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Intrusion of Out-Group/Females in In-Group's/ Males' Domains and its Consequences in Children's Novel Matilda

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Abstract- It is very important to form social relations with people in the society. In order to form the social relation with each other, people have to know each other. In order to know each other, people usually utilize the pre-conceived ideas or views about one another without knowing them personally. For instance, women are kind and loving where as men are brave and blunt. This pre-conceived idea about men and women may be faulty because not all women might be kind and loving or not all men might be brave and blunt. If one says that women are kind and loving it may mean that such a person may expect all women to be kind and loving. This stereotypical attitude of a person may lead him/her to behave unjustly to a woman whom he/she finds not loving and kind. With the help of pre-conceived or faulty information, people put the other group of people in different categories. Thus, people have formed different groups in order to judge other people. These groups may be formed on the basis of race, gender, status, power and so on. When the people from a certain group, judge the person as different from their group without knowing him/her personally, they apply their pre-conceived or faulty information; it may lead a clash between the people.

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Intrusion of Out-Group/Females in In-Group's/ Males' Domains and its Consequences in Children's Novel Matilda

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Abstract- It is very important to form social relations with people in the society. In order to form the social relation with each other, people have to know each other. In order to know each other, people usually utilize the pre-conceived ideas or views about one another without knowing them personally. For instance, women are kind and loving where as men are brave and blunt. This pre-conceived idea about men and women may be faulty because not all women might be kind and loving or not all men might be brave and blunt. If one says that women are kind and loving it may mean that such a person may expect all women to be kind and loving. This stereotypical attitude of a person may lead him/her to behave unjustly to a woman whom he/she finds not loving and kind. With the help of pre-conceived or faulty information, people put the other group of people in different categories. Thus, people have formed different groups in order to judge other people. These groups may be formed on the basis of race, gender, status, power and so on. When the people from a certain group, judge the person as different from their group without knowing him/her personally, they apply their pre-conceived or faulty information; it may lead a clash between the people. For instance, a man having notion about woman that woman cannot excel in sports, then this man would not allow a woman to be in his team. This would lead to an unjust or discriminatory behavior towards that woman. Thus, the man from in-group prevents a woman (a person from out-group) to excel in a task which is dominated by in-group people. This means the roles are defined by the categories to which group a person belongs. This is a result of stereotypes related to the roles assigned for certain groups. This paper is an attempt to highlight the outgroup's (females') intrusion in male (in-group's) domains in Children's novel *Matilda*. This paper will also highlight what happens when a person from outgroup tries to excel in in-group's domain.

I. Introduction

In the study of psychology, researchers have exhibited their interest in understanding prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination along with the intergroup biases (John F. Dovidio). John F. Dovidio further explains about inter-group bias that inter-group bias is referred as the systematic tendency to evaluate one's own membership group (the ingroup) or its members more favorably than a non-membership group (the outgroup) or its members (John F. Dovidio). In order to understand inter-group biases, it is mandatory to understand prejudice, stereotypes, in-group and out-group concepts. Firstly, to explore about in-group, it is found that "in-group is a group in which an individual has membership and towards which the individual feels loyalty and respect" (Cheryl Bourassa). Furthermore, these ingroups are usually formed on the basis of social relationships such as family, religion, or ethnicity and race (Cheryl Bourassa). On the other hand, "out-group is a social group in which one does not have membership and does not seek to have membership. Outgroups are the opposite of ingroups, and ingroup members tend to feel contempt, opposition, and other negative emotions towards outgroup members" (Cheryl Bourassa). Here, it is to be noted that a person puts himself or herself in certain categories like man-woman, rich-poor, old-young, Blacks-Whites and so on. When a person categorizes himself/herself, simultaneously he/she sees other people (members of out-group) as different from in-group (a group to which person belongs). It means a person puts another person in outgroup by judging him/her without knowing the person personally or actually. In this way, an in-group member may generate stereotypes and prejudices about an out-group person. While doing so, an ingroup person expects a person from the out-group to behave in a certain way. For instance, a man who thinks that women are incompetent in sports, then he applies his pre-conceived idea to each and every woman without knowing them personally. He judges every women and reaches to the conclusion that all women are incompetent in sports. With reference to this example, the definition of stereotypes is to be understood relating to inter-group relations.

> Stereotyping is a mental process in which generalized beliefs about a group are assigned to all members of that group…Stereotyping is a particular form of social typing involving rigidly held beliefs that are frequently based on incomplete or erroneous information (Stereotyping and the self-fulfilling prophecy).

With reference to the previous example of a stereotyped person about woman, it is to be understood that such a man simultaneously expects a woman not to

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take interest in sports. This stereotypical attitude of a man may generate unjust behavior towards the women who excel in sports. Apart from that, such a stereotyped man may not let a woman to be in his team. In this way, the gender stereotypical roles might be defined and promoted if the person is stereotyped about women's stereotypical roles. Such a stereotyped and prejudiced man (an in-group member) may feel that he is superior to a woman (an out-group member) considering a woman inferior in terms of gender roles. Moreover, he may not easily accept a woman who excels in sports. He may feel that a member from an out-group should not be empowered in the domains of in-group. In order to prevent an out-group member (a woman) to excel in sports, a man may arouse unjust behavior towards a woman. He might prevent a woman to play and be a member of his team, and thus the discrimination is generated towards the outgroup member. Thus, the stereotyped man has directed hostile and discriminatory behavior towards an out-group member. It is rightly said that,

> If the dominant group in a society believes that a particular out-group is violent or wanting in some way, society may communicate its expectations for the out-group in a number of ways-it may simply deny the group progress and sharing of resources… Expectations communicated by word or action can eventually lead to tremendous frustration that may erupt in violence (Stereotyping and the self-fulfilling prophecy).

In this way, it is rightly observed that "stereotypes represent various types of social relationships existing between people (studies done by Maykovich, Karlins, *et al.,* Gilbert, Katz and Braly) (Hosokawa). It is further opined that these stereotypes function to create social cohesiveness in two ways. Firstly, through an institutional approach by which the values and beliefs are taught to the person as a part of the process of socialization. Due to that a person adopts stereotypes as a part of his/her normal value system (Simpson and Yinger quoted in Hosokawa). In this way, a person learns number of culturally responses towards minority groups which he may use in his interaction with them. Secondly, stereotypes create social cohesiveness by "invoking of a group's sense of preservation in the face of threat" (Hosokawa). This happens when the minority groups' or out-groups' values are considered to be different and inferior from in-groups or majority groups, then stereotypes are activated in order to form the common definitions about out-group members (Hosokawa). In this way it may be said that people generate various stereotypes in order to preserve values of his/her group in which they do not wish the out-group members to excel in certain activities or to dominate the roles which are assigned for the dominating group members. It might also seem that people learn and form stereotypes about out-group members in order to define themselves different from the out-group members and similarly out-group members may generate stereotypes to define themselves different from in-group members. Thus, the role definitions such as subordinate-super ordinate roles, formal-informal roles, ingroup-outgroup roles are formed (Hosokawa) and these roles help to develop further contact and interaction between people. When these stereotypes provide a very limited image of a group like Blacks are lazy, females are sensitive, men are brave, boys are adventurous and so on; these stereotypes justify specific behavior towards the group that confines the members into a subordinate role whereas the producer of the image lies in superordinate group (Hosokawa).

Stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination have been associated with each other or one another as well as these are also considered as the byproducts of social biases (John F. Dovidio). Prejudice is considered as "an attitude reflecting an overall evaluation of a group" (John F. Dovidio) whereas stereotype is perceived as "the associations, and attributions of specific characteristics to a group"; and discrimination is a biased behavior towards a group or its members (John F. Dovidio).

This paper is an attempt to see what happens when the outgroup members (females) try to lay their hands in in-group's (males') domain. This paper analyzes the inter relations of male and females in the novel *Matilda*. *Matilda* is a novel penned by a British writer Roald Dahl (McKnight) in the year 1988. It explores the story of a five-year-old girl Matilda Wormwood who is the victim of ill-treatment received from her parents because of being a girl child. Matilda teaches lessons to her parents by her tricks when she receives ill-treatment from them. Matilda's extraordinary features like being a mathematical genius, being an intense reader and being intelligent are not only neglected by her parents but also humiliated by them. It is only Matilda's loving teacher Miss Honey who seems to understand Matilda's potential and makes efforts to do something for Matilda. However, Miss Honey herself is exploited and humiliated by her aunt Miss Trunchbull since her childhood. Miss Trunchbull is a headmistress of the school who becomes hurdle in Matilda's growth as Miss Trunchbull has not allowed Miss Honey to promote Matilda in higher grade. Matilda ultimately takes the action in her hands and frees her teacher Miss Honey from the grab of Miss Trunchbull. Throughout the novel, Matilda and Miss Honey are seen doing the tasks which are prohibited to them. As a result of this, they have to face problems like discrimination and humiliation which will be explored further in this paper.

In order to understand the conflict between in-group and out-group, the male and female characters of the novel *Matilda* are put into the category of in-group

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and out-group. Male character particularly Mr Wormwood is seen as an in-group member whereas the female characters like Matilda Wormwood, Miss Trunchbull and Miss Honey are put into the category of the out-group members. Mr Wormwood- Matilda's father is a gender biased person who believes that females are incompetent in business so they should not take interest in business matters. That is why he gives due importance to his son. Mr Wormwood not only neglects his daughter-Matilda but also humiliates her. Mr Wormwood is a second hand car dealer who once arrives from his job taking pride in his selling of cars. He befools people by mixing saw-dust with the oil in the gear box. When Matilda asks her father about the use of saw-dust, he tells her "an ignorant little twit" (Dahl 16). He is prejudiced about gender roles as he further goes on telling "You are too stupid. But I don't mind telling young Mike here about it seeing he'll be joining me in the business one day" (Dahl 16). This shows that the gender bias father does not expect Matilda to excel in male domains because she is a girl. In this way, an in-group person/a man tries to preserve his norms and also makes sure that an out-group member (a girl) should not excel in male domains. Being a male Mr Wormwood takes favor of another male i.e., his son. Mr Wormwood does not mind rather he promotes his son to take interests in business matters. On the other hand, Mr Wormwood sees that an out-group member/Matilda should not get benefit in terms of male dominated tasks. The result is an out-group member/ Matilda gets humiliation from her father/a person from in-group. On another incident, when Matilda does the long sum of her father's earning of the day, she is humiliated by her father. Her father cannot believe that Matilda can calculate addition in her mind so quickly without the help of a calculator or a pen and a paper. He blames Matilda to be "a little cheat" (Dahl 48) and "a liar" (Dahl 49). He goes on insulting Matilda by telling that "No one in the world could give the right answer just like that, especially a girl" (Dahl 49). This may show that an in-group member/ Mr Wormwood believes that the boys might be good at mathematics and just because Matilda is a girl (belongs to out-group) she is not supposed to be good at mathematics. Mr Wormwood accuses that Matilda has seen the sum of the amount from a paper where he has written the addition. Thus, Matilda is not supposed to look into the matters of business as these tasks are dominated by males particularly in-group members.

Apart from the business matters, Mr Wormwood does not like Matilda's hobby of reading. Mr Wormwood feels that an out-group member/ a girl should not become superior in terms of knowledge with the help of reading. That is why he does not like Matilda's reading. He does not allow Matilda to take her supper in the dining room in order to prevent her from reading a book. Mr Wormwood forces her to sit in front of television while taking their supper and thus prevents Matilda to excel in reading and learning. On another occasion, in order to prevent Matilda from reading, Mr Wormwood snatches the book and rips out each and every page of the book throwing them in the waste-paper basket. It seems like "the man felt some kind of jealousy…how dare she enjoy reading book when he couldn't?" (Dahl 35). It looks like an in-group member/Mr Wormwood who feels that he is superior to an out-group member just because of his gender (being a male). Mr Wormwood does not want to lose his superiority rather he wants to dominate females in his house. That is why it seems that he does not expects her daughter to take interest in reading. He fears that the girls/females should not be intelligent with the help of reading. That is why he tears up the book which Matilda is reading. It is to be noted that when Matilda/ an out-group member tries to lay her hands in the domains of males, she gets ill-treatment and discrimination from an in-group member i.e, from a male/her father. There is a justification found about such sort of behavior of Mr Wormwood towards an out-group member Matilda. As stated by Hosokawa that stereotypes create social cohesiveness by "invoking of a group's sense of preservation in the face of threat" (Hosokawa). Here, Mr Wormwood feels that Matilda is a threat for the norms of his group i.e., in-group because she is a girl. Therefore, Matilda should not enter into male domains. Hosokawa further states that when the minority groups or out-groups values are considered to be different and inferior from in-groups or majority groups, then stereotypes are activated in order to form the common definitions about out-group members (Hosokawa). Here, the stereotypes about women's roles are activated by Mr Wormwood when he considers females as different and inferior from males. Thus, Mr Wormwood by generating stereotypes about females, exhibits very limited view about females. When the stereotypes provide very limited view about females, then "these stereotypes justify specific behavior towards the group that confines the members into a subordinate role whereas the producer of the image lies in superordinate group (Hosokawa). From the behavior of Mr Wormwood towards his daughter Matilda, it is found that the stereotypical attitude of Mr Wormwood generates the biases about the out-group. He puts an out-group member/Matilda (a girl) in sub-ordinate role whereas he sees himself in super-ordinate role (just because of being a male). His supremacy is revealed by the narrator in the following sentence: "One could almost hear him saying, It's me! Here I come, the great man himself, the master of the house, the wage-earner, the one who makes it possible for all the rest of you to live so well! Notice me and pay your respects!" (Dahl 54). These sorts of inter-group relations may reveal the power relations that the creator of stereotypes remains in super ordinate role which means the in-group people see themselves as powerful as compared to out-group persons. In order to gain such power, the out-

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group people try to excel in in-group domains. Not only Matilda takes interests in male domains, but also Miss Trunchbull and Miss Honey do. Miss Trunchbull and Miss Honey both have empowered themselves by being working women. Miss Honey is a school teacher whereas Miss Trunchbull is a headmaster of the school as well a former Olympic athlete. However, out-group members also try to dominate each other when one finds another getting empowered. For instance, Miss Trunchbull being a female does not promote Matilda in higher grade when Miss Honey informs Miss Trunchbull about Matilda's extra ordinary features. Moreover, Miss Trunchbull exploits her niece- Miss Honey since her childhood. In order to fit into in-group domains, Miss Trunchbull does not do household duties rather she makes her niece- Miss Honey to do the same. In order to fit into male domains, Miss Trunchbull wears male like clothes and almost looks like a male by her appearance. Her physique displays her bull-neck, big shoulders, thick arms and sinewy wrists (Dahl 76, 77). This may mean that Miss Trunchbull is powerful in terms of physical strength. This means she excel in in-group domain by being powerful like man. However powerful she looks in terms of physical strength, she is also punished for her intrusion in domains of in-groups/ male domains. At the end of the novel, she is terrified by Matilda's trick. In particular, Matilda writes something on a blackboard with her eye power and mind power. Miss Trunchbull assumes that the ghost of Miss Honey's father is writing on the board. Thus, it is right to say that Miss Trunchbull is terrified not exactly by Matilda but by the male voice which represents that "I" written on the blackboard in the following way:

> Agatha, this is Magnus…
>
> Give my Jenny her wages
>
> Give my Jenny the house
>
> Then get out of here.
>
> If you don't, I will come and get you
>
> (Dahl 215, 217).

Miss Trunchbull has grabbed the property of Miss Honey and exploited her, and she is also suspected to be a murderer of Miss Honey's father. Miss Trunchbull thinks that the invisible hand writing on the board is none but the ghost of Miss Honey's father. In this way, ultimately the powerful, strong and reputed lady is punished by a male voice in the form of Matilda's trick. It also looks that Miss Trunchbull is punished for what she is not supposed to do i.e., to excel in in-group domains by being strong, taking interests in sports and being independent.

It may be perceived that inter-group relations might be based on power relations. The group which generates stereotypes about out-group persons, put their group/ in-group in super-ordinate group and considers the out-group as a sub-ordinate group. There is a clash created within particular group members itself. For instance, when out-group considers in-group as inferior then out-group people try to lay their hands in in-group domains. When out-group people try to excel in in-group domains, they might feel that they are no longer the member of out-group. Therefore, they treat their group members/ out-group members in unjust manner. This is what happens in the case of Miss Trunchbull's treatment towards Miss Honey and Matilda. Miss Trunchbull being a female does not appreciate females. Rather she thinks that "Nasty dirty things, little girls are. Glad I never was" (Dahl 80). Thus, she is biased about her own group/ out-group or females. When Miss Honey tells her that Miss Trunchbull also once remained a girl, then Miss Trunchbull blurts: "Not for so long anyway… I became a woman very quickly" (Dahl 80). It looks like Miss Trunchbull thinks that to be a girl might make one weak so she refuses to remain a girl for long. In this way, she refuses to remain in out-group in order to excel in in-group by being strong. When Miss Trunchbull thinks herself strong like men, she under-estimates the power of a girl- Matilda who is extra-ordinary in terms of her intelligence. As a result of this, Miss Trunchbull does not promote Matilda in higher grade when Miss Honey tries to convince Miss Trunchbull to do so. It may mean that when Miss Trunchbull thinks that she can also be an in-group member by being strong, she starts hating her own group members i.e, females considering them bad and incompetent. Moreover, Miss Trunchbull does not do the household duties which are meant for out-group members i.e., meant for females. In addition to that, Miss Trunchbull compels her niece Miss Honey to do chores. She dominates her niece Miss Honey since her childhood. In order to excel in in-group domains, Miss Trunchbull behaves like Mr Wormwood in terms of cheating people. Mr Wormwood- Matilda's father cheats people in selling stolen cars to them and applying his tricks to mend the cars and reversing speedometer and so on. Similarly, Miss Trunchbull cheats her niece as she grabs all the assets of Miss Honey's parents by creating a fake will and also takes much of the amount from Miss Honey's salary in the name of compensation money which Miss Trunchbull has spent on her nurture. There is a suspicion laid on how Miss Honey's father died as Miss Honey suspects that Miss Trunchbull might have killed him. In this way, Miss Trunchbull turns out to be a cheat, liar and criminal like Mr Wormwood/ an in-group member. Miss Trunchbull does not show love or compassion like in-group members in particular like a loving and caring teacher- Miss Honey has shown.

Lastly, the cowed and dominated lady- Miss Honey also lays her hands in in-group domains such as being independent, achieving degrees, earning money, getting a job of a teacher and so on. Somehow, Miss Honey attempts to excel in in-group domains. As a result of this, she is dominated and exploited by one of

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the member from her own group/outgroup i.e, by Miss Trunchbull. As Miss Trunchbull feels that she might not be like her own group members/outgroup members or females in terms of reputation and physical strength. Therefore, she exploits the members of her own group in order to show that she is different from her own group members.

In conclusion, it is perceived that whosoever females try to intrude in male domains/ domains of ingroup, they have to face the problems whether by in-group members or by their own group/out-group members. They are not expected to intrude in the tasks which are not assigned for them. Matilda is humiliated by her parents due to taking interests in business matters and studies and being intelligent. Miss Trunchbull is defeated at the end of the novel by a threat to leave the school and return the fortune of Miss Honey by the writing on the blackboard which is assumed to be written by a male i.e, Miss Honey's father. Miss Honey is exploited and humiliated for laying her hands in studies, getting a job and seeking liberty from the grab of Miss Trunchbull. Thus, it is assumed that when out-group people try to excel in in-group domains, inter-group conflict is aroused and they face ill-treatment as well as discrimination from in-group members as well as from the out-group members in the novel *Matilda*.

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