



RESEARCH ARTICLE

MASCULINITY IN THE LANGUAGE USED IN PRAISE POETRY IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THE RITUAL OF *SHILEMBE* AND INDIGENOUS SPORT OF *MAYO* AMONG THE ISUKHA COMMUNITY IN KENYA.

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ABSTRACT

Praise poetry is an ambiguous genre in Kiswahili Literature. This is portrayed in its definition and manner in which it is used to create and maintain hegemonic masculinities. Although praise poetry is classified as a genre of Oral Literature, the language used captures the linguistic aspects that portray masculinity in various ways. The Isukha praise poetry that is chanted during the *Shilembe* ritual and the indigenous sport of *Mayo* is one of the ways in which masculinity is portrayed during bullfighting in this community. In this praise poetry, stylistic devices have been used to convey information using the semantic approach in context. This article highlights application of the masculinity theory and critical discourse analysis theory in the analysis of the stylistic devices used in praise poetry during the ritual of *Shilembe* and the indigenous sport of *Mayo* to portray masculinity. Though there are also other types of genre that portray masculinity in this community, but praise poetry is peculiar and distinct in this context, as it involves bullfighting.

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INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to discuss the concept of 'Shilembe' and 'Mayo' singly without associating it with bullfighting. Bullfighting has a long history and this can be traced from Mesopotamia where bulls were worshiped and sacrificed to the gods. This fire record shows a story where Gilgamesh and Enkidu fought and killed the bull of heaven. Bullfighting is also associated with the Romans where the functions of human beings and animals were done as a form of competition. Bullfighting was majority associated with the Greeks and their myths. In Spain, 'Toreros' who was the fighting bull was associated with the fans of football who were supporters and funded by well-wishers and shown in media (Hemingway 1932). During the 19th century in France, the community members started bullfighting as their own game. The game spread out up to the continents of Africa, Europe and Asia and during the time of the Romans (Kabaji 2008). In Tanzania, bullfighting was propounded by the Portuguese. They started this game with the people of the Islands of Pemba and Unguja. There the game was known as '*mchezo wang'ombe*' that translates to 'the game of cows'. In Western Kenya this game involves a bull and another bull using horns.

In Mumias, for instance, the Wanga community calls this game Eshirembe and it is done after burial where the bulls are brought on the grave and they fight and realize the grave of a hero. The hero must be a man who has done a heroic deed like killing a wild animal. Matinde (2015) explains the importance of praise poetry in portraying masculinity in various aspects of the community in question. In the same way, in the Isukha community, Kakamega County of Western Kenya, praise poetry is considered a high form of literary art as it is chanted during the ritual of *Shilembe* and *Mayo* to portray masculinity. It was on this basis that the researcher was motivated to research on the masculinity in the language used in praise poetry as portrayed during the ritual of *Shilembe* and *Mayo* among the Isukha community in Kenya. Therefore, the research focused on examining the stylistic devices in the Isukha praise poetry basing on the semantic approach. Praise poetry in Kiswahili is known as '*majigambo*'. In singular it is '*jigambo*'.

The word '*jigambo*' is a noun that is derived from Swahili verb '*jigambo*' which means to praise oneself; The verb '*jigamba*' has other synonyms which include, '*jitapa*', '*jisifu*', '*jiinua*', '*jinaki*' and '*jiringa*'. Therefore *kujigamba* literally means to praise oneself depending on the context. Different scholars have come up with various definitions regarding the meaning of '*majigambo*' or praise poetry. Mwokozi (1996) explains that

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praise poetry is commonly constructed and chanted by the character him or herself. He adds that this contraction is done in a very creative way using hyperboles, metaphors, imagery and onomatopoeic sounds among other stylistic devices. Mwita (1997) explains that praise poetry is an art of speech that involves performance. In this art, a person praises himself or herself with an aim of expressing or exposing his or her characteristics. Matei (2011) supports the issue of praise poetry by explain that it involves a narrator who understands the in depth of what he/ she is talking about by praising himself through chanting of praise words. She emphasizes that the main function of praise poetry as to portray masculinity in the male gender in the community in question. All these definitions were a major platform for our basis of this research. The most vital issue in their definition is that praise poetry is a literary art that is chanted by the person himself to portray masculinity according to context.

Wanjala (2012) asserts that praise poetry is a way in which a man can portray his manhood in various relationships that involve gender.

Literature review: Nonetheless, many documents refer to the role of praise poetry in portraying masculinity in various communities. Previous literature on the role of praise poetry in portraying masculinity has acknowledged that praise poetry play a pivotal role in expressing the masculinity characteristics in various community. However, in most communities, bullfighting is not involved.

Literature review: Nonetheless many documents refer to the relationship between masculinity especially with ideology, history and the construction of masculinity in general with the issue of praise poetry, rituals and other disciplines. Previous literature on praise poetry portraying masculinity has acknowledged that indeed praise poetry play a pivotal role in ensuring that masculinity is portrayed in various communities with greater attention on the research done by various scholars, it is evident that feminism is given more emphasis than masculinity.

The concept of masculinity: Masculinity has been defined differently by various researchers. This is because the concept is complex and ambiguous. This arises from the fact that different people have different perspectives and philosophical ideas that affect their views (Hoffman 1998). Oxford (1948) in Matinee (2015) highlighted that masculinity has male characteristics like being handsome, gentle and heroic. This fully depends on the traditions and ideologies of the community in question. Onyango (2011) asserts that masculinity as a term began to be used even before the colonial era. He adds that various concepts of oral literature like riddles, tongue twisters and songs portrayed a man as a hero, who was highly valued and had more powers compared to a woman. He emphasizes that there's a close relationship between songs and heroic relationships. Therefore, in many communities in Kenya, songs were constructed to praise the man regarding his authority whereas those constructed for women portrayed them as weaker human beings. Kamusi ya Karne ya 21 (2015) identifies masculinity as the tricks that use power, strength and exploitation among other. According to Walsh (1997), in the African communities, masculinity is associated with authority of men and their being able to succeed and take care of the family. He continues to say that a man is never born with masculinity as part of his reproductive organs but rather it is

constructed and built in the tradition in which he grows. Choti (1998) describes masculinity as a way in which a man is drawn or portrayed as having power that is different from a woman. He explains that a man is seen from a positive perspective whereas a woman is viewed from a negative perspective. Even though his research was based on the female gender. Matinde (2006) in his work on how Kuria men are portrayed in initiation songs indicates how a community's views and take up a major role in programming the gender role and evaluating the quality of each gender. This scholar has proved that the Abakuria community portrays a man in a positive way that is different from a woman, the way Choti (ibid) puts it. Matinde (Ibid) has shown that the male gender has more power and authority in various community disciplines like law, politics economy and authority on decision making and agreements in the society. Wanjala (2011, 2015) Narrates the way songs used by the initiates in the Bukusu community portray masculinity in a Bukusu man by giving him authority, power and characteristics of heroism. According to Wanjala circumcision is very vital in this community as it is a symbol of authority and power to the male gender.

The meaning of praise poetry: Just like it is for masculinity, praise poetry is a term that is complex. It has forced various scholars to come up with different definitions. Izibongo(1968) explains that a praise poem offers admiration or worship of a person or god. Praise poetry continues to be a familiar literary form in various South African cultures. He asserts that the genre of praise poetry, called 'Isibongo' from the Zulu culture offers imagery and storytelling related to a person and the history that surrounds him or her. In his research on the poetry of Zulu, he explains that the person who chants the praise poetry in the Zulu community is known as 'Imbongi'. This word refers to the narrator. These poems rotate on the general life of the Zulu people in terms of the traditions and ideologies of their community. Cows are mentioned as very important in the life of the Zulu people. They were very important in laying a ground for pointing out the praise poetry of the Isukha community and their traditions and ideologies as a raw material to prove the relationship of power and authority in this community.

Kunene (1971) explains that in the Abatsotso praise poetry there is the role of praising the acts of heroism, confidence, trickster and bravery during wars. This arose from the day today wars that took place in this community, journeys of hunting and always encountering with animals among other dangerous issues. Hodza (1979) on the Shona people points out that there are different types of praise poetry in this community, for instance the clan praise poetry, personal praise poetry and praise poetry that involves being proud like a peacock. He analyzed these praise poetry phonologically and morphologically. In his work, he has explained that these praise poetry are part of the traditions and ideologies of the Shona people. His work related so well with this paper as it involved the aspects of linguistics like morphology, syntax and semantics. His research assisted our research in being able to analyze praise poetry basing on various clans of the Isukha community. Mulokozi (1996) explains that praise poetry is a chant of praising oneself, thus it is done by a character him or herself. He adds that, praise poetry is constructed using imagery, metaphors, hyperboles and repetition among others. This work was vital to this research as it guided the researcher in analyzing the stylistic devices like metaphors and hyperboles in the Isukha praise poetry using the semantic

approach. Mwita (1997) suggests that in praise poetry is where the art of speech that has performance enables one to put across his characteristics. This involves choosing of specific words so as to raise the feelings that affect the audience to feel bitter or happy. He adds that because praise poetry involves people, places, tribes, clans, rations and ideologies to the community in question, it has to serve the history and the knowledge of ethnography of the community in question well before understanding the particular praise poetry in the same way, in this paper, the Isukha praise poetry had to select the words to use in order to raise the feelings of the audience during the ritual of Shilembe and Mayo. All these scholars agree that praise poetry as an art involves the heroic acts in different African communities..

Research on semantics as a branch of linguistics: As a branch of linguistics and logistic, semantics is concerned with meaning. Therefore, language as a means of communication that is used by only human beings is analyzed by the discipline of linguistics. Most researchers have indicated how linguistic issues are analyzed without relating to other disciplines. However, Linguistics involves the following branches:

Phonetics, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics and pragmatics. According to King'ori (2005) and Ambuyo (2007) nobody can deal with these branches without involving semantics because it is the branch that involves meaning and which brings about communication that gives birth to development in the society. Therefore meaning arising from the way in which forms are used in relation to extra linguistic world of objects, ideas and experiences. Thus meaning is very vital in any communication as it was portrayed in the Isukha praise poetry. Kibigo (2015) emphasized on the use of noun classes among the Maseno University Kiswahili students and the results were that the linguistic aspects of grouping nouns include morphology, syntax and semantics with the latter being the umbrella of the first two. Therefore semantics is an important aspect of linguistics that this paper aimed at adopting in order to analyze masculinity in praise poetry of the ritual of Shilembe and Mayo in the Isukha community in Kenya.

The two theories that were adopted in this research: According to Wanjala (2011), oral literature research can be guided by either one or more than one theory depending on the objectives of the research in question. On this basis therefore, this paper adopted two theories that are: Masculinity theory (Izugbara, 2005) and the critical discourse analysis Theory (Wodak 1996).

Masculinity Theory: This theory was propounded by Robert Bly (Wells and Holland, 2001 and it as continued by Izugbarabin the year 2005. This theory shows how power and authority possessed by the male gender especially due to the traditions of the community in question. The theory states that the term 'manhood' has its roots in biology whereas masculinity depends on the ideologies, perspectives and the expectations of tradition and depends on the particular community that is being referred to. Therefore masculinity is born, raised and brought forth depending on the community. The genesis of this theory is associated with the penis and those who possess it in the society as a powerful resource as far as the male gender is concerned. This makes the male gender to be considered as being powerful, respectful and of high esteem in the society. Walsh (1997) explains that masculinity is shown or viewed in terms of

the freedom of gender, competition, authority to rule, control and also the power to order. He adds that in the African community, masculinity is associated with the power to rule, order and control. This theory has three main tenets. Ideologies of the community that guide the mind and perspectives of the community members. This tenet assisted this research as it assisted in evaluating the way the Isukha community programmes the gender relationships in the performance of the gender relationships in the performance of the ritual of Shilembe and Mayo and be able to portray masculinity through the praise poetry that is chanted by the artist.

- Secondly, the other tenet states that tradition life of the community and the relationships and the expectations of the community in question. The tradition of the community is portrayed through language, ideology and culture that show up in all the structure of the community as whole.
- Thirdly, there's this tenet that explains how the responsibilities are divided depending on gender in the same way, responsibilities in the Isukha community are divided in a way that portrayed at how masculinity is portrayed at an early age. The praise poetry portrays this through the chants of the artists.
- Fourth, there's the tenet that states that there are specific characteristics that show that men or the male gender has specific characteristics that are peculiar and give them authority over the female gender. These are the characteristics that a man ought to possess in order to build, maintain and portray masculinity. These characteristics include: patience, power, being courageous, promiscuous, firm and daring among other characteristics.

These tenets were very appropriate to this research as they guided it in collection and analysis of data so as to achieve that objective of this paper. Even through, the research adopted the theory of critical discourse analysis so as to analyze the Isukha praise poetry in depth using the various aspects of language with a semantic perspective.

Critical Discourse Analysis: This is the second theory that was used in this paper commonly known as CDA, this theory was propounded by the following people; Teun, Van Dijk, Fairdough and Wodak in 1990. It is grounded in different works of these proponents. It identifies the use of language in the society. Its main tenets are examine, power relations, history and ideology. Choge (2018) states that, this theory needs assessing of discourse in a very keen manner, with an eagle's eye. CDA is not a single theory but it is perceived as a way that has different perspectives of analyzing the relationship between the use of language and the context of the community. The tenets that are commonly used are those of Van Dijk, Fairdough and Wodak (1997) Therefore, this theory focuses on the problems in the community. Thus this theory does not just focus on language but it also looks at its usage and also shades light of the linguistic characteristics of the community and traditions especially the concept of lack of gender equality and racial discrimination among other issues (Van Dijk, 1993). This theory assisted this work in analyzing praise poetry discourse in depth in order to portray masculinity in the Isukha community.

The first tenet states that CDA focuses on the problems of the society. This was appropriate in this work as it helped the researcher to analyze the aspects of language in praise poetry

in the Isukha community in order to identify how language aspects portray masculinity that brings about the problem of gender disparity. Power relations that come from speech. This tenet was important as it assisted in showing how relations in the society are portrayed in speech. This was useful as it showed clearly poetry that is chanted during the ritual of Shilembe and Mayo portrays masculinity. This theory clearly states that it is important to analyze any discourse in a deeper way in order to identify the assets of power that are within. The third tenet indicates that CDA relates the society with tradition. IT aims at encouraging analysts to put in consideration tradition and the society in question in their analysis. A person's language is actually his /her identity. Therefore, this theory shows that the use of language contributes to changes in the society and the traditions of that society including the power relations. This was vital in this paper as the praise poetry in the Isukha community were analyzed on their clans – which includes their tradition and ideologies that were portrayed in the stylistic devices like metaphors, hyperboles and repetition. The fourth tenet states that discourse is history. Therefore, interpretation of discourse context. According to the CDA theory, it is clear that it cuts across all areas like linguistics tradition, society and ideology. This theory insist that it is important to focus on the history of the society in question in order to analyze any discourse in an easier and simpler way. In this paper, issues of history according to the Isukha community have been evident especially in the praise poetry during the ritual of Shilembe and Mayo. This has assisted the researcher to be able to identify and understand the Isukha man and the discourse that has a long history in this community. Fairdough (1995) explains that discourse is supposed to help an analyst to identify a certain action of the society depending on a particular perspective. Therefore, if discourse is history, then it means that the praise poetry of the Isukha community is peculiar and different from that of any other community. This tenet was vital as it assisted the researcher to analyze masculinity in the Isukha praise poetry basing on their clans. One of the scholars who has used this theory include is Owalla(2014) in his thesis “analysis of selected discourses on national and international terrorism in *Taifa Leonewspaper* published in Kenya”. He explains that any analyst of discourse is supposed to take caution in choice of language, news source and discourse access when reporting about terrorism. He adds that this can reduce bias and negative effect on readers as a result of the bias. In the same way, the CDA theory, helped this paper to identify the need of critically analyzing the praise poetry in order to identify the stylistic devices used using the semantic approach.

Research design: To examine masculinity among the Isukha people of Kenya as portrayed in the language used in praise poetry during the performance of Shilembe ritual and Mayo indigenous sport, this paper used the qualitative designs. This type of design was historical and ethnographic in nature. The researcher got an opportunity of staying with the Isukha community in order to be directed by snow- balling sampling techniques. This was vital as the artists were able to guide the researcher to the next place where the performance was taking place so as to collect data. Tape recording was adopted as it helped the researcher in being able to transcribe and analyze the praise poetry from sixteen Isukha tribes. Initially, the researcher aimed at collecting twenty seven Isukha clans, however seven popular praise poetry were selected using purposive sampling technique while nine were selected using

simple random sampling which gave a total of sixteen praise poetry that were used in this research.

RESULTS

Data was analyzed using the descriptive way. It included the use of examples, pictures, and video. The use of language aspects that contain masculinity with a semantic approach. Van Dijk (2000) asserts that the words of those with power are usually taken to be true and of great value than those who are seen as powerless in the society. On this note, this paper found a basis of analyzing how different stylistic devices in praise poetry can create, portray and maintain masculinity in the Isukha community basing on the semantic perspective. Language is a very important aspect in the life of every human being. As language prospers, its literature also gets a gap of developing. In this regard, people's experiences are stored and developed. Therefore, praise poetry as a genre of poetry is part of the traditions of a society. King'ei & Kemoli (2000) therefore basing on the chanting of Isukha praise poetry, it is clear that there are some special discourses that are used. These discourses are used by the artists who are also part of the society and have experienced a lot from the society in question. Wamitila (2008) notes that these are some of the things that motivate and give an artist the will to create and piece of art (Wamitila 2008). The artist therefore selects specific words in order to portray the real life of the community members. Gibbe (1988) notes that though the language that is used in poetry is usually difficult, he says that the simpler language is the one that is normally selected by the artists due to their experience. This is due to the fact that it is the language that is found easily in daily speech in their vicinity and the society at large that deals closely related to Gibbe and Anosky's (2014) Study with stylistic devices that are used to refer to semantic as an aspect of linguistic and that the language aspects involved are hyperboles, repetition and metaphors among other aspects.

Hyperboles and semantic: According to the twenty first century Dictionary (2015) hyperboles refer the idea of exaggerating or adding more salt to an issue with an aim of affecting feelings. Kimani and Chimerah (1999) argue that this is a stylistic device that exceeds the normal situation. It refers to putting more words than usual in a speech in order to make it to appear extraordinary in nature. This type of stylistic device has been used with semantics in this paper in order to show how it is constructed by the language aspects that are in a special way used by an artist to come up with a picture that he/she desires. In the same way, in the Isukha community, there are many ways in which hyperboles are used by an artist in order to construct and build or portray characteristics of masculinity. For instance in the following praise poetry'.

Praise poetry No. 11. Refer to Kibigo 2019, p: 147.

Isukha Dialect

English

Source: Field Research

(Translator: Researcher)

<i>Nuwisunda himbi handi</i>	If you move closer to me
<i>Kenyanga wekasie ubulahi</i>	You need to prepare well
<i>Habula olanyakhana</i>	Otherwise you will suffer
<i>Rulanga mumuliango kwa Abisende</i>	I hail from the Abisende clan
<i>Mwene tsichirishi tsyobucheli</i>	The owner of bright bulls
<i>Vamanya khukhola avakhali vanyole</i>	They know how fuck women to
<i>tsinda</i>	be fertile and become pregnant
<i>Avasiani varambi tsifuti tisa</i>	Tall boys with nine feet

In this praise poetry, the artist uses the hyperbole where he tells us about the way the Abisende clan possess bulls that have wisdom and they know how to look for wealth in the society. It is the male gender that possesses the bulls in the Isukha community. There, they are the only ones who are bright and have wisdom. They are seen as the ones who know how to 'sleep' with women and impregnate them. In other words, the artist finishes the chant by saying that the children that are born are tall boys with nine feet that can be broken into two to produce two men. In this praise poetry, the artist is trying to show us that the idea of the boys possessing nine feet is associated with masculinity in the Isukha community. The height of a man that is long is a characteristic that is viewed in a positive way where as that one of shortness is seen as negative. In this part, the artist has used the idea of a long man to portray masculinity. Even though a short man is compared to a hammer, there are some artists who argue that the shortness of a man doesn't matter what matters is his power, authority, strength, power, authority, strength, proves and his struggle to produce wealth. This is portrayed in the following praise poetry. Therefore in this praise poetry, it is clear that even though a man may be short, what matters is his initiative in searching for wealth and being in a position to build his home.

Praise poetry No. 16: Refer to Kibigo 2019, p: 152.

Isukha Dialect
Khali nikaba ichilishi ni tsimbi
Shindu shikali ni khukhaba buhinda
Munjila yuhumbakha litala lile
Khuvirila mukhwira mutsiku
 Source: Field Research

English
 Even though a bull may be short, what matters is to search for wealth as he builds his own place in the process of killing his Enemies
 (Translator : Researcher)

This also shows that the idea of searching for wealth is an appropriate pillar of masculinity as far as expectations of the Isukha community are concerned. Therefore in this community, it is evident that the female gender depends on the male gender to provide for them thus this makes them fully dependant on the male gender. This is supported by the traditions and ideologies of the Isukha community that uplift the male gender and diminish the female gender.

Metaphors and semantics: According to Chimerah (1992) a metaphor is an application of a strange term that is transferred from one species to another or else by analogy to veil the original meaning. He adds that it is the transfer of the characteristics of A to B Mwita (2005) supports Chimerah by explaining that metaphors are words that are used to hide the meaning of a particular idea. Therefore the reader or listener is required to unveil the metaphor in order to achieve or get the intended message.

In Isukha praise poetry, the use of metaphors is evident in most of the 'stanzas'

Praise poetry NO. 14: Refer to Kibigo 2019, p: 150

Isukha Dialect
Nitse mwiroli wamanyikhana
Wamanywa okhuhwanyanja
tsichirishi
Ndayanzwa ni tsing'ombe
tsinyingi
Tsiesivitsanga visindi
Kwarula muluyia Iwa Vayokha
Ndahura vandi voosi

English
 I am the proud man that is famous
 Who knows how to bullfight
 I am loved by many cows.
 Those that shake their behinds.
 From the clan of Vayokha
 I defeat all.
 (Translator : Researcher)

Source: Field Research

- In this praise poetry, the male gender possesses the characteristics of being able to approach the female gender on issues of love.
- They claim to be loved by many cows. This shows the idea of a man in this community being polygamous in nature. Therefore in the Isukha community, a man is allowed to possess more than one wife whereas on the other hand, a woman is not allowed to possess more than one husband.
- In essence the metaphors that are used in the Isukha praise poetry use ordinary words to refer to other objects or metaphors are words with hidden meaning s, they force an analyst to search for further explanation as indicated by Fairdough (2015)

Consider this praise poetry: In this context, when a woman wants a man to make love with her, or to pay dowry, it becomes a very tough situation until they accomplish the mission in question. Therefore, a woman is portrayed as a needy gender always depending on the male gender especially when it comes to payment of dowry. On the other hand, the female gender exploits the male gender as a man is forced to look for all ways possible in order to satisfy the female gender. Therefore, if the woman refuses, then she has saved you from all the efforts that are to be made in order to get cows to be used as bride price. Therefore the two theories, hegemonic masculinities and critical discourse analysis assisted this work to identify the masculinity characteristics in Isukha praise poetry and critically analyze them to come up with the semantic linguistic aspect.

Consider this praise poetry no. 2: Refer to Kibigo 2019, p: 145

Isukha Dialect
Ing'ombe neyanzi ichirishi
Ibetsanga kama ilirimu munda
Okhumwira
Namusuye abetsanga
namukhonyere
 Source: Field Research

English
 When a cow loves a bull
 It is like an arrow in the stomach
 She wants to kill you
 But when she refuses she has helped you.
 (Translator : Researcher)

Conclusion

This research was intended to examine the use of stylistic devices in the Isukha praise poetry in the ritual of Shilembe and the indigenous sport of Mayo using the semantic approach. The tidings indicate that the language used in these two ceremonies portray masculinity in the Isukha community during bullfighting. Therefore they should not just be taken for leisure and entertainment purposes.

Recommendation

The findings of this research can be used to come up with strategies that can be used to curb gender inequalities of any type in the society, especially by use of language. This can be disseminated online and changes in society showing how artists are supposed to be sensitized through various workshops on issues affecting the society. This can help in helping the artists to come up with praise poetry that aims at bringing equality in the society in question. Praise poetry can be used to educate the society so they should not be underestimated. The praise poetry that was used in this paper was as a result of the ritual of Shilembe and Mayo the indigenous sport that is derived from Shilembe. Therefore, Mayo is a modern sport that portrays the ritual of Shilembe. In essence, such functions should not be taken for granted but they should be regarded with an eagle's eye in order to realize their value in the society.

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