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12

ADDA AS A FORM OF CULTURAL PRACTICE PRODUCES HOMOSOCIAL BONDING AMONG THE MALE YOUTHS OF KOLKATA'S SUBURBAN AREAS: A SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

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Abstract: *The present paper deals with adda as a form of cultural practices among the male youth of Kolkata's suburban areas. It tries to explain how does adda produces homosocial bonding among them. An attempt has been made with the help of ethnographic research on a pilot basis to understand how the level of intimacies developed among subjects. It also tries to explore the notion of masculinity among the male youths of Kolkata's suburban areas. And last, but not the least it explores the foci of activity that are embedded which produces homosociality.*

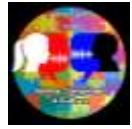***Key words:*** *Adda, homosocial bonding, youth, intimacy.*

Introduction

By the term "culture" we mean all the learned and symbolic aspects which include language, customs, traditions, etc which are all passed from one generation to another. In a simple way we can define culture as a way of life. "Adda" is a form of cultural practice that is very much significant in the mundane existence. "Adda" is specifically a Bengali genre which includes the speech, conversation from were individuals used to take out their busy schedule in their mundane activities to get participate in the process. It denotes the domain of cultural practices were individuals used to obtain knowledge, information and more specifically in Bourdieu's terminology it seeks the social capital, cultural capital and symbolic capital. Social capital through adda forms the bonding, relationships, solidarity with in their parameters of selection of friends. Cultural capital helps to gain and seek for the information that an individual get through adda if they might miss it due to their busy schedule. And finally it also acquires the capital of representation through adda that what is called the peer symbolic capital.
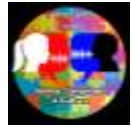
Adda is generally a Bengali speech genre, which refers to the practice of friends to getting together for long and non – rigorous conversations (Chakraborty, 2000:181). According to Sen, the context of adda has been historically linked with the intellectual significance ranging subjects from local, global to art, music and literature. While talking about the Bengali community people were devoid time from their mundane existence to adda. The places like coffee house or the "rawk culture" in the typical north metropolitan Kolkata Bengali people were always eager to share their experiences, self exploration through adda. Adda is not restricted into the structural format rather it takes place by having tea, cigarettes in a tea stalls, were various topic are discussed and explored. The casual conversations which took place are very much common but what make adda as a cultural identity are the creative performances. In a typical Bengali middle class culture there is always a subjective contradiction, at one point of time it denotes as a leisure activity of wastage of time and at the other point it represents a sense of belongingness. The present paper focuses on how does adda as a form of cultural practices among the male youths that creates a homosocial bonding. It also focuses its attention on the male youths so the respondents in this paper belong to the age group from 18 years of age to 28 years of age. It also tried to demonstrate the level of intimacy among the group. As the research is based on male youths, it is quite oblivious that the adda in the research will be gendered. Culturally speaking, over the past three or four decades, adda is gradually disappearing from the urban life due to the presence of industrialization and individualization. "It is as if with the slow death of adda will die the identity of Bengali" (Chakraborty, 2000:181). Adda takes the shape not always in the form of content and conversation but also in the locations, spaces, and habitus of its practices as noted by Sen (2011:522). Drawing from Bourdieu's framework, adda forms the social, cultural and symbolic capital.

Homosocial bonding or homosociality refers to the social bonds between the person of a same sex. This social bond from a sociological point of view refers to the seeking of enjoyment and preferences from the same sex. This bonding helps to establish relationships and solidarity. From the various study, it has been revealed that people are used to share their inner experiences of the world as a form of intimacy to them who feel that they are the part of their life. On the basis of societal structure on the realms of caste, class, habitus (Bourdieu) helps individual to decide their own parameters of friends. Homosocial bonds in other words, refer to the same- sex focussed relations (Bird: 1996, 121). One of the key point as far as homo social bonding is concern is the notion of intimacy, which is based on an individual's
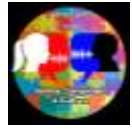
Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
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A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

14

private domain of sharing inner life and mutual self exploration. The concept of "affective individualism" used by Stone (1977) to convey the individual's glorification on personal emotion. Intimacy is also associated with the rise of the reflexive narrative self (Giddens: 1991, 1992). It also requires the value sanction from the other side (friends) whom they develops the feeling of mutual trust and commitment. In the contemporary society, it has been observed that the husband and wife are becoming friends and tries to negotiate the traditional aspects of friendships. In the context of homosocial bonding, every individual is treated in a same way from where the notion of intimacy develops. The notion of intimacy is divided into two types – inclusive intimacy and exclusive intimacy. The former marked by the group settings while the latter refers to the aspects of dyadic in nature. So within the large friends circle, individual used to create a subset in the entire periphery. In such intimate friends are often transformed into the system of "kin". In Bengali society friend's mother and father are often refer to as "kaku" and "kakima" which means uncle and aunt. Such notion of intimacies helps to strengthen the system of solidarity by exchanging gifts at occasions, cherish the memories, taking selfies together etc. In homosocial bonding every members are treated as an equal entity and must have a continuous flow of reciprocity among its members. This paper also elaborate the construction of masculinity and the foci of activity that are embedded in adda practices which produces homosociality among the male youths by conducting an auto ethnographic research method.

Formation of intimacy in homosocial bonding within the plethora of "adda" practices

Intimate friendships in homosocial bonding with in the domain of adda practices is not a relevantly recent phenomena, it has its traces since the inception were the sharing of one's inner life and mutual self exploration remains to be the chief criteria. The framework of intimacy with in the paradigm of friendship is the common background through which the relationships developed. The collective cultural ethos, i.e, the culture of intimacy runs through traditions and is expected by social roles. From the intimacy point of view, it requires "value sanction" from the other side of the individuals – whom they can develop the feeling of mutual trust and commitment.

As 23 year old, Jiko one of the participant narrates the importance of adda – "*Adda in Kolkata or in any other parts of West Bengal creates an identity of Bangali. As working in a private sector, life has been so hectic from 10 am to 5 pm, adda gives me the relaxation that I enjoyed after work, helps to get in touch with the friends, gain knowledge or information that*
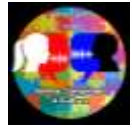
Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
Second Year I Third Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

15

if I missed due to busy schedule". From the above narrative of Jiko, I can relate that adda helps to maintain social relationships, gaining information which actually what Bourdieu calls it as a social capital and cultural capital. Social capital according to Bourdieu refers to the framework of social relationships while the cultural capital refers to the process of gaining knowledge through the system of education which can be formal or informal or may be both. One of the significant aspects that Jiko told that adda creates a sense of Bengali identity. Similarly, Chakraborty (2000, 181) argued that "it as if with the slow death of adda will die the identity of being a Bengali".

So now the question arises that do each and every member equally share and participate in the practices of Adda? Anirban illustrate this answer with his own experiences.

"I recently passed B.A examination, in my club, I see various elder members gives adda to their same age mate. It's a boundary that has been created and we also share the same experiences. It's a mutual territory that we respect each other group. As far as friendship is concern it is not necessary that each and every one of my friend with in the same age be a special one, whom I can share my feelings, experiences, etc. For me a friendship needs to have a same sense of taste". From the experiences of Anirban it's very clear that the selection of friends actually based on likeness and similarities or what we called as "Habitus" (Bourdieu). Habitus refers to the way a person of a particular background perceives and reacts the world.
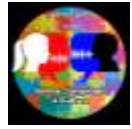
Intimacy under the realm of male sociality helps to develop the concept of "man of feeling, which emphasize the men share the same experiences, sentiments among themselves. Such notion is very much common during the teen years of an individual. Now, intimacy can be divided into two types – Inclusive intimacy and Exclusive intimacy. The former refers to the pattern of friendships which are marked by group settings and the latter refers to the dyadic relationships which encompasses with the private thoughts, feelings and experiences of two individuals. In this context two of the participants, namely Arim (23 years) and Agniv (25 Years) argued that "*our friendship lasts over 10 years, we both preparing for the government job examination. On that note we come close to each other and there is nothing private between us. Most importantly we usually present gifts in every occasion takes place, planned tours for pandal hopping during Durga puja. In addition to it, our girlfriends are also became friends due to our close associations"*. From the above narratives it's clear that friendship can any large framework and even the sharing special or close relationship with

Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
Second Year I Third Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

16

any friend that are basically the subset of the entire periphery and are based on what Bourdieu calls it as a habitus. In case of Arim and Agniv who are intimate friends such e s friendships are often transformed into the system of kin. In Bengali society, we often designated friend's father and mother as "kaku" and "kakima" which means uncle and aunt. Arim and Agniv are no exception behind this. Friendship is a special relationship that is socially, culturally and economically structured and patterned (Placing friendship in context, Rebecca G.Adams and Graham Allam). The solidarity that is evident from such relationships is based on commitments, obligations and responsibilities framed on the social and economic reality. It is evident from the extensive literature survey in traditional Britain that most of the working class people form friendships based on kin and due to such circumstances working class people unable to form friendships outside their kin – lack of skills are preventing for making it and most importantly social integration is not possible. Relation of friendships is needed to view from a wider social context – i.e, what Goffman call it as a "frames".
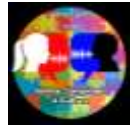
Construction of Masculinity

This section of the paper describes how "maleness" is maintained through mundane adda practices (Gough 2001: 170; Kimmel, 1989:9). While talking about the male homosocial space is celebrated by the male discourses and pleasures are often judged from the lenses of heterosexual normativity. From Jiko's narratives it is clear that without adda life becomes worthless and most importantly the bonding that are associated with it represent the domain of masculinity. Echoing Jiko's narratives, Arjun who is working in a government bank suggest the term "thek" which implies as their second home and were the practices of adda is usually taken place. He narrates that "*adda comes first, it is the only spaces were the real selves are coming out. My girlfriend knew that I usually give time to my friends in adda, to be very frank that we can't compromise in any such thing. Most importantly we boys like to maintain our privacy and independence*" this narrative of Arjun helps to understand the essence of male homosociality and the privacy that one enjoys which can't be destroy by the presence of any outsider – be it any group or any other's girlfriend. So, the construction of masculinity establishes as a free and liberating space that possess within the domain of male homosociality as an adda through cultural practices. This masculine practices explained by Gough as "biting your tongue (2001). There is often evident from the linguistic tendencies among the male to defend their own group like "amader bondhuto" (our friendships) which symbolises the constructed notion of gender relations in the mundane affairs – "a particularly metaphor crucial in upholding the patriarchal values" (Gough, 2001:178).

Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
Second Year I Third Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

17

The context of "amader bondhuto" was actually a space for liberating the maleness and the expression that one possesses in the real entity. Arjun narratives help to understand the carrying the real male self is typically stigmatized to their own core group were the girlfriends and others can wait, not to compromise on the "adda" time. Sarbajit Das, aged 28 years, working in an IT sector in Kolkata narrates that"*in the present scenario women enter into the men's friendship – directly or indirectly. In a direct sense, we may observe her physically and in an indirect way in the form of girlfriend, fiancé, wife of a friend – used to dictate him about what he should wear, how many cigarettes he can take with his friends and so on. A good understanding woman is not able to interfere in their husband or boyfriend's life. I am a married person and I can proudly say that my wife is not interfering in nature, specifically I told her from the very early days that I don't like this kind of nature. Even I also know some of my friend's girlfriends and wife usually does this".* From this narrative of Sarbajit, it is very clear that a hegemonic code of masculinity created in the mundane context by imagining the division between the "self" and "other". Moreover specifically it is a protection against the challenges of women in "amader bondhuto" realm. Such masculinity is constructed, created, reproduced and controlled the feminine discourses. He believed that the ideal feminity will not able to control their husband and boyfriend's male bonding. Sarbajit further stated that an ideal woman can make but not to break a family or any other relationships in the mundane affairs, which is a feminine aestheticization of a culturally metaphor of "grihalakshmi" and a symbolification of "bhadramahila" or a respectable middle class women.

On the contradictory, Abhishek Sengupta, a third year college student argued that"*in today's world both men and women are on the equal foot note in every respect. It will be illogical for me to not offering them (female friends) a cigarette or any materials related to pornography. We bengali bhadra samaj are too much conservative in nature. Let me confess that we (Indian men) are not comfortable enough to see a woman taking a cigarette or even drink a glass of wine. One of my friends says that the beauty and gracefulness of woman is destroyed by taking cigarette in her hand and using slang languages".* Such narratives of Abhishek tries to focus on pleasant feminity where by a man tries to romanticize the womanhood and most importantly giving respect to them. But on the other hand Abhishek's friend narrative believed on the notion of hardcore ideas of conservative masculinity. Such notion is directly a representation of Bengali male middle classes romanticization of controlling their woman which is a direct negotiation of men's colonial powerlessness (Sarkar, 2001). From the

Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
Second Year I Third Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

18

narratives of Sarbajit Das, it represented the male homo social bonding is actually a direct relationship between the good and the bad woman that controls the ideal feminity as also noted by Holland et al. (1998) in the western society. As Chatterjee noted (1989:632) the bad woman in the Indian context are either too westernized or sexually promiscuous or creating a quarrel and jealous against the husband's brother or any family members that leads to break the solidarity of the family, clan, group, etc.

Sudipta Chatterjee, 25 is quite concern about the problem related to family after the entry of wife. For this reason, he argues that he will prefer to stay bachelor (bramhachari) in his life. He says that "*I prefer to remain single in almost all of my life. I don't like the family conflicts and tension that may arise after the entry of wife. Nowadays the marriage of a male member is quite too risky, who knows the character of a girl. Nari charitra bojha bejai kathin (understanding the nature of a girl is very difficult) in a sarcastic way*". Such narratives of Sarbajit, Sudipta and a friend of Abhishek is basically a cultural construction of ideal femininity that are based on the realms of expectations which are driven into the juncture of family system and the intimate spaces of male friendships.
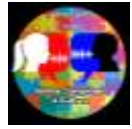
Defend of male identity or the construction of masculinity is the chief criteria of men which came out as "suigeneris" (Durkheim) for the other men to achieve it. Two narratives of two participants will help to explain such theme. First, a friend of Sudipta Chatterjee, Suvon Jana who is really good, cute and girlish. Sudipta narrates "*suvon is girlish, soft hearted, used to cry at a silly things and matters, we used to play prank on him and undoubtedly he is the main attraction of fun*". Second, Sarbajit argues that "*one of my friend, I will not utter his name. He is basically disgrace to the male species. After marriage he gives so time to his wife and in fact have no time to come in our adda thek. More specifically he has become stroino (henpecked)*". The first narration represents that the masculinity is always characterize as a powerful and strong entity of a man which is widely accepted and if in any case a friend like suvon jana appears in the friend circle, then the friend like sudipta will bully him in order to defend the masculine traits. And the second narration represents there are some insecurity in male homosocial bonding with the arrival of a person from different gender. Thus, we can say that that there are different shades of masculinity what I found while doing a research on this. More specifically, the concept of masculinity is always explained from 4Hs – Homosociality, Hegemonic Masculinity, Homophobia and Hetero sexual normativity.

Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
Second Year I Third Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

19

Foci of activity embedded in "adda" produces homo sociality

Foci of activity in adda help to create cultural practices and at the same time produce social solidarity, forming friendships on the realms of continuous interaction. Foci of activity can be define as the social, legal, psychological, physical entity which produce organize activity are common to all the members were social interaction is embedded in it. As one of the participant, Rocky Das, aged 26 years, civil police under Barrackpore Police Commissionrate narrates "*I hardly get time to participate in the adda practices, but I manage to play cricket in the local play ground so that I can refresh from the busy schedule by playing twice or thrice day a week. While playing I used to keep in touch with friends and helps to establish solidarity among us".* This narrative illustrates that foci of activity facilitate the communication as a whole and further lead to represent the character of integration which are embedded in it. This embedding character helps to follow the societal norms and expectations that may arise from the foci of activity. It also helps the individual to make aware of the issues and tries to solve it.

It's not necessary that the foci of activity will always keep in a positive note; conflict may also arise within the activity. As Anirban Pal stated that" *while playing cricket, conflict do exist among the members regarding the decision making process or playing it, but that conflict doesn't stay long forever. Once the game is over we are not used to elastic the issues beyond playing ground or in our daily lives. Sometimes I may be wrong or any one, but the important thing we can't stretch it beyond".* From the above narratives, it's very clear that conflict will not always lead into trouble, for the sake of development and change conflict helps to restore the friendship with new ingredients (Dahrendorf, 1958). As people move from one place to another, foci of activity and nature of association also changes. As Arim narrates that "*one of my friend Babin who is recently move into a new place, where he is facing a problem to build friendship there with a new set of friends. Because the choosing of friends into the new place is based on what one likes a political party? As a democratic right I, babin and some of my friends used to cast their vote but we are not active followers of any political party".* From the narrative of Arim, it is very clear that the intensity of friendship begins within the early years, were the solidarity arises from the embedding nature of foci of activity. Thus foci of activity is characterized by organised entity, mutually shared, repeated interactions and communications among its members and determined by the norms and expectations.

Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
Second Year I Third Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

20

Another aspect of foci of activity through the use of technology is the proliferation of social media. Due to the outbreak of pandemic covid 19 in recent times, government imposes various restrictions on social interaction for which the adda as a form of cultural practices has been replaced by the social media. Sayantan Bhattacharya, 22 narrates *"when the lockdown session was going on, I and some of the friends are always keep in touch either by making video calls, whatsapp chats or even by playing online games but we miss our 'we time' that's generate from adda so that we can discuss anything but at home we couldn't make the feeling as our father and mother are always with me which acted as hindrances for me".* Another participant Debjit Chowdhury narrates that *"even online platform helps to maintain relationships".* From such narratives it is clear that the longevity of friendship may arise from the social media or even in 'adda' as a cultural practice is actually depending upon how we knew each other, reciprocity and the establishment of relationship.

Research Methodology

This portion of a paper deals with the description of the methods that are used in order to understand the sociological analysis of homosocial bonding among the youths in the sub urban areas of Kolkata. The present research helps to understand the nature of homosocial bonding and seeks to understand certain question that have risen from the ethnographic field and the secondary data that are gathered from the existing literature. The objectives related to the present paper are as follows:

- To understand the nature of homosocial bonding among the youths that have risen from the 'adda' as a cultural practice.
- To know the importance of 'adda' as a plethora to continue as a form of cultural practices.
- To examine the nature and pattern of intimacies that has risen from 'adda' among the youths.
- To realize the foci of activity that plays a crucial role in the formation of intimacy while performing through 'adda' as a cultural practice in the mundane affairs.

To understand such objectives, I explored the exercise of "sociological imagination (Mills, 1959)" and with the help of auto ethnographic mode of approach. This paper is a joint venture of ethnographic imagination (Brewer, 2000) that helps to connect the personal narrations to the broader structural events in society. Narrative helps to understand the knowledge as an organize pattern of reality in the form of cultural practices. As the paper is

Society Language and Culture – A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal
Second Year I Third Issue I ISSN - 2583-0341
A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

21

based on the exploration of male homo social bonding among the youths through adda as a form of cultural practices, the study of narratives helps to promise new theories, new methods, new ways of talking about self and society (Denzin, 2000). So narratives are not record of facts but a system of making and understanding the perceptions and experiences.

In this present paper there were about 11 participants who are interviewed. All the participants are belonging to the age group ranging from 18 years to 28 years. The participants in this paper are some employed in government, private jobs and some are students and some are preparing for government jobs and some are married and some are unmarried. The most important thing that came out from the narratives of every participant is that adda remains a dominant force in the mundane life which refers to as a way of life; in short it plays a cultural practice.

Conclusion

Through the narratives of the participants by conducting auto – ethnographic method, this paper shows that how adda as a form of cultural practice helps to among the youths through the formation of intimacies, construction of masculinity and by creating the foci of activity in the plethora of contemporary society. There are various themes through which the present paper analysed:

- ❖ Formation of intimacy in homosocial bonding with in the plethora of adda practices.
- ❖ The construction of masculinity within the regime of adda among the male youths.
- ❖ Foci of activity embedded in adda produces homosociality.

While going through the existing literature, the exploration of homosociality in the spaces of adda as a form of cultural practices is very minimal. So the combination of sociological imagination by Mills and an auto ethnographic account by Riesman tried to develop a methodological tool of ethnographic imagination which seeks to link between the personal narratives to the broader structure of the society.

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A Unit of Society, Language and Culture Trust

22

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