

**POLITENESS: A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS ON AMITAV GHOSH'S
SEA OF POPPIES**

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Abstract

Different approaches in language means different levels of appreciation. Pragmatics is one among such approaches which spans text over context, form over function of language. In the analysis of literary work pragmatic diverse in different levels such as; conversation analysis, speech acts, co operative principle and finally politeness level. Politeness is one among the most interesting and radical interpretation which explores the character from psychological, cultural and sociological perspective. The words get new meaning and contexts get new interpretations. Based on the theories of Sperber and Wilson and Leech selected texts are taken for analysis. It's not about behavioral politeness rather linguistic politeness. 'Sea of poppies' by Amitav Ghosh is rich with cross cultural and postcolonial atmosphere. This would open a new level of appreciation of the novel in the context politeness theory.

KeyWords: *pragmatics, politeness theory, functions of language, post colonial and cross cultural, different theories*

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Introduction:

Language is always alive. The reason is nothing but it is an outflow of a living being either human or animal. If it is alive it has got a unique quality of creating effects in wherever it is being used. Hence the impact or effect of language created is depended mostly on the contexts where it is being used. An unknown language can never act as an instrument of effective communication. Pragmatics is branch of linguistics where text is understood and interpreted on the basis of contexts. Thus language can be passive as well as dynamic depended upon the contexts. Contexts make the communication effective or non effective. According to Sperber and Wilson context is defined as the set of premises used to interpret an utterance (15). It is a social, psychological and intellectual construct where the hearer and speaker becomes the catalyst of interpretation. *Sea of Poppies* has been by Amitav Ghosh is known for its pragmatic significance. The different varieties of characters and conversations have been used for analysis. Hence one who speaks and hears becomes the characters in the communication. Communication is between writer and reader, speaker and hearer, text and mind etc. In literary work all three elements are significant demand a space for interpretation.

1.1 Significance of the Topic

Politeness in linguistics has nothing to do with the social behavior of the person, it would rather explore the choices that are made in language use, the linguistic expressions that give people space and show a friendly attitude to them. Brown and Levinson are the pioneers of politeness theory said that in order to get into a social relationship we have to acknowledge and show an awareness of the face, the public self image of the people whom we address. At the same time they wanted to be respected and maintain their face.

Sociologically and culturally this element is unique in each situation and context. The very basic of human relationship is mutual respect expressed through polite behavior and words in expressions. The words which are used imprudently and nonsensically create great harms and destroys the bond of family, persons, politically national and international relationships. The words are taken as the expressions of human mind. Characters in the novel are copy of real human characters. Hence the politeness in this analysis explores the real face of the characters.

There are two aspects for face: Negative face and positive face. The speaker should respect the feelings, expectations of the hearer and should avoid face threatening acts (FTAs) (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In other words he should maintain a positive self-image. This is called positive face. Positive politeness strategies aim to save positive face. It aims at showing closeness and solidarity, appealing to friendship and making others feel comfortable by considering hearers interest, tastes and needs and both having common goal ultimately. They may share personal information, nicknames, common dialect, slang and gossip. The common strategy is to seek agreement and avoid disagreement. Negative politeness on the other hand respects the hearer's negative face or redresses the FTAs with positive politeness. Negative politeness strategies keep distance between interlocutors and avoiding intruding on each others territory. It is used to avoid imposing and presuming and giving option to the hearers even to say no. The speaker is bothered about other's time and concerns using apology and hesitation.

Leech has analyzed the politeness maxims more systematically in different categories of maxims than the former one. He lists six maxims such as; tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy. The first two forms a pair like third and fourth. Tact maxim focuses on the hearer and says 'minimize cost to other and maximize benefit to other'. This maxim is having a close similarity with Brown Levinson's politeness strategies. The second maxim generosity is the other side of the tact; minimize benefit to self and maximize cost to self. The second pair approbation and modesty focuses on words of praise to avoid disagreement. Approbation minimizes dispraise of other and maximizes praise of other whereas modesty on the other hand minimizes praise of self and maximizes dispraise of self. The last two does not make a pair and leech gives less important to these two. The maxim 'agreement' minimizes disagreement between self and the other and

maximizes the agreement. The maxim 'sympathy' keeps the same tone of minimizing the antipathy between self and other and maximizes sympathy between the two (107).

Both theories have similarity and difference in their approach and perspective. If Brown and Levinson depend more on social psychology for the analysis, Leech has dominance over the cultural aspect of the society. Thus it is more open and having endless pair of categories. However both emphasize that politeness is a pragmatic phenomenon and lies not in the form and the words alone rather in their function and intended social meaning. It considers not only text but also context where it is expressed. At the same time contexts play a major role in determining different aspects of politeness. Hence there are three types of contexts which have been influencing both the speakers and hearers. They are situational, social and cultural contexts.

1.2 Politeness and Literary Discourse

Politeness theories were developed in order to analyze conversational interactions in natural context. But it is also used to analyze the conversations between characters in fiction as well as interaction between writer and reader. Hence there are two levels of literary analysis; Narrator and reader level and character's level

1.2.1. Narrator and Reader Level

The author and reader level analysis presuppose a relationship between author and reader. The reader is imposed to spend his time for reading at the same time author makes use different techniques to keep the reader in tact with reader with less FTA. This is a one way interaction where author builds up relationship with reader on different levels such as; choice of topic, intertextual elements, figures of speech, choice of methods of narration and so on. By all these means author maintain the reader keep on reading without FTA (Black 74).

Choice of Topics

The subject of *sea of Poppies* has never been a matter of dispute or offence to any of the readers. It has been selected and shortlisted for booker prize and been appreciated all over the world. Though Indian story it has a world wide appeal in subject matter since it has been dealing with a historical event, opium war. For historians it appeals very much especially of getting information on Gazhipur opium factory, opium trade of British India,

sea voyages, royal families and civil systems in British India etc. Romance, adventures, fight, devotion etc. are also part of the narration. The detailed narration in this regard is really a contribution to the world history.

Romance (81-83; ch. 4)

Opium trade (75-77; ch. 4)

Sea voyage (10-23; ch. 1)

Intertextual Element

The use of language is considered to be a matter of FTA. The mixture of Hindi, Chinese, Arabic, French, Bengali, Bojpuri etc. seems to be an offence in the light of post colonial studies for the so called native English readers whereas it is very less offensive to the Indian readers. Moreover he has given translation of each foreign word except common Hindi words.

Khul ke bataibo – tell me truthfully

Tu kahe aisan kail karala? Why do you act like this? (279; ch. 12).

Mai – bap, humke maf karelu... forgive me, master... (56; ch. 3).

Hase ka ka batba re? what're you laughing at?, Josh dikhawat chalatba! Show him you have some spirit too (280; ch. 12).

Sab hazir hai? All present! (403; ch. 18).

Ham nahin tal sakelan- I cant bear it, I cant (408; ch. 19).

Figures of speech

Metaphors and ironies are used to keep interest in reading. They are less offensive as far as a post colonial reader is concerned.

Deeti narrowed her eyes and spat back: Be careful. My jora is waiting above.

Your jora? Said Bhyro Singh. You can forget about that scavenging piece of filth (476; ch.21).

There's nothing here that's new to me, he said, smiling. I've seen the grain-bag and I know it's full... (477; ch. 21)

'I going to kill that bastard

Who

Crowle

With what?' Neel was tempted to laugh. 'Your hands?' 'you wait, see' (466; ch. 21)

Method of Narration

Regarding the method of narration he has employed an element of magical realism throughout the novel however historical facts are the thread linking all the stories in the novel. This maintains suspense in the novel as well as put space for interference of supernatural elements.

Did you see that? He said to Jodu. Did you see?

What?

That cat jumped ship: now there's a sign if ever I saw one (366; ch. 16)

Jodu – was also preparing to embark on the journey that would bring him athwart the bows of Ibis and into Deeti's shrine (61; ch. 3)

Your arrival is indeed a happy coincidence, and it would have pleased my father, the late Raja, who was, as you know, a great believer in signs and omens... (83; ch. 4)

1.2.2. Characters' Level

Politeness between characters are analyzed in the areas of polite interactions, quarrels etc. There are many polite interactions in the conversational discourses. How far the characters are using FTA is analyzed based on the conversations.

Ka bhail? What's the matter? Working alone again? How long can you carry on like this? You need a son, to give you a helping hand. You're not barren, after all... (6; ch. 1).

Chandan Singh is employing FTA whereas Deeti keeps positive face without making FTA according to Brown and Levinson. As far as Leech's list of maxim is concerned Deeti uses the maxim of generosity where she minimizes benefit to self and maximizes cost to self by keeping silence without responding to Chandan Singh. Hence Deeti is a woman of Politeness.

Ey- re Kalua, she said, that man of mine is unwell at the factory; he has to be brought home (60; ch. 3)

She never shows FTA to Kalua and redresses her negative face into a positive face by applying maxim of sympathy where she minimizes the antipathy to self and others and maximizes sympathy to self and others. She is sympathetic towards kalua, her husband and herself and minimizes the antipathy while approaching kalua, a low cast ox cart man.

Do you mean slaves, sir?

Mr. Burnham winced. Why no, Reid. Not slaves – coolies (79; ch. 4)

Zachary applies FTA towards his ship owner in a matter of slavery showing his negative face to Burnham by asking such a question. But Burnham showing his positive face applies the maxim of agreement where he minimizes the disagreement to self and others and maximizes agreement to self and to others.

The ship owner smiled, baring a set of large, sparkling teeth. Well do you feel up to giving me a tour of my new vessel? (73; ch. 4).

Burnham keeps his positive face without showing negative face and appeals to other with maxim of approbation where he minimizes the dispraises to other and maximizes the praises to other. Hence he makes though negative face redresses himself and shows positive face applying different maxims.

Will you be sailing back to Baltimore soon...? Neel asked. He was about to add my lord but caught himself just in time (110; ch. 5)

Neel wanted to show his positive face by using maxim of approbation to minimize dispraise to others and maximizes praises to others. But he was showing unknowingly his negative face by applying FTA in the form of asking irrespective question.

Before he could stop himself, he said aloud: Good afternoon, Mr. Reid.

That a convict should have the spleen to address an officer was so incredible to Bhyro Singh that he slammed his lathi on Neel's shoulder, knocking him to his knees: B'henchod! You dare look the sahib in the eye? (384; ch. 17)

Neel shows his negative face in the midst of adversities by calling the officer by name and looking at him. Though his behavior was a maxim of approbation minimizing dispraise to others and maximizing praises to others, have been taken as FTA and negative face by others. He was labeled as impolite man in the novel; however he has been a polite Raja of Raskali.

1.3. Findings and Suggestions

1. The author has deliberately explored to a great extent the linguistic possibilities of politeness principles
2. The characters though seem to be impolite linguistically are really polite in character.
3. Bilingual language has been used to violate positive face of the readers from post colonial perspective
4. Politeness is never depended upon the nationality of the characters. Both native and foreign characters good and bad in showing politeness in different occasions.
5. Woman characters and educated characters show positive face always whereas uneducated as well as male characters fail in this level.
6. The heroine Deeti and the American slave woman's son Zachary seem to be the most polite characters in the novel.
7. Literary analysis is incomplete without pragmatic analysis.
8. Politeness theory can be applied to all characters for analysis.

1.4 Conclusion

Language is always relevant in the context of communication and characters. The producer and receiver through a medium of language make the communication possible. Hence it is purely a contextual, functional and involves different agents. Any kind of functional implications of language study is incomplete unless a pragmatic approach is employed. In literary work this approach brings out a new level of appreciation and criticism.

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