



Chauvinism in Linguistics and Language

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Abstract

Linguistic Chauvinism is inordinate love for one's own language. This love is so much strong that one considers one's language superior to all the other languages of the world. This theme is effectively brought out by the writer Alphonse who teaches people to hold on fast and guard to their language which is the key to their freedom which symbolizes their identity. No doubt is the term that firmly exercises power and superiority over others. Linguistics is study of evolution of language owing to cultural, social, historical and political manifestations. Language is a gift of humans and language always changes with the passage of time and never remains static. Linguistic study explores from casual communication to technical expertise. Media and literature are the two fields that duly register the potentiality of language and communication. The paper attempts to explore the effect of Linguistic Chauvinism deflating women empowerment pertaining to the role of media and Literature. Selected works from literature and media are pegged for the study.

Keywords: *Chauvinism, Language, Communication, Literature*

1. INTRODUCTION

The title itself suggests exploring the contextualization of language usage and its subsequent impact on the society. The blatant disregard for linguistic diversity set in motion a chain of events from whose impact Pakistan was not able to recover. THE division of Pakistan in 1971 was the culmination of the conflict between its two halves that started with the Bengali Language Movement. The imposition of the single language in linguistically diverse country proved to be its undoing and led much suffering. Any attempt to homogenize India's linguistic diversity as strong resistance throughout the country. India is facing similar threat today as the result of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government's instructions to promote Hindi on social media. But politician in Tamil Nadu reacted very strongly against this. The concept of a language is firmly gloved with environmental factors. Language and environment are closely associated and reflect the culture of a society. Linguistics is the study of usage and structures of a language. The study of linguistics duly registers historical, cultural and political influence on language. World is the galaxy of multilingual set up. Every region has its own language and the study of language and linguistics facilitates better understanding. The study also reveals linguistic chauvinism promoted through Media and Literature to oppress the marginalized section of a society. Language is a gift of humans. Usage of a Language is not static and constantly undergoes a change. Linguistics is a study of evolution of language pertaining to the context. The potentiality of a language is more pronounced in Literature and

Media. Sapir observes,

“Languages are more to us than systems of thought-transference. They are invisible garments that drape themselves about our spirit and give a predetermined form to all its symbolic expression. When the expression is of unusual significance, we call it literature”.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistic Chauvinism in Literature

Literature is the powerful tool producing an intense impact of the culture of a society where the culture determines value of humans. For instance, women not only in India but around the world do not enjoy equal rights as men. She is often discriminated and disgraced by linguistic chauvinism. Let us consider linguistic chauvinism from the perspective of women. The quality of language always reflects cultural matrix. Hence Sapir asserts that the literature fashioned out of the form and substance of a language has the color and the

texture of its matrix. The situation and environment in which a book or a work in media is produced records the milieu of a society.

“The critique of language is an essential tool for managing experience.....linguistic skepticism, linguistic relativism, and the analysis of ordinary language are so many ways of dealing with the power of words over the thoughts and behavior of people”

Literary works are embellished with words to create a greater impact. Often power politics is exercised through apt vocabulary propelling to weaken the confronting party. The confronting party many a time is formed from the oppressed group of a society. Linguistic chauvinism is one of the manipulating techniques to quell the resurgence of activists who fight for justice. Poems, novels, short stories are the major genres of literature. The literary works have a major impact on the society. The paper analyzes the chauvinistic language exercised towards women firmly placing them in inferior status.

Literary works duly registers the power of words subjugating women in the past. Poems and other literary works project women as just objects produced to please their male counterparts. The poem given below illuminates how men exercise linguistic chauvinism to place women in inferior status.

Tell it to women

That we are who we are; men, And the substance of who we are cannot be overshadowed whether young or old, we are men!

Don't treat us like a stranger in the land we own,

You must go when we ask you to go, That is the authority endowed us by nature in Adam.

Tell it to women

That men owns the jungle of life and its domain.

We have sucked the milk of the earth before they

Came from our ribs as a misleading companion, A trait from their mother Eve made the world sinful.

I am not sexist but I speak from the truth of my pen.

Tell it to women

That we are the shadow that bakes purity and love;

Created as their shield of living abundant life.

When we roar in the jungle, the forest is calm,

Nature made us who we are, men of courage, Because we stand as god and can never be shaken!

Tell it to women

That the birth of our water from within are their

Beauty, show me a successful woman and I will Gladly point out a man behind her success story which may lack behind her teeth after men are gone.

Their weakness has become our strongest stand!

Tell it to women

That their future lies in the house of a man,

Some may hop here and there glowing amicably But their tomorrow still remains in men hand fix Because men the world and we are the gods here.

-John Chizoba Vincent

Every line in this poem emanates chauvinism and argues that women cannot be equal to men. To some extent Culture and Religion is responsible for this mentality. Texts of varied religion propagate men as supreme human on the earth. The lines, "You must go when we ask you to go that is the authority endowed us by nature in Adam", Men consider that they are the descendents of Adam, the first Man on the earth. It was believed that Eve is *the misleading companion* of Adam as it was believed that she came from his ribs and hence the purity of earth is tarnished by Eve. Women are equated to sins. She has not been perceived as another human being but only an object meant for the convenience of men.

The irony of the poem is, when the poet defends himself by claiming that he is not a sexist and speaks only the truth,

Nature made us who we are, men of courage, Because we stand as god and can never be shaken. Idolizing men is a traditional practice adopted in several parts of the world. In India, husbands are worshipped as God. Religious texts accentuate that an ideal women worship men. Thus literature propagates supremacy of men implanting firmly the grain of subordination in the mind of women making them feel guilty when they set out freely pursuing their interest. Women are considered as mere shadows to men. The scriptures both in Indian literature and English literature preach that an ideal woman is none but a mute subordinate to her husband accepting everything her husband endeavors to accomplish. The following lines illumines this fact,

That their future lies in the house of a man,

Some may hop here and there glowing amicably But their tomorrow still remains in men hand fix Because men the world and we are the gods here.

Language itself exudes chauvinistic attitude of men. The Pronoun 'He' and the common noun 'Man' are always used to refer to humans. There is no place for women in language usage. Let us see the following proverbs,

1. Practice makes **Man** Perfect.
2. Early to bed, early to rise, makes a **Man** healthy, wealthy and wise.

Thus women have no voice, status or any position in the society and the language lucidly reveals the truth. *Ramayan*, one of the well read mythologies in India, proclaims that 'Where Ram is, that is *Ayodhi* for Sita', accentuating that women are just a shadow of men. Language and literature certainly assert the power of men over women.

No Place for Language Chauvinism in India

This fact cannot be denied English is the language of elite while many find English as a language of opportunities. NK Bhattacharjee as a teacher of Comparative Literature says the official position of English in India is confusing. Constitution does not recognize it as an Indian though Sahitya Akademi gives away an award every year in English language. On the other hand, two of India's top literary awards Jnanapitha as well as Saraswati Samman keep English of their ambit, he said. But Meenakshi Madhavan Reddy says, "Though honours is available in English, Hindi and Sanskrit but students with the highest cut-off go for English. It may be because English is a language of opportunity, perceived as a social privilege and status. This needs to be rethought. We try to question this hierarchy. Students should value the fact they come from multi-lingual society.

Linguistic Chauvinism Subjugating Women in Media

It is a well known fact that where women are worshipped, deities are pleased. "No doubt we cannot think of welfare of the world unless we improve the condition of woman - said Vivekananda."

Femininities and Masculinities describe gender identities. They describe socio-cultural categories in everyday language. These terms are used differently in biology. Because femininities and masculinities are gender identities, they are shaped by socio-cultural practices and processes, not biology. Femininities and masculinities are plural and dynamic, The change with culture and with individuals.

Women welfare does reflect a healthy and harmonious society. But media many a time promotes sexism using linguistic chauvinism to subjugate women. Advertisements are one of the significant channels available to media displaying sexist attitude and it is quite shocking to note the projection of

women stating inferior status in the society through advertisements. The below given illustrations of advertisements exudes sexism.

Many advertisements lucidly portray linguistic behaviour which is an insidious vehicle in creating and maintaining hierarchies of power perpetuating the devaluation and control of others. Sexist messages are repeatedly contested in literature and media undermining the status of women. Though there are women activists who fight for equality, media is still the realm of men. There were feminist writers in English like Barbara Johnson, Mary Woolstonecraft promoting women equality, yet Literature and Media are dominated by men. Language plays a vital role in exercising power over others.

Sociolinguistics is the study of impact of language use on society and **Sociology of language** studies the effect of language on the society. Literature and media weave the motif anchored on sociolinguistics and sociology of language. The effect of language both in literature and media reflect the linguistic behavior of people. Sociolinguistics focuses on the society's effect on language. Advertisements certainly portray patriarchal society.

3. CONCLUSION

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held on Beijing, China on Sept. 1995, focused on issues of women pertaining to gender equality in media. The objective of the conference is to provide a platform for women to voice suitable suggestions to elevate the dignity and rights of women in media. Under the title of Women and the Media Diagnosis the following strategies were laid down for discussion.

1. Media should encourage the participation women and provide access to women in decision making production.
2. Stereotyped portrayal of women should be discouraged and a balanced nonstereotyped portrayal of women should be encouraged.

Literature and Media are the most powerful tools reflecting the culture of a society. To elevate the status of women, more women should actively participate in literary programs and in media firmly discouraging linguistic chauvinism and sexism to encourage and disseminate courage among women to face challenges both at personal and professional lives. For centuries the supremacy of male is advocated through literature and media duly conditioning the psychology of women that they are inferior and thus obey to the orders of men. But over the past few decades women have proved their skill and knowledge in various fields despite social and cultural barriers. Media and literature being the most powerful vehicles should shoulder the responsibility of promoting women empowerment as the development of a society mainly depends on the contribution of women.

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