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PAPER

Majoritarian Discourse, Masking and Female Suicide Bomber in Chandrasekaram's Forbidden Area

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Militant weaponization of life is a complex area of study. In modern psycho-political warfare the suicide bomber has been one of the most potent weapons of the LTTE, since the first suicide attack on 5th July 1989. In common public discourse, the suicide bomber is often perceived as the "other", a menacing threat to society who is "morally culpable of great crimes, thus less than human and deserving of punishment". Therefore, this paper attempts to identify the majoritarian discourse, which dehumanizes the female suicide bomber, and analyzes how "masking" allows her to survive the 'hostile powers' that control her.

Masking in postcolonial discourse, as viewed by Elaine Savory, is a series of "codes signifying multiple levels of personality, indicated by ritual ways... in which gods can temporarily occupy the physical plane of human existence, thereby heightening and solemnifying the ordinary human decisions.... (or) a code for disguise, deceit, (and) retreat from self exposure...." Especially mask's effectiveness as protective and subversive strategy in politically dangerous contexts is foregrounded in this respect. Thus, the cold blooded inhuman characteristics of the suicide bomber can be read in terms of camouflage.

First, one can observe Urmila donned with a mask of courage and defiance, because as the time for the mission dawns she shows signs of weakness; wanting to make more human and physical contact with Raman, her handler. However, while the sudden sexual urge she develops towards Raman heightens her "sensuality", her lack of self constraint projects her as being "uncivilized/ savage". The complexity of Urmila's character is heightened as she subverts gender politics and 'femininity'; also she draws divine inspiration from the Hindu goddess *Kali*.

Although Urmila doesn't fall short of being "human" her final action is far from being dialectical. Nevertheless, the catharsis that is provoked in the spectators can only be considered by viewing the masking process as "a series of codes signifying multiple levels of personality" as opposed to being viewed as disguise or deceit.