

## Chapter-2

### Yaarana: An Usher in the Gay Literature

When Michel Foucault acknowledged the emergence of homosexual species in *The History of Sexuality*, offering 1870 as the date of birth of modern homosexuality, in one sense, it was the beginning of a new development in the realm of Queer Theory. Foucault states that as defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth century homosexual becomes a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being type of life, a life form, and morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy, and possibly a mysterious physiology. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was a species.

Thus the focus has been reallocated from outside to within. From the category of psychological perversion of the nineteenth century and earlier, homosexuality has become an identity in itself. The trauma, the anxiety of homosexuality as a psychological aberration is gone. It is now an established fact that homosexuality is natural. Homosexuality is an innate process of growth from childhood. There is no question of a cure at all, as it involves nothing unnatural. In another way, the whole concept of natural/unnatural is itself questioned. After the authenticity of the homosexuality is recognized, the next step is to fight

against the phallogentric, heteropatriarchal social system that is still hostile, still homophobic.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick defines the terms homosexual and gay in her book, *Epistemology of the Closet*. She writes:

I have used one (term) or the other interchangeably, most often in contrast to the immediate relevant usage (e.g., gay in turn of the century context for the homosexuals in the 1880's context would mean to be suggest a categorization broad enough to include at least the other period as well.). She also adds, I had not followed a convention used by some scholars, of differentiating between gay and homosexuals on the basis whether a given text or person was perceived as embodying (respectively) gay affirmation or internalised homophobia. (Sedgwick75)

The situation is problematic here. On the one hand, there is the visibility of same-sex love, and, on the other there are prejudices in the social system. Now the focus has been transferred, from society at large to the individual concerned. The onus is now on the person who identifies himself as homosexual. How with his inner- realization of his gayness, he is going to stand in the public, in society at large? How is he going to handle the existing homophobia? There lies the dualism of closet and coming out which forms the crux of Eve Sedgwick's book, *Epistemology of the Closet*.

Sedgwick argues that closet is the defining structure for gay operations in the 20th century. Closet is not self-made, but precisely it is a mainstream

construct. Now a fundamental question is, who is in the closet and who needs to come out? The question is integrally related to the distinction between the two terms: homosexual and gay. Though Sedgwick uses the terms interchangeably, the two terms have obvious distinction in the present context. The homosexuals are what Foucault termed as sodomites. While being gay is a question of self-identity, homosexuality involves the mere act. This peculiarity is same as Vanita and Kidwai's differentiation between same-sex love and same-sex sex. As love involves a broad perspective, the conscience of gayness involves a self-identification. It absorbs the pronouncement with alternative sexual orientation. The term gay entails a way of life, a life different from heteropatriarchal notions of sexuality.

It is with the gay that the concept of closet and coming out is necessitated. Homosexuality is a temporary action. Once the act is over, the homosexual can easily merge into society at large. But for a gay, his sexual orientation becomes his identity. When a gay wants to project his identity, when he wants to come out, the existence homophobia in the mainstream refuses to accept him, thus thrusting him into the closet. Thus, the concept of closet/coming out works in revolving circles where both acts are interrelated to each other.

Sedgwick argues that, for any modern query of sexuality, knowledge/ignorance is more than just one in a metonymic chain of such binaries, as after late eighteenth century, 'knowledge and sex' in European culture become indissoluble to each other. Thus, knowledge means sexual knowledge and ignorance means sexual ignorance. This is what Foucault points out in *The*

*History of Sexuality*; that epistemological weight of any sort seems a force increasingly drenched with sexual momentum. Its genesis lies in the Bible, where the fruit from the tree of knowledge implies sexuality. This is the reason why western culture is always ready to restrain cognition, sexuality and transgression from its roots.

Sedgwick argues that the epistemological distinctiveness of gay identity and gay situation in our culture is different from other modern oppressions, so far as it is related to the image of the closet, and for that matter homophobia.

### **Homophobia and the Defense against Same-Sex Love**

Phobia means fear and hatred. Thus, homophobia means fear and hatred of homosexuals. Again in psychology, this phobia does not relate to any neat reason or incident. This is a psychological shortcoming in any individual. When an individual suffers from fear, which does not have any ontological meaning, it is called phobia. Going by these standards, homophobia is also a psychological shortcoming. It involves with heterosexual psychological fear about the person or persons who refuse/s to oblige to homosexual norms. Thus, homophobia is not an ontological fact, but a psychosexual disorder.

Eve Sedgwick in the book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire*, commented on the term homophobia as pure etymological nonsense, presumably because it suggests fear of human beings rather than of homosexuals. She adds that more serious problem is that the linking of fear and hatred in the phobia suffix and the words, usages tend to prejudge the question of

the cause of homosexual oppression: it is attributed to fear as opposed to (for example) a desire for power, privilege, or material goods.

Sedgwick notes that the term heterosexism offers a possible alternative, and since 1985, when her book was first published, the use of this term has become widespread. Giving examples of wide spread intelligibility of woman-to-woman bonding ‘at the particular historical moment’, Sedgwick observes that it is different in a man-to-man relationship, that apparent simplicity—the unity—of the continuum between women-loving-women, and women-promoting-the-interest-of-women extending over the exotic, social, familial, economic and political realms, would not be so striking if it were not in strong contrast to the arrangements among males.

If we have to believe Heidi Hartmann’s definition of patriarchy as a relation between men, which has a material base, and which, though hierarchically established, creates interdependence and solidarity among men that enables them to dominate women, then the continuum between men loving men and men promoting the interest of men should have the same force that it has for women.

Quite to the contrary, much of the more recent writings on patriarchal structure suggest that obligatory heterosexuality is built into the male dominated kinship system, or that homophobia is a necessary consequence of such patriarchal institutions as heterosexual marriage. From the vantage point of our

own society, at any rate, it has apparently been impossible to imagine a form of patriarchy that was not homophobic.

The historical manifestations of this patriarchal oppression of homosexuals have been savage and nearly endless. Society is brutally homophobic; and the homophobia directed against both man and woman is not arbitrary or gratuitous, but tightly knit into the texture of family, gender, age, class, and race relations. Thus, Eve Sedgwick observes that society cannot cease to be homophobic without having its political and economic structure unchanged.

Jonathan Dollimore concentrates on homophobia as loosely descriptive of a manifest phenomenon: the hatred, fear, and persecution of homosexuality and homosexuals. Dollimore argues that in theory, misogyny and homophobia often go hand in hand. One reason is that both the binaries potentially express the violence of the other. Secondly, homophobia often incorporates other kinds of phobia and hatred, not only misogyny, but also racism and xenophobia.

Like the term homosexual, the term homophobia is also a new, somewhat modern invention. The homosexual is the creation of modern discourse, medical, sexological, and psychological, as evidenced by the fact that the term homosexual was coined in 1869. Dollimore argues that the nearest concepts to it in early modern England were probably sodomy and buggery. Michel Foucault argues that before the nineteenth century the sodomite was someone who performed a certain kind of act: no specific identity was established, or assumed by the sodomite. The attribution or assumption of this identity marks the creation of the homosexual.

## **Homophobia in India**

The homophobic invasion in India occurred at the same time as the establishment of the British Empire in India. In 1857, after the Sipoy Mutiny, the rule of the East India Company was replaced by the direct rule of the British Empire under Queen Victoria. This also marked the violent end of the medieval era, where same-sex love enjoyed a privileged position under the flourishing Muslim culture. Queen Victoria's rule also marked the end of this privileged position further, by the implementation of the 1861 law that criminalizes homosexuality.

As we have said earlier, homosexuality in India was never talked about. Though homosexuality was widespread, it was invisible. It did not have a name. The visibility of homosexuality in India or rather the talk about homosexuality started with British imperialism. Macaulay's "Minute on Education" in 1836 offered an accessible leap for the new generations of colonial India to pursue western knowledge. The old means and processes of learning were altogether destroyed. Instead, Western, especially British learning was insisted upon, which was by no means our cultural identity. Indians were denied their own heritage and could only access that which their colonial masters chose to teach. Hoshang Merchant shares his experience of being a homosexual in a heterosexual, homophobic environment:

With the Bible came the western narratives, Shakespeare, the novels of Dickens, Scott and Austin, the essays of Hazlitt and Lamb. My Parsi

teacher of convent school told me that I should never be marooned on an island without these four. How more marooned could I be than at school among heterosexual boys was beyond me. Not that these books within civilization spoke to my condition. They come severely disinfected and sanitized. The Old Testament was Moses but not Lot or Sodom or David who danced naked before the Ark. The New Testament was the Sermon in the Mount but not the Temptation of Christ. Shakespeare was Romeo and Juliet but not the Sonnets. (*Yaarana* xxi)

Here, one has to understand the fact that the history of homosexuality in the West is different from India. Long before the psychoanalytic theory and material socio-political account on homosexuality, it was visible in the West, if nothing else, as a form of perversity. The case is different in India. Before the colonial period, there is no name for homosexuality in India. It was then a part of the social life as a whole, flourishing amicably within the socio-political, cultural and economic framework.

With this spread a large amount of homophobia-- fear and hatred for homosexuals. These people were branded as perverts. They were socially ostracized, and laws were implemented to penalize them. Nothing of these kinds of incidents was ever recorded in India.

When with Macaulay's Minute, the so-called legacy of British heritage travelled to India, they also carried with them, this fear and hatred for homosexuals, homophobia.



Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai writes:

In 1895, in Britain, poet Oscar Wilde was convicted under a new law that criminalizes indecency ‘between men (as distinct from sodomy)’ and his sufferings in prison led directly to his death. This widely reported case functioned to instill fear into homosexually inclined men in England and could not but has similar effects in India where newspapers in English and in other Indian languages picked up reports of the case. (*Same sex Love in India* 195)

It is somewhat ironical to note that in India, homophobia spread before the realization of homosexuality itself. It is the homophobia—the hatred for homosexuals that consequently led people to identify with actual homosexuality. This is the process, which can be termed as the progress from homophobia to homosexuality.

At this point it would be worth quoting Hoshang Merchant:

It should be obvious ---- that ‘gay’ in India is not an ethic, not a religion, not a sub-culture, not a profession, not a sub caste. Yet it is all present, all pervasive, ever practiced and ever secret. .... It is shame, guilt, subversion, for some new fangled ones even their honour and pride. Homosexuals are largely unrecognized and blend with the crowd. Hence homosexuality is unspoken about, unaccepted, a danger to the homosexual and the non-homosexual alike. (*Yaarana xxi*)

This is a clear case of the British thrusting Western homophobia onto its colonies. Vanita and Kidwai also note that similar laws were introduced in other colonized countries in the same year.

This also testifies to the British way of viewing the world: that east is ethically wrong and morally ignorant. British educators and missionaries often denounced Indian marital, familial and sexual arrangements as primitive--demeaning to women and permissive to men. Arranged marriage, child marriage, dowry and polygamy were treated as evidence of Indian culture's degeneracy. Hindu Gods were seen as licentious, and Indian monarchs both Hindu and Muslim, as decadent hedonists, equally given to homosexual behaviour but indifferent to their subjects' welfare. In contrast, British monarchs, especially Queen Victoria, were held up as models of familial propriety. This was what Indians were taught under the pretext of teaching them knowledge through Western education. This marked the birth of schizophrenic Indian culture as Merchant argues. Those who defended Indian culture did not altogether reject Victorian values but rather insisted that Indian culture was originally very similar to Victorian culture and had been corrupted during the medieval period.

In British India, trying to work on women's education and against women's oppression, social reformers tried to develop an ideal Indian man, woman, child and family, largely based on the model of the British Victorian nuclear family. Monogamous heterosexual marriage came to be idealized as the only acceptable form of sexual coupling, within which the woman was to be the

educated companion of the male head of the household. Thus, same-sex love was banned violently both socially and legally.

The 'rootless' homophobia, which was planted under colonial rule in India, is still flourishing in its full prime.

### **Homosocial and Anti-Homophobic Accounts in Selected Gay Indian English**

#### **Poems:**

In contrast to homophobia, Eve Sedgwick adopted and popularized the term 'Homosocial', in order to demonstrate the possibilities of same-sex love. According to her Homosocial is a word occasionally used in history and social sciences, where it described social bonds between persons of same-sex: it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with homosexual, and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from homosexual.

Subsequently, the term is more generally used to describe social relationships- and the norms, habits, and ideologies engendered by them, which are overtly single sex (normally male) and heterosexual. The term contains weight as behind an overt homophobia, concealed homosexual or homoerotic impulses may often be found, and homosocial manages to suggest the possibility of such a combination.

Below is the analysis of homosocial and anti- homophobic accounts in selected gay Indian English poems and stories.

#### 1. **“O Pomponia Mine” by Sultan Padamsee**

This poem tries to describe the closetness in public spaces. The narrator of the poem is very well acquainted with his sexual identity and orientation but because of the fear of the society is unable to come out. It is basically a love poem about poet narrator and his young male friend as they go out together to dine in Astoria, which is a high-society public space but they have less time to spend with each other. The male friend of poet-narrator wears Agatha's hair loom laces, wears colours on the cheeks, and it is evident in the last line that the narrator's partner is not of the opposite sex but of his own sex.

The contrast between the public reality and private desire comes to surface in the third stanza where-

We shall play it bravely; only,

Pomponia alone.

We shall never groan

Even if the rolls are hard,

And the prices on the card

Makes us feel a little lonely. (9-14)

The poet can't behave in the manner he wants to behave as he is aware of public homophobia. This answers the expression the poet uses "...you are not my mistress nor my wife"(31). The poet narrator is not able to express his love to his companion as a heterosexual lover do to his wife or mistress. A heterosexual lover is allowed to commit adultery or any other kind of sexual practice involving a

women but when it comes to relationships between man and man they find is not acceptable and no sex should be involved. It is Janus faced situation. In India common bond between two men is homosocial encounter, it is highly acceptable everywhere. The bond of love between Krishna and Sudama, and Krishna and Arjuna are popular myths. Here the presumption is that there is no sex entailed. That is the reason why the two lovers do not face any problem sitting in the restaurant. So, the poet narrator comments that they would play it bravely; they would practice what they desire, but alone, not in public. He has his strategies ready:

Never mind,

I shall touch my tie,

And lie that we are of a different kind. (15-17)

The poet narrator is well aware of the intricacies of the cultural notions. And he is not ready to voice a protest against it. He accepts things as they are. At the same time he also follows his desire, but alone.

The spread of homophobia is all-pervasive. It is not only prevalent in the mainstream but also in the psyche of the individuals concerned, the individual who is sure about his alternative sexual orientation. It is called internal homophobia, a situation where the fear of social prejudices prevents an individual from disclosing his sexual orientation openly. Where the question of sexuality is concerned, he plays a hide-and-seek game with himself, turning into a split personality. In private he is a free man, he can follow his instincts and fulfill his

desires. But in public he has to project that he conforms to the norms and belongs to the mainstream. An individual who is gay, who is sure about his alternative sexual orientation, but because of the spread of homophobia in society is so widespread that an individual has to remain silent against conservative society for fear of being ostracized. He then plays the dual role of both being a heterosexual and a homosexual.

Another important factor that intensifies homophobia and the concept of closet and coming out is that physical love or love where the body is involved which is always viewed in terms of man-woman relationship. Every sexual exercise is scrutinized and judged in terms of heterosexual yardstick. Homosexuality is not able to escape from this biased judgement.

The poem is a celebration of gay reality in India is against all odds, the poet narrator, who is gay, is taking every possible opportunity to make the best use of what is in his hand. He goes to a public space, hangs out with his male friend (in a way a heterosexual would do with his wife or with his mistress), and feels no qualms about it. He feels sad only when the bill arrives because soon they have to part. And the poet narrator comments upon the homophobic mainstream:

They shall never know

This is the toxin that adds flavours to our life,

Never know

That you are not my mistress nor my wife. (28-31)

The poet narrator is thoroughly comfortable with his gayness. He enjoys the thrill of hide-and-seek game with society. He is well aware of the fact that society isn't going to accept him as he is, and he has to put on a mask to mingle in the mainstream. He admits this predicament and is brilliantly carrying out his role.

The last line of the poem is at once important and difficult to interpret. The question is, if the addressee whom the poet narrator is addressing, is a male, why does the latter have to stress upon the fact that they (the mainstream) will never know if the former is 'not ... mistress nor ... wife'? One interpretation can be that although the poet narrator identifies himself as gay, he is not able to escape the clutches of existing homophobia, or his own internal homophobia. He is still struggling with the patriarchal images of phallogocentric norms and binary opposition. The binary of man/woman still haunts the periphery of same-sex love. The poet narrator here assumes the role of a male patriarch and his partner remains his subordinate, like the woman in heterosexuality.

## 2. **“Epithalamium” by Sultan Padamsee**

Sultan Padamsee's "Epithalamium" is a very complex poem to interpret. At the very beginning of the poem recounts the experience of a certain Roman soldier called Marius at the sight of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. At the most intermediate level, the poem is about universal brotherhood with a mild religious overtone. It deals with how Marius was overwhelmed by the sight of the dying Jesus and experienced a metaphysical union with him. At a deeper level, it is

singularly a homophobic poem where the speaker Marius tells prostitute Lenia, over and over again, how he is a lover of women:

Below the cross was a man of thirty,

A wasted face of much beauty,

He was made indifferently well –

But nothing to me,

A lover of women. (57-61)

But the same lover of women soon experiences an incredibly strange experience i.e. the interest in same-sex love and the ecstasy and passion for the people of his own sex. The poem portrays the incidents that Marius witnesses while the crucifixion of Christ, and is besieged with pity. With the scene the emotion of pity soon turns into love, and though he tries his best to defy this odd sensation of his heart, stating that he was a lover of women, he fails at last to resist his desire.

He died crying strange things,

The women jeered him and the men

Cried out strangely,

And as he died, my mind

Grew clouded,

And I gambled with the soldiers



For the garments and won.

I seized them and in that barren

Place which you Jews call Golgotha,

Behind a rock I buried my face

In the lice-ridden cloth. (121- 131)

The speaker's desire to attain the clothes of the victim whom he had already injured, and towards whom he felt a kind pity, marks an important point of departure. It allows us to categorize it as a gay poem within its exceedingly homophobic circumference.

This paves the ground for the consequent metaphysically enlightening experience of love. It is called as metaphysical because the whole experience is something Marius could not comprehend through his outer senses. He feels pity for the dying Christ, which turns into love, and he does not quite understand why he had to make love to John instead. The confusion is more apparent because he identifies himself as a lover of women, and feels that he has defiled himself by making love to John.

I went from the place

To the Jew whom we the Romans call John,

And desired him and I have

Come here defiled.

For the body of John stroked my body

And the full lips of John

Stroked my body—(140-146)

The homophobia in the poem is apparent. This highlights the internal homophobia in the individual himself who experiences same-sex love within him, but is not confident enough to accept the fact. The conflict here is in between instinct and intellect, between the feelings inside and the norms outside. The narrator confirms to himself again and again that he is a lover of women. This is only to hide his real feelings, lest society ostracize him for doing something that is both morally and ethically wrong. Thus he sees his fulfilment of same-sex love as a vile defilement. He returns to his harlot lover and vows to forget what has happened.

I will not remember those things,

The white disease of the body of John.

The winds come down from

The mountains and Marius slept again

In the arms of a woman (156-160)

Society accepts as long as a man sleeps with a woman whether it is a prostitute or a legally married woman. The poem critiques this practice. Destroying this veil of surface-homophobia, Padamsee's metaphysics of same-sex love penetrates deeper. The way Marius is reassuring himself that he is a lover of women

indicates that there lies within him another man who is a lover of men. For, if heterosexuality is the only reality, Marius need not stress again and again that he is a lover of women.

Though the poem ends with a happy heterosexual ending, it can leave the readers baffled. The question here arises is, how to explain Marius' desire (the transformation of pity into love) for the Christ? The pity, which Marius feels for Christ, substitutes love for hate.

I grew angered, and my love

And his pains and the dark sky

Grew together, and I knew

I must enter this man

In sensuous pain (106-110)

Here the words, 'enter this man' have strong homosexual reverberation. It indicates that his love for Christ is not only metaphysical but also physical.

The essence of Christianity is all pervasive; Love thy neighbor as you love yourself. Christians believe that Christ died for the sake of entire humanity. Here Marius, an ordinary Roman soldier inherits this pity of Christ with a sudden awakening of metaphysical enlightenment. His pity is transformed into love, love for a man, and love for humanity as a whole. He was already a lover of women, now he also becomes a lover of men. Thus, Marius enters the nucleus of the universal brotherhood.

### 3. “Underground” by R. Raj Rao

The portrayal of the outside world presented in Rao’s “Underground” is sadistically homophobic. Rao confirms in the poem that homosexuals in India are compared to untouchables (dalits). People from the very lowest strata of the society were considered untouchables or dalits by upper class society but now this status has also been shared by the homosexuals: for in the new age, they are the carriers of various STDs , including AIDS.

The homophobia in Rao’s “Underground” is violent to the core. The poet dreams of a gay utopia, by discarding the heteropatriarchal world for an altogether different world in the underground, as this world cannot escape the clutches of homophobia. Maltreatment of the people who go to satisfy their desire in the underground is disbelievably frequent. The poem narrates, among other things, the plight of an individual who goes to a certain underground toilet to mitigate his desire and is outsmarted by hooligans, bashed up and looted of his valuables. And the poet reacts:

You want to throw loo goo on his face.

But you give in meekly,

handing over cash and valuables.

The meek shan’t inherit.

You stand bereft,

the city your headload. (42- 48)

For Rao, this is the reality of homosexuals in India.

#### 4. **“Poem from Vacation” by S. Anand**

The poem, “Poem from a Vacation”, is a classic example of the conflict of closet and coming out which culminates in the internal homophobia of the poet narrator. The poet narrator has come out to himself about his sexual orientation. The problem lies in the fact that he fails to do the same in public.

The poem is ingeniously divided into two parts: Anand speaks and Anand writes. Here speaking is the real self and writing is his alibi for the things he cannot speak. The basic desire of the poet narrator is very simple, “I want to be true to my name” (2)

In Sanskrit, and in other Indian languages, Anand(a) means happiness. That is, to be gay. The pun on the word gay is unmistakable. In both the senses of the term he wants to be true. He wants to be happy, and he wants to derive this happiness through his gayness. He wants to be both happy and homosexual. He wants that his identity of being gay should be a part of his real self, rather than a part of a personality, confined in closet.

The aspect of writing is more complicated. It involves relating the truth as it is, which he is unable to do. It involves committing the truth in black and white.

When letters arrives

Six at a time

I fear my father

But I say nothing to his jibes (13-16)

Accepting the truth within one's self is one thing, and telling it to the whole world is another. The fear of society looms large within the identity of alternative sexual orientation. It is really the fear of the heteropatriarchy, which is symbolized by the poet narrator's fear for his father.

Here it is interesting to note that the practical implications of homophobia in India are very different from those of the West. In western theory, homophobia implies fears and hatred of homosexuals. In India, this situation does not arise because according to Indian culture, there is no homosexuality in India. This is purely a foreign import. Now, under these circumstances, what is an individual, who identifies himself with the fringe of alternative sexual desire, supposed to do? He cannot declare his desire in public or even practice it in private. He is confronted with the norms that the patriarchy decides and is forced to follow them. This pain, this tension within the individual who cannot be open about his sexual preference can be called as internal homophobia. This internal homophobia is the opposite of heterosexism. Heterosexism is a means to protect the homophobic mainstream, that is, a means to fight against the growing homosexuality. The concept of heterosexism is made popular by the gay movements, and gay rights activism. Internal homophobia is the opposite of heterosexism in that it does not relate to the mainstream, but concerns the individuals who identify themselves as gays. It deals with an individual's way of

coming out to the world about his alternative sexual orientation, and dealing with the homophobic, heterosexist mainstream. Thus, closet-ness and internal homophobia are interrelated.

This is the same tortured experience about which Anand writes: “I’m no more the same”. (10)

He is sure of his identity. But he, by no means, can break free from the closet, for, as he writes, he... fear(s) (his) father. The father here is certainly an agent of the mainstream, and the mainstream has its own reasons to stigmatize homosexuality.

All said and done, the process of fighting against homophobia is still on. The battle starts when one has the realization of the evil. Here the evil in question is homophobia, and the closet it builds around homosexuals. When an individual is sure of his alternative sexual identity, the next step is to fight against the homophobic social existence. Anand writes: “But writing this I’m already better”(21-22).

The battle has started. Here, the battle is synonymous with what is termed as internal homophobia. Here, writing works as an act of coming out since writing is viewed as public act while talking is private.

##### 5. **“Beta” by Rakesh Rati**

In Rakesh Ratti's poem "Beta", homophobia begins at home. The poem is a heart-rending account of how the poet struggles to fulfil his desire and at the same time tries to keep his parents happy. His own desire stands at the opposite pole from that of his parents. His parents wish that their son should get married to a girl of their choice. The poet does not mind getting married, but not to a person of opposite sex, but of his own. The problem lies in the fact that this is not possible in the heteropatriarchal environment where he has been brought up. He cannot afford to tell his parents. The poet narrator cannot dismiss their overpowering influence on his life as they are the ones who have every say his decisions. This is a fate shared by most young men in India. Though they identify themselves as gay, they have to remain in the closet, for their identity cannot be disclosed. Their opinion is never asked for. For their parents are there to decide what is good for them and what is not. Growing up under the shade of the huge Banyan tree of the patriarchal family, the young men have to accept what their parents decide for them, which obviously would be within the social code of norms.

In the poem, "Beta", the son oscillates between two very important aspects of his life, his destiny and his duty. He is not ready to sacrifice the one for the other and this forcefully establishes the crux of the poem. In most cases, it happens that the young men have to sacrifice their desire for their duty. The poem achieves a tremendous feat in bringing out the pain and tension of living in the closet, when the poet narrator wishes that he should fulfil both his desire and his duty.

I want to fill their eyes with joy,



Yet let my spirit run wild.

How can I find the love I seek

And still remain their child? (17-20)

This way of thinking is the first step of gay emancipation, identity and coming out of the closet. The poet narrator is fully aware of his desire and he is not ready to sacrifice it for anything else in the world. I think this marks the first important move to come out of the closet.

#### 6. **“Night Queen” by Mahesh Dattani**

It is a one play by Mahesh Dattani, which sheds light on the claustrophobic world of the Indian homosexuals. “Night Queen” undertakes a socio- psychological study of gay experience and gayness. It addresses the issues like social exclusion, homophobia and self- hatred for gays. The story starts in a small room occupied by Raghu, a young boy in his mid- twenties and Ash, who met Raghu in the park walks in his room. Ash came to have sex with Raghu. During such strange encounters gays tend to hide their identities as to avoid blackmailing. Initially, both Raghu and Ash also concealed their identities which are common between strange gay partners during casual sex and meetings for their fear of being exposed and blackmailed. “Raghu: Straight guys pretending to be gay so they can pick up someone bash them up and take all their money”(64).

Rahul discovers the real name of Ash as Ashwani Kothari and his being gay. Raghu was shocked to hear his real name as he is the beloved of his sister

Gayatri and he threatens Ash that he will reveal his disguised identity of gay to her sister. Raghu's mother and sister are totally unaware of his homosexual identity.

Ash is stunned for a moment at this disclosure. He backs away slowly.

Raghu: Shall I tell her? Shall I tell her who you are?

Ash: (gasping for breath) Don't tell them. Just don't tell them! (67)

The two gays in the play are battling with their own selves to deny and to suppress their homosexual identity from the homophobic world. They are afraid of coming out of the closet and Ash who is about marry Gayatri is not able to tell his actual sexual orientation to her. In the play readers are made to confront the world of the homosexuals who are battling with their own selves to annihilate their world of perpetual suffering, suffocation, dehumanization through a process of self-burial. This play makes the audience see the stark realities of being a gay. Ash's brother represents the typical heteronormative patriarchal society and he beats him up as taking a neutral stance of the heterosexuals.

Ash: My brother beat me up. I slept with him the next day. I wanted it. I wanted it for real. He hit me hard. He showed me those guys, looking around, waiting for a sexual partner. A stranger. He told me how unhappy and miserable they were. They looked unhappy and miserable to me. And ugly. And I didn't want to be a part of it. I didn't want to be ugly and repulsive! In my brother's eyes, they were worse than lepers. And I was

my brother's favourite. In his eyes I didn't want to be ugly. I hate myself (73).

The dreadful vision of an invisible and loathsome existence is what compels Ash to fake a heterosexual person and to believe in the heterosexist monogamous marriage which actually never makes less gay of him. But there are dangers that this intentional self-burial brings about in the life of both the pseudo- heterosexist and the straight wife which means jeopardizing his own life as well as others including his family. That is why Raghu warns Ash for jumping into the pitfall while trying to escape from one. For Ash, marrying Gayatri would make him less ugly, which means it would transform him into an acceptable and 'normal' creature of the society that considers everything outside of its heterosexist ideologies and normalizing institutions, 'aberration.' "Night Queen", a short but magnificent play presents a critique of the Indian gay scenario and makes a formidable attempt to show the wretched plight of the homosexuals and establish their identity as god's creation, not god's curse.

#### 7. **"Moonlight Tandoori" by R. Raj Rao**

The story revolves around the intimacy between a university graduate living in a rundown restaurant and its cook who pays heed to narrator's advances on account of his lure for good T-shirts, and other materialistic benefits. The cook has been exploited sexually by his uncle because of his economically inferior position.

Then confiding in me he'd tell me how Ahmed his uncle and employer, owner of Moonlight Tandoori, exploited him and I would feel helplessly sorry and my feelings would show(83).

This sort of oppressive sexual slavery finds its manifestation in the power assertion of the prostitutes whom he can buy out in the same way as his uncle and other economically rich would. So the sexual coercion he suffers on account of poverty-ridden life translates into the subjugation of economically weak fairer sex or servants and thus the apparent utopia of classless and casteless same sex union has its own fishers. And one such fisher is when many straight men act as gay and trick their partners for money and then blackmail them. The cook is aghast at the exploration of the narrator's same sex leanings and suggests that he must delve into heterosexual relationships: "He did not resist but spoke of my need to have a girlfriend" (87).

It's much easier for an upper class to come out of the closet and become comfortable with his sexuality without the persistent anxiety than lower class.

#### 8. **"The Slaves" by Hoshang Merchant**

The slave by Merchant very well defines the active/passive dichotomy and takes a unique tangent when Mazhar, who usually fucks (an active) his menial servants and prostitutes because it boosts his perception of masculinity and makes him less effeminate, and he becomes passive for the upper-class narrator because of his economic condition. In order to combat inherent homophobia that he suffers due to his passivity, he employs various methods.

One day he brings a Christian girl to assert his masculinity:

One night Mazhar brought a Christian girl to my home... The girl dressed. A cross glistened on her impossibly lean frame. She probably needed food. Mazhar paid her fifty rupees. He felt like a man. She looked like a poor girl. I felt bad for her(53).

Mazhar was a fatherless and was used and exploited by his maternal uncle and all male boarders started using Mazhar. "When he grew up, he started using servant girls, he felt like a master. They were his sex slaves"(53).

This was his way of countering his rage against his own notion of homophobic effeminacy. This is his way of countering his rage against his own notion of homophobic effeminacy. In fact, the misconception of active masculine man is so complicated in his mind that it becomes claustrophobic for him to be a passive partner to the narrator but could not disrupt the internalised hierarchy of class superiority of the narrator though there is no money exchange for sexual favours in then relationship.

Once he brings a boy home and becomes an active partner and insists that the narrator should watch it so that he could assert his active masculinity, though in implicit form, before the narrator:

He came inside the boy. Once. Twice. Thrice. Then the boy begged mercy to let him go. I gave the boy ten rupees out of pity. The boy asked Mazhar too for an equal amount. 'Don't teach him bad habits,' Mazhar admonished me(54).

Now this whole incident gives Mazhar a way to get out of his crippled sense of helplessness at being passive before the socially superior narrator. Mazhar is perennially puzzled by the fact that he fucks prostitutes and servants and he lets the narrator fuck him. He asks: "It's I who fucks everyone why is it that I let you fuck me?" (54).

After one sexual encounter with the author Mazhar leaves a ten rupee note on the grass. This is his way to get even with the narrator and thus clearly lays bare the complex polyvalence of class and gay subculture that constantly regulates each other and creates a perennial flux.

#### 9. "Six Inches" by R. Raj Rao

R. Raj Rao's play, *Six Inches*, explores the class trump over sexuality and many a times straight men pose as gay to gain benefits from sugar daddies. In this play Rashid and Ashok are in same-sex- union. Ashok enjoys living in Rashid's well-furnished home and this fact creeps up time and again in their conversation:

Ashok: 'You think I'm your slave.'

Rashid: 'No'

Ashok: 'You keep me in your flat, allow me to drive your car, so you can control my will.'

Rashid: 'No. No.' (141)

Rashid on his part accuses Ashok of being straight and faking as a gay, so that he can enjoy benefits provided by Rashid. He calls Ashok a liar and states: "Liar.

Voyeur. I know what you were upto in my flat when I was away in U.S. You're not even queer. You pose as one because its trendy."(144)

But the tables are turned when Rashid has got a photographic assignment through the contacts of Ashok in which he has to click few Indian men in action without being overtly pornographic for a very famous men's magazine, "Six Inches." Now like Ashok (whom he accuses of being straight and faking as gay for materialistic comforts)

He too manipulates the straight men busy in innocent day-to-day activities to appear as being indulgent in same-sex activities through his cleverly clicked photographs. This is highly symbolic of the manipulation that many straight men indulge in to appear as gay for money. For the first photograph they go to Chowpatty beach where many men have gathered sitting together and holding hands.

Rashid and Ashok camouflage themselves in the crowd. Ashok has a camera hanging from his neck. He searches for an appropriate shot, then zeroes in on a pair who clasp each other so low on the waist that they virtually look like they're clasping arse (142).

The boys think them to be foreign tourists and consider it to be an innocent photograph without doubting their intentions. Likewise for the second picture they go chose Nariman point.

They stop before two collegians, one of whom has his leg on his friend's. Ashok physically rearranges the lads in such a way that one's knee is almost on the other's crotch(142).

And when one of them asks whether they are from press they blatantly lie and nod in affirmation. They said that they are doing a feature on different facets of Marine Drive. For the next picture he clicks two men squatting while facing each other. He stealthily clicks the photograph which appears highly erotic from the perspective of gay rendezvous. For the fourth photograph they select a second class compartment.

The compartment is so over packed that the commuters, as they alight virtually look as if they are on the top of one another, especially as Ashok takes the picture from the floor level.(144)

For their last snap they manipulated the picture of wet male bodies falling on one another at *Dahi handi* festival. All these photographs have been shot skillfully with such angle that these straight men indulging in non-sexual activity appear as gay men indulging in homosexual mating. Hence, Ashok's act of faking as a gay (if it is true) is synonymous with Rashid's cunning distortion of pictures of straight men to satisfy gay fantasy because both of them are doing it for economic benefits. Little wonder Rashid calls it a "cunning alibi" and tries to break the camera in a fit of rage. Thus in a very humorous manner the author is able to present a very dubious side and heart wrenching agony of homosexual man who is compelled to be constantly in doubt whether his partner is actually gay and it's a



mutually satisfying same-sex activity that he is engaged in or his mate is merely faking it for money. This pretention of being gay and cheating is also apparent in the story "The Jungle" by Madhav G. Gawankar. In it the protagonist cries vehemently: "Many guys have deceived me. They cheated me. They pretended to be gay. Now, many of them are married. Please don't do that." (The Jungle49)

All these examples bear witness to the fact that the subject queer/economy/ gender is too sprawling and contradictory to be a single comprehensive and linear monograph.

#### 10. "An Answer to the Female Liberationists" by Iftikhar Naseem

This is a very lucid, lyrical and political poem. And it is a satire against flawed and biased female liberationist movement policy of fighting patriarchy.

Where were you?

You who screamed for women's rights

Why were you silent

When I washed dishes:

the eunuch going house to house?

You should have understood

Why did you not speak? (216)

Female liberationists who ideologies to bring about a equality between man and woman by disrupting all binary oppositionalities in the male society. The poet narrator asks why they didn't speak for LGBTs (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) since the fight is against patriarchy, why not speak for homosexuals since in both the cases of heterosexual females and homosexuals, the oppressor is the same i.e. patriarchy.

And the man who tormented you

Was the man who tormented me. (216)

The poem was an attack against the hypocrisy of the female liberationists who feel it is judicious not to bring any other species other than man/woman within the purview of their movement. And because of this LGBTs do not come into consideration as they do not belong to the fixed binary of male/female. The poet narrator tries to questions the strange silence.

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