Challenging Heteronormativity: A Study of Indian Queer Literature

A Dissertation for

Course code and Course Title: EGO DST Dissertation

Credits: 08

Submitted in partial fulfilment of Master's Degree

Master of Arts in English

by

AUDREY SNAZZY PIRES

21P011033

Under the Supervision of

DR. ANJALI CHAUBEY

Shenoi Goembab School of Languages and Literature
Discipline of English

Goa University

Date: **APRIL 2023**

Examined by: Seal of the School

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that the data presented in this Dissertation entitled, "Challenging Heteronormativity: A Study of Indian Queer Literature" is based on the results of investigations carried out by me in the Disciplineof English at the Shenoi Goembab School of Languages and Literature, Goa University under the Supervision/Mentorship of Dr. Anjali Chaubey and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree or diploma by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities will not be responsible for the correctness of observations/experimental or other findings given the dissertation.I hereby authorise the University authorities to upload this dissertation on the dissertation repository or anywhere else as the UGC regulations demand and make it available to any one as needed.

Audrey Snazzy Pires
21P011033
Discipline of English
Shenoi Goembab School of Languages
and Literature

Date: 24th April 2023

Place: Goa University

COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation **"Challenging Heteronormativity: A Study of Indian Queer Literature"** is a bonafide work carried out by **Ms. Audrey Snazzy Pires** under my supervision/mentorship in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts** in the Discipline of English at the Shenoi Goembab School of Languages and Literature, Goa University.

Dr. Anjali Chaubey
Discipline of English

Date: 24thApril 2023

Prof. Anuradha Wagle
Dean
Discipline of English
Shenoi Goembab School of Languages and Literature
Date: 24thApril 2023
Place: Goa University

Shenoi Goembab School of
Languages & Literature
Goa University
School Stamp

CONTENTS

Urkund Analysis Result

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

There is no love without fear, but love makes you fearless.

– Audrey Snazzy Pires

CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Aims and Objectives

This dissertation aims at studying Indian Queer Literature as a reflection of the LGBTQIA+ community in India. In doing so, this study examines and explores the worlds beyond conventional definitions and understandings of sexuality and gender identity/expression. This study extends to analyse the 'queer' characters from the selected texts through the lens of Queer Theory and Feminist Theory. And thereby, it seeks to use Indian Queer Literature as a means to provide a better understanding and to facilitate the acceptance of varying sexual orientations in Indian society. This hypothesis stands justifiable and appropriate as it challenges the heteronormative worldview as being the preferred or *normal* sexual orientation. The five texts selected for this study include *A Married Woman* (2002) by Manju Kapur, *Kari* (2008) by Amruta Patil, *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010) by A. Rēvathi and V. Geetha, *My Magical Palace* (2012) by Kunal Mukherjee, and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) by Arundhati Roy.

1.2 The LGBTQIA+ Community in India: A Brief History

India accounts for about 17.7% of the total world population. Being a country of such astounding strength, India is a secular nation that is home to people of diverse cultural and religious groups including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and more, which are further divided into different sects. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution preaches the principles of Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, allowing its citizens to live in harmony and integrity. Hinduism, the major religion of India, is deeply rooted in the caste system along with other religions like Islam and

Christianity, which is responsible for the internal division in religious communities. Although India appears to be a united nation with rich diversity, the social division between and among these religious communities has caused political upheavals in the past and continues to do so. A fine example of this internal division and prejudice can be understood through the following lines found in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), which read:

> I saw a man on a bridge about to jump.
>
> I said, 'Don't do it!'
>
> He said, 'Nobody loves me.'
>
> I said, 'God loves you. Do you believe in God?'
>
> He said, 'Yes.'
>
> I said, 'Are you a Muslim or a non-Muslim?'
>
> He said, 'A Muslim.'
>
> I said, 'Shia or Sunni?'
>
> He said, 'Sunni.'
>
> I said, 'Me too! Deobandi or Barelvi?'
>
> He said, 'Barelvi.'
>
> I said, 'Me too! Tanzeehi or Tafkeeri?'
>
> He said, 'Tanzeehi.'
>
> I said, 'Me too! Tanzeehi Azmati or Tanzeehi Farhati?'
>
> He said, 'Tanzeehi Farhati.'
>
> I said, 'Me too! Tanzeehi Farhati Jamia ul Uloom Ajmer, or
>
> Tanzeehi Farhati Jamia ul Noor Mewat?'
>
> He said, 'Tanzeehi Farhati Jamia ul Noor Mewat.'
>
> I said, 'Die, kafir!' and I pushed him over. (Roy 119-120)

Setting aside these religious differences, may it be internal or external, the Indian society as a whole condemns the sexual minority which is a community of outcasts that is neglected and abused as its members are considered 'immoral,' 'impure,' and 'unethical.' This particular

group of the sexual minorities of India and the world in extension does not enjoy the very principles of the Indian Constitution to its fullest capacity and has struggled to make their voices heard and acknowledged.

The abbreviation LGBTQIA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and the plus sign signifies every other gender identity and sexual orientation that has not yet been perfectly described or understood. This community of sexual minorities has existed since the beginning of time and although natural, being part of this community is branded shameful or members of this community have been seen as having a mental defect, through the years. Thus, the word 'gay' which originally meant 'happy' or 'joyous' back in the 13th century, emerged as a code word within the queer community to express same-sex desire and sexuality largely among men in the 1940s and 50s. But in the mid-20th century, the term was popularised to describe homosexual relationships in both men and women. And now, it has become a part of an umbrella term, LGBTQIA+ which is inclusive of all sexualities and sexual orientations and has evolved into a community. Since the LGBTQIA+ community has been a sexual minority, the heteronormative majority presumes that this way of living and loving or being sexually inclined towards the same sex or both sexes is *unnatural* or *abnormal*. Until recently, this minority group had been neglected, abused, and failed to recognise its members as fellow human beings by the larger society. Even though 'human rights' have not been practiced to their fullest capacity yet, over the centuries, there has been noticeable development in the acknowledgement and acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community.

To date, the vast Indian population has been nurturing the misconception of 'homosexuality' being a Western import. What Indians fail to realise is that 'homophobia' is in fact the Western import – a colonizer's idea crafted around the personal gain. India, in reality, has a rich and diverse sexual history dating back to the Vedic period, when the

presence of alternate sexual identities was acceptable in mainstream culture. The book, *British Colonialism and the Criminalization of Homosexuality: Queens, Crime and Empire* (2018), by Enze Han and Joseph O'Mahoney provides insight into this forceful cultural change that has stigmatised the sexual minorities in Indian and other British colonies. In the words of Enze Han, the British colonisers had an "overly erotic" view of Asia and the Middle East, and therefore, "they wanted to protect innocent British soldiers from the exotic mystical orient." They feared that the colonial administrators and soldiers, especially the ones without wives, would indulge in sodomy and other sexual activities and get distracted from their duty. Thereby, introducing the Victorian Christian Puritanical concept of sex which forbade all non-marital and non-reproductive sexual activities to educate and "modernise" the colonies.

The British historian, Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay, drew up the Indian Penal Code (IPC) which came into force in 1862 containing Section 377 which was modelled on Britain's Buggery Act of 1533, and read as follows:

> Section 377: Unnatural offences – Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with [imprisonment for life], or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall be liable to fine. (India Code: Section Details)

The British Empire altered the harmonious Indian culture that housed various sexualities, supposedly to prevent their Christian soldiers from running astray from their duty, to protect them from corruption, and to 'correct' and 'Christianise' the native Indians.

However, in recent years England has opened itself to the idea of alternate sexualities, and with the struggle of several activists, the LGBTQIA+ community has found recognition in the West. And even though it is not exclusively accepted, such a step is now considered

'progressive' and suited for a first-world country. But, although India was originally a nation that made no distinction among differing sexualities, it is now having trouble opening itself up to such 'new' and 'Western' ideas. This is deeply rooted in the stigma laid by the British colonisers, leaving an anti-LGBTQIA+ legacy in India and Asia as a whole. Indians fail to understand and acknowledge that what they disapprove of, thinking it does not belong to the Indian culture, is the very basis of our culture and heritage.

In Hinduism and Indian mythology, several deities are associated with both, the divine masculine and the divine feminine, and are represented as male and female in different avatars, or are said to simultaneously possess the characteristics of both genders like Ardhanareeshwara, who is 'Ardha' or half, 'Nari' which means woman, and half 'Ishwara' or Lord, created by the divine merging of Lord Shiva and his consort, Parvati. The ancient Sanskrit texts describe the third gender as a male with effeminate characteristics and behaviour, and unlike heterosexuals, they could give and receive penetration as they could change their gender from male to female. In mythology, the third gender and androgynous identity were associated with bravery and skill, exemplified by characters like Shikhandi in the *Mahabharat*. Shikhandi, who was born as Shikhandini, was transformed by a Yaksha into a male warrior to fight Bhishma in the epic war. Similarly, Arjun, a renowned warrior, underwent a gender change and became a "kinnar" named Brihanalla due to a curse from Urvashi. As Brihanalla, Arjun taught music and dance in King Virata's court, challenging traditional ideas of masculinity and embracing his androgynous nature. It also makes a mention of the queer avatar of Lord Krishna as Mohini who conjugates with Arjun's son, Aravan, before sacrificing him. The *Ramayana* hints at homosexuality in women through the birth of Bhagirath, which was a result of the conjugal union of two women who had the divine approval of God Shankara, implying that either the divine intervention from the male God may be a motif for his insemination or that homosexuality was legitimised by the

supernatural. Even the Vedic texts represented a social order wherein all kinds of sexualities not just existed but were also held in high regard.

Apart from these enlightening texts, the rich sexual diversity of India can be found carved into the walls of Medieval Hindu temples that stand tall to this day such as those at Khajuraho which depict sexual acts between the same sexes and also the opposite sex. In addition, temples like the Rajarani Temple in Bhubaneshwar, Odisha, has a sculpture depicting two women engaged in passionate oral sex. The Lingaraja Temple located in the same area is among the oldest temples built by the Kalinga Dynasty and is adorned with sculptures said to be inspired by Vātsyāyana's *Kama Sutra,* the world's first guide on sex – which in extension gives the transgender and the homosexuals marital rights. Unfortunately, the sexual minority which was once an integral part of Indian culture has now become a subaltern group, whose voice has been and is being actively silenced.

1.3 Indian Queer Literature and its Relevance

The LGBTQIA+ Community has evolved to shelter all kinds of sexualities and has struggled for several decades to gain recognition, respect, and equality in society. The desire of being accepted as normal just like any other heterosexual individual runs deep into this community, and this desire is the very foundation of every protest, campaign, and literature written in favour of this socially neglected and abused community. Queer Literature is written not only by members of the sexual minority, but also by those who support, admire, and wish to educate the ignorant masses on sensitive topics such as the experiences of the queer community which include physical, sexual, and mental abuse. Queer Literature cannot be categorised into a standard genre because it encompasses a wide variety of genres like romance, fantasy, political fiction, feminist fiction, autobiographies, and so on. The narratives of Queer Literature follow queer or gay themes, symbols, characters or protagonists, and storylines. And every narrative is

reflective of their individual experience as a member of the queer community. Therefore, Queer Literature can be seen as a record of personal experiences, and in being so, serves as a portal to the minds of the sexual minority.

Queer literature has its origins in Feminists works because just as the members of the queer community are a minority, women too are a marginalised group in society. The term 'feminism' was coined in France in the 1880s and is a combination of the French word 'femme' for woman, and '-isme' which is "referred to a social movement or political ideology." (Freedman 3). Feminism and feminist theory are often misunderstood to be anti-male, as it focuses on male dominance and the masculine attributes of competitiveness and control. Rather, feminist theory questions these assumptions about male superiority, privilege, and access, and disrupts the assumption of 'man' being a natural or normal category, and 'woman' as a category that only exists in relation to man. The feminist theory can be interpreted in many ways. The primary concern of feminism is equality and justice for all women, as it seeks to eradicate the system of inequality and fight the injustices against women. Feminism embraces all women and celebrates their achievements along with honouring their struggles and sacrifices. In its recent version, the feminist theory has expanded its embrace to be inclusive of diverse 'female' identities, such as women of colour, transgender women, and effeminate and non-masculine males. Thereby, embracing the queer community.

Historically, the term 'queer' was used as an insult, and to be referred to as the same meant the person was seen as a symbol of perversion, illness, absurdity, and evil. It was used to silence, suppress, and shame such practices and identities that were located outside perceived social boundaries. Now, the members of the queer community have adopted this term and reclaimed it to proudly represent a resistance movement to transform the oppressive nature of the term into a positive depiction of the self. If 'queer'

marks the resistance, then 'queer theory' forms the theoretical heartbeat of the movement. Queer literature has its foundation in 'queer theory,' a term coined in 1991 by Teresa de Lauretis in her work *Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities*. Queer theory is a conceptual framework that "conveys a double emphasis – on the conceptual and speculative work involved in discourse and their constructed silence." (de Lauretis iv) The institutionalisation of some forms and displays of sexuality and gender while stigmatising others is critically examined by queer theory. The rise and acceptance of Gay and Lesbian (now LGBTQIA+ or Queer) Studies in the academic field was followed by the development of queer theory. And it questions and opposes inflexible identity categories, sexuality and gender norms, and the oppression and violence that such hegemonic norms are meant to justify.

LGBTQ Studies try to analyse queer persons as stable identities, and queer theory, which is frequently referred to as the "deconstruction" of LGBTQ Studies, undermines sexual and gender identities while promoting numerous, unrestricted interpretations of cultural phenomena. It asserts that all sexual behaviours and gender expressions, as well as any ideas connecting them to societally imposed identities and classifying them as 'normal' or 'deviant,' are social constructions that produce modalities of social meaning. By rejecting the idea that sexuality and gender identity are essentialist categories defined by biology and can therefore be empirically judged by fixed standards of morality and 'truth,' the queer theory builds on and develops the feminist theory.

Indian Queer Literature can be traced back to the Vedic Period when two of the greatest epics, the *Ramayana* by Valmiki and the *Mahabharata* by Vyasa were written. Although these texts existed centuries ago, the queer topics mentioned in them were not widely celebrated and were almost ignored. Therefore, it is safe to say that Queer Literature has long existed in India but was not exclusively regarded as a topic of study.

Gradually, Indian writers took an interest in this particular subject but faced backlash for openly expressing such 'provocative' ideas in their works. Ruth Vanita, along with Saleem Kidwani published *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History*, in 2000, which is a collection of queer encounters found in Indian classics from the *Mahabharata* to the *Kama Sutra*, which is said to depict love and desire in all forms, which were unfortunately restricted to upper-caste males, and medieval Urdu writings like *ghazals* which were written by male poets, were infused with homoerotic themes, proving that writings dating back to around 2000 years incorporated queer themes.

What changed was that Victorian morality came with British colonial control. This stance was politically solidified with the imposition and implementation of Section 377. However, this did not dissuade Indian authors. In his early 1900s work, *Chaklet*, Panday Bechan Sharma, better known by his pen name Ugra, brought up the subject of homosexuality, if only to condemn it. On the other hand, Ismat Chugtai and her short story, *Lihaaf* – featuring a lesbian relationship, written in 1942 caused an uproar in Indian society. While Chugtai was the target of a legal and public backlash for her efforts, Sharma was accused of sedition. Such compositions were part of the *ghasleti sahitya* of the time, and the populace was stirred up by its content which led to a movement called 'Ghasleti Andolan' against it that lasted for twelve long years.

Fast-forward to a few decades later, the queer literary scene was thriving with Suniti Namjoshi's Lesbian Feminism, and Vijay Tendulkar's ground-breaking Marathi play about two lesbian lovers called *Mitrachi Goshta: A Friend's Story*. Mahesh Dattani adopted a similar goal, aiming to reshape gender roles and investigate sexuality. Other famous individuals from this era include Hoshang Merchant, who is known for editing anthologies, Bindumadhav Khire, a Marathi author who stirred up controversy, and R. Raj Rao, whose book, *The Boyfriend* (2003) was one of the first gay novels published in

India. Without a doubt, the historic decision taken in 2018 that decriminalised homosexuality represented a significant step in the right direction. There are numerous additional works and a booming market for Queer Literature. However, both readers and writers concur that LGBTQIA+ works should not be categorised or stereotyped because doing so would prevent such narratives from entering the mainstream. Queer writing is gradually branching out beyond just autobiography to include science fiction, drama, and even mythology. To prevent a few voices within the LGBTQIA+ community from predominating over others, there is a need for more inclusive and representational literary works to enter today's zeitgeist.

Although queer literature makes up a tiny fraction of the vastness of literary works, it is of great importance to the sexual minority as its members can relate to these queer characters, and their existence and struggles can be recognised through these works.

> The moment passed in a heartbeat. But it did not matter. What mattered was that it *existed*. To be present in history, even as nothing more than a chuckle, was a universe away from being absent from it, from being written out of it altogether. A chuckle, after all, could become a foothold in the sheer wall of the future. (Roy 41)

Queer literature as a genre pushes the literary envelope with its diverse array of novels, short stories, autobiographies, dramas, and poetries. These works challenge readers to explore, understand and accept worlds beyond the conventional definitions of sexuality and gender identity/expression. Queer literature broadens one's understanding of the sexual minority and exposes the heteronormative society to the reality of being unaccepted by the said society. These literary works also criticise the hypocrisy of people and laws which are not followed when it comes to accepting queers as fellow humans. A. Revathi, in *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*, explains why she has come forward and written her autobiography:

In our society we speak the language of rights loud and often. But do the

marginalized really have access to these rights? Individuals are denied their

rights in the name of sex, sexuality, caste and religion. They have to either

arrive at a compromise or engage in a struggle…My story is not meant to

offend, accuse or hurt anyone's sentiments. My aim is to introduce to the

readers the lives of hijras, their distinct culture, and their

dreams and desires…I hope now that by publishing my life story, larger

changes can be achieved. I hope this book of mine will make people see that

hijras are capable of more than just begging and sex work. I do not seek

sympathy from society or the government. I seek to show that we hijras do

have the right to live in this society. (A. Revathi, translated by V. Geetha 1)

Queer stories have come a long way from being unaccepted, opposed, criminalised, and revolted against in literature. Only recently have these stories been brought to light and efforts are being made to study queer literature as a means of normalising differing sexual identities. These stories also help the readers sympathise with this marginalised community and help establish a respectable social relationship. It is of utmost importance to take into consideration that it takes queer writers a lot of courage to come forward and share their personal experiences with the world. Many of these experiences are full of cruelty and disrespect that come from the heteronormative society, making the writers vulnerable to attracting threats and harm for standing up against the wrongdoings of the sexual majority. Non-queer writers of queer literature are a symbol of support to this community, although not all writers write in favour of the LGBTQIA+ community. But any mention of the queer community helps spread its knowledge and make it visible.

The world has seen a great many changes in the description, identification, and understanding of sexual identities. Queer literature is dominated by encounters of

transgender, transsexual, and homosexual characters, but the inclusion of the experiences of other sexualities must also be encouraged. Every type of literature serves the purpose of providing insight into the subject it explores. Literature in itself is a tool for gathering knowledge about the truths of life and about how society functions – as Salman Rushdie once said, "Literature is where I go to explore the highest and the lowest places in human society and in the human spirit, where I hope to find not the absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart."

1.4 Literature Review

Indian queer literature has undergone significant change over the decades. As a genre, it has evolved to be inclusive of different types of texts from epics, short stories, and poems, to lengthy novels, autobiographies, and drama. The research paper titled *Homosexuality in Indian English Literature: Queer Perspectives* by Dr. Joji Johnpanicker, published in the year 2010, attempts to analyse several contemporary queer writings in India and discusses India's queer sexuality. It explores the evolution of queer writing from facing homophobic discrimination to its recent acceptance and success. *Queer Literature in India: Visible Voices of the Sexual Subalterns* by Aditi Chakraborty, a research paper published in the year 2018 in the 12th Issue of the International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR) explores how queer literature has been visible and vocal throughout to be the catalyst of respite for the repressed sexual minorities of India. On the other hand, the main argument of the paper, *A Discordant Harmony – A Critical Evaluation of the Queer Theory from an Indian Perspective* by Srija Sanyal and Abhik Maiti published in 2018, is to trace a lineage of queerness in India both in terms of its representation in literature by analysing *The Editor* (1893) and *The Housewife* (1891) by Rabindranath Tagore; *Lihaaf* (1941) by Ismat Chugtai; and R. Raja Rao's *The Boyfriend* (2003), and how it prevailed in reality or the societal perception of the same. The

paper attempts to trace the missing links of when and how queerness hid behind the curtains only to reappear in front of a more complicated, confused, and probably more rigid audience.

Shalmalee Palekar's *Out! and New Queer Indian Literature*, published in 2018, attempts to answer the question of what constitutes new queer literature in India, by focusing on works written in the 21st century, and by particularly paying attention to two short stories from the anthology of 2012, *Out! Stories from the New Queer India,* edited by Minal Hajratwala: *A Cup Full of Jasmine Oil* by Sunny Singh, and *Nimbooda, Nimbooda, Nimbooda* by Ashish Sawhny. *Foregrounding Queer Spaces in Contemporary Indian English Fiction for Young Adults* authored by Bornali Nath Dowerah, and published in Issue 6 of JETIR in the year 2019, analyses queer spaces as exemplars of contemporary young adult Indian English fiction through two novels, namely, *Slightly Blunt* (2014) by Payal Dhar and *Talking of Muskaan* (2014) by Himanjali Sankar. Extending through the methodology of queer theory, this paper interrogates the narrative voices that claim heterogeneity as normal against homosexuality. In extension, it attempts to study and bring out the element of ambivalence outlined in the authorial voice, queer representations, and the adolescent perspective. Published in 2022, Aakanksha Singh's *Reflections on Queer Literary Representations in Contemporary Indian Writing in English* is a reflective piece that explores the significance of thinking beyond labels for queer desires and expressions of love.

1.5 Research Methodology

In this dissertation, the approach to studying involves analysing the depiction of reality in literature through qualitative methods. It establishes Indian Queer Literature as a reflection of the sexual minority in India, and in doing so, helps the heteronormative majority to understand and acknowledge the hardships faced by the former.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The first chapter lays down the aim and objective of this study, followed by the history and evolution of the LGBTQIA+ community,

and religious myths and folklore surrounding the same. It discusses the queer identity and its impact on literature by using Queer Theory and Feminist Theory. Additionally, the third section helps us understand the relevance of Queer Literature.

The second chapter of this dissertation is solely dedicated to analysing the 'queer character.' Thereby, introducing the select texts and analysing the transgender and homosexual protagonists through the lens of Queer Theory and Feminist Theory. The third chapter, titled 'Indian Queer Literature as a Reflection of the LGBTQIA+ Community in India' deals with the portrayal of the sexual minority of India against its rich religious and political backdrop. The fourth chapter attempts to answer the highly debatable question – 'Heteronormativity: Is It Really *Normal*?' This dissertation's fifth and final chapter is its concluding chapter, followed by the citations. The selected texts for this dissertation are from the period 2000-2020 and include three fictional novels, a graphic novel, and an autobiography, which assist this study's progress through a contemporary viewpoint.

CHAPTER II

Analysing the Queer Character

2.1 Introduction

The protagonists of texts belonging to Queer Literature are mostly the representatives of the LGBTQIA+ Community and in other cases can be found as a side but significant character, whose personal experiences play a major role in the progression of the plot. These characters play a crucial role in portraying the reality of their world which is pushed to the brink of invisibility by the heteronormative culture. Through these characters, the writers who belong to this group of sexual subalterns, get an opportunity to voice out the injustices suffered by them at the hands of a world that labels them 'impure.' The queer protagonist or the queer characters, provide a release of the writer's childhood experiences, trauma, abuse, and suffering. Writers who do not belong to the LGBTQIA+ Community themselves, make an effort to raise awareness about such issues by introducing characters who can deliver such queer experiences and educate the readers through their fictional stories.

Every queer character, in some way or the other, circles around the concept of 'love' which generally means an emotion, a feeling, or a connection for the other person. But the rules surrounding who this 'other' should be, destroy the very meaning of love, as the dominant heteronormative culture only recognises love between the opposite genders and shames those who feel romantic love towards members of the same sex. Therefore, the queer community has "…to struggle for acceptance and the right to love as [they] feel." (Kapur 213). The restrictions on whom to love are laid by the adults in our society can cause severe loss of self-esteem, confusion about self-identity and self-awareness, and strong feelings of alienation in young queers. Therefore, youngsters and even some adults who are struggling with their sexual identity can relate to these characters and sometimes find their way out of the closet. The queer character acts as a medium to guide confused young minds that feel

there is something wrong with them because they are unable to adhere to the norms created by the heteronormative society. These characters also help readers to understand certain aspects of a queer person's life that cannot be fully expressed in real life, in fear of judgement and shame, thereby allowing them to be more considerate and respectful towards the other.

2.2 Introduction to the Select Texts

Indian Queer Literature consists of a wide variety of texts from fictional novels, graphic novels, and poetry, to autobiographies, and more. This dissertation tries to study the experiences of people with different sexualities through such texts that depict the lives of characters that are Gay – a man sexually attracted to men, Lesbian – a woman sexually attracted to other women, Transsexual or Transgender – a person born with typical male or female anatomy but feels as if they have been born into the wrong body, Intersex – a person born with both male and female anatomies, and Bisexual – a person who is sexually attracted to both or more genders. Following are the brief summaries of the five texts selected for this study:

Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman,* which was originally published in 2002 narrates the story of a young woman named Astha who slowly discovers herself and her sexuality against India's political and religious background, and in doing so, the novel takes a turn of a diary entry which allows the reader to witness the events of her life through her perspective. She is a wife and a mother of two, who is bound to familial and societal duties. Having nothing do to all day at home, Astha starts working as a teacher – a profession she thinks is cliché for all women. This allows her to step out of her comfort zone and make the acquaintance of the founder of The Street Theatre Group, Aijaz Akhtar Khan, who soon suffers a tragic death as the novel progresses. The news of this tragedy stirs up Astha and she decides to join the Sampradayakta Mukti Manch, a forum set up in memory of Aijaz's theatre

group. Here, she pursues her interest in art and engages in social service. This is when Astha comes across Pipeelika Trivedi who is Aijaz's widow and slowly falls in love with her. The relationship between the two turns quite passionate and intense but Astha steps back as she cannot give up her marriage and family because love like hers is not acceptable in her society.

Kari by Amruta Patil is the very first Indian graphic novel in English by a woman, which was published in January 2008. The novel opens with the chapter 'The Double Suicide' – a reference to the practice of lesbian couples resorting to suicide because society was and continues to be unwilling of acknowledging homosexuality among women. The story is about a young lesbian couple, Kari and Ruth, who are driven to suicide but are saved under different circumstances and from there on part ways. Kari narrates her life experiences as she struggles to establish an identity for herself in a typically modern setting – the Smog City, Mumbai, where she is primarily surrounded by heterosexuals and where lesbianism is considered abnormal, or more so, non-existent. She lives an ordinary life with an ordinary job and has to tolerate several insensitive and offensive questions about her sexuality. The novel tries to cover every aspect of a lesbian's life from family, marriage, and romance to self-identity, loss, and alienation as she navigates through her life and sexuality. It comes to an end as Kari finally realises her self-worth and puts herself first.

The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story is an autobiography of A. Revathi, who was born as Doraisamy, a Tamilian boy who strongly felt that he was trapped in the wrong body. The book was originally written in Tamil and was later translated into English by V. Geetha and published in the year 2010. From having to spend her childhood as Doraisamy and being unable to understand her sexuality, to accepting herself as a transgender woman and becoming a leading activist for the hijra community, Revathi boldly narrates the tragic incidents of her life. She unflinchingly talks about her disrespectful and violent encounters

with family members, neighbours, peers, and even government officials. Her moving autobiography records the most brutal and sickening experiences of her life as a transsexual in a widely heteronormative and conservative society, and in doing so, it educates the reader about hijra traditions in India. Revathi's disclosure about the unfairness of having to suffer for something you are born with and to be treated unequally for that is truly an eye-opener.

Kunal Mukherjee, in his novel, *My Magical Palace,* published in 2012, explores the life of Rahul, who narrates his own story to his lover, Andrew. The gay couple living in San Francisco faces hardships in their relationship when Andrew learns that his boyfriend's parents in India are actively in search of a suitable bride for their son. Rahul, who has kept his sexuality a secret from his parents, has to make the hard choice of giving up on either the love of his life or his closeted life in India. Rahul decides to open up to Andrew about his childhood back in India and shares his most difficult experiences as a homosexual in traditional Indian society. The novel makes a reference to the gay 'conversion therapy,' wherein homosexuals underwent electric shock therapy or 'treatment' for months. In fear of being discovered and treated as an outcast, young Rahul has to keep his desire for men a secret. As he grows up, he learns about and befriends other men who are homosexuals like him, but who have either resorted to adopting a 'normal' life and seeking a female partner or simply giving up on traditional norms of marriage and living as a bachelor. At the end of the novel, Rahul finally comes to terms with himself and his double life and decides not to pretend anymore. The novel is proof of how far India has come from being a homophobic society to decriminalising homosexuality and has a long way to go to completely accept and embrace it.

Arundhati Roy is one of India's most fierce writers who has been critical and yet compassionate about the political history of her country. The majority of her work is set

against the strong backdrop of Indian religious and political history, one of which is *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, which was published in 2017. This novel shows life in India in the wake of its partition through the perspective of two different characters: Anjum, an intersex woman who was born as Aftab with both male and female parts, and Tilo, a qualified architect who travels to Kashmir to reignite her romantic relationship with Musa, a freedom fighter. Roy juxtaposes the lives of the 'normal' heterosexuals and the 'abominations' who suffer the shared effects of the religious and political disturbance in a 'secular' country. The novel is made up of several characters, each having a say in the ongoing issue and providing fruitive inputs to the plot, making it as complex as the reality of the blood-soaked partition. This text stands out from other works that share the same background as it is inclusive of the sexual minority and gives the readers a glimpse into the sufferings of both communities as a whole.

2.3 The Queer Protagonist: A Hero or a Tragic Hero?

A protagonist is the main character of a story whose life incidents drive its plot. Until recently, most literary works only introduced queer characters as side characters. But now, a number of works having a queer protagonist can be found. Being the protagonist of a queer novel or literary work is to be a fighter and fight for their right as a human being and for their right to love whom they want to. In her autobiography, A. Revathi says, "A man sometimes has to struggle to live; but for people like me, to live was to struggle and fight." (Revathi, translated by Geetha 182) – implying that living as a queer person in a heteronormative society is in itself a fight. The queer protagonist, in this sense, can be compared to a tragic hero. In Aristotle's *The Poetics*, he states that the tragic hero must be a good person with a tragic flaw or Hamartia, and the "character must be true to life." (Aristotle, translated by Butcher 17). Queer protagonists, although not necessarily of high birth, are described to be

persons leading a seemingly moral and ethical life while carrying the flaw of being queer. This aspect of having a tragic flaw means having to suffer, and the unjust suffering of a good person or 'hero' arouses empathy in readers. These queer protagonists are 'true to life' as the writers either narrate their own personal experiences through the character of the protagonist or are modelled based on members of the sexual minority. The protagonists go through the much-required 'character development' throughout the story, aiding its plot's progression. Therefore, a queer protagonist who undergoes infinite suffering through every step of their life and has to struggle to be accepted as an equal in society, just because of who they are, makes them a worthy tragic hero.

Although, it is very important to note that not all queer stories are tragedies because not all of them have a devastating end. Some novels do end on a hopeful or happy note wherein the protagonist overcomes their battle with themselves and/or society and moves forward to a successful life. Some queer stories can be works of imagination by writers who are non-members of the queer community or beautiful fantasies in which the queer writer can fulfil their dreams and, in a way, do what they could not in real life. Such fantasies provide an outlet for the suppressed desires of the writers who belong to the sexual minority. Queer protagonists can also simply be seen as heroes of a story who help members of the queer community who are in question, to find their sexuality and assert their self-identity. The experiences shared through the protagonist help instil a sense of belongingness in the members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Ultimately, the queer protagonist as a tragic hero remains a hero and, in any way, does not degenerate into a villain, even though they supposedly 'sin' against and 'deviate from the paths of morality' by being queer.

2.4 The Transgender and Homosexual Idols

Indian Queer Literature is dominated by stories of transgender, intersex, and homosexual protagonists and/or side characters. By analysing the five selected texts for this study, through the lens of queer theory, it is apparent that Indian society mainly recognises the Hijra community which is made up of transgender and intersex women, and the homosexual community which includes gays and lesbians. It can be inferred that India has not yet opened itself to the broader idea of other existing sexualities which fit the spectrum of the LGBTQIA+ community, although rare mentions of bisexuality can be found in some texts.

In A. Revathi's autobiography, *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010), she shares her personal experiences of living a life as a member of the sexual minority in India. She thinks of herself as "A woman trapped in a man's body." (Revathi, translated by Geetha 17) Being born as a male, Revathi was named 'Doraisamy' – a Tamilian boy name, and had to live with it for the entirety of her childhood, as she tried to explore her sexual identity. As a child, Revathi enjoyed playing "girl's games" with "girls from the neighbourhood." (9) And engaging in all kinds of domestic activities associated with women, like sweeping and swabbing, drawing the kolam in the courtyard every morning, helping her mother in the kitchen and washing the utensils. She was also inclined towards soft and 'feminine' tendencies and even enjoyed dressing up as a woman. Not much heed was paid to all these characteristics by the adults thinking "He'll outgrow all this when he grows older." (9) She suffered a childhood full of insults being hurled at her, being misunderstood, and feeling unwelcomed – all for something she could not help herself from doing; "I did know that I behave like a girl, it felt natural for me to do so. I did not know how to be like a boy." (11)

As Revathi struggled to explore her self-identity and strove to assert her sexuality, she took the impulsive yet necessary step of running away from home and trying to explore her sexuality within a community she could relate to and learn from. Moreover, this community of *hijras* or *pottais* – as they call themselves, made her feel safe, welcome and understood. In the process of exploring her sexuality, she learned that being a *hijra* was not just limited to dressing up as a woman and giving form to her real feelings, but rather it was an age-old tradition demanding her commitment, respect, and obedience. She took this opportunity to fully transform herself into a woman by undergoing a painful procedure of castration and sex-change surgery called *nirvaanam*. Although her transformation gained her personal satisfaction, it did not fit the taste of the heteronormative society, and therefore, her life took a darker turn into more misery and torment. Being a part of the Hijra community then, meant begging in markets, on bus stands, and at railway stations, and also engaging in sex work to sustain themselves. A *hijra* could neither find a reputable job in society nor was treated with dignity.

> How we could ever hope to make a living? God has made us this way, I
> thought, and we have no work of our own, our parents do not understand us
> and this world looks upon us with distaste. Yet we too go hungry. Above all,
> we wanted to live as human beings do, with dignity. I tried hard to ignore all
> that was happening around me. (Revathi, translated by Geetha 30)

When Revathi took to doing *danda* or sex trade in hopes of satisfying her sexual needs, she was sexually abused by rowdies, robbed, threatened, and raped. She also faced internal disputes and rivalry amongst fellow *pottais* in the competition of bagging 'customers.' And since prostitution is illegal in India, there was no one who could win her justice or safeguard

women like her from being exploited, but on the contrary, she was sexually abused and taken undue advantage of by police officers themselves.

Marriage was not encouraged among the Hijra community because it only added to their abuse and turmoil. But as Revathi climbed the hierarchy of the Hijra community and housed her own *chelas* – or new members of the Hijra community, she was introduced to an organization that supported the sexual minority called Sangam, by them. Here she was offered a reputable position as an office assistant and soon fell in love with a bisexual colleague and married him. Although her marriage lasted only a year, it gave her a new sense of understanding of herself, gave her hopes of having a love life, and extended the boundaries of her world that were once restricted to begging and sex work.

> '…If our elders, at least some amongst them, had gone out into the wider world and found other work, then younger hijras would have followed their example. You taught us your way of life, but hijras of my generation want more. We want to acquaint the world with our lives, and we wish to live like others. That's why I am going to work.' (Revathi, translated by Geetha 200)

As an independent woman, she was able to fend for herself and financially assist her family who had once turned their back on her. Revathi redefined the meaning of being a transwoman and the stigma attached to it. By writing an autobiography she proved that anyone is capable of fighting for themselves if they put their heart into it. We see an idol who has broken societal norms to improve her life's conditions and that of others.

Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) is another such work of queer literature that emphasizes the life experiences of a transwoman, who was born intersex, but was gendered male at birth. Aftab, who later underwent the gender transition surgery to become Anjum, and identify as a transwoman, led a miserable childhood of being bullied for

her feminine qualities and being pressurised by her parents to transition into a man. But when "One spring morning Aftab saw a tall, slim-hipped woman wearing bright lipstick, gold high heels and a shiny, green satin salwar kameez buying bangles from Mir the bangle-seller… He wanted to be her." (Roy 19) She was Bombay Silk, a transwoman who lived in a *haveli* called Khwabgah – the House of Dreams, with several other *hijras.* Deciding for himself, Aftab leaves his home to permanently join his own community in the Khwabgah, where he feels accepted and loved for who he really was. From here on she takes the name Anjum and leads her life as a successful transwoman, being constantly interviewed by NGOs, Human Rights groups, and journalists, as her story of bravery and confidence influences society.

Not conforming to the societal laws of sexuality and that of the Hijra community, Anjum adopts a daughter whom she found abandoned outside a mosque. The religious and political conflict following the partition of India, traumatise Anjum to a point where she is forced to leave Khwabgah and her daughter under the care of Saeeda, a fellow *hijra*, to live by herself in a graveyard, and with the help of Saddam Hussain, a young Dalit, opens Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services, where she tends to all the downtrodden members of society and the outcasts, to fend for herself. From here on the story takes a turn to narrate the life of Tilo, a woman trapped in the politics of the partition, who ultimately finds her way to Anjum, who then provides her and her adopted child with shelter. From being born as Aftab to navigating her life as Anjum, she manages to influence society and be of assistance to those who have nobody to call their own.

The lesbian partners, Kari and Ruth in Amruta Patil's *Kari* (2008), part ways at the very beginning of the novel, after attempting a double suicide. Kari narrates her perspective on this separation amidst a largely heterosexual society. The 'smog city' of Mumbai, known to be one of the advanced parts of India, inhibits an ironically heteronormative society, where

Kari, as a lesbian finds herself to be 'suffocating,' as she has no one to share her desires with. Her life is overtly very much like that of the other heterosexuals surrounding her at work and at home. But she lacks the love of Ruth. The story is central to Kari's feelings of alienation in a society that practically dismisses non-heterosexual desires, and neglects the existence of the sexually marginalised, asserting that "eventually a woman needs a man and a man needs a woman." (Patil 81) *Kari* does not exclusively portray the protagonist as an idol or saviour for her community, but when Kari puts herself first and realises her self-worth – "I still love Ruthie more than anyone else in the world, but I won't be jumping off ledges for anyone any more." (Patil 115) – she becomes her own hero. This novel shows the life of a homosexual person in a rather less brutal – in terms of abuse, yet a highly heteronormative environment in terms of ideology, and how one suffers the wrath of love regardless of their sexuality.

Another novel that is central to a homosexual relationship between women is Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* (2002), wherein Astha ventures into her newfound sexual interests with Pipeelika. But unfortunately, she cannot give in to her desires and commit to her relationship which only remains an 'affair' outside her marital and familial life. As a mother of two and a devoted wife, "She was living, the way people like her lived." (Kapur 200), and finds herself in a position where she cannot give up her well-settled life, to create a new one with her lover. From her perspective, doing so would only birth new problems for her in the conservative society she lived in. She was restricted to her home, her duty as a mother, and her teaching profession. On the contrary, Pipeelika, despite being a widow, had great plans of pursuing her further education abroad and taking her relationship with Astha to the next step. She knew what Pipeelika wanted of her, but she was unable to change her life:

> She wants a full life, after six months she wants commitment, if I can't give it
> to her, why shouldn't she look elsewhere, but she didn't want Pipee to look

elsewhere, she wanted her to stay with her forever, as she was, as they were.

(Kapur 216)

Their opposing viewpoints lead to them parting ways, but in the process, Astha got the opportunity to stand up for herself, pursue her interests in painting and actively participate in social service in the wake of religious and political unrest. In this story, Pipeelika extends the hand that guides Astha out of the darkness of her sexuality and allows her to explore her real self, but unfortunately, Astha cannot hold long enough to be completely let out and gives up on her desires and her love.

My Magical Palace (2012), by Kunal Mukherjee, on the other hand, is central to a gay couple's relationship. Rahul, born in a conservative Hindu family in India is expected to exhibit masculinity and is discouraged when he does not. The extremely biased and negative attitude towards homosexuality by his family and the society that he is a part of, makes him wonder if something is wrong with himself because Rahul develops strong feelings for an actor named Rajesh Khanna and feels no sexual attraction towards women. To protect himself from the hostility towards homosexuality and from shock therapy which was given to Amit – his classmate who wrote a love letter to another boy, Rahul denies his sexuality; "if I were a homo too, life would be unbearable at school and at home. 'Chee…Chee…' my parents would say shaking their heads sadly." (Mukherjee 20)

He later learns that Shubho dada, his best friend's elder brother, is like him too as he develops sexual feelings for him and eventually, they indulge in intense romance, exploring his deepest desires for the very first time. But Shubho simply cannot accept his sexuality and resorts to leading a *normal* heterosexual life by marrying his girlfriend, although his marriage is short-lived, and he stays single for the span of the novel. Amidst all these chaotic happenings in his life, Rahul finds a friend in Colonel Uncle who is a middle-aged bachelor.

Rahul realizes that he too is a homosexual, who has lived alone after the war, because his partner, like Shubho and many other homosexual persons, married and settled down to a heterosexual lifestyle. It is only when Claudio, his lover, becomes a widower, that he returns to him in Italy, to spend the rest of their lives together. Rahul gets the chance to openly explore his sexuality only after he leaves India to live in San Francisco where he meets Andrew and gets a fresh new start in his life. Even though Andrew lived in a seemingly progressive society, he still struggled to build his own sexual identity as the church deemed homosexuality devilish, but unlike Rahul, he at least had a school counsellor who helped him embrace who he was. Considering the hardships everyone like him has to go through, Rahul finally has to face his reality and tell his parents the truth about his double life. Once the truth and he himself is out, things get a little smoother for him. All six of these homosexual characters experience life differently, but somehow share the same experiences of living in fear, feeling alienated and not being able to be expressive of their desires.

In one way or another, all of these queer characters stand up for themselves and their sexual identity. Some of them manage to influence the society they are a part of, whereas others experience personal growth. Even though all these stories have mainly transgender and homosexual protagonists or side characters, they have different endings – just as every individual witnesses unique experiences in life. Each one does what they feel is best for themselves. In doing so, some become idols to others and some become idols to themselves, and in both cases, these characters do not fail to influence the readers and guide those who are confused about their sexuality or encourage those who are too scared to come out of the closet.

2.5 A Feminist Approach to Queer Literature

The feminist approach demands the improvement and empowerment of all women, including those belonging to the sexual minority, who face discrimination, abuse, and marginalization in a highly patriarchal society. The feminist perspective of queer literature aids the upliftment of the sexual subalterns by giving them a voice and attempting to transform the patriarchal systems of power that reinforce and perpetuate inequality. Queer literature cannot be devoid of feminism because the atrocities against women prevail in every community and more so in the sexual minority in an andro-centric society like India. Male dominance is regarded as the natural order but the role of women to maintain this order is highly side-lined. Feminism does not promote hatred towards men but rather advocates equality among all.

As the title suggests, Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* (2002) traverses Astha's life from being a girl to becoming a married woman and simply transferring the authority of her life from her father to her husband. "Astha was brought up properly, as befits woman, with large supplements of fear. One slip might find her alone, vulnerable and unprotected." (Kapur 5) As a feminist, Kapur strives to challenge the patriarchy by indomitably exploring a feminine lesbian identity within the Indian framework. In her work, she glorifies the chemistry between a lesbian couple against the backdrop of the prejudiced heteronormative order. Astha was an only child, whose education, character, health, and marriage were her parents' greatest *burdens*. "Her mother often declared, 'When you are married, our responsibilities will be over." (Kapur 5) In Indian society, the ultimate goal of a woman's life is marriage and producing heirs to carry on the legacy of patriarchy. Astha does not get to decide whom she marries, rather, she has to be grateful for a man who "does not believe in dowry." (Kapur 32)

Like every other man, Hemant Vadera "wanted an innocent, unspoilt, simple girl…a virgin." (Kapur 37) – and found one in Astha. A woman's character is defined by her chastity, but the same does not apply to a man. Similarly, when it comes to sex, the act does not consider a woman's satisfaction. She is expected to be ready whenever her husband feels like it and satisfy him. Kapur, counters this unwritten but highly normalised law by making Astha revolt, as she does not entertain his sexual advances one night:

> That night, Hemant started his sex routine.
>
> 'No,' said Astha, 'I don't feel like it.'
>
> Hemant paused. This was the first time his wife had not felt like it. 'What's up?' he demanded.
>
> 'Nothing.'
>
> 'Then?'
>
> 'Then what? Do I have to give it just because you are my husband? Unless I feel close to you I can't – I'm not a sex object, you have others for that.'
>
> (Kapur 201-202)

Women have always been objectified and their role in society has been devalued and underestimated. Men are praised for doing the simplest tasks, whereas women who are capable of handling a full-time job and simultaneously running the household are barely given any credit. Kapur pays attention to such minute details that are generally overlooked and points them out in her work: "Hemant dropped her occasionally when she was getting late for morning assembly. Both families exclaimed at his devotion as a husband." (Kapur 43) Additionally, even as a working woman, Astha's finances are handled by her husband, and he takes the liberty of using her money without her consent and against her wishes. Matters concerning money are largely associated with men, and women are seen as incapable of handling their money; "He is a man, he knows about money" (Kapur 93)

Astha's newfound confidence through her service as a part of Sampradayakta Mukti Manch gives her a platform to pursue her interest in painting, thereby expanding her boundaries and allowing her to grow beyond familial and marital duties. Through her empowering relationship with Pipeelika, Astha is encouraged to step outside her comfort zone and dive into the depths of her sexuality. This special relationship makes her feel important, included, and wanted, and enables her to express her desires in a way she never could with her spouse. Her relationship with Pipeelika is one that she chose to be in, unlike that of her marriage. In her lesbian feminist work, Kapur boldly depicts the life of 'a married woman' who ventures outside the traditional norms of Indian society but is not brave enough to break away from them as Astha is unable to sacrifice her role as a mother for the companionship of her lover:

> 'I love you, you know how much you mean to me, I try and prove it every moment we have together, but I can't abandon my family, I can't. Maybe I should not have looked for happiness, but I couldn't help myself. I suppose you think I should not be in a relationship, but I had not foreseen … Oh Pipee, I'm sorry I am not like you.' (Kapur 217)

This sets aside the reality of two different women coming from two different backgrounds. While Pipeelika is free-spirited, has the power to make her own decisions, and is not afraid of accepting her sexuality, Astha is born and brought up in a conservative household where she does not enjoy the liberty of free will. She is tied to her responsibilities of being a wife, a mother, and a daughter-in-law, and accepting and being open about her sexuality only meant attracting more trouble to her already troubled life. She gives up on the only source of genuine joy and self-satisfaction for the comfort of her family – a sacrifice every woman is expected of.

Women, especially in Indian society could not – and to an extent still cannot break away from abusive or unhappy marriages. "When I was growing up, the only people who got divorces were film stars and models. We were middle-class folks and divorce was just another word for a loose woman." (Mukherjee 12) The stigma attached to being a divorced woman is far worse than sustaining abuse. In *My Magical Palace* (2012), Mukherjee mentions the injustices women have to undergo in the institution of marriage and family. Gender roles are assigned at a very young age and are expected to be obeyed. While women are expected to succumb to the authority of the father or husband "as if the purpose of women in life was to serve men." (Mukherjee 95) Men on the other hand were discouraged from participating in any activities that were considered feminine under the patriarchal regime: "If I spent time in the kitchen my father would punish me." (Mukherjee 125) Additionally, stereotyping men and women to behave in a certain way or pressuring them into having certain preferences affects their sexuality. This is evident through the experiences of Rahul who is constantly ridiculed for his interest in 'feminine' activities, his behaviour, and his preferences – "Rahul is a girlie boy. Rahul is a girlie boy!" (Mukherjee 98)

Women have always been seen as submissive and dormant members of society, who are obligated to abide by patriarchal norms. In the near past, even "dating was considered to be a sign of a 'loose character.' Only 'fast girls' dated and others gossiped about them." (Mukherjee 54) Although, traditionally, dating includes both male and female partners, only women are shamed for it. 'Love marriage' was an alien concept in Indian society where parents married off their daughters to strangers under the system of 'arranged marriages.' Mukherjee digs into this unjust system through the character of Mallika, who is beaten and forced to end her relationship with Salim and marry Sanjib who makes her a victim of domestic violence – emphasizing the violence women have to endure at the hands of patriarchy. A. Revathi, in her autobiography, provides an insight into this abusive system as

she vividly describes the painful incidents of her life as a transwoman. She and the members of her community have to suffer sexual abuse and rape at several points in their lives. They are mocked for being 'half man' but this does not stop men from sexually exploiting the 'half woman' side of them. "These men were respected, and they abused us in a school where their children studied!" (Revathi, translated by Geetha 178) Revathi was also severely beaten and abused by her brothers for being a *hijra*.

Central to the life of a lesbian character, Amruta Patil's *Kari* (2008), is set in a more modernised setting. Kari is a strangely unique protagonist who is distant from society, keeps to herself, is unbothered by others, and is openly homosexual. Patil explicitly discusses topics like sex, sexuality, and suicide in her work, which is written using the stream-of-consciousness technique through Kari's perspective. The protagonist of the story works at an ad agency, lives with two women, Billo and Delna, and leads an ordinary life. Compared to the overcrowded and noisy city of Mumbai, Kari's life is lonely and quiet. She is troubled by the loss of her lover who has left her alone after a failed double suicide. Amidst the vastness of a society that is highly critical of the 'queers' and is dominated by patriarchy, Kari finds herself deserted:

> A city alters when a person leaves. It drops drawbridges, grows new roads, looks hairy at dusk. Since Ruth left, I don't think I have walked the same road twice. Every day I wander into strange backyards and junk heaps and miraculously find my way out and back to work or home again. I give my days to the ad agency, work like a fury and sleep like the dead. (Patil 14)

Kari is part of a society that is not entirely prejudiced against the queer community but is also not completely supportive of the same. Her sexuality and her past relationship with Ruth are not taken seriously or respected in a way that a heterosexual relationship would be.

She gets asked questions like "Are you, like, a proper lesbian?" (Patil 79) – showing how society can be indifferent towards and ridicule a woman's opinion about herself. Society tends to favour their definition of what a woman is and what she ought to be rather than accepting her self-description. Patil also points out the stereotypical nature of society that governs the definitions of being a man or a woman, like the barber who says, "Madam, face looking boy type." (Patil 107) after Kari insists on getting a buzz cut – a haircut mostly associated with men. In an andro-centric society that is dominated by gender norms and gender roles, Kari tries to be her most authentic self. *Kari* (2008) being the first Indian graphic novel by a woman, introduces a new syntax for representation and a new way of thinking about women.

CHAPTER III

Indian Queer Literature as a Reflection of the LGBTQIA+ Community in India

3.1 Introduction

Indian queer literature is a mirror of the heteronormative Indian society that disregards the sexual minority. In an attempt to showcase the reality of the lives of the sexually marginalised, Indian queer literature paints the picture of an India that is cold, brutal, and displeasing – in stark contrast to its depictions of diversity, oneness, and harmony. The members belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community are deemed as the outcasts of society, who undergo severe abuse, injustice, and disrespect. Indian queer literature ventures into the lives of these outcasts to tell their stories. The love laws imposed by the colonisers have left a lasting impact on Indian society by completely redefining its idea about the 'queer' persona.

In 2018, India scrapped the archaic law that criminalised homosexuality and homosexual relationships and allowed the queer community to engage in consensual intercourse without having to fear punishment or imprisonment. This was a small milestone for the LGBTQIA+ community in India after rigorously fighting against the anti-gay community that opposed this on the pretext of same-sex relationships affecting the institution of marriage. The verdict of the then Chief Justice Dipak Misra read:

> "Social exclusion, identity seclusion and isolation from the social mainstream are still the stark realities faced by individuals today and it is only when each and every individual is liberated from the shackles of such bondage and is able to work towards full development of his/her personality that we can call ourselves a truly free society." (Das Jayant)

However, it is evident that these laws are by no means respected by the majority public, and changing the closed mentality of Indian society will be a long and tough journey to victory.

Indian queer literature has played a significant role in reflecting the experiences of the Indian queer community. These works of literature explore a wide range of themes and issues related to sexuality and gender identity, including discrimination, marginalisation, coming out, and romantic relationships. It has been a powerful tool for creating visibility and awareness around the experiences of the LGBTQIA+ community in India as many of these works challenge traditional gender roles and societal expectations, and they provide a platform for queer individuals to tell their own stories and share their perspectives. Queer literature in India provides a valuable perspective on the experiences of its sexual minority and contributes to ongoing conversations around sexuality, gender identity, and social justice thereby helping to promote greater acceptance and understanding of this community.

3.2 The Indian 'Hijra'

> "Everything was either masculine or feminine, man or woman. Everything except her baby. Yes of course she knew there was a word for those like him – Hijra. Two words actually, Hijra and Kinnar. But two words do not make a language." (Roy 13)

'Hijra' is a term used by Indian transgender and transsexual women to describe themselves. The Hijra community in India is a marginalised group of transwomen who are often subject to discrimination and violence. This community is believed to have existed in India for centuries and has recently been recognised as a third gender in Indian society. The term *hijra* refers to a person who is born male but identifies as female or as a member of a third gender. The Hijra community has its own cultural practices and traditions, including a unique form of dance known as the *badhai* and a language known as 'Hijra Farsi.' Despite their long history and cultural significance, the Hijra community faces significant social and economic challenges. Many *hijras* are ostracised from their families and communities and

struggle to find employment or access to healthcare. Discrimination and violence against the Hijra community are common, and many Hijras are subjected to physical and sexual abuse.

The hijra community has long existed in Indian society since ancient times. The Hindu texts and ancient scriptures and architecture are surviving proof of the community's existence. Koovagam Festival, also known as Koothandavar Festival or Aravani Festival, is an annual event held in the village of Koovagam, located in the Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu, India. The festival is celebrated in memory of Lord Aravan, who is considered a patron god of the transgender community. It dates back to ancient times and is believed to have originated during the reign of the Chola dynasty. According to legend, Lord Aravan was the son of Arjuna, the legendary hero of the Indian epic Mahabharata, and the Naga princess Ulupi. Aravan was sacrificed by the Pandavas as part of a war ritual, and his spirit is believed to reside in a stone idol at the Koothandavar Temple in Koovagam.

The festival is a celebration of the transgender community, also known as 'Aravanis' or 'Hijras,' who participate in various rituals and cultural events. The highlight of the festival is the re-enactment of the marriage between Lord Aravan and the beautiful Mohini, an avatar of Lord Vishnu. The Aravanis, dressed in bridal attire, perform the role of Mohini and mourn the death of Lord Aravan during a ceremonial wedding. After the wedding, the Aravanis participate in a traditional ritual known as the Thiru Nangai, where they break their bangles and remove their bridal attire, symbolising the end of their married life. The festival culminates in a grand procession where the Aravanis dance and sing to the beat of drums, carrying the idol of Lord Aravan to the nearby village of Villupuram for immersion in a water body. Over the years, the Koovagam Festival has become a symbol of the transgender community's resilience and spirit and is attended by thousands of people from all over India and around the world.

The Hijra community firmly stands on the foundation of a set of traditions and rituals one must abide by to become a part of the same. The traditions of the hijra community in India are vividly described in Revathi's *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010). Making the bold decision of leaving home as Doraisamy, the young transgender Revathi, fully transforms into a transwoman by becoming a part of the Hijra community. Here she learns the basic customs of the Aravanis or Hijras of Tamil Nadu, like saying "Paampaduthi amma" while bending down to touch their feet as a way to greet the elders of the community. The Hijra community demands its new members to take a 'female name' and from there on the new member is adopted as a *chela* or daughter by a *guru* – a mother figure who provides her *chelas* with food, clothing, and shelter, and the *chela* is expected to serve and earn for her *guru* in return. This process of accepting a *chela* is to be carried out during the *jamaat*, which is a meeting of elders when they discuss important issues, accept *chelas*, and so on;

> All of us sat around a plate, on which was spread a white cloth. Betel leaves
> and 1.25 rupees were placed on it. My guru announced that she would like to
> adopt me as her chela and for this, she was willing to give 5 rupees and also
> 1.25 rupees to the jamaat. This latter was referred to as thandu (fee) money.
> The others received the thandu money in my guru's name and placed it on the
> plate. They took the 5-rupee note and noted that this was 'for Revathi' and
> muttered, 'Five rupees for Revathi deen deen.' At this, the others showed their
> appreciation by shouting and clapping. I was to address my guru as I would
> my mother—I would have to call her Amma. My guru in turn announced that I
> was her daughter, and my name was Revathi and asked me to do paampaduthi
> to all the elders. (25-26)

The Hijra community is a hierarchy of sisterhood wherein a *guru's guru* is referred to as *nani*, and the *nani's* sister is referred to as *kalaguru*, while the *guru's* sisters are called *gurubais*. Surrendering oneself to femininity by adopting feminine ways of lifestyle like growing hair long, piercing the nose and ears, essentially plucking facial hair instead of shaving them, and making way for a man and showing him respect by bending one's head while making sure the chest is properly covered is central to becoming a *hijra* along with draping saris. *Hijras* earn their living by collecting *doli-badaai* – the practice of playing a dholak while singing and dancing at weddings and childbirth in return for items like rice, wheat, or saris in order to bless the couple or the new born with fortune and fertility, and also by collecting *badaai* from shopkeepers.

> In this Delhi, for centuries, they've treated us like gods. They fall at our feet and seek our blessings. Our word is considered all-powerful and whatever we say comes true. When we go to shops, we clap hands and say "Ramramji! Namaste babu!" and they give us money, a rupee or 5 rupees …We accept this money, place our palms on the shopkeeper's head and say "Be well! We hope your business goes well."' (41)

This belief of Hijras having the ability to bless one with good fortune or curse them has its roots in the myth of Lord Rama.

> when Ramar went off on exile for fourteen years, his subjects, both men and women, came to see him off to the forest. They walked with him to the forest's edge and would have accompanied him further inside, when he told them, "All of you, men, women and children, go back to your houses. I'll complete my fourteen years of exile and return to rule over you." So, everyone … but a group of people stayed back and there they remained at the forest rim for

fourteen years until Ramar came back. Astonished, he asked them, "Who are you? Why haven't you gone back to your homes in the city?" They replied, "Swamy! We belong neither to mankind, nor to womankind. You said then that men, women and children ought to return to the city. But you did not ask us to go. Bound by your wishes, we remained here." Rama was so astounded and moved by their sincerity that he granted them a boon. "Whatever you speak will be true. Your words will come true." 'So, from that day onwards, people here have believed that a hijra's word will come true and think of us as godly beings. (42)

The *hijras* of Mumbai engage in sex work or *danda* unlike those in Delhi and there are special houses devoted to sex trade practices. But the ones doing *danda* do not participate in *badaai*. In the Hijra community, there exist seven houses or clans, each with its own name. *Hijras* are free to choose gurus from any house and also "shift their allegiance to another." (56) And each of these houses consists of a *parivar* (family) that has its own elected representative known as the *naik*. Each region has a unique *guru-chela* system and the system of one region is not applicable to other regions and vis versa;

In every state of north India there are separate hijra houses, each with their own *parivars*. Hijras from all the seven houses live in Karnataka. Tamil Nadu alone is different in this respect. A person has a guru in the state and also another one, outside of it. (57)

When the *guru* is satisfied by the *chela's* dedication, she allows her *chela* to have *nirvaanam* – "To undergo nirvaanam is to submit to castration and turn into a full woman." (23) or to undergo a sex transition surgery. When the operation is performed by another Hijra it is called *thayamma* operation. Hijras who undergo this surgery cannot eat fruits or drink

milk for forty days, and on their fortieth day, they offer puja to Pothiraja Mata – the patron of *Hijras*. "They carry a pot of milk to appease the goddess and only after they have ritually mixed it with the water of a river or a pond, do they eat fruit and drink milk." (67) On the twelfth and twentieth days after the surgery is conducted, *hijras* from the neighbourhood are invited to pour water over the heads of the newly transitioned *hijras*, their peers rub turmeric all over their bodies, and their mouths are filled with sugar after performing arthi for them. And "It was only after the haldi-mehndi ritual, followed by a puja to Mata and another ritual similar to the puberty rites done after the first menses to declare the girl free from pollution, that [the *hijras*] could leave the house." (76)

The custom continues with the *guru* gifting her *chelas* with a *jok* which "comprises a green sari, a blouse and an inner skirt, and a nose-ring, anklets and toe-rings." (76) These chelas are then bathed and dressed in the *jok*, and led to the image of Mata. A coconut is broken and a puja is performed to the Goddess and the Hijras are garlanded. Additionally, small bundles of betel leaves and areca nuts are tied into the folds of their saris. Later on, a pot of milk is balanced on the *hijras'* heads, assisted by two other *hijras* for each. They are then escorted to the nearest well and made to pour the milk into the well without taking the pot off their heads, and then fill the pot with water and pour it back into the well. This process is repeated twice. Once they are back at the place of worship, they are asked to unveil their faces and recite: "Take me away and give yourself to me" (77) to Mata's image. Thus, the chelas are declared true Hijras and given a choice of delicacies to choose from. "Hijras believe that [their] future would be as the food [they] chose to eat. For those who chose sweets and fruit, life would be pleasant." (78) After the ceremony ends, the *nani* gives them a new sari to wear and instructs them to take off their *jok*, which is then handed over to *akuva pottais* – "those who are yet to undergo *nirvaanam*." (79)

hijras have their own rules, culture and rituals. The jamaat is their forum for

mediating and pronouncing what is good and bad. Marginalized by

mainstream society, denied a legal existence and dispossessed of their rights,

hijras turn to their community and its culture for comfort and for nurture. In

the hijra community there is no high or low—hijras do not observe caste or

religious differences and there are hijras from both poor and rich homes. (56)

In recent years, there have been efforts to promote greater acceptance and inclusion of the Hijra community in Indian society. In 2014, the Indian Supreme Court recognised the Hijra community as a 'third gender' and mandated that they be given equal rights and protections under the law. This was a significant step towards greater recognition and acceptance of the Hijra community in India. However, there is still much work to be done to address the challenges faced by the Hijra community and promote greater understanding and acceptance of transgender individuals in Indian society. Many activists and organisations are working to promote LGBTQIA+ rights and create a more inclusive and accepting society for all individuals.

3.3 The Role of State and Religion

Political and religious influences have had a significant impact on Indian queer literature, both in terms of the themes and topics explored and the reception of these works within Indian society. Religious beliefs, particularly in Hinduism and Islam, have historically played a significant role in shaping attitudes towards same-sex relationships and gender identity in India. Many works of Indian queer literature explore the tension between religious teachings and queer identities, and the impact of these teachings on the experiences of queer individuals in Indian society. Political factors have also influenced the development of Indian queer literature and Indian politics serves as the backdrop of Indian queer literature.

The partition of India in 1947 had a significant influence on the country and its people. The partition was a result of the British decision to divide the country into two separate states, India and Pakistan, based on religious lines, with India being predominantly Hindu and Pakistan being predominantly Muslim. This led to the largest migration in human history, with millions of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs leaving their homes and moving to either India or Pakistan. The mass migration resulted in widespread violence, with communal riots and massacres taking place in various parts of the country, leading to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. The blood-soaked partition had a lasting impact on India's political and social landscape, with the creation of a separate Muslim-majority state leading to increased tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India. The country has since struggled with communal violence and religious extremism, and the partition remains a deeply emotional and divisive issue in India.

Prominent political writers and activists from India like Arundhati Roy are known for their insightful and critical commentary on various social and political issues in the country. Roy's work often focuses on issues such as caste, gender, and class inequality, as well as environmental degradation and the impact of globalisation on marginalised communities. She is known for her work, which offers a sharp critique of the political and social realities of contemporary India. Roy's political writing often challenges the dominant narratives of the Indian state, exposing the systemic injustices and violence inflicted on marginalised communities. She has been a vocal critic of the Indian government's policies on issues such as Kashmir, Maoist insurgency, and the displacement of indigenous communities for development projects. One such example of her work is *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) which has a strong background of the Kashmir insurgency, the 2002 Gujarat riots, and more.

The Kashmir insurgency is an ongoing armed conflict between India and various insurgent groups operating in the Indian-administered state of Jammu and Kashmir. It has been fuelled by a range of factors, including historical grievances, political and economic marginalisation, and a desire for greater autonomy or independence. The conflict dates back to the late 1980s, when various separatist groups began to emerge in the region, calling for an independent state of Jammu and Kashmir or for the region to be merged with Pakistan. The insurgency quickly escalated into a full-fledged armed conflict, with both sides engaging in violent attacks and counterattacks. The Indian government deployed a large number of security forces to the region to counter the insurgency, leading to accusations of human rights abuses and excessive use of force. The insurgency also led to a significant loss of life, with thousands of civilians, security personnel, and militants being killed in the conflict, in addition to the significant impact on the people of Kashmir. Roy places her character, Tilo against this backdrop to bring into light the many wrongdoings against the common masses and criticise the Indian government for perpetuating the violence for personal gain.

On the other hand, Roy places Anjum against the backdrop of the 2002 Gujarat riots, wherein she is left deeply traumatised by the incidents that take place. On her visit to Gujarat with Zakir Mian, to an important Muslim shrine to pray for the recovery of her adopted daughter, Zainab, they are encountered by an angry Hindu mob who brutally murder Zakir Mian but leave Anjum unharmed as she is a hijra;

> Nahi yaar, mat maro, Hijron ka maarna apshagun hota hai. Don't kill her, brother, killing Hijras brings bad luck … They left her alive. Un-killed. Un-hurt. Neither folded nor unfolded. She alone. So that they might be blessed with good fortune. (Roy 49)

The religious and political disturbance in Gujarat in 2002 was a result of the controversy surrounding the Ayodhya temple and Babri Masjid in India. In February 2002, a train carrying Hindu pilgrims was attacked and set on fire in Godhra, a city in Gujarat, killing 59 people. This led to communal riots in several parts of the state, resulting in the deaths of over 1,000 people, mostly Muslims. The incident was seen as a retaliation by Hindu nationalist groups for the attack on the train, and it led to large-scale violence and destruction of property, particularly targeting the Muslim community. The state government, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was accused of complicity in the violence and of failing to take adequate measures to control the situation. The aftermath of the Gujarat riots saw increased communal tensions and polarisation in the state, and the incident continues to be a source of controversy and political debate.

Mentions of a similar incident are made by Kapur in her work, *A Married Women* (2002). Aijaz and his theatre group are burned alive in a Matador by the Hindu mob. This incident has a major impact on Astha, who then devotes her time to fighting against these religious injustices the best she can, and in doing so explores her sexuality:

> According to our sources, a procession containing bricks for the proposed Ram temple in Ayodhya was routed through a gully adjacent to a minority community mohalla earlier in the afternoon. Despite the presence of the police, slogans were shouted. Untoward incidents were then avoided, but that evening violence, possibly premeditated, broke out during a performance by The Street Theatre Group. Unruly elements in the crowd started heckling the actors. Other elements responded. In the confusion the members of the group were driven away in a van, ostensibly for safety. This seems to have been a ploy. (Kapur 129)

These riots have roots in the Babri Masjid incident which was a controversial event that took place on December 6, 1992, in Ayodhya, a city in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The incident involved the demolition of the Babri Masjid, a 16th-century mosque that was believed to have been built on the site of a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Rama. The demolition was carried out by a group of Hindu nationalists, who claimed that the mosque was built on the ruins of a Hindu temple that had been destroyed by Muslim invaders. The demolition sparked widespread violence across the country, leading to the deaths of over 2,000 people.

After gaining independence from British rule, India sorted to partition based on religion. Since then, there has been a violent history between the Hindu and Muslim religions which still influences society and the crucial decisions they make. Instances of the interference of political and religious history can be found in Mukherjee's *My Magical Palace* (2012) wherein the Hindu girl, Mallika is forced to end her relationship with the Muslim boy, Salim:

> 'You know Binesh would never do that once he finds out the boy is Muslim.
> Because of Muslims, his family had to move from Chittagong in East Pakistan
> to India. Their family lost everything. His mother died on the way to Calcutta,
> when their train was attacked and set on fire. The train arrived at the station
> with everyone in it stabbed to death and burnt!' Baba said, his voice heavy.
> 'He saw such terrible things. He told me of one particular incident—he saw a
> Muslim man take a baby from its mother's arms and tear it into two
> before her eyes.' (Mukherjee 109-110)

The political background given to Indian queer literature helps to emphasise the abuse done against the queer community under these circumstances. However, Indian queer

literature faces several challenges due to such political factors. Conservative groups sometimes sought to ban or censor works of Indian queer literature, and some authors have faced threats and harassment for their writing. Despite these challenges, Indian queer literature continues to play a vital role in promoting greater awareness and acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community in Indian society. Many authors and activists are working to challenge stereotypes, fight discrimination, and promote a greater understanding of the diverse experiences of the sexual minority in India against its political backdrop.

3.4 Homosexuality: A Well-Maintained Secret

"Don't mention that word again." (Mukherjee 32)

Homosexuality has been stigmatised and discriminated against in Indian society after the colonial rulers imposed their ideologies on the natives and criminalised sexualities that did not adhere to heteronormativity, leading many queer individuals to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity. Homosexuals and other members of the LGBTQIA+ community are therefore ashamed of their sexuality or are threatened by society into hiding their true identity. In traditional Indian culture, family and community honour are highly valued, and individuals are often expected to adhere to rigid gender roles and societal expectations. Homosexuality, which is often viewed as a deviation from these norms, can be seen as a threat to family and community honour, leading many individuals to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid bringing shame or dishonour to their families.

Religious beliefs also play a significant role in attitudes towards homosexuality in India. Many religions, such as Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity have traditional teachings that view same-sex relationships as immoral or sinful, further contributing to the stigma and discrimination faced by homosexuals. Although ancient Hindu scriptures have vivid descriptions of homosexual relations and instances of Gods taking the form of Goddesses,

they are not interpreted as being 'homosexual' activities rather they are perceived as actions taken to fulfil a crucial need for the greater good. In Islam, homosexuality is generally considered to be sinful and forbidden as the Quran contains verses that speak against homosexual acts, for instance, in the story of Lot, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are punished for their homosexual behaviour. Islamic teachings also stress the importance of marriage as a union between a man and a woman, thus condoning homosexual relationships and marriages.

In *A Married Woman* (2002), Kapur portrays the secretive nature of homosexuality in India through Astha's lesbian relationship with Pipeelika outside her marriage. Astha lives a double life, one that was given to her and one that she made for herself. Despite her affection for Pipeelika, she is unable to openly accept her sexuality because doing so would mean defying the conventional norms of society. She never mentions her inclination toward women or chooses to speak about her sexuality with anyone else except Pipeelika. When she attends her first gay film show with Pipeelika, she sees "All of them open, none of them living a life of lies." (Kapur 213) on the screen. Unlike the actors in the film, she could not be open about her sexuality. Astha, like most other homosexual women in Indian society, preferred a 'life of lies' rather than suffering the discomfort of judgements and being ostracised by society.

Mukherjee explores the importance of secrecy around homosexuality in Indian society in his novel, *My Magical Palace* (2012). The protagonist experiences various instances wherein he learns what homosexuality is and why he has to be so secretive about it. On learning about his classmate, Amit being expelled from school for being a 'homosexual' – a new word that he learns that surprisingly describes his own sexual feelings, Rahul is taken aback at the shame and hatred society associates with homosexuality: "Arre, yaar, Amit is a bloody homo!" (Mukherjee 18) This made him realise that if he was a 'homo' too, "life

would be unbearable at school and at home." (20) The word itself is taboo and his sister, Rani instructs him to strictly avoid using it or making any mention of it in front of their parents or elders. The fear of being teased and getting sent to a mental institution like Amit, forced Rahul to keep his feelings hidden away. He understood that it was not safe to confide in anyone about his feelings, even his mother:

> I wanted to tell her so badly that I was not like everyone else. That I was different from the boys in my class. That I might have been doing something really wrong. And that I did not want to get married. But I was sure she would not understand … This time, she was clear about what was normal and what was expected of me. I turned away from her, feeling very alone. (49)

When for the first time Rahul allows himself to express his desires and have his first sexual encounter with Shubho dada, he urges Rahul to "keep this [their] little secret." (158) in order to safeguard his reputation in society and his 'normal' heterosexual relationship. Furthermore, Rahul's discovery of a crate full of his parents' old books leads him to Barbara Golding's *It's Never Too Late to Love – Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex*, which read:

> 'Homosexuality is an abnormal condition. Male homosexuals are often effeminate. Parents need to look to see if their children are teased in school for being too feminine or masculine. Boys who are homosexual like to play with dolls, hate sports and prefer quiet activities to active ones. Girls who are homosexual like to play rough sports and do not play with dolls like normal girls do. Early signs of homosexuality are obsession with a friend who is of the same sex and a lack of desire and interest in the opposite sex. It is treatable by electric shock and aversion therapy. Homosexuals live on the fringe and are

very unhappy people. Parents are advised to start treating this condition

early in childhood.' (247)

This makes him feel disgusted about himself and forces him to keep his sexuality a secret. After leaving India he gets the chance to freely identify as a homosexual in America and be in a relationship with his lover, Andrew. But sadly, Rahul lives a double life, an altered reality as he never reveals his identity to his parents back in India. The stigma attached to being a homosexual in India affects his relationship with Andrew, who confronts him by asking, "Am I a dirty secret that you have hidden from your world?" (9)

Legal restrictions, such as the now-defunct Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalised same-sex sexual activity, are one of the largest contributors to the secrecy surrounding homosexuality in India. Such laws can create an environment of fear and persecution for LGBTQIA+ individuals, making it difficult for them to live openly and freely. Overall, the secrecy surrounding homosexuality in Indian society is a result of the stigma, discrimination, and legal restrictions faced by the members of the LGBTQIA+ community. However, there is also a growing movement for LGBTQIA+ rights and acceptance in India, and many individuals and organisations are working to promote equality and create a more inclusive society.

3.5 Upholding 'Izzat' in the Indian Society

'Izzat' is a term commonly used in Indian society, particularly in the context of family honour and reputation. It refers to one's social status, respectability, and dignity, which are often closely tied to the actions and behaviour of oneself and one's family members. In traditional Indian society, family, and community honour are highly valued, and individuals are expected to maintain their *izzat* by adhering to cultural norms and societal expectations. For instance, a woman's *izzat* may be tied to her chastity and modesty, while a man's *izzat*

may be tied to his ability to provide for his family and uphold his responsibilities. The concept of *izzat* can have both positive and negative effects on individuals and communities. On the one hand, it can encourage people to act in ways that promote social harmony and respect for others. On the other hand, it can lead to rigid expectations and the oppression of individuals who do not conform to societal norms.

Several instances of *izzat* playing a major role in shaping the lives of characters are found in Indian queer literature. Queer characters are largely influenced by the concept of 'shame' when it comes to their sexuality. The stereotypes pertaining to sexuality and a woman's chastity are tightly knit into conventional Indian society. In his novel, *My Magical Palace* (2012), which is central to homosexuality, Mukherjee attempts to express the severity of *izzat* in India, and how every step of one's life decisions is governed by it. He writes, "Without izzat, a man cannot leave his home and face the world." (Mukherjee 267) His homosexual protagonist, Rahul spends his entire childhood and even his adulthood trying to hide his sexuality from his family and the larger society because of the stigma of shame attached to it;

> I also got to see for myself how society treated the parents of gay children. From that point on, I pretty much went straight back into the closet. I could not imagine bringing shame to the family … I don't think you've ever dealt with that kind of shame … disowning one's kids is not enough. Have you heard about honour killings? … that is the level of shame I am talking about … I was completely in denial and lived in terror of losing what I had left." (Mukherjee 267)

Not conforming to the heteronormative society by being openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, is often seen as a violation of traditional gender roles and social norms, and

therefore it is considered shameful. In Indian society, the notion of traditional gender roles is closely tied to cultural and religious values, which emphasise the importance of family, marriage, and procreation. Therefore, any deviation from these traditional norms is viewed as a threat to the stability of the family and the broader social fabric. Additionally, the criminalisation of homosexuality and any other sexualities beyond heterosexuality has led to a history of discrimination and persecution of the LGBTQIA+ community. This has contributed to the stigmatisation of non-heteronormative identities, making them a symbol of shame.

Not only does the queer community suffer the wrath of *izzat* but the heterosexual community does too. Individuals are conditioned to take into consideration how society will judge them before taking any decision. Inter-caste or inter-religious marriages, women engaging in sexual and romantic relationships before marriage, pregnancy outside wedlock, and even divorce are still stigmatised in Indian society. Mukherjee touches upon the topic of divorce;

> 'When I was growing up, the only people who got divorces were film stars and models. We were middle-class folks and divorce was just another word for a loose woman. Growing up, we didn't know even one divorced couple. All our friends lived in families that remained intact despite the fact that not all the marriages were happy. (Mukherjee 12)

Through these lines, it is evident that women are the sufferers both in and out of an unhappy or abusive marriage. Mallika is married off to a stranger against her will because she falls in love with a Muslim boy. This kind of coercion and injustice against women is normalised in Indian society, as is seen when Rahul's father agrees with Mallika's father and approves of his actions: "I would do the same thing if my daughter tried to marry a Muslim

boy. They think they know what is best for them, but we have our family honour to think of. We want to walk in society with our heads held high. (116) The burden of not bringing shame to the family is weighed down on women in Indian society, and a woman is expected to sacrifice her needs and desires, and even tolerate abuse to safeguard her family's reputation in society.

The notion that women are solely responsible for upholding their family's honour in Indian society is a cultural belief that has been deeply ingrained for centuries. This belief is rooted in the patriarchal norms and values of society, which assign a subordinate role to women and place a premium on their chastity and purity. According to traditional Indian culture, a woman's honour is linked to her virginity, and any deviation from this expectation is considered a stain on the family's honour. This puts an immense amount of pressure on women to maintain their virginity, sexual purity, and modesty, which is often enforced by strict rules and restrictions imposed by the family and society. Moreover, women are often viewed as the property of their families and are expected to conform to their family's expectations, particularly in matters of marriage and sexual behaviour. This expectation is often enforced by the threat of violence or social ostracism if the woman brings dishonour to her family.

Another striking example of a woman's responsibility to uphold *izzat* is depicted by Arundhati Roy in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017)*,* as Jahanara Begum tries to hide the gender of her intersex infant from her husband and society until she is old enough and cannot be kept a secret any longer. As a mother, she is horrified by what she had birthed and brought upon her family, thereby making her the reason for tarnishing her family's reputation. A similar instance can be found in *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010), where Revathi's family physically abuses her for dressing up as a woman and dancing at the

festival, and joining the Hijra community where she engages in sex work and begging. She is accused of bringing shame to her family through her actions and her sexuality.

However, it is important to note that this belief is changing, particularly among younger generations of Indians who are challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for gender equality. Many women are rejecting the notion that they are solely responsible for upholding their family's honour and are seeking to live their lives on their own terms, free from the constraints of societal expectations. In recent years, there has been increased awareness and discussion of the harmful effects of izzat-based violence, such as honour killings, which are acts of violence committed against individuals who are perceived to have brought shame or dishonour to their families. Efforts are being made to challenge and reform these harmful practices and promote a more equitable and just society.

CHAPTER IV

Heteronormativity: Is It Really *Normal*?

4.1 Introduction

"Fear and ignorance are our biggest enemies. They blind us to the truth, make us hate those who are different." (Mukherjee 44)

Ignorance plants the seed of hatred which is the root cause of the divide in society. When a person lacks knowledge about a certain concept, they make assumptions about the same. And more times than not, these assumptions tend to be incorrect. The widely heteronormative society of India discourages its younger generation from indulging in such scandalous concepts of sexuality. The influence of heteronormativity is so strong that young individuals fear or are ashamed of even bringing such topics up for discussion, thereby perpetuating the cycle of ignorance and hatred. The misconception that members of the LGBTQIA+ community are perverted or mentally unsound individuals is held by a large number of heterosexuals who make no effort in understanding the truth and accepting the sexual minority as fellow members of society. Exposing oneself to these concepts is falsely alleged to influence one into becoming queer. Rather, acquainting oneself with information about sexualities and sexual identities may help one to realise their own and feel included.

In addition to social media and other social platforms, the recent inclusiveness of queer identities in movies, web series, and the birth of queer literature on a global level have opened up spaces for educating oneself about varying sexualities and expanding ones understanding of the same. Although the horizon for the sexual minority is expanding with the help of such platforms, a vast majority still object to embracing such 'unorthodox' ideas of sexuality. Thereby, making it difficult for the sexual subalterns to openly embrace their sexualities and lead a normal life.

4.2 Why is 'Heteronormativity' Normalised?

The simple and straightforward answer to this question is that heterosexuality is generalised as the majority of the population identifies with it. Heteronormativity is normalised in many societies because it is viewed as the *natural* way of being, based on biological reproduction and cultural traditions. It assumes that people are born into two distinct and opposite sexes and that these sexes are attracted to each other in a binary, heterosexual manner. This view is often reinforced by cultural norms and expectations, such as gendered clothing, behaviours, and roles. Thereby, heterosexuality is assumed to be the default sexuality of the human species. However, this assumption stands untrue because sexualities other than heterosexuality exist, even if people find it hard to process and accept. And although these sexualities exist as a minority, they are medically not recognised as abnormalities, diseases, or mental disorders of any sort by the Indian Psychiatric Society: "Homosexuality is not a psychiatric disorder and we recognise same-sex sexuality as a normal variant of human sexuality much like heterosexuality and bisexuality." – and therefore are very much normal.

The stereotypes associated with gender in an andro-centric society perpetuate the prejudices against individuals who have dispositions that do not adhere to these societal norms and promote behaviours like bullying among youngsters. For instance, in a classroom, students tend to make fun of a classmate with physical abnormality because his/her abnormalities are visible and this *differentiates* him/her from the normal and abled students. Similarly, they also bully a little boy who is soft and feminine in nature. A disability that does not fit the standards of being physically normal, or a personal preference that does not align with the gender stereotypes is in no sense a reason to humiliate someone, but it is the *distinctiveness* that sets them apart that is seen as *unnatural*. Such behaviours are learned behaviours and can be changed if adults stop instilling false notions about sexuality and also

about disabilities in their children. Being unique in this sense should not be a reason to not consider someone as a fellow human being who is deserving of love and acceptance.

The practice of promoting heterosexual relationships and the idea that love can only happen between the opposite sex is ingrained in children by their parents from the very beginning. Classic fairy tales like *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, and *Rapunzel* that are central to heterosexual relationships fuel this mentality. In Indian society, as soon as children are born, they are assumed to be heterosexual and are trained to adhere to gender norms. And any kind of romantic relationship which does not conform to the traditional ideas of sexuality is made invisible to the child. Karin A. Martin, a Professor of Sociology at the University of Michigan infers in her study, *Normalizing Heterosexuality: Mothers' Assumptions, Talk and Strategies with Young Children* that;

> Those who consider that their children could some day be gay tend to adopt one of three strategies in response: Most pursue a passive strategy of "crossing their fingers" and hoping otherwise. A very few try to prepare their children for the possibility of being gay. A larger group, primarily mothers from conservative Protestant religions, work to prevent homosexuality.

Heteronormativity is also normalised through institutional systems, such as marriage laws and adoption policies, which are based on the assumption of heterosexuality as the norm. These systems often exclude or marginalise those who do not conform to the heterosexual norm, including queer individuals. The normalisation of heteronormativity is also perpetuated by the media and popular culture, which often reinforce traditional gender roles and present heterosexuality as the only valid form of romantic or sexual attraction. Members of the LGBTQIA+ community are often represented in stereotypical or negative ways, further marginalising them in society.

For most individuals, especially of the older generation, sexualities outside heterosexuality are unusual, unacceptable, and abominable. Not being a part of the sexual majority is deemed shameful and therefore the members of the sexual minority are treated as outcasts. The fear of being abused and harassed under the dominant heteronormative culture forces queer persons to hide their sexuality and live a life of falsity. The grasp of heteronormativity on Indian society is so strong that anything outside heterosexual behaviour is seen as wrong or unusual. It is just as normalised as calling every toothpaste 'Colgate' and referring to a photocopy as 'Xerox.' Although these are brand names and not product names, the popularity of these brands was widespread because in the past they were the major and one of the very few or only brands available in the market. Therefore, people generalised using these brand names for their products. These generalisations have been ignorantly passed down for generations and have come to be accepted and used in daily communication. Thus, the sexual minority suffers the disadvantages of being a minority group in a highly conventional society.

The majority always has a stronger influence on the whole, but that does not mean the minority is non-existent. Most often than not, people find themselves incapable of accepting something that is not common. Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri, in his book, *The Holy Science,* originally published under the title *Kaivalya Darsanam* in 1894, states that "Troubles are born from Avidya, Ignorance. Ignorance is the perception of the nonexistent, and the nonperception of the Existent." The false understanding of nature is what drives humanity to foolishness, and the inability to learn and accept the truth is what perpetuates ignorance. Such ignorance fuelled by herd mentality promotes baseless violence and prejudiced attitudes in society. Heterosexuality is only normalised because a vast majority identify as heterosexuals and non-heterosexual relationships are discouraged because of their non-reproductive nature. But science is ever-evolving and offers several alternatives for conception.

The Indian society that was once inclusive of all sexualities has undergone a great many changes under colonialism which made natives unlearn the learned behaviours to learn new behaviours, thereby adopting homophobia. Despite these challenges, the increasing visibility and advocacy of LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities have helped to challenge and dismantle heteronormativity in many societies. Education and awareness-raising efforts, as well as legal and policy changes, have also helped to promote greater understanding and acceptance of diverse gender and sexual identities.

4.3 Homophobia and Transmisia

The term homophobia was coined by an American clinical psychologist, George Weinberg in the late 1960s and it was prominently used in his book *Society and the Healthy Homosexual* which was published in 1972. Homophobia is defined as the culturally produced irrational fear of, or prejudice against homosexuals that manifests itself in legal restrictions or, in extreme cases, 'gay-bashing' that is, bullying or violence against homosexuals. Also known as heterosexism, it is an assumption that every individual is or should be heterosexual. Homophobia is an attitudinal disposition that ranges from mild dislike to abhorrence of homosexuals. It is a culturally conditioned response to homosexuality that varies across cultures over time.

Homophobia can be presented as a systematic oppression wherein a homosexual person can be discriminated against by the government, religious institutions, and also by educational and business institutions. This discrimination can be in the form of criminalising same-sex relationships or marriages, being denied housing or admission to educational institutions, and getting fired from jobs. Through the study of ancient texts and architecture, it is evident that homosexual relationships among men were acceptable in ancient cultures. Intolerance towards homosexuality emerged in the Middle Ages among the adherents of

Christianity and Islam. As discussed in section 1.2, we understand that homophobia is a Western import that was imposed on India and other colonies along with the foreign religion, by the British who took it upon themselves to educate the *uneducated*, calling it "the white man's burden." It was a part of their mission of 'civilisation' that they thought would eventually be beneficial to the colonised natives.

The irrationality of homophobia is beautifully described by Kunal Mukherjee by using the metaphor of bats in his novel, *My Magical Palace* (2012). "There are bats there. It's dirty." (30) – Rahul's mother warns him against venturing into the forbidden parts of the palace. When he asks if bats are dangerous, she replies, "Ignorant people think so because they look so different from anything else that flies. Contrary to urban myths, flying foxes or bats are completely harmless to humans and certainly do not get entangled in our hair…I just think that places where bats live are filthy and dark. You never know what else might be there." (31) If bats are interpreted as homosexuality, in this context, it is evident that Rahul's mother, much like several others, is aware of the non-harmful nature of being a homosexual but finds the idea of it difficult to digest because the society she was brought up in conditioned her to believe that homosexuality is 'bad' or 'wrong.'

In addition, when a bat accidentally enters their living room while Mr. and Mrs. Firdausi are visiting, and gets entangled in the curtains, Mrs. Firdausi exclaims, "Oh I hate these disgusting creatures! They look like monsters with fur and wings. They are an abomination" (35) and whips her shoe off to batter the helpless and innocent bat to death – showing that senseless disgust and hatred had led to unwanted violence and harm. In Rahul's reflection on this unpleasant incident, Mukherjee writes, "I wondered why people killed things that they found ugly. What were they afraid of?" (36) This question is applicable to the heteronormative culture that baselessly discriminates against homosexuals and the entire

queer community in extension. When Rahul first met Colonel Uncle and expressed his fear on stumbling upon the bats in the dark room, he assures him saying, "there is no reason to be scared of bats, you know." (43) He proceeds to explain that the perception about bats being "dirty and strange creatures that get caught in long hair and bite" (43) is simply a myth and that although "some myths are beautiful, like the myths about Goddess Durga and Goddess Kali. Others are not so inspiring and are created in ignorance." (44) Through the homosexual character of Colonel Uncle, Mukherjee provides Rahul with a supportive figure who guides him through his sexuality and comforts him with the knowledge that helps Rahul to feel seen, understood and not feel like something is 'wrong' with him.

Similarly, transphobia or transmisia is the hatred against transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming individuals. Transmisia is not a commonly used term in the English language or within the broader LGBTQIA+ community. It is possible that it is a neologism or a term used within a specific community or context. However, the prefix 'trans' generally refers to transgender or transsexual individuals, who identify with a gender that differs from the one they were assigned at birth. 'Misia' is not a common suffix, but it is interpreted as 'hatred' or 'dislike' in a similar way to the suffix '-phobia' in homophobia. Therefore, transmisia is used to describe a prejudiced or discriminatory attitude towards transgender individuals as well as individuals who are nonbinary, that is a person who does not exclusively identify as a man or woman, and gender nonconforming – a person whose gender identity or expression is beyond the conventional norms of being a man/woman or masculine/feminine.

However, it is always important to note that language and terminology are constantly evolving, and the interpretation of specific terms may vary depending on the context and the communities using them. Apart from seeing these individuals as less human and unworthy of

respect, transmisia can be projected through government laws that do not validate their

identities and prevent them from using public restrooms that align with their gender identity.

An example of such injustice by the law can be found in Revathi's autobiography:

> Doesn't your law allow you to give licences to people like me? I haven't
> cheated you or anyone, I have produced the papers you asked for and yet you
> say you won't give me my licence? … What have you found wrong with me
> that you won't give me a licence? You say you've not encountered this sort of
> "case" before. Well, I was born a man and I became a woman. I have taken an
> insurance policy in my name, that is, Revathi. My name has been changed in
> the ration card. What more do you need to issue a licence? (Revathi translated
> by Geetha 187)

Like homophobia, many other ideologies and practices including the English

language are Western imports that stuck with India. The Western ideologies that harm native

culture and perpetuate prejudiced conditioned responses should be abolished. Nurturing such

ideologies also causes internalised homophobia, which is the hatred homosexual individuals

feel for their own sexual identity. This leads to them denying or resisting their sexual identity,

pretending to live a stereotypical heterosexual lifestyle, and even discriminating against gays,

lesbians, and bisexuals, thereby adding to their injustice and perpetuating the violence and

hatred against them.

4.4 The Physical and Psychological Impact of Heteronormativity on the Sexual Minority

The heteronormative perspective that heterosexuality is the norm or default sexual

orientation, which reinforces the idea that gender is binary, that is only male or female, can

have a significant impact on the sexual minority. The fear of being rejected by society, and

the unacceptance of queer identities in society are the two major factors that allow abuse to

persist. Abuse is often characterised by a misuse of power, and can occur in different forms. The most common type of abuse inflicted on the sexual minority is physical and sexual abuse which overshadow and add to the lasting mental trauma they suffer. Mental and emotional abuse is not visible to the eyes but psychological manipulation, verbal insults and threats, gaslighting and feelings of isolation exploit the victim's mental health, sometimes driving them to insanity. The sexual minority, especially transgender and transsexual women are highly prone to sexual abuse in Indian society. The use of coercion to perform non-consensual sexual acts is aided by the law that does not protect the rights of the sexual minority, thereby allowing such crimes to perpetuate. This community also suffers financial abuse and neglect, both at home and in the larger society, curtailing any prospect of having or making a decent living.

The stigma attached to homosexuality and any sexuality outside the conventional norms of heteronormativity is passed on to children at a very young age and their mindset is modelled around conforming to these norms. Bullying, teasing, insulting, and humiliation are results of straying outside the traditional 'rules' of how to act, what to wear, and which partner to choose. A. Revathi offers a vivid description of the abuse she underwent since childhood in her autobiography, *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010). She writes, "…boys at school, as well as men and women who saw me outside the house, would call out 'Hey Number 9!', 'female thing,' and 'female boy.' Some even teased me saying, 'Aren't you a boy? Why do you walk like a girl? Why do you wear girls' clothes?" (Revathi, translated by Geetha 9) In addition to being teased and mocked for being *unnatural*, she would also be bullied because of her stammer, thus making her "a regular source of amusement and curiosity." (11) She expresses that she used to feel humiliated to be called such names and felt like she was constantly being punished for displaying her true self. Revathi recollects a bitter incident from her schooling days, she says, "…since I did not play boy's games, I got

punished by the PT teacher too. He would box my ears and yell, 'Are you a girl or what? Pull your trousers down, let me check.' He would make as if he was going to strip me and I would start crying. The other boys laughed at this." (11) Society fails to recognise this kind of behaviour as sexual assault and harassment because it reinforces heteronormative beliefs.

When she was still a young boy under her parents' roof, she had to help her father with his business and experience the anguish of having to be a man. Her father hurled abusive comments like "You'll learn only by drinking their piss!" (32) at her when she could not deliver the best results at cleaning like the other grown men he had employed. Having to go through such torment every single day, makes her run away from her home to seek her true sexual identity. But she is lured back home on the pretence of her mother being severely ill and is made a victim of physical violence, abuse, and death threats:

> As soon as I stepped in, he shut the door, grabbed a cricket bat, and began hitting me, all the while screaming, 'That'll teach you to go with those Number 9s. Let's see you wear a sari again, or dance, you mother-fucking pottai!' He beat me hard mindlessly, yelling that he wanted to kill me, I who had dared to run away. I tried to protect my face and head with my hands to keep the blows from falling. But nevertheless they came down hard, and I felt my hands swell. I was beaten on my legs, on my back, and finally my brother brought the bat down heavily on my head. My skull cracked and there was blood all over, flowing, warm. (50)

Not only is this kind of violence accepted in heteronormative society but is largely supported. There was no one who could defend her, thereby forcing her to venture into an unknown world where she would be a victim of much more violence.

In her journey of being a *pottai*, she realised that this life as a transwoman would not be easy. She recounts instances of being sexually exploited by customers and also by the police when she worked as a prostitute for a living. She and her fellow *hijras* would be awakened by the heat of the flames on their bodies by the lighted matchsticks thrown at them by some rich men, as they slept on the roadside. Such men including rowdies used to demand sex without paying and would falsely accuse them of theft and threaten them. The uncertainty of their life forced them to live in constant fear of the outside world.

> …he wanted me to do things that I did not like doing. (He wanted me to have anal sex with him.) He spat abuse at me and forced me into the act. When I screamed in pain and yelled for my guru, he shut my mouth with one of his hands, whipped out a knife with the other and threatened to take it to my throat. I was hurting all over, and yet had to give in and do as he told me. The skin down there felt abraded and I was bleeding. Unmindful, he left, but only after he had snatched my purse away from me. Men like him will understand the terror and pain they cause only if they become hijras and are hurt by rowdy men such as themselves. (93)

In addition, since there are no laws that protect sex work but rather criminalise it, although it is one of the oldest occupations and is widely practiced in several parts of India, the enforcers of the law become the perpetrators of assault. When Revathi is found on the streets trying to attract customers, she is caught hold of by a police officer who arrests her and exploits her dignity. She is made to sweep and swab the police station, is sexually abused, and is made to eat food off the floor like a dog. Furthermore, the police make her pay an amount of rupees two hundred – a fine they would supposedly pay on behalf of her to the court. Thereby preventing her from raising her voice against them.

I fell at the policeman's feet. He kicked me with his boots. He then asked me

to take my clothes off—right there, while the prisoner was watching. I pleaded

with him and wept, but he forcibly stripped me. When I was standing naked,

he stuck his lathi where I'd had my operation and demanded that I stand with

my legs apart, like a woman would. He repeatedly struck at that part with his

lathi and said, 'So, can it go in there? Or is it a field one can't enter? How do

you have sex then?'… 'Bend down. I've got to inspect your back.' I bent and

showed him my back. He then asked me to hold my buttocks apart so that he

could see my anal passage. When I did, he thrust his lathi in there and asked,

'So you get it there?' (172-173)

Revathi also writes about the abuse faced by fellow transwomen she encounters in her

life. One of them tells her that the men "had forced her to have sex through her mouth and her

backside, 'near where you shit.'" (20) Another transwoman named Shakuntala became victim

to an alcoholic man who falsely claimed to be in love with her and later on began extorting

her money and threatening to follow her and throw acid at her face when she tried to decline

his demands. Members of the Hijra community, as mentioned in her autobiography, are also

brutally murdered in instances of robbery but are not served justice. The heteronormative

mentality allows this violence to continue and fails to protect the sexual minority and

acknowledge them as fellow humans.

The abuse inflicted on the LGBTQIA+ community can also drive them to suicide.

Patil's *Kari* (2008) opens with the act of a double suicide attempted by a lesbian couple.

When society abandons its members and views their sexual orientation as a reason to reduce

their worth in society, it can have an extremely negative impact on some individuals, leading

them to suicide. Even though Kari and Ruth fail, they are forced to separate from each other.

Patil writes "A failed suicide is death still, because no one emerges from it unscathed." (Patil 10) Abuse and exploitation in any form can deeply wound one's self-esteem, and traumatise them forever. The members of the sexual minority consider killing themselves on several occasions in order to end their misery forever which is inflicted on them by the heteronormative society.

Heteronormativity leads to discrimination, marginalisation, and stigmatisation of sexual minorities. Queer individuals face bullying, harassment, and violence due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, which can lead to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse – as can be seen in Revathi's case when she takes to alcoholism to wash down her sorrows and bear with the abuse. Heteronormativity can also affect access to healthcare, employment, and housing. Many sexual minorities experience discrimination and unequal treatment in these areas, which can have negative impacts on their quality of life and well-being. The negligence of the doctor and the nurse, when Revathi undergoes her transition surgery, serves as a prime example. Additionally, heteronormativity can limit the visibility and acceptance of diverse sexual and gender identities, making it more difficult for queer individuals to find supportive communities and role models. This can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, which can also contribute to mental health issues. Heteronormativity can have a profound impact on the lives of sexual minorities. Recognising and challenging these norms is an important step toward creating a more inclusive and accepting society.

4.5 Queer Literature: A Guide to Accepting and Understanding Varying Sexual Orientation

Indian culture is dominated by patriarchy and only recognises heterosexuality as the *natural* sexuality. Therefore, heteronormativity is central to Indian society. The practices and

customs of a vast majority of the Indian population are deeply rooted in gender stereotypes that fail to acknowledge and be inclusive of differing sexual orientations. India has traditionally been a heteronormative society, where heterosexuality is the dominant and accepted norm for sexual and romantic relationships. This has been largely influenced by the country's conservative cultural and religious beliefs, which have emphasised the importance of marriage and family as key institutions in society. However, in recent years, there has been a growing awareness and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ rights and identities in India. The country's Supreme Court decriminalised homosexuality in 2018, overturning a colonial-era law that criminalised same-sex relationships. Despite this landmark ruling, there is still a long way to go in terms of creating a truly inclusive and accepting society for the LGBTQIA+ community in India.

It is not accurate to make a generalisation that Indians are backward on concepts of sexuality. While it is true that there are conservative cultural and religious beliefs in India that have historically emphasised traditional gender roles, marriage, and family as important social institutions, it is important to note that these beliefs are not unique to India and are shared by many cultures around the world. However, discrimination and prejudice against the LGBTQIA+ community continue to be prevalent, particularly in rural areas and among conservative communities in India as the concept of non-binary identities is still relatively unknown and not widely accepted in mainstream society. But at the same time, it is important to recognise that there is a wide range of diversity within India itself, with varying levels of acceptance and openness towards different sexual orientations and gender identities. There are also many individuals and organisations within India that are actively working to challenge and change traditional beliefs and attitudes toward sexuality and gender.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the concept of sexuality itself is complex and multifaceted, and cannot be reduced to a single set of beliefs or attitudes.

Different individuals and communities within India may have their own unique perspectives and experiences when it comes to sexuality, and it is important to approach these issues with sensitivity and nuance. Although there have been positive strides toward greater acceptance and inclusion of the sexual minority in India, there is still much work to be done to challenge and dismantle the heteronormative cultural and social norms that have dominated the country for centuries.

Queer literature can be a powerful tool for accepting and understanding varying sexual orientations and gender identities. By providing a platform for LGBTQIA+ authors to share their experiences, perspectives, and stories, queer literature can help readers to develop empathy and understanding for individuals who may have different experiences than their own. Queer literature can also provide readers with a sense of community and validation, particularly for those who may feel isolated or marginalised due to their sexuality or gender identity. Seeing oneself represented in literature can help to affirm one's identity and provide a sense of belonging. In addition, queer literature can challenge traditional gender and sexuality norms and promote diversity and inclusivity. By featuring diverse characters and experiences, queer literature can help to broaden readers' perspectives and encourage them to question and challenge societal norms and expectations. In addition, queer literature can play a valuable role in promoting acceptance and understanding of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities by providing readers with a deeper appreciation for the richness and diversity of human experiences and help to break down barriers and promote greater social and cultural acceptance.

It is essential to create an open and inclusive culture that respects and embraces diversity. Queer literature offers a space to be more welcoming of varying sexual orientations by allowing the readers to educate themselves about different sexual orientations and gender identities, and understand the experiences and challenges faced by individuals who identify

as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Being in possession of such knowledge allows individuals to challenge traditional beliefs and attitudes towards sexuality and gender that may be discriminatory or exclusive by questioning negative stereotypes and challenging myths and misconceptions. It also helps individuals to be more supportive of LGBTQIA+ rights and advocate for policies that protect the rights of the sexual minority, such as anti-discrimination laws and legal recognition of same-sex relationships. Thereby creating safe spaces in the form of creating LGBTQIA+ support groups, organising events and social gatherings, and creating inclusive policies in schools and workplaces for queer individuals to feel accepted and valued. The introduction of queer identities in literature can help raise awareness about their struggles in society, thereby allowing the masses to speak out against discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity. This can involve challenging homophobic and transphobic remarks and reporting instances of discrimination to the appropriate authorities. Overall, becoming more welcoming of varying sexual orientations involves creating a culture of respect, inclusivity, and acceptance, and taking proactive steps to challenge discrimination and promote equality.

CHAPTER V
Conclusion

Through the thorough analysis of the selected texts, it can be concluded that queer literature is one of the reliable means to understand and accept varying sexual orientations. Indian queer literature specifically focuses on the queer identities present in India and gives them a voice to make their stories known, their concerns heard and expose the abuse done against them. The protagonists of these texts play a major role in depicting the realities of Indian society mainly against its rich political and religious background. Introducing more than one queer character in the texts show how representatives of a certain sexuality can have individual experiences. Queer literature also encompasses feminism which emphasises the cruelty against women regardless of their sexuality. Indian queer literature does not just tell the story of the sexual minority but rather it is a reflection of the entire Indian society. It is more than a means to simply understand what it means to be a queer person in an orthodox andro-centric society. It is a mode of self-reflection that is offered by the vivid depictions of the heteronormative society's mistreatment of the marginalised.

Autobiographies like A. Revathi's *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010), provide readers with true-to-life experiences that aid a better understanding of their difficulties. This text also acts as a record of *hijra* traditions that one can use to expand their knowledge about this unique minority group. The misconceptions nurtured about queer persons by several generations can be brought to an end by sharing such personal experiences. It is very important to note that exposing one's personal life incidents is an act of bravery as it needs a lot of courage since the vivid imagery of sensitive topics such as sexual abuse, sexual assault, molestation and rape at the hands of men ranging from local rowdies to police officers can attract a great many threats and controversies.

However, queer literature is written with a purpose and with the hope that these experiences will inspire members of the LGBTQIA+ community to take a stand for themselves and enlighten the greater majority to think beyond the conventional norms of the patriarchal society. India has always been close to its cultural norms, but the nation fails to acknowledge that the idea of marginalising the sexual minority is a Western import. The British influence has a strong hold on the natives, blinding them from the truth and turning them against their own people, and stigmatising the sexual minority. Indian queer literature challenges the beliefs of the heteronormative society by posing the question of love. Love is a complex emotion that is experienced by all. Generally, it involves a deep affection or attachment to another person, often accompanied by strong feelings of caring, intimacy, and commitment. It is important to recognise that love is not limited by one's sexual orientation, and anyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, can experience romantic love and form a romantic relationship with another person, as love is a universal human experience and can be expressed in many different ways.

The idea that heteronormative culture does not allow love between homosexuals is a complex issue with roots in societal norms, cultural attitudes, and historical contexts. In many cultures like that of India, heterosexuality has long been seen as the norm and homosexuality has been stigmatised and even criminalised. This has led to a societal stigma against same-sex relationships, which has been reinforced by laws, religious beliefs, and social norms that favour heterosexual relationships. This stigmatisation can manifest in a variety of ways, from discrimination and violence against the LGBTQIA+ community to the lack of legal recognition and protections for same-sex couples. These attitudes can also influence the way people view same-sex relationships, often leading to a perception that they are unnatural or wrong.

However, these attitudes are slowly changing, as more people are becoming aware of the harm caused by discrimination through queer literature, social media, and other social platforms, and are advocating for greater equality and inclusion for the LGBTQIA+ community. There are now many countries that legally recognise same-sex relationships and social attitudes toward homosexuality are also becoming more positive. Unfortunately, India is lagging far behind on such fronts due to society's highly conservative mindset. Love transcends gender and sexual orientation and therefore it is important to recognise and celebrate all forms of love, including those between individuals of the same gender, and therefore our nation must unite to work towards being a more inclusive and accepting society.

Queer relationships, or relationships between people who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community, are not inherently harmful as perceived by the heteronormative society. In fact, like any other type of relationship, queer relationships can be loving, supportive, and fulfilling. However, queer individuals face unique challenges and difficulties in their relationships due to societal stigma and discrimination. For example, same-sex couples may face legal and social barriers to marriage and adoption, which can limit their ability to fully commit to and build a family with their partner. Transgender individuals may face additional challenges, such as difficulty accessing medical care, discrimination in the workplace, and harassment or violence in public spaces. These challenges can have negative effects on queer relationships and can lead to stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues. Additionally, discrimination and stigma can also contribute to social isolation and a lack of social support, which can further impact the well-being of queer individuals and their relationships. In order to create a more inclusive and supportive society for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, the nation must advocate for policies that support equal rights for the LGBTQIA+ community, increase awareness and

understanding of LGBTQIA+ issues, and foster safe and supportive spaces for queer individuals to connect and build relationships.

When society mocks and ridicules concepts such as sexuality and gender expression, it poses a threat to the queer community. Such attitudes can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about the sexual minority and their experiences. This can lead to discrimination and marginalisation, as well as a lack of understanding and support from the broader community. Additionally, it can reinforce bullying and harassment of the sexual minority. When people make fun of others for their sexual orientation or gender identity, it sends a message that being queer is something to be ashamed of or ridiculed, which can lead to feelings of self-hatred and shame among queer individuals. Mocking such concepts can also contribute to a culture of violence and hate toward the LGBTQIA+ community. When people use homophobic, transphobic, or otherwise derogatory language toward queer individuals, it can normalise these attitudes and make it more acceptable to engage in violent or discriminatory behaviour towards them. Challenging these attitudes and behaviours is important to promote a culture of acceptance, understanding, and respect toward the sexual minority.

Queer literature in India can be a powerful and effective tool for spreading awareness about the experiences and issues of its sexual minority. Literature has the ability to explore complex emotions, experiences, and identities, and can provide a platform for marginalised voices to be heard and understood. Queer literature can offer insight into the lived experiences of queer individuals, including their struggles with discrimination, marginalisation, and oppression. It can also explore themes of identity, self-discovery, and community, which can help readers understand the complexities of LGBTQIA+ experiences and foster empathy and understanding. Moreover, queer literature can also challenge

dominant cultural narratives about gender and sexuality and provide alternative visions of what it means to be human. This can be particularly important for those who may not have direct contact with the LGBTQIA+ community or may not have had access to information about LGBTQIA+ experiences. It can help to break down stereotypes, promote empathy and understanding, and contribute to a more inclusive and accepting society.

Works Cited

Abraham, Amelia. *'Solace, Joy and a Lifeline': Why Queer Literature Is Vital for People
    Growing up LGBTQ+*. Penguin Books UK, 7 Apr. 2020,
    https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2020/02/why-queer-literature-is-vital-for-people-
    growing-up-lgbtq.

"Abuse types" promt. *ChatGPT,* 23 March version, OpenAI, 1 April 2023,
    chat.openai.com/chat.

Ahmad, Areeb. *11 Queer Books from India You Must Read*. She Reads, 14 Apr. 2022,
    https://shereads.com/must-read-queer-books-india/.

Anderson, Eric. *Homophobia*. Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 20
    Feb. 2023, https://www.britannica.com/topic/homophobia.

Aristotle. *The Poetics of Aristotle.* Translated by S.H. Butcher. Gutenberg Org,
    http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1974/1974-h/1974-h.htm.

Asoori, Pranav. *A Look into the Conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir*. E, 7 Oct.
    2020, https://www.e-ir.info/2020/10/07/a-look-into-the-conflict-between-india-and-
    pakistan-over-kashmir/.

"Babri Masjid" prompt. *ChatGPT,* 23 March version, OpenAI, 3 April 2023,
    chat.openai.com/chat.

Blackburn, Mollie V, et al. *Examining Queer Elements and Ideologies in LGBT-Themed Literature: What Queer Literature Can Offer Young Adults.* https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1086296X15568930.

Blakemore, *Erin. From LGBT to LGBTQIA+: The Evolving Recognition of Identity*. History, National Geographic, 19 Oct. 2021, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/from-lgbt-to-lgbtqia-the-evolving-recognition-of-identity.

Bose, Shormita, et al. *A Hijra Exposes Society's Underbelly in Her Novel – Different Truths*. Different Truths – A Global Participatory Social Journalism Platform, 10 Aug. 2021, https://wwwdifferenttruthscom.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/www.differenttruths.com/advocacy/gender/a-hijra-exposes-societys-underbelly-in-hernovel.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity.* New York: Rutledge, 1993.

Canada, Global Affairs. *Feminist Approach – Innovation and Effectiveness Guidance Note.* GAC, Government of Canada, 6 Jan. 2023, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/fiap_ie-paif_ie.aspx?lang=eng.

Chakraborty, Aditi. *Queer Literature in India: Visible Voices of the Sexual Subaalterns.* IJSR, 2017.

Correspondent, Special. *Homosexuality Not an Illness: Indian Psychiatric Society.* The

    Hindu, 28 Nov. 2021, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/homosexuality-not-

    an-illness-indian-psychiatric-society/article61515009.ece.

Cughtai, Ismat and Surajita. *Lihaaf.* Rajkamal Prakashan, 2016.

Da Silva, Chantal. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness by Arundhati Roy, Book Review*. The

    Independent, Independent Digital News and Media, 21 June 2017,

    https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-ministry-of-

    utmost-happiness-by-arundhati-roy-book-review-a7"91941.html.

Das, Jayant. *Supreme Court Verdict on LGBTQ Rights Epoch-Making.* The Pioneer, The

    Pioneer, 12 Sept. 2018, https://www.dailypioneer.com/2018/state-editions/supreme-

    court-verdict-on-lgbtq-rights-epoch-making.html.

Dasthagiri, B and Dr. Ankanna. *Eco-Feminism in Arundhati Roy's the Ministry of Utmost*

    Happiness: A Critique. IJELS, Infogain Publication, 2022.

Datta, S. *Can You See Her the Way I Do?: (Feminist) Ways of Seeing in Amruta Patil's Kari*

    (2008). Feminist Encounters, 2020.

Delf, Liz. *What Is a Protagonist? || Definition &amp; Examples.* College of Liberal

    Arts, 27 Jan. 2023,

    https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/wlf/whatprotagonist#:~:text=The%20protagonist%2

    0is%20the%20character,emotional%20heart%20of%20the%20narrative.

de Lauretis, T. *Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities.* Differences: A Journal of

Feminist Cultural Studies.

Dowerah, Bornali N. *Foregrounding Queer Spaces in Contemporary Indian English Fiction*

for Young Adults. JETIR, 2019.

Dryden, Steven. *A Short History of LGBT Rights in the UK.* British Library,

https://www.bl.uk/lgbtq-histories/articles/a-short-history-of-lgbt-rights-in-the-uk.

Dsouza Prabhu, Ruth. *We Need Queer Literature in Regional Languages to Tell Stories of*

Gay People in Small-Town India. The Hindu, 13 July 2019,

https://www.thehindu.com/books/queer-literature-in-india-son-are-you-

mohanaswamy/article28400513.ece.

Feminist and Queer Studies: Judith Butler's Conceptualisation of Gender. La Clé Des

Langues –Cultures Et Langues Étrangères, 24 Mar. 2021, https://cle.ens-

lyon.fr/anglais/civilisation/domaine-americain/feminist-and-queer-studies-judith-

butlers-conceptualisation-of-gender.

Freedman, E. *No Turning Back.* New York, NY: Ballantine Books. 2002

Gedro, J and Mizzi R.C. *Feminist Theory and Queer Theory: Implications for HRD Research*

and Practice. Sagepub, 2014.

"Gender and Mythology" prompt. *ChatGPT*, 23 March version, OpenAI, 4 April 2023,

chat.openai.com/chat.

Goel, Ina. *Chapter 5: Understanding Caste and Kinship within Hijras, a 'Third' Gender

Community in India.* Gendered Lives, State University of New York Press,

https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/genderedlives/chapter/chapter-5-understanding-

caste-and-kinship-within-hijras-a-third-gender-community-in-india/.

Goldsmith, John W. *The Evolution of Queer Representation in the Young Adult Genre.* Digital

Commons, 2016.

Gupta, Charu. *Sexuality, Identity and Censorship.* Humanities Underground,

https://humanitiesunderground.org/sexuality-identity-and-censorship/.

Hammish. *Why Heteronormativity Is Harmful.* Learning for Justice,

https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/why-heteronormativity-is-harmful.

Han, Enze, and O'Mahoney Joseph P. A. *British Colonialisation and the Criminalisation of

Homosexuality: Queens, Crime and Empire.* Routledge, 2018.

"Heteronormativity and sexual minorities" promt. *ChatGPT*, 23 March version, OpenAI, 2

April 2023, chat.openai.com/chat.

Holidify. *7 Sex Temples of India: Idolising Sex Through Erotic Sculptures*. Holidify, Holidify,

4 Aug. 2020, https://www.holidify.com/pages/sex-temple-in-india-4413.html.

Holidify. *Koovagam Festival – The Transgender Festival in Tamil Nadu*. Holidify, 16 Nov.

2021, https://www.holidify.com/pages/koovagam-festival-4151.html.

Homophobia: Definition, Effects on Health, Seeking Help, and More. Medical News Today,

MediLexicon International,

https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/homophobia#effect-on-health.

Homosexuality and Transgenderism in the Quran – Gale.

https://www.gale.info/en/database/reading/homosexuality-and-transgenderism-in-the-

quran.

India Code: Section Details. India Code, https://www.indiacode.nic.in/show-

data?actid=AC_CEN_5_23_00037_186045_1523266765688&amp;orderno=434

#:~:text=Whoever%20voluntarily%20has%20carnal%20intercourse,also%20be%20li

able%20to%20fine.

"India's heteronormativity" prompt. *ChatGPT*, 23 March version, OpenAI, 2 April 2023,

chat.openai.com/chat.

"Islam and homosexuality" promt. *ChatGPT*, 23 March version, OpenAI, 3 April 2023,

chat.openai.com/chat.

Iovannone, Jeffry J. *A Brief History of the LGBTQ Initialism*. Medium, Queer History For the

      People, 30 May. 2019, https://medium.com/queer-history-for-the-people/a-brief-

      history-of-the-lgbtq-initialism-e89db1cf06e3.

Jnanevetar, Swami Sri Yukteshwar Giri. *The Holy Science: Kaivalya Darsanam.* Self-

      Realization Fellowship, 1972.

Johnpanicker, Joji. *Homosexuality in Indian English Literature: Queer Perspectives.* 2010.

Kapur, Manju. *A Married Woman.* New Delhi: India Ink, 2012.

Koovagam Koothandavar Festival – India's Largest 'Transgender Festival'. Indian

      Panorama, 25 July. 2020, https://www.indianpanorama.in/blog/koovagam-

      koothandavar-festival-indias-largest-transgender-festival/.

"Koovagam festival of India" promt. *ChatGPT*, 23 March version, OpenAI, 5 April 2023,

      chat.openai.com/chat.

Kumar, Ruchi. *How LGBT Literature in India Has Fared since Homosexuality Became*

      Lawful. Medium, ZORA, 30 Oct. 2019, https://zora.medium.com/how-lgbt-literature-

      in-india-has-fared-since-homosexuality-became-lawful-dcfe929539b0.

Lasher, Megan, and Lhea Campano. *Everything You Need to Know about the History of the*

      LGBTQ+ Acronym. Seventeen, 5 Apr. 2023

      https://www.seventeen.com/life/a18209179/lgbtq-meaning/.

Livemint. *Same-Sex Marriage to Be Legal in India? Here's What Supreme Court Said.* Mint,

13 Mar. 2023, https://www.livemint.com/news/india/samesex-marriage-to-be-legal-in-

india-what-supreme-court-said-while-hearingplea-11678704209925.html.

Love, Heather. *Feminist Criticism and Queer Theory (Chapter 16) – A History of Feminist

Literary Criticism.* Cambridge Core, Cambridge University Press,

https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/history-of-feminist-literary-

criticism/feminist-criticism-and-

queertheory/DD3DFD79790B47F0D3A24E6E770A072B.

"Love has no limits" prompt. *ChatGPT*, 23 March version, OpenAI, 6 April 2023,

chat.openai.com/chat.

Lowrey, Sassafras. *Queer Literature Top Five.* The Center for Fiction,

https://centerforfiction.org/book-recs/queer-literature-

topfive/#:~:text=Lesbian%2C%20Gay%2C%20Bisexual%2C%20Transgender,sexuali

ty%20and%20gender%20identity%2Fexpression.

Manju Kapur (Author of Difficult Daughters). Goodreads, Goodreads,

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/203233.Manju_Kapur.

Mark, Joshua J. *LGBTQ+ in the Ancient World.* World History Encyclopedia, 15 Apr. 2023,

https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1790/lgbtq-in-the-ancient-world/.

Martin, Karin A. *Normalizing Heterosexuality: Mothers' Assumptions, Talk and Strategies with Young Children.* American Sociological Association, April. 2009, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27736057?read-now=1.

MasterClass. *Queer Theory: Definition, History, and Impact.* MasterClass, https://www.masterclass.com/articles/queer-theory.

Migrator. *The Hindu Goddess Worshipped by India's Transgender Community*. Homegrown, https://homegrown.co.in/homegrown-explore/bahuchara-matas-story-a-hindu-goddess-worshipped-by-indias-transgender-community.

Mohan, Charumathi, et al. *Kari: A Graphic Novel About Lesbianism and Big-City Love.* Feminism in India, https://feminisminindia-com.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/feminisminindia.com/2017/03/28/kari-book-review.

Mukherjee, Kunal. *My Magical Palace.* HarperCollins Publishers India, 2012.

Muthukumaraswamy , M.D., et al. *Koovagam Koothandavar Temple Festival.* Sahapedia, https://www.sahapedia.org/koovagam-koothandavar-temple-festival.

Najeeb, Hajara, et al. *Gender and Neoliberalism in Arundhati Roy's the Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Feminism in India, https://feminisminindia-com.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/feminisminindia.com/2021/12/10/gender-and-neoliberalism-in-arundhati-roys-the-ministry-of-utmost-happiness.

Nambiar, Sridevi. *A Brief History of Hijra, India's Third Gender.* Culture Trip, The Culture

Trip, 1 Jan. 2017, https://theculturetrip.com/asia/india/articles/a-brief-history-of-hijra-

indias-third-gender/.

N.V.R. Krishnamacharya. *The Mahabharata.* Tirupati: Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams,

1983.

Palekar, Shalmalee. *Out! and New Queer Indian Literature.* Gramma: Journal of Theory and

Criticism, https://ejournals.lib.auth.gr/gramma/article/view/6595

Parenthood, Planned. *What's Transphobia and Transmisia?*. Planned Parenthood,

https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/gender-identity/transgender/whats-

transphobia.

Papa, Oliver B. *Homosexuality and Religion: The Conflict.* The BYU Undergraduate Journal

of Psychology, BYU Scholarsarchive, 2015.

Patil, A. *Kari.* New Delhi: Harper Collins. 2008, PDF

Philosophy: Introduction to Queer Theory. Introduction to Queer Theory – Philosophy –

Library Research Guides at Indiana University,

https://guides.libraries.indiana.edu/c.php?g=995240&amp;p=8361766.

Queer Literature. StudySmarter UK, https://www.studysmarter.co.uk/explanations/english-

    literature/literarydevices/queerliterature/#:~:text=Queer%20Literature%3A%20History

    y%2C%20Classics%20%26%20Themes%20%7C%20StudySmarter.

Queer Theory. Encyclopedia, HandWiki Huang, 17 Oct. 2022,

    https://encyclopedia.pub/entry/29608.

Queer Theory. Oxford Reference,

    https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100358573;j

    sessionid=DF243FC2F35952F46789F9F507031DC2.

Queer Theory: Background. Background – Queer Theory – LibGuides at University of

    Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,

    https://guides.library.illinois.edu/queertheory/background.

Radhika. *Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri*. Sri Yukteswar, https://www.sriyukteswar.com/.

Rajendran, R. *Identity Search as Women Among Trans Women in India: A Study on A.*

    Revathi's The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story. IJTRD, 2018.

Raveesh, B N. *Ardhanareeshwara Concept: Brain and Psychiatry*. Indian Journal of

    Psychiatry, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Jan. 2013,

    https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3705693/#:~:text=Ardhanareeshvara

    %20is%20a%20combination%20of,consort%20Goddess%20Parvati%20or%20Shakti

Reda, Zione. *Indian LGBT Literature – from Mahabharata to the Present*. Il Grande Colibrì,

2 Feb. 2019, https://www.ilgrandecolibri.com/en/indian-lgbt-literature/.

Revathi, A. *Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story.* Trans by V. Geetha. New Delhi: Penguin

Books India Pvt Ltd, 2010. PDF

Roy, Arundhati. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. India: Penguine Random House, 2017,

PDF

Ruth, Vanita and Kidwani, Saleem. *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and

History.* Macmillan India, 2001.

Same-Sex Love in India. Google Books, Google,

https://books.google.co.in/books/about/Same_Sex_Love_in_India.html?id=McoYDA

AAQBAJ&amp;source=kp_book_description&amp;redir_esc=y.

Sanyal, Srija, and Abhik Maiti. *A Discordant Harmony – A Critical Evaluation of the Queer

Theory from an Indian Perspective.*

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324343645_A_Discordant_Harmony_-

_A_Critical_Evaluation_of_the_Queer_Theory_from_an_Indian_Perspective.

Saradha, R and Velmani, N. *Reconstructing Feminine Identity: A Lesbian Feminist

Perspective of Manju Kapur's A Married Woman.* Notions, 2014.

Singh , Jahanbi, et al. *History of Queer Literature in India.*Women's Studies Centre, JMC, 18

       Sept. 2021, https://womenstudiescentrejmc.wordpress.com/2021/09/18/history-of-

       queer-literature-in-india/.

Singh, Aakanksha. *Reflections on Queer Literary Representations In Contemporary Indian*

       Writing in English. Journal of International Women's Studies, Bridgewater, 2022.

Sweeney, Renata. *12 Must-Read Coming-Of-Age LGBT Novels*. Earlybirdbooks.com, 18 June

       2019, https://earlybirdbooks-com.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/earlybirdbooks.com/9-must-

       read-coming-of-age-lgbtnovels.

The Third Gender and Hijras. Religion and Public Life at Harvard Divinity School,

       https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/religion-context/case-studies/gender/third-gender-and-

       hijras.

The Evolution of the Great Gay Novel. Literary Hub, 20 Mar. 2019, https://lithub.com/the-

       evolution-of-the-great-gay-novel/.

The Islamic State's Views on Homosexuality. The Washington Institute,

       https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/islamic-states-views-

       homosexuality.JSTOR. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27736057.

The Editors of LitCharts. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness Study Guide*. LitCharts,

       https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-ministry-of-utmost-happiness.

Tiwari, Nityanand. (PDF) *Homosexuality in India: Review of Literatures.*

    https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228127620_Homosexuality_in_India_Revie

    w_of_Literatures.

"Trans Prejudice: Transmisia" promt. *ChatGPT*, 23 March version, Open AI, 1 April 2023,

    chat.openai.com/chat

Valmiki. *Ramayan of Valmiki: with Three Commentaries Called Tilaka, Shiromani and*

    Bhooshana. Gujarati Printing Press, 19121920.

Vasudeva, Geetika. *Book Review: A Married Woman by Manju Kapur*. Youth Ki Awaaz,

    Youth Ki Awaaz, 12 Sept. 2010, https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2010/09/book-

    review-a-married-woman-by-manju-kapur/.

Vatsyayana. *The Kama Sutra, Transleted by Sir Richard Burton and F.F Arbuthnot.* Kimber,

    1963.

Vats, Vaibhav. *Witness to Destruction: Remembering the Babri Mosque Demolition.* Religion

    | Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera, 6 Dec. 2019,

    https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2019/12/6/witness-to-destruction-remembering-

    the-babri-mosque-demolition.

Vishwaroop. *Destruction of Ayodhya Mosque*. Religion and Public Life at Harvard Divinity

School, https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/religion-context/case-studies/violence-

peace/destruction-ayodhya-mosque.

Wade, Lisa. *Before Love: Puritan Beliefs About Sex and Marriage*. Sociological Images,

https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2013/02/15/before-love-puritan-beliefs-about-

marriage-and-procreation/.

Weinberg, George. *Society and the Healthy Homosexual.* St. Martin's Pr, 1972.

*What's the Difference Between Being Transgender or Transsexual and Having an Intersex

Condition?*. Intersex Society of North America, https://isna.org/faq/transgender/.

Why Does Islam Forbid Lesbianism and Homosexuality?. Islam Question & Answer, RSS,

https://islamqa.info/en/answers/10050/why-does-islam-forbid-lesbianism-and-

homosexuality.

Women's Rights and Inclusion – Practices in Hinduism. BBC News, BBC,

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zvrsv9q/revision/10#:~:text=The%20Vedas%2

0hold%20women%20in,religious%20activities%20of%20the%20family.

"Women upholding family honour" prompt. *ChatGPT*, 23 March version, OpenAI, 9 April

2023, chat.openai.com/chat

Wong, Tessa. *377: The British Colonial Law That Left an Anti-LGBTQ Legacy in Asia*. BBC

   News, BBC, 28 June. 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-57606847.

Zeigler, Sara L. *Feminist Theory. Feminist Theory*, https://www.mtsu.edu/first-

   amendment/article/1255/feminist-theory.

Document Information

Analyzed document	Audrey-Dissertation.docx (D164530906)
Submitted	2023-04-20 12:43:00
Submitted by	anjali
Submitter email	anjali.chaubey@unigoa.ac.in
Similarity	1%
Analysis address	anjali.chaubey.unigoa@analysis.urkund.com

Sources included in the report

W	URL: https://centerforfiction.org/book-recs/queer-literature-top-five/ Fetched: 2020-04-10 16:44:51	⊞	1
W	URL: https://www.ijsr.net/archive/v7i12/ART20193077.pdf Fetched: 2021-01-17 14:11:08	⊞	5
W	URL: https://ejournals.lib.auth.gr/gramma/article/download/6595/6334 Fetched: 2022-01-03 06:11:47	⊞	3
SA	**DISSERTATION Body.docx** Document DISSERTATION Body.docx (D146064732)	⊞	2
W	URL: https://www.thecuriousreader.in/bookrack/lgbtqia-books/ Fetched: 2020-07-05 08:52:35	⊞	1
SA	**PhD_Thesis_Neha_Kumari.pdf** Document PhD_Thesis_Neha_Kumari.pdf (D36154648)	⊞	3
SA	**192.Sejal Talgotra.docx** Document 192.Sejal Talgotra.docx (D114721225)	⊞	1
SA	**Jennifer Marcel Ph.D English Thesis.docx** Document Jennifer Marcel Ph.D English Thesis.docx (D129943845)	⊞	1
SA	**SuryaMol_English_M.phil.pdf** Document SuryaMol_English_M.phil.pdf (D154535649)	⊞	1
SA	**Suryamol_English_M.Phil.pdf** Document Suryamol_English_M.Phil.pdf (D152053613)	⊞	1

Entire Document

CHAPTER I Introduction 1.1 Aims and Objectives This dissertation aims at studying Indian Queer Literature as a reflection of the LGBTQIA+ community in India. In doing so, this study examines and explores the