

# Poverty, Shame and Social Exclusion

## Working Paper 1 India

### Cultural conceptions of poverty associated shame: Analysis of Indian Cinema and Short stories

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### **Introduction**

India is home to the largest number of poor people in the world. Of 1.13 billion people, 27.8 per cent live below the poverty line (below the accepted income level of consumption requirements according to the conservative standards of the Indian government). The face of this deep and persistent poverty is observable in poor spending on health, undignified ageing, poor educational standards, malnourished bodies, inferior housing, poor infrastructure resulting in deterioration in the quality of life, child labour, poor service delivery, less importance attached to safety measures etc. All of them have severe implications for interpersonal relationships within the household, village, work place, and in the larger community. Concurrently, in recent times, wealth accumulation through businesses in India is reported, indicating increasing economic inequality.

On the other hand, India is also marked by another interesting phenomenon. It is the home of origin for the largest number of religions. Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Sikhism were all born in India. It is also important to note the peculiar institution of caste, i.e., dividing human beings into social hierarchies according to their occupation, which is peculiar to Indian culture. Thus, while from an economic perspective, India may depict weak interpersonal relations, institutions of religion and society present an alternative view of strong bonding. Interestingly, in many measures of happiness, south Asian countries have performed much better than Western countries. This paradox is the context in which the proposition that “economic inadequacies lead to inter-personal inadequacies” is examined. Within the inter-personal inadequacies, the lens of shame is adopted.

Indian civilization, arguably, has existed since 8000 BC. Despite many historical discontinuities such as invasions by other kings and states, Indian culture has sustained a common characteristic, widely similar with subtle variations across the South Asian continent, which has created many symbolic forms or “codes of honor and dishonor” (Casimir, 2009: 307) to

regulate social processes. This paper identifies the key codes associated with poverty induced shame. While examining the relationship between shame and poverty, we have attempted to construct the notion of shame within the cultural context. This is because, complex emotions such as shame (Engelen, 2009) are shaped by culture. Both the “culture-specific values and norms attributed to bearer of emotion” (Casimir & Jung, 2009: 270) construct the nature of shame in poverty contexts.

As an empirical foundation to study the place of shame in Indian culture, we have relied on cinema, short stories and proverbs.<sup>1</sup> This report presents findings from analysis of 30 films in six languages, 23 short stories in five languages and proverbs from eight languages to examine the place and related issues of shame and poverty in the Indian culture. The analysis was conducted between September 2010 and January 2011 (see Annex-B for detailed methodology).

The report is structured in five major sections. First, we provide an overview about the representation of poverty and shame in the Indian cultural context. Second, we discuss based on the empirical findings various social groups which are subjected to shame in the context of poverty. Third, the process of shaming is discussed. Fourth, we discuss the strategies adopted by bearers of this negative emotion to cope with the shame. The fifth section identifies some of the counter-indicators to the poverty-shame nexus. The final concluding section summarises the findings. It is worth noting that one of the difficulties of studying any culturally loaded concepts in India is the existence of diverse cultures which are normally clubbed together under ‘Indian culture’. In fact, there are at least 1400 different languages in India, and each language could also signify different cultures.

### **Representations of Poverty**

Indian literature and cinema are well known for the portrayals of everyday human life and struggles. Therefore, ‘poverty’ is an inescapable theme in these art works. The strong connection between cinema and literature has been very crucial in popularizing both.

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<sup>1</sup> These cultural artifacts are effective means to study shame since “emotions are discursive public forms whose special power does indeed draw on embodied experience, without implying any parsimoniously describable universal biological substrate” (Appadurai, 1990: 93). Particularly, cinema in India has captured the spirit of popular culture (Vasudevan, 2000).

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Particularly cinema has helped the popularity of Indian regional literature (Natarajan, 1996) because the storyline of the former has been influenced by the latter.

Irrespective of the period covered (1920 – 2000) (Annex-B), the short stories invariably depict poverty. However, the focus of the thematic representation of poverty may be said to have vary depending on the chosen period (Annex-B). Four types of stories were selected for capturing the cultural construction of the concept of shame comprehensively. First is modern Indian literature. The focus of modern Indian literature (beginning from the first independence mutiny in 1857) is more nationalistic in order to enlighten the mass against colonial rule. Therefore, the oppressed life of 'the poor' and the downtrodden are the overriding themes. The second type of story is from progressive literature. The writers who were part of the progressive movement (started in the 1930s) had a commitment to socialist ideology and attacked social injustice and backwardness. The aim was to inspire people to develop a collective identity by touching their own lives, where the less privileged class of people became heroes and heroines in the literary works. The ultimate aim of these writers was abolition of poverty and inequality. Third is Dalit literature. Though Dalit literature is closely linked with progressive literature, it stands as a distinct genre because it introduced a new world of experience in literature as self-representation of a group that was always considered outcasts. The representation of poverty and related shame are prominent themes in Dalit literature since the status of outcasts/lower caste is always associated with lower status occupation. The fourth category of selected writers belonged to the contemporary literature. The focus to be near the common man and to be socially conscious makes poverty of the people an obligatory theme (Natarajan, 1996) (see Annex-B). Among the selected authors Premchand (Hindi), Tagore (Bengali), Thakazhi (Malayalam), Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya (Bengali), and Kesavadev (Malayalam) are some of the greatest of all times in the Indian (prose) literature (Das, 1995; Natarajan, 1996). The works of such genius cannot represent something other than poverty because their writings focus on the lively experiences of the downtrodden and the backward classes of the Indian society.

Cinema, as a medium of popular entertainment, should entertain the audience rather than overload them with negative feelings and emotions associated with poverty. Each medium of

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entertainment, though momentarily, wants to relieve people from suffering and frustration. Therefore, poverty as a theme of cinema is perceived as a 'serious' one. However, the analysis of films (1950-2010) invariably projects the hardships and sufferings of the poor people. Depending on the period covered, the dimensions and the intensity of the negative conditions varied. But on the whole, the selected films show extreme poverty and associated negative conditions. Stereotypical representations of poverty in the Indian context include being in rural areas, being in slums, being unemployed, that of malnourished children engaged in manual labour, beggary, living in thatched houses, being in tattered clothes, walking bare foot and similar. However, these representations have changed over the years as the art of cinema has evolved.

Films of the 1950s through to the 1970s dealt primarily with melodramas, mostly with sad endings, where the representation of poverty was one of the major concerns. During this age many of the films were recasts of the literary works of the then famous writers, especially progressive literary writers. Therefore, the importance was to the thematic representation of poverty and the related suffering. However, this scenario has changed from the late 1970s when existential philosophy took over worldwide. Rather than being thematic, films were more 'visual' with less social commitment. After the 1980s, the focus changed to being commercial alone where more humour, romance, and entertainment took over. This trend was more common within Hindi and Tamil films, but they too show subtleties of poverty. However, the films of few directors especially in Malayalam, Bengali, and Telugu stood apart in bringing socially relevant themes inclusive of poverty. The noted directors like Sathyajith Ray (Bengali), Ritwick Khattak (Bengali), Guru Dutt (Hindi), and Adoor Gopalakrishanan (Malayalam) are notable in bringing an international flavor to Indian cinema through their excellent thematic work primarily by disclosing the reality of Indian poverty to international viewers.

### **Representations of Shame**

Given the multiple cultural and linguistic differences within India, the notion of shame, how it is expressed, when it is experienced, how a person reacts to the experience of shame are all

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influenced by different cultural factors. According to Goffman (1963) shame is the dominant emotion in all social interaction – all social interaction in any culture therefore has the potential for shame at its core. Rather than attempting to find differences between different cultures within India regarding the notion of shame, our attempt has been to find commonalities. The subtleties of shame are portrayed by characters within stories and films through facial, behavioral, attitudinal and emotional signals.

Often the characters portray profound feelings of unhappiness, sadness, rejection and loneliness. Kishore in *Kolhathyachapor* (1994) is shown sad and rejected because he was not lucky enough to get a new pair of clothes for the Diwali festival. These feelings of rejection are intensified when he compares his own torn clothes to the new clothes of others. So it the clothes of others that make him think about his clothes and feel shame. An inference can be drawn that one's feeling of shame at being a 'have-not' is heightened if the 'haves' are insensitive in their display of relative prosperity. The writer combines physical as well as emotional elements to illustrate shame and poverty in the story. In many Indian languages proverbs that teach a public code of double-standard behavior for social acceptance are relevant here. For instance, from the Maithili language the proverb *'ghar mein hoyh rahri ke roti aur bahhar sukhaye kor wala dhotii'* – literally means to hide the penury of not having food at home, one wears colourful dresses in public. In wearing a colourful dress the protagonist is seeking to meet the social standard for acceptance of the reference group.

This element of comparison is depicted in the film *Katha Parayumbol* (2007) as a withdrawal behavior by Balan who refuses to meet his childhood friend, now a celebrity, Asok Raj, who happens to come to Balan's village for a public function. While giving a speech, Asok Raj talks about his childhood friend Balan. Though present during the public function, Balan sneaks out. The conversation between both of them, after Asok Raj reaches Balan's home, learning from others about Balan's whereabouts, is very relevant:

**Balan:** I heard your speech. I thought when you became famous, you had forgotten our past. Now I realize that I'm at fault and I'm sorry for that. Now you've come to my small house (hut) also.

**Asok Raj:** I searched for you everywhere, but I couldn't find you. But, you could have found me. Did you never feel to meet me in these years?

**Balan:** I left hometown without anything (due to a love marriage) and was trying to stand on my feet for a long time. You became so famous in a short period of time. Initially, I thought of meeting you...a number of times. But, when years passed, I lost the courage to come in front of you. I felt you shouldn't see me in such an impoverished condition. May be that was my inferiority feeling.

Balan admits that his feelings and attitudes were against his wishes and hence he hid himself from his celebrity friend. Shame associated with poverty is manifested through his feelings, behaviour and attitudes. Since shame paralyzes the self (Kaufman, 1996), the poor person's actions become self-conscious. Moreover, the shame effect in itself is producing further shame and the consequent actions. The withdrawal behaviour therefore may be considered as an explicit reflection of poverty induced shame.

Therefore, the films and literature suggest that there is no substantial change on the experiences and manifestations of shame and poverty related shame. On the other hand, the selected films and literature obviously give a picture of why, how, when, with whom, and under what circumstances 'poverty associated shaming' takes place in the Indian culture, as discussed in the following section.

### **Vulnerable groups to poverty- induced shame**

Those in lower castes and social classes, women, children, elderly, eunuchs and beggars are the most likely to experience poverty associated shame as observed in the films and short stories. Caste groups, eunuchs and beggars (to a certain extent) are specific to Indian culture while all the other groups are universal groups.

*1) Caste group and shame:* Within the hierarchical arrangement of society, caste occupies a central place providing a system of social stratification based on the principle of purity and occupation (Ghurye, 1969; Dumont, 1981). Outcasts (dalits – literally meaning oppressed), who were subjected to the practice of untouchability are considered to be a group that has experienced historical injustice and the Indian constitution provides various measures to





Through the above scene, the director contrasts the general perception of shame associated with being born as a lower caste with the progressive thinking of 'Sankar'. The above scene also points out how the society wants to keep the lower caste away from the mainstream. Traditionally, the caste system paved the way for an order and inner security within the caste, but inter-caste relations were dynamic, complex and hierarchical. None of the reforms have changed this basic structure, but they have helped in getting reservations for lower castes in public sectors. However, the atrocities committed against lower castes remain a common element of Indian society. The caste categorization occurred in ancient India according to division of labour. The lower caste/ Dalits (earlier called as 'untouchables') are forced to do a number of inhumane jobs like cleaning the toilet of higher caste people with bare hands, cleaning the sewage etc. the analysis of the films and short stories revealed that the specific jobs and branding of 'persons with their job' generates a deep seated shame.

2) *Class and shame*: Class complicates the notion of a status-based society of India. India is a country of huge inequalities (Gini: 0.36). In urban areas and villages, these differences play out differently. In urban areas owning a business is a symbol of being a rich man. Often, in rural areas this distinction is made between those who are landed and the landless (The Gini coefficient of inequality of land distribution in rural India was 0.62 in 2002). In both urban and rural areas, being a teacher, doctor or government employee is considered as belonging to the middle class. Educational inequality is also highly prominent (0.56 Gini for adult schooling years). The class difference is one of the unavoidable themes in the films and literature of a hierarchical society. People who are below in the hierarchy are ridiculed and shamed in a number of ways. An example of class distinction from the perspective of a rich person, may be seen in the story, *Poor Trishanku (1968)*; Trishanku resides in a slum where his neighbours are the lowest strata of people. Being a school teacher, Trishanku placed himself in an upper class position. The biggest ambition in his life is to move to a larger house in a 'decent' neighborhood. Somehow he managed to arrange a large house in a colony named 'Swargapuri' and reaches his new home to-be. Reaching there he greets his house owner, Indradev, very emphatically. Indradev does not even properly respond to the greetings of Trishanku. He

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reprimands Trishanku for even having thought of living in a neighborhood like Swargapuri. The scene follows:

**Trishanku:** Why can't I live in that house? Am I not a man?

**Indradev:** *looked at him intently*, and said, "No one who is just a man can live in this neighborhood."

**Trishanku:** What do you mean?

**Indradev:** Simply, that you're not fit to live here. I need only look at a man to know all about him.

**Trishanku:** So what are the prerequisites for living here?

**Indradev:** looked at him with annoyance. "Beggars, for one, can't live here," he added. "Do you have a car? A radiogram? A refrigerator? A sofa set?"

Through such instances the writer portrays the inequalities that exist in the society and how the poor are being shamed by the rich and the upper social class. The above instance also sets boundaries for the poor and their aspirations and dreams. Here, class-wise exclusion happens, but not individual level exclusion. The class boundaries of the poor are shown in much the same way in a 2008 film, *Kanchivaram*. In contrast to the rich man's perspective, the scene shows the way the poor person perceives the class difference. Vengadam, the hero in the film is a silk weaver, humiliated and criticized by his own people for aspiring high or leaping the boundary set for him. All through his life, Vengadam dreams of becoming the first person from his class to marry a bride with a silk sari yet, due to lack of money, he cannot not fulfill his dreams.

**An old lady:** (*taunting*) Why is she in a cotton sari? Where is the silk sari? Since the age of 5 you've been singing to the whole village that when you marry, your bride will be in a silk sari, what happened? I thought you'd be marrying the lord's daughter.

Vengadam doesn't respond, but his head down in shame.

**Old lady:** A silk weaver can only weave silk, not wear it.

The above instance shows the class difference between the rich and the poor while choosing the quality of attire. When a poor man aspires to get things beyond his capacity or things that

can be afforded only by the rich, he will be ashamed to have thought of acquiring that. Often, a poor person may not be able to achieve his aspirations because of poverty. Therefore, the elders in the community, as seen above, make references even with a taunting tone, to control higher aspirations of the poor so as the younger generations do not cross the limits of expectation and fall into disappointment.

3) *Women*: It is estimated that 73% of the Indian population living in poverty is made up of women and children (Dreze & Sen, 1995; Menon-Sen & Kumar, 2001). Since gender is central to allocating roles, responsibilities, resources and rights in a society, poverty is likely to make the condition of women poorer in patriarchal societies. Women bear the brunt of poverty induced shame more than any other characters as observed in the selected films and short stories. Though the position of women is inferior to men in the traditional Indian household due to the patriarchal system, in principle the womenfolk are given undue honor in Indian society (some of such beliefs reinforced through myths about goddesses). In most situations, this does not happen, and women on the other hand are disgraced. Interestingly, the films and stories bring out this issue in association with poverty. The most common situations depicted are: the deteriorating charm of women because of poverty, domestic violence in the name of a dowry, being a victim of sexual abuse and trafficking, entering into the profession of sexual work in poverty and finally fighting to protect their honor (See Annex – B). Any situations in which the women become dishonored are considered as matter of grave shame by the family members, community and the women themselves.

Since the dowry system is more of a bargaining business in India, a lot of shaming takes place for women in the name of the dowry in Indian culture. In *Deonapana* (1928), Nirupama's parents are unable to provide the dowry they had agreed for her marriage. Therefore, Nirupama has to face insults and harsh treatment from her in-laws from the time she steps into the house. She is ashamed and humiliated at every stride since her poor father cannot find a way of raising the money. The atrocities make Nirupama adopt a different perspective towards the dowry system and the value of woman. Then she says to her father, "I will be humiliated only if you pay the money. Your girl has a certain dignity. Am I only a bag of money, having

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value as long as it is full? No, you should not humiliate me by paying this money.” The frequent exposure to shame and dishonor hence forces the character to think in a different way in order to defend her ‘self’.

Sexual abuse of poor women is another shame filled condition. A good example is the 1969 film, *Kalli Chellamma*. Chellamma, the heroin, is a destitute orphan woman. Despite her bravery, many people from different walks of life try to abuse her. More specifically, people try to take advantage of her poverty and beauty. She resists and stands as a winner over the various temptations until she is trapped into a false wedlock with Jose. Jose takes advantage of her womanhood and hard earned money, concealing the fact that he is already a married man with two children. When Chellama realizes the truth, she feels ashamed, devastated and finally commits suicide. In this film, the director brings out the extent of atrocities which can happen to a young orphan poor woman in 1960s Indian society . A different style of sexual abuse may be seen in Thakazhi’s (1969) story, *Velutha Kunju* (The White Baby). The story depicts how the women in remote Indian villages were sexually abused by the colonial rulers. In the story, Parayichi is tempted by a British officer and bears his child, a white baby. The event becomes a source of serious shame not only for Parayichi, but for the entire community.

The ultimate level of poverty associated shame experience by women is that of their inability to protect their honor and being forced to sell their body to make a living. Hence poverty and prostitution emerge constantly as themes concerning women characters in the selected films and literature. To a great extent, scrupulous cheating puts women into this work; but few willingly enter into the profession. *Kaal* (2007) deals with issues of women trafficking and poverty. The film is all about the journey of four different girls who end up in the dark world of flesh trade due to poverty. It shows how vulnerable the poor women are. Young girls are lured to marriage and they are sold off to traffickers who engage them in the flesh trade. Such instances are disgraceful to the poor woman and her family.

In contrast to the above instance, films and literature also show how women willingly enter into the profession because of poverty. *Aakaler Sandhane* (1980) depicts how a woman decides to sell her body (or decides to bring an income to her starving family) in utter poverty. Most of the

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time, the women are not given any other job, so they are forced into prostitution to keep their family alive. This scene shows the daughter-in-law of Chandradhar returning home with rice and oil after spending the night with the city contractor.

**Chandradhar's Son:** Where did you get oil? Who gave you?, (Angrily) don't you hear me?

**Chandradhar's daughter in law:** Your body is weak, go to sleep. I will cook the rice and then call you

**Chandradhar's son:** Where did you get the rice?

**Chandradhar's daughter in law:** What will you gain knowing it?

**Chandradhar's son:** I know everything, you went to the Kolkata's contractor

**Chandradhar's daughter in law:** Yes

*Chandradhar's son becomes violent hearing that and beats her up and throws away their child...*

The above instance explains the intensity of shame and disgrace to the husband, nevertheless the condition in the house is so pathetic that the wife has to fill the stomach of all at home. Since she realizes that her husband is unable to bring food for the family members, she volunteers herself to do the job of a breadwinner with her body. This example explains how helpless poor women are. They have no choice but to surrender themselves to demeaning jobs like prostitution.

In *Salaam Bombay* (1988), the director courageously brings the issue of social exclusion and shame experienced by prostitutes. When Rekha goes to the shelter home to get her daughter back, the head of the centre says to her, "Due to the fact that the mother is a prostitute the state has decided for the child's welfare, she must be kept in state custody until she comes of age. Of course, you have the right to appeal. But why? Why not let her be adopted by a good family? Her life will be made. It'll be easier on you, too. Won't it?" The above instance shows how the prostitutes are ostracized from society and from their kinship. They are not even given the freedom to take a decision regarding their own children. The state of prostitution is humiliating, but the forced severance from the child is more humiliating.

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4) *Children*: Though family values are important in India, children constitute the powerless section within the family, resulting in the huge impact of poverty on children's lives. Abandoning the children, female infanticide, child marriage, trafficking of children, and child labor are some of the worst practices, associated with poverty, still rampant in many parts of the country. Along with these, the films and stories portray how children dropout of school and enter into forms of anti-social behavior (See Annex-B).

Subho, in *Ekhane Pinjar* (1970) left his school and joined a gang involved in bomb making. One day, Amal, the lead actor, confronts him.

**Amal**: Why don't you go to school? Don't you like school?

**Subho**: Who said I did not like to go to school? Since I used to go to school barefooted and with torn clothes, everybody used to make fun of me. Teachers used to scold me for I did not have the books and finally my name was struck off from the register due to non payment of fees.

Many small children like Subho end up not going to school because they are being harassed and excluded by friends (and school management) for not having a decent dress, a sandal, a bag, necessary school books, not paying the school fees and other requirements. While the school management strikes off Subho's name from the register, Krishna is asked by his parents to stop attending his school so as to support his family economically. *Salaam Bombay* (1988) depicts the life of a boy, Krishna, who finds himself trying to make ends meet and eventually reaches his objective whilst being surrounded by all sorts of anti social elements in the society. He is told by his mother that he will be welcomed back home only if he manages to earn 500 rupees. Initially he works at a circus but due to a sequence of events he has to travel to Bombay. There he ends up in Bombay's notorious red – light area of Falkland Road near Grant Road Railway Station and finds himself working at a local tea stall in an area where the main commerce is prostitution and drug addicts are plenty. The entire movie shows him toiling in petty, unthankful and often demeaning jobs with the sole motivation of earning 500 bucks so that he can make his way back home. Like Krishna, many poor children in India are destined to cope with their traditional poverty primarily by learning to generate income at a very young age.

Though children as a whole are powerless, girl children are more prone to poverty associated shame compared to boys. Female foeticide, abandoning and killing girl children in India, is part of poverty shame spread across India. In Tamanna (1997), the director describes how the birth of a girl child is a shame to the family and hence she is abandoned in the garbage bin on the day of her birth. The expenses required for bringing her up and marrying her off make poor families take such an extreme steps towards girl children. In the above film, the rich family abandons their three daughters. Why does it happen? The director may be pointing out the evil elements of a patriarchal social structure through these instances. Yet another explanation for this disgraceful action is the belief systems in India that the souls attain heaven if the funeral rites are carried out by sons, hence girl children will not be able to satisfactorily fulfill these rites.

5) *Elderly*: Though India has a relatively small elderly population (7% over the age of 60), the condition of elderly persons are not prosperous due to the absence of formal social security systems. Often, elderly people depend on children and immediate friends for physical, mental, and financial support. Financial dependency makes the elderly more vulnerable to poverty associated shame. In India, there are many elderly who don't have enough food, medicine and shelter. In the film, *Do Bigha Zamin* (1953), Shambu (the hero)'s father finally has a mental breakdown and is seen wandering in the street. He fears he will lose the remaining land unless his son brings a good amount of money to repay the debt he has taken from a rich landlord. A contrast is seen in the film, *Manassinakkare* (2003). Kochu Thresia is a rich widow. But she cannot experience any of the luxuries of her richness. Many elderly people are prone to poverty induced shame in spite of being in rich families – due to a lack of enough medicines, food, care and happiness. Some are mercilessly thrown out from their homes and some are admitted to old age homes. Kochu Thresia divides her entire assets among her children. Later, as she realizes that her children loved only her wealth, she becomes so ashamed to live in the house (especially in front of the domestic help) that she leaves. A different dimension may be seen in the film, *Nadodikkattu* (1987). Having lost their land and house, Dasan's mother has to stay with a distant relative almost like a maid servant in her old age.

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6) *Eunuchs (Hijras)*: Eunuchs are considered as a third gender and India is the only country where the tradition of Eunuchs is prevalent today. Although there is no definite count of the hijra population, estimates reach over a million (Nanda, 1990). They are poor, illiterate and look upon themselves as cursed for the sins of their past life. They are rarely employed in regular jobs and hence often resort to prostitution and begging for economic survival, though many would like to lead normal lives. They are often faced with lives of isolation, poverty, public ridicule and are treated worse than untouchables. The discrimination based on their class and gender makes the community one of the most disempowered groups of Indian society.

The film *Tamanna* (1998) portrays the struggles, hardships and discrimination of eunuchs in the society. Tikku is a poor eunuch who finds an abandoned girl in a garbage bin and brings her up. A poor Tikku finds it difficult to make enough money, so he goes with a friend to his step brother for some money.

**Tiku:** Hello Anjum Mia I have brought some sweets for you...

**Anjum:** Oh...I see ... you are Tiku, Naznin's hijra....

**Tiku:** Brother Anjum so many years have passed still you tease me...

**Anjum:** what do you want?

**Tiku:** I have a small girl...I need some money...I shall return you

**Anjum:** Good job...Keep it up! Bye

Anjum leaves the place and his son throws the sweets to Tikku's feet and shuts the door. Both Tikku and Salim are stunned at his behavior and later Tikku weeps and cries over the humiliation from his relatives. The above instance illustrates how eunuchs are treated in the society.

7) *Beggars*: The films and stories suggest that beggars are routinely humiliated and ashamed in Indian societies. It is estimated that India has 6 million beggars, the world's largest population. Apart from poverty, certain Hindu belief systems also facilitated the growth of beggars in India. According to the Hindu culture, beggars have long had an important and socially acceptable role, where hand outs to the needy are seen as a way to keep away bad luck and gain favor



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with God. However, in contemporary society, the image of the beggars has changed and they are considered as a nuisance. The story *Hunger* (1957) portrays how far a beggar can be ashamed for asking for alms. In the story a beggar pursues Anna Rao, the protagonist, everywhere on a Sunday evening. When Anna Rao goes to buy a cigarette packet from a pan shop the beggar follows him there too.

**Beggar:** Oh Father! I haven't had food for three days! Please give me a few paisas. Please give me something baba.

**Anna Rao:** I won't I won't give

**Beggar:** I'm burning with hunger, Baba

**Anna Rao** (*shouted in disgust*): Get lost, I say!

However, the beggar followed him.

**Anna Rao** (*furious and yelled at the beggar*): Go away rascal, will you go or not? If you don't go, I will kick you. Get out of here first.

The above scene shows the height of undermining the dignity and honor of a person. Therefore, undoubtedly, it can be said that beggars too are a vulnerable group to poverty associated shaming. However, contrary to other groups, beggars do not live in shame, but much of their actions are shameless. This issue is discussed further in the section on 'counter-indicators' of shame.

### **The process of poverty associated shaming**

In a collectivistic culture such as that of India; the process of shaming is carried out more at the collective level than at the individual level. Shaming is the process of expressing disapproval or condemning a person and is capable of invoking remorse in the person who is being shamed. The individual may become powerless, helpless and feel inferior as a result of this process. The analysis suggests an external element triggers the shame feelings in the characters – this may be the actions of the 'non-poor' or a self perception of failure. The interesting element to be noted here is that shaming of the individual directly points towards the community since the

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individual is part of a strongly bound community. Many of the selected works describe the following process as shaming:

### *1) The identification as a member of certain specific groups*

Branding of a 'person with traditional caste based occupation' generates a deep seated shame among characters. Sankaran, in *Ninakkathumathy* (1970), Sankaran, cannot bear it if someone calls him, "Ambattan" (barber). But he is always called "Ambattan". Unable to bear this shame any longer he leaves his hometown to join the Indian army, where nobody knows his familial identity. A similar situation is found in the story, *Poisoned Bread* (1972). As part of shaming, the character of the lower caste is addressed by the landlord using the traditional occupation rather than his given name. This lower caste person's educated young grandson rebels against the shaming by the landlord. A different scenario of revealing real identity and resultant shame is seen in the film, *Tamanna* (1988). Tikku's humiliation is extreme when his step daughter finds out his real identity as a eunuch. Tikku's immediate reaction to this is a static posture with an open mouth and widened eyes - a frozen face. Later he cries aloud and runs away to hide himself from her. This is one of the most poignant scenes in projecting 'shame and disgrace' through the exposure of an unacceptable identity.

### *2) Rituals and shaming*

Being one of the oldest traditional societies in the world, India is a land with diverse culture, traditions, rituals, feasts, festivals and household ceremonies which occur round the year (Rinehart, 2004). Since these rituals are closely linked with religious and cultural tradition, people believe that the inability to perform them may bring some kind of wrath from God. A second perspective is that of grave shame while not carrying out the practices. If anyone for any reason withdraws from celebrating, s/he may be excluded from the community. The unsaid principle is that poverty should not be a barrier for celebrations. Raise money and make feast as the community expects, if not be ready for exclusion. The importance of celebrating festivals may be seen from the saying in Kerala about celebrating the state festival, Onam. "Kanam vittum onam unnam" (Even if you need to sell your land, you have to have onam lunch). A failure to celebrate may lead to shame and eventual exclusion from the community.

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The selected cinemas and stories from 1920s to 2010 show the importance of these practices and the shame attached with failure to perform the desired behavior. The common rituals shown in the analysis are treating guest, marriages, funeral rites, and festivals.

In *Idgah* (1927), Ameena, a poor old lady, is sad because she feels unable to entertain guests for Eid because of the shortage of money. She thinks, “Now just 8 paisa is left, 3 in Hamid’s pocket and 5 with me. I always come across this problem while celebrating Eid. Only Allah can save us. Everyone right from washerwoman, milk woman, barber’s wife and many more will come and ask for traditional dish of vermicelli and everyone asks for large amount of it, no one even considers a small amount. How can I hide from so many people and where will I hide?” Since it is so humiliating, Ameena wants to hide from everyone and dreads being excluded from and condemned by the community for failing to behave according to social expectations.

Another shaming occasion is the marriage ceremonies. In India, marriages are expensive irrespective of social class. Due to the dowry system and other expenses, the marriage of a girl in Indian conditions is very expensive and poor parents’ bear fire on their chest if the daughters are grownups yet not married. In *Chekuthan* (1950), the author shows the shame experienced by a mother to look at her adult daughter. Mariam cannot think of getting her daughter married due to the expenses including the dowry required for the marriage. The shame associated with a failure to carry out the essential practices lies more in the household. Therefore, the head of the household usually takes the decision about expenditure on marriages. In *Mother India* (1957), Radha’s mother-in-law takes a loan from the money lender to meet the marriage expenses of her son. She is forced to pledge their small land for security. Since she is ashamed of mortgaging her land for money, she conceals this fact until the neighbours talk about it.

**Neighbour:** Chachi, everyone tells that you’ve taken loan on your land from Sukhilal for Shamu’s marriage.

**Chachi:** This is a new rumor spread by those villagers who are jealous of me and my son. Tell him to come and ask me directly. **Then she goes inside and talks to herself:** Yes, I have taken loan, but everybody does that; we didn’t have any other option.

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In the above scene, shame occurs as a double-edged knife from both sides. As per the societal practice, Chachi might have been humiliated and excluded from the community if she had not spent enough money for the marriage of her only son. Since she was short of money, she took a loan from a money lender, which is also a shameful action as far as Chachi is concerned. Therefore, she tried to conceal this from everyone, but she was ashamed when her neighbor asked about it publicly. Such instances of shaming are quite common in the films and stories.

Inability to perform the final rites of a dead person in the family induces intense shame in the Indian culture. The poor are always troubled with such practices, but to avoid humiliation and social exclusion everybody does it. In the story, *The Babus of Nayanjaro* (1921), when his father dies, there is one dazzling outburst of funeral extravagance, and then insolvency. The property is sold to liquidate the debt. The little money left over is altogether insufficient to keep up the past ancestral splendors. This example shows how unnecessary expenditures lead to financial break down and humiliation. In *Mother India* (1957), the director brings a poor family's perception of being disgraced for not allowing the dead soul to attain Moksha (The heaven) by providing sweets to Brahmins. After Radha's mother-in-law's death, the family organise a feast to provide sweets to Brhamins. On this occasion, Birju, the younger son of Radha, asks her;

**Birju:** Mom, Why do you give them sweets when you don't give us bread to eat?

**Mom:** This is the tradition. We have to follow it.

**Background voice:** These are Brahmins, we have to feed the soul of the dead with sweets, but do not have food for those who are alive.

The underlying belief in such practices is that, being a higher caste, the Brhamins are next to God and if they've given sweets in the name of the dead person, the dead person's chances of attaining Moksha may be easier. Therefore, everyone practices this and failure may bring humiliation and social exclusion. The director has given a sarcastic touch with the 'background dialogue' in the above example to bring out the issue of poverty, the caste system and blind social practices.

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### 3) Debt, harassment and shame

As seen above, in *Mother India* (1957), many people take debt on land or any other source to carry out the family and community rituals. In the selected films, the importance of the association between poverty and debt are dealt with in almost all the films right from the earliest '*Do Bigha Zamin*'(1953) to the latest '*Peepli Live*' (2010). The scene from *Do Bigha Zamin* shows how the poor are being cheated inhumanly for taking loans from the rich. In the film, '*Harinar*', the rich Zamindar, made a false account for Shambu's loan and filed a case against him. The scene is Shambu's trial in the court.

**Shambhu:** *(to the judge)* I'm to give just Rs.65/-

**Advocate:** Reply to whatever being asked to you. Have you taken 5 sacks of rice from Harnar Singh?

**Shambhu:** But, my father has returned.....

**Advocate interferes):** Don't talk about your father. Have you paid the amount for the rice?

**Shambhu:** *(heads down)* no

**Ad:** Do you have to repay three years interest?

**Shambhu:** *(Confidently)* I have repaid two years interest.

**Ad:** Do you have any receipts/proof?

**Shambhu:** The accountant has not given me anything?

**Ad:** If not, what is the proof? Or any witness?

**Shambhu:** *(helplessly, looks above)* proof? Witness? God is the only witness.

*(Everyone laughs at him and the court ordered Shambhu to pay the amount back to Harnar in three months time)*

The interaction between the money lender and a poor person can always be a process of invoking shame. Money lenders are interested in humiliating the poor publicly. The films with a focus on poverty depict at least one scene of this stream of interactions. The intensity of humiliation may be seen in the responses of Joseph in a 2003 film, *Kasthooriman*. When the money lender decides to take away the furniture instead of a month's interest, Joseph tells him;

**Joseph:** Please don't shame me

**Money lender:** So, do you have shame?

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In the above instance, both admit the fact that being poor is a reason to be ashamed. Withdrawing or hiding is a typical behavior of a poor person who owes money because of the fear of being humiliated in public. Therefore, the simplest way to escape from this situation is to pull out from the situation. Shame is painful to the self, but more painful if experienced in public. Most of the selected films are rural based and the characters are poor farmers. Hence these films show the functionality of poverty and its impact on the natural relation between man and the soil beneath his feet.

Sometimes harsh poverty may even convince people to take things on credit from grocery shops. This process and the consequences are one of the crucial situations represented in the films and stories to evoke shame in the person. Neeta, in *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1968), being a college going girl, faces public humiliation from the shop keeper for her family taking grocery on debt. She responds with her head down, or by diverting her look and finally ceasing to attend her college.

#### 4) *The state of low income, no income and unemployment*

The states of low income, no-income and unemployment are recurrent themes in films and stories. All these aspects are covered in Dasan's narration about his pathetic condition – from low income to no income - to Balettan in the film, *Nadodokaattu* (1987):

“The financial condition in my house worsened after the death of my father. My mother had to sell our house and land to complete my education. Poor mom! She thought one day I will find a good job and bring her to me. She stays with a distant relative, almost like a maid servant. Her only hope is that one day I will fetch her lots of gold and money like an Arab King. I'm tired Baletta. (*Weeps*) I've never dreamt of a big bungalow or a car, but dreaming of a small job so that I can take care of my mom – at least to send enough money for her medicines . That's all my dreams. (*Dasan weeps, puts his hands on eyes, then cries*)”.

Through this film, the director gives a picture of the issue of unemployment of the time. A number of films and stories, especially between the late 70s to late 80s, portray the core issues of unemployment and the resultant humiliation and frustration of the educated youths in India.

### **Coping strategies to poverty-shame**

Human beings develop a number of coping behaviors and defense strategies against shame, in order to protect one's self-image, self-confidence, self-worth and inner security. The coping strategies are specific to the individual in consideration with his cultural background, temperament and personality structure (Kaufman, 2004; Nathanson, 1992). The films and literature suggest that the characters use constructive and emotion – oriented approaches to deal with the shame of poverty. The theoretical background of this classification is Nathanson's (1992) 'compass of shame' and 'stress coping styles' of Lazarus and Folkman (1984).

*Emotion-oriented strategies* involve actions which aim to remove only the emotional imbalance, but not the condition which results in the imbalance. In the present paper since the reason for shame is poverty, the strategies which do not focus on removing poverty may not remove the actual problem. However, such actions enable the 'shame-self' to avoid shame or be free from further shaming. Hence withdrawal behavior, attacking behavior, suicides etc come under this category. The majority of the characters in the films and stories studied adopt this approach to deal with shame. The self is saved, but their actions do not generate any substantial change to the existing condition of poverty.

'Disintegration of the self' (Nathanson, 1993) to different degrees of intensity is frequently observed among characters as a response to shame. Some of the emotion-oriented strategies shown in the analysis are expressions of fear, distress, rage, anger, resentment, helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, inferiority, lack of self-confidence, isolation, loneliness, and withdrawal. However, the highest level of disintegration was that of the characters destroying the existence of the 'self' and 'others' – through committing suicide and homicide, and attempting suicide.

Shame is one of the five components of suicide (Breed, 1972). Vijaya, a destitute widow (*Thulabharam*, 1967), kills her three children and attempts suicide because she cannot bear to see her children starving. The continuous torture and shaming from the money lender makes Joseph (Kathooriman, 2003) take poison. Omana (Vidheyan, 1993) thinks of committing suicide when she is dishonored by the feudal landlord. Hariprasad's wife commits suicide (Subarna

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Rekha, 1965) because she cannot tolerate the incessant cries of her children for food. Neeli (*Neelakkuyil*, 1956), commits suicide because she is devastated by her loneliness and dishonorable life as a result of social exclusion. Chellama (*Kalli Chellamma*, 1967) too commits suicide because of her feelings of loneliness. *Peepli Live* (2010), the latest film in the selected category also discusses how suicide could be the last resort to save the self from the painful experiences of shame in poverty and distress. The suicidal tendency of the characters may be an escape from the self and others from shame, as Lester (1997) has pointed out.

Contrary to the above descriptions, an interesting observation of the films is the use of humour to deal strategically with shame. Unlike stories, the selected films use humour as a defense to stand against shame. For instance, the film, *Nadodikkattu* (1987) portrays the social issues of the time with humour. The core issues of unemployment, poor peoples' vulnerability to constant cheating, aspirations to work in the Gulf, and disappointment with the educated youth are represented all the way through its comic script. The film, *Katha Parayumbol* (2003) also depicts poverty associated shame with its humourous script. Laughter and humor are effective means of reducing intense negative affect, particularly shame (Kaufman, 1996). The shared enjoyment experienced through humour attenuates the shame discomfort of the self. While cracking a joke, the self gains command of the situation, making others laugh instead of being laughed at by others (Kaufman, 1996).

*Constructive strategies:* Constructive strategies are tasks which aim to remove the emotional imbalance and the factors which caused the imbalance. Therefore, the removal of poverty becomes relevant to being free from poverty induced shame. In shame, the honor of the self is lost. Therefore, to defend and come out of the shame, re-establishing lost honor is essential. For this, a direct action on the threatening environment is necessary (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). In the selected films and stories, some of the characters approach the shame experiences with this frame of mind. The reaction of Gandhi, in the film *Challenge* (1984) is a good constructive strategy to deal with shame of poverty. When Gandhi attends a job interview, he is seen to be ill treated by Ram Mohan Rao, the interviewer. The reason behind this ill-treatment is that



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Gandhi's application arrived without a stamp as Gandhi could not afford to buy a stamp. In this situation, an ashamed Gandhi counter- attacks:

**Ram Mohan Rao:** If you are so intelligent, why don't you use this intelligence in earning money?

**Gandhi:** Sir, Every person has his own aim in his life. Earning money is not an aim for anybody. In that case, earning money is not at all difficult.

**Ram Mohan Rao:** Don't argue like a fool. Poor people like you always argue in this way to satisfy your ego. You are poor and you are destined to be poor.

**Gandhi:** If that is the case, I will show you how I can change my destiny. I will earn 50 Lakhs in 5 years. It's my **CHALLENGE**.

In the above scene, the insults result in humiliation; in turn it provokes Gandhi's pride. The humiliation by the officer prompts Gandhi to challenge him, asserting that he will also make money. In the film, Gandhi works hard and earns 50 lakhs in five years. Though he is ashamed for being poor, the humiliation prompts him to develop his aspirations. The counter-indicators discussed in the next section bear a close link to constructive strategies.

A combination of emotional and constructive strategies may be effective in dealing with people who experience shame of poverty. While emotional approaches heal the self, constructive strategies heals the mass.

### **Counter- indicators of poverty shame**

Although so far we have discussed the negative feelings of the characters in hardship, their life is not fully lived with these unconstructive thoughts. This is most aptly captured by a Marathi language proverb '*amiri aali tari maazu naka; garibi aali tari laazu naka*', which literally means 'do not be arrogant of your richness; do not be ashamed of your poverty'. In the films and literature on few occasions, the characters counter-attack the existence of 'shame of poverty' with pride, self-respect, dignity, resistance and a considerable amount of happiness. The most enriching scenes in the films and literature are when the characters come back to power to retaliate the self's negative feelings of shame. In *Mother India* (1957), the way Radha honors her womanhood in harsh poverty when Sukhilala, the money lender, approaches her with sexual intentions is an inspiring scene for poor women who fall prey to such temptations.

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**Sukhilala:** I feel very pity for the children, (*to children*) take this gram and eat

**Birju:** I will not eat your gram; I'll eat what my mother cooks

**Sukhi lala to Radha :** Why are you making your children suffer? (*again to children*) take this and eat.

**Radha to children:** Throw it away. Whom do you want? Your mother or food?

A disgraced Sukhilala walks away.

Radha over powers Sukhilala's intentions and in turn Sukhilala becomes ashamed. Radha is not ready to compromise her honor and dignity for poverty. Another dimension where a woman subdues poverty associated shame is depicted in the film, *Kasthooriman* (2003). The way Priya earns a livelihood for her family and supports her studies and how she feels proud in her activities is an excellent counter indication. She is confident to say that she is a maid servant and works at different houses. For example, let us look at the following scene:

**Sajan:** Is that your house or some relatives?

**Priya:** No. It is the house where I work for as a part time servant.

**Sajan:** (*taunting*) don't worry, I will not tell anyone

**Priya:** No need to keep this as a secret, many in this college knew that.

**Sajan:** (*lowered voice*) I never expected this.

**Priya:** Not only one house, I am the part time domestic help for five houses and I earn Rs.5000 pm.

In the above instance, Sajan's intention is to humiliate Priya by projecting her poverty. However, Priya's confidence astonishes Sajan and he is ashamed to have thought of disgracing Priya. The above instance shows that poverty and a lower status job need not always induce shame, rather one may take pride in his/her state of living.

Reconciliation with the negative feelings of the self to get pride is seen in the story *Idgah* (1927). Hamid and his friends walk around the fair after the worship at the mosque on Eid. The author explains Hamid's reflections while seeing his friends spend money;

“Hamid envies his friend’s toys—they’re made of clay—one fall and they’ll break in pieces. But his eyes look at them hungrily and he wishes he could hold them in his hands for just a moment or two. His hands stretch without his wanting to stretch them. But young boys are not givers. Poor Hamid doesn’t get to touch the toys. After the toys it is sweets. Someone buys sesame seed candy, others gulabjammuns or halva. They smack their lips with relish. Only Hamid is left out. The luckless boy has at least three paise; why doesn’t he also buy something to eat? He looks with hungry eyes at the others.”

While debating with his friends about the uselessness of toys, they come across a hardware store. Hamid sees a pincer out there and he decides to buy a pincer for his grandmother which would be very helpful for her in preparing food. The story continues,

“Hamid stops to see a pincer. It occurs to him that his granny does not have a pincer. Each time she bakes chapattis, the iron plate burns her hands. If he were to buy her a pincer she would be very pleased. She would never burn her fingers; it would be a useful thing to have in the house. What use are toys? They are a waste of money. You can have some fun with them but only for a very short time. Then you forget all about them.”

Hamid takes control over his decisions. Though initially he is ashamed and longs for toys and toffees, he cannot rationalize the necessities of toys in his impoverished condition. He opts instead for a useful thing for the family. The behavior of Hamid is a good example of counter-indications of shame of poverty. Another element in his behavior is that he prioritises the familial need over his personal need. This may be attributed to the collectivistic nature of Indian culture, where the individual works for the family honor.

*Shamelessness* could also be considered as a counter-indicator of shame. The films and stories suggest that begging is a shameless action. In the story, *Hunger* (Telugu) the persistent following of the beggar in spite of the humiliation is a shameless behavior. Two proverbs from Malayalam are noteworthy to explain shamelessness. “Nanamillathe nedunna dhanam nanathe

mattidum". This proverb could be roughly translated as 'the wealth that one acquires shamelessly can rescue one from shame'. This indicates the great paradox if one reserves oneself from certain activities as 'shameful'; such person is likely to remain in the original state without much progress. This proverb is often used by elders to encourage younger ones who exhibit inhibitions to enter into traditional jobs fearing being viewed by others as 'shameful' activities into which one is forced to enter because of no other alternatives. Another proverb which is common in many Indian cultures concerns the rationalization for remaining in the state of shame. In Malayalam this is with vulgar expression that 'namamillathavante moottil oru aalu mulachal athum avanu thanalanu'. This is also an expression of shamelessness. In Oriya this is if a person who has pimple on their face and does not take treatment for the same claims the shade of such pimple to be useful. The proverb shows the forbearance attitude towards shame from the one who experiences the same.

People living in poverty are not necessarily overwhelmed with a feeling of shame. In other words, poverty itself isn't the reason for shame in most cases but rather, they like the rest of us feel ashamed when they feel helpless or inferior. Therefore *happiness* of the characters in the midst of hardship may also be considered as a counter-indicator of the shame experiences. Few examples are *Do Biga Zamin* (1953), *Chemmeen* (1965), *Nadodikkattu* (1987), *Salaam Bombay* (1988), *Kasthooriman* (2003), *Kalli Chellamma* (1967), *Katha Parayumbol* (2007), *Kanchivaram* (2008), and *Tamanna* (1998). The characters shown in these movies have to live in such abject conditions that they should feel ashamed or choose to wallow in self-pity, the chances of their survival are slim to none. However, regardless of shame and poverty, the characters enjoy freedom, happiness and have desires and dreams. In the midst of poverty, they sing, dance and enjoy life. Happiness and entertainment are part of their life. The films *Salaam Bombay*, *Tamanna* and *Do Biga Zamin* also portray poor people as happy and enjoying life despite experiencing shame and exclusion.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to show, through the analysis of cinema, selected stories and proverbs, how poverty induced shame is constructed in the Indian cultural context. Table 1

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summarizes our key findings. The most important of these is regarding the nature of collective identity of individuals. Such an identity forces individuals to 'protect' others in the immediate surroundings (such as women, children) in order to save their pride. Often, poverty creates conditions in which such family/community obligations cannot be met, which in turn results in the shame felt by individuals.

**Table 1 Cultural conceptions of poverty associated shame in India: An exhibit**

<b>Key elements of individual-society interplay in Indian cultural context</b>	<b>How it constructs shame</b>	<b>Poverty induced shame</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individuality nurtured within joint-family and caste system develops a sense of obligation for immediate surroundings, but depersonalization of those 'not belonging to us'.</li><li>• Collective identity works within the framework of hierarchical/status-based society.</li><li>• Possession of resources brings an additional layer to the status-oriented society.</li><li>• Seamlessness of tradition (e.g. fatalism) and modernity (e.g. aspiration), to which individual is continuously exposed, creates multiple fluid identities shaped by situations.</li><li>• Elders and guests command special treatment and respect in traditional settings.</li><li>• Patriarchal structure along with family values creates ambivalent response to women.</li><li>• Wide-spread religious values reinforce traditional norms.</li><li>• Close-knit communitarian living reinforced by geographically proximate housing in rural areas and slums in urban areas forces frequent informal interaction.</li><li>• Oral culture and informality encourages social exchanges based on trust and mutuality.</li><li>• State and formal institutions are largely subsumed within societal forces, and individual develops an alienation from these institutions.</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Shame experienced differently within group and with reference to those outside the group.</li><li>- Status-based interactions allow dependency culture (thus muted shame), particularly in the exchange of decommodified goods.</li><li>- In traditionalism, saving pride and honor is like 'do or die', often leading to disintegration of self.</li><li>- Shame used as a norm to enforce values of groups (women, caste, children, elders etc).</li><li>- Shame is primarily experienced because of identity (e.g. belonging to lower caste) than about resource possession. But, loss of resources brings change in status.</li><li>- Hiding the identity helps one to transcend ascribed status. Thus, fear of being shamed by others forces the poor person to lose identity.</li><li>- Multiple identities allow poor people to act 'shamelessly' to overcome poverty.</li><li>- Rituals are obligatory practices towards others in close-knit society. Failure may bring ostracism of various levels from the community.</li><li>- Inability to keep word (e.g. loan repayment) within group, than with formal institutions, brings intense shame.</li><li>- Happiness, being part of a collective culture, lets shame cope with lost honour.</li></ul>

Dependency culture in every-day social exchanges generates muffled shame in the individuals belonging to the lowest rung (e.g. landlord-labourer). Such muffling, rather than rebelling is typical of non-Western culture with an aim not to 'disrupt harmony' (Trommsdorff and Rothbaum, 2008). Thus, self-taught standards through societal reinforcements (e.g. religious practices) often generate greater shame than self-chosen standards, which may give rise to the emotion of pride (Creighton, 1990; Mesquita & Karasawa, 2004). Here, the ontological difficulty to distinguish between 'individual experiencing' and 'individual expressing' comes in the way of our understanding. This is because what emotion is to be expressed or suppressed is often regulated by culture. In non-Western culture, where suppression of negative emotion is emphasized, one needs to find under what conditions such suppression may be occurring. Our analysis of films and texts shows that such emotional expression is regulated depending on whether the individual is behaving within the group of social affinity (e.g. anger arising out of shame expressed to wife by a man) or 'Other' (e.g. subservient behavior to get livelihood with employer).

An important issue that has emerged from this analysis concerns the difficulty to pin point the 'formal object' (Engelen et al, 2009) that evokes shame. Our analysis shows that often identity of the individual (e.g. belonging to certain caste) rather than being in the state of poverty generates shame. This is evidenced by many episodes in films and literature where a poor person living in poverty is not overwhelmed with a feeling of shame. Many poor people worked 'shamelessly' with the hope that they could overcome poverty. On the other hand, in some instances, a poor person found no reason that their agency could do anything with the ascribed status (except hiding the identity), which remained as the 'formal object' of shame. However, this aspect requires more empirical investigation.

Through the analysis of film and texts, we have seen many instances where different coping strategies are adopted by individuals subjected to shame. Interestingly, a substantial number of films and stories depicted 'disintegration of self' in the form of suicide, primarily that of female characters. This also has parallels with the growing number of farmer suicides that have taken place in India in the last decade due to agrarian crisis. This issue points says something about the effectiveness of coping strategies depending on how long a person has remained in the state of poverty.

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