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SOCIETY INDUCED IDENTITY CHANGES IN DUTCHMAN BY AMIRI BARAKA

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“No man is an island” says John Donne, it’s true in reality, we live in groups as a society, influencing and get influenced by the people around us. This influence sometimes changes the basic qualities of an individual like that of identity. Social conditions do have an impact on the so called definitions of femininity and masculinity. The characters of the play *Dutchman* undergo these changes.

Dutchman was written by an African American writer Amiri Baraka then known as LeRoi Jones. He is an actor, teacher, theatre producer, theatre director, writer, activist, and poet. He also served in the US Air force during 1934-2014 as a sergeant. Baraka taught in state university of New York at Buffalo and state university of New York at Stony Brook. He received PEN/Beyond Margins Award in 2008 for *Tales of the Out and the Gone*. *Dutchman* is a play written by him and was staged in 1964, when he was about to embrace Black Nationalism. The play was considered as the political allegory representing the relationship between the Black and White. It won Obie Award and was made into a film in 1967. This one-act play is basically based on Racism, picturing the Black and White relationship. Though the play is a short one it speaks volumes on it.

The setting is in the underground belly of the city in a subway car and the mood is gloomy. Luna, white woman in her thirties approaches Clay, a Black man in his twenties and starts the conversation, she perfectly guesses the personal details of Clay which triggered him to hear more from her or continue the conversation, it is not that he did not fall for her. Luna seductively speaks with Clay to what he gives in but when suddenly Luna started to criticize his race Clay is angered. Luna further speaks amorously and this time Clay couldn’t control and thinks of killing her, before he could do that Luna stabs him to death and approaches another Black man. This justifies the title *Dutchman*, the ship which was cursed to sail eternally telling that these kinds of incidents will be happening without an end. The social unrest prevailed in America made Whites to prejudice the African American male’s stereotype and the consequences, and the male and female identity changes. Luna makes a perfect guess on his residency, with whom he is living, his interest in poetry, and his preference in lukewarm sugarless tea and his personal secret as well. She could even guess his friend's Phony English accent. These details tell us that Luna had a well framed attitude on Black men stereotype. Black men were expected to be alpha males, Aggressive, violent and swaggering, Media too depicted them in this way and society expected them to do nothing than this.

“You look like you live in New Jersey with your parents trying to grow a beard, that’s what. You look like you have been reading Chinese poetry and drinking lukewarm sugarless tea, you tried to make it with your sister when you were ten” (Baraka 2).

Clay flirted with Luna but didn't give into all her accusations for who he is. When Luna abused him emotionally his confidence turned as feeling sorry for who he is. Here Luna, a female, did not possess the so called feminine definitions like graceful delicate or gentle rather she was coarse accusing Clay and she was not gentle as she murdered Clay in the climax. Her mind was loaded with rational ideas influenced by the society and there she stands with her identity changed with zero sympathy or empathy. Common belief is that Men go

behind Women but in *Dutchman* this got reversed, Finally Luna orders the co-passengers to throw clay's body out of the train. She will continue to live like an innocent girl without getting punished. This has a connection with reality as well. More than hundred African-Americans in the US were shot to death by the police and 30% of them were unarmed. Statistics say that though whites were shot in large numbers it is only 49% in 62% of white population. Though blacks, being 14% of the population 24% of them are shot. The probability is Black are killed three times to White. Research on this goes with white police who looks at Black as a threat. Taller Black Men are the first victims, like that of *Dutchman* stereotypical views lead to the death of many Blacks in the United States of America, like Luna many police men were unpunished tells the statistics except some cases like that of Walter Scott. Amiri Baraka ends the play with the note that this kind of injustice will continue like *Dutchman* ship. This happens all around the world, even in South India, North Indian males were killed following the false news that they are into kidnapping children, through Whatsapp. People believed this fake news because they have already set a stereotype that those young Men especially who takes pan were harmful. But when attitude of people gets changed and when they stop prejudicial actions, when people stop making judgments these things will get gradually decreased and can end unlike *Dutchman*. Know the truth for yourself, Practising this may encourage man not to be a victim of social unrests and to get his Identity changed or stop him from making prejudicial imaginations on stereotype of Men and Women. When something happens between two sides definitely at least a single mistake will be there on the victim as well, an interview regarding the death of Blacks stated that due to implicit bias police shot unarmed Blacks but the conclusion stated that the victim also exposes the implicit bias which triggers the implicit bias in policemen resulting in a brutal mess, here the fear of victim is misconceived by the other as crime or the prejudice of the other makes him take an instinctive action. Thus it is a double sided action which could be stopped by not making prejudice on both the sides as already said.

Works Cited:

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