

Tracing the Elements of Queerness in Indian Mythology with reference to the select short stories of Devdutt Pattanaik's Shikhandi and Other Tales They Don't Tell You

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Abstract : Indian Literature comprises several literatures - Sanskrit, Urdu, Tamil, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, and Malayalam. These literatures flourish today on the literary scene and most of these are distributed on a broadly which are called as "Regional Writings" in the mother tongue. Indian Mythology had a long history with millenniums and many gods and deities. Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik (1970 – till date) is an Indian physician turned mythologist, author, theorist whose works focus largely on the area of myth, religion and mythology. The researcher's work *Shikhandi and Other Tales They Don't Tell You* is a collection of short stories from various Indian myths across India. Devdutt exposures that the Queer narratives in Indian folklores which describe about the gays and lesbians and hijras of Indian society. It accepts Queer behaviour, be it cross dressing or homosexual intercourse, as perfectly natural, it leaves its social acceptance or rejection to culture, which is an artificial dynamic and artificial construct. The short story collection lights the suppressed voices of suppressed personalities in the Grand Narratives of Indian mythology, the analyses of these stories in which individuals of this age are resisted the hegemonic notion of gender and class.

IndexTerms - Queer Narrative, Folklore, Hegemonic Notion, Myth.

India has a long history of many millenniums and its literatures trace its roots to the four thousand years the *Old Vedas* and to *Puranas*, *Agamas*, *Tantras* and *Bhakti* literatures emerged in the last two thousand years. These literatures had many mythologies which are the study of people's subjective truth expressed in stories, symbols and rituals. Subjective truth is indifferent to rationality interpretations of mythic stories which are strongly influenced by the belief of the interpreter as well as the beliefs of those receiving the interpretation. So there is no such thing as an objective interpretation. The composers of the *Vedic Hymns* (in the period beginning 1500 CE) did not think themselves as "Indians". Like many other terms such as "Hindu" and "Buddhist", it had been applied with hindsight to the people of the past who did not apply to themselves in the historical construction of the nation. Despite vast differences among regions, linguistic communities, religious and social groups, there was an enough "Commonality" in literary and intellectual traditions. There is a wrong notion of Social Scientists who argue that this commonality was an invention of Western Orientalists but this particular invention predates the advent of the British by centuries.

A common reading of Hindu mythology in western academia tends to be literal and so locates patriarchy in *Satya Yuga* (According to *Laws of Manu*, The first epoch or era within the four ages of cycle consists of 12,000 divine years) when structure is respected. The last era of the world "Kali Yuga", the structure is collapsed and there queerness is celebrated and then comes "Pralaya", the flood of doom when nothing exists and then the world starts anew. This makes fixed categories as the hallmark of purity and fluidity of the hallmark of pollution and collapse. These *Old Vedic Manuscripts* traces 4000 years. The question before us is: does the human mind have the empathy to include gender and sexual ambiguity in civil human society? In every yuga new rules come into being that redefine the world order. *The Mahabharata* mentions a yuga when there was no marriage and women were free to go with any man they chose. This situation changed when *Shvetaketu* instituted the marriage laws. People have lived through a yuga when left unchallenged laws of old Imperial masters that dehumanized and invalidated sexual minorities. This has to change – hopefully now.

In India, *Vedas* (4000 CE – 3000 CE) mention two different sexes of human beings as "Purusha" (male) and "Prakriti" (female) but also recognises existence of another sex – "Tritiya Prakriti" of "third gender". Sanskrit language that originated in India (~ 4000 CE) mentions about the existence of four gender states – Pung (masculine), Stree (feminine), Kliba (neuter) and Ubhayalinga (common gender). The same in the case of Queer theory studies which is not a western import, modern or sexual. *The Vedas* and *Manusmriti* say about "Gender Identity" and "Sexual Identity" which reveal the presence of Queerness in Indian contexts before many centuries.

In Modern Period, Queer theory is considered to be a branch of Post-structuralism theory that emerged in the early 1990 which includes both queer reading of the texts and the theorisation of "queerness" itself. It is heavily influenced by the works of Lauren Berkant, Judith Butler and Indian writers such as Raja Rao, Arvind Narrain, Shobha De, Ruth Vanita and Devdutt Pattanaik. Queer theory challenges the idea that gender is a part of the essential self and examination of the socially constructed nature of sexual acts and identities.

In Annamarie Jagose's *Queer Theory: An Introduction*:

Queer theory focuses on the 'mismatches' between sex, gender and desire which prominently associates with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT). Unknown to many, Queer is in association with more than 'LGBT' like Cross-dressing, Inter-sex, Hermaphrodites, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery. (Pg. No. 56)

Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik (1970 – till date) is an Indian physician turned mythologist, author, theorist whose works focus largely on the area of myth, religion and mythology. He has written over 600 articles and 30 books on the relevance of sacred stories, symbols and rituals in modern times including *Myth = Mithya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology*, *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata*, *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana*, *Shikhandi: And Other Tales They Don't Tell You*. Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik is the first person to acknowledge, compile and comment on Queer ideas in Hindu metaphysics and mythology. He decided to study on his own: Freud, Campbell, Jung, Levi-Strauss, Wendy Doniger, and a whole bunch of authors who wrote on Indian and World mythology.

Devdutt's exposure to Queer narratives in Hindu lore and to gays and lesbians and hijras of Indian society, led him to write the book *Man Who Was a Woman and Other Queer Tales From Hindu Lore* which was published by Haworth Press, USA. The book wonders why Queer tales exist in the Hindu lores. What do they say about the Hindu understanding of the world? Devdutt was convinced that while the Hindu worldview accepts Queer behaviour, be it cross dressing or homosexual intercourse, as perfectly natural, it leaves its social acceptance or rejection to culture, which is an artificial dynamic and artificial construct.

Societies, depending on their requirements, may choose to condemn, condone, or celebrate sexual and gender plurality. Rejection or acceptance of society does not render any sexual or gender expression invalid in the cosmos. In the Hindu world, everything is a manifestation of the divine. Devdutt also wrote an essay, *Homosexuality in Ancient India* which was published by Debonair in 2000. His first work of fiction, *The Pregnant King*, was published by Penguin Books India in February, 2008. This mythological story is based upon a fragment of a tale found in the Mahabharata and many Puranas. Devdutt Pattanaik says, "Queerness isn't only modern, western or sexual. It questions what constitutes male and female" (SOT Blurbs). The project aims at giving a space for the suppressed voice of suppressed personalities in the Grand Narratives of Indian Mythologies.

Shikhandi and Other Tales They Don't Tell You is a collection of various myths across India. In this research work, 'LGBT' group are explained with one or two stories for each category is discussed here. Lesbianism is explained in the story of Ratnavalli; Gay is explained in the stories of Somavan and Aravan; Bisexual is explained in the stories of Mohini (Vishnu's avatar in a female form) and Transgender are explained in the stories of Shikhandi and Arjuna. Apart from that Cross-dressing is explained in the stories of Krishna and Samba. These mythological characters are hidden in the Grand Narratives of Indian Epics. Devdutt brings this hidden idea of queerness in the mythology.

The Mahabharata is the greatest epic of India that reached its final form between 300 BCE and 300 CE. Shikhandi plays a key role in *The Mahabharata* because his arrival marks the turning point of the Kurukshetra war. Shikhandi later became a term to refer to "eunuchs" and men of doubtful sexuality. The story is remarkable for the cluster of motifs associated with the sex change – rebirth, the cross-dressed girl-child married to another girl, her desire to be a man and the uncertainty regarding the permanence of the change.

The story of Shikhandi made Sthuna to lend his manhood to her for one night. This made Shikhandi to prove her masculinity to the princess. Kubera, king of "yaksha" was very angry with Sthuna for lending his manhood such things is not to be done. When Shikhandi came to Sthuna to return his "borrowed organ", Kubera was pleased with his integrity and allowed Shikhandi to use the manhood as long as he lived. In the Kurukshetra war, Bhishma declared his vow of celibacy and no one can kill him only he choose the time for his death. Krishna gave the clue of Bhishma's darma which was to lower his bow not before a man but certainly before a woman. But women were not allowed to enter in battlefield as per the law. Durupada sent his eldest child Shikhandi who was born as a woman and later became a man but Bhishma will see him as a woman.

Shikhandini, who became Shikhandi is what modern queer vocabulary would call a female-to-male transsexual, as her body goes through a very specific change genitally. But re-tellers avoid detail and tend to portray him/her either as a eunuch (castrated male), a male-to-female transsexual (a man who rejects his male biology), a male-to-female transgender (a man who wears women's clothes as he feels like a woman), an intersexed hermaphrodite, or simply a man was a woman (Amba) in his past life. It reveals a patriarchal bias even in the queer space. The Queerness made here not accidental but quiet deliberate. The idea of a forest spirit magically enabling sexual transformation is found in many folk tales like 'Teeja Beeja', Rajasthan folk tale in oral tradition.

For the others Shikhandi viewed as a man and for Bhishma she was a woman. In *The Mahabharatam: Text as Constituted in Its Critical Edition*, Bhishma says:

This is how, O best of the Kurus, Sikhandin, the excellent charioteer, the son of Durupada, was born as a woman-man. O bull of the Bharatas, the eldest daughter of the king of Kashi, who was well known as Amba, was born in Drupada's family as Sikhandin. If he approaches me, armed with the bow, to fight, I will not look at him for a moment, nor hit him. O joy of the Kurus, I will not use my arrows against a womkan, one who was once a woman, one whose name is like a woman's, or one who resembles a woman. For this reason, I will not kill Sikhandin.

- Chapter 5.193, lines 59-63.

In the tales from *The Mahabharata*, the sexual transformation happens because a 'yaksha' sacrifices his manhood. This is like an organ transplant from an organ donor. In the modern period, the organ transplantation is possible for the transgenders. To remove their 'Sexual Identity' and 'Gender Identity', they choose clinical surgery to change their genitalia. They do not feel about their physical structure but the individual freedom to choose their sex.

The next character is Arjuna, who was temporarily castrated for showing restraint. Once Urvashi left Indra's kingdom and came to earth to give pleasure to her. That time she saw a handsome man on the bank of river Amaravati. She approached him with the intention to make love. But Arjuna refused that he was the son of Indra and she was the lover of his father. He considered her

to be a mother so he felt that could be incest. She explained that she was an 'apsara' which meant she would not belong to no one and the morality of mortals could not apply to him. Pissed by the obstinacy of Arjuna, Urvashi gave a curse "only a eunuch refuses a willing woman, so be one" (SOT Pg. No. 42) and vanished. When Arjuna asked Indra to revoke his curse but Indra said curses cannot be revoked but they can be only modified. So he modified it that he would lose his manhood as Urvashi wills but only for a year of his choice. He used it for him and his brothers during the exile period.

When the Pandavas lost everything in gambling and reclaimed them after twelve years exile period and a year in incognito (without being known to others under an assumed title or person). So Arjuna spent his one year in incognito period as a eunuch. Arjuna disguised himself as Brihanalla or Brihanada, a eunuch-transvestite served in royal women's place. He taught dance to princess Uttaraa, the daughter of King Virata. He meant that he was served as the dance-teacher who looked Uttara as his daughter. Arjuna saw her as a daughter when she lost his manhood though he got his manhood back. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna tells Arjuna, "Don't behave in an unmanly way" (SOT Pg. No. 72) when he was not ready to take bow against his own grandfather Bhishma, teacher Drona, brothers Kauravas and his own people. Krishna used the sanskrit word *kliba* which is commonly translated as 'eunuch'. It is a reflection of the masculine cult that celebrated valour.

In Tamil, *The Mahabharata* had a reference to one called Aravan, the son of Arjuna by his serpent princess wife Uloopi. On the Kurushetra war, the oracle of human sacrifice for the goddess of war would bring victory to the Pandavas. Three divine people were selected for the human sacrifice: Krishna, Arjuna and Aravan. Finally Aravan volunteered himself to sacrifice his life. Since he was not married, it became a barrier to lose his life. Marriage entitles a person to a cremation and proper funerary offerings. But a question aroused that not a single woman on the earth would come forward to marry a man who doomed to die on the next day of marriage. So the Pandavas requested the help of Krishna who turned into a beautiful woman called Mohini. Krishna as Mohini married Aravan and spent the wedding night. The next day he had been sacrificed and she mourned as a loyal widow for her husband. The description of Krishna's weeping for her husband Aravan is very heart-touching and loyal that no widow had done it before.

The role of Krishna (one of the ten avatars of Vishnu) becoming a woman is common the *Puranas*. In the image of Krishna, he is often shown sporting a nose ring and a braided plait like a woman. To establish 'dharma', Vishnu takes many avatars like animal, human, priest, king, servant, male and female. Every year, near Pondicherry in the village of Koovagam the story of Aravan is enacted. Aravan is linked with the village deity, Koothandavar who is associated with Shiva. A giant image of Koothandavar is taken into the procession before it is taken apart indicating his sacrifice. The war is one of the outcomes of Krishna's manipulation so that the blood of the wicked king falls on the ground and is consumed by the earth-goddess Kali. The Aravanis or the wives of Aravan are transgendered but are not obliged to castrate themselves. The word *Thiru-nangai* meaning "Sir-lady" or "Mr.-lady" is associated with transgenders.

The next select story in his collection is Samavan, who became the wife of his male friend from the *Skanda Purana*. The work was written in the period 700 – 1150 CE. In the sixteenth century a Tamil poet named Varatunka Rama Pandiyar retold the story of Samavan's sexual transformation found in *Skanda Purana*. The story is a variation on the familiar theme of miraculous sex change. Sumedhas and Samavan are two poor brahmins who remained unmarried. They came to know about the Queen Simantini, who welcomed poor brahmin couples on every Monday. She served them rich food and sent them away with gifts. As she was a great devotee of Shiva, she considered the poor couple to be Shiva and Shakti. The poor young men wanted to remove their poverty so they decided to get the gifts by falsity.

Samavan disguised himself as the wife of Sumedhas and appeared before Simantini. But she guessed them as the men who pretend to be couples. But she considered them as the divine couples of Shiva and Shakthi, worshipped them. The idea of the devotee being in a sense is more powerful than the deity. So Samavan lost his manhood and became a woman, Samavati. Initially Sumedhas was shocked and later he accepted his former friend as his life partner. Both got married and lived happily with the gifts which they got from the queen:

The two foremost brahmins were rushed to the temple of Ambika (Parvati) on the advice of Bharadvaja sage, they worshipped the Goddess with difficult vows. Then Gauri (Parvati) asked the king: what is your wish?

He replied: By your grace may he get his masculinity. The Goddess replied: what has been done by my devotees cannot be undone even in the myriad years. Let Samavati, the son of the brahmin be Sumedha's wife. United with him, let her enjoy the pleasures of desire.

- *Sriskandamhapanam* 3.3.9.84

The physical transformation of Samavan takes his past memory of his former friend as his husband and he accepts it. The question is, will the equation between the post transformation and the post marriage be one of the equals considering it is a queer one, or will it adjust to patriarchal hierarchies? Here the transformation is almost volitionally brought about by the woman devotee, Simantini. She sees through the disguise and knows that Samavan is a man dressed as a woman, but instead of denouncing him, she chooses to see and worship the goddesses in him. This suggests that she perceives the 'womanhood' in him and by worshipping it, makes it manifest.

In devotional texts, the deity often is represented as containing all possibilities. Through their perfect union Shiva and Shakti represent sensual love, as it clear from the iconic representation of the union between "lingam" and "yoni". Although the story heterosexualises the couple, they are not punished but ultimately rewarded with marital bliss. Such stories suggest how the traditional notions of fluidity of gender can work to the benefit of same-sex couples.

A queer person may see a bond between the two women of the story. This bond may be emotional but can it also be sexual. Or that is hidden because of the unacceptable of the society. Such stories are found across the *Puranas* explaining the sacredness of a particular pond, grove, mountain and river. There is a traditional practice in rural communities to build a shrine for the women

who had died violently before marriage or before they became mothers. Many shrines of twin India are dedicated to lesbian women forced to commit suicide, as society did not allow them to live their life. These oral traditions suppress such queer themes.

On the temple walls across India such as in Kanchipuram, Thiruvananthapuram, Konark and Khajuraho where the images of same-sex intercourse usually women are found in passionate embrace. This could be the representation of the women in love or temple dancers play acting for the pleasure of men, or just women who are good friends. Relatively fewer images exist of two men having sex. Maybe there are also on the walls image of persons of the third gender who can easily be mistaken as a male or a female. Everything depends on the eyes of the beholder. In many temples across the country, many cave paintings explain the unique way of queerness. The *Puranas* chronicle stories are written in Sanskrit which speaks of gods, kings and sages. There are eighteen major *Puranas* and several minor *Puranas* dated 850 – 950 AD. The stories and the lists of kings found in them are not consistent indicating several generations of reworking. These books either favor Shiva or Vishnu or any Goddesses. Only in the medieval period there was a rivalry between the followers of Shiva and Vishnu. In these stories Shiva is treated equal with Vishnu as the wife of Shiva.

Once an “Asura” Bhasma-asura pleased Shiva to get a boon which gave the power to burn into ashes anyone on whose head he would place his hand. He tried to touch everyone and then decided to try his power on Shiva's himself. Shiva fled to Vishnu to seek his help. Vishnu turned himself as a beautiful woman called Mohini which he had done previously on sharing the “amrita” (Nectar of Immortality) between the Devas and the Asuras. When Bhasma saw the beautiful Mohini, he wanted to marry her. Mohini put one condition that he should dance like her and he agreed to it. During the course of the dance, Mohini kept her hand on her hand; the same was done by the Asura which burnt him into ashes. She then noticed the beauty of Vishnu as Mohini and overwhelmed with desires. This made him to leave his wife Shakti and ran after Mohini. Mohini became pregnant from the intercourse with Shiva and delivered a child. Vishnu was ashamed by this act and left the baby to earth where it was adopted by the Pandian King Rajasekhara of Pantalarn and named him as Ayyappa. The child grew up into a great warrior and ruled the country. He was also called as Hariharaputra which literally means 'the son (putra) of Vishnu (Hari) and Shiva (Hara). Endowed with the immense powers of both the preserver and destroyer Gods, he embodies the power to protect.

In the *Puranas*, there were three places where Vishnu transformed into avatar Mohini. The first was giving Nectar of Immortality between the Devas and the Asuras but Shiva did not see her on that occasion. On the second time, when Shiva saw Mohini which resulted in the birth of Ayyappa and in *Agni Purana*, the sight of Mohini makes Shiva to spill his semen which was carried by Vayu, the wind god. Vayu placed it in the womb of a female monkey, Anjana through her ear. Thus Hanuman, the monkey god is born who served Rama, one of Vishnu's avatar much revered in the epic, *the Ramayana*.

Here queerness is used to unify rival Hindu sects. The idea of two male gods creating a child does not cause embarrassment to devotees until the western gaze points out its queer nature. Then defense and apology follow. They see what 'we' (Indian) do not see. But are alternate views allowed? Or is that simply postmodern and disrespectful of tradition? What about queer views that have traditionally been silenced? In Vishnu temples of south India usually procession, the deity is often dressed as Mohini and shown holding a pot containing the nectar of immortality. The pot has always been associated with the goddess and feminine power.

Vishnu is the preserver of the world who had many lovers. Though he was attracted by many women in heaven and earth, when he changed himself as women Shiva was addicted to her beauty. The traditional interpretation of the story is that Vishnu's “leela” (play) is to make Shiva forget that Mohini is Vishnu and thus become attracted to Vishnu's Mohini form because Shiva missed seeing it earlier and heard about its beauty. So Shiva is aware of the ambiguous nature of his male-female form. The stories suggest the fluidity of gender in sexual intercourse with Vishnu as Mohini.

Krishna lore is full of Krishna's cross-dressing. Only a few devotees see this in sexual terms. But it does show that Krishna's absolute comfort with feminine attire. Krishna used to play pranks with milkmaids. He stole their clothes while they were bathing and refused them to return their attire. So they decided to punish Krishna by dressing him as a woman. They were shocked to see that he was not offended or ashamed of that but enjoyed it. He insisted them to give the best of their clothes and jewels and they painted his face perfectly. They considered them to be punishment but Krishna considered that as an act of love. The milkmaids loved him even more. Krishna braided his hair as a woman's plait with flowers and wears a nose ring and other ornaments like a woman. He would even paint his palms and soles red with altar just like his mother.

In Krishna lore, the erotic mingles and merges with the transcendental. Unlike monastic orders where sexual desire or “kama” is actively suppressed, here sexual desire is transformed into affection. It is no more threatening. It becomes an expression of love or “prema”. Thus queer vocabulary brings about a shift in emotion, defying patriarchy. Krishna, the lord of the Yadava clan, had a son called Samba who loved to play prank like his father. Samba cross-dresses like his father which resulted in the disastrous. Samba wanted to make fun of the sages, test them and ended in earning a curse for himself and his clan. Samba disguised himself as a pregnant woman and approached the Kanva Maharishi to foretell his pregnancy whether he would bear a son or daughter. The sage got angry and gave a curse that he would bear an iron mace which would destroy the Yadava clan. Samba experienced excruciating pain and delivered an iron mace. The Yadava elders advised the youths to throw the iron mace into powder and thrown into the sea. Unfortunately the mace was swallowed by a fish which was caught by a hunter named Jara. He turned the iron mace into fragments and made an arrowhead. The powder deposited on the beach at Prabhasa and turned into sharp blades of grass.

Sometimes later, the Yadavas went to the Prabhasa beach for a picnic. They consumed alcohol and discussed Kurushetra war and asserted their arguments. The words failed and became violent which resulted in a fight. The men pulled out the blades of grass and began striking each other with them. They were not ordinary grass blades but as sharp as razors and they struck people dead. Realising the futility, tried to stop this civil war Krishna went to the forest where he was accidentally struck dead by Jara's arrow as he was seen as a deer by Jara. Samba destroyed all that Krishna spent his life protecting. Here cross-dressing is seen in a negative light. It destroys rather than protects. The stories of Samba are perhaps a warning: do not imagine the son of God will also be like God. Every living creature is unique, carrying his or her own burden of their own Karma.

Madurai temple lore tells the story how Madurai was once ruled over by the three-breasted Meenakshi who wanted to conquer the world. But when she saw Shiva in Kashi, she fell in love and lost her extra breast. But she remains the dominant one in Madurai and worshipped as a Goddess. Here the woman with the masculine quality rules the place. In her temples, the image of Meenakshi is often shown wearing trousers, an appropriate attire for the rulers. She holds a parrot like a peacock, but at her hip hangs her dagger. In contrast, at Chidambaram Shiva is worshipped as Nataraj, the Lord of Dance. The man with feminine quality shows himself as a dancer. Essentially, the masculine energy requires courage, knowledge, passion and understanding and feminine qualities require love, patience and dedication to nurture consciousness into reality.

The re-telling of the Chitrangada-Arjuna romance by Rabindranath Tagore about the princess is a masculine warrior who fears that Arjuna will not love her unless she turns herself into a woman. To her great delight, Arjuna bored of 'feminine' wives seeking adventure with the 'masculine' one and so accepts Chitrangada in her original form. Here queerness is accepted deliberately by Arjuna. Arjuna had many wives including Chitrangada, the masculine warrior and Uloopi, the serpent princess who were not known for their feminine quality.

The Manusmriti is an ancient legal text among the many *Dharmasastras* of Hinduism which was dated from 200 BCE to 300 BCE. It is called as *Laws of Manu*, a collection of discourse with 1080 chapters and 1,00,000 verses given by Manu and Bhṛigu on dharma topics such as duties, rights, laws, virtues and punishments.

In *Manusmriti*, Chapter VIII states,

A twice-born (brahmin) man, who commits an unnatural offence with a male (homosexuality), shall bathe, dressed in his clothes. - Verses 175

If a female virgin has homosexuality to another female virgin, she should be fined 200(pennies), be made to pay double (the girl's) bride-price, and receive ten whip (lashes). But if a (mature) woman does it to a female virgin, her head should be shaved immediately and she should be ride on a monkey in public.

- Verses 369-370

The punishment given for the homosexual activities in the *Manusmriti* was lesser when compared to the other crimes. It states that those who abduct or rape women should be given cruel death sentences and those who molest or incite the women into adultery should be given harshest punishment which would create fear among others to even think of such a crime. The ancient texts neither support nor oppose the homosexual activities. They thought that it was against nature so there are punishments which are lesser when compared to the other crimes such as rape, adultery, stealing, murder and so. But they allowed it when the men and women are impotent or they are imbalanced about their gender.

Next the survey moves to the Indian architecture in the temples of India, cave temples and statues. Construction of Hindu temples in stone began in 600 CE and reached its climax in twelfth Century. The grand pagodas of the eastern and southern India such as Puri and Tanjore where the magnificent structures of variety of images are seen: gods, goddesses, demons, sages, lovers, priests, plants and animals. Amongst scenes from epics and legends, one invariably finds erotic images including those that modern law deems unnatural and society considers obscene. Similar images are also seen in prayer halls, cave temples of monastic orders such as Buddhism and Jainism built around the same time. The range of erotic sculptures is wide from dignified couples exchanging romantic glances, to wild orgies involving warriors, sages and courtesans.

In Khajuraho, there are erotic images of men and women which describe the same-sex attraction and relation. These images cannot be simply dismissed as perverted fantasies of an artist or his patron considering the profound ritual importance given to these shrines. According to ancient treaties on architecture, a religious structure is incomplete unless its wall depicts something erotic, for sensual pleasures (kama), are as much an expression of life as are righteous conduct (dharma), economic endeavors (artha) and spiritual pursuits (moksha). Interpretations and judgments aside, these images tell us that the 'idea' of same-sex and what the colonial rulers termed 'unnatural' intercourse did exist in India. This shows that the images represent the common or the exceptions.

In Ajantha cave painting, the painting of Bodhisattva dated 100 CE described the queerness of man in graceful feminine stance. The Bodhisattva Avalokitesh was popularly the lotus bearer of languid eyes who stands in a posture known as tri-bhanga generally associated with female dancers of India. The posture perhaps involves bending the body at the neck, waist and knee and in later times is taken by Krishna. The masculinity balanced itself with femininity. The reason for that feminine posture is the man (with flute and peacock feather may be Krishna) behind him. The queerness is revealed here, the man made another man in feminine stance that the attraction of same-sex. Another painting of Krishna and Radha's loving scene had the background of drizzling. At the same painting some place far, there are two women inside a cave who exchange love looking for each other. This again shows the queerness in the architecture.

Indian society had a clear cut idea of all these people in the past. Now that we have put them under one label "LGBT" (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender), there is a lot more confusion and other identities have got hidden. The reason why these people were excluded from the society and discriminate from others came into being only in the late nineteenth century Europe when discussion on the varied expressions of sex and sexuality became acceptance in the academic circles. The term "homosexuality" was used to describe "morbid sexual passion between members of the same sex". It was declared "unnatural" by colonial laws, as unnatural as casual sex between men and women that was not aimed at conception. These "unnatural" perceptions are imposed across the world through imperial might. They were deeply influenced by the concept "sex is sin" as a stand of the Christian Bible. With typical colonial condescension, European Definitions, laws, theories and attitudes totally disregarded how similar sexual activity was perceived in other cultures.

In 1857, the official incorporation replacing the East India Company signaled the violent end of medieval India. For same-sex love, that end was signaled by the 1861 law that criminalised homosexuality which resulted in legal execution. For centuries, in many parts of Europe, the LGBT people were vilified, tortured and executed but not a single person has been executed in India. The British anti-sodomy law of 1860 was progressive in Britain in so far as it reduced the punishment for sodomy from execution

to ten years' imprisonment. In 1861 as Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, it was a retrogressive step. This law remains in India today, even though homosexuality between consenting adults was decriminalised in England in 1967. After that many European countries accepted "LGBT" and their marriages are legalised in their country.

Traditions that make celibacy as an option to men and women and view it as a superior to heterosexual marriage allow nonsexual but passionate same-sex relationships to acquire primary importance in the life of those so inclined. Ancient Indian ascetic traditions both Hindu and Buddhist were similar to Roman Catholic tradition. Traditions that glorify marriage and procreation, above celibacy and make the former way of life near compulsory tend to trivialise or be hostile towards same-sex relationships. Such was the tradition inaugurated by psychoanalysts in post-Freudian Euro-America who were contemporaries of Gandhi. Gandhi's language in that letter is influenced by psychiatry. Although using the new terminology, Gandhi conveys his conviction, based on older traditions, that all sexual activities are not directed toward procreation is 'the same disease'.

They are more in the pathetic situation. LGBT individuals may experience multiple forms of marginalisation- such as poverty, child abuse, molestation, family abuse, sexism along with homophobia or transphobia that negatively impact on mental health. This marginalisation often excluded LGBT people from many support structures, often including their own families and basic needs such as medicine care, justice and legal service, sanitation and education. According to a study, 30 % of LGBT youth have been physically abused by family members because of their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. After these abuses, they wanted to escape from their family which made them to become homeless and uneducated. Without family, money and education, they began to do anything for their survival. It encourages the risk-taking behaviour that lead to starving, diseases and psychological imbalance. The lack of support made many LGBT youth to turn to criminalised activities such as sex work to survive, drug addict to relief from pains and stress or stealing for their livelihood which drives them further onto the margin of society.

The exclusion and discrimination have major impact on the lives of LGBT which resulted in dropping out of school earlier, leaving home and family, unable to find regular jobs, being ignored and isolated in the community, Unawareness of medicine and psychological support and mobility. Some people wanted to hide their identity for the fear of rejected from family and society. So they decided to follow their parents wish to marry the opposite sex. It resulted in insult, suicide attempt, and divorce and may be to the end of their life. The main reason was the mental trouble for the LGBT youth is, the family. The impacts of the family rejections give high levels of depression which made them to attempt suicide. Another side the problems of homophobia which are the bad experience like discrimination harassments (including verbal, physical, mental and sexual), sexual orientation sometimes the religion and political beliefs of a dominant group. The above said are the happenings in the present day situation. Think of the people who are having clear idea of their own gender. Then there is no possibility for heterosexual marriage of them. By Section 377, there are many harassments and violence are shoot out against LGBT people. The law is for the society not for the individual. The project questions, the queerness is accepted by the ancients, moderns, scientists and many more but what about the responsibility of an individual.

I have a man's body. I dress like a woman. I desire men. dress like a man. I desire women.	I have a woman's body. I am neither male nor female. I am both male and female.
I am firm as flexible. I am aware and I am not.	To
appreciate the fluidity of nature culture is to appreciate Queerness (SOT Pg.No.46)	And the shifting rigidities of

Rather than focusing on the oppressor and the oppressed, and advocating revolutions to change the world. Mythology focuses on how we see the world. What is seen and unseen and why something is seen and others are unseen. Everyone is warned of the karmic consequence of refusing to see other people's truth. The West ridicules this approach as passive, for it has always valued changes in the external world (society), ignoring all impacts on the external world (mind).

The paper views the devotional traditions; God takes male as well as female form for the devotee. These queer stories are not sexual but the sexual aberrations in personality which come out with challenging notions of gender. Even though the LGBT argues, these characteristics are found among the ancient people with the reference to mythological stories, temple statues and cave paintings. Queerness is still considered to be a sexual taboo in Indian culture.

The society therefore comes across a wide range of transsexual characters and cross-dressers in epic. Though a queer subject has always been and still is looked down upon, Pattanaik's stories offer a fresh outlook on gender ambiguity need not necessarily stem from a curse. It can be empowering as well. Shikhandi becomes a man and gains entry into the male domain of welfare by fulfilling his pledge to kill Bhishma. Arjuna and Krishna dress up as women and knavishly gain access to an impenetrable world of the sorcerer. Arjuna lived himself as a eunuch and thereby escapes from suspicious look. In the hands of Post-Colonial Indian Writings, the mythological past takes different shapes. Unlike retelling of previous centuries, these stories do not view the epic as a mere tussle between "dharma" and "adharma". The re-telling and re-narrating of the past mythology takes a different perspective. These stories demolish authority, stereotypes, icons and sexist values.

Emotional or Erotic, Gender Transformation is harder to ignore. They do not ask others to accept them rather to understand the fact that they are also humans who had feelings, emotions and pain. Some argue that it is a psychological disease, let it be. But the best medicine is their own family. The physical or verbal abuse did not change the LGBT youth rather the love of family and the acceptance of the family as they are. They longingness for a care needed a partner for them. So they search for a partner who accepts them as they are, that may be another queer people. There comes the same-sex marriage which is not "unnatural or against nature". It is for their survival to live in this earth. Of course, they could adopt children and give a rational thinking offspring. They could not be the biological parents but better parents to give a happy childhood which they had lost.

As the paper lights the suppressed voices of suppressed personalities in the Grand Narratives of Indian mythology, the analyses of these stories in which individuals of this age are resisted the hegemonic notion of gender and class. Thus the Queer, seen as a figure which endures social rejection is depicted through a new light. S/he is not an aberration and not even as aversion.

The word “Queer Theory” connotes the European Conservatism and Conventionalism. Only for a European Puritanical mind, these sexual activities are “queer” or “strange”. The Indian psyche does not accept these differences. They are accepted as if they were normal activities – activities which happen in a Magic Realism novel. So there is need to find out an apt Indian term like “Natural/other Sexual Group” (NSG or OSG).

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