

COPY CATS !

AINEE NIZAMI DISCOVERS AN UGLY SIDE IN THE WORLD OF LITERATURE- PLAGIARISM.



With more and more books coming out each day, the world of literature has never been so fascinating. Since readers are getting more interested in reading about different things, the author can afford to be more experimental with their writing styles. Though each one of them has a unique style, there are many who do get inspired from other authors. But sometimes, they tend to cross the thin line between getting inspired from other peoples work, and copying their work, better known as Plagiarism.

Plagiarism in the literal meaning is copying someone else's work and passing it off as your own. If the work is copy-righted, plagiarism is illegal and can be punished by law. With the increasing use of the Internet, getting content on any topic in the world is just a click away. Someone has rightly said, "In the good old days, plagiarism had a price. It was hard work to spend hours at the library to find the correct passages to copy or paraphrase." Today, it just takes a few seconds to cut, copy and paste material from the net, camouflage it and present it as your own.

One of the recent examples of plagiarism in the literature world is of Kaavya Viswanathan. A student of Harvard University, Viswanathan was accused of copying paragraphs from "Sloppy Firsts" a novel published in 2001, and incorporating them into her own novel "How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild, and Got a Life". "Borrowing or getting inspired from work done earlier is fine to a certain extent. But these days people are straight away lifting the complete work and passing it off as their own," says Najmus, a management student. While writing, getting influenced by any written piece is quite common. But in that case, quotation marks should be put around the material taken from other piece or work and the source should be clearly mentioned. Even when the article consists of ideas written in your own words, acknowledging the source from where your ideas are inspired is considered more ethical. To keep plagiarism in check, various internet search engines like google.com, alltheweb.com, gigablast.com etc. allow searching complete sentences and exact phrases. All you need to do is copy, paste the content as keywords and the search engines compile all the Internet docu-



ments containing those phrases or words. But these sites also have their own drawbacks. At times, this database is limited, and a paper could be plagiarized using documents beyond the parameters of a particular application. At times the software cannot distinguish between cheating done intentionally and mistakes done while summarizing, rephrasing etc. "Plagiarism these days has increased mainly due to the pressure on people these days, to complete their work and get it published within deadlines. Still this is not an excuse and it is high time we come with serious punishment for people committing this crime," sums up Monila Sapre, a Literature student.

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