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PEDERASTY OF REPRESSIVE SOCIETY: A DECISIVE LOOK INTO THE FILM *GHETUPUTRA KOMOLA*

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Abstract

Focusing on the sexual exploitation and despotism in Humayun Ahmed's film Ghetuputro Komola (Pleasure-boy Komola), the current paper aims to create and raise individual as well as public awareness of sexuality and its negative sides, particularly pederasty. Ghetuputro Komola conspicuously specifically represents the regressive culture and tradition of pederasty of the mediaeval Bengal. Through the culture of 'ghetugaan', perversion like pederasty once became an extensive practice. Vulgarity spoilt the beauty of the great culture of 'ghetugaan'. Young boys were the victims of this vulgar tradition. The dark history of ghetu culture has been portrayed in this film. Although the culture of 'ghetugaan' exists no more, its shadow is still present in the existing society of which young boys become the victims either knowingly or unknowingly. In most of the cases, sexual repression is responsible for arising child abuse at an extreme level. This paper believes that change can come through awareness. Literature is a reflection of real life, and films are one of the best ways to convey messages to the common people in an entertaining way. Through the keen analysis of the film Ghetuputro Komola, this paper endeavors to make people conscious of sexuality so as to ensure a safe and secure life.

Keywords: *Ghetu culture, sexuality, pederasty, exploitation, awareness*

1. Introduction

Ghetuputra Komola (Pleasure Boy Komola) is a 2012 Bangladeshi musical film presented by Impress Telefilm and acted by renowned actors and actresses of Bangladesh like Tariq Anam Khan, Jayanto Chattopadhyay, Munmun Ahmed, Agoon, Pran Roy and Mamun (in the role of the protagonist character, Komola) and so on. It is a film directed by Humayun Ahmed, the legendary playwright of Bangladesh. The protagonist Jahir, a 12-year-old boy, dreams only to play with his sister in an open field in the movie. He wants to fly in the sky of his imaginative world just like a free bird. Unfortunately, his identity as *Ghetuputro Komola* (Pleasure Boy) brings all his dreams to an end. This ending of Ghetuputro is a stifling of a life's freedom. The film is about pederasty and based on the history of mediaeval Bengal where there was a culture of 'Ghetu Gaan' or 'Ghetu Song'.

The practice of pederasty came through the culture and young boys were its victims. Homosexuality or bisexuality is not an unusual fact but when it is a matter of forced pederasty, it becomes questionable. Foucult (1978) mentions the fact as suppressed and restricted in society which leads to vulgarity. As a result, people especially young children become the victims of this vulgarity. The paper argues that the fact of pederasty should come to light of modern society and people should talk about it openly. In the very beginning of the film, a brief introduction of ghetu culture is provided where it is said that around one hundred fifty years ago, a new trend of music named 'Ghetu Song' emerged in a Vishnu Akhra at Jolshukha village in Sunamganj district.

During that time, a musical group was created where young boys danced in female costumes, and those dancers were called "Ghetu" (Pleasure Boy). It is also mentioned in the introductory part that the songs they sung had a traditional melody with the influence of classical music. The presence of young boys in guise of women injected this musical tradition with vulgarity. The rich and influential people of society started being lecherous to get these young boys as their sexual partners. Gradually, this matter got social recognition and became a culture. With the declining of ghetu culture, ghetu song has been lost too as it is mentioned in the beginning of the film: "It's a matter of rejoice that 'Ghetu Song' is a memory today. The misconduct in the name of music has been stopped. At the same time, an amazing trend of music has been disappeared."

2. Objectives

The study is based on two major objectives. It intends to bring out the truth behind the practice of pederasty in the society and to raise awareness about sexual harassment among the people of society.

3. Literature Review

Foucult (1978) gives his theory of repressive hypothesis where he claims that homosexuality or bisexuality is not unusual, but sometimes it happens by force especially with the young boys which are morally wrong. Dynes (1990) mentioned that pederasty is occurred chiefly as a form of initiation in tribal and pre-modern societies. He figures out pederasty into the world of male adulthood through sexual intimacy between the older partner who serves as patron, protector, and mentor, and the younger, who is the pupil. Frederick (2010) accuses lack of legal identity, poverty, absence of primary caregivers and extensive rural-to-urban migration as responsible for sexual abuse of young boys.

Male homosexual relationship is a common fact in the majority of human societies throughout history. Although it is known by the term 'pederasty,' in medical science it is termed as 'Pedophilia'. According to Primoratz (1999) as it is described in his article 'Pedophilia':

Pederasty refers to sexual attraction of an adult male to boys and sex between an adult male and a boy in his mid-teens. It has been the characteristic form of male homosexuality in many societies; its best known type, of course, is the "love of boys" among the ancient Greeks. (p. 99) According to medical science, 'pedophilia' is a psychiatric disorder in which an adult or older adolescent experiences a primary or exclusive sexual attraction to prepubescent children (Wikipedia). So, the act of pederasty also can be treated as a psychiatric disorder like pedophilia where a young boy becomes a victim of sexual exploitation. There is another medical term named 'Transvestism' which is also applicable specifically for Ghetuputro or the pleasure boy. Transvestism is the practice of dressing and acting in a style or manner traditionally associated with the opposite sex (Wikipedia). It is to seduce and engage physically the opposite sex.

4. Methodology

As a primary research work, the researcher followed qualitative method in conducting the study properly by applying Foucult's (1978) theory of repressive hypothesis. This method mainly includes the analysis of the celebrated Bengali movie of Humayun Ahmed, Ghetuputra Komola and the other studies correlated with it.

5. Findings and Discussion

In the movie *Ghetuputro Komola,* Ahmed portrays the character of a young boy who plays the title character's role. Komola's real name is Jahir. He is just a child who has no practical knowledge of reality of this cruel world. Like other children, he intensely desires for playing in the field. But due to poverty, Jahir has to join his father's music group. The group roams here and there on the call from rich people. Jahir is hired along with the music group of his father by a Zamidar (landlord) in the Haor region of East Bengal. The musical group has to entertain the Zamidar until the annual flood is over. But the boy finds out that he has to do something more than the rest of the members of the group are required. He has to satisfy the landlord sexually as

well. Although it is so unwanted to this young boy, he is forced to be the sexual partner of that landlord for entertaining him both mentally and sensually.

The wife of the Zamidar cannot stand this new 'rival' of hers. Although Jahir is a little boy and he is forced to become a pleasure boy, he has to tolerate people's hatred and wrath. Sometimes the landlord's wife herself helps Jahir to prepare to act as Komola in a woman's attire, but every time she spits upon his face with hatred and anger. Thus, she considers Komola as her competitor and conspires to kill the boy, and finally according to the direction of her conspiracy, one of her maidservants kills the boy by pushing him from the roof top. Thus the chapter of the innocent boy's life comes to an end. This murder scene of the film carries the ultimate brutality of those pleasure boys who in spite of being unknown became the victims of vulgarity in the name of music and culture.

The film, *Ghetuputra Komola* (2012), brings out a loathsome aspect of the Bengali history. According to the article published in *The Daily Star* on 14 September 2012, the movie tells the story of an abusive practice that was once a popular form of entertainment in the haor (inundated field) areas of the north eastern Bengal where young adolescent Ghetu performers (pleasure boys) were the objects of entertainment to the influential people. At that time, people had no other option of entertaining themselves except through dance and music. Folk songs became very popular among people and as Ghetu gaan had an influence of classical music and folk song, people accepted warmly this music trend. But the appearance of Ghetuputros introduced the culture with crudeness. The luxurious and rich landlords' lust and sensual desire to have Ghetuputros as their sexual partners damaged the beauty of this music trend.

Although the tradition and culture of Ghetu gaan is no more, its impact is still present in our society. Still now young boys are becoming the victims of sexual exploitation and repression. Both the suppression of poverty and the sexual repression has been portrayed in the film. It is shown here that poverty was the main reason for those Ghetuputros to take this profession to manage their livelihood. Still now in our society, many young boys are becoming the victims of such vulgarities for want of money, but it remains secret as society does not allow people to talk about sexuality. These young boys even have no sexual education, but they are being suppressed by social norms as society injects the idea into people's mind that talking about sexuality is a matter of barbarism. This repression actually increases vulgarities and perversions about sexuality in our society. For the theme of sexual repression Foucault's (1978) theory of repressive hypothesis in *The History of sexuality* is quite appropriate, where he argues that modern industrial societies are increasing sexual repression day by day. He maintains:

> We have not only witnessed a visible explosion of unorthodox sexualities; but- and this is the important point- a deployment quite different from the law, even if it is locally dependent on procedures of prohibition, has ensured, through a network of interconnecting mechanisms, the proliferation of specific pleasures and the multiplication of disparate sexualities (p. 49).

Foucault (1978) argues in "The World of Perversion" that the repression of sexuality is not a right task to protect it. Especially, when it is about homosexuality or bisexuality, the entire fact gets suppressed specially by the victims. By the nineteenth century, he mentions, sexuality was being readily explored both through confession and scientific enquiry, but still it is repressed by the common people. In the movie also, audience can observe the repression in the common people. In the film, Jahir is sexually abused by the landlord and everyone learns about the matter, but no one raises voice against it, even knowing the fact that it is immoral. Even the landlord's wife cannot protest against her husband from the act of pederasty, although she argues against this and wants to go to her father's place. It happens only for an unusual and ill mentality of having sensual entertainment of the landlord as he says in the film,

> "The banks have filled up with water. They will stay three months. I have nothing to do. I called on him for my entertainment." (*Translated*)

It also proves the influence of power and money as Foucault himself also argues that the labeling of perverts conveyed a sense of pleasure and power. Though the fact was known to everyone, no one raised their voice against the practice considering it as a tradition. As a result, 'Pederasty' itself became the tradition. Basically, poverty and practice compelled the young boys to act in this way. Even their parents allowed them to have such kind of vulgar participation for want of money. In the movie, Jahir's father is seen to prepare his son with his own hands for entertaining the landlord and then consoles him by saying, "We will go home with a lot of money. We will make a new tinned roof home. Three months will pass in the blink of an eye." It is one of the most touching parts in the movie when the little boy screams with pain but gets no help from others. It indicates the cruelty of bourgeois society. In this context, Foucault (1978, p.17) states "The seventeenth century, then, was the beginning of an age of repression emblematic of what we call the bourgeois societies, an age which perhaps we still have not completely left behind". It was the age when in spite of continuing sexual torture on those little boys, no one was there to protest as the feudal society was entirely tyrannical. So, power of the bourgeois society was undoubtedly another main weapon in establishing pederasty as a tradition in the society as Foucault also claims.

Since pederasty is the main theme of the film, it faced some obstacles at the time of its release. This film was not received well by the Bangladeshi audience and critics. Even the director himself requested the audiences not to watch the movie with children. In the article, published in *The Daily Star* on 19 September 2012 has mentioned that the film banners and advertisements clearly advised against to watch the movie with children, because the movie is considered to have bad impact on children. In Darashiko's (2012) analysis, the story of the film took place in Victorian age as the penny in the movie is sculptured with Victoria's face. So, it can be considered that the history of Ghetu culture is taken from Victorian age as Foucault (1978) also claims that sexual repression happened in England in the same period. He also indicates money as responsible for forceful sexual relations with children. The same reason is presented in Ahmed's (2012) *Ghetuputro Komola* as Darashiko rightly mentions in his movie review that the movie is a perfect one for strongly preventing child abuse and sexual perversity.

Critics' analysis from history let us know that the wives of the landlords could not accept the Ghetuputros (Pleasure Boys) easily. Though they had been suppressed, they could not protest the incident. As they treated the boys as their husbands' second wives, the boys became an object of their hatred. In the movie also the audience can see that the landlord's wife who cannot tolerate the Ghetuputro as it is mentioned before. Out of her envy, the landlord's wife plans to kill the Ghetuputro by pushing him from roof. This conspiracy takes away the innocent boy's life. But as the Ghetuputro is very ordinary and poor, nothing has been changed in the consequence of this murder. It has also occurred for the landlord's power. From this incident, the cruel and brutal history emerges to light. These pleasure boys have no value of their lives and it becomes clearer in the film when the landlord wants to pay money in front of Jahir's dead body. The landlord says in the last part of the film, "I will try to reduce his mother's pain. I will provide handsome amount so that the rest of life goes well." It is certainly an insensitive commitment to reduce a mother's grief caused by the loss of her son. Later, the landlord understands that on the order of his wife her servant Mayna has killed the Ghetuputro Komola, he does not take any proper action but only expels her from her job. The brutal death of that little innocent boy does not touch the landlord's heart. It cannot change him or make any impact on any other's daily life as it is portrayed in the last part of the film. The last scene of the film becomes more hurtful with the acting of the landlord's little daughter who only cries for Ghetuputro Komola and the background music "Shuya urilo, urilo, jib er o jibon (Beloved bird wings its way, wings its way, life of the living)" which really touches the heart.

The music in the film reflects Ahmed's (2012) love for our folk culture and his effort in preserving the same. Songs like "Shua Urilo" and "Baje Bongshi" signifies the glorified folk song of Bangladesh. Except one song, the lyrics of the rest of the songs are not objectionable. The song "Jomunar Jol" reflects the vulgarity of Ghetu culture of that period. If the language is analyzed, the depth of indelicacy of Ghetu gaan is found. For instance, the lyrics of the song "Jomunar Jol"

can be mentioned where it is said, "Amar Jomunar jol dekhte kalo/ Shan korite lage valo/ Joubon mishia gelo jole" (My Jamuna's stream seems dark/ Yet I feel fine to bath/ Youth amalgamated with that stream). Through this song the director has portrayed the vulgarity that became a part of Ghetu gaan. But another songs like "Baje Bongshi" or "Joley Vasa Saban" or "Shua Urilo" represents the beauty of Ghetu gaan where the taste of classical music and folk song is manifest. The same has to be said about the garish makeup and attire of Komola.

In *Ghetuputro Komola*, sometimes Komola is seen here to wear some seductive dress as pleasure boys were used to wear at that time. Wearing such female costumes they had to appear with sensual attire to seduce the landlords. Thus, to bring out the perverse history of 'Ghetu' culture, Ahmed took the step to make the film with a real taste of the past. Though the tradition of Ghetu culture is no more, pederasty continues to be practiced in society in different ways. And at the same time sexual repression is continuing. Even in such a conformist country like Bangladesh, pederasty practices still now though most of the times secretly. In these cases, young boys become the victims of this vulgarity. John Frederick gives an overview on the sexual abuse and exploitation in South Asia, especially on young boys. In the paper titled "Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Boys in South Asia", Fredrick (2010) mentions:

Among children aged 6 to 12 years old in South Asia, boys are generally considered to be more vulnerable than girls outside the home because social custom protects and monitors girls more, while boys have relatively more freedom. 16 Social customs contribute to the vulnerability of boys, as they are generally considered capable of protecting themselves and because society in general tends to deny the sexual abuse of boys and consensual sexual relationships between males. (p. 6) As a country of South Asia, in Bangladesh also, the sexual abuse and exploitation of boys are quite common facts, though sometimes they remain out of knowledge of mass people. The study indicates that children aged 10 to 14 years are the most vulnerable to sexual abuse in the family and community in Bangladesh. In most cases, abusers of boys are adults. Young boys are abused by older boys and women as well. Frederick (2010) argues that mainly poverty is responsible for such incidents as Foucault (1978) also claims. Moreover, authentic data and descriptions are also given here regarding sexual harassment of both girls and boys in Bangladesh.

To consider authentic evidence of sexual exploitation, according to this research study, more than one-third of boys aged 11 to 16 are not in school and 38 percent of them are in the labor force (p. 45). In a conservative country like Bangladesh, most of the news of sexual exploitation of boys remains secret. Most information comes from newspaper articles and police reports. According to the research paper, boys may comprise up to 45 percent of sexual abuse cases (p. 46). Most of the boys become victim in their owners' hand at work places. Some studies have addressed the sexual abuse of children as a whole, but specifically sexual exploitation of young boys gets less importance in our country. Nonetheless, in studies it is found that boys especially adolescents who live in streets or working places become victims of secret sexual exploitation.

Frederick (2010) further mentions:

> Children aged 10 to 14 years are the most vulnerable to sexual abuse in the family and community. In most cases, abusers of boys are adults they know, such as cousins, brothers, uncles and family friends, as well as teachers and house tutors. Most perpetrators are male and middle-aged, primarily between the ages of 25 and 40, while some are from ages 17 to 25. (p. 47)

6. Analyses and Recommendation

The study implicates the horrible situation of present time. In Bangladesh, parents hold a prevalent belief that relatives and friends are safe. Thus, the abusers get privileged in the domestic sphere which parents or the abused children cannot understand. Moreover, the family's reluctance to report abuse creates effective silence that allows abuse of children with freedom. There is a strong tendency of blaming victims rather than accusing perpetrators. In consequence, to cover up the incidents in the name of saving their reputations, parents of the victims do not even take any approach to seek justice. So, the victims become victims for the second time for social suppression.

Thus, sexual repression increases sexual exploitation. Although the tradition of Ghetu culture has been declined from our society, such secret sexual perversion is the reflection of it.

However, proper law should be applied to these cases and otherwise such crime may increase in our society. If we see international law, it is found that States are bound to give all kinds of protections to children. In UNCRC (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) it is clearly said that States must have to provide all kinds of protections and facilities to children. A simplified summary of that particular article (1989) is given here:

States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. (p. 19)

According to this article it is Government's liability of giving proper protection to children, though in Bangladesh in most of the cases it is not applicable. Although Bangladesh Government has prohibited children labor, but their sexual protection has not yet been ensured in a credible way. Moreover, parents are not aware about this and they do not give sexual education to their children. On the other hand, sexually abused children are typically inclined not to disclose their experiences due to feelings of guilt and shame. In that case, children who are sexually abused are even less likely to share their trauma with their parents, teachers or relevant authorities. It happens because children are taught from the very childhood to consider the fact of sexuality as a matter of shame. The social restriction, sometimes in the name of religion, forces people to act in this absurd way. It must be mentioned here that, though young girls are at more risk, adolescent boys are also not safe from such exploitation and repression.

Sexual repression makes people to subjugate their conscience. Homosexuality and bisexuality become unethical and immoral when they occur by force. But the sense of sexual repression also allows people to accept the unethical task in many contexts which is also presented in the film *Ghetuputra Komola* (2012). Still present, the social context of our country remains the same as it was before. Here people are too conservative and reluctant to have open discussion about sexuality. In this kind of restrictive circumstances, teenagers grow up with a fantasy and sometimes without any idea about sexual activities. As a result, people specially children, cannot know about the fact and they create their own perception as they wish. Sexual and psychological illnesses, perversion, rape, conflict in conjugal life and on a whole sexual exploitation like pederasty are increasing hastily. Only breaking the invisible wall of repression in society can stop these. Repression increases the curiosity and interest which makes fantasy among people, especially among the young people about sexuality in a wrong way. If our children are brought up frankly where they can have open discussion about the right or wrong path of sexual choices, they will be vigilant and be able to avoid many unwanted circumstances. Even at their work places, they can have security. Moreover, people will understand about the sexual exploitation. Especially proper implementation of law will be more helpful to stop forceful sexual attachment and torturing of children. This may stop pederasty where young boys become the victims. Ahmed's (2012) *Ghetuputra Komola* can be considered as an attempt where the director wanted to show the cruelty of pederasty and horrible results of sexual exploitation and repression. Though the movie itself has not been received warmly by the audience, yet like it more movies or documentary works should be done to stop the vulgarity right now.

7. Conclusion

This paper has come to the firm point against sexual exploitation and repression. People should know the fact with vivid idea and knowledge. Children should have the chance to talk on this topic openly and share their opinions. Parents should value children's opinions and create an inclusive environment for children to express themselves which will enable children to disclose all types of information freely without fear and shame, even in case of sexual abuse. Both boys and girls should be treated as social mediators to consult on the matters that affect them. They must have the right and capacity to express own experiences and opinions and the chance to receive and

impart information. Listening to children and learning from their experiences can resist the vulgarity. And obviously the proper application of law is important to give children a safe and comfortable life. Creating awareness can be the best weapon to break the silence. Ahmed's (2012) *Ghetuputra Komola* is just an attempt to break the traditional social context. Thus, if people get aware and alert from right now it is possible to stop sexual harassment even in a conformist society like Bangladesh.

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