

CHAPTER 12

When Cryptotype Meets the Imaginary 'Adultery' in a Sri Lankan Village

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All observers are not led by the same evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated. (Whorf 1974, 214)

The subject of this extended case study is a Sri Lankan Muslim woman who married into the village of Kutali, where I lived and worked, and who was ostracized by the entire village during the three years I lived there (1979–1982).¹ She wasn't just ostracized; on the day of the birth of her fourth child (she was 24 years old at the time), no village midwife, not even her mother-in-law, who lived a few houses away, came to help. Only her husband attended the delivery of their child. When I found out about this, I was bewildered and curious. Why had no one helped? I inquired with many villagers and, while they differed in their stories (see the ethnographic section), they all mentioned that it was mainly due to Sakhina being an adulteress. Some explanations bordered on the phantasmagorical, detailing how she would have one or more men visit her nightly and she would quietly leave her husband in bed to enjoy sex with them. Some noted that, before she met her husband, she had been in love with a Buddhist man, who she still loved and met (though he lived some 50 kilometres away).

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Yet, despite village consensus that Sakhina was a wanton adulteress, there was no villager who claimed to have bedded her or volunteered the name of someone who had. One villager claimed he had witnessed someone leaving her home at night, but subsequently admitted, in private, that he had made this up to add some spice to the rumour mill (see the ethnographic section). Sakhina and her husband denied that there was any truth to these stories and viewed them as malicious gossip by jealous villagers. Yet, even if they were true, there were many other women who were known adulteresses. Most prominently, there was Miriam Beebee, who was married and called 'training grounds' (in English) as she was visited by young single men for obvious reasons. Yet, she ran one of the two most successful grocery stores (called *kadees*) in the village. No one ostracized her; males and sometimes women joked and congregated at her *kadee*.

According to the *Sharia* (Islamic law), adultery (*zina* in Arabic) is punishable by death. Yet, in Kutali, few people were punished for adultery or premarital sex and mostly these were men. The central part of the punishment was being publicly beaten 101 times with a stick. However, the person administering the punishment did so with his elbow on the ground so that the blows were mostly symbolic and not painful. Second, after the punishment, the woman or man took a ritual bath, put on a new sari or sarong and was considered cleansed of sin. Everyone thereafter congratulated the person, who usually acted sheepishly, followed by a short celebration. Sakhina's case had never been brought to the Mosque trustee board, though probably everyone believed the rumours regarding her frequent affairs. Clearly, Sakhina was a special case.

In this chapter my aim is to uncover and explain the unarticulated and sub-conscious reasons for villagers' viewing Sakhina as a 'folk devil' and not any of the other women in the village who, villagers said, had committed the same sinful (*haramkootie*) act of adultery. According to Cohen, there are three main perceptual attributions to the construction of a folk devil. First, a group will exaggerate grossly the seriousness of the events and the amount and effects of any damage or violence; second, there are reports about the inevitable recurrence of the events linked to a folk devil; and, third, a form of 'symbolization' occurs that, on sight, activates perceiving the person or group as a folk devil (Cohen 2002 [1972], 26). For Cohen, the media and moral gatekeepers in a community (such as politicians) spread and promote this image of a folk devil, which leads to 'moral panic'.

Some of the above features fit villagers' responses to Sakhina as a kind of folk devil, as evident in their collective ostracism of her. But there are some features that don't fit so easily. This is partially due to Cohen's theory having been developed in England, where there is a mass media and a subcultural group to target as folk devils. There is no mass media or subcultural group in Kutali. There are no villagers who offer an explanation for why Sakhina is singled out for ostracism and not other alleged adulteresses. I found theoretical sources

to help answer this conundrum in the back alleys of my own field, cognitive anthropology, where there is a sparse and mostly outdated (1940–1970) literature on ‘covert categories’ (Berlin, Breedlove and Raven 1968; Black 1977; Hallowell 1955). During my search for additional theoretical material for the third revision of this chapter, I happened upon Benjamin Lee Whorf (1945, 1974), a collected volume of his writings by John B. Carroll (1956), and numerous writings on Whorf (Ellos 1982; Halliday and Webster 2005; Lee 1996; Taylor 1984). In these writings my focus was on Whorf’s concept of the ‘cryptotype’, which he considered to be a deeper kind of covert category. It seemed to me a much better theoretical concept for apprehending villagers’ aversion to Sakhina than covert categories – which remains in the realm of a linguistic structure. In this chapter I rely on this concept for much of my analysis.

I also searched for insight in an area I have studiously avoided owing to my positivist bent: the ‘imaginary’. Tine M. Gammeltoft (2014), Byron J. Good (2012) and Claudia Strauss (2006) provided the main summations of this concept. The idea of the imaginary, sometimes used like the concept of *ethos* (Strauss 2006, 323), ought to contain, I expected, some theoretical insights that could help explain why villagers treated one presumed adulteress different from other adulteresses. Both Gammeltoft and Good view the imaginary in relationship to the state, politics and suffering. Both take a phenomenological approach in using the imaginary to explore how relations with others and their perceptions of self and the world change due to emotional distress, suffering, historical traumas and self-perceptions of the “‘natural gaze’ of the political order’ (Good 2012, 26). As a phenomenological tool, the imaginary acts as a means to understand how real people who are marginalized or in distress view the world and are viewed by others. In terms of Sakhina, the imaginary points to identifying the collective imagination of the villagers who seem to view her through the same lens; it also helps ‘make sense’ (Good 2012, 25) of the obverse gaze of Sakhina as she views the villagers. The collective imagination of the villagers attributed Sakhina with a hypersexuality she did not possess and a status she did not deserve. Sakhina, on the other hand, reduces the villagers to the American equivalent of ‘backwood rednecks’.

I begin by finding connections to other chapters in this edited volume. These connections create a sort of comparative web of significances that help situate this chapter into the larger comparative context of the symbolic roles folk devils play in society. According to Paul Joosse, in his afterword to this volume, Cohen was at best uncomfortable with comparative and macro-historical analysis, and sought to ‘drill inward ... to discern the social logics, endogenous to the panics’. Cohen explicitly rejected macro-historical approaches to folk devils, considering himself ‘too close to the sixties’ (Cohen 1972, 2) and too focused on the subcultures of unruly youths, which he listed as follows: ‘the Mod, the Rocker, the Greaser, the student militant, the drug fiend, the vandal, the soccer hooligan, the hippy, the skinhead’ (*ibid.*, 3; see also Joosse, Afterword).

Further, he strongly identified with the symbolic interactionists, arguing that '[i]t is to this body of theory that we must turn for our major orientation to the study of both moral panics and social types' (ibid.). His drilling inwards lends to making it difficult to apply his theory beyond the European setting in which it is grounded. In drilling outward, we paradoxically also dig deeper inward by adding the concepts of cryptotype and imaginaries to our repertoire of conceptual tools for explaining the psycho-cultural processes by which folk devils are conceived. Second, this study extends the notion of folk devils to cultures outside the penumbra of Western Europe.

Making Inter-Chapter Connections

While the case of Sakhina is unusual, it links up with other studies that help shed light on how and why Sakhina was ostracized by villagers. Unlike the other studies in this edited volume, there are no political forces, no mass or social media portrayals, no fellow rebels, no examples of collective expressions of vilification, nor any indicators that villagers sense that Sakhina is but a harbinger of things to come. There are no overt, organized protestations that signal moral panic. There is only Sakhina, walking the streets of Kutali alone, riding buses to nearby towns without an escort, singing or humming pop tunes rather than religious songs as she is walking or playing with her children. How, then, does this chapter qualify in a volume on folk devils and moral panic?

A key concept by many of the contributors to this volume is the process (verb) and label (noun) of the 'other' being 'othered' because they are perceived as 'inadaptable' and 'dangerous' outsiders who reject insider culture (see Slačálek, Chapter 9). In the chapter by Svatoňová, the folk devil is identified with Judith Butler and feminists. Roma constitute the folk devils in chapters by Slačálek and Ivasiuc. The ensuing moral panic is captured with references to various social actions and expressions that articulate the negative attributes and culturally harmful actions of Roma as folk devils. These othered outsiders are perceived to threaten the physical and moral well-being of society. Khan notes how asylum seekers are perceived to threaten the cultural fabric of the UK. Harboe writes about how Lithuanian men in Denmark are perceived by Danes to be thugs and thieves. Danes profile Lithuanians as thugs who pose a physical threat to the good citizens of Denmark. Harboe also makes it clear that the sentencing of Lithuanians is biased due to a public perception of them as 'hardened folk devils', transforming 'law and order' legal representation into one based on 'law and border'.

I find linkages in other chapters that connect Sakhina to the idea of 'devilling' and moral panic. In Chapter 7, Svatoňová writes about the Czech anti-gender campaigners' that have produced an anti-feminist and LGBT+ moral panic. She notes that there had been no such thing as 'gender ideology' until it was created in the 1990s. Sakhina may represent a stage prior to the development

of a gender ideology, when the borders were hard and fast and everyone knew them so they did not need to be stipulated. But when they are crossed there is a collective feeling of discomfort, if not threat.

The point of this chapter is to provide a reasonable cultural-psychological explanation for why villagers bedevilled Sakhina and (more tentatively) why she expressed herself in ways that were by any stretch of the imagination *haram* (that is, sinful) from a village (if not more general) Muslim perspective. To engage in this task, I followed Cohen's injunction to 'drill inwards' (via Joosse). Drilling inward led me (oddly and unintentionally) first to Whorf, who first coined the terms 'covert categories' and 'cryptotypes', and then to the imaginary, a concept I had always rejected as an unnecessary addition to the jargon heap.

Theories: Cryptotypes and the Imaginary

In this section I will trace the development of Whorf's idea of cryptotype and then link it to the concept of the imaginary. The concept of cryptotype is a useful tool for examining and explaining the underlying subconscious mechanisms that allow people to believe and justify their beliefs in folk devils and then respond with a moral panic that is, from rational, ethical and empirical perspectives, not justified. While the twin concept of moral panic and folk devils have become 'key concepts' in sociology and criminology (Cohen 2002 [1972], i; Thompson 2005), they did not reach the shores of social psychology until the early 2000s (Pearce and Charman 2011, 293–4). Social psychologists were quick to criticize the theory as a sociological phenomenon that labels groups of people, which is then ratified and amplified by the mass media. The psychological mechanisms by which people (or the public) construct and accept the belief that some other(s) are folk devils threatening their way of life are missing. The two concepts promoted here are not the only means to explain how people come to belief in folk devils but they do offer a psycho-cultural explanation for how the folk devil–moral panic complex acquires a subconscious – that is, an out-of-awareness collective unity and currency.

Whorf coined the term 'cryptotype' to refer to what he called a 'second order' (i.e. deeper) covert category. The latter term refers to a collectively felt sense of meaning regarding some cultural practice for which there is no phenotypical sound concept to anchor that meaning. The meaning is consciously inferred or felt but not articulated. There are three different forms of covert linguistic categories. I describe them from the simplest to the most complex. The first example is the sentence 'The baby was named Helen', in which we know that she is also a girl, but knowledge of her gender is not phenotypically available to us. We need cultural knowledge about gendered names to know this. The second example refers to covert category labels, especially in taxonomies. One instance is that both a domestic cat and a lion can be called 'cats' but we cannot combine

dogs and wolves under the label 'dogs.' The former is an overt category because there is a superordinate label (or word) to subsume both, while the latter is a covert category because we can infer it but we have no word for this category. A more complicated version of this is found in Mary Black's (1977) discussion of Hallowell's (1955) presentation of Ojibwa categories of living and non-living things. It turns out that, since humans can shape shift to be rocks or anything else in the world, one something can belong to both categories – living thing and non-living thing – but there is no word to reflect this dual and, from a Western perspective, illogical dual membership.

The third kind of covert category is the most interesting. Whorf was a fundamental Christian Methodist, but he was also a mystic. He saw language as possessing a mantra-like quality or 'soul'. The phenotype – the sound of language – is exceptionally important because thought could not develop without language and the development of language requires speech that conveys meanings. Meaning is at some deeper non-verbal level. Meaning is pulled up (out of the subconscious) and transubstantiated into phenotypical strings that allow for human communication. Meaning is formulated via cryptotypes that, through their connection with the phenotype, form word-meanings placed in 'overt categories'. The hidden meanings in words come from the pool of cryptotype that can be dragged into words or that insufflate phenotypes with more meaning than intended or that can be articulated. Whorf referred to this deeper pool of 'second degree' meanings as cryptotypes (Whorf 1945, 1974; Lee 1996, 165). At this level of semiotics, meaning is generated in the interweaving of sound and 'soul', phenotype and cryptotype (Whorf 1956, 266). According to Whorf, this relationship of sound and soul is analogous to the wind and string instruments of an orchestra with the score. In fact, according to Ellos (1982, 147), Whorf saw music in mathematics and both as deeper types of language that expressed 'ultimate reality'.

In short, the phenotypes are mere sounds until they are connected to the cryptotype, which is really a semiotic primal deep structure. Language is where conscious meaning resides because it combines the source of meaning with a sound system for communicating meaning. Cryptotypical meaning is not overtly communicable and this insight allows us a means to theorize how villagers pack extra meaning into their use of the term 'adultery', otherwise their behaviour does not make sense.

We now turn to the more contemporary term, the imaginary, and what it can add to the idea of cryptotype. In her section on 'theorizing the imaginary', Gammeltoft (2014) navigates through a variety of different perspectives on the imaginary, moving from Sartre to Lacan, Althusser and finally Žižek. My take-away is that the imaginary is a semantically redolent un-coded space because Saussurean constraints on linguistic referents are absent; more sociologically, it is the means by which we can imagine society, institutions and ourselves to be coherent wholes, and third that the imaginary is always 'politically inflected' – it is spurred by the inherent relational dialectics of power. Power, as we all know

by now, always exists in relationships that are at a tug of war, each seeking to increase power at the expense of others (Gammeltoft 2014, 157–60). Strauss (2006) points out that many have substituted culture – a loaded term – with the imaginary to lessen the load, but really this just conceals its equivalence. Strauss seems to me to agree with Lila Abu-Lughod’s (1991) anti-cultural stance stating that anthropologists should, instead, show ‘the actual circumstances and detailed histories of individuals and their relationships [which] are also always crucial to the constitution of experience’ (Abu-Lughod 1991, 476).

Strauss posits a similar particularistic view of the imaginary by asking, ‘Whose imaginaries?’ She writes that ‘Answering this question requires a person-centered approach ... so that we are talking about the imaginaries of real people, not the imaginaries of imagined people’ (2006, 339). She argues that imaginaries are constructed between ‘indisputable facts’ and ‘a complete lack of knowledge’ (ibid.) and consists of ‘explicit knowledge of imagined facts, and implicit cultural beliefs, and dissociated, repressed, and fantasized knowledge’ (ibid.). The takeaway point is that the imaginary seems to presume the existence of a subconscious field where particular cryptotypes are spawned through the reimagination of knowledge about ‘perceptible facts’ (Strauss 2006). The imaginary is always about power because it implies a relationship between real people in which the imaginary can alter that relationship in purposeful but disassociated or displaced ways.

Ethnographic Material

The dominant collective criticism of Sakhina was that she committed and continues to commit adultery. As noted previously, many other women were said to have committed adultery; one, Miriam Beebee, was even referred to as ‘training grounds’. Why wasn’t she reviled? Or why were no other alleged adulteresses ostracized? I often went to Miriam Beebee’s store (*kadee*), ‘owned’ by her husband and father-in-law. Usually, Miriam was at the counter, bantering with customers. Tea, dried crusty bread and a banana were often ordered by adult male villagers, who sat on two benches in the *kadee* veranda or leaned against the wall, enjoying each other’s company. Miriam would be the only woman present. No one saw her presence as unusual, nor did villagers mock her. I spent much of my time during the day ‘hanging out’ at various *kadees* in Kutali. Almost all the men, when they weren’t working in the fields, at the mosque, or conducting various business such as selling bananas, coconuts, mangos, *bidi* leaves (a tendu leaf in which tobacco is wrapped for local cigarettes called *bidis*) and so forth to local merchants and some who came from as far away as Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The *kadee* was where plans were made; long discussions on any topic under the sun from sex to politics to local thievery and conflicts were ongoing on a daily basis. From my perspective, it seemed that for villagers and myself

(especially) the diurnal cycle and time in general was not oppressive. It was an immensely liberating feeling for me. Most importantly, my integration into the community depended on being able to become an accepted and relatively 'normal' member of these fluid *kadee* groups. It is here where I obtained most of my information about villagers' perceptions of Sakhina.

One of the things that was distinctive for me about life in Sri Lanka and, most notably, in Kutali that social life was regulated by norms of etiquette that constituted a covert category. They were not a set of explicit instructions, nor was I taught any of them; rather, over time, I simply internalized them. For instance, when an older man came to the *kadee*, a younger man would automatically stand and give him his seat. If one's father or any elder relative came, the younger man would also shift the subject of conversation if it were risqué or controversial to something more prosaic. If a younger man were smoking and his mother, father, sister or elder brother came by, the cigarette would immediately disappear. Also, when women came by the *kadee*, men would change the subject of conversation if it were about sex (which it often was). Men did not pay attention to women as they walked by the *kadee*, unless the woman happened to be Sakhina. Then the pitch of the conversation dropped; the men often lapsed into a momentary silence or sit as if in deep thought. Only after she had passed a certain distance would they start up as if nothing had happened. It was as if Sakhina had this 'magical power' to halt conversations by her very proximity. But, again, why?

One day at the *kadee* with many people present a villager claimed to have seen a Buddhist man enter her house at night. The villager said that he was walking past Hassan's house at night and heard a ruckus. He went over to investigate and saw a strange person in bed with Sakhina. When the man saw him, he ran, but not before the villager had boxed him on the ears. He said, with obvious scorn, that Hassan stayed, like a mouse, in the other room. I visited Hassan to confirm this story. He and Sakhina scoffed and noted that it was impossible to run out of their house from the bedroom without being noticed and the person who told the story would have recognized and identified the stranger but did not do so, because it never happened. I also had a conversation with the man who told the story; he admitted that he had embellished the story and had only heard a sound coming from the house at night; the rest he had made up for entertainment. The *kadees* are places to make deals, gossip and meet friends. This story is probably narrative flotsam that served its immediate purpose as entertainment but not as tinder for a fire.

Surely, we would expect to find a villager who spoke one good word about Sakhina, but I never heard one. The villagers' avoidance and dislike of her appeared unanimous. In passing, I cannot help but compare the responses of villagers to Sakhina to the many news reports around the globe describing 'honour' killings of daughters and wives, or the gang rape of young women who go to the cinema or ride a bus alone. The typical explanation for these horrible crimes is that these women were perceived to reject normative, modest female

repertoires for behaviour. To my knowledge, Sakhina and her husband were never physically or verbally abused, nor had any villager even suggested doing them harm.

In what follows, I will explore Sakhina's life before and after she came to Kutali and the key moment when she assertively stopped me in order to vent about her life in Kutali. I will also discuss villagers' behaviours as they pertain to her or to people who shared some (but not all) of her qualities. My goal is to eliminate all other possible explanations for ostracizing Sakhina, except one: that of the cryptotype. A cryptotype that pulls together all the fragments of her masculine forms of behaviour, which, when taken as a gestalt, symbolize a revolutionary threat to the present patriarchal structure of gender roles and statuses. The notion of cryptotype is important to the theme of this volume, because a folk devil is more than a gang of men or women who appear threatening. The devil possesses the supernatural power to destroy life and capture your soul. The concept of cryptotype provides a means to apprehend that imagined, even awesome power, condensed in the cryptotype of the masculine female that I believe Sakhina symbolizes.

As a cryptotype, Sakhina is a metaphorical devil in that she represents a revolutionary model of gender for the Muslims in Kutali (and perhaps many globally) because she rejects the bundle of essentialized, ascriptive traits and status distinctions that come with patriarchy. I need add that I refer to Muslim cultural norms, rather than Islamic precepts regarding gender, because ethnography is a person-centred activity and my analysis (whether right or wrong) is informed by what villagers do and say, and not what is deduced from the Koran, Hadiths (Sayings of the Prophet) or Islamic traditions.

Sakhina's Family History and Background

Sakhina was in her mid-twenties when I met her. She already had three children and was pregnant. I hadn't paid her much attention and did not have any extended conversations with her until after the delivery of her fourth child. Most marriages in Kutali are uxorilocal, that is, the groom moves into the house of his wife, which was usually built by her parents and adjacent to their house. However, Sakhina was an outsider and moved to Kutali from Vyragama (a pseudonym), an upcountry town, where her family owned a large merchant store as well as a gem store.

Sakhina was the second youngest of five children; she had three elder brothers and a younger sister. She grew up in a large house attached to the family store. Vyragama seemed a 'successful' town: the residents appeared well off, the land was lush, there were two rice seasons (as opposed to Kutali, where there was only one season), there was much gemming in the area and the town was on a main highway connecting Colombo, on the west coast, to Kalmunai and Batticaloa, on the east coast. I visited Vyragama a number of times and

visited Sakhina's family. Her father and brothers ran the family businesses, and her mother the household. Her mother was a strong-willed woman who was comfortable talking with me about Sakhina. She told me that, when Sakhina was growing up, she always wanted to be in the shop helping her father and brothers.

Sakhina's father and brothers were more reticent in discussing Sakhina. They volunteered that she had had a Buddhist lover in Vyragama and this had caused great embarrassment to the family for two reasons: first, women are expected to be virgins at the time they marry and this rule is especially strong for rich or newly rich families who seek to establish a good reputation for themselves; and, second, while premarital sex happens, that a Muslim woman has sexual relations with a Buddhist makes the situation much worse. It sends a message to the community that Sakhina's family could not control her, and had not taught her the proper, modest and obedient modes of behaviour that befit a good Muslim woman.

Sakhina's family offered a bribe to the Buddhist man to stay away from her, which he accepted. Sakhina, however, became distraught when she was prohibited from seeing him and, though under the guard of her brothers and mother, would manage to slip away now and then to look for him. Her father and brothers described her as 'mad' (*pissu*) about this man. In order to minimize the shame and town gossip, Sakhina's family decided to find a marriageable man for her who lived far away. One of her brothers was friends with a bus mechanic who happened to be from Kutali. The bus mechanic's brother was single, and his family was looking for a bride for him. The bus mechanic's father had been the 'headman' of the village (*arachi mahatteya*) and the mechanic's brother, Hassan, was the village secretary, so he was educated and came from a reputable family. Hassan also needed to stay in Kutali to take care of his parents. Sakhina's family provided an excessively large dowry by Kutali standards and also offered Hassan's brother, the mechanic, a home and place of work in Vyragama. Primarily because of the value of the dowry, a marriage was arranged and Sakhina moved to Kutali. Hassan and his parents also received a substantial sum of money as part of the dowry. The only problem was love.

Sakhina did not want to leave Vyragama and she vocalized her love for the Buddhist man. Vyragama is a picturesque town in the hills with a year-round temperate climate. Her parents were well-to-do, and the large, newly cemented family home had electricity, running water and a private driveway. In contrast, Kutali was in the lowlands, carved out of a tropical forest that also served as one of the largest animal sanctuaries in Sri Lanka. Wild boar, rogue elephants and monkeys were among the many animals that made farming difficult. I witnessed a rogue elephant destroy a large section of paddy lands in a few hours. Snakes, leeches and mosquitoes are endemic to the area. Kutali is hot and humid most of the year; it lacked electricity, plumbing and even paved roads. The houses were mostly composed of dried, clay hand-made bricks, cow-dung floors, palm-leaved roofs, and wooden planks for doors, with bars for windows.

From Sakhina's vantage (as she described it), the uneducated and peasant world view of the villages was the most unbearable feature of the village. The first few years she frequently boarded the bus to return to Vyragama for visits. Her family discouraged these visits and told her not to come so often. As a compromise they would send Sakhina's younger sister to visit her in Kutali. Sakhina made her dislike for the village and its residents obvious at every opportunity. Perhaps that is a reason why villagers disliked her, but it is unlikely to be a reason for ostracism.

Just before my interview with Sakhina, she had a baby boy. She had the boy at her Kutali home; only her husband helped her through the birth pangs and delivery. There were a number of midwives in the village; none came to her aid. Not even her mother-in-law attended until the very end, just before the baby was born. In a conversation with her, the mother-in-law referred to Sakhina as '*haramkootie*' (meaning sinful, like a Muslim who eats pork).

Interviews with Sakhina and Villagers

Sakhina's husband, Hassan, invited me to the naming ceremony of their fourth child. It is the custom for Muslims to wait 40 days after the birth before naming the baby. It is always a grand occasion. They had repainted (or in this case re-limed) the mud walls of the house, the inside of the house was gaily decorated with colourful banners and balloons, and a makeshift canopy of bright-coloured saris was strung up, under which guests were intended to sit and be led in prayer by the village *lebbai* (a sort of Muslim caste recognized as part astrologer, part folk priest). Guests were to present gifts to the proud parents (usually cash in an envelope). The proud hosts are expected to provide food and cigarettes for the men.

On the day of the ceremony, I had put some money into an envelope and, with my assistant, 'Singer' Muthulingam (his nickname refers to the fact that he fixed Singer sewing machines), we made our way to the party. We were a bit late. As always on such occasions, I had with me a notebook and small tape recorder. Red and green paper streamers were strung between trees; the house had been decorated and there were trays of single cigarettes, *bidis* and finger foods. No one else was there, not a single soul! I was not prepared for this; after all, why had they gone to such expense and trouble? Where were the *lebbai* and the mosque trustees?

Hassan and Sakhina were clad in new clothes. They sat, visibly disconsolate, under the canopy of their house, where it was cool. We waited for other guests to arrive and made some small talk, nibbled at the food and had a cigarette. No one came; an Anglo Jew from America and a Tamil Hindu were the sole attendees. After an awkward half hour (or less), we said our goodbyes. As we began to walk away, Sakhina shouted for us to stop. She asked me to turn on my tape recorder and she was going to give me her version of why no one, not even

Hassan's parents, had come to this celebration. She was direct and adamant. She ordered Hassan to pull up two more chairs and Singer and I sat facing the couple. She began to talk and went virtually non-stop for roughly two hours. Hassan sat next to her the whole time; he barely moved.

She told us of her life in Vyragama and how she had an affair with a Buddhist man who she still loved. She hadn't wanted to marry Hassan, but as an obedient daughter she felt obligated to do so. She acknowledged that she was deeply unhappy living in Kutali, but was resigned to stay because there was nowhere for her to go to. She continued:

The women of this village are all jealous of me because I am rich and doing well ... the lot of women in this world is hell; we are totally dependent on men, even I am dependent on this sickly man [nodding to Hassan]. What can I do? I go everywhere by myself, why not? Should I sit here by myself? I do that so many days, no one comes to visit. I sit here and sing songs. Here, listen [she sings a song]. For this I am criticized because women are not supposed to sing; so I should stay in the house silent?

My husband is weak; I can't enjoy sex with him. Look at him, how could that satisfy any woman? [He did not respond] ... I still love a man in Vyragama, he is Sinhalese, but what can I do? If only I had married him none of this would have happened. But he is also married now ...

So many women in this village are unfaithful; their husbands don't care for them and spend their money on useless things then come home and beat them up because there is not enough food to eat. Only then do women go and find another man. ... They make eyes or go like this [gestures with her hand, palm down, hand slightly stretched out and finger opening and closing on palm]. But I will have nothing to do with these fools; they are all ignorant.

I expected that at any minute Hassan would tell her to shut up, but he sat impassively in his chair next to her. Shortly thereafter, I had an opportunity to talk with him. He told me that he was aware of village rumours and that he didn't socialize with villagers and professed not to be concerned about their comments. 'My wife,' he said, 'is unhappy but she is loyal to me; she works hard and she is a good mother to my children. What can I do?' Later he said that he did not believe she had committed adultery in the village and mentioned the story that I had previously discussed with him. He reiterated that it was untrue but that he could not convince villagers of this fact and had stopped trying.

Hassan's parents were in their sixties and they lived in one of the nicest houses in the village. The father was frail and sickly but the mother was strong and talkative. Hassan had pleaded with her to midwife the birth of his son, but she had refused. She acknowledged this and said, in effect, that Sakhina

'ate up' her son and she did not consider Sakhina a member of her family. Only reluctantly did she come for the very end of the delivery. Neither she nor her husband would talk or have anything to do with Sakhina, though initially they liked her and treated her well. I am not sure why they scorned her; they could not really cite the turning point.

Before I analyse the above materials, there are three brief case studies of outsiders I would like to present. The reason for including them is that one could argue that villagers ostracized Sakhina because she was an outsider and an adulteress; Miriam Beebee was an insider whom villagers are likely related to through multiple kinship links. A man in his sixties who had lived in the village, married and had grown children and grandchildren was still known as 'Columbo' because he had been born in the city of Columbo. He remained marginal in village political and power structures largely because he was recognized as an outsider and lacked the kinship ties that served as a basis for local power and prestige.

The next two cases are not about outsiders who moved into the village, but they do illustrate how villagers frame their understanding and orientation to outsiders. This is important because the main alternative explanation for why villagers treated Sakhina differently from other adulterous village women is that her adultery was compounded by the lack of kin to counter villagers' negative comments about her. The first case is one of a funeral that took place in the village just at the time a group of orthodox Muslims were visiting the village to eradicate folk Buddhist corruptions and instruct villagers on Sunni orthodoxy. The second story is of an elderly couple from a southern village who had come to buy gems in the village.

The Tablighi Jama'at is an Islamic organization that sends well-to-do, usually retired Muslim men, to remote Muslim villages in order to reinvigorate villagers' faith and to eliminate polytheistic practices that have crept into local religious beliefs and practices. Usually a group of five (or so) men arrive by van, sleep in the mosque, give speeches and sermons, go door to door discussing their mission (*jama'at*) and leave after a few days. On one such occasion, a poor villager had died and, as is the custom, was to be buried the following day. Some village leaders pointed out that the village, in particular this family, was so poor that they could not hold a proper funeral and the family and village would be humiliated in the eyes of the Tablighi members. Others argued that for this very reason they should invite the Tablighi members, who might offer a donation. Eventually, it was decided to hold the funeral in secret at an abandoned mosque and funeral rites were performed without the knowledge of the Tablighi members. This case illustrates the villagers' sense of a collective identity and their capacity to feel collective shame. More importantly, it shows how the villagers can individually, and without the urging of leaders or mass media, act as a single collectivity in the face of outsiders.

The next case study illustrates the amoral and exploitative principles that organized a hidden text constructed expressly as a response to an outside couple who came to Kutali for economic gain. One hot, muggy day in July, an elderly Muslim couple arrived in the afternoon by bus. The man had been a government employee in the southern coastal town of Dikwela and had recently retired. The couple had decided to take a good portion of their life savings to Kutali to buy gems. Gems, particularly blue sapphires, had been found in the region. The couple obviously hoped that villagers did not realize the value of these gems and they could make a tidy profit. About a week after their arrival, a friend told me about the villagers' response to the request for gems. At the time, no gems of any worth had ever been found in proximity of the village, and only occasionally did villagers try their luck at gemming. Nonetheless, the villagers, collectively, had bought cheap blue ballpoint pens, melted down the ink, smoothed it over glass shards and polished it up. It was an amazingly good simulacrum of a cornflower-blue sapphire, to my untrained eyes. The couple, who were obviously novices at the gem trade, were busy buying these 'blue sapphires' and, no doubt, thrilled by their good fortune. My friend told me that some villagers had decided that the game had gone far enough and they should cease and desist, returning some of the money. I came to the meeting when a group of villagers informed the couple that they were being swindled. Immediately, as if a switch had been turned, the couple slumped in sorrow; the woman wept uncontrollably, while the man bent to his knees and sobbed. The villagers managed to collect about 50 US dollars and put them on a bus back to Dikwela.

These examples illustrate how capable villagers were of uniting collectively in order to deceive outsiders. However, both collective acts were against outsiders with *no* ties to the village and were only there temporarily. If we consider the naming ceremony events as a case study, we can see how the villagers' response to Sakhina is analogous to that exhibited in the above two case studies. By denying Sakhina access to village life and also by refusing to accept her invitation to the naming ceremony, not only did the village exclude Sakhina from participation in the hidden texts that signify in-membership but they also excluded her from participating in the public texts that mediate public life with outsiders and insiders. Beyond the need to conceal their 'true' identity or agenda with Sakhina, the villagers also rejected the minimal requirements for social interaction. Sakhina was symbolically elided from both public and hidden social texts and made invisible. The difference, however, is that Sakhina is there permanently and does have kinship ties via marriage to the village. Further, the villagers did show respect to the members of the Jamaat Tablighi and some made some amends to the couple from Dikwela. No such empathy was shown to Sakhina and her status is not so much as an outsider, because the villagers interacted with the other outsiders, but as excluded from village society as if she were a kind of alien.

Imagining a New Cryptotype of Gender and Agency: Protecting Patriarchy

Joose (2018) uses Donald Trump as a case study to explain the dynamic between charismatic leaders and traditionalists. He combines Cohen and Weber's theory of charisma to show that the folk devil, charismatic hero and traditional authority figures are in a complex dialectical and antonymic relationship. Using Donald Trump as his case study, Joosse notes that Trump is both a folk devil and a folk hero. Trump asserts his singular positionality as the only moral virtuoso and keeper of traditional values in the political world and thus only he can 'Make America Great Again'. All other politicians, Republicans and Democrats, are either 'lyin', 'crooked' or merely political (i.e. instrumental) in their claims. He is both Weber's charismatic hero and Cohen's folk devil. This suggests that people buy into one or the other political party not so much based on their own beliefs but based on their belief of what others believe (see also Paluck and Shepherd 2012). Both moral panic due to folk devils and the belief in a charismatic hero are based not in what one believes but in what one believes others believe. Thus, many Republicans believe that Democrats do not support workers, families, Christianity or democracy and Democrats believe Republicans love guns, are racists and are motivated by an animus of greed. For both groups, Trump is a transcendent figure: hero and devil.

My evaluation of Sakhina is analogous to Trump: for the villagers, she is a folk devil, pure and simple, but for readers of this chapter she is, most likely, a kind of hero, invoking gender equality and expressing her fundamental human rights. Both assessments tap into a cryptotype of how things should be. Sakhina and the villagers tap the well of some cryptotype that is more than two levels down. Perhaps, as Whorf (1974, 35–6) suggests, people draw phenotypical (that is sound/articulate) meaning from archetypes but the archetype encompasses more meaning than any phenotype or 'word'. When the villagers refer to Sakhina as an adulteress, they imagine more; they dig into a particular cryptotypical formation that can be identified through excavating those outcroppings of gendered behaviours that constitute a radically imagined 'bad' (and 'dangerous') woman. That radical imaginary is constructed as a cryptotype formed from a range of 'perceptual facts' that villagers collectively observe (e.g. Sakhina taking the bus alone, singing secular songs and the like) and from which a cryptotype is formed. The cryptotype is formed from these behaviours by creating a holistic image of a woman radically different from the range of bad and good women that constitutes the overt categories of women. In short, the cryptotype is comprised of a flow of imagined and culturally deviant behaviours that reflect symbolic opposition to the normative image of a Muslim woman (at least by the villagers). The cryptotype forms a gestalt of this woman, who cannot be consciously imagined because there is not a cultural representation of

such women; there is only one, Sakhina. In this sense, we can see that Sakhina is a devil and creates a suppressed pool of moral panic.

The three comparative differences between Democratic and Republican perceptions of Trump and how villagers view Sakhina are: Sakhina and the villagers are not overtly political antagonists; second, Sakhina stands alone: she is not a member of a group of feminists; and, third, hatred for members of the opposition party has a long history; social media also provides discourses for expressing anger, articulating arguments, and injecting fears with fictive scenarios of chaos and doom. No such fears could be articulated about one woman in a village.

If there were more women in the village to follow her lead, moral panic would probably ensue because a collective behaviour signalling a new gender ideology would be expressed. Thus, the moral panic is not due to one's own (direct) belief but rather in one's belief about what a group of others believe. Perhaps the fears would be further flamed in that Sakhina's 'masculine' signifying behaviours symbolically reject the religious ratification upon which gender discrimination is legitimized as a sacred deontic duty. The cryptotype in this case references an imaginary world in which patriarchy no longer exists and this is enough to 'endorse and enforce' (Elder Vass 2012) a collective ostracism of Sakhina.

In the case of Sakhina, the perceptible fact is that she is a 'bad woman', but her badness conceals the fact that her actions imply that women have equal rights as men; they too can walk and travel on their own and behave as autonomous, agented beings. In her perceived actions, she is covertly signalling that she deserves the same status as males in public arenas. That symbolism is bundled up and concentrated in the overt category of adulteress. As a cryptotype, adultery resonates across these cultural beliefs about gender roles and relationships, rejecting the hard sanctioned boundaries that define these roles. If the internal linguistic structure would meld with the external structure, then the cryptotype would become overt and at least recognized. Hence the imaginary allows for villagers to deflect the symbolic meaning of Sakhina's perceived behaviour and make it manageable. In that sense, Sakhina is both a folk devil and not a folk devil. She is a folk devil because she acts in ways that they reject and which subliminally express that women like her represent a threat to the patriarchal establishment. She is not a folk devil because villagers have reformulated her behaviour to fit with their normative scheme of the bad woman as adulteress. It is for the latter reason that she does not activate moral panic in the village, but it should be noted it is probably also for this reason that she is not harmed by villagers.

Notes

¹ All names of places and people are pseudonyms.

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