

Impact of use of color in yellow fish by ambai

[Science](#), [Biology](#)



Ambai, or C. S. Lakshmi (1944) hailing from Tamil Nadu, India comes on the forefront of modern Indian writers who have made a huge mark in World Literature as a whole. Her works are characterized by her passionate espousal of the cause of women, humour lucid and profound style and the touch of realism. She is one of the most important Tamil writers today, who have been included in the recently published book 'Picador' book of Modern Indian Literature by Amit Choudhuri. Most of her stories are about relationships and they contain brilliant observations about contemporary life. Exploration of space, silence, coming to terms with one's body or sexuality and the importance of communication are some of the recurring themes of her works. The story, Yellow Fish is one of her most passionately feminine works. The imagery used here by Ambai is excellent and encapsulating as the reader finds his/her own passion stirring as the story comes to the end. The use of colours is very symbolic in its irony. Through the use of colours, Ambai has tried to depict the objects characteristics, adding more material to the images, like a real life image anyone from her audience has experienced.

The ash grey sea, unlike the 'blue green open stretch of space' does more to depict the set of mind her narrator possesses at that particular moment of time. The fact that images of the ash-grey sea and horrific colour images of the fisherwomen's clothes were inserted, ought to give the reader a premonition, of kinds, about the dark turn, the narrative is about to take a little way ahead. With the unwanted, thrown away fish too, comes an upsurge of images with vivid colours, the colour yellow being associated with

the pale rusting leaves, that fall, and are left to lie around in the most discarded state.

The narrative begins with the vivid description of the scene of fishing boats returning of the sea. It is high summer and the sand is heated up. Images of sea and water are predominant. There is a juxtaposition of images of faded blue and the ash grey sea. The bright colors of the fisherwomen's clothes: demonic red, blinding indigo, profound green and assaulting blue, stand vibrant against the white boats and the bodies of the men, darkened by the saltwater, the black hands of the fishermen and the brown of the wood and the white bellied fish.

Image of the fish being unloaded is also particularly staunch since the 'good' fish is splashed on the troughs, and the rest, that is the 'bad' ones are thrown away. The sea and the water are life-giving sources for so many life-forms, but suddenly, our attention is drawn away from the din of the fisherfolk to a little yellow fish thrown away on the sand of the shore. The line catches our attention because Ambai makes it stand out with her expertise of speech, as if almost drawing our attention towards ourselves. The first person narrative fixes the perspective and point of view of the story.

The detail of colour follows as the narrator observes the varying colour schemes in the events. The colour of the fish is yellow, is significantly pointed out to us as it is put into limelight as it is one of the 'bad' fish caught by mistake and was brought home. The narrator takes her time to stoop and watches fish shuddering and gasping for breath. It is this image that wrenches the memory of a similar incident of gasping for breath by

Jalaja. “ Like Jalaja’s mouth,” stands alone forcing us to think about the abrupt change from one sequence of events to another.

We’re taken into the imagery used by Ambai to show us the occurrences on that particular day, rather than actually narrating. The first image is that of the narrator standing outside Jalaja’s room constantly watching her little daughter struggle to survive. The next image is that of the ashes being brought home, in a small urn and the narrator’s insistence that the mouth of the urn be left open and the ashes to be immersed in the sea. Apparently unrelated are the thematically linked with the deep use of images and metaphors.

In both cases we witness an astounding struggle to survive. Gender differences emerge in the difference in attitude of Anu and Arup – Arup who fails to understand why Anu wants the lid of the urn open, and the loud sobs, hint at the intense grief buried in the narrator’s heart. She is trying to help her child breathe as she couldn’t earlier. For Arup it’s just ashes, whereas for Anu, it’s her daughter inside, whom she wants to liberate. Jalaja, born of water, whom she wants to release into the water, the open sea.

All the pent-up feelings of helplessness, frustration and grief, that she could do nothing to save her daughter, resurfaces when the narrator watches the yellow fish gasping for breath and thrashing hopelessly to go back to the sea. The arrogant leap of the fish can be metaphorically interpreted as the endless possibilities if opportunities are provided. It also points towards the overriding theme of self- liberation present in all of Ambai’s written works. Anu has also taken a plunge towards freedom from bondage of ideologies from grief taking her towards realization.