

A FREUDIAN PSYCHOSEXUAL ANALYSIS OF MS ICE AND SANDWICH

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Abstract

Mieko Kawakami has emerged as the most acclaimed feminist voice in Japanese literature since the publication of her groundbreaking work, *Breasts and Eggs*(2020). Her novella 'Ms Ice and Sandwich' centres on the life of a meek boy's obsessive fantasy with a Sandwich vendor. This sandwich vendor whom he names 'Ms Ice and Sandwich' is hardly aware of the boy's infatuation with her. He likes to spend the whole time gazing at the enormous eyes with electric ice-blue eyelids, and all her doing; slipping the sandwiches in to plastics with apt hands. Juvenile period is one of most important and changing period for every person. Ms Ice and Sandwich plays multiple roles in the life of the boy who transitions from adolescence to adulthood though the feminine touch of the lady. While Ms Ice and Sandwich is older to the boy and is unaware of the emotions of the boy, she is objectified by all male characters around her including the boy. Her objectification being evident even from the name used to refer to her. She is expected by her mostly male customers to always look pleasant and behave with jolly spirit. Ms Ice and Sandwich is the only feministic character present in the story who calmly faces the masculine bully firmly without providing any persuasive answer. This paper traces the psychosexual growth of the boy in terms of Freudian theories around male sexuality and feminine influence. The paper will delve deeper into concepts such as dreams and consciousness for theorizing masculinity and sexuality of the boy in the text, Ms Ice and Sandwich.

Keywords: psyche, id, ego, super ego, carnal desires, obsession, fantasy, feministic etc.

Adolescent time is the most important phase of human life because at that point several thoughts exist in conflicting position within human mind and body. Along with bodily changes due to puberty, the mind of the person is also found in developmental stages where its concepts and conflicts are in ever evolving mechanism. This evolution that directs the youth to establish

for itself a masculine identity is the bridge between childhood and adulthood. This phase dictates the central characteristics that a person would exemplify all his life. This in turn demands that the adolescence is treated with care and caution in order to avoid hazards to personality development and career. In short adolescence is the landmark for development of a personality, male or female.

The story of the novella starts when we see the boy is mapping the road towards the supermarket where he can see his dream girl Ms Ice and Sandwich with whom he is infatuated with. The boy doesn't get any motherly affection from his mother. Even his grandmother who was always by his side for mental support is now a days in the death bed, so no one left in his family to console him or comfort him. He found it impossible to adjust with Doo-Wop, who was always busy with his gaming world nor even he get along with the fighting world Tutti, his another friend. But somehow Tutti is more understanding towards him he realizes the inner conflict of the boy, and tries to get it released by arranging a meeting with the vendor women with the boy. The boy meets her and bids her "goodbye" as she was leaving her job to get shifted to another town. That night the boy had a dream about his dream girl Ms Ice and Sandwich where he is travelling on the widen road the vendor women on his back. The paper analyses the dream in the light of Freudian psychoanalysis.

The novella 'Ms Ice and Sandwich' meditates on the boyhood obsession and its impact on a meek boy who in his teenage is deeply infatuated by the beauty of the sandwich vender at the supermarket, mainly with her "enormous eyes" painted with "electric ice-blue". He lost his father from childhood and mother is busy with her own whim; one short of astrological practices with all her friends. The boy gets no company besides his grandmother who in on her bed about to meet her last day. So she can't talk, only listen with silence. Though she is always compassionate to her grandson but now she isn't in the condition of providing any suggestions to him. The boy complained several times to his mother about her indifferent avoiding nature to her son but was ignored completely. According to her "If I'm in a good mood and having fun, then it's really good for the whole family, if I'm happy then you are happy too". He can neither harmonize himself to Doo-Wops' gaming world and nor with Tutti's fighting world. All such things get spired and takes the form of infatuation get bestowed on Ms Ice and Sandwich. He loves to spend time watching Ms Ice and Sandwich her "really humongous eyes" with electric ice-blue paint, slipping of sandwiches into the plastic by her apt hand. Somehow he can't express his feeling about the vender to anyone but with her grand mother. Later on he find Tutti very friendly to him and gradually he expresses his feeling for Ms Ice and Sandwich. Tutti realises his feeling and try to convince him to have a talk with the Sandwich vender. This is how his obsession comes to an end. Boyhood obsession and infatuation can't be considered as sin rather we can simply take it as the hormonal changes in the body that creates such feeling, which should be directed to good cause rather than suppressed.

According to Freud the structure of human psyche is the combination of three components; the Id, Ego and Super Ego. Freud's most favourite research experiments are based on ID. It is the desires, ideas, ambition, wishes those doesn't appear to the surface level of human mind because in most if the cases it entangles itself with carnal desires which are restricted by the society and cultural norms. The boy in the novella *Ms Ice and Sandwich* strongly desires to be with the Sandwich lady; to see her daily works providing sandwiches to customers with skills, her icy blue eyelids, her face, her big enormous eyes. But he gets rejected and rebuked of expressing such things publicly. The boy listened to the bully girls, his classmates abusing Ms Ice and Sandwich about her possible failure of plastic surgery like "she

looks like some kind of monster". The boy wanted to defend the sandwich lady all this sort of abuses but was afraid if his infatuated attraction comes in public and him ashamed. As he was initially repelled sternly by his mother. Even the boy had once beheld the whole scene where one customer had a serious problem with Ms Ice and Sandwich for nothing. He complained, yelled at her, abused her and repeatedly demanded apology from the sandwich vendor for not showing traditional feminine qualities like smiling while dealing with the customers. These repeated incidents arouse a sense of insecurity for Ms Ice and Sandwich in the boy's mind but he can do nothing for her. A sense of incompetence and unmanliness drive him for her security. He gets to realise that these places are not safe for her. She deserves something more safe and secure place like palace, guarded by high walls.

Super Ego is the set of social and cultural rules and regulations that restrict the carnal desires. Mainly there is never-ending fight between ID and Super Ego and Ego mediates between the two and restricts ID to manifest itself directly. It forcefully subdues its desires. So, all the unfulfilled carnal desires find their path to express themselves when we sleep. The conscious shut down while sleeping, the carnal desires don't get any obstruction on their path for getting materialized. Though the carnal desires sometimes come out while the conscious is active it is through sleep of tongue or by art. Gradually the boy comes to know that his mother is never going to bestow any affection on him. She doesn't even talk to him properly. She is always busy on her phone and with her friends discussing about deep ideas of astrology. She is of the belief that her happiness is the guarantee of the happiness to all her family members. The boy never expresses his feeling to his mother not even to his friend Doo-Wops. It was only when the boy was frustrated after repeatedly listening to the abuses of the bully girls about Ms Ice and Sandwich while talking to Tutti by chance with the slip of tongue his infatuation and attraction was known to Tutti.

The Ego is the intermediary element that harmonizes between the two; the ID and Super Ego. It suppresses and modifies the sensual desires and paves the acceptable way of expressing the carnal desires in a modified manner. The Ego doesn't allow the boy to be open about his likeness towards Ms Ice and Sandwich. It was only known to Tutti by mistakenly uttering two words "*about sandwiches...*"

The Freudian psychoanalytical idea of ID gets realised in the dreams also found in the story. All his feelings and attachments with the ice-cream vendor convert into a complex structure of deep unconsciousness for social restrictions. The societal structure doesn't allow him to reveal his desire towards Ms Ice and Sandwich. The boy tried several futile attempts to express his feeling to his mother, but didn't succeed, because his mother sternly forbade him not to tell all such things publically. He finds Tutti though somehow amiable but initially his *Super Ego* bars him expressing his feelings for the vendor, because it is not socially acceptable. So, all his infatuation and strong attraction spills through art, specially drawing the face of Ms Ice and Sandwich and finally, after meeting her, through the dream.

The boy draws the picture of Ms Ice and Sandwich sitting near the bed-sicken grandmother and day by day he gets his hand perfect on drawing his source of desire, Ms Ice and Sandwich, that symbolises intensifying deep passion for him. His intense desire doesn't get way to release, dragged in the deep unconsciousness and slips only while talking to Tutti about the about the three naughty girls' messy talking about Ms Ice and Sandwich's face that they claim as the result of the failure of the plastic-surgery. Neither the boy can digest all such things easily nor even he has such courage to defend her. But it shakes him deeply. He wondered how the girls can talk about a girl like that. So, his tongue slips while talking to Tutti. Tutti though

entangled with her own fighting world becomes an outlet for the boy's passion. She convinces the boy for a meeting with, Ms Ice and Sandwich. During the meeting the boy gifts Ms Ice and Sandwich the painting of hers painted by him. Last time before bidding goodbye he had the chance of having the sight of her smiling face for the first and last time.

The Dream where our Super Ego doesn't prevail to suppress the ID, is another medium of expressing the deep unconscious, is found in the novella. The boy had a dream the night before meeting Ms Ice and Sandwich that releases all his passionate desire for her. Actually the boy saw the "big enormous eyes" for the first time in the childhood story book. Now he can't remember the name of the story but he didn't forget the enormous eyes of the fogs painted within the story. He repeatedly used to ask his mother about the story and try to provide the similarity between the eyes of the dogs and Ms Ice and Sandwich, that seem to him very interesting and fascinating. Returning home after meeting Ms Ice and Sandwich that night his mother presented him with the story book named '*The Tinderbox*' in which the story of the big eyed dogs, is one within the collection. He read the story over and over that night and the story formed a deep impact on his mind which will be soon manifested in his dreams.

The dream starts with the boy standing somewhere on a high place watching the giant-eyed dogs running through the city streets. The very next moment the dogs flew and their eyes got bigger and bigger as they neared the boy. Next moment the boy found himself running along with the giant eyed dogs. To his utmost surprise he found his face changed like dogs with big eyes and carrying on his back his princess; Ms Ice and Sandwich. She is wearing long white dress, that brushes against his neck, having spell-bound expression on her face, and eyes as always painted with "electric ice-blue", tight. Stroking her fingers of the white hand on the neck of the boy (transformed dog). She had her firm grip on the dog's shoulder blade. She was "secure and safe on the dog's back". The dog runs towards the castle and finally bid her goodbye. The sound of "goodbye" keeps echoing in his ear.

The Freudian Latent Dream Content that undergoes into the deep unconscious goes through four stages of the dream work to express itself, is found in the dream of the boy. The four stages are condensation, displacement, representation and representability and secondary revision respectively. Freudian first step towards the manifestation of the *latent content*, Condensation, is found in the dream. Seeing someone yelling at Ms Ice and Sandwich one day in front of the Icecream stall for her unfriendly gesture, even the talking of the three girls about the failure of the plastic surgery all such things are condensed into the personal safety of Ms Ice and Sandwich is represented through his association with her, lying on his back to her full contentment, eyes shut, rely on him, secure about her destination. Stroking her fingers on the fur of his neck also condensed as a sense of reliability and safety in association with the boy, on her part.

The second idea of the release of the deep unconscious, namely *Displacement*, is also found in the narration of the dream. Concern for the safety of Ms Ice and Sandwich is displaced as the image of the castle where the boy in the form of a giant-eyed dog carry his beloved to the Castle.

Generally the castle is the symbol of safety and security with guards and high wall. At the last of the dream we see the boy leave princess Ice and Sandwich to the castle. She bade him farewell with smile. The smile also is the displaced image of companionship, a set of safety, with whom we no longer feel any discomfort and danger. The boy never see her smiling sometimes he was surprised seeing the robotic working manner of Ms Ice and Sandwich, not even saying any customer "how can I help you". For the first and last time the boy talked Ms Ice and

Sandwich and was amazed seeing her smiling. All such things displaced through the dream and take the shape in Princess “*lying secure and safe on his back*”

In the dream the exhale a white cloud, breath from between his fangs, clear liquid that drip from his nose makes Ms Ice and Sandwich saturated, create a spot and quickly vanishes. The girls vicious remark on the surgical failure of Ms Ice and Sandwich’s face also represented as the cloud that boy exhaled and make her wet, soon it vanished is also the representation of vanishing all such ideas after meeting Ms Ice and Sandwich. The cloud is here some short of obscurity in the boy’s mind, the fangs may represent the yelling person at the ice-cream stall that together with the remarks of the girls it created the cloudy obscurity, that erased after the last meeting.

Secondary revision, the fourth Freudian idea in the process of release of the *Latent Content* of deep unconscious, also present in the dream. In this process there is the certain amount of censorship. The dreamer ignores all the unnecessary elements of the dream and organizes and reorganizes the elements of the dream. Omits the unacceptable images and present the acceptable. The boy finally meet his desired lady and had an amicable talk with her. All his obscurity about her vanished. He find Ms Ice and Sandwich also a very good person by heart who expresses a good friendly gesture by admiring his painting with smile. The boy find it safe for Ms Ice and Sandwich to stay away from the city people that revised as the her displacement to the more secure place, the palace.

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