

Investigating Gender Stereotypes embedded in Gujarati Nursery Rhymes taught in Schools

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Abstract

This paper posits that the language employed in nursery rhymes assumes a profoundly influential role in perpetuating stereotypes pertaining to gender-based roles. The focus lies predominantly on the portrayal and reinforcement of stereotypical roles deemed suitable for specific genders in Gujarati language. Extensive scholarly discourse addresses the impact and integral role of children's literature in the multifaceted journey of child development. However, there remains a dearth of attention accorded to the consequential formation of stereotypes that can arise from the literary materials consumed and recited by young children. The construction and consolidation of stereotypes and prejudices are intricately linked to the intricate process of social categorization, drawing upon individual experiences and the dynamics of social learning. Notably, the content of nursery rhymes to which toddlers are exposed in educational settings can serve as a fertile basis for the germination of stereotypes and prejudices.

Keywords: stereotypes, rhymes, gender, men, society.

1. Introduction

Nursery rhymes serve as a reflective mirror of society, akin to literature for adults, albeit with a heightened sensitivity that resonates more intensely within the receptive minds of young readers. Its distinctive power lies in its ability to cultivate distinct impressions and images. In a child's developmental journey, they encounter rhyming verses at an early stage, even before their formal education commences or they reach an age where they can partake in the enchantment of fairy tales shared by their parents. The child becomes attuned to the rhythmic tapestry of language at an impressionable time. These timeless rhymes serve as conduits for conveying and embodying socio-cultural thoughts within their lyrical confines. Nursery rhymes assume a pivotal role in shaping the child's understanding of society on a miniature scale. Within the concise verses of nursery rhymes lie embedded fragments of societal beliefs, rituals, and stereotypes. The current investigation delves specifically into the representation of gender within the realm of nursery rhymes with the agenda of achieving equality and inclusion. As S. Dauda (2007) aptly puts,

"In fact, it has been aptly noted that development becomes endangered if it is not engendered."

Nursery rhymes possess a dual function of not only fostering a sense of historical continuity but also establishing connections with broader societal and cultural contexts, effectively serving as a cohesive force that transcends temporal boundaries (Chhavi, 2016). Consequently, these rhymes play a pivotal role in influencing and shaping the development of children's personalities, rendering a critical examination of their content imperative (Chhavi, 2016). Within the context of literature, the prevalence of gender stereotypes impedes the realisation of the complete spectrum of female human potential by depriving young girls of diverse and empowering role models. It is worth noting that this limitation also extends to the potential growth and development of male individuals, as they too suffer the repercussions of consuming such biased material (Fox, 1993).

Interestingly, most rhymes possess a "social charter" that offers moral guidelines to young leaders. Mehta (2010) states that the first Gujarati children's book, "Balsakha," was believed to cultivate qualities of a "good child" and serve as a companion for children. What's even more intriguing is that this book is a Gujarati translation of a Marathi translation, which, in turn, is an English translation of a French book. It was published in 1831 (Mehta, 2010). One potential challenge in identifying socio-cultural expectations is the diverse and pluralistic nature of Indian society. While most English nursery rhymes target a specific cultural group, summarising the norms for the Gujarati-speaking community can be difficult. Mehta examines this challenge by noting that numerous individuals started writing for young readers, but authors from the pre-independence era heavily relied on ancient Sanskrit, Pali, Ardhamagadhi, and mediaeval Gujarati sources, occasionally incorporating European themes. Their subject matter remained traditional, and their values were reflective of the mediaeval period.

2. Literature Review

This section gives a review of literature highlighting the portrayal of gender in nursery rhymes which depicts the derogation of women.

According to Lerner (1986) , despite the fact that neither gender contributes more to the play of life, women are given supporting roles. While men and women are equally important in the play, men have written and directed the show, assigning themselves the heroic parts and leaving women with supporting roles. Al-Ramahi (2013) discusses the sexist bias present in the language of nursery rhymes, which reinforces the subordination of women through the use of masculine noun roots with feminine suffixes or prefixes. Women are often depicted from a male perspective as helpless and dependent. Similarly, a study by Nasiruddin (2013) asserts that the nursery rhymes in the Urdu language play a significant role in shaping gender perceptions in Pakistani society, with many rhymes reinforcing gender discrimination and stereotyping. These ideas are internalised by children and can affect their attitudes and identities as they grow up. Mushtaq and Rasul (2012) also found that the nursery rhymes taught in Pakistan portray gender discriminated social roles and therefore there is a high tendency that children actualize these social roles according to the gender differences. Katyal & Chanda (1988) while analysing Chhada (a genre of ditty, song or rhyme in Bengali) addressed the irony of the passive presence of the mother. Katyal & Chanda (1988) writes that 'when the mother speaks - and not just speaks, but sings, recites, chants - she remains in a sense absent. So present, and yet so absent. A whole history of voices, embodying a whole history of absence.' A study by Nadesan (1974) found that The Real Mother Goose collection of rhymes heavily features masculine themes. Cook (2019) suggests that rewriting rhymes from a woman's perspective can help combat this issue of gender stereotyping and help in making the voice of the other social group reach the masses. Peterson and Lach's (1990) investigation meticulously examined the prevalence of gender stereotypes within Spanish children's books. Their research shed light on a discernible bias, with male characters being more commonly depicted in professional capacities compared to their female counterparts. Crisp and Hiller's (2011) seminal study undertook a comprehensive analysis of gender representation within the Caldecott Award-winning children's picture books, spanning an impressive timeline from 1938 to 2011. The insightful findings underscored a prevalent trend of ascribing professional roles, including doctors, lawyers, and scientists, predominantly to male characters, thereby perpetuating gender disparities within the narratives. Furthermore, exposure to gender-stereotyped literature demonstrated a significant association with the formation of gender-stereotyped attitudes and beliefs among impressionable young minds. Building upon this body of research, Shahnaz et al. (2020) conducted an insightful analysis that unequivocally revealed a significant overrepresentation of men in professional roles within nursery rhymes, cementing their dominant presence throughout. Concurrently, women characters were relegated to the sidelines, consigned to supporting roles that perpetuated the notion of their insignificance, while men were portrayed as proactive problem solvers and daring adventurers. Consequently, these findings underscore the consistent underrepresentation of women in major and illustrious roles, a critical observation that perpetuates restrictive gender norms and reinforces social expectations. Echoing this sentiment, Fox (1993) passionately expressed her concerns regarding the pervasive negative conditioning women have endured within society, specifically noting that young children, typically around the tender age of 5, frequently assign masculine gender roles to lead characters. Moreover, a noticeable dearth of robust female role models within the domain of children's literature leaves young girls without inspiring figures to admire. Instead, an abundance of poems crafted for children perpetuate discussions centred around the physical and mental vulnerabilities of women.

In the wake of these disconcerting observations, Tanwani and Mukhopadhyay (2020) assert that authors and writers wield considerable transformative power, capable of effecting changes in attitudes and promoting behaviours deemed "gender appropriate." Yet, regrettably, this responsibility has largely gone unrecognised and unfulfilled. As a result, the prevailing landscape of children's literature predominantly portrays girls as passive entities, subjects who acquiesce to the actions and circumstances imposed upon them. However, it is worth highlighting that women are not the sole victims of these societal stereotypes; men, too, find themselves confined within rigid expectations. Notably, certain professions, such as ballet dancers or occupations deemed financially precarious, are deemed unfit for male individuals.

Conclusively, the collective findings derived from these studies highlight the pervasive nature of gender stereotypes entrenched within the realm of children's literature and nursery rhymes. They further underscore the potential impact of exposure to gender-stereotyped media in shaping the development of gender-stereotyped attitudes and beliefs within impressionable young minds. This body of research serves as a clarion call for critical examination and introspection, urging the literary community to address and rectify the inherent biases within children's literature, thereby fostering a more inclusive and empowering landscape for future generations.

3. Theoretical Background

This section provides a theoretical background to the study establishing the importance of nursery rhymes as building blocks of gender identity. We engage with social construction of gender (Butler, 2011) as a theoretical background for our investigation of nursery rhymes.

Gender plays a crucial role in the organisation of human social life. Gender identity is taught and enforced, not constructed by the individual, as emphasised by Butler (2002). The acquisition of gender identity involves conforming to socially defined standards of femininity or masculinity.

According to Elaine Showalter (2007), femininity is not inherent but rather a social construct; being raised as women entails adopting a specific role, wherein women can impose expectations of womanhood on each other, while men exert influence by regulating their freedom of movement, education, and economic independence. Goffman (1979) suggests that our society is populated not by individuals per se, but by sexed individuals. Vygotsky's theory of social development argues that community and language play a central role in learning. Central to Vygotsky's theory is the concept that cooperative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society are necessary for children to acquire the ways of thinking and behaving in a community's culture (Berk, 2013). Social constructivism implies that we build knowledge as ways of understanding the world, and that these ways of understanding are a subset of how the world could be understood. This reality is constructed by individuals within social groups over a period of time. Vygotsky believed that children develop as a result of social interactions. He developed an explicit connection between speech and mental concepts, arguing that inner speech develops from external speech via a gradual process of internalisation. This means that thought itself develops as a result of conversation. Once the process is complete, inner speech and spoken language become independent. For Vygotsky cognitive development was a socially mediated process dependent on the support that adults and more mature peers provide, as children try new tasks (Zone of Proximal Development).

4. Methodology

For this study (Figure 1), teachers of 30 schools in Ahmedabad were interviewed to understand the purpose and method of teaching nursery rhymes. (Includes: Pre- Schools, pre- primary (nursery, LKG and UKG) and primary (Standard I and II only) sections). These included Pre-schools, CBSE, IB and Gujarat Board schools. From the total number of rhymes (125) collected through the interviews in Gujarati language those relating to gender roles at large (98) were considered for the purpose of this study (Table 1 provides the list of rhymes analysed). The selected rhymes were analysed to study the portrayal of gender role stereotyping. CDA, which is both a theory as well as a method of research, has been employed in this research to analyse the rhymes. Critical Discourse Analysis of the texts has been carried out in order to establish a link between discourse as a social practice and construction of gender identities. Society constitutes itself by an organised system of assigning identities to its members. This system of assigning identities is largely discursive and identities are constructed implicitly rather than explicitly, through texts and talk (Shaikh & Khan, 2012) . Critical Discourse Analysis aims to explore the intricate relationship between language, power, and ideology. It goes beyond mere linguistic examination and delves into the reasons behind the existence of language. This approach is not only concerned with deciphering the meaning within discourse, but also with unravelling how meaning is constructed through discourse. By peering beneath the surface-level structure of language, it exposes the influence of ideology on textual content, the text's response to ideological forces, and their origins within the social structure, all while recognizing the role of power dynamics (Fan, 2019). This interpretative methodology emphasises the social aspect of language and how individuals purposefully employ language. It is important to note that discourse is a culturally constructed representation of reality, rather than an exact replica.

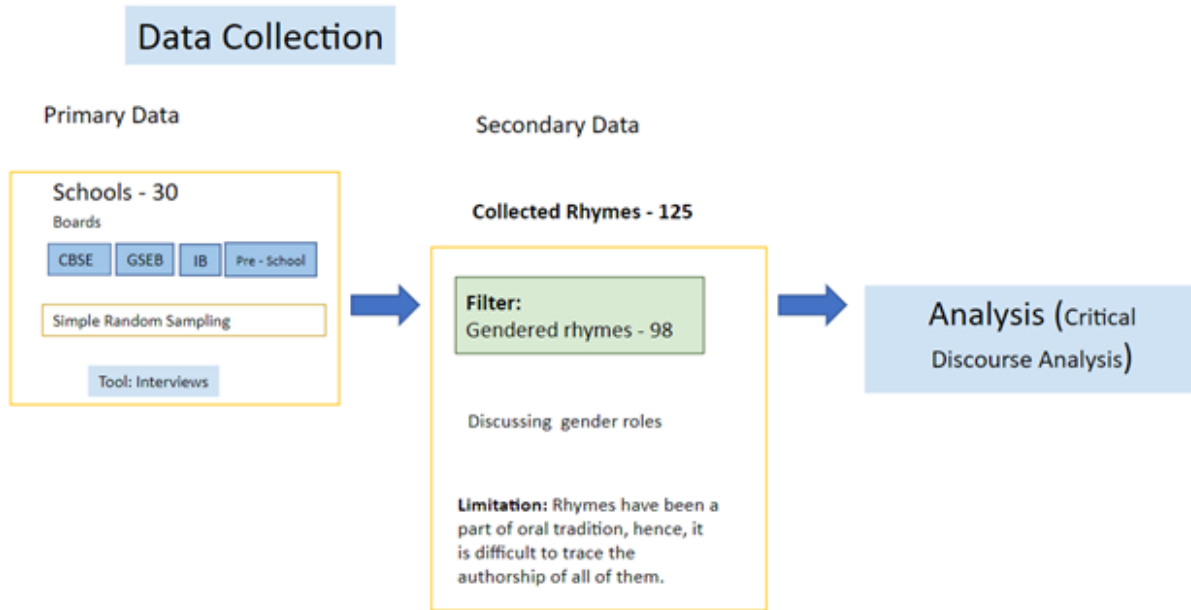


Figure 1: Research Design
Age group : 2 to 6-7 years

Left Right	Labuk Jabuk	Malo	Varta re varta
Ae to Kevi Ajab Jevi Vaata chhe	Mooch	Hey Bhagwaan	Chaki ben
Ame Fer Phudardi Phartatan	Macharbhai	Kathputli Valo	Chor

Aha Avyu Vacation	Tip Tip Titodi	Chanda mama	Suraj bhanva aave
Phandalu Pet chhe Pappa Nu	Meeting	Kevi Majha	Film Padva betha
Oondar	Ek mari Dhingli ne aevi sajav	Bakri	Betha hata
Biladi	Nani mari Dhingli	Mari dhingli	Vaar
Aavya Meghraj	Mallam Par	Behni maathe gaagar	Ek Ek Anekh
Chalo ne Ramiye Hodi	Chal bachuda laile soti sainik sainik ramiye	Phuga re Phuga	Gujarat no gujarati
Television Jevi	Suthar bhai	Bho bho karti motor	Mehulo
Cycle mari	Bhago re Bhago	Aav re megh raja	Mamanu Ghar - 2
Phuggavalo	Thandi	Chota jadugar	Vero
Bhandubhai Toofani	Hathi bhai toh jada	Mindu	Hoon Jadugar
Ugadi gai che school	Niche utarya chanda mama	Mummy na haath ma velan che	Hathi
Kikku Kidi	Dhobi aavyo	Nankadi Ben	Kevi Majha - 2
Police chali jai che	Suraj dada	Kadiyo	Chakli
Chief Minister	Vad dada	Dadaji ni dadhi	Gaam ne Gondare
Lesson	Ek hathi shakri	Govala	Sagarne tere
Likhitang	Thandi ni majha	Oondar mama	Baliyo Thaliyo
Tappu Kachbo	Ek hato Undar	Cycle mari - 2	Kudam kuda
Chando Khavay	Hasta ramta	Ramakda ni Gadi	Balta Baporma
Railgadi	Nana nana tarliya	House re House	Hambo Hambo
Hoon nahi bolu jav	kraek	Ladoo Bhatt	Machali re Machali
Savaar	Khiskoli	Dhingli Mari	Jal Upyogi Jeevan ma
Ek Biladi Jadi	Mamanu Ghar Kettle		

Table – 1: List of rhymes (Gujarati language)

5. Results & Discussion:

Following are the Nine(9) themes that emerged after critically evaluating the rhymes subject to scrutiny in this paper (Figure 2).

1. Work / Profession
2. Dressing / Clothes
3. Traits
4. Activities
5. Choices
6. Appearance
7. Treatment of the other Gender
8. Expected Familial duties
9. Biased use of words

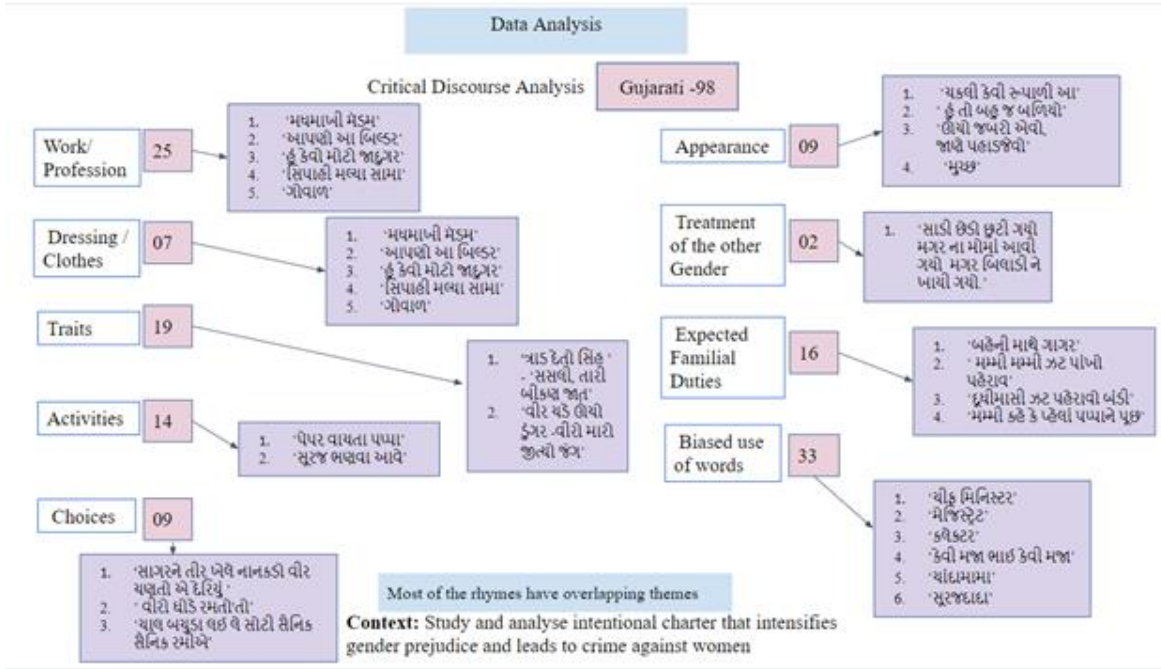


Figure 2: Gendered roles depicted in the nursery rhymes of Gujarati language.

6. Work / Profession

Frequently, professions are associated with specific genders, inadvertently creating stereotypes within society. The nursery rhymes mentioned consistently depict teachers as women, as exemplified in the rhyme 'Bhandubhai Toofani' (ભોદુભાઈ તોફાની) where all teachers at the animal school are women - 'Kidi Bai' (કીડીબાઈ - woman ant) and 'Lokdibai' (લોકડીબાઈ - woman fox). Similarly, the poem 'Ugadi gai che school' (ઉઘડી ગઈ છે સ્કૂલ) portrays the teacher as 'Madmakhi Madam' (મધમાખી મેડમ), aligning with the conventional depiction of a woman being a school teacher.

On the other hand, the poem 'Mallam par' features all men such as a tailor, blacksmith, and doctor. In 'Suthar bhai' (સુથારભાઈ), the carpenter is portrayed as a man, while the washerman in 'Dhobi aavyo' and the mason in 'Kadiyo' (કડિયો) are also depicted as men. The barber in 'Dadaji ni dadhi' (દાદાજીની દાઢી) is another example of a profession deemed fit for men (1).

In the poem 'Govala' (ગોવાળ), it is a small boy / herdsman (who takes the cattle out for grazing (ગોવાળ ગાયો યારે) tending the cattles. Even in the poem 'Balta Baporma' (બળતા બપોરમાં) the herdsman catering to the need of the cattles is a 'man'. The builder and the woodcutter in the poem કેક 'Kraek' (કેક) are both men which is very evident through the following lines of the poem:

(ત્યારે ડર લાગે છે જ્યારે આ માણસજી હાથમાં કુહાડાને લાવે, બાકી તો આપણા આ પાયા પણ ઊંડા ને આપણો આ બિલ્ડર

'Tyare dar lage che jyaare aa manasji haathma kuhadane lave, baaki toh aapna aa paaya pan undha ne aapno aa builder pan naek! pillar ma kyaek nathi kraek'.

The person indulged in farming is always described to be a man, though farming as an activity is done by both the genders. The rhyme 'Mehula' (મેહુલો) and 'Jal upyogi Jeevan ma' (જળ ઉપયોગી જીવનમાં) both depict farmers as men. The line 'Hal laine jaato khatare khush ghano che taat' (હળ લઈને જતો ખેતરે ખુશ ઘણો છે તાત) from the poem 'Jal upyogi jeevan ma' (જળ ઉપયોગી જીવનમાં) evidently portrays this. The puppeteer in the rhyme 'Kathputli valo' (કઠપૂતળીવાળો) is a man and is mostly depicted as such. Same is the case with a magician. We never come across a magician who is a woman as far as these rhymes are concerned. For instance, in the rhyme 'Hoon Jadugar' (હું જાદુગર!) (2) the magician is a man. Even the rhyme 'Chota Jadugar' describes a little magician boy; this profession is so stereotyped that there does not exist another vocabulary which is inclusive of the 'other' gender in the language that is in question here. The balloon seller in both the poems 'Phuga re Phuga' and 'Phuggavalo' (from the Meghdhanush collection of rhymes. Part - 2) depicts a man. Even driving is stereotyped to be a profession for men. The rhymes 'Bho Bho karti motor' mentions a 'Driverbhai' (ડ્રાઈવરભાઈ). Also, in the rhyme 'Gaamne Gondare' (ગામને ગોંદરે) (3) describes a boy driving the cart.

The milk seller and police are always depicted as men as in the rhyme 'સાયકલ મારી સરર - 2' (Cycle Mari sar sar). Even in the rhymes 'Police chali jai che' describes a policeman. The soldiers and officers are always shown to be belonging to the superior gendered category of the society - 'men'. The rhymes (ટીપ ટીપ ટિટોડી) 'Tip tip titodi' talks about (પોલીસદાદાજી) 'Police dadaji'. The soldiers in the rhyme (વેફ્ટ રાઈટ, વેફ્ટ રાઈટ ?) 'Left right, Left right' are all (વીર જવાન) 'Veer Jawan', that are all men. The (સિપાહી) 'Sipahi' and the (ચોર) 'Chor' in the rhyme (ચોર) 'Chor' (4) are both men.

People in positions of power are always depicted as men. The minister in the rhyme (ખિસકોલી) 'Khiskoli' is a man as is evident through the word (મિનિસ્ટર) 'Minister' itself. It inadvertently points out at the absence of a vocabulary to be used for women in such cases as these professions / positions of power are so dominated by men that there was never considered a need to use a vocabulary that is inclusive for both.

Dressing / Clothes

Certain clothes and dressing styles have been stereotypically associated with certain gender. The doll in the rhyme 'Ek mari dhangli ne aevi sajao' is dressed in a sari with bangles, anklet, rings and flowers by the little girl who is dressing her up. In the rhyme 'Nankadi Ben' the girl adorns herself with bangles and anklets. The anthropomorphized woman cat in the poem 'Ek Biladi Jadi' is depicted wearing a sari. (લોકડીબાઈ) 'Lokdibai' in the rhyme (ભોંદુભાઈ તોફાની) 'Bhondubhai Toofani' is shown carrying accessories which are only associated with women like a (પર્સ) 'Purse'.

On the other hand the rhyme (ફિલમ પાડવા બેઠા) 'Filam padva besa' depicts the boys using their father's 'lungi' as a screen to project the motion picture. The line (પપ્પાની લઈ લૂંગી પરદો બાંધી અમે બનાવી ફિલમ એની મોંઘી) 'Pappani lai lungi pardo bandhi ame banavi filam aeni mohangi'

highlights the idea of stereotypical dressing for men who often dress up in a (લૂંગી) 'Lungi'. Even the rhyme 'Cycle mari' (from the Meghdhanush collection of rhymes. Part - 2) describes the man dressed in a 'pagdi' which women are never shown to sport. In the rhyme (મોતા શેઠ) 'Mota Seth', the (શેઠ) 'Seth' adorns a (પાઘડી) 'pagdi'. The man described in the rhyme (ગુજરાતનો ગુજરાતી) 'Gujarat no Gujarati' sports (ધોતી-કુર્તા) 'Dhoti Kurta'.

Traits

When it comes to traits and characteristics, there are quite often a set of them associated with one gender and another set with the other gender. The cat in the rhyme (એક બિલાડી જાડી) 'Ek biladi jadi'(5) which is anthropomorphized as a woman is shown to be so fragile and vulnerable that when she ventures out of the house, she ends up being eaten by a ferocious anthropomorphized man - crocodile.

The rhyme inadvertently gives the message that girls should be confined to the four walls of the house and if they dare to venture out of the house they would end up in a sorry state of affairs. The 'goat' (બકરી) in the rhyme (ભાગો રે ભાઈ, ભાગો) 'Bhago re bhai, Bhago'(6) is shown to be timid and faint hearted. The woman goat gets really scared seeing a dog in front of her which is evident through the following line: 'Kutro joi naasi jai, mane joi khush thai' (ફૂતરું જોઈ નાસી જાય, મને જોઈ ખુશ થાય). The anthropomorphized woman rabbit in the same rhyme is shown to be faint- hearted and the anthropomorphized man -lion is courageous and bold.

The lion is given attributes like courage, fierceness and boldness, valour, leadership, and wit whereas the rabbit is characterised by timidness, faint- hearted and ill-wit. These descriptions perpetuate and immortalise the association of weakness and feebleness with women and valour and braveness with the men. Since the quality of valour is associated with men, a cat personified as a woman, who is courageous is often compared with a lion. Similarly, the rhyme 'Veero' (વીરો) (7) depicts the boy described in the rhyme as capable of showing valour.

Women are expected to be helpless, feeble and timid. In a crisis situation they are never shown to get a resolution by themselves rather cry.

Men are always depicted in a position of power in these rhymes. The inanimate object like the cloud in the rhymes 'Aav re megh raja' and 'Aavo Megh Raja' is personified as men, solely because they have the power to shower the rain and nurture the earth. All the creatures are dependent on 'megh raja' for water / rain. Same is the case with the sun, in the rhyme 'Suraj dada' (સૂરજદાદા) which is personified as an elderly man since it is so powerful that everyone depends on it for bringing light during the day. The wind, 'Pavan bhai' (પવનભાઈ) in the poem (રેલગાડી) 'Railgadi' is also personified as a man since it has the power and capability of making the bud- (ફૂલબાઈ) Kupal bai', which personified as a small girl, bloom. The bud (little girl) is dependent on the wind (powerful man) for her growth. The puppeteer in the rhyme (કઠપૂતળીવાળો) 'Kathputli Valo' is a man who has the authority and power to control the puppet, the (કઠપૂતળી) 'Kathputli', and make it dance to his accord.. Similarly, in the rhyme (ખિસકોલી) 'Khiskoli', looks at the world through a men's perspective and the person in position of power is a man (Minister) in the animal world. The banyan tree in the poem (વડદાદા) 'Vad dada' (8) takes the responsibility of providing for the needs of all and hence is personified as a man. The following

lines makes it clear that (વડદાદા) 'Vad dada' is the (સંભાળ રાખનાર) 'Sambhal rakhnar' or caretaker.

Another discrepancy that is visible in terms of the food habits of girls and boys is in the rhymes 'Dhingli Mari' and 'Ladoo Bhatt'. The little doll in the rhyme 'Dhingli Mari' is shown not eating much whereas the little boy in the rhyme 'Ladoo Bhatt' eats a lot and hence is given the name. The girl in the rhyme 'House re House' is depicted as (નખરાલી) 'Nakhrali' which means flirtatious and the brother as (ઝઘડાખોર) 'Jhagada Khor' which typically means Quarrelsome; which are the stereotypical traits associated with men and women.

Activities

Oftentimes activities carried out by one gender are stereotyped to be done by that particular gender only. In the rhyme 'House re House' (9) only the father is shown reading the newspaper whereas the mother cooks in the kitchen. In almost all the rhymes this gets repeated which ends up typecasting and associating certain activities with certain gender types. Even in the rhyme 'Chalo Ne ramiye hodi' the line 'bapu na chapa' ascertains the close and only association between the activity of reading a newspaper and men. The rhyme (કિક્કુ કીડી) 'Kikku Kidi' describes a little boy, (પપ્પુ) 'Pappu' going to school. The rhyme 'Television jevi' shows that the little boy (Tippu) is mocked for not studying and wasting his time playing, as it is expected from boys to study well. We never see the same being expected from a girl child who is rather happy spending time with the doll which mirrors the society. Even the inanimate object like the sun which is personified as a man is shown going to school in the rhyme (સૂરજ ભણવા આવે) 'Suraj bhanva aave'.

However, it is always expected from the girls to be able to cook as is expressed in the rhyme 'Nani mari dhingli', the little girl is very worried that her little doll doesn't know how to cook well. Similarly, in the rhyme (મારી ઢીંગલી) 'Mari Dhingli' the little girl is described playing with a rubber doll and spending time taking care of her and teaching her different things.

On one hand while girls are shown confined in the indoor activities especially revolving around their dolls; boys are shown venturing out and about exploring different avenues. In the rhyme 'Varta re Varta' all the kids playing out of the house are boys. In the rhyme (સાગરને તીરે) 'Sagarne teere' only the boys are shown playing outdoors. And since only boys are shown out of the domestic world they try to explore different activities. In the rhyme (વીરો) 'Veero' the boys are shown climbing mountains. All the kids in the rhyme (હસતાં રમતાં) 'Hasta ramta' who wander about in the jungle are boys. The rhyme (ગુજરાતનો ગુજરાતી) 'Gujarat no Gujarati' describes the man travelling around the world. While talking about or describing an entire community of people only a man is considered an appropriate representative of all.

The poem (એક હતો ઉંદર) 'Ek hato undar' describes the anthropomorphized man rat venturing out of the house and playing drums all around.

Choices

The everyday choices we make depict certain stereotypes pertaining to gender that are so ingrained in our psyche that subconsciously or unconsciously we end up choosing certain things

over the others. In the rhyme (ટીપ ટીપ ટિટોડી) 'Tip Tip Titodi' when the mother has leisure time she makes a choice to go to the parlour while the father chooses to take the children out for a ride. Choice of plaything for girls and boys also differ significantly. The choice of plaything for girls revolves around either dressing up the doll, feeding her, taking care of her or playing with her. In the rhyme 'Ek mari dhangli ne aevi sajao' the girl dresses up and adorns her doll with ornaments. Similarly, in the rhyme 'Nani mari dhangli' the girl takes care of her doll, trying to feed her. On the other hand the boys in the rhyme 'Chal bachuda laile soti sainik sainik ramiye' choose to play enacting soldiers who protect the mother nation. In the rhyme (બેઠા'તાં) 'Baitha hata' the little boy enjoys riding a toy horse: (વીરો ઘોડે રમતો'તો) 'Veero ghode ramto hato' and in (સાગરને તીરે) 'Sagarne teere'(10) the little boy enjoys building a sand castle.

Appearance

Nursery rhymes inadvertently play a major role in propagating biased beauty constructs. In the rhyme એક બિલાડી જાડી (Ek Biladi Jadi) (5), the anthropomorphized woman cat is fat shamed. In the rhymes 'Nani mari dhangli' and 'Dhangli Mari' the dolls are described to be beautiful with blue eyes and rosy cheeks which sets an expectation for the girls to become like them. Even the anthropomorphized girl sparrow in the rhyme 'Chakli' (ચકલી) is described as (રૂપાળી) 'beautiful': 'Chakli kevi roopali aa' (ચકલી કેવી રૂપાળી આ)

On the other hand boys are shown to be strong as mentioned in the rhyme "Baliyo Thaliyo?" (બળિયો ઠળિયો ?) (11). This rhyme reflects the societal stereotype of association of men with strength and valour which in this rhyme is associated with the physical appearance -strong build.

If one fails to have a strong physique in that case the man is labelled as a timid anthropomorphised woman cat.

The rat in the poem 'Oondar' who is described to be a king, has a huge moustache which is a stereotypical characteristic associated with strength and valour. Similarly, in the rhyme (મુચ્છ) 'Mooch'(15), the moustache is considered to be a mark of strength. Even in the rhyme (હંબો હંબો) 'Hambo Hambo' all the boys aspire to become strong men.

Treatment of the Other Gender

The behaviour of one gender with the other as depicted in these rhymes sets an example for the toddlers reading them. In the rhyme 'Phandelu pet che papa nu', it is clearly evident that the husband disregards the suggestion of his wife considering her inferior to him. Similarly, in the rhyme (એક બિલાડી જાડી) 'Ek Biladi Jadi' (5) the woman cat who dares to venture out of the house ends up eaten by the anthropomorphised man-crocodile. This rhyme gives a clear message that the women who dare to take a step out of their home will end up in the misfortune of death.

Expected Familial Duties

When tasks are allocated within a family, they are distributed among different family members to alleviate the burden. However, when these tasks consistently fall upon a single person, certain gender stereotypes start to emerge. Women are always shown indulged in the household chores and taking care of the kids at home. In the rhyme 'Mummy na haath ma velan chhe', the mother is

shown doing the household chores like cooking and cleaning. The (ચકલી) 'Chakli' in the rhyme by the same name is shown taking care and providing for the kids as is expected from the mother to do. Even in the rhyme 'House re House' the mother is shown cooking in the kitchen. It is always the women who are shown collecting water for the household in the rural setting. The rhyme (બહેની માથે ગાગર) 'Behni Maathe Gaagar' (12) describes the woman carrying water on her head to her home. Even in the rhyme 'Nankadi Ben' the little girl fetches water for the household. Similarly, in the rhyme (મામાને ઘેર - 2) 'Mamane Gher -2' the mother goes out to fetch water: 'Mummy pani bharva jai' (મમ્મી પાણી ભરવા જાય).

In the rhyme (ઊઘડી ગઈ છે સ્કૂલ) 'Ugadi gai che school' the mother has the responsibility of getting the child ready for school: 'Patangiyu kahye mummy mummy jhat pankho pehrao, ugadi gai che school amari jhat hoon bharva jao ' (પતંગિયું ક્યે મમ્મી મમ્મી ઝટ પાંખો પહેરાવ, ઊઘડી ગઈ છે સ્કૂલ અમારી ઝટ હું ભણવા જવ). Similarly, in the rhyme (ઠંડી) 'Thandi' (13) where all the vegetables are personified as humans. The tomato goes to the 'Doodhi masi' to get clothes when he feels cold.

On the other hand men in the family stereotypically are expected to have certain responsibilities. In the rhyme (ચાંદો ખવાય?) 'Chando Khavay?'(14), the little squirrel has to take permission from the father who is the head of the family to go out as is the case in a patriarchal set up. The ownership of the house is designated to a man in the rhyme 'Mamanu Ghar kete' which is clear from the title itself. Even the possession of the child is in the hands of the father in a patriarchal society. This is clearly depicted in the rhyme (ભોંદુભાઈ તોફાની) 'Bhoondubhai Toofani': 'Hathibhai nu ek madaniyu bhoondubhai Toofani' (હાથીભાઈનું એક મદનિયું ભોંદુભાઈ તોફાની). It is also the responsibility of the men to make sure that the needs of the family are satisfied which is very well depicted in the rhyme (વડદાદા) Vad dada (8). In the rhyme (લબુક ઝબુક) 'Labuk - Jhabuk' both the flies working out of the house are men since it is assumed to be the duty of the men to go out of the house to work. In the rhyme (મુચ્છ) 'Mooch'(15) it is shown that the men has to take care of the esteem of the family and the 'Mooch' here, is a symbol of manliness and power. Also, the masculine tasks like running after the kids are usually attributed to the men of the house as in the rhyme 'Aha Ayu vacation'. In the rhyme (ટીપ ટીપ ટિટોડી) 'Tip tip Titodi' it is the father who takes the kids out for a ride which is a usual scenario and expectation from fathers in the society.

Biased use of Words

Language, being a human creation, is predominantly influenced by men, resulting in a biased vocabulary that favours one gender. Both English and Gujarati are gendered languages. Stout & Dasgupta (2011) emphasises that in languages with natural gender distinctions, such as masculine and feminine forms, the usage of masculine generics may result in social discrimination. Terms such as 'Chief Minister', 'Magistrate', and 'Collector' specifically highlight representatives who traditionally hold these positions and these are men. Though these words are from the English vocabulary, these are retained as it is in many of the rhymes in the Gujarati language. While there has been an increase in women representatives in recent times, the language still predominantly reflects male gender bias. In the rhyme (ચીફ મિનિસ્ટર) 'Cheif Minister' the little boy aspires to become the Chief Minister. We never come across rhymes where a girl is shown having such aspirations. Also, the absence of any gender neutral terms makes the case worse. The image of the

society is reflected in these rhymes which are derogatory and then these rhymes continue to shape the society through the minds of the little toddlers which they influence and the never ending cycle continues. Even the word 'monitor' in itself denotes the 'men' category of gender as is used in the rhyme (લેસન) 'Lesson'. the use of masculine pronouns with these words make the gender evident.

At times when the gender is unidentified, by default the gender is considered to be masculine. The mind fills in the empty spaces with masculine pronouns. In the rhyme 'Ame fer phudardi phartata' the use of the word 'bhai' makes it very clear: 'Ame fer furdardi farta tan.. Padi javani kevi maja bhai padi javani kevi maja.' Similarly, in the rhyme (કેવી મજા) 'Kevi Majha' the following lines ascertain the above claim: 'Kevi majha bhia kevi majha'. Even the women's body parts in the rhyme 'Ae to kevi Ajab Jevi vat chhe' are given a masculine gender. In the rhyme (હસતાં રમતાં) 'Hasta Ramta' all the elements of the nature are ascribed a masculine gender: (ઝરણા, હરણાં, સસલાં, બોરાં, છોરાં) 'Jharna', 'Harna', 'Sasla', 'Bora' and 'Chora'. All the numbers in the rhyme (મીંડું) 'Mindu; are masculine: (એકડો,બગડો,તગડો,યોગડો.....) 'Ekdo', 'bagdo', 'thagdo', 'chogado'.....All the days of the week in the rhyme (વાર) 'Vaar' are masculine. In the rhyme (એક એક અનેક) 'Ek ek Anekh', (ગુજરાતનો ગુજરાતી) 'Gujarat no Gujarati' and (મિટિંગ) 'Meeting' the entire community is addressed using a masculine pronoun (or by considering the men who are representative of all the members of the community which in a way negates the existence of any other gender). In the rhyme 'Ramakda ni Gadi' the toy seller who is a man only addresses boys when selling his toys. The rhyme (બળતા બપોરમાં) 'Balta Baporma' describes the struggles of the herds'man' roaming around in the summer: 'Haan re ame nana govaliya thai' (હારે અમે નાના ગોવાળિયા થઈ). The absence of a feminine term for (ગોવાળિયા) 'Govaliya' might be one of the reasons for this discrepancy. Similarly, in the rhyme (મેહુલો) 'Mehulo' the word (ખેડૂત) 'Khedut' makes the reader assume a farmer who is a man.

The sun, moon, stars and even clouds in almost all the rhymes are given masculine gender. In the rhyme (હું નહીં બોલુ જાવ) 'Hoon nahi bolu jaav' there is a mention of (ચાંદામામા) 'Chanda mama' and (સૂરજદાદા) 'Sooraj dada'. The other elements like the 'stars' (તારા), 'cloud' (વાદળ) and the little child who is complaining are all masculine. (ચાંદામામા) 'Chandamama' in the rhyme by the same name is ascribed a masculine gender as suggested by the personification itself. Same is the case with the rhyme (નીચે ઊતર્યા ચાંદામામા) 'Neeche utarya Chandamama'.

The stars in the rhyme (નાના નાના તારલિયા) 'Nana nana taraliy' and the moon are ascribed a masculine gender. The same scenario is repeated in the rhymes - (કેવી મજા ! - 2) 'Kevi maja -2' which mentions (ચમકતા તારલા) 'Chamakta tarla' and (વાદળે સંતાતા ચાંદા) 'Vadale santata Chanda'. The sun in the rhymes (સૂરજદાદા) 'Sooraj dada', (ઠંડીની મજા) 'Thandini Majha' and (સવાર) 'Savar' personifies the sun as a man.

In the rhyme (ભોંદુભાઈ તોફાની) 'Bhondubhai Toofani' all the members of the elephant family are men - (હાથીભાઈ) 'Hathi bhai, (ભોંદુભાઈ) 'Bhondu bhai' and (દાદાજી) 'Dadaji'. Similarly, the

tortoise in the rhyme (ଟଟ୍ଟୁ କାଚ୍‌ବୋ) 'Tappu Kachbo' is a man. The (ଓଂଢ଼ର) 'oondar' in the rhyme (ଓଂଢ଼ର ମାମା) 'Oondar mama' is a man.

Future Scope

The study serves as a foundation for further investigation, not only within the realm of education but also in all domains where language holds significance. The paramount focus lies in recognizing the urgency of critically evaluating the language employed when interacting with and instructing children. Timely exploration of such stereotypical patterns is vital for fostering positive gender attitudes in both children and society as a whole. The primary objective of this research is to emphasise the imperative of promoting gender-fair language by identifying problematic areas that underscore the necessity for incorporating more gender-neutral terms and language usage. Though the 'everydayness of Gender' has led to an assumption of it being an easy or 'soft' programme (Sreenivas, 2015) but given the emergence of AI-enabled devices disseminating nursery rhymes and stories to children, it becomes particularly pertinent to assess and prevent the proliferation of such stereotyping at an alarming pace.

7. Conclusion

Nursery rhymes have the potential to be edited in a manner that aligns with the comprehensive learning needs of children. We propose that educators and parents carefully assess the messages conveyed by nursery rhymes and select materials that uphold positive values and foster respect for diversity.

While language undergoes a continuous process of evolution as societies generate new ideas, nursery rhymes remain stagnant and unchallenged. These rhymes should serve as vehicles for children to learn about a society that embraces equality for all individuals, rather than promoting the superiority of one group over another, particularly in terms of gender roles. Despite their function as a means of communication, the traditional usage of nursery rhymes has led many educators to overlook their underlying messages, which may no longer align with modern society. It is of utmost importance for educators to exercise greater caution and consider revising or substituting the content and themes of such rhymes to prevent children from developing perspectives that conflict with contemporary societal values. As Kassahun (2006) states that unless the constraining factors are investigated thoroughly and possible solutions solicited, all efforts directed towards gender equality may be in vain. Recognizing the profound impact of these rhymes and their influence on society, it becomes crucial to harness the power of language in order to update and promote positive social values.

Declaration

Authors Contribution

Batul Kakkai and Nigam Dave participated in drafting the manuscript. Both the authors discussed the results and implication on the manuscript at all stages.

Batul Kakkai is a research scholar at the School of Liberal Studies, Pandit Deendayal Energy University since 2019. Her research interest includes exploring the scope of language and literature in shaping an individual's worldview focusing on Gender, Culture and Sociolinguists. She has been a

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Appendix:

(1) દાદાજીની દાઢી કરવા
વાળંદ ઘેર આવે;
નાનો બાબો જોયા કરતો
સાબુ કેમ લગાવે

(2) હું કેવો મોટો જાદુગર !

હું નાનો નાનો જાદુગર !
ટોપીમાંથી સસલું કાઢું.....

(3) ગામને ગોંદરે ગાડું આવે, ગાડું આવે
નાનો નાગર એને હાંકી લાવે, હાંકી લાવે.
ગામને..

(4) ચોર કરવા ચાલ્યા ચોરી, સોની પોળમા થાતો શોર
સિપાહી મલ્યા સામા, બાના ભાઈ તે મામા

(5) એક બિલાડી જાડી,
તેને પહેરી સાડી
સાડી પહેરી ફરવા ગયી
તળાવ મા તો તરવા ગયી
તળાવ મા તો મગર
બિલ્લી ને આવિયા ચકકર
સાડી છેડો છુટી ગયો
મગર ના મોમાં આવી ગયો
મગર બિલાડી ને ખાયી ગયો.

(6) "ભાગો રે ભાઈ, ભાગો ! દટ્ટણ આવ્યું, પટ્ટણ આવ્યું; ઊંચેથી આલ પડ્યું, પીઠ મારી ભાંગી નાખી; ભાગો રે ભાઈ, ભાગો !"
હાથી ભાગ્યો, હાથણી ભાગી, સસલીબાઈની ટોળી ઝાઝી... - ત્રાડ દેતો સિંહ સામો મળ્યો, આંખ કાઢી આડો ક્યો. "ક્યાં ભાગ્યાં છો સસલીબાઈ ? શી માંડી છે આ ભવાઈ ! કુત્તા, ગદ્દા, ઘોડાભાઈ, હાથી, ઊંટ ને શિયાળભાઈ ! ક્યાં ભાગ્યાં છો ત્રાહિ ત્રાહિ ?"
ભાગો રે ભાઈ, ભાગો ! દટ્ટણ આવ્યું, પણ આવ્યું; ઊંચેથી આલ પડ્યું, પીઠ મારી ભાંગી નાખી; ભાગો રે ભાઈ, ભાગો !"
સિંહ ત્રાડ મારી ઊભો, સસલી સામે રોષ કીધો : "ક્યાં છે તારું ઘટ્ટ પટ્ટણ ? ક્યાં છે તારું આલ પડ્યું ? ક્યાં છે તારી કેડ ભાંગી ? ભાગો નહિ, ભાઈ ! ભાગો નહિ ."
ચાલ્યાં પાછાં સિંહ સાથે સસલી, ગદ્દો, ઘોડો, આઠે; પાછા ફરતાં ધૂજે પગ - સિંહ પાછળ ભરે ડગ ! આવી સસલી વાડા પાસ : ત્યાં પડ્યું છે થોડું ઘાસ, ઘાસ પાસે પીંપળપાન; સસલી બોલી : "એ છે આલ !" ત્રાડ નાખી સિંહે કહ્યું : "આવાને શું કહેવું રહ્યું ? સસલી, તારી બીકણ જાત, સૌની તેં છે લીધી લાજ !" સસલી શરમે નીચું જુએ, ઘોડો-હાથી લાજી મરે !

(7) વીર ચડે ઊંચો ડુંગર.
ડુંગર ઉપર દેરી,
ધજા ચડી સોનેરી,

સઘળે મીઠી ધૂપસુગંધ,
વીરો મારો જીત્યો જંગ.

(8)નામ છે મારું વડદાદા, મારી ડાળીએ ટેટા સદા.
નાનું ફળ ને નાનું બીજ, એમાં સમાયું મારું નિજ.
મારી મજાની વડવાઈ, દાતણ કરે બેની ને ભાઈ,
હીંચવા સૌ આવે છે રોજ, વડવાઈને પણ આવે મોજ,
મારી ઉપર પંખીના માળા, સૌનાં કરું હું તો રખવાળાં.
ઊભો છું ગામને પાદર, સૌ કોઈ આપે મને આદર.

(9)પેપર વાયતા પપ્પા
રસોઈ કરતી મમ્મી.....

(10) સાગરને તીર ખેલે નાનકડો વીર
ચણતો એ દેરિયું થઈને ગંભીર... સાગરને
વીરાની દેરીને પચાસ પગથિયાં,
વમાં પૂર્યાં છે પચરંગી સાથિયા,
ઘોળી ધજા ફરકે દેવને મંદિર... સાગરને
રેતીમાં ચણતો મહેલ ને મિનારા,
ચળકંતી કાંગરીના શોભે કિનારા,
ઊછળતાં મોજાંનું સુણતો સંગીત... સાગરને
આથમતી સંઘ્યાના રંગોએ રાયતો,
ગોળ ગોળ ઘૂમી ઘૂમી આનંદે રાયતો,
નિત નવા ખેલ કરે સાગરને તીર... સાગરને

(11) નામ બળિયો પણ બીકણ બહુયે, ઠાવાં બણગાં ફૂંકે,
બડાઈની વાતો કરવાનો, લાગ જરા ના ચૂકે.
હું તો મોટો ! હું તો જબરો ! હું તો બહુ જ બળિયો !
હું તો થાંભલા જેવો મજબૂત ! બીજા પાતળી સળીઓ.
ડોળા કાઢું તોય બિયારાં, ભોળાં લોક તો ભડકે,
હાક મારું તો ઊભી પૂંછડિયે, ભાગે ઊભી સડકે.
બળિયાને સૌ સમજી ગ્યા'તા, બળિયો છે ડંફાસી,
બળિયો બીકણ બિલ્વી' કહીને, બાળક જાતાં નાસી.
છોકરાંઓની પાછળ પડતાં, પગમાં આવ્યો ઠળિયો,
ધડીમ !' લઈ પછડાયો હેઠે, રોવા લાગ્યો બળિયો.
ઠળિયાભાઈની ઠોકર ખાધી, મટી ગયા ડંફાસી,
ડાહ્યાડમા થઈને બેસે, જાણે મીનીમાસી.

(12) બહેની માથે ગાગર,
ગાગરમાં તો સાગર.
સાગર કેવો છલકે !
બહેની મોઢું મલકે !

(13) કહે ટમેટું મને ફીઝમાં બહું લાગે છે ઠંડી,
દૂધીમાસી , દૂધીમાસી ઝટ પહેરાવો બંડી.

(14) ચક્ર ચક્ર ચક્ર પ્લિસકોલી મમ્મીને પૂછે કે
મમ્મી આ ચાંદો ખવાય?
મમ્મી કહે કે પહેલાં પપ્પાને પૂછ
એના ઝાડ ઉપર કેમનું જવાય?

(15) ચહેરા કરતાં સાતગણી લંબાઈ શું કામે રાખું?
વંદાલૈ ક્યે હું તો હમણાં મુચ્છ મુંડાવી નાંખું, શું બોલે છે એનું ભઈલા તને કાંઈ છે ભાન? દાદાજી ક્યે
મુચ્છ આપણા ખાનદાનની શાના! મુચ્છ વિનાનું તુચ્છ લાગશે જીવન આખ્ખઆખ્ખું,
વંદાલૈ ક્યે...
વંદાલૈ ક્યું તમે કહો તે ગીત હવે નહીં ગાઉં, આ જ મુચ્છને કારણ હું તો ટ્રાફિકમાં અટવાઉં! મુચ્છથી
પકડાઈ જાઉં જો સ્હેજ વાનગી ચાખું.
વંદાલૈ ક્યે...
આજકાલના જુવાનિયાઓ કહ્યું કદી ના માને, દાદાજી ક્યે કહો ન્યાતમાં કોણ પરણશે આને? બીજાનાં
ચશમાં પહેરે તો બધુંય લાગે ઝાંખું.
વંદાલૈ ક્યે...