

# Abjection of the Supernatural; An Ostracization into the Liminal Space

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**Abstract:** Literature, culture, art, institutions and organizations in the current world speak or propagate inclusivity of human beings irrespective of their gender, race or economic strata. However, marginalization continues in its most domestic and violent forms. What the world fails to acknowledge is to read between the lines. The paper thus introduces 'Abjection' which is a concept in critical theory that is relevant in the areas of poststructuralism and psychoanalysis. "Referring to becoming cast off and separated from norms and morality" (Babu 1). The argument put forward is that the voices of the marginalized are so loud that the voices of those in the liminal space are not being heard. Often when the down trodden protagonist tries to get a voice, the side-lined characters are subsequently ostracised. To support this argument the paper introduces the short fiction Orotha and the Spirits written by an eminent writer from Kerala. It is the story of Orotha and her interaction with the spirits, trying to communicate or scare her on her way back home. The story portrays a very brave female protagonist. But the paper put forward the central argument on the abjection of the voices of the spirits who remain unfortunate in their liminal spaces.

**Keywords:** Abjection, poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, marginalization, supernatural, liminal spaces

## I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the course of history, the need to shape its destiny has always been the plan of action from monarchs to politicians and even those who seek liberation. One has to scream to the top of one's voice for such a recognition. The mute among them is yet again double marginalized. Liminality or the liminal space refers to the transitional phase between two stages of roles or identity. The paper thus focuses on the state of Abjection of those characters in their liminal mute phases in Orotha and the Spirits.

The writer of the short fiction, Gracy was born in Ernakulam district of Kerala. Her writings portray strong feminine character. Her stories have been translated into several languages including English, Hindi, Tamil and Oriya. She is the recipient of Kerala Sahitya Akademi award.

The characters in Orotha and the Spirits have a different reality to serve. One comes across the interaction of the protagonist with the spirits, like yet another human interaction. The idea of abjection is thus brought to the picture.

Abjection is a concept in critical theory referring to becoming cast off and separated from norms and rules, especially on the scale of society and morality. The term has been explored in post-structuralism as that which inherently disturbs conventional identity and cultural concepts. Julia Kristeva explored an influential and formative overview of the concept in her 1980 work Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection, where she describes subjective horror (abjection) as the feeling when an individual experiences or is confronted by the sheer experience of what Kristeva calls one's typically repressed "corporeal reality", or an intrusion of the Real in the Symbolic Order. (Abjection)

Here the repressed corporeal reality is eliminated by the three marginalized spirits or the supernatural due to societal trauma or standards that were imposed upon them.

The story Orotha and the Spirits begins with the protagonist Orotha in the living world is heading back home alone in the dark after a hectic day of work. The path leading towards her home is dark and mysterious with the tumultuous cries of those from the world of the dead. It is here we come across the three spirits whose unfortunate social struggles led them to an unfortunate ending. Here wind becomes a medium as Orotha walks, the wind awakens the spirits.

With an ear-shattering roar, the wind gushed past Orotha. Orotha's house was just across the cashew grove. Many had hanged themselves in this grove. The owners being far away, it lay open without a fence or even a stick for a boundary. Anyone could come and hang himself here. (Orotha and the Spirits 97)

The cashew groves used for suicide thus stand or acts as symbol of liminal space. "The "abject" exists accordingly somewhere between the concept of an object and the concept of the subject, representing taboo elements of the self barely separated off in a liminal space." (Abjection) By eliminating themselves from the harshness of their realities they have ultimately lost their identity or the self and thus have lost their voices that have muted their side of the story.

"Kristeva claims that within the boundaries of what one defines as subject – a part of oneself – and object – something that exists independently of oneself – there resides pieces that were once categorized as a part of oneself or one's identity that has since been rejected – the abject". (Abjection)

In the story Orotha meets the first spirit blacksmith Ittaman who calls out to Orotha for a piece of meat in her bag to which Orotha rebukes him reminding of how his wife left him for another man that led him to suicide. Here Orotha's voice becomes the voice of the society that criticises and judges' fellow humans. Ittaman was abjected and thus repression cast him out to his liminal space where he has no voice to defend himself. "Ittaman fell silent on the branches of the cashew tree" (Orotha and the Spirits 97).

"Abjection is a culturally complex concept that concerns the impulse to reject what threatens the stability of the self, thus endangering its boundaries" (Journal for cultural Research) thus exposing the fate of the supernatural character Ittaman. The second spirit that meets Orotha is that of fortune-teller Santha. Santha was pregnant when she killed herself, the reader understands this when Santha asks Orotha for the meat piece as she's having a child to which Orotha degrades her by reminding of her forbidden relationship with her uncle. The pregnant ghost unbearable and mute swings herself in those branches and represses it all again.

In the end the wind gushes and Orotha meets the third ghost whose name is Outha. Even before Outha could speak or raise its voice, it was muted by Orotha by shaming him of a mistake, a theft he had committed with his only hand by saying:

You are a clever fellow, Outha. Didn't you, with your one hand, carry off twenty sacks of pepper stored in the Valiyaveedu attic that night? But it was utter folly on your part to have gone and hanged yourself when they found out and filed a case against you. The one-handed ghost fell silent, realizing his folly. He lay back, staring at the sky. (Orotha and the Spirits98)

The voice of the society is replicated as the voice of Orotha. The constant reminders of misfortunes, the harsh judgements and criticism and the ostracization of people according to the conditions or models of societal rules, morals or norms.

"The abject is described as that which brings about a condition of abjection and thus is cast out. But once it has been cast out, the abject does not disappear but rather hovers at the margins of existence and poses an ongoing threat to the stability of the self" (Journal for cultural Research). Here the paper focuses on the three ghosts that has been caste out. The voice of the supernatural represents those voices who are unable to speak for themselves and hovers in the margins of existence; unable to be included or excluded. They are not marginalized but are double marginalized. The characters here look at themselves from a different realm; unable to rectify or even be heard.

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