



HYBRIDITY AND BARNASANKAR: A DETAILED STUDY OF THE COMMON FEATURES OF THE CONCEPTS AND THEIR EFFECT ON SOCIETY.

SUCHISMITA SARKAR

Assistant Professor, Bongaon Mahavidyalaya



ABSTRACT

Hybridity is one of the crucial concepts of post-colonial discourse which vaguely refers to the amalgamation of race, culture and religion. More precisely, it is a conflict-generating factor which raises fluctuating tension between 'sameness' and 'difference' causing several adverse effects like miscegenation, cultural confusion, religious obscurity. Such racially amalgamated generation emerged out of interracial marriages simultaneously feel an affinity and become discordant towards his own ethnicity for having reared up amid multiple cultural and religious milieu. Therefore they suffer from a typical identity crisis double consciousness. Besides ancient religious and sacred texts like Hindu manusmriti, religious doctrine Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, Chanakya Neeti, always instructed against interracial marriages to maintain the racial integrity along with highlighting the destructive results of such matrimonial alliance. An ancient concept of 'Barnasankar' pertinent to Hindu religion of which we avail a detailed information in the Indian epic, also considered sacred religious text Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, vividly describes the devastating outcome of a racial mixture and amazingly coincides with the theory of hybridity. This article is an attempt to reconcile these two magnificent theories pertaining to racial mixture and to merge them concluding with the subversive effects of this cultural phenomena.

Keywords: hybridity, barnasankar, cultural difference, sameness.

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"Culture never stands alone, but always participates in a conflictual economy acting out the tension between sameness and difference"

-Robert Young, *Colonial Desire, Hybridity in culture, and Race.*

The tension of amalgamation of two races, their culture, and religion has always remained simultaneously with the clandestine desire to transgress the borderlines of race as elucidated by Robert Young in the definition of colonial desire. The entire notion of hybridity revolves round this

particular aspect and also impregnates several critical issues like multiculturalism, syncretism, double consciousness and cultural difference. Hybridity is a metaphor which theorises 'the black experience' as 'diasporic experience' and delves deep into the problem of doubleness or double voiced structures. It is also utilised to highlight 'the dialogue of power and resistance, refusal or recognition. A socio-cultural hybrid is defined not by purity but by the recognition of diversity and heterogeneity. Coincidentally another ancient notion propounded in an sacred religious doctrine encapsulates the same

concept of socio-cultural hybrid, or hybridity. The term 'barnasankar' mentioned in *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* in chapter- 1 conforms to the norms of 'a hybrid' or a cross of two races. In this respect the mixture of two races one relatively superior another inferior produced unwanted progeny which invites catastrophic termination of a race. According to them barnasankar was literally a threat to an entire race and was supposed to create infernal predicament, effacing an entire race, its culture, traditions and religious tenets.

Barnasankar is a term mentioned by prince Arjun when he tried to rationalise his decision of not retaliating his kinsmen by killing them in the battle of Kurukshetra. He mentioned that brutal massacre of his own relatives would destroy the entire dynasty which would further lead to corruption of women of that race. In these lines he indicated the possibility of racial mixture. Degradation of women begets unwanted progeny and increase in the number of unwanted progeny abolishes the entire race.

Ancient Hindu sages always advocated stringency in laws of marriage. This rigidity was also followed in their desperate endeavour to keep the tenets of a particular culture, its traditions intact. The sole purpose behind it was to avoid racial amalgamation, of which we get ample instances in the laws of Manu in *Manusmriti*. The laws of Manu purport rigidity in the caste system in the ancient Vedic era in India. In chapter 9 of *Manusmriti* a detailed demonstration of this statement can be found where the sage concentrates to encompass the laws related to women concerning their marriage and protection. In Sloka 7 of *Manusmriti* Manu disparagingly remarked that the chief royal sages who formerly possessed the whole world, caused a confusion of castes (barna) as his intellect was destroyed by lust. In shloka 85 he asserts that if a Brahmin wed women of their own and of lower caste the seniority, honour, and habitation of those wives must be settled according to the order of the castes (barna). Shloka 90 advocates a damsel to wait for three years, though she be marriageable, but after that time, let her choose for herself a bridegroom of equal caste and rank. The laws were invented only to protect the integrity of various castes or barna and our ancestors were very

particular about it. Moreover, according to Chanakya, the ancient Indian politician, strategist and adviser of the first Maurya emperor Chandragupta, marriage in a family of equal status is preferable. In his *Chanakya Neeti* chapter 1, he clearly mentioned that a wise man should marry a woman of a respectable family and equal status even if she is deformed.

Similarly, the concept of barnasankar evolved from the fear of racial inter-mixing. It has been described elaborately in *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* by Arjun, the prince of Hasthinapur, son of late king Pandu. In Kurukshetra. When Arjun confronted his kinsmen aligned in the rally of enemies, he expresses his reluctance to kill his own kinsmen to fulfil his own selfish desires. He rationalises his reluctance by expounding the notion of barnasankar and its disastrous outcomes. The sin of killing his own kinsmen will beget retribution on the entire dynasty. Ancient family traditions will be demolished. When the eternal family tradition is vanquished the rest of the family engages in irreligious practice. When irreligion is prominent in the family the women become corrupted. From the degeneration of womanhood comes unwanted progeny. With the increase of unwanted population infernal situations arise to the destroyers of the family. There is no offering of food or water to the ancestors. Family welfare activities are devastated and those destroyers of family tradition always dwell in hell. The gravity of such social condition can be easily surmised by prince Arjun's repeated and ardent assertion to Lord Krishna.

Therefore, it is quite evident that the concept of 'barnasankar' and 'hybrid' appears to be more or less similar. Both ideas revolve round unwanted adulteration of the race resulting in unfortunate and a critical scenario simultaneously for the pure one and the hybrid. Considering the other definitions of hybridity Robert .c. young's conception appears to be more convincing, who opines that hybridity is manifested in a single process "though it can be described in unimaginative abstract terms far away from the dynamic dimensions of cultural formation and contestation.....it involves process of interaction that create new social transformation." Colonial desire is

a “covert but insistent obsession with transgressive inter racial sex, hybridity and miscegenation.” a deep disgust for the alien and irresistible attraction towards miscegenation is thus shown in perpetual contention. Cultural hybridity resulted from interracial sex disturbs the process of demarcating cultural and racial boundaries. Thus the colonial conception of culture or cultural hybridity is found to be in an inherently unstable situation. Simultaneously, it organises and obliterates racial boundaries. Eventually this desire to trespass the racial lines though, remains beneath the surface, but manifest itself in numerous ways, demonstrating the infirmness of the unwanted progeny which finally ends up with erosion, corruption and racial adulteration.

Homi.k.Bhabha also promoted the idea of hybridity along with cultural ambivalence in his post-colonial writing *The Location of Culture*. In racial theory hybridity is a study of the effect of mixing identity and culture. The liminality of hybridity is presented as a paradigm of colonial anxiety. Bhabha emphasizes that “the discriminatory effects of the discourse of cultural colonialism for instance, do not simply or singly refer to a person or a discrimination between mother culture and alien culture...discrimination between his mothers and bastards, the self and its doubles,”. Precisely, it adulterates the authenticity of strong cultures. The perception of sameness and difference most probably originated from this sense of doubleness. Stuart Hall defined this doubleness in terms of the experiences of migrant or diasporic people. Hall’s analysis concentrates and signifies the complexity of presence/absence of Africa and to highlight the dialogue of power and resistance of refusal and recognition. Bhabha theory differs from the bakhtinian definition of hybridity in terms of its colonial discourse. Bakhtin’s hybridization destabilizes univocal form of authority. On the contrary Bhabha perceives hybridity as a “problematic colonial representation which reserves the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other denies knowledge’s enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority.” Paul Gilroy’s analysis of ‘modern black political culture also focuses on this double

consciousness. This doubleness and cultural mixture distinguishes the experience of black Britons in Europe. The problem of identity as Cornel West expatiates issues from the struggle between cultural difference and ethnic fixity. In his theory Homi Bhabha also explained the concept of cultural difference where culture is seen as the point at which two or more cultures meet and it is also where most problems occur, discursively constructed rather than pre given a ‘process of enunciation of culture as knowledgeable.’

The threat of hybridity thus lies in the unbridled mixing of the two races and its essential elements’ hybrid jeopardises not only the two clans to which he belongs but also the individual existence of them. Like Young justly said ,it causes erosion of the culture by endangering the originality of a particular its culture, traditions and religion .Bhabha also stressed the fact the baffling confusion among the mother, alien and its hybrid can lead to misinterpreting the actual ethnic norms of a race. In this process the authentic strong race would gradually fade away, leaving no trace of it, just as described in the narration of the consequences of producing unwanted progeny or barnasankar. Another argument lies in the context of Young’s assertion that the obsession with interracial sex is happening simultaneously. If it is a concomitant procedure, then the desire to kill one’s own kinsman(as Arjun mentions that only by killing one’s own kinsman can lead to the occurrence of barnasankar) should be always there in a surreptitious mode. The dormant desire to obliterate a boundary drawn by one’s own ancestors must be part of it. Such desires will obviously prove disastrous to a race and will further enkindle its dilapidation.

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