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The Colonial Machinery's Marginalisation of Indian Women's Discourses by the Mutation of Socio-Linguistic Genes

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Abstract. Colonialism in general and British colonialism in particular, mutates sociolinguistic genes to suit its needs. British colonialism in India controlled and shaped the development and mutation of socio-linguistic genes both directly and indirectly. The transfer of written texts, oral narratives, and non-verbal expressions can be compared to the transfer of biological genes vertically from one generation to another and horizontally from one space to another. There are three possible situations: first, a gene may transfer as a dominant gene; second, a gene may not be transferred; third, a gene may be transferred, but only as a recessive gene. A similar situation occurred among women writers: many of them never reached the present generation, and those who did are not considered important writers because the British handed over authority only to socio-linguistically engineered Indians whose sensibilities were structured to reject all such discourses. Even during the struggle for freedom, women's issues remained fixed in remarkably similar schemes during the British period as one patriarchy confronted the other. In other words, the Indian patriarchal system, though outwardly opposed the British system, also marginalised the voices of independent women by depriving them of their livelihoods, and the British assisted in this with laws, police and discourse. Socio-linguistic engineering resembles genetic engineering in many respects, and this analogy can be used to study how the sensibilities of people are controlled.

Keywords and phrases: socio-linguistic genes, linguistic mutation, British colonialism, Muddupalani, Deleuze and Guattari

Introduction

The nature and scope of Indian women's discourses changed significantly under the influence of British colonialism. For instance, troupes of women singers, popularly known as *jhumur* troupes, "became objects of virulent censure" (Dutt 1929, 29–30) because the colonial authorities disliked them. This dislike is evident in the memorandum on indigenous work (1820) presented by E. S. Montagu, Secretary of the Calcutta School Book Society. Montagu stated that the works of these women poets are to be "lamented, as manifesting aloud the degraded state of those minds which will take such pleasure therein" (Banerjee

1989, 149). Similarly, Reverend James Ward compared the women *jhumur* troupes with a poor ballad singer:

> A poor ballad singer in England, would be sent to the house of correction, and flogged, for performing the meritorious actions of these wretched idolators. (Bose 1881, 118–119)

The colonial authorities worked on two levels. On the one level, they attempted to persuade the natives about the inferiority of their culture, for instance Banerjee quotes from Third Report of the Calcutta School Book Society (1819–1820) and shows how Mr. Montagu succeeded in converting "one Pundit" to his viewpoint and,

> Subsequently he in conjunction with some other natives, concurred among themselves to express their dissatisfaction with such works… (Banerjee 1989, 149)

On the second level, they used the assistance of official machinery. Women's powerful discourses disappeared slowly, "Because of the police, in many places their clubs have been closed down" (Lahiri 1905, 1041). These examples demonstrate that the British colonial authority propounded and canonised the concept of good Indian women and bad Indian women through various means.

Similar to genetic engineering, the colonial intervention removed progressive and challenging linguistic elements by using force and shaped a new breed of women in *bhadralok* homes who, in their writings and so-called cultivated patterns of behaviour, replaced women's popular culture in Indian middle-class society. The women of the upper strata discarded the old popular culture, which had rested on the social ties that bound women from different classes. Only the women of the lower social strata, who did not relinquish their commitment to the popular culture as rapidly as the others did, retained that culture. Finally, even they were forced to grasp the logic of an altered social world, and the old forms of women's popular culture withered. Moreover, the men who had enjoyed the cultural production by women artists began castigating these works. Following the mutation of linguistic genes in the British imperial lab, they began saying, "Look at the streets of Calcutta, how the vulgar lower order right in front of thousands of *bhadralok,* trampling on the chests of the powerful police force, go around wherever they want to, singing extremely obscene songs and making obscene gestures" (Banerjee 1989, 147).

British colonialism in India changed the configuration of hegemonic powers through socio-linguistic engineering. As a result, large parts of the Indian masses believe that there was a large number of women writers and thinkers in the

ancient India of the Vedas. They also believe that the position of women deteriorated only during the Mughal rule due to the anti-feminist nature of the Mughal rulers. This assumption is contrary to the facts. First, "Statistics collected by the British officials suggest that there were more girls in schools in the 18th than the early nineteenth century" (Tharu and Lalitha 1991, 62). Second, "The discourse on women's writing in Vedic India is based…on the two hymns of *Rig Veda* attributed to Ghosha, and on the verses that might have been composed by eight other female seers" (Tharu and Lalitha 1991, 51). As far as women's writings are concerned, the Mughal period was richer than the Vedic period. This phenomenon hints at a hidden agenda that shadows both the progressive elements of the Mughal period and women writers to strengthen orthodox Hinduism.

Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha, in their book *Women Writing in India* (1991) (both volumes), included more than 140 authors, who were selected from an initial (also selective) list of more than 600 writers. It is very strange that out of such a large galaxy of women writers, only a few names have reached the collective psychological space. Both the British rulers and the ruling community of independent India, which is a product of colonial hegemony in many ways, systematically marginalised women writers because they knew that the best way to rule was to keep the majority of those who were ruled away from progressive literature.

Socio-linguistic Genes

Direct and indirect restrictions and the appropriation of all progressive discourses weakened the position of these discourses in the linguistic chain because "…creativity falters if it remains wholly private. The product of creativity needs to be accommodated within the surrounding culture if it is to be perceived and valued: it then becomes an invention, publicly recognised and available for interpretation" (Robson and Stockwell 2005, 22). Thus, if an ideology wants to survive, it must become part of discourse. The new ruling class that emerged during British rule knew this, and they either appropriated challenging voices and converted them into their allies or marginalised them by criticising them for lacking literary merit. This is why, despite such a long list of women writers, only a few names are currently known to the masses.

The transfer of written texts, oral narratives, and non-verbal expressions can be compared to the transfer of biological genes from one generation to another. There are three possible situations. First, a gene may transfer to the next generation as a dominant gene. Second, a gene may not be transferred to the next generation and will become a dead gene. Third, a gene may be transferred, but only as a recessive gene. A similar situation occurred among women writers; many of them never reached the present generation, and those who did are not

considered important writers because the British handed over authority only to socio-linguistically engineered Indians whose sensibilities were structured to reject all such discourses.

Discourses, seen technically, are simply various linguistic structures arranged in a particular manner and with a particular relationship with the consciousness of the people who are both the products and the producers of linguistic artefacts. The linguistic construction of reality dominates reality because "language constitutes reality and identity, and the constraints of language limit the expression of realities and identities that are seen as non-normative. The practice of language, in other words carries dominant social values". Control over the production, publication, canonisation, and popularisation of literary works centralises and marginalises various sections of society, including their lives, practices, and experiences. This is why the "experience of women (and other decentered groups) is denied expression" by blocking their narratives (Robson and Stockwell 2005, 2). When language is organised in the form of linguistic artefacts, such as literature and other discourses, it "can create not only knowledge but also the very reality" it "appear[s] to describe". With the passage of time, "such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse" (Said 1978, 93) that emerges as the major or only source of knowledge of the marginalised sections. The entire colonial/neocolonial machinery imparts a position of power to this type of discourse. The power of these discourses can be judged by the fact that even the marginalised sections attempt to know themselves through these discourses.

The creation of a discourse involves the transformation of raw material – language, other literary texts, and ways of perceiving the world—into a product through the use of specific techniques. However, the producer of discourse never reveals the forces responsible for the production of the text; he hides them behind the concept of universalism or high art. This mystification of literary production lends it power because the "text does not allow the reader to see how the facts it contains were selected, what was excluded, why these facts were organised in this particular way, what assumptions governed this process" (Eagleton 1996, 147–148). By hiding the modes of production, the writer attains a God-like stature, as James Joyce's character Stephen Dedalus puts it:

> The artist, like the God of the creation remains behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence indifferent, paring his fingernails. (Joyce 1977, 336)

Following this analogy, India can be seen as a large text composed of a large number of socio-linguistic genes. British colonialism altered the configuration of these socio-linguistic genes, and this alteration reconstructed Indian society to

suit imperial needs. In this reconstruction project, Indians were the subject, object, content, medium, and final product. Therefore, it would not be incorrect to say that India, as a whole, is a large text composed of a large number of socio-linguistic genes, whose most important part was written by the British. The Indians were both the readers and the subject matter of this large text. As the readers or the medium of the colonial project, they accepted the socio-linguistic engineering as natural and were converted into the subject matter to suit the imperial needs of the writer, the British.

The mystified process of the production of the text is always directed towards the reader, as Roland Barthes says, "The reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any of them being lost, all the citations out of which a writing is made; the unity of text is not in its origin but its destination" (Barthes 1989, 44–45). Its aim is to indoctrinate the institutionally created truth. This statement is true when applied to the colonial project in India. The unity of colonial discourse cannot be found in its source, which sometimes condemned India for its *brahmanical* culture and sometimes promoted the same. The unity of colonial discourse is visible in the influence of colonialism on its subject because all discourses, whether complimentary or contradictory, helped in colonising India.

Linguistic construction overlaps reality because the human psyche consists of physical drives along with beliefs, values, and the ways of thinking and feeling through which people perceive, and with the help of which they explain, what they take to be reality. In this way, reality is largely, if not wholly, shaped by the ideas that are transmitted through language. Reality, or the perception of reality, is altered by linking new linguistic genes or by mutating pre-existing genes. The linguistic chain resembles biological genetic material in its functioning because "language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we came to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics, and at their social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature, to other beings" (Thiong'o 1981, 16).

Socio-religious customs, myths, superstitions, ideologies, and all other items of socio-cultural value remain stored in language. Once stored in written texts, they cannot become extinct unless the books themselves are removed from circulation. They can be likened to dominant, recessive, and extinct genes. Some books are dominant books, although the dominance is determined by the external circumstances; like dominant genes, they affect the organisation of society. Then, there are books that are not in circulation; these are dormant books. The ideas contained in them can become active and produce social change when these books are canonised and popularised. All ideas and discourses encoded in the form of linguistic genes enter into the personal psychological space, which "is in

fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together" (Eliot 1994, 298). Once the products of these reactions emerge in verbal or non-verbal forms, they become part of the linguistic chains; they enter into the collective psychological space and manifest in the form of social changes. Thus, linguistic genes determine the socio-cultural life of human beings.

This theoretical framework can be applied to the development of the British Empire and the marginalisation of women's discourses. Although British imperialism was interested in capturing resources, issues such as who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, and who had the right to plan its future were "reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative…. The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism and constitutes one of the main connections between them" (Said 1994, XIII). This is evident from the fact that the fabric of Indian society was completely changed by the presence of the British. Almost all sections of Indian society that were the creators of art, literature, culture, science, and technology and that posed a challenge to the colonial rulers were destroyed by them. The rulers produced a new breed of Indian that was an imperfect copy of the rulers and replaced all challenging sections with them. The flow of money was the major force for socio-linguistic engineering, as evidenced by the fact that in 1764 and 1765, the last years of the Indian Administration in Bengal, the land revenue totalled £ 817,000. The company administration realised £ 1,470,000 from 1765 to 1766; the permanent settlement was fixed at £ 3,400,000. In many provinces of Bengal, one -third of the inhabitants died in the terrible famine of 1770. With the surplus siphoned off systematically, the peasant cultivators had no reserves to rely on when the crops failed. Many thousands of people were also affected by deindustrialisation, primarily the collapse of the textile industry but also the collapse of iron, glass, paper, pottery and jewellery (Tharu and Lalitha 1991, 145).

This paper will take two examples of feminism, Vaishnavism and women's writings (i.e., Muddupalani's [1730–1790] *Radhika Santwanam*), whose status was reversed during the British period when both the British and Indians (with greatly changed intellectual structure) resisted them. This fact establishes the importance of this period for the study of the marginalisation of feminist discourses in India. Colonial rule structured narratives in such a manner that most people accept the feminist movement and the empowerment of women in India as one of the greatest achievements of British India. However, meticulous research by various scholars shows how British intervention destroyed the Indian feminist movements that were present when the British first arrived in India.

The British in India destroyed many feminist and other discourses that challenged their authority and blocked all such discourses from forming. The process that began by engineering socio-linguistic genes continues. Control over linguistic products empowers the ruling classes because "we know no world that is not organised as a language, we operate with no other consciousness but one structured as language – language that we cannot possess for we are operated by those languages as well. The category of language then, embraces the category of world and consciousness as it is determined by them" (Spivak 1988, 77–78). It is true that no one can control language and linguistic products completely, but the dissemination of linguistic products can be controlled through capitalistic machinery.

The role of socio-linguistic engineering can be understood through an analogy with genetic engineering. As genetic engineering is used to change breeds of animals biologically, socio-linguistic engineering is used to change breeds of human beings intellectually. Since the dawn of humanity, human beings have known this technique, which is evident from the literature of ancient times that favours the kings and changes the common masses into subjects. This feeding of different discourses to different sections of society resembles, to a certain extent, the social structure of a beehive in which different types of bees are produced by feeding different types of food to larvae.

Socio-linguistic engineering resembles genetic engineering in many respects, so this analogy can be used to study how the sensibilities of people are controlled. The word "genetics" is commonly used in biological sciences. Genetic study shows that every organism has a set of chromosomes, made up of genes, which determine the biological nature of that organism. Genes are composed of genetic material: RNA or DNA. Although genetic material remains the same, its concentration and pattern differ from individual to individual and species to species. The genetic structure of organisms undergo change under pressure from the external environment or due to the intermingling of genetic material that occurs when it is transferred from one generation to another or from one organism to another through genetic engineering.

In genetic engineering, genetic material is changed forcibly. This task is accomplished with the help of specific agents, which, in most cases, happen to be viruses. Deleuze and Guattari take a cue from genetic engineering and suggest that "a virus can connect to germ cells and transmit itself as the cellular gene of a complex species; moreover, it can take flight, move into the cells of an entirely different species, but not without bringing with it 'genetic information' from the first host" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 11–12).

Various discourses coded in books and other forms behave like the viruses and the socio-genetic material that is transferred from one generation to another. The term "socio-genetic" draws an analogy between the role played by biological genes in biological life and the role played by socio-linguistic genes in the social life of a given society. This study aims to analyse socio-linguistic genes that exist in the form of variously patterned and concentrated linguistic codes found in written texts, oral discourses, socio-religious customs, myths and superstitions.

As in genetic material, all linguistic products' basic linguistic units remain the same. However, the words, phrases, sentences, texts and discourses formed from the basic units carry different values and meanings. These artefacts are produced by changes in the pattern of basic units under the pressure of changes in social, political, and economic conditions, the natural environment, and individuals' perceptions of these things or through the influence—both forcible and natural—of other cultures. These artefacts, when absorbed by the masses, affect the perception of reality by creating a different relationship with it, reflecting and refracting reality differently. In this way, a social reality is created and projected through socio-linguistic genes. Any change in either the structure or the meaning of socio-linguistic genes changes society, its structure, and its perception of physical reality. At the same time, the social structure and economic and political circumstances interact with socio-linguistic genes. This interaction mutates the linguistic genes and determines the dimensions of social, economic, and political circumstances, not only for the present but also for the future. Deacon supports socio-genetic studies when he says, "The ability to use language symbolically has phylogenetically affected the human brain, not in a direct cause and effect manner, but indirectly through its effects on human behaviour and on the changes that human behaviour brings about in the environment". Each individual brain is linked to other brains temporally and spatially. This temporal and spatial connectivity leads to the development of a collective brain. Due to this temporal-spatial connectivity and autonomy, "the changes in environmental conditions brought about by human symbolic responses to that environment can, in the long run, bias natural selection and alter the selection of cognitive predispositions that will be favoured in the future" (Kramsch 2006, 241).

The Marginalisation of Indian Women's Discourses: The Case of Muddupalani

Muddupalani (1730–1790), the writer of *Radhika Santwanam*, was a poet in the court of Pratapasimha, who reigned between 1739 and 1763. There is no evidence to suggest that Muddupalani's work was attacked or dismissed in her own time. If the honours and rewards bestowed on her by Pratapasimha, her royal patron, are considered in terms of the response of a contemporary reader, there is no doubt that her work was truly appreciated in her own time. However, she lost

her reputation and means of survival when the king lost to the British.

Muddupalani lost her literary position not for a lack of literary quality but because economic, political, and social factors played an important role in changing the status of Muddupalani and many other independent women artists. By 1799, all revenue from the Thanjavour kingdom went to the British. As the British established their commercial and military authority over India during the second half of the 18 century, the old rulers were overthrown or marginalised, and the earlier centres of trade and administration lost their importance to the new port cities. Artisans and craftspeople, poets, musicians, architects, scientist, scholars, and artists of all types who depended on the patronage of the courts were deprived of a means of sustenance and were driven to destitution because of these changes. The large number of women artists, mainly singers and dancers, who depended on the wealthy households for patronage as well as the court artists such as Muddupalani were driven into penury and prostitution. In this way, British intervention at the economic, political, cultural and social levels marginalised women intellectuals because the evidence suggests that there were several eminent literary women at the court.

Socio-linguistic engineering changed the status of these women intellectuals in their contemporary period and in the time to come by changing the intellectual setup of Indian people to such an extent that Kandukuri Veereshalingam, the father of the social reform or (re-form) movement in Andhara and a novelist, scornfully dismissed the poet in his definitive history of Telugu poets. He wrote, "This Muddupalani is an adulteress, many parts of the book are such that they should never be heard by a woman, let alone emerge from a woman's mouth. Using *sringara rasa* as an excuse, she shamelessly fills her poems with crude descriptions of sex". This is not surprising, in his view, because "she is born into a community of prostitutes and does not have the modesty natural to women" (Veereshalingam 1950, 142). However, it is surprising that a person who was at one time a court poet was dismissed at another time as a prostitute. The most interesting aspect of this statement is that it does not come from personal enmity, prejudice, or fact but from an engineered psyche.

People like Kandukuri Veereshalingam were both products and means of socio-linguistic engineering by the British authorities. This is why the authorities used them to criticise everything that posed a challenge to the rulers in the name of social reform. Under these circumstances, the terms *social reformer* and *social reform* in the Indian context must be analysed critically because "innumerable people use words and expressions which they have either ceased to understand or employ only because they trigger off conditioned reflexes" (Adorno and Horkheimer 1986, 166).

The engineering of socio-linguistic genes, like the genetic engineering of biological genes, requires both force and technique. British authorities and thinkers used force and technique to structure the sensibility of the Indian masses. This is evident, first, from the fact (related to force) that in 1911, Police Commissioner Cunningham seized all copies (Tharu and Lalitha 1991, 5) and, second, from the fact (related to the mutation of socio-linguistic genes) that English literature was taught in Indian universities several years before it was in Britain.

> Readers critically trained to appreciate such carefully selected canons of English literature would most likely have found not only *Radhika Santwanam* but the culture and society that sustained the writer to be reprehensible, even dangerous. Gradually, as the new powers staked their claims over the land and over the minds of the people, not only individual works but whole literary traditions were delegitimated and marginalised. (Tharu and Lalitha 1991, 10)

This newly emerged bourgeois, like their intellectual fathers, were not against the broader theme of *Radhika Santwanam*, but their fear was that they would not be able to appropriate this poem. This is evident from the fact that another singer poet, Mirabai, who composed poetry on the same theme (i.e., Krishna), was highly praised and canonised because the bourgeois could appropriate her to establish their hegemony, which was generally exercised on women through Indian men. If the real lives of both poets (i.e., Muddupalani and Mirabai) are compared, Muddupalani was not a rebel in any sense of the word because the independence of women was routine in her society. In contrast, Mirabai was a rebel because her society did not permit her independence. However, in the colonial era, Muddupalani's character and poetry both posed a greater challenge because they could not be appropriated to suit the imperial needs, whereas Mirabai's character and poetry could be appropriated. As a consequence, Muddupalani was reduced to the position of a non-intellectual in the British period, although the same authorities canonised Mirabai. Mirabai was attacked and persecuted for leaving her husband and taking up a religious life, but her life and poetry have been accommodated into schemes about which patriarchies in her time, or in ours, would have few complaints. Although she was a rebel, once she chose the divine Krishna for a lover, her spiritual idiom became that of a chaste and dutiful wife who observed, in every minute detail, her household tasks. She made no mention of the sufferings of other women or of the injustices that prevailed in society. Feudal order was her support, not her enemy and her concern was to find fulfilment through increasingly intense involvement in the spiritual recreation of the good wife's role. In this way, colonial restructurings of gender and the curricular institutionalisation of literature both worked to

undermine the authority of Indian literature and to undercut the societies that gave rise to them.

Orientalist scholars or Indologists, the European scholars who wrote about India, were honest scholars because they believed in what they did. They were both victims and victimisers. They were victims because they were under the control of the pre-existing socio-linguistic genes and socio-economic political circumstances of Europe. They were not free in their critical or creative endeavours, as revealed by the genetic study. As per this theory, the mother-father (i.e., creator) is not the originator and shaping agency of a child but is a "space" in which genes and external factors produce a genetic code peculiar to that child. Similarly, the human *subject* is not the originator and shaper of a work. Rather, the human mind is a "space" in which conventions, codes, and circulating locutions precipitate into a particular text or as a "site" wherein the cultural constructs, discursive formations, and configurations of power prevalent in a given cultural era or inherited from distant cultures, both in time and in space, converge and are recorded. These configurations of power are transferred from one space and time to another through language because man "spins language out of himself, he spins himself into it" (Humboldt 1988, 60).

As mentioned above, the Indologists or Orientalists were the product of an intricate relationship among European capitalism, the influence of classical learning in Greek and Latin, liberalism, changing European society, Indian literature in Sanskrit, and their position as rulers in India. In other words, many linguistic genes were interacting in their psyche. Their own classical learning compelled them to retrieve and circulate many Sanskrit and Persian texts. However, for the Indian masses, this authorisation of Sanskrit literature was like forcefully linking a gene in a chromosome. This engineering at the level of language affected life in the sub-continent.

The imaginary, unchanging village communities of the Vedic period sustained the natural human qualities of gentleness, truthfulness and other worldliness, and ancient India thus became a sort of utopia for the Romantic imagination. "The study of Oriental cultures", it was believed by John Drew, "would help invigorate European culture" (Tharu and Lalitha 1991, 44). "It was in the Orient", the poet August Schlegel (1767–1845) proclaimed, that "Europe should search for the highest Romanticism" (Thapar 1979, 23). Through his much-reprinted book, *India: What It Can Teach Us* (1892), Max Muller propagated the idea of ancient India as the answer to the ills of contemporary Europe, which had become materialistic and self-indulgent. The governing principles of Vedic society, he wrote, were not active, combative, and acquisitive but rather passive, meditative, and reflective. In other words, ancient Indian civilisation had the qualities Europe required for a richer, total humanity. These notions, propounded by European

Romantics and popularised by ruling authorities through the educational system and other means, engineered the psyche of the Indian masses.

The British authorities had a stake in this project. They required the help of the Indian masses, especially the newly emerged middle class, to strengthen their rule. Therefore, they reformulated and standardised personal law through the "discovery" of existing customary and religious norms. Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha, in their book *Women Writing in India: 600 BC to the Early Twentieth Century*, note that "courts were made to look to the Vedic texts, re-designated by the evangelical temper as 'scriptures', and endowed with prescriptive status, for information about these 'laws'. Because tradition was equated in this procedure with the sacred texts, and the courts used brahmin pandits [...] to interpret these texts, some historians have argued that consolidated in the process was a *brahmanical* view of society". It regarded its "structure in terms of immutable religious principles" and applied "a theological definition to the concept of family and to the proper basis of relation within it" (Tharu and Lalitha 1991, 157).

The newly standardised rigid *brahmanical* version of Hindu law, re-empowered by Orientalist scholarship and by colonial authority, extended its hold over castes and other areas that possessed their own localised, non-scriptural laws and legal procedures. In the process, a changing and heterogeneous society, with conventions, laws, legal institutions, and ideological formations that embodied the different historical experiences of its people, was reconstituted and confined into a stunted upper-caste image not only by the law but also by the entire range of social practices that took their cue from legal procedure. In other words, the British control of Indian society is an excellent example of the engineering of socio-linguistic genes. The British removed or disempowered the earlier rulers and eliminated the artists and other intellectuals who could be a danger. They ensured the flow of their ideology through capitalist modes in which their consumers were "the workers and employee, the farmers and lower middle class" through capitalist production and dissemination and confined "them body and soul, that they fall helpless victims to what is offered them". They could do so because "the ruled always took the morality imposed upon them more seriously than did the rulers themselves", so "the deceived masses are today captivated by the myth of success even more than the successful are" (Adorno and Horkheimer 1986, 133–134). The success myth during the colonial era brought a large section of the Indian masses under the control of powerful minority rulers.

Widow Immolation and Colonial Authority's Mutation of Linguistic Genes

Another example of socio-linguistic engineering is related to widow immolation. The British authorities earned the credit for abolishing widow immolation despite the fact that many European intellectuals were responsible for encouraging this

inhuman practice in many ways. Many European thinkers and writers praised this practice, and some of them even recommended it for European women. The British government in India, which earned worldwide fame for eradicating widow immolation, in reality destroyed and marginalised all movements and discourses that were against this practice and that were used to provide both shelter and the means for intellectual progress to women who left their homes for various reasons.

European intellectuals supported widow immolation indirectly by creating a powerful lobby of orthodox upper-caste Hindus that came into being by re-empowering the dead and decayed past in the name of the golden Vedic past of India. Many eminent European thinkers and writers supported this inhuman practice. Max Muller is one of the most powerful thinkers who supported and recommended this practice, even for European women. Similarly, Clarisse Bader argues, "Western women had much to learn from the ancient civilisations, in which women were characterised by spiritual and ascetic tenderness, complete abnegation of self-interest, and unlimited devotion to the family. Their awe-inspiring spiritual courage, she, and others seemed to think, was still evident in the women who mounted the funeral pyres of their husbands to commit *sati*". After praising this inhuman practice, she criticises the feminist movements of this region by tracing "contemporary degradations of Indian women to later accretions on Vedic beliefs and practices and to the growth of the sensuous Vaishnava cults" and considering "the decline of Vedic society … a lesson for Europe" (Chakravorty 1963, 44–45).

The official machinery of the East India Company legitimised widow immolation by making some *brahmanical* texts the basis of personal law. In 1805, the question of scriptural sanction for *sati* was put to the pundits of the Nizamat Adalat. Specifically, they were asked "whether a woman is enjoined by the Shaster voluntarily to burn herself with the body of her husband, or prohibited" (Mani 1989, 98). The response was as follows: "To the best of my knowledge– every woman of the four castes (Brahmin, khetry, bues and soodur) is permitted to burn herself with the body of her husband" (Mani 1989, 98). Although the pundit responded that the texts did not enjoin, but merely permitted, *sati* in certain instances, the Nizamat Adalat concluded:

> The practice, generally speaking, being thus recognized and encouraged by the doctrines of the Hindoo religion, it appears evident that the course which the British government should follow, according to the principle of religious tolerance…is to allow the practice in those cases in which it is by the same authority prohibited (Mani 1989, 99).

Therefore, the colonial authority imposed its interpretation of some *brahmanical* texts on the masses who were not previously following them. It also provided criminal-minded people with an opportunity to kill women in the name of religion, as stated by Rammohun, noting that *sati* originated in the jealousy of certain Hindu princes who, to ensure the faithfulness of their widows, "availed themselves of their arbitrary power, and under the cloak of religion, introduced the practice of burning widows alive" (quoted in Mani 1989, 105). According to Rammohun, the princes then sought to legitimise the practice "by quoting some passages from authorities of inferior weight…as if they were offering female sacrifices in obedience to the dictates of the Shastras and not from the influence of jealousy" (quoted in Mani 1989, 105).

Linking the Genes of the Vedas and Newly Emerged Social Reformers

Romila Thapar also sheds light on the promotion and popularisation of Vedic India by the Romantic poets and thinkers of Europe. According to Thapar, "The tendency to essentialise Vedic culture and exaggerate its virtues was in part a result of the Romantic search for a distant Edenic world". The Europeans attempted to create "a Utopia, to escape from the bewildering changes taking place in nineteenth century Europe and in part to counteract the highly critical attitudes current among Utilitarian thinkers in Britain from whose ranks came the more influential writing on India" (Thapar 1979, 3).

In contrast, Mill, unlike Muller and the Romantics, considered Indian culture primitive, immoral, rude, and fundamentally lacking. If studied carefully and critically, it becomes clear that Mill had the linguistic genes of a statesman and looked at India from the perspective of a ruler. Both appreciation and criticism of Indian culture froze Indian culture in some remote past and created a gap between ideals and goals and participants' experimental realities.

At this point, one may be tempted to ask why these notions and books did not change the social structure in Europe. The answer is that unlike Europe, in India, these texts were followed by force that both threatened and persuaded. This is why the maximum impact of these books has been seen in India. Physical force as Althusser points out "works explicitly in terms of violence, through force (including the police and armed forces)". Intellectual weapons (including language, literature, and other arts) work "through ideology"; of the two, one "is primarily public; the other may be largely private, including ideas such as the family" (Robson and Stockwell 2005, 9). These methods were employed by the British authorities to establish hegemony in India.

The ideological state's apparatus works through language and literature. It establishes hegemony without shedding blood. It compels people internally to

accept the dominant ideologies. Whenever the privileged classes desire to accomplish something, they employ and reward the intellectuals who follow their ideology. These writers, with the help of language, infuse the desired ideologies into the psyche of the common masses and engineer it; as a result, large groups of people behave accordingly. In contrast, the intellectuals who pose a challenge to the authorities are punished in such a way that the masses cease to acknowledge them as intellectuals.

The sculpting of new respectability for Indian women was one of the major tasks of the social reform movement, which set out to re-form an assumed traditional society into a modern one. However, this reform movement actually re-formed Indian society to suit the needs of British rulers along with the newly emerged patriarchal middle class. Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha question the validity of the social reformers of the British colonial era when they ask us to "shift our attention from the issues overtly addressed by the reformers – *sati*, widowhood, or child marriage, and the women's literature of this period seems to demand that we do so – to a more general economy of the transformations that were taking place". According to them, this shift will reveal the hidden agendas of the social reform movement that emerged in more telling forms. The reform movement had the explicit goal of massive ideological reconstructions of patriarchy and gender that under-wrote the consolidation of imperial power. These reconstructions often took place at the interface of patriarchy with class and caste (Tharu and Lalitha 1991, 152).

This situation can be explained by using the model developed by Deleuze and Guattari, who consider this world a large machine and all other things independent machines of different sizes that constitute this large machine. The large machine of the British Empire destroyed the less powerful machines and formed new machines, such as reform machines and traditional machines. This reconfiguration of social machines plunged the history of India into a battle between the social reformers, who were considered modernisers charged with the interests of women, and the traditionalists, who were believed to be opposed to the movements for reform and in favour of the preservation of a traditional society. This popularisation of the conflict between traditionalists and reformists duped the Indian masses and continues to do so by marginalising even larger and more useful movements. Figures such as Nagaratnamma and the cultural forces she represents, which are neither "modern" nor "traditional" in the sense that the modernisers represented tradition, are obscured by these categories, which also reduced the complex and heterogeneous forces at work to a simple dichotomy between the progressive and the reactionary.

The manner in which the hegemony of Europe was established in India recalls a very powerful and catchy sentence written by George Orwell in his *1984*: who

controls the past controls the present, and who controls the present controls the future. Perhaps the British authorities knew this earlier than Orwell; this is why they controlled the past of India by authorising the Vedic India, and they controlled the present by force, as is evident from many historical instances of the elimination of the intellectuals who posed a challenge. Therefore, the British could control the future of India, as evidenced by statements issued by two eminent historians cited below, in particular, and by most of the people faced with the task of defending Indian culture. The novelist and historian R. C. Dutt (1848–1908) "drew on the Indologists to attack the edifice Mill and others had developed when they had elaborated the Utilitarian thesis into a call for Britain's permanent presence in India. In Dutt's *History of Civilization in Ancient India*, too, the Vedic woman becomes the highest symbol of Hindu womanhood. As late as 1938, A. S. Altekar, in *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, claimed that the Vedic age was one in which women enjoyed singular freedoms" (Tharu and Lalitha 1991, 49).

The strong and powerful linguistic genes of the colonising programme are attached to the linguistic string they started influencing the social, political, economic, and intellectual life of the subcontinent. Careful and critical analysis of even eminent, conscious, and progressive thinkers can reveal the presence of these genes. For example, Meenakshi Mukherjee claims, "Although India's cultural contact with England could not escape being affected by the realities of the colonial situation, it did not prove unfortunate in all its consequences. The emergence of the novel in India was certainly a fortunate consequence of this contact" (Meenakshi 1985, VI–VII). Strangely, Mukherjee seems to appreciate the colonial experience of India that resulted in the development of the novel as if this development were even greater than the price paid by India for the import of the novel from England (which received it from some other country free of cost). She is unable to visualise the development of the novel in India without colonial exploitation, nor she is able to visualise how much better it would have been had it developed without colonisation. She cannot see the possibility of the development of the novel without British colonisation.

It is true that nationalist thinkers politically appropriated the terms of Orientalism and undermined its functions; their goal was not to consolidate but to confront and displace British rule. However, it is also true that the question of women along with the questions of Dalits, minorities, Tribals, and other marginalised sections remained fixed into remarkably similar schemes as one patriarchy confronted the other. In one sense, the people of India lost their battle against the imperial powers because they won freedom in the terms and conditions that were infused into the psyche of the ruling minority through linguistic engineering.

The influence of this engineering in the field of linguistic production can be seen even in independent India. For example, literary canons were established in the early 1950s, shortly after Independence, and they were charged with constructing an imagined continuity and sculpting the new citizen. However, the critics, whose major concern had been to establish the universal dimensions of a literature that was, at the same time, authentically "Indian" seemed to have had little interest in probing such unsettling configurations or asking what these tensions implied for the woman writer or for the literary form. They were "not interested in how the question of the education of women into citizenship and identity, as fascinatingly broached in Chandu Menon's *Indulekh* 1889, and in Rabindranath Tagore, *Ghare Bhaire*, 1916, had been recast by Indira Sahasrabuddhe or Rokeya Hussain" (Tharu and Lalitha 1991, XIX).

It was in this newly minted, linguistically engineered, archaic, upper-caste image that the entire scope of Indian history and Indian culture was reconstructed. Indian history became the history of the Aryan man. The Aryan woman, the perfect adjunct to the Aryan man, the shadow of that shadow character, haunted almost all writing on women in pre-colonial India—which had, in effect, become Vedic India. However, women's literature from the later periods was not ignored. It was discussed, but it was discussed in a way that completely absorbed it into the polemic of the Aryan women. Accounts stressed the erudition, not the rebellion, of the bhakti saints, and somehow found in each major figure moral qualities that would do the Aryan woman proud.

Marginalisation of the Vaishnavite Movement

Another example of the marginalisation of women's discourses comes from the marginalisation of Vaishnavism, whose members, as per the Census of India (Bengal 1872), opened "their arms to those who are rejected by all others–the outcasts, the crippled, the diseased and the unfortunate" (Banerjee 1989, 134). In this way, gender was rearticulated in relation to class as both institutions were re-formed. Many Vaishnava poets and singers as well as women artists were de-legitimated and marginalised as the new "respectable" middle-class woman was shaped.

In a fascinating recent study, Sumanta Banerjee traces the fortunes of this popular cultural mode in the second half of the nineteenth century. Traditionally, Vaishnavism, with which the bhakti movements in the North and the East are associated, provided a legitimate space for those rejected by society. Lurking somewhere under the umbrella of that last category were also widows and other women, married and single, who had been driven out of or had left their families. "Contemporary records", Banerjee writes, "abound with references to women in villages–widows, married as well as unmarried women – deserting their homes to

join some Vaishnavite *akhara* or monastery. Here religious norms allowed them a freedom of movement, an access to all corners of society, both high and low, and a certain liberty in their relations with men--privileges that were out of reach for rich and middle class Bengali women of this time" (Banerjee 1989, 134). Many who had learned to read and write in their homes taught the girls and boys in upper-class homes their first lessons. These educated women artists, composers, and singers were part of society when women's education staked its claim as a major issue by the 1860s.

Anglicised Indian upper- and middle-class males attacked Vaishnavite women because they sought to continue a tradition, both social and literary, which was uncomfortable for the *bhadralok*. They were literally hounded from *bhadralok* society. After being ostracised by the *andramahal*s and persecuted in the streets of Calcutta, they attempted to carve out a place for themselves within the new female education system. The Bengali *bhadralok*, however, objected to their entry into these training schools. A letter in a contemporary journal (Somparkash, C, 1866 [Paush 3, B. S. 1273]) complains,

> …there is a "normal school" in Dhaka; but the majority of the trainees are Vaishnavites. We are not insulting them, but let us remember that people have no respect for Vaishnavite women…if they therefore do not send their daughters to be taught by such women, we should not be surprised. Women of this type cannot educate girls who are expected to grow up to embellish their homes, provide happiness to their husbands and become ideals for their children… (Banerjee 1989, 154)

In Maharastra and Tamilnadu, and most spectacularly in Bengal, there were heated discussions over a suitable curriculum for women, and efforts to bring women out of purdah were renewed. However, ironically, "one of the tasks the social reform movement set itself", Banerjee says, "was to break this unregimented and indecorous intercourse between women of all classes and create the respectable middle-class housewife the *bhadramahila*. The purity and domestic virtue of this newly created being was defined by setting it up as the antithesis of the 'unbridled movement' and the 'licentiousness' of the Vaishnava poets" (Banerjee 1989, 134).

This reform movement was a double-edged process for women because the popular culture, which provided support for women, was discredited, and the artists were reduced to penury and often forced into prostitution. The new, respectable, upper-caste woman was shaped and her sexuality elaborated. The figures speak best. According to the 1891 Bengal Census, there were 17,023

actresses, singers, dancers, and accompanists. In 1901, the number had decreased to 3,527 (Chakrabarty 1963, 97). A. K. Dutt points out some of the displaced women must have found jobs in the new mills that were established. Others attempted to become teachers in the new schools, which, the reformers never tired of announcing, were desperately in need of women teachers, but the Vaishnavite women were turned away (Kopf 1979, 92).

The present of every generation is controlled and shaped by the past of that generation, which is stored in the collective psychological space of the generation in the form of linguistic codes or genes along with the present economic, social, political, and environmental circumstances. Furthermore, the past and present of a generation, after mutations, is transferred to future generations in the form of socio-linguistic genes. Thus, if some agency is powerful enough to control and mutate linguistic genes, it can control the past, present, and future of a weaker society almost in proportion to its strengths. The examples cited in this paper prove that the British authorities and the European culture as a whole, with their state apparatus and ideological apparatus, changed the structure of linguistic genes and, in this way, structured a large part of the Indian population to assist them.

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