

Exploring the Roots of Racism in consideration with the select works of C. S. Lakshmi

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Abstract

Racism is typically linked with European nations, although it goes unreported in Asian nations. The psychological idea that beauty only exists in white has been deeply instilled. As with the belief that white people are innately honest, the idea that fair complexion is connected with beauty is still widely held in nations that were formerly governed by the British and Europeans. This idea is also employed for certain commercial reasons and is displayed in television advertising. Many people overlook the fact that a person's skin tone is correlated with the "melanin" pigment that their bodies create for their protection. Why it is always "fair and lovely" but never "dark and lovely" is a mystery. The researcher's claims are supported by the CRT since they are clear from that data. In order to critique commonplace racism, the Critical Race Theory (CRT) was established in the United States after some effort. The condition has been around since the Aryan invasion and is more common in Indian society. This notion is very well discussed by Ambai in her short stories, "Once Again", "In a forest, a deer", "A Thousand words, one life" and "My Mother, Her Crime". No color is, in fact, intrinsically less lovely. Every skin tone, whether black, white, fair, or yellow, has its own special attractiveness. Discrimination and valuing someone differently depending on their skin tone are unwarranted. Caste or skin color do not determine a person's character; making negative remarks about someone's appearance or skin tone does not help them; on the contrary, it makes them feel alone and separated from other people. This essay aims to prove that, like white people, brown people, and black people are all products of God and have nothing to be ashamed of.

Key Words: Racism, Asian Countries, Psychological idea, Critical Race Theory, Skin Color.

Full Article:

Objectives:

1. To show how a person's belief system aids in their ability to overcome any difficulties even though they suffer from racial discrimination.
2. To offer insight into how an individual's brain creates a secular belief system that unconsciously adheres to an individual's inner fortitude.

Indian English Literature, or literature during the past 150 years, is a creative work created by Indian authors using a blend of English and their local tongue. V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Agha Sahid Ali, Rohinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Salman Rushdie are some of the authors that fall under the category of Indian Diaspora writers. Literature in Indo-English is also included. Sake Dean Mahomet's *Travels of Dean Mahomet* published in England in 1793 was the first book written by an Indian in English language. C.S. Lakshmi born in 1944 is an Indian Feminist writer and she writes under the pseudonym Ambai. *Nandimalai Charalilae (At Nandi hills)* published in 1962 is considered to be her first work. Her first serious work of fiction was the Tamil novel *Andhi Malai* otherwise *Twilight* which was published in the year 1966 and also it received *Kalaimagal Narayanaswamy Aiyar Prize*. For her short story *Siragugal Muriyum (Wings will be broken)* she received critical acclaim which was published in the literary magazine *Kanaiyazhi*.

Dolly Kikon has published an article entitled "Dirty food: Racism and Casteism in India" in the journal *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. The article traces how food culture in India reiterates social hierarchies and caste logics of cleanliness and purity.

When compared to CRT, the researcher's claims are clear and have their backing. In order to examine everyday racism, the United States established Critical Race Theory (CRT) after some effort. Throughout history, marginalized people have collaborated across national boundaries to develop postcolonial criticisms, social justice theories, and mass resistance techniques. The protagonists of the selected short tales had significant hardships as a result of their dark skin, making the Critical Race theory appropriate to them. The short story "In a Forest, a Deer" makes the aforementioned claims without a doubt. Thangam Athai, the heroine of the short story, allegedly endured a number of insults throughout her life due to the hue of her skin and her inability to bear children. Thangam Athai is adored by practically everyone in the province. She had no personal enemies because she was courteous to everyone. However, she has occasionally been injured by others who made disparaging remarks about her condition. Sometimes they made an effort to intimidate her. She never expressed her disapproval of their behavior.

Thangam is an optimist, although she occasionally lost her confidence due to the negative consequences of others' remarks. She comforts herself while she

cries in anguish by saying, ““Nothing will happen. "Don't be frightened" (Ambai, 6) but in turn, she was brutally hurt by the words of others on her infertility. She claimed that she had a body that felt hunger at the right times, slept peacefully, acted normally, and digested the food she ate. She also claimed that her blood clogs, her wounds become infected and generate pus, and that she behaves like other people. She asserts that the only thing she need was a physique identical to that of everyone else. However, there were other times when she lost herself as her emotions seized over. Even though she was an optimist, she occasionally caved in to pressure. She cried so hard when she was by herself that she even did it. According to a Harvard Health Publishing poll,

Individuals who learn they are infertile often experience the normal but nevertheless distressing emotions common to those who are grieving any significant loss — in this case the ability to procreate. Typical reactions include shock, grief, depression, anger, and frustration, as well as loss of self-esteem, self-confidence, and a sense of control over one's destiny. (Psychological)

She soothes herself and also made others to accept her as she was. Even the narrator who adores her the most says that, “Thangam Athai had beautiful dark skin” (Ambai, 3). The topic of why her skin tone is given so much weight but she isn't described as lovely arises. Even though he still cares deeply for her, her husband wed another lady, one with a fairer complexion than Thangam Athai. Thangam fits the criteria for Critical Race Theory since she had significant daily hardships as a result of her dark skin tone. Because of the critiques she had through in her life, even she occasionally considered suicide, but she wanted to stand up for her rights.

Until Thangam found their inner, admirable qualities, she was unable to face their conditions. She drew "fear" when their attention was mostly on the terrifying incidents. When she learned how to attract good things, she concentrated on their positive approach and it brought beautiful things to her. As per the quote of, “As you think thoughts, they are sent out into the Universe, and they magnetically attract all like things that are on the same frequency” (Byrne, 45), Till they considered the gloomy events in their lives, Thangam instilled fear and despair into their lives. But when she focused on the positive frequency that was all around them, everything shifted. Meanwhile Nayaki, the protagonist of the short story “A Thousand Words, One life”, proved that words play a major role in providing positivity and motivation to a person.

The short story “A Thousand Words, One Life” tells the readers the power of words that a person uses in their day-to-day life. As Tony Robbins says, “Throughout human history, our greatest leaders and thinkers have used the power of words to transform our emotions, to enlist us in their causes, and to shape the course of destiny. Words cannot only create emotions, they create actions. And, from our actions flow the results of our lives” (Meah 1), power of words influence both the receiver and the sender. The main character, Nayaki, is a live illustration of the power of thought. The words she selects to hear will influence her success. Since the day she was born, she had paid attention to both good and terrible things, but she only gave the good stuff much thought—especially the words that provided her the inspiration she needed to achieve.

Kamakshi, Nayaki's mother wanted to abort the child as this is their third one. In spite of her Mother's fear, she was born healthy, "Kamu, she is the very same colour as your sister-in-law. As dark as that? It's as if her whole body is covered with moles. Just take a look" (Ambai, 237). She had a dark complexion and this was the first thing that she heard on the first day of her birth. But her grandmother loved her more than her mother. She named her Ranganayaki. The name was shortened to Nayaki. When she was born, her grandmother exclaimed that, "Today is Friday. An auspicious day. You are going to become very wealthy through her" (Ambai, 238).

Nayaki initially refused to eat from her mother's hand. It was unclear why Nayaki was refusing to eat from her mother. However, she agreed when the servant, Mutthamma, fed her. Her mother was also perplexed. She stayed silent as the other kids in the house yelled and played. Her actions, however, changed drastically. Nayaki's father wasn't ready to see her when she got to Bombay. However, when they got home, her mother tossed her in a corner without even taking into account that she was a baby. Instead of stroking her, her father held her in his arms and examined her. He had several issues with Nayaki. He exclaimed that, "she was dark-skinned, she was not chubby; she was a girl. He did not say that they should take the baby to a studio and have her photographed. Neither did Kamakshi think of it" (Ambai, 240). Her parents had little time to think about her luxury stuff since she had to deal with the wartime shortages. Nayaki received no special treatment in the household. Even in her own home, she suffered abuse and had her rights violated. She wasn't even depicted in photographs alongside Kamakshi's other kids. Nayaki wasn't given much attention until Kamakshi's brother insisted on shooting pictures and said that she appeared to be a movie star. After hearing this opinion from others, Kamakshi began to value Nayaki.

Nayaki's mother and father started to back her up, which contributed to her empowerment. Her parents praised and honored her for each step she took. Kamakshi would reassure Nayaki when she was feeling down by recounting her Rama tales. The stories were mostly about Rama's birth. She began with the Gandharva, "Gandharvas refers to a group of low-ranking male nature deities that appear in both Hindu, Buddhist, and sometimes even Jain mythology. In all three traditions, the gandharvas are closely related to the wilderness as well as the creative arts, particularly music" (Ghandharva, 1). She tells that Gandharva comes out of the fire pit with a silver bowl full of "milk Payasam" (Ambai, 242) and gave it to Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, who were the three wives of the king Dasaratha, the father of Rama. After consuming the holy drink Rama and his other three brothers were born to his parents.

As soon as Nayaki heard the account of Rama's birth, she enthusiastically inquired about her mother's efforts for her delivery. Her mother feared that if her kid found out about the steps she had taken to abort her, it would do harm. She made the decision to instill Nayaki with optimism instead. She also says that her success was greatly influenced by her mother's remarks, which provided her the story of her birth. Nayaki also criticizes her mother's comments, alleging that she didn't genuinely want to know the truth about how she was born. She had accomplished more than enough with those statements.

The two main characters in this tale stand for two distinct types of attraction. Kamakshi, who is often gloomy and has a negative attitude on life, struggled with many internal conflicts and was unable to thrive in her life. In the event of a third pregnancy, she wanted to have the child aborted. Her youngster refused to eat as a result. Some psychologists believe that mother's feeling affects the behaviour of the child, "As per the study of the author Patricia K.Kuhl, "the main message for new mothers is that their babies are listening and remembering during the last stages of pregnancy. Their brains do not wait for birth to start absorbing information" (Kerker 1). Being a child Nayaki was also affected by the pessimistic view of Kamakshi but it all changed when Kamakshi changed her perspective about Nayaki, which helped Nayaki to progress in her life.

This led Nayaki to achieve in life after hearing her mother's motivating remarks. Her life is totally changed as a result. Nayaki is a perfect illustration of how a person's life may be changed by encouraging words. A person may become a beast or an angel with the use of only one phrase. Similar to this, a person's behavior is marked by the words they decide to keep in their heads. The power of optimism connects Nayaki and Kamakshi, the two diametrically opposed poles. According to the critical race notion a person who has experienced racial discrimination has the power to alter the perception if they stand up for their rights and give a firm rejection to the critiques they face. Nayaki didn't achieve success in life until she rebutted the attacks leveled at her. She would have endured a great deal of suffering in her life if she had ever accepted and bowed down to such praises.

In the same way, Nirajatchi, the protagonist of the short story "My Mother, Her Crime" learned her life lessons from her unfavourable events. The youngest daughter of the family, Nira, was born with a dark skin tone. Compared to her mother and sisters, she lacked the same degree of impartiality. Because she constantly received criticism from others, she would frequently ask her mother why she had such a dark skin. On the other side, her mother would continually remind her to make an effort to focus on her objective. Her love for Nira, her own daughter, was unaffected by the color of her skin. Nira's mother was her sole supporter. She laughs, "Go on with you. Who can be as beautiful as you are" (Ambai, 66)

Nira would frequently ask her mother for guidance in attempt to better herself. Because her mother was her main source of support, she could only rely on her at her home. Thirteen-year-old Nira was interested in both her own body and the menstrual cycle. However, her mother was unable to help her in this circumstance. She only kept silent when Nira questioned about it. She became intrigued by this and started to concentrate more on her physical appeal than her intellectual attractiveness.

The mother of Nira had no idea that her child was reaching adolescence. Since 71% of teenage girls in India were uninformed of their menstrual cycle until they reached menarche, the issue could not be blamed to just Nira's mother. According to Supriya Khanna of the Indian Council of Medical Research, "Women across India grow up remaining unaware of the real reasons for menstrual hygiene. The

taboo surrounding menstruation remains a part of their growing up and continues with their daughters. Hence, the lack of awareness is carried forward via generations in India” (Dutta, 2)

Adolescence is seen as a formative time in a person's life, so whatever values they internalize now will shape who they become in the future. The criticisms of Nira's appearance hurt Nira's mother, who had tried so hard to give her daughter confidence. Nira didn't want to hear what other people thought of her attractiveness, yet her thoughts was always searching for them. Young teens are developing their sense of self and individuality, adjusting to physical and aesthetic changes, and striving to blend in with their peers. A study reveals that,

Teens whose appearance concerns or insecurities consume a lot of energy, cause them significant distress, or make them reluctant to be seen by others might have body dysmorphic disorder (BDD). BDD is an uncommon condition in which a person will exhibit obsessions and compulsions about appearance that can disrupt everyday functioning. Unfortunately, it's common for teens to develop a negative body image or dissatisfaction with some aspect of their appearance. (Hopkins)

Nira's father would refer to her as the dark one of the house, adding to the stress in her life. She proclaims that, “Here you are, dark girl’. He always called me that. Sometimes when my father said that, I would go and look at myself in the mirror hanging in the hall” (Ambai 68). This demonstrated that even her words might cause a shift in any adolescent girl's confidence. However, if a person receives the kind of support Nira had from her mother, things may alter. Nira would remember her mother's remarking her as, “You are beautiful” (Ambai 68) whenever she felt down because she was listening to her father's statements.

Nira was shocked to learn that she was having her monthly cycle one day, but she had no idea what was happening. To attend the wedding of her cousin, who shared the same skin tone as Nira, her mother had to go. Nira had no idea what she was meant to do for the rest of her teens. She then turned to her sister Kalyani for assistance. She gave her sister Kalyani a shocked face when she informed her about Nira's first menstrual period, as if something strange had occurred to Nira. Nira was somewhat perplexed as to why her educated sister had such a surprised expression. It was described as, “That look, and the way she runs off, without so much as taking the basket from me, send centipedes crawling in my mind” (Ambai 69). Even though Kalyani, Nira's elder sister, had gone through all Nira had, the young girl was not in a position to accept Nira's menstruation as natural.

After the housemates learned about Nira, she could hear tremendous noises all around her. Nira began to weep, seemingly unconcerned. Her mother was the only one she needed. As soon as she met her mother, she wanted to tell her that, “I am frightened” (Ambai 69). She thought that her mother would say her that, “There! Nothing whatever has happened to you. Everything is all right now” (Ambai 69). Normally, Nira plays a typical adolescent who, if she weren't aware of her period, would be horrified. She also questioned why, despite teaching her many things in the evenings, her mother had not informed her of these events.

The young woman was unaware that she had grown up in a culture where menstruation was stigmatized.

Nira wanted to be as independent as she had been in the past. But until her mother got there, she was confined to a room. She was baffled as to why the other residents were so insistent that she remain within the house and keep her distance from the outside world. Even her looks had changed, as had everything else in her life. She used to receive satin skirts from her mother, but now she had to dress in a saree or half-saree. Nira was perplexed as to how her life might drastically change over the course of a few hours without her notice.

She was even more terrified when she saw the purple satin skirt with blood spots on it, and she was having nightmares about the skirt. Even the girl who was in the middle of her studies could not believe it was just a normal occurrence. This makes the reader wonder what the girl's motivation was for participating in the horrifying practices that the author discussed about the society's which made the small girls believe that they had changed and were no longer a part of the world to which they truly belonged. On the other hand, Nira preferred not to pay attention to what others had to say. She wished to make her own decisions. She did not want to adhere to societal norms when they were suggested by someone who was telling her how to conduct her life. Although she was not opposed to the social mores and regulations, she wished to think for herself.

Nira wished to eradicate all superstitious customs from society. She wanted to demonstrate to everyone how typical her menstrual cycle was. She wanted to free herself as well as the other females in the neighborhood, especially her younger sister Kalyani. She had been waiting for her mother the whole time, and all she wanted to do was express her thoughts. She really needed her mother's attention, but she never received it because her mother also saw her as a financial drain on the family. She was disappointed to learn that her mother's arrival would not be helpful. because cultural conventions harmed her mother.

Nira was unaware of the taboo surrounding menstruation, but she never thought it was. It seemed normal to her, and she didn't want to become a victim of superstitious notions. There are several fallacies about women's menstrual cycles that are spread across India. When a woman is menstruating, she is viewed as filthy, unsanitary, and even impure. However, the aforementioned argument was not supported by any scientific evidence. For their own health and cleanliness, ladies in the past were not disturbed during their menstrual cycle. It is scientifically proven, "Poor protection and inadequate washing facilities may increase susceptibility to infection, with the odor of menstrual blood putting girls at risk of being stigmatized. The latter may have significant implications for their mental health" (Garg and Anand). The things which were created actually for the benefits of women turned to be a burden for them in later days.

The author included not just the idea of feminism but also the racism that exists in society, especially among women, by showing the typical thinking of some men who reject women based on their complexion. When Nira's mother

arrived, her father inquired about Radhu's marriage, which had been avoided by many because of her dark skin. the bride had also rejected her this time because of her dark skin, according to the mother.

Radhu had been rejected by many people in the past because of her skin colour, which made her a burden to her family. Nira's mother, who was always supportive of her, never thought of her daughter as a burden. Radhu herself started to believe that she was a burden to the family. After seeing the condition of Radhu, Nira's mother too started to believe that Nira was also burden to her family. This worry made her to stop motivating her daughter. But her previous motivation built a strong foundation in the mind of Nira. So Nira proudly withstood and confronted all the issues. Her mother proclaimed that, "He's refused, the rascal. Apparently the girl is too dark-skinned"...."We too have a dark girl"....I dash down to stand in front of her.... She looks at me. I don't know whether in that instant I am changed into another Radhu. Her words are like a sting. "And what a time for this wretched business of yours! It's just one more burden for us now". (Ambai 76-77)

But occasionally, despite her strong resolve, Nira was surprised by her mother's remarks. The young child was shocked when she heard the term "burden." She experienced a psychological reaction to this, and she never again spoke poorly of another family member. Nira was made silent. The little anecdote shows that women did not see their natural birth as a blessing or a curse. However, society is causing people to view themselves differently. Through her words, the author brilliantly illustrates Nira's mindset as, "Noiseless sobs knock at my chest...In that fiery instant the divine image that covered her falls away to reveal the mere, human mother. Endless fears will stay forever in my mind from now on; dark pictures. Not impurities alone are burnt in the fire. Buds and blossoms too are blackened" (Ambai 77).

The author challenges the strict social norms that restrict a girl from being the same girl once she enters adolescence through the voice of the mute Nira. When Nira was so worried about her marriage, she was only a little child. Additionally, Kalyani's mother did not use the same words when she hit puberty because of her pale skin. The rules of her environment entirely undermined Nira's comprehension of her monthly cycle, which she had gained via schooling. Nira was friendly to everyone, but she was unable to restrain herself around her mother because of her intense love for her. Nira's determination to keep asking questions might revolutionize society. According to the critical race theory, it is illegal and disrespectful to exclude someone based only on their skin tone. It is essentially viewed as untouchable. It is absolutely obvious that Nira and Radhu would have battled against the scandal mongers in their lives if they had known about the constitutional provisions.

Women and some men with dark skin experience oppression, rejection anxiety, and constant dominance. For speaking out for themselves and sticking up for themselves, they are even killed. They endure severe abuse for defending their

own privileges. Some Indian constitutional rules should be known by women in order to safeguard them. They are:

- Article 15 (1), says that there should be no discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- Article 15 (3), guarantees to make special provisions for children and women.

The two main characters in the short story "Once Again" are Lokidas and Sabari, a boy and a girl who were born into separate orthodox households; despite the fact that Loki was born a boy, he was raised as a man and prepared to rule, while Sabari was prepared to serve as a lady and take orders. In the meantime, some characters suffered because of the influence of television advertisements in their teenage years. When Lokidas was a baby, his parents wanted him to be an engineer. They decided that it was the suitable career for their son. They considered that doing engineering was the decent job. Moreover, they thought that only intelligent child could do engineering courses.

In addition to being constrained in his academic endeavors, Loki was also forbidden from choosing his friends. He was instructed to limit his friendships to Hindu youngsters and to steer clear of those of other beliefs. He had no idea what to do because his parents had been putting him under constant restraints. He was unable to exercise independent judgment. The author of these short stories illustrated both the limitations placed on youngsters by their family and those imposed by society. When a child reached puberty, they were forced to choose items that were particularly appealing to the opposite gender. Television advertisements stressed appealing individuals of different genders, gaining attention from others, and maybe upholding one's dignity in society rather than advising viewers to put their own needs first. The author of the short story asserted through the characters,

Wear our suits, your girlfriend will appreciate you. Wear our shoes, the girls will turn round to look at you. Wear our shirts, the lion in you will wake up. Use our razor blades. She will stroke your cheek. Then...Buy our toothpaste, her face can come near yours. Drink this. Your boss will commend your energy. Why wear crumpled clothes? Buy our crease-proof material. You'll be praised for your efficiency. (Ambai, 14)

According to the study, television commercial advertising have an impact on children's life as well. Those advertising mentally encouraged children to purchase the items without even providing an appropriate usage instruction. A child would become more addicted to the particular advertising that influences them to buy the products. For instance, commercials for soap and shampoo specifically targeted teens and adults, promising attraction between people of different genders. A study reveals that,

Violence and sex are often used to draw viewers to TV programs, but they might interfere with memory for the ads embedded in those programs. The current study showed that televised violence and sex impaired memory for commercial messages immediately after exposure and even 24 hr later. The effect of televised violence and sex on memory for commercial messages was quite robust. The memory impairment occurred for both men and women, for adults ranging in age

from 18 to 54 years (representing more than 70% of adult TV viewers), and for people who like and who do not like to watch violence and sex on television. (Bushman and Bonacci 561)

Sabari, on the other hand, had grown up being taught how to be a nice wife and a respectable person. While in first grade, Sabari would regularly say that she would wed Abdulla. When she was little, she had no concept of caste or religion. Every time she used to mention Abdulla's name because he was a Muslim, she was told not to because of his religion. Over the course of more than two years, Sabari became aware of the inequalities and started treating other children differently based on their caste and religion. In her third class when her father asked about Abdulla she would proclaim, "No Appa. He was a Muslim, wasn't he?" (Ambai, 15), for which her father would proudly proclaim that, "She has sense, this girl" (Ambai, 15). She avoided caste and religion after finishing school because she had been educated about them since she was a little child, along with the traditions and culture of her family's heritage.

It is clear from this that Loki and Sabari have a lifelong propensity to please others, and that both of them were persuaded by television ads to appear alluring to others. Due to the fact that Loki and Sabari were the targets of the commercials, they were also seen as marginalized people under the Critical Race Theory. Advertising corporations have been known to manipulate children's minds in an effort to show that their product is the best. They instill in them the idea that their existence is all about pleasing others' eyes and teaching them how to present themselves well on the outside.

The researcher concludes by saying that even in Asian countries like India there prevails racism among people in one way or the other which sometimes ends in serious problems such as suicides and ragging. There will always be distinctions among the people of India because it is such a complicated and diverse country, whether it be in terms of appearance, skin tone, language, caste or religion. However, discrimination is not justified based on these little disparities. The diversity of India's cultures, customs, ethics, religions, dialects, communities, etc. is well recognized. The North East Indians, for example, who are of the Tibet Mongoloid ethnicity, are a prime example of how we go about freely discriminating and spreading racial prejudice against people just because they are from a different community or ethnic group. On the other hand, we claim to be proud of living in a country that is so beautiful and diverse that it embraces people of different cultures and traditions.

Skin tone preferences are assumed to exist regardless of circumstances in our Indian society. They find it difficult to understand that being dark is attractive and that dark people should be treated with the same dignity and respect as fair people. A lighter skin toned individual is always favored over a deeper skin toned one. This results in the removal of chances for black people in many spheres, including education and work. They frequently become victims of hate crimes because of their skin tone, which makes them feel intimidated and insecure in

their own nation. It is past time to put an end to the growth of racial prejudice and hatred toward Black people, and to enact and enforce harsher laws.

Racist murders, racial slurs, insults, and other offensive language ought to stop. Instead of judging individuals by their appearance, we should accept and value them for who they are. Caste or skin color do not determine a person's character: making negative remarks about someone's appearance or skin tone does not help them: on the contrary, it makes them feel alone and separated from other people.

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