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## Funny Boy: Penis Conflict in Quelling Nation

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**Abstract:**

*Gender, race, sex, discrepancy, feminism, capititation, decapitation, psychoanalysis, Oedipus-complex, electra-complex, Foucault's impact, Lacan's theory, existentialism, absurdism, structuralism, deconstruction and many others to name are groundbreaking unconventional postcolonial attributes, which hit to expose deep socio-psychic facts. Queer theory is one of them that tries to define the odd or so called unnatural sexual relation that does not follow societal code and conduct or normative pattern of heterosexual relation. This is the penis conflict of peripheral queer and central heterosexism. Funny Boy is the best work of gay fiction in Canada and established Selvadurai as a central voice of postcolonial, Canadian gay fiction. He is very much influenced by writing technique of Romesh Gunasekera and Michael Ondaatje. He has never been an ivory tower writer, he is concerned with current sociopolitical unrest of his country. He poses contemplative socio-political challenges on the changing scenario of the country. He is aware about racial and caste conflict and subsequent identity clash in diasporas. Apart from these issues he is sensitive about interpersonal conflict of "normative code". He made similarities between Tamil- Sinhalese strife and social issues like homosexuality and heterosexuality.*

**Keywords:** Gender, capititation, conflict, heterosexuality, normative code.

Gender, race, sex, discrepancy, feminism, capititation, decapitation, psychoanalysis, Oedipus-complex, electra-complex, Foucault's impact, Lacan's theory, existentialism, absurdism, structuralism, deconstruction and many others to name are groundbreaking unconventional postcolonial attributes, which hit to expose deep socio-psychic facts. But still there are concepts after concepts, theory after theories in the realm to examine meaning in a quandary. Queer theory is one of them that tries to define the odd or so called unnatural sexual relation that does not follow societal code and conduct or normative pattern of heterosexual relation. This is the penis conflict of peripheral queer and central heterosexism. There is heated debate around the world on queer-identity and their rights. Is it imposed or biological or some psychological disorder? In spite of these world has unnatural eye on queer; it may be America, Africa, Britain, China, Japan, France, Italy, Canada, India or Arabian, Asian countries there is no social acceptance. Yet it's a fact to have such relation naturally. Shyam Selvadurai's magnum opus Funny Boy, is an intensive landmark on this contemporary issue. It has won Lambda Literary Award for best work of gay fiction. How can one ignore Prakrti's observation on the novel:

... stand apart as the work of the future not only because it hits at very core of the normative heterosexual middle class system immersed in a patriarchy of its own making that we live our quotidian life by, but also because it challenges this normative code to such an extent that it begs a redefinition of the gendered ethno-cultural parameters of the modern post-colonial nation state in crisis.

Generally, in patriarchal world, heterosexual relation is a common notion, which considers male penis is made for female sex organ or only male can be masculine and female should feminine; but queer theory deconstructs this notion and talked about "gender bending", where a male can be female by dress code and biosycology and vice-versa. Pushpesh Kumar in his article Queering Indian Sociology A Critical Engagement has mentioned different views in order:

The term 'queer' stands here as an umbrella term to include both who are closeted and who are public about their non-heterosexual inclinations; to those who prefer to label themselves and the ones who choose to reject labelling or unable to choose a label and name themselves (Narrain and Bhan 2005). These may be the sexual life lived outside definable and bound imagination of society (Bhan, 2006). It is opposed to all kinds of hierarchies and sexual violence. It constitutes a specific fight against human rights violations resulting from AIDS/HIV based stigma, and discriminations. Queer includes activism and protest through art, literature, academic criticism and inclined to forge alliance with any counter hegemonic project (Nayar 2010).

- (Pushpesh Kumar, Queering Indian Sociology A Critical Engagement)

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Selvadurai “very subtly critique the value charged hierarchical masculine-feminine gender equation.... This object is all the more ground breaking in that the text subverts the existing patriarchy by highlighting the oppression experienced by males (Arjie and Shehan) at the hand of patriarchy through the constructed norms of masculinity”.

The beginning of the novel hits on the core concept of the novel when there lies a territorial separation of male and female. Arjie, a young boy is the central character; a male figure has feminine taste. He is fond of grandparents’ yard that is reserved for girls. Arjie is fascinated for that “second territory”, “the second territory was called “the girls”, included in which, however, myself, a boy”. He wanted to be there because of one game bride-ride, where he plays the role of a bride and enjoys it at extent. There is another character Meena, who gets less attention, breaks social gender code and prefer to play with opposite gender. Selvadurai describes it as, “two things formed the framework of this system: territory and leadership”. Arjie’s attraction for girls’ territory was not just his fascination but it he was naturally gravitated towards the land. He gets immense scope for the free play of his natural emotions. That back territory is his Disney land. He himself expresses his feelings for the place, “for me the primary attraction of the girl’s territory was the potential for the free play of fantasy. “Because of the force of my imagination”. And on the role of the bride he plays in bride-ride game he says, “for me the culmination of this game and my ultimate moment of joy, was when I put on the clothes of the bride”. Arjie does not understand the differences and follow his innate nature. He does not prefer to play cricket because of its toughness. His mother asks his brother to take him and involve in the play. Then he asks why people want to make him behave like other boys though he does not prefer to be like that. His mother replies her, “because sky is so high and pigs cannot fly that’s why”. He is not able to get the hidden meaning that she wanted to convey.

Tanuja is a fat girl stands as a symbol for conventional country like Sri Lanka. A conventional country values its tradition and normative code. Like other part of the world it is also follows strict patriarchal rules and of course believes in heterosexual relations. The girl named Tanuja is quite jealous of Arjie’s position in girls’ group and wanted to usurp it. She wants to play the role of bride in bride-ride game because of being girl. She tries to achieve it and when fails she rebukes him, “pansy”, ‘faggot”, “sissy”. But he does not care these things because he could not understand the meaning of these remarks. When Tanuja gets failed she brings out her mother, who gets the matter instantly. And takes him in front other adults of home and remarks to his father, “look like you have a funny one here”. He again is not able to understand them and “caught between the boys’ and girls’ worlds, not belonging or wanted in either”.

After elders’ reaction and growing in age, Arjie starts to understand his different position that does not match with heterosexual society. In spite of this he has no complain but he starts to live his life accordingly. His school master’s case made him aware about his need and societal discrimination. At his home he left bride-ride game and involves himself in real life endeavours like in Radha Aunty’s marriage and think that, “ I had better things to worry about than her (Tanuja) (silly game”. Though Arjie understands the differentiation, but he has fear and pondering questions to his parents and society. It is very much visible in his following contemplation:

For how could loving Sehan be bad? Yet if my parents or anybody else discovered this love, I would be in terrible trouble. I thought of how unfair this was and I was reminded of things I had seen happen to other people like Jegan, or even Radha Aunty, who in their own way had experienced injustice. How was it that some people decide what was correct or not, just or unjust.

(Funny Boy)

Gradually Arjie starts to get the meaning of the words used by Tanuja, but it is not clear till the last chapter of the novel. His meeting with Jagen, Daryl Uncle and Sehan give him the full meaning of his transgender nature. He feels natural physical attachment with them. Arjie’s father cannot tolerate his transgendered nature, so he sends him Victoria Academy for “becoming a man” according to heterosexual norms. The academy is known for its patriarchal nature and “Black Tie” is very strict for that reason. But no one can change an innate urge of personality; so in spite of becoming a man Arjie becomes “Funny”, which gives him cross-cultural identification.

Arjie is no more silent bearer of injustice; he has discovered his own way to assert. In has selected his school that is the symbol of patriarchal norms to contests. He has planned to destroy Black Tie’s world by his utter insult. He distorted entire recitation that has shown his courage to live his life on his own rights. Prera has rightly written, “Arjie (engineers) matter in such a way that (embattled) principal is(dependent) on him for his own survival”. Selvadurai gives other tone to the main theme of the novel. He relates the identity clash with the unrest and racial anxiety of the country Sri Lanka. A conservative country like Sri Lanka was not ready for the

new changes and distortion in patriarchal codes and conducts. That's why he shows a displacement of country, from SriLanka to Canada. This shift is highly connotative.

The fire and distortion of his home is not only outer of physical event but it is in deep skin, he no longer wants to stay in SriLanka. Because it is not the kind of place for his free queer identity, he says, "I long to be out of this country, I don't feel at home in Sri Lanka any longer..."

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