

Lion Movie Critic
Gender Dress & Society - SBS 3201
Wendy Tupacyupanqui
New York City College of Technology

LION

Based on a true story of a five year old boy named Saroo (Sunny Pawar), accidentally traveled thousands of miles from home in central India, ending in Calcutta. Saroo was stranded in a city he did not know and did not speak (Scott, 2016). Throughout his journey he overcame many obstacles that could have been fatal. The society in which he was born to a very economically low country. Saroo encountered people who would do anything for money, by committing illegal actions like exploiting children as well as cruelty. Saroo was adopted at the age of five by Sue Brierley (Nicole Kidman) and John Brierley (David Wenham) and moved to Australia with his new family. Twenty five years later he feels lost and is determined to find his way back home.

Film costume designer Cappi Ireland (2016) describes the importance of dress as, “Indeed, often when you meet a character, it’s their wardrobe that begins telling the viewer their tale, before they’ve even spoken.” Saroo comes from a very poor family and his clothing are exactly what is expected, ragged dirty shirt, very simple strap shoes and his face with smudged dirt (see Image 1). Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher author of *Dress and Identity* state,

“From the perspective of symbolic interactions theory individuals acquire identities through social interaction in various social, physical and biological setting. So conceptualized, identities are communicated by dress as it announces social position of wearer and observer within a particular interaction situation.”

In Saroo's case his identity of a child is compromised when he is put through hardship in search for shelter, and survival. Saroo was born to a poor economical household so a child getting lost in ragged clothing doesn't help the situation in which others view him, adults don't pay attention to a crying child because his dress and hygiene is of a poor homeless (see Image 2). One uses *social cognitive* defined in textbook *Social psychology of Dress*, the use of mental or social cognitive to think, perceive, judge and make inferences about people (Lennon, Johnson & Rudd, 2017, p.68)

In The New York Times article *Care About Kids? You Should Want to Save This Tax Credit* (Alam, 2017.) states that republicans have stated to eliminate the adoption tax credit. This affects families who have adopted kids and others who are looking into adoption. The elimination of this act affects the possibility of adults being able to adopt and have the financial means, this affects young international kids who are in need of a stable home. Children who are set for adoption will have a more difficult time to be recited to possible foster homes. The film *Lion* shows a scene where Saroo's adopted parents are looking to give a child in need a home. Sue and John, Saroo's adopted parents were filled with joy to have Saroo and adopted another child in need, a child that was put through hardship back in India. Stripping the opportunity for a child's well being is compromised with the elimination of the taxes.

According to the article *Dress and Identity* dress is defined as, "*dress* of an individual is an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or and or supplements to the body" (Eicher & Roach-Higgins, 1992). Saroo undergoes a change in his appearance by the change of dress because if the new economy statues he is grown up in. Sue and John Breirley are economically stable, they own a home and are able to provide proper food, clothing, and education to Saroo.

Time forwards to Saroo (Dev Patel) now twenty-five years of age. Saroo's *cognitive perspective* of who he once was changes, he is now a college student with an Australian accent and his dress is sued and/or leather boots, clean proper fitted jeans, a long sleeve mid open shirt. Saroo has long wavy hair and beard, his smile shows his perfect aligned white teeth. The twenty years of living in Australia had also affected Sarro in understanding and speaking fluent Hindi.

Saroo is surrounded by other students and his professor asked where he was from he answered with "I am Australian Mate," and quickly backed it up by identifying the team he supports in the sport cricket. Students from his group invite him for dinner where he encounters Indian cuisine, some foods he has not tasted in many years. Saroo could not keep up with the *subculture* the home decor is of Indian culture, the food, and when spoken the geography of his birth country he does not know. The environment in which he was invited to is different to what Saroo considers a norm. Saroo encounters sweet treats that he once craved and asked his older brother Guddu (Abhishek Bharate) to someday when they have money to buy hundreds of them. That woke up his emotional past and many questions about his *identity*. Saroo started recollecting his *lived experience* also known as *hermeneutic phenomenology*, "personal experience in living in ones body and clothing over a life time" (Lennon, Johnson & Rudd, 2017, p. 34-35).

Saroo's hermeneutic phenomenology changed his lifestyle, the question of his identity arises he starts extensive research on his past. Flashbacks through the film points out the way Saroo perceives his now life with Sue and John. Saroo creates a *schema* and starts comparing his ethnicity, and culture. Each memory leads to another and slowly Saroo is able to identify his route from where he was lost back home. Many unsettling moments were portrayed, in one scene

he cries to his mother Sue because he identifies himself as “different.” Saroo feels as if his identity is lost and he needs to go back home to fill in the empty gap he has. Although he loves his mother Sue he still finds himself wanting his birthmother.



Image 1. Capii Ireland Costume Designer. Scene 1: Saroo while trying to rob coal in exchange for milk for his family.



Image 2. Capii Ireland Costume Designer. Scene: Saroo on board the out of service train that took him thousands of miles away from home, clothing has been worn from the beginning of the movie (2016).

Resources

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