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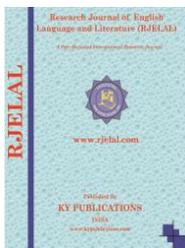
ANALYZING DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF LIVES THROUGH FEMINISM, CRITICAL RACE THEORY, AND MULTIMODAL COMPOSITION

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ABSTRACT

Social Science mainly examines how individuals and society shape each other in terms of identity formation through various shared relationship networks. Social Sciences as an umbrella term entails political, cultural, social and economic dimensions of the society and as a discipline helps us understand the world, both at its face value and rhetorical implications, and unravel how these different compartments collaborate to impact the society, in all visible and invisible ways. This paper talks about various ambiguities and overlaps witnessed in political, social and economic scenarios among others, implying why social researchers need do more contrapuntal thinking on why the seemingly poles apart issues in fact intersect at certain points. It basically digs into gender, religion, race, profession, education, ethnicity, and caste based issues and explicates how all these govern the identities that the members of a society are slapped with. Talking about issues of race and discrepancies between legal provisions and social practices, the essay revolves around why social scientists need to be more rhetorically involved in making sense of the anomalies that subtly and overtly prevail in the discussed topics. Critical race theory, and multimodal theory, and feminism might help us examine different aspects of social lives.

Keywords: Critical race theory, feminism, multimodal theory

Oxford Dictionary defines social science as "the study of people in a society," and thus as an academic discipline it deals with how society and the members constantly influence each other. In other words, it is connected with how the human constituents of a society behave with one another and help shape and reshape their relationships. Social Sciences as an umbrella term entails political, cultural, social and economic dimensions of the society and as a discipline helps us comprehend the world- which may be devoid of our first hand involvement- and unravel how these different facets collaborate to impact the society, in negative or positive manner.

In the first place social science helps discern the political developments that are constantly manifested in different patterns and are subject to change on a par with the change in time, place and context. It unravels the scenario of people inhabiting a certain political space and being indoctrinated accordingly and also being a part of a gradually changing ideology. The arena of politics in one nook of the world is, interestingly, intertwined with socio-economic issues of some other parts of the world. For example, the change in stock market in the U.S. could affect the way Nepalese celebrate certain festivals as remittance has largely affected the Nepalese lifestyle in the past two decades. This in turn may affect the political fabric of the country. Similarly, the upcoming

elections in India could affect the mentality of Nepalese voters who are gearing up for forthcoming local elections.

Next, the demarcation between the two extreme ideologies, whether one justifying terrorism or one that is displayed as anti-terrorism, is quite blur. In this connection it would be pertinent to mention how though seemingly poles apart, Jihadists and the so- called democratic powers of the West use one another as a pretext to cause real harm to the people who they claim to be safeguarding or fighting for. And apparently the animosity they are supposedly be harboring against each other does them little harm; rather it torments the people who have nothing to do with their causes whatsoever. Benjamin Barber in *The Globalization Reader* mentions "Jihad pursues a bloody politics of identity, Mcworld a bloodless economics of profit" (p. 35). And even more fascinating it is to find these proponents of Jihad sporting the very outfits produced by the Western World, also at times interchangeably used as Mcworld, and expressing brand loyalty unwaveringly. This is one paradoxical or intriguing case study for the students of social science.

Moving onto the cultural domain, the other visible pictures are the acculturation and deculturation processes. Whenever any culture enters a new scene, there are certain compromises that it has to make in order to adapt itself to the changed surroundings. For example, when McDonald's was introduced in Hong Kong, it too had to make some alterations in order to camouflage itself with the colors of the Chinese society. McDonald's thus became a fusion of both American and Chinese culture. It has, writes James L. Watson in *The Globalization Reader,* "made the transition from an exotic trendy establishment patronized by self-conscious status seekers to a competitively priced chain offering value meals to busy preoccupied consumers" (p. 129). Similar is the story of Sushi which now is not just another Japanese cuisine but indeed, according to Theodre C Bestor in *The Globalization Reader*, "a globalized version of a slice of Japanese culture" (p. 120). Likewise, it is now a common sight to find youngsters in the underdeveloped nations as well using Apple smart phones and losing themselves to the melodies of

Justin Bieber and Shakira. Interestingly, cultural influence is not a one-way traffic as quite often perceived by some. Cultural rivers flow in all directions as now Bollywood films have succeeded in occupying a considerable share of the market in the Western world and Indian restaurants count among the most visited eateries in the United States. And even musicians such as A.R. Rahman are capable of winning the Oscars! Social Science thus makes exhaustive analysis of such intricate developments and thereby exhibits how the concept of the superior West and the inferior East is gradually fading and the dichotomies are narrowing down bit by bit.

Another issue of particular interest to the scholars of Social Science likewise is that of identity crisis. One of the key reasons responsible for this crisis is the advancement in technologies such as genomics and cloning which blur and overlap personal identity of off springs with parents, and hence, obscure family and social relations. For example, there was an instance when "In 2001, a French woman gave a birth to a child using an egg of anonymous donor, which had been fertilized by her brother's sperm" (Woodward 20). This has triggered a controversy regarding whether the baby would be the result of an incestuous relationship although no physical relationship between family members was established. More puzzlingly, who would be the rightful parents of the child? Another case in point is the announcement made by an Italian scientist that "200 couples were participating in human cloning experiment" (Woodward, p. 21). The debate revolves around whether this "unnatural" practice, if made possible by wonders of science and technology, robs humans of their natural identity or elevates their already established status which has them placed atop the vertical hierarchy amongst other inhabitants of the planet. Further, cyborg culture has equally challenged innate identity comprehensions, and as some argue, taken humans away from their real selves.

Another identity issue of interest to the social scientists could also be connected to gender. Ashok Bhusal (2017) in his "Emphasizing the suppression of feminist voices" suggest that we need to highlight the importance of including females in our rhetorical tradition. He states that "Because of

sexist and racist perspectives, their literary and rhetorical gifts were discredited and were not included in traditional historical study" (p. 56). Feminist writers have emphasized the achievements of females and the suppression tactics used against them by the patriarchal society.

For centuries heteronormativity has been the norm though there are plenty of examples of other sexual and gender identities being on and off accepted and rejected by the societies and cultures across the world at different historical epochs. Suresh Lohani (2016), a scholar who has studied the LGBTI rhetoric in social, legal and cultural contexts in South Asia mentions, posits a Hindu context that adopts quite an ambiguous outlook towards LGBTI minorities. He cites that

> When it comes to the Hindu texts too, some interpret this belief system as very much liberal to this LGBTI community, while others say this sexual-gender diversity is 'alien' to the Hindu culture and must be punished. So, once entered into the space of individuals, the fixity of the legal system decided by the geographical boundaries and the prescriptions given by the religious texts collapse. (p. 65)

Thus, the scholars of sociology can dig deeper into unraveling the issues that explain why even within the same physical and cultural spaces, the outlook towards peoples of varied gender and sexual orientations keep changing and how that shapes the identity of these communities. Interesting again would it be for the social scientists to study as to why some conservative and traditional perceived nations such as Nepal, in LGBTI issues, seem more progressive and liberal than the so-called modern states.

Critical race theory might be helpful in critiquing the racist and sexist behaviours against minorities. Ashok Bhusal (2017) in his " The Rhetoric of Racism and Anti-Miscegenation Laws in the United States" emphasizes that "Systemic discrimination against minority groups in the United States' justice system has been unremitting, abetted by a veil of rhetoric that demands a closer look at the stark social and historical realities that produced it" (p. 83).

Therefore, it is an urgent need that we discuss the roles of females in our society and their contributions in every aspect of our lives. Similarly, in Bhusal's (2019) "The rhetoric of racism in society," he talks about the horrible situations minorities face due to racist practices inherent in our society. For him, racism is responsible for the minorities [questioning] their identities and [putting down] their own traditions to acquiesce to the majority" (p. 114). The purpose of his article is to encourage the audience to "combat racism" (p. 114).

In addition to identity crisis visa-a vis human science interactions, citizenship is another big issue in the modern world that social science deals with. Citizenship ambiguity is the result of 'In' or 'Out' of a group movement where extensive movements of people occur in the form of mass migration. Thus "citizenship is a category of inclusion, and, by implication, exclusion" (Woodward, p. 48). Most of the times, the nation states perceive the outsiders as trouble makers responsible for problems of health, employment, education, welfare, social security etc. Further, citizenship is chiefly associated with linking of people to a geographical location coupled with a strong social, cultural and political identification along with other basic rights even provides rights to select people's representatives leading to government formation. However, bias practices prevail as "Hostility and fear of the 'other' and of outsiders may well have always been a more familiar scenario, however" (Woodward 49). This type of prejudiced ideology of the white is manifested in their hatred against the black (including Asian) as evident in the extract, "The Caribbean psychiatrist Frantz Fanon when he visited France in the 1950s a child cried to its mother 'Look! A negro … mother, I'm frightened'" (Mirzoeff, p. 151) and how 'the other' groups are deported in 1492 by the order of king of Spain that legacy for outsiders still be going on directly or indirectly: "As part of their project to reunify Spain Ferdinand and Isabella forcibly expelled the Jews and the Moors, the first by force of law, the second by force of arms" (Mirzoeff, p. 46). These are heightened instances of discrimination that have resulted out of "us" and "them" mindsets. Worse still is that these are just tips of the icebergs.

Social science in addition also looks at "You are the outsiders" outlook nurtured by the discriminatory state and how that translates into a traumatic experience for people of different cultural and racial background who too may have been inhabiting the very geographical space almost as early as the "natives". However, one may question whether a certain spatial location is a sole possession of a single group under any ethno cultural cover. History is rife with instances pointing to the fact that for a long time human species lived as wanderers, roaming from place to place, and temporarily settled in some places that were deemed suitable for certain period. Measuring against the epochal historical backdrop, it has not been very long since humans finally decided to permanently settle at a certain geographical space. So, who are the natives of the land and thus rightful citizens of the state is a relative issue with no definite explication. Along this line goes "Ethnic Nepalese first began migrating to Bhutan in the nineteenth century… Bhutan's ruling elite asserted that the majority of the ethnic Nepalese in Bhutan were not citizens but illegal immigrants …" ("Last Hope," p.13). However, these ethnic "outsiders" were initially issued citizenship cards by the Bhutanese government and ironically forced to leave Bhutan after hundreds of years of their attachment with Bhutan.

It is not difficult to decipher how the culture and language differences were the key issues that divided the state and these Bhutanese Nepalese were compelled to flee their country. This alludes to the Colonial mission that was bent on erasing the Sapnish linguistic heritage in Mexico. Suresh Lohani (2019) in "Constructing Nontraditional Rhetoric: Critical Study on Gloria Anzaldua and Suresh Canagarajah" talks with reference to systemic language ideology that colonizers use as a pretense to maintain the status quo. He talks about the design of the dominant language in belittling the richness of Spanish English so that their dominance over the colonized would continue. He states that "this hegemonic approach espoused by English left no stone unturned in trying to rupture the rich Spanish linguistic heritage and have its practitioners accept a lowly opinion of their language" (p.117). In both the scenarios, the linguistic capital of the societies was

disturbed by the ruling powers and that significantly affected their social fabric. Thus, these harrowing incidents speak of identity and citizenship as relative entities, however, interpreted by the dominant powers to suppress the "others" within the nation under some pretext. Thus with this orchestration, the ruling class were able to perpetuate their hold on power thereby systematically displacing the same "others" from the geography and robbing them off the citizenship they rightly deserve. These actions should arouse the curiosity in the social researchers on why linguistic element so profoundly leads to some political fanaticism and how this can be checked.

Another thread in the citizenship and identity issue is the economic status of an individual that acts as a determinant of power. It outruns all other aspects and elevates one to high reputation and accords esteem to individuals because of its control over social, cultural and even political institutions. Most of the immigrants in rich and developed countries are poor, so they are face discriminatory treatments and a mockery is made of their identity and citizenship. Economic inequality leads class formation amongst people and ultimately results in social divisions. The society is thus fragmented between "haves" and "haves not" causing a struggle place between the two. This is powerfully explicated by Marx in *Communist Manifesto*, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles (Marx 35). This can be more simply understood as existence of two distinct groups: one just engages in labor and is exploited, and the other retains the means of production and exploits the labor class. That is: "Workers are paid less than the value their work creates for the capitalist- that profit is produced which creates more capital for use by the owners of the means of production" (qtd. in Woodward, p. 72). In this context, the value of workers translates into "a commodity" (Marx, p. 42) and the worth of commodity solely depends upon its use. This can be perceived as one another facet of society which markedly exhibits how even identity and citizenship differ in meaning for the differing classes.

The next stretch of interest for social scientists is the relation between people and their

roles in a "social" setting. People in a society are expected to perform certain roles and the society tacitly applies pressure to ensure that people conform to these expectations. And it is these roles that people take up that determine their positions in society. The status that individuals enjoy in a society is not a one-dimensional phenomenon but a complex one that hinges on a compromise that the members reach with the society. And in turn the society confers them with a certain identity. When one talks of society, bundled with are multi-cultural and multi-ethnic elements that are protected by the constitution, and on that account all those practicing those are justly treated. In practice though that may not happen. Suresh Lohani (2015) in…., delving into citizenship issue in the Nepalese context states how "they all have equal access to services and facilities. Therefore, no Nepali is superior to others and no person is inferior. In practice, some forms of unequal treatment exist in the Nepali society" (p.69). This, however, is not just the story of Nepal. Even countries such as the USA that have the most liberal and inclusive constitutions endorsing equal citizenship rights to Americans from Hispanic and African roots, see ample prevalence of discriminatory practices in the societal level. The issue of identity, therefore, is not just confined to an individual on a micro basis of law, but rather it could come blended with broader cultural and social membership. Thus personal identity is often defined by social or collective affiliation. Gender identity in this regard can be perceived as one of the significant identities for it determines how individuals perceive themselves in relation to other people in terms of sexual orientation, behavioral traits and thought processes.

It would also be pertinent to see how education too would interest social researchers. The educational practices too have traveled through the globalization bandwidth. The pedagogical approaches practiced in yesteryears undergo changes as they now need to address the concerns of neo richly diverse school settings in which technology has come to affect a tremendous impact. To elaborate, no longer can conventional teaching methods based on academic writings that rest on the clout of dominant language offer solutions to the diverse student population in classrooms that is so

well adept at technology. What comes into play here is the employment of multimodality which will not only challenge the traditional teaching practices but also ensure social justice by refusing to take refuge in the academic writing practices propelled by the dominant language conventions. With the proliferation of global traffic even in education sector, a lot of changes have taken place with regard to what is to be accepted as proper, formal writing coupled with voices raised to endorse vernacular languages into the academic mainstream, calling for a need to negotiation. Suresh Lohani (2019) in "The history of multimodal composition, its implementation, and challenges "states that "the issues of negotiation and variations in register clearly point towards texts that are no longer confined to conventional textual writings but show up in the form of different non-standard media such as billboard, documentaries and flyers" (120). Thus, educational issues that pull along the issues culture and identity should be an area for further exploration to the social researchers.

In addition to gender, religion, race, profession, and education, ethnicity and caste also attribute identities to the members of a society. It can thus be said "Having an identity is one of the ways in which we fit into the social world and are marked as having distinctive membership of one group rather than another within society" (Woodward 19). It would thus be no over statement to say that identity is fluid and is defined and redefined by relational, contextual and genetic background. Thus identity is relational, contextual, and often genetically conditioned. Birth based identity is rampant especially in the Indian sub-continent where caste system still plagues the society. Society has created stratification according to the roles individuals perform and subsequently positions they assume on the very account. This hence establishes distinct strata leading to deep fissures in the relationship among people often resulting in envy and conflict as "At the root of conflict lies a complex of factors: the imbalance of political, socio-economic and cultural opportunities among different identity groups ;…"(Upreti, p. 258). The delegation or roles and attainment of position thus cause a wide array of

problems with political, economic, cultural and social ramifications.

To sum up, social science critically studies and tries to make sense of cultural, social and economic aspects of life. However, it would be unreasonable on the part of the social science to make hasty judgments and offer prescriptions to the prevalent problems. However, scholars of social science should be credited on the ground that now the notions of identity and citizenship have acquired multiple outlooks that must be addressed thoughtfully in the dynamic political arena. It has been generally accepted worldwide that no human being would be barred of space, rights, and equality under any pretext. Advocacies are mounting that citizenship and identity should not just be viewed as the fusion of rights and obligations in relation to a certain geographical space alone. Rather they must be viewed in a broader spectrum of humanity so that no human being becomes a victim of an unjust treatment on the grounds of race, color, culture, ideology and location.

These days, we see many multimodal texts that discuss cultural and social aspects of our society. These textbooks have been used for classroom purposes. Multimodality, as Ashok Bhusal (2019) in his "Addressing FYC Instructors' Lack of Technological Expertise in Implementing Multimodal Assignments" says, indicates "multiple modes of communication -- textual, aural, visual, and spatial" (p. 167). With the advent of new technologies, the urgency to include multimodal texts in the classroom to effectively analyze different aspects of our society has increased.

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