

Hamid has no answer to this powerful argument. He asks, “Who will come to arrest us?”

Noorey puffs out his chest and replies, “This policeman with the gun.”

Hamid makes a face and says with scorn, “This wretch come to arrest the Champion of India! Okay, let’s have it out over a bout of wrestling. Far from catching them, he will be scared to look at my tongs in the face.”

Mohsin thinks of another ploy. “Your tongs’ face will burn in the fire every day.” He is sure that this will leave Hamid speechless. That is not so. Pat

comes Hamid with the retort, “Mister, it is only the brave who can jump into a fire. Your miserable lawyers, policemen and water-carriers will run like frightened women into their homes. Only this Champion of India can perform this feat of leaping into fire.”

Mahmood has one more try, “The lawyer will have chairs to sit and tables for his things. Your tongs will only have the kitchen floor to lie on.”

Hamid cannot think of an appropriate retort so he says whatever comes into his mind, “The tongs won’t stay in the kitchen. When your lawyer sits on his chair my tongs will knock him down on the ground.”

It does not make sense but our three heroes are utterly squashed - almost as if a champion kite had been brought down from the heavens to the earth by a cheap, miserable paper imitation. Thus Hamid wins the field. His tongs are the Champion of India. Neither Mohsin nor Mahmood, neither Noorey nor Sammi - nor anyone else can dispute the fact.

The respect that a victor commands from the vanquished is paid to Hamid. The others have spent between twelve to sixteen pice each and bought nothing worthwhile. Hamid’s three-pice worth has carried the day. And no one can deny that toys are unreliable things: they break, while Hamid’s tongs will remain as they are for years.

The boys begin to make terms of peace. Mohsin says, “Give me your tongs for a while, you can have my water-carrier for the same time.”

Both Mahmood and Noorey similarly offer their toys. Hamid has no hesitation in agreeing to these terms. The tongs pass from one hand to another; and the toys are in turn handed to Hamid. How lovely they are!

Hamid tries to wipe the tears of his defeated adversaries. “I was simply pulling your leg, honestly I was. How can these tongs made of iron compare with your toys?” It seems that one or the other will call Hamid’s bluff. But Mohsin’s party are not solaced. The tongs have won the day and no amount of water can wash away their stamp of authority. Mohsin says, “No one will bless us for these toys.”

Mahmood adds, “You talk of blessings! We may get a thrashing instead. My Amma is bound to say, ‘Are these earthen toys all that you could

find at the fair?' "

Hamid has to concede that no mother will be as pleased with the toys as his granny will be when she sees the tongs. All he had was three pice and he has no reason to regret the way he has spent them. And now his tongs are the Champion of India and king of toys.

By eleven the village was again agog with excitement. All those who had gone to the fair were back at home. Mohsin's little sister ran up, wrenched the water-carrier out of his hands and began to dance with joy. Mister Water-carrier slipped out of her hand, fell on the ground and went to paradise. The brother and sister began to fight; and both had lots to cry about. Their mother lost her temper because of the racket they were making and gave each two resounding slaps.

Noorey's lawyer met an end befitting his grand status. A lawyer could not sit on the ground. He had to keep his dignity in mind. Two nails were driven into the wall, a plank put on them and a carpet of paper spread on the plank. The honourable counsel was seated like a king on his throne. Noorey began to wave a fan over him. He knew that in the law courts there were khus curtains and electric fans. So the least he could was to provide a hand fan, otherwise the hot legal arguments might affect his lawyer's brains. Noorey was waving his fan made of bamboo leaf. We do not know whether it was the breeze or the fan or something else that brought the honourable counsel down from his high pedestal to the depths of hell and reduced his gown to mingle with the dust of which it was made. There was much beating of breasts and the lawyer's bier was dumped on a dung heap.

Mahmood's policeman remained. He was immediately put on duty to guard the village. But this police constable was no ordinary mortal who could walk on his own two feet. He had to be provided a palanquin. This was a basket lined with tatters of discarded clothes of red color for the policeman to recline in comfort. Mahmood picked up the basket and started on his rounds. His two younger brothers followed him lispig, "Shleepers, keep awake!" But night has to be dark; Mahmood stumbled, the basket slipped out of his hand. Mr. Constable with his gun crashed on the ground. He was short of one leg. Mahmood being a bit of a doctor knew of an ointment which could quickly rejoin broken limbs. All it needed was the

milk of a banyan sapling. The milk was brought and the broken leg reassembled. But no sooner was the constable put on his feet, the leg gave way. One leg was of no use because now he could neither walk nor sit. Mahmood became a surgeon and cut the other leg to the size of the broken one so the chap could at least sit in comfort.

The constable was made into a holyman; he could sit in one place and guard the village. And sometimes he was like the image of the deity. The plume on his turban was scraped off and you could make as many changes in his appearance as you liked. And sometimes he was used for nothing better than weighing things.

Now let's hear what happened to our friend Hamid. As soon as she heard his voice, Granny Ameena ran out of the house, picked him up and kissed him. Suddenly she noticed the tongs in his hand. "Where did you find these tongs?"

"I bought them."

"How much did you pay for them?"

"Three pice."

Granny Ameena beat her breast. "You are a stupid child! It is almost noon and you haven't had anything to eat or drink. And what do you buy - tongs! Couldn't you find anything better in the fair than this pair of iron tongs?"

Hamid replied in injured tones, "You burn your fingers on the iron plate. This is why I bought them."

The old woman's temper suddenly changes to love - not the kind of calculated love which wastes away in spoken words. This love was mute, solid and seeped with tenderness. What a selfless child! What concern for others! What a big heart! How he must have suffered seeing other boys buying toys and gobbling sweets! How was he able to suppress his own feelings! Even at the fair he thought of his old grandmother. Granny Ameena's heart was too full for words.

And the strangest thing happened - stranger than the part played by the tongs was the role of Hamid the child playing Hamid the old man. And old Granny Ameena became Ameena the little girl. She broke down. She spread her apron and beseeched Allah's blessings for her grandchild. Big tears fell from her eyes. How was Hamid to understand what was going on inside her!

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Exploration of Caste, Class and Gender : “Lived Experiences” Under Scrutiny

Ravneet Param

INDIA

One of the approaches taken up by feminism has been to retrieve the “subjective experience” or “lived realities” of women or any marginalised section of society. The cause of marginalisation in most cases is difficult to be identified because it could range from structural (patriarchy) to socio-political (pro-bourgeoisie policies) etc. Most often under the garb of traditions, conventions, culture etc. ‘personal experiences’ (however it’s difficult to untangle the ‘personal’ from the ‘cultural’ since culture remains one of the sites which conditions/influences one’s existence) remain ignored/sidelined.

Though my visit to Allahabad was part of an internship program and the focus remained to analyse the kind of work ISD is doing among the slum dwellers of Allahabad, but the first hand experience that I received from the visit goes beyond the limits of mere an internship. During the course of my stay I visited many colonies, meeting and interacting with the residents of these colonies. The conversations remained frank and without any hesitation since ISD members share extremely sincere relations with the residents. I did not take up any particular criterion to ask questions. I rather wanted the conversations to evolve on their own so that an individual’s subjectivity doesn’t get obliterated in between. There was also an effort to situate the conversations within the context of class, caste and gender because these factors play a pertinent role in conditioning an individual experience. Usually women took part in the meetings because

men were either working or were drunk to the extent of unconsciousness. Its very interesting to note that unlike a middle class, upper caste woman (who chooses to remain silent, thus curbing her own desires), women of the Bastis are extremely vocal of their desires as well as their anger. They not for a moment hesitated in talking about the pressure they bear as women, wives or mothers in a patriarchal society. As a feminist, it was actually wonderful to see these women sharing their experiences, good or otherwise with so much enthusiasm. However, a kind of dilemma of class/caste distance kept lingering around during the entire visit and the fact that one was ‘visiting/observing’, which in a way is an act of ‘objectification’. Sometimes their questions render one speechless as happened with me when a woman asked that how was I going to solve their problems and I had no answer to give because it’s difficult to find a quick solution when the problems faced by them are structural. Emotions are often obliterated in an academic writing, but for me emotions play an extremely important role while analysing any lived experience. An emotional response might be exaggerated to a certain extent but it does express the situation in which a person is living or ‘made’ to live. Though knowledge(s) has been produced about a Dalit Woman’s life and the conditions she lives in but in that process subjective experience is usually invisibilized. However, entire focus on personal narratives as well glosses over the socio-economic factors that play an important role in an individual’s life. In this article, my focus would be to underline the subjective

experiences of women (or men) living in the colonies while simultaneously analysing the conditions (caste, class and gender) which form such experiences. I would refer to the colonies as “Bastis” as they are popularly known.

The first thing that I noticed when I reached Sanjay Nagar was a big old pungent pond of water with no outlet (so during the monsoons, almost all the houses get flooded because of this). There is no direct water supply to the households. There are two or three public taps where one could fill water. Since there is no direct supply, most of the residents bathe in open. One might think of it as a trivial issue but its imperative to understand the ‘gendered’ experience of bathing in open. In a patriarchal society, a woman’s body is considered something to be protected from an outsider’s gaze, hence strict codes of clothing are present for women. One can’t talk about personal hygiene in a situation like this because the option of ‘personal’ isn’t available. Most women complain of problems like vaginal discharge, infections etc. and these problems are never cured because a standard level of hygiene is never achieved. It is actually a form of violence for they can’t remove their clothes because of the ‘public nature’ of the activity. Its difficult for a bourgeois woman even to think of doing activities like bathing in public but women in colonies like Sanjay Nagar have no other option but to be an object of constant ‘male gaze’. A gaze is often considered harmless but underneath it is present an abstract form of violence, which goes unnoticed in most cases but it could become a cause of extreme emotional turmoil for the person who is the object.

One of the several other problems faced by women in these colonies is domestic violence. Now domestic violence is certainly one form of patriarchal violence/oppression

but it further needs to be contextualized. One can’t determine one reason and universalise it. Domestic violence like any other oppression needs to be understood within a particular context and time. If we try to locate an incident of domestic violence in a Basti like Sanjay Nagar then it can’t be marked as ‘patriarchal violence’ alone. Though violence in any form can never be justified but there is a need to understand the underlying frustration on the man’s part. Though patriarchy provides certain privileges to men but it certainly gives certain burdens. Care of the household in terms of financial help is attributed to a man. In a scenario, where the State itself maintains Brahmanical caste hierarchy and jobs still are allocated according to this hierarchy, it’s difficult for a lower class Dalit to get a decent job even when he is educated. In a society where one is constantly reminded of one’s caste/class and oppressed violently because of that, he would eventually take out his frustration on an easy target and in this case the wife or children become that target. As I said earlier that violence can never be justified but it could at least be understood and contextualized. An analysis of this kind of violence should also be done to understand the upper caste/class nature of the State and the kind of atrocities it is involved in. In a place like Sanjay Nagar, one can’t pin point a single reason only for one problem because there are so many problems as well as multiple reasons which form a complex mesh. State has an immense role to play and most of the miseries of these colonies are because of the upper caste/class nature of the State which marginalises these sections to an extent that they remain invisibilized. The fact that they are also ‘citizens’ of this nation state doesn’t even cross a bourgeoisie’s mind. It is evident from the fact that the residents of the bungalows near which some of the

slums are located keep creating nuisances for them by blaming them for lack of hygiene, sanitation as well as criminalising their existence by creating false stereotypes. The fact that these colonies don't have an underground sanitation system is not their fault but the State's negligence and irresponsibility. Men from these colonies are taken away by the police and falsely accused in any case whatsoever if the authority fails to find the true culprit. Most of them are daily wage labourers or do labour like manual scavenging. They are discriminated, exploited, marginalised on the basis of caste, class, religion. In such a scenario one can't blame patriarchy, capitalism or caste based politics alone and try to find a solution.

Most of the women at Sanjay Nagar are domestic workers in the nearby colonies. Since household work done by women is still not perceived as 'labour' in our society, their wages remain low even after interventionist efforts by "Shehri Garib Sangharsh Morcha" along with ISD. Men on the other hand remain drunk most of the times and spend whatever they earn on alcohol or drugs (caste hierarchy plays an instrumental role in relegating the residents of the Bastis to menial tasks or labour which is socially considered filthy and lowly). Women take care of the household, bring home money therefore debunking the "sexual division of labour" which relegates women to the private sphere and men to the public sphere. But patriarchal control of a husband remains on a wife's earning and he could extort money whenever he can forcefully or otherwise. Unfortunately women's economic independence doesn't liberate them from their duties as wives or mothers. The duties expected from a wife and mother in a patriarchal society remain intact thus multiplying their oppression. However, economic independence does give women a strong position within the family while simultaneously giving them the space to

take some important decisions as well. During the conversation, one of the desires that surfaced was to separate from their husbands. There was a sense of disappointment among them because of their inability to take a decisions and leave their husbands. Its however important to note that they identify 'societal pressure' as the reason becoming a hurdle in their decision making.

It is always important to contextualise and critically scrutinised any lived experience because as I mentioned earlier it is conditioned by several institutions. I attempted to contextualise the experiences of these women within the framework of caste, class and gender and how these structures form their individual experiences. In case of the women of the Bastis, no matter how conditioned their experiences are by patriarchy or caste hierarchy, there is a recognition on their part of their existence (particularly as women) within such structures and institutions. They negotiate with these institutions to carve out a space for themselves and no matter how miserable their condition is, there is a constant struggle they fight to survive. Its commendable that they recognise that how institutions like marriage and family become sites of their oppression as women. Within a patriarchal structure, its almost unimaginable to expect a woman to articulate the oppression she faces within marriage. As an activist as well as a feminist it was overwhelming to see women being vocal of the oppression and exploitation they face within the institutions which are socially lauded and considered as 'havens'. Their strong articulation and anger underlines as well as questions the hypocrisy of the patriarchal structure. Breaking free of the ideological bondage is the first step of liberating oneself of the prescribed oppressive position in society and women of these colonies have actually covered that milestone.

The Development of Modern Poetry

Christopher Caudwell

...Continued from previous issue

[2]

To the bourgeois, freedom is not the consciousness of necessity but the ignorance of it. He stands society on its head. To him the instincts are "free," and society everywhere puts them in chains. This is the reflection, not only of his revolt against feudal restrictions, but of capitalism's continual revolt against its own conditions, which at every step drives it forward to revolutionise its own base.

The bourgeois is a man who believes in an inborn spontaneity which secures man's free will. He does not see that man is only free in so far as he is conscious of the motive of his actions – as opposed to involuntary actions of a reflex character, like a tic, or imposed actions of a coercive character, like a shove in the back. To be conscious of the motive is to be conscious of the cause, that is of the necessity. But the bourgeois protests against this, because determinism seems to him the antithesis of free will.

To be conscious of one's motives is to will freely – to be conscious of the necessity of one's actions. Not to be conscious is to act instinctively like an animal, or blindly like a man propelled by a push from behind his back. This consciousness is not secured by introspection but by a struggle with reality which lays bare its laws, and secures to man the means of consciously using them.

The bourgeois refusal to acknowledge this is paralleled by his attitude to society, in which he thinks he is free if he is free from overt social duties – the restrictions of feudalism. But at the same time the conditions of capitalist production demand



that he enter into an increasingly complex series of relations with his fellow men. These, however, appear as relations to an objective market controlled by the laws of supply and demand. He is therefore unconscious of their true nature and ignorant of the real determinism of society that has him in its grasp. Because of this he is unfree. He is ruined by blind forces; he is subject to crises, wars, and slumps and "unfair" competition. His actions produce these things, although he is undesirous of producing them.

In so far as man understands the laws of outer reality – the determinism or necessity of dead nature as expressed by science – he is free of nature, as is shown by machines. Freedom here too is the consciousness of necessity. The bourgeois is able to attain to this freedom, which is lacking in earlier class societies. But this freedom is dependent not on the individual but on associated men. The more elaborate

the machine the more elaborate the association needed to operate it. Hence man cannot be really free of nature without being conscious of the laws of association in society. And the more the possibility of being really free develops with the development of machinery, the more rudely he is reminded of the slavery of ignorance.

In so far as man understands the nature of society – the determinism which connects the consciousness and productive relations of men – he can control society's impact upon himself as an individual and on nature as a social force. But the very conditions of bourgeois economy demand that social relations be veiled by the free market and by the forms of commodity production, so that relations between men are disguised as relations to things. The bourgeois regards any demand that man should control economic production and become conscious of determinism as "interference with liberty." And it is an interference with liberty in this respect, that it interferes with his status as a bourgeois and his privileged position in society – the privilege of monopolising the products and therefore the freedom of society.

Thus the root of the bourgeois illusion regarding freedom and the function of society in relation to the instincts, is seen to spring from the essential contradiction of bourgeois economy – private (i.e. individual) property in social means of production. The bourgeois ceases to be bourgeois as soon he becomes conscious of the determinism of his social relations, for consciousness is not mere contemplation, it is the product of an active process. It is generated by his experiments in controlling social relations, just as his consciousness of Nature's determinism is generated by his experiments in controlling her. But before men can control their social relations, they must have the power to do so – that is, the power of control the means of production on which social relations rest. But how can they do this when these means are in the power of a privileged class?

The condition of freedom for the bourgeois class in a feudal society is the non-existence of feudal rule. The condition of the

freedom of the workers in a capitalist society is the non-existence of capitalist rule. This is also the condition of freedom for a completely free society – that is, a classless society. Only in such a society can all men actively develop their consciousness of social determinism by controlling their associated destinies. The bourgeois can never accept this definition of freedom for all until he has ceased to be a bourgeois and comprehended the historical movement as a whole.

The nature of this contradiction in the bourgeois notion of freedom only becomes apparent in so far as bourgeois society decays, and the freedom of the bourgeois class becomes increasingly antagonistic to the freedom of society as a whole. The freedom of society as a whole consists in its economic products. These represent the freedom man has won in his struggle with Nature. In proportion as these expand, not only does the bourgeois feel himself free, thanks to the conditions of bourgeois economy, but the rest of society, which shares these products, is not proposed to challenge these conditions in a revolutionary way. It also – passively – accepts them. All this seems therefore a confirmation of the bourgeois theory of freedom. In these particular circumstances the bourgeois theory of freedom is true. It is an illusion, a phantastic illusion, which at this stage realises itself in practice. Man is gaining freedom by denying the relations of society, for these were feudal relations, already made obsolete by the development of bourgeois economy in their pores.

"But in order to oppress a class, certain conditions must be assured to it under which it can, at least, continue its slavish existence. The serf, in the period of serfdom, raised himself to membership in the commune, just as the petty bourgeois, under the yoke of feudal absolutism, managed to develop into a bourgeois. The modern labourer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population or wealth. And here it becomes evident that the

bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie: in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society."¹

At this point, therefore, the contradictory nature of the bourgeois definition of freedom discloses itself because the advance of society has objectively negated it. This, therefore, gives way to a definition of freedom as a consciousness of determinism, and the condition of man's freedom is now seen to be the consciousness and the control of the determining causes of social relations – the productive forces. But this is a revolutionary demand – a demand for socialism and proletarian power, and it is opposed by the bourgeois as the negation of freedom – as indeed it is for him, as a bourgeois. He attempts to speak here in the name of all society, but the revolutionary movement of the bulk of society itself denies him this right.

Thus the bourgeois illusion regarding freedom, which counterposes freedom and individualism to determinism and society, overlooks the fact that society is the instrument whereby man, the unfree individual, in association realises his freedom and that the conditions of such association are conditions of freedom. This illusion is itself the product of a particular class-society, and a reflection of the special privilege on which bourgeois rule rests, and which rends society in two as long as it persists.

Other class societies have their own illusions. Thus a slave-owning society sees freedom, not in the absence of coercive relations, but in a special coercive relation, that of Will, in which the Lord directs, and the slave blindly obeys as of right. In such a society, to be free is to will. But the development of classes sunders the consciousness that directs the will from the

reality with which the slave, who blindly obeys the will, must actively struggle. The economic decline which results from this is a reflection of unfreedom due to man's increasing unconsciousness of necessity, due to the increasing inactivity of the class which is supposed to be the vehicle of consciousness and therefore of freedom. Consciousness is generated by man's active struggle with nature, and perishes in a blind formalism once that grapple ceases.

To be aware of the true nature of freedom – that it involves consciousness of the determinism of the environment and of man and of the society which expresses their mutual struggle – to be aware of this, not as a result of contemplation, which cannot generate consciousness, but in active struggle, is to be engaged in a struggle to end those very relations of blind coercion or exploitation in society which obstruct the development of this consciousness. To end them is to end classes and give men the means of becoming truly free: but this can only happen because capitalism has evolved its own grave-digger – the class whose conditions of existence not only drive it to revolt and make possible a successful rule, but also ensure that its rule can only be based on an extinction of all rights which can produce classes.

1. *The Communist Manifesto (1848)*, Moscow, 1955, pp. 75-6

To be Continued...
Courtesy—Illusion and Reality

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