Lev Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory And The Adverse Effects Of Socio-Cultural Contexts On Human Psychology Depicted In The Urdu Novel "Gurg-E-Shab"

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Abstract:
This article explores the intersection of Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and the Urdu novel Gurg-e-Shab by Ikramullah. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the positive role of social and cultural contexts in shaping cognitive development, but Gurg-e-Shab portrays the darker side of socio-cultural influence, illustrating how harmful social conditions can lead to psychological trauma. The novel's protagonist Shafi (later Zafar) experiences lifelong alienation and PTSD due to childhood trauma and societal rejection. His attempts to escape his past only deepen his internal conflict, reflecting how negative socio-cultural contexts can severely harm psychological development.

Keywords: PTSD, Socio-cultural, Adverse, Nausea, Nihilism, Psychology, Urdu novel

Lev Vygotsy's Socio-cultural Theory:
Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory describes the influence of social and cultural conditions and contexts on children's cognitive development and human psychology. Man is a social animal. A newborn baby is born with only short-term memory, instinctive traits, desires and needs, emotional feelings, and the capacity and ability to learn. As a result of slow biological growth and interactions with people and objectivity around him, he acquires language and rudimentary information and undergoes cognitive development. His language, ideals, heroes, and his standards of good and evil are shaped by the objective prevailing standards of his time and space. His personality, goals and aspirations are strongly influenced by these social and objective contexts. Lev Vygotsky also describes the zone of proximal development (ZPD), the gap between what a learner or child can do or learn by himself or what he can learn or do with the guidance and assistance of the more knowledgeable and capable persons around him. Apart from the Freudian sexual drive, the id, ego and superego merge into one another. A person's self and identity and unconscious are deeply influenced by his consciousness (objective conditions, information, sciences) and prevailing ethics.

Vygotsky also discusses the role of language, among other factors, in this process of children's cognitive development. According to him, language has two functions, one is internal and personal and the other is social. In the personal or internal context, it is used for internal speech, self-expression and reasoning and on the other hand, in the external context it is used for conveying one's conscience to others and expressing and reflecting feelings and thoughts. Language is a fundamental component of culture. Words are mere sounds without cultural and social consciousness. Thus, through language, these cultural and social references become firm and solid within the human being.

Discussions:
An individual's psychology is deeply influenced by his socio-cultural conditions. He learns to interact in society through his objective situations and the company and observation of his elders. The objective and socio-cultural conditions of his childhood influence his relationships, interactions with society and cognitive development. Leo Vygotsky discusses the effects of socio-cultural conditions on children's learning and cognitive development in a positive sense, but sometimes these conditions also have negative and adverse effects on the child's psychology. These adverse childhood conditions and traumas seriously harm children's psychology and remain in the psyche and personality of these people throughout their lives. A similar coverage and examination of childhood traumas and negative socio-cultural conditions on child psychology is seen in the Urdu novel "Gurg-e-Shab" where the main character spends his entire life as a PTSD (1) sufferer.

Introduction and Observations:
Gurg-e-Shab is a short novel in which the author of the novel, Ikramullah, has beautifully illustrated the adverse effects of socio-cultural contexts and factors on the psychology of an individual. The protagonist of the novel suffers from a psychotic disorder and exhibits symptoms of PSTD. He wants to get rid of the bitter memories, references and incidents of his past but fails. He feels nauseated and disgusted with himself. He feels fear of darkness and nightmares disturb his sleep. He leaves his native area and moves to the city and becomes a successful cotton merchant there. He changes his name from Shafi to Zafar, but by changing his name, his personality problems cannot be solved, nor can he get rid of the monster of fear, loathing, alienation, nausea and contradiction that thrives inside him. Even the colorful life of the city and the busyness of business fail to fill the emptiness of his soul. He wants to get away with excessive drinking and drunkenness, but even with that, he cannot get away from his thoughts. He feels an attraction to women but fails to develop a sexual relationship with them. He is a victim

of social and personal alienation, and despite a thousand attempts, he is unable to get out of it. He belongs to a middle-class and well-to-do family and his childhood progresses in a normal manner. Problems arise when people in his neighborhood He is a victim of social and personal alienation, and despite a thousand attempts, he is unable to get out of it. He belongs to a middle-class and well-to-do family and his childhood progresses in a normal manner. Problems arise when people in his neighborhood laugh at him and say he looks like his stepbrother. This situation is depicted in this novel in these words:

"From the day I regained consciousness until the last day of my life in Ferozabad, I had been hearing from different people in different ways that my appearance resembled my stepmother. People used to laugh out loud and express a very meaningful surprise that children resembled their parents or siblings never saw anyone looking like her stepmother." (2)

People shout at him and mock him with mean-spirited surprise that he resembles his stepmother rather than his parents and real siblings. He did not understand this at the time. After all, he was still a young child. He heard the first explanation of this at an age when he was unaware of its seriousness and consequences. One day when there is a fight between her mother and his step-brother's wife, her step-brother's wife taunts her mother that you are having an illicit relationship with my husband and your stepson. And this child Zafar is born from this illicit relationship. His step-brother's wife taunts his mother and says:

"You have taken my husband away from me; you have relation with your step-son. If you are ashamed, then drown somewhere. You produced your child from his seed and stand your child in front of him as a shareholder. (3)

The story of the novel progresses and he falls in love with a girl named Hamida who lives in the neighborhood. The conversation progresses and they both start dating each other. This growing love relationship between the two fills his life with new colors. But here too he gets to hear the same thing. Hamida tells him that her mother was also saying about him that Shafi is the illegitimate child of his owns half-brother. He has been hearing this as a taunt since childhood, but now when his lover tells him the same thing, his condition starts to deteriorate. His self-esteem hurts and he becomes lost. The writer has reflected the mental and psychological condition and confusion of Shafi who went through mental trauma at that moment in these words:

"My mother used to say that you are the son of Bhai Ghulam Ahmed." I became paralyzed; my enthusiasm, passion and enthusiasm all became cold as if they had never been born in my body. There was a void in my mind from somewhere. And a field of grass emerged. I had no sense to answer, no power to deny. I could not say anything; I could not even say how I could tell whose son I was. Yes. How could anyone tell whose son he was? I sat silent, silent, like a stone idol. She kept kissing me, apologizing. I kept trying to somehow say it was okay. But my lips could not move, she finally left me sitting there because of the fear of her family and I was sitting on the broken roof staring at the sky full of stars until morning. The journey from school to home ended."(4)

For some time, he suffers in this state of mind. One day he goes to the same place at night and sees Hamida sitting with a boy where she is talking to her new lover and laughs at the mention of him and says, "Well, that illegitimate Shafi!" After that, Shafi leaves for the city and becomes a big cotton merchant through tireless hard work and effort. He changes his name to Zafar, and wants to run away from his past. He wants to lose his personality in the busy routine of business. Even this behavior of self-deception fails to free him from these psychological problems and torment. He keeps getting himself drunk to escape from his memories and thoughts but the tactic doesn't work either. This condition is mentioned in different places in the novel in the form of his soliloquies and thoughts. These situations are depicted in the novel in such words:

"There is a small Zafar inside me which is the real Zafar. When he starts to raise his head, I give him alcohol and then put him to sleep."(5)

This situation is also depicted on other place in these words:

"But if I don't drink alcohol then what should I do? How to sleep How far can I become a fabric of thoughts staring at the ceiling all night long? In which, at last, like a fly trapped in a net, I am left confused and the same suffocation pain that occurs in the dream, it appears in the waking state. Loads of my breasts! Heavy stones of my life! You who come to strangle me every night, why don't you ever slip from my mind and come to my tongue"- (6)

He often uses alcohol to get rid of his thoughts. He wants to escape from his present and his realities. He comes to town, changes his name, meets new people and wants to get rid of his identity. He does business tirelessly and wants to forget his sorrows in the work routine. He wants to integrate his "I" and his individuality into others. He wants to seek refuge in "Bad Faith"(7) but fails. His health begins to deteriorate due to heavy drinking and psychological problems. He tries to quit this habit but fails to give up alcohol. In the novel, the realization of his intense demand after he decides to give up his drinking is mentioned in this way:

"I was foaming at the mouth and panting. Just like a mad dog in search of wine, In search of a temporary means of self-forgetfulness." (8)

Apart from his habit of drinking alcohol, he also tries to have physical relations with women so that he can get rid of his loneliness and his thoughts. He also approaches Prostitutes but fails to have sex with them. He wants to live a normal life with his psychological torments, but when he is not normal in the eyes of society, how can he succeed in this? Shafi acknowledges that the first level is to recognize one's self, or only with one's self can one develop a relationship with other people. How can he fulfill his desires, emotions and his being when he is incomplete? He says, "What should a body do if it cannot accept its own body and cannot accept another body, despite all these cries, yearnings and pangs" (9)

On the one hand, the novel indicates the social pressure and traumas on the psychology and health of the individual; it also reflects its adverse effects on human psychology. The main character of the novel becomes a victim of alienation. His sense of belonging is badly hurt. All his life he relives this trauma which remains etched in his mind. He has nightmares at night. Sometimes he has the same dream over and over again which reflects the worse state of his consciousness and his subconscious. He is afraid of the dark. It seems as if he is afraid of himself and his thoughts, but there is no escape from this situation. This is his tragedy and he is being punished for being himself. His nightmares and phobias are mentioned repeatedly in the novel-These passages are cited here for illustration.

"The air conditioner was running. I was sweating profusely. These dreams will eventually kill me. It's been several months of having the same nightmares every night regularly."(10)

"The heart began to panic at the very thought of darkness."(11)

In the novel, the existential element of nausea can also be seen, because the people of his circle make him believe that he is an inferior and dirty thing, he is an illegitimate child. According to Charles Horton Cooley's theory of the looking-glass self, the protagonist of the novel derives his sense of self from his image in the public eye. He considers himself dirty and disgusted by the perception and image of the people associated with his existence. He feels horror at himself and feels like an earthworm and a fly stuck in the dirt. In the novel, the subjective ground and feelings of this character are depicted abundantly. The sense of disgust with existence and nausea can be easily seen in the passage below:

"I feel as if something is being done to me that after a while I will turn into a filth-wandering fly, a thousand-legged wasp, a squirming earthworm, and a squirming black leech. That will not only disgust everyone watching but also disgust to myself." (12)

The tragedy of the main character of the novel is that the reason why he is feeling hatred and loathing towards himself has nothing to do with his personality and any of his personal actions. He is suffering the punishment of society's narrow morals and traditions. He tries to live a life in bad faith. He wants to surrender his self to live a happy life. He wants to flee from this environment to a place where no one can recognize him, a place beyond the perception of good and evil and away from the parameters of social norms and ethics. In the narrative of the soliloquy in the novel, he questions the validity and efficacy of traditions and reflects the ideas of ethical and moral nihilism. (13) He is suffering from this bad condition due to the useless traditional standards and morals created by his ancestors. He is being punished for actions he did not commit. Without considering the innocence of his childhood, his character was made a slur. He speaks of re-examining these traditional scales of what is right and legitimate and wrong and illegitimate. He wants to create a new humanistic ethics and socio-cultural conditions that play a positive role in the mental and psychological development of the individual. Questioning the authority and efficacy of adverse moral codes and socio-cultural conditions, the novel's protagonist says:

"We were actually trying to defying all the values that were constantly imposed on us from the time of birth."(14)
He also criticizes those adverse traditional social and ethical parameters in such words:

"I am actually stuck in a transitional period. Old values are obsolete. Although new ones are being created, they have not come into existence yet. The world is currently suffering from labor pains and maybe new values will be born in a few centuries."(15)

Conclusion:
The Urdu novel "Gurg-e-Shab" examines the effects of socio-cultural conditions and social norms and traditions on the mental and psychological level of an individual. The protagonist of the novel Shafi (who later changes his name to Zafar) is a victim of childhood trauma and social stigma, resulting in lifelong alienation, internal conflict, and PTSD. His inability to escape the psychological scars inflicted by his surroundings shows how negative socio-cultural conditions can inhibit personal growth and identity formation. Lev Vygotsky discusses the socio-cultural context in the cognitive development of the child. But the novel helps us understand that this development is not always positive. Sometimes these socio-cultural conditions also have negative effects on the child's psychology. Apart from this, it is also clear that the individual and his socio-cultural references and objective conditions play a fundamental and key role in his mental and psychological development.

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