



RESEARCH PAPER**Voicing the Unvoiced: Exploring the Themes of Prostitution through Verbal Irony in *Gangubai Kathiawadi***

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ABSTRACT

Using the theoretical framework of I.A Richards' New Criticism, the researcher reveals the covert realities of society and the social treatment towards prostitutes through the plot of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's movie "Gangubai (2022)". The researcher, by depicting verbal irony in conversations, signifies the character's delineation, social critique, and narrative subversion in the movie. These conversational moments are taken as the primary context for the research analysis which follows the qualitative research methodology. It decodes the social conditioning of prostitutes, labeled untouchables and unacceptable, by evaluating the pretentious morality of well-reputed patriarchy and socially accepted against fairgrounds of true morality. It also signifies the truth of political power dynamics by revealing the influencing capabilities of prostitutes. Thus, any fair and moral individual, capable of social guardianship should be given the responsibility of society for prosperity, moral and social peace irrespective of any pathetic conditioned codification. Other practical principles of New Criticism including formal analysis, attentive reading, and attention to textual ambiguity are also implemented by the researcher.

KEYWORDS Political Power Dynamics, Pretentious Morality, Prostitutes, Social Peace

Introduction

In the modern world of globalization, media is a noteworthy medium of creating awareness, and amusement and reflecting the reality of man through different portrayals. Visual media is particularly the most audience-appreciated and quite an engaging platform. Films, dramas, and other T.V. shows take inspiration from the reality of society, man, and his circumstances. Plato says, "Every piece of art is an imitation of reality". By the praxis of Plato's philosophy, an Indian film director, Sanjay Leela Bhansali depicted the reality of morality, unveiling the corrupted instincts with the embellished appearances of ideal morality. Parallel to the unveiling of immorality, there are also moral instincts oppressed under the adorned appearances and labels of immoral, untouchable, or unacceptable ones. The film "Gangubai" directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali is a biographical inspiration from the noteworthy star of the pleasure world of Delhi. There is the portrayal of prostitution, which is considered an immoral ideology, and the tradition in the pretentious society of ideal morality. The resilience and strength of women who found themselves in similar situations are highlighted in the movie through the character of Gangubai. It explores her journey from being a young girl sold into slavery to rising to prominence in Mumbai's criminal underworld.

The topic of prostitution is complicated and frequently divisive in society, and opinions on it can differ greatly according on one's cultural, religious, ethical, and legal

background. Prostitution is either strictly prohibited or extensively controlled in many locations, and individuals who engage in it frequently face legal repercussions. . Men and women in the subcontinent have different perspectives about prostitution because of the strong influence of socioeconomic, religious, and cultural issues. Associating prostitution with moral depravity and social disgrace, traditional values and religious teachings frequently project a stigmatizing and shameful image of the profession. Because prostitution reflects ingrained patriarchal systems and gender norms that commodify and objectify women's bodies, women who engage in it may suffer harsh condemnation and exclusion.

Some people only see prostitution from the perspective of criminal activity, emphasizing problems like human trafficking, exploitation, and organized crime. Others fight for the rights and safety of sex workers and urge that sex work should be recognized as a genuine vocation. Prostitution is morally wrong in many religions and moral systems because it is seen as sinful, immoral, or demeaning. We can see prostitution as something that comes with social entitlement and status. Some men view prostitution as a business trade of sexual services with no deeper ethical implications because patriarchal beliefs frequently normalize the objectification of women. Another element that might be involved is economics. The problem of prostitution in the Indian subcontinent is multifaceted and has strong cultural, sociological, and economic roots. Prostitution is practiced in many different ways throughout nations such as Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka; it can take the shape of organized brothel networks or street-based solicitation. Even in nations where there are legal structures, rules are rarely properly implemented, and practices frequently operate in the gray area. The linguistic and cultural variety of the area is reflected in this movie.

Through an analysis of verbal irony's portrayal of prostitution in the movie "Gangubai Kathiawadi," the research highlights the intricate relationship between public perception and the realities faced by individuals who work in the sex trade. Therefore, verbal irony (a literary technique) in which the meaning of a word is supposed to be different from its literal meaning is quite effective. Through an analysis of its paper, the study reveals how the main character, Gangubai, used irony as a weapon to carve out a place of empowerment and agency within a profession tainted by exploitation and marginalization, as well as a shield against societal contempt. The study is noteworthy because it not only advances our knowledge of cinematic language and its effects, but it also encourages a more comprehensive conversation about how marginalized communities are portrayed in media, pushing viewers to reevaluate their viewpoints and the stories they take at face value.

The language is written to fit the idioms and slang that are widespread in the area during the time shown in the movie, as well as the personalities of the characters and the story's setting. A literary device or genre known as satire makes fun of people, society, and humanity in general by employing irony, comedy, sarcasm, or mockery. It's a type of social criticism that seeks to amuse as much as to provoke change or consideration. Satire frequently makes fun of or exaggerates to draw attention to the flaws or absurdities in its target.

A figure of speech known as verbal irony occurs when someone says one thing but intends something quite different. It happens when there is a discrepancy between the words' intended meaning and their literal meaning. Verbal irony can be used to make jokes, express sarcasm, or gently make fun of or criticize an individual or circumstance. Because verbal irony can occasionally be misinterpreted if it is not presented accurately, it depends on tone and context to effectively express its intended meaning. It is a frequent

literary trick used to give communication more nuance, wit, and layers of meaning in literature, ordinary speech, and a variety of media.

Applying the New Criticism approach by (I.A Richards) to the analysis of "Gangubai," one would mostly concentrate on the formal aspects of the film while ignoring extraneous components like the director's aims or the audience's responses. This is one possible way to go about it. Sanjay Leela Bhansali's "Gangubai," which has a visual and narrative structure, limits how the story can develop. To extract meaning from the text itself, New Criticism would place a strong emphasis on meticulously studying the film's formal elements, including dialogue, mise-en-scene, editing, and symbolism. One could examine the movie's use of color, for instance, seeing how Bhansali makes use of vivid hues to capture the depth and complexity of Gangubai's universe. The painstaking attention to detail in set design and costume-making helps the film's visual coherence.

Literature Review

"Gangubai" revolves around the story of Gangubai Kothewali, who is portrayed with a holding intensity by [Alia Bhatt]. Gangubai's story, from her modest upbringing in a small town to her rise to prominence as one of Kamathipura's most fearsome characters, is a tribute to the human spirit's tenacity. Alongside her, the story is made more nuanced and complex by a group of interesting individuals, each with their own goals and reasons (Bansali, 2022).

Beyond its glamour and mystery on the outside, "Gangubai" explores deeper themes of identity, power, and social hierarchy. The film sheds attention on the challenges experienced by women who dare to break tradition by examining the complexity of gender and class in a patriarchal culture through Gangubai's journey. In addition, "Gangubai" highlights the strength inherent in misfortune and provides a moving remark on the human capacity for resilience and transformation (Zaidi, 2022).

In the piece titled "Women's Empowerment in 'The Matriarch of Kamathipura,' a Part of Hussain Zaidi's 'Mafia Queens of Mumbai,'" Sumarsono and Masofa (2022) explore the story of "The Matriarch of Kamathipura," an engrossing tale found in Hussain Zaidi's "Mafia Queens of Mumbai." The writers delve into the tale of the mysterious matriarch, whose ascent to fame in Mumbai's infamous Kamathipura neighborhood upends traditional ideas of agency and power. Sumarsono and Masofa examine how the matriarch negotiates the intricacies of Mumbai's underworld, establishing her dominance and influencing the sociopolitical climate of the area, drawing on Zaidi's painstaking research and gripping storytelling. The writers analyze the matriarch's tactics. The writers analyze the matriarch's coping mechanisms and methods for empowerment via a feminist perspective, emphasizing her fortitude in the face of hardship. The piece additionally situates the matriarch's tale in the larger context of conversations about gender dynamics and women's empowerment in Indian society. Sumarsono and Masofa's perceptive research adds to the continuing discussions on gender, power, and representation by providing readers with a comprehensive knowledge of the intricacies of female empowerment in the setting of Mumbai's criminal underworld.

Das explores the nuanced nature of narrative voice and female portrayal in Saadat Hasan Manto's short story "The Insult." This short story is also written on patriarchal society and women's oppression which we felt related to the research article. Das analyzes how Manto uses a feminine narrative perspective to represent the experiences and feelings of female characters, drawing on the theoretical framework of *écriture féminine*. Das examines how Manto opposes patriarchal standards and subverts gender roles through the

voices of his female protagonists by closely examining the text. Das also examines the ramifications of Manto's narrative technique in the context of feminist theory and Urdu literature, emphasizing the ability of women's voices to subvert repressive systems. "She Laughs, She Speaks" provides a detailed perspective of Manto's investigation of gender, power, and society with academic rigor and critical insight.

Charles A. Knight's "The Literature of Satire" offers a thorough examination of satire as a literary form, charting its development from antiquity to the present. Knight's study examines satire's function in critiquing politics, society, and culture by providing a thorough analysis of its techniques, topics, and goals. Knight examines the many types of satire, such as Juvenalian, Horatian, and Menippean satire, and evaluates their unique qualities and purposes using a broad range of literary examples. Charles A. Knight's "The Literature of Satire" offers a thorough examination of satire as a literary form, charting its development from antiquity to the present. Knight's study examines satire's function in critiquing politics, society, and culture by providing a thorough analysis of its techniques, topics, and goals. Knight examines the many types of satire, such as Juvenalian, Horatian, and Menippean satire, and evaluates their unique qualities and purposes using a broad range of literary examples. In addition, the book explores the socio-historical settings in which satirical works first appeared, providing insight into the reasons for the criticisms of satirists and how modern audiences saw their creations. "The Literature of Satire" offers readers a fuller grasp of the satirical medium's lasting relevance and potency in changing public conversation and questioning established norms through scholarly rigor and incisive commentary.

Socrates, the revered ancient philosopher, engaged in profound discourse on the nature of verbal irony, encapsulating its essence with timeless wisdom. In his dialogues, particularly those recorded by Plato, Socrates contemplated the paradoxical nature of irony, suggesting that it involves a form of communication wherein the speaker's words convey meanings contradictory to their literal interpretation (Plato, Year). For Socrates, verbal irony was not merely a rhetorical device but a reflection of deeper truths hidden beneath the surface of language. Through his dialectical method, Socrates encouraged his interlocutors to unravel these layers of irony, challenging assumptions and revealing underlying insights (Philosopher, Year). His teachings on verbal irony continue to resonate across centuries, inspiring scholars and thinkers to delve deeper into the complexities of human communication and interpretation.

Material and Methods

This article uses the qualitative research method, focusing on the analysis of the film (Gangubai Kathiawadi) under the lens of new criticism theory by (I.A Richards). "Gangubai Kathiawadi" is a film rich in cultural, social, and emotional layers. Qualitative research methods are particularly effective in exploring the depth of these complex human experiences and social interactions depicted in the film. These methods allow researchers to study the nuances of character development, narrative techniques, and thematic elements in detail. Multiple images and themes, including social justice, gender roles, and empowerment are present in the film. The interpretation of these symbols and themes can be assisted by qualitative techniques such as thematic analysis or narrative analysis, which offer insights into how they support the narrative and the reader's comprehension of the story.

Qualitative research provides insight into the psychological depth and motivations of characters. By evaluating conversations and interactions, methods such as discourse analysis and content analysis can be utilized to better understand the story's relational

dynamics and character development. It may help researchers to collect a variety of viewer responses and interpretations using this method, which can be extremely helpful in figuring out how the film has social and cultural resonance. Techniques such as focus groups and interviews can reveal how various audiences view and relate to the narrative and characters.

This method can yield interdisciplinary insights by combining aspects of history, sociology, gender studies, and film studies. This method allows for a thorough comprehension of how the movie addresses and reflects current social issues, especially those about gender roles and the promotion of human rights. You can gain an in-depth and profound understanding of "Gangubai Kathiawadi," from its artistic expressions to its social implications, by employing qualitative research methods. This method not only advances the scholarly analysis of the movie but also develops larger conversations about how the media affects cultural representation and societal change.

Formalism, another name for New Criticism, is a literary philosophy that first appeared in the early to mid-20th century. Instead of taking into account extraneous elements like the reader's reaction, the author's biography, or the historical setting, it places a strong emphasis on attentive reading and text analysis. Since the meaning of a work is contained within its textual elements and may be exposed through careful research, New Critics support a deep examination of the language, structure, and form of a literary piece. From their perspective, a literary text is a cohesive and self-contained whole in which each element adds to the overall meaning. In "Gangubai," the characters' language reflects their struggles, desires, and social rank. Carefully constructed dialogues highlight the subtleties of resilience, power dynamics, and social norms. In contrast to her opponents' subservient tones, Gangubai's aggressive and powerful speech highlights her strength and drive.

Moreover, the visual components of the movie such as, the scene design, cinematography, and costumes are essential to expressing the themes and nuanced character development. The elaborate clothes and vivid colors (white sarees of Ganga the protagonist) represent Gangubai's ascent to notoriety in the underworld as well as her disregard of social norms. Grandiose sets and dramatic lighting define Bhansali's unique visual style, which heightens the drama and immerses the audience in Gangubai's universe.

Results and Discussion

The interpretive analysis of verbal irony in 'Gangubai' provides an engaging investigation of the subtle application of verbal irony throughout the story. Using a qualitative methodology, the study explores the subtleties of verbal irony as a rhetorical device, illuminating its complex character in the context of the movie. The piece carefully examines talks and situational circumstances to reveal the layers of meaning concealed in the characters' sardonic remarks, offering insightful information about their motivations, feelings, and the main themes of the story. Additionally, a thorough analysis of how verbal irony is used in the movie as a vehicle for social critique and character development is made possible by the interpretative framework of the article. Here, are some dialogues from the movie which show verbal irony under the lenses of new criticism theory;

"Yeh sheher kabhi nhi sota." (This city never sleeps)

This is an ironic remark because it suggests that the city is always bustling and lively, but in the movie, the city is rife with corruption, exploitation, and crime, revealing a darker side to the city than meets the eye. It also contains a great deal of unfairness and

inequality. Thus, "ye sheher kabhi nahi sota" might be read as a critique of the contradictory aspects of the metropolis, where the shadows of exploitation and poverty mingle with the dazzling lights of growth and prosperity. Essentially, the dialogue seems to be celebrating Mumbai's vibrancy at first, but its real value comes from its satirical portrayal of the paradoxes and complexity that come with living in an urban environment, especially for underprivileged groups like Gangubai and those around her.

"Yahaan har cheez bikti hai, insaan bhi." (Here everything is for sale, even human beings.)

This line highlights the dehumanizing aspects of the civilization depicted in the movie by implying that even people are commodities to be bought and sold in the metropolis. But the real irony is seen in how this discovery has deeper ramifications. In a way, it's a reflection of the real world of Gangubai, where people are treated like commodities to be bought, sold, and used for financial gain. This is similar to the brutal reality of forced labor, human trafficking, and the sex trade when victims lose their agency and dignity and are treated like commodities to be bought and sold.

The moral deterioration that the movie portrays, goes beyond a literal reading. It refers to the dehumanization that happens when power and greed run amok, treating people as nothing more than commodities and disregarding morality.

The sentence "Yahaan har cheez bikti hai, insan bhi" basically acts as a sobering reminder of the harsh reality of the world shown in the movie, where the moral fabric of society is strained to the breaking point and the distinction between humanity and commodity is blurred.

"Yahaan har khel ka niyam, jeetne wala sabse bada hota hai" (Here, in every game, the rule is that the winner becomes the biggest.)

It implies a warped sense of morality and justice, where power and success are cherished above all else, regardless of the techniques employed to obtain them, which makes his comment hilarious. It also implies that the biggest player wins every game. The line "Yahaan har khel ka niyam, jeetne wala sabse bada hota hai" from the film "Gangubai" perfectly captures the brutality of the universe portrayed, especially in relation to power struggles and survival.

At first glance, the remark seems to express a widespread belief that is frequently connected to competitive settings: that the victor has the most importance or authority. It implies a celebration of power, cunning, and domination and implies that the winner of any game or endeavour commands respect and influence.

But when this conversation is examined in the context of "Gangubai," the irony of it all becomes clear. Gangubai's persona functions in a society where achieving success frequently necessitates moral lapses and the exploitation of others.

"Aurat ka sabse bada shatru hota hai, us ka shohar." (A woman's biggest enemy is her husband.)

This statement is ironic since it suggests that a woman's spouse is her worst enemy, which goes against the conventional wisdom that views marriage as a holy union of love and support. The line "Aurat ka sabse bada shatru hota hai, uska shohar" from the film "Gangubai" perfectly captures the painful irony of the gender dynamics and patriarchal institutions that permeate society.

At first glance, the remark seems to emphasize how contradictory relationships are, especially when it comes to marriage. It implies that a woman's spouse, who is customarily assumed to be her partner and protector, can frequently be her worst enemy. This comment highlights the brutal reality that many women must deal with, in which the same person who is supposed to provide security, love, and support instead acts as a catalyst for exploitation, abuse, and oppression.

The larger cultural ramifications that this exchange shows are what make it ironic, though. It draws attention to the structural injustices and disparities in power.

“Banda nahi, daulat banti hai” (It's not the person, but wealth that matters.)

This statement is paradoxical since it contradicts popular belief, which places a higher emphasis on relationships than material belongings, by implying that riches is more significant than human ties or emotions. The harsh irony of societal values and the desire of wealth at the expense of humanity and morals is encapsulated in the sentence "Banda nahi, daulat banti hai" from the film "Gangubai".

Upon initial inspection, the statement appears to present a practical definition of success, implying that a person's influence and value are determined by their financial situation rather than their personal qualities or achievements. It suggests that wealth is the ultimate currency in a society dominated by materialism and economic power, able to bestow upon its possessor respect, privilege, and influence. But when this conversation is considered in the context of the movie's story, its irony becomes clear. In the universe in which Gangubai lives, power and riches are highly valued but frequently acquired.

“Yahaan har raat nayi kahaniyan paida hoti hain.” (Here, every night, new stories are born.)

This statement is ironic since it implies that there are new stories to be found every night, which would imply excitement and adventure. However, in actuality, the stories that come from the city are frequently tragic and terrifying, reflecting the harsh realities of existence.

This dialogue suggests that new stories, adventures, and dramas are created every night in the land of Gangubai, seemingly celebrating the diversity and depth of human experience. It suggests that a plethora of stories, each distinctive and captivating in its own way, are just waiting to be told, even at the most sinister reaches of society. But when this conversation is considered in the context of the movie's story, its irony becomes clear.

It draws attention to the contradictory essence of storytelling, which is that people always crave meaning and narrative, even in the most hopeless situations. It also highlights the harsh realities of underground existence, where the tales that are told every night are everything but magical and where pursuing a story might have disastrous consequences.

“Yahaan insano ka dard, sirf insan hi samajh sakta hai.” (Here, only a human can understand the pain of humans.)

This phrase is ironic because it suggests that only humans are capable of feeling another person's grief, but the movie shows a world in which treachery and exploitation are frequent occurrences and empathy and compassion are rare.

The remark seems to express a profound truth about the human condition at first look, implying that only another human being can fully understand and empathize with

the anguish and pain endured by others. It suggests that empathy is a characteristic that is specific to humans and that cuts over social divides and limits. It also points to the depth of human connection and the intrinsic complexity of human emotions. But when this conversation is considered in the context of the movie's story, its irony becomes clear. Here "Gangubai" is saying inhuman to those people who are involved in the case of prostitution.

"Yahaan har aurat ka astitva dharmon say uper hota hai" (Here, the existence of every woman transcends religions.)

The English translation of this saying is "Here, the existence of every woman is above religions" (Yahaan har aurat ka astitva dharmon say uper hota hai). This quote from the film "Gangubai" sends a strong message about women's agency and empowerment that cuts Beyond the society. This phrase has a lot of weight in the context of the film "Gangubai," which is based on the true story of Gangubai Kathiawadi, a woman who went from being sold into prostitution to becoming one of the most powerful people in Mumbai's underworld. The traditional duties that society and religion put on women are challenged by Gangubai's character. In spite of the obstacles in her way, she forges her own path and displays her strength.

The statement implies that women are not only defined by their religious or social roles in the milieu that the film depicts. Rather than being limited by religion, they have their own identities, goals, and capacities. It highlights the idea that regardless of their social standing or religious connections, women should be valued and respected for their intrinsic worth and achievements.

Conclusion

Through the lenses of New Criticism, the film "Gangubai Kathiawadi"'s examination of prostitution through verbal irony reveals the inherent power of language as a transformative and revelatory weapon. To uncover the layers of meaning contained within, New Criticism emphasizes the significance of attentively examining the text itself in this example, the dialogue and cinematic techniques. In addition to subverting the audience's preconceived assumptions about morality and legality in the context of prostitution, the movie's deft use of verbal irony reframes the victim's narrative to one of agency and empowerment. Through her sardonic expressions, Gangubai challenges the social conventions that both constrain and define her, providing a nuanced and universally understood portrait of the woman.

Furthermore, it also emphasizes how the film's style and structure support its primary concepts. Gangubai's sarcastic speech is skillfully placed against the harsh realities of her life in the brothel to produce a moving contrast that is both engrossing and illuminating. This approach highlights the careful skill with which the directors have used irony, not only as a stylistic device but also as a potent statement about the tenacity and resourcefulness of individuals who are ostracized by society. This method promotes a deeper understanding of how movies, as a type of literature, can shape and change cultural perspectives by concentrating on the text itself. With "Gangubai Kathiawadi," cinema promotes a more nuanced understanding of the lives of those who are marginalized while both entertaining and educating audiences.

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