

**IN THE HOPE OF EQUALITY: A STUDY OF FEMALE MARGINALISATION AND
HOMOSEXUALITY**

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Abstract

For centuries, Marginalisation in India has affected the niches and nooks of the country on a different level. Right from the caste system to the sexuality choices of people, we have marginalised communities in all the parts of the country. Today, in the 21st centuries these minority voices are heard due to social media awareness. The LGBTQIA+ community is one such marginalised community to come in limelight and raise voices against the inequality and inhumanity. However, it is still a very urban phenomenon. Conversely, the rural picture still dwells in the marginalisation leading to conversion therapies, forced marriages, even killings of the people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community.

This paper presents the account of marginalised LGBTQIA+ community of how heteronormative mentality and legal negligence are still leading factors to the suffering of the pride circle. The legal constitution showered some love on the pride community. A unanimous verdict; the Supreme Court in *Navtej Singh Johar versus Union of India case*, held that *Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code*, which criminalises consensual sexual conduct between adults of the same-sex, is unconstitutional! But the reality for members of the LGBTQIA+ community in the Indian society is different. They believe it will take a long time to change regressive and heteronormative attitudes towards them. This is a study and critique to highlight how there is a necessity for reconceptualization of societal norms and traditions for the queer community to gain their pride and dignity. The paper reflects on issues started from legal negligence to history conditioning its temporary usages in the community with special reference to, 'Married Woman' by Manju Kapur.

Keywords : LGBT, marginalisation, legal negligence, section 377, heteronormative attitude, queer community, pride.

Introduction

National psychology is a complicated affair, said Nehru in his autobiography. Everyone thinks they are right; their thoughts and values are way better than other people. No one accepts the flaws in themselves but are the first to point it out in others.

"Who are the marginalized"? We may define marginalized groups as those groups which have been systematically excluded from participating in the mainstream society by the dominant groups or communities. The Dalits, religious minorities, linguistic minorities, sexual minorities are some of those who have been excluded from mainstream society. Among these marginalized groups are the queer communities. Till the recent Supreme Court judgment, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transvestites were compelled by law to keep their sexual desires under the closet. Between 2014 and 2016, 4,690 cases were filed under Section 377, with Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Delhi and Maharashtra topping the list. The principal objective of our study is to show the impact of social change on the marginalized sexual minorities of India. But the queer communities themselves have strived hard to change public perception of themselves, and challenged the laws which curtail their freedom. The Indian courts have played a major role in interpreting laws which were the first step in ushering in progressive social change. The recent Supreme Court judgment shows that they have succeeded in challenging Article 377

The root cause of marginalisation is this superiority complex. Wherein you point out the different in others just because it does not fit in your natural value set. The sheer mentality that sex is for reproduction has what led us to not accept same- sex love as there is no reproductive outcome of it. Doing something for the sake of pleasure is frowned upon by the society. This environment of exclusion lends itself to violence and discrimination. Exclusion also leads to inequality of opportunity and of access to resources

Sexuality has long since emerged as an area of analysis. It determines the cultural structure and dimension of the people of our society. There is an element of exclusivity, a marginalisation, and even a stigmatisation which we relate to sexual differences in people –especially towards people who we classify as “the other” or the homosexuals. Your sexuality can play pivotal roles in determining your identity according to eminent theorists like Michael Foucault. Clarifying his stand point further, Sexuality, Foucault says, is an expression of the identity of the self .It basically forms part of your inclination. But the fact is that it has always been there in all individuals. He has even come to the point of stating that sexuality has attained the status of a discourse. But before attaining a full- fledged angle to this area, Sexuality as an area of discipline had an interdisciplinary past. It was only towards the 1990s that it came to be associated with the broader area of Cultural studies. Ever since Queer studies and theory has been boldly recognised as an area of study and criticism in the wide spectrum of literature.

The relationship among human beings, from the history of mankind, was deep and intimate. The perspective and outlook change when the relationship under discussion is about the interpersonal relations in the female world alone. It can vary from the love and support extended to blood relations [sisters, cousins, relatives of the female gender], friendship with girls in the age of adolescence, proclamations of sensual love between mature women and so on.

Manju Kapur's writings highlight the lives of women who live and suffer under the oppressive mechanisms of a closed society. Protagonists foster the drive to be self-sufficient and live their own lives. They want to take on tasks that aren't limited to their husbands and children. They are aggressive, loud, determined, and action-oriented, rather than silent rebels. They transcend one patriarchal threshold only to be stuck in another, where their free spirits are restrained and all they can do is adjust, compromise, and adapt. Women were not meant to speak out for their rights, oppose injustice, or question established beliefs, practices, rituals, or superstitions. They must only exist in the patriarchal system, surrendering and subordinating to it. Women must be obedient, quiet, submissive, and passive, refusing to assert any of their rights as women or human beings. Female protagonists in Manju Kapur are generally educated, aspirational, or hopeful women trapped within the confines of a traditional society. Their education encourages them to think independently, which causes bias and intolerance in their families and society. Tradition and modernity are at odds with them

In her novel *A Married Woman*, Manju Kapur uses writing as a form of protest, a way of mapping from the perspective of a woman. In the personal allegory of a bad marriage, the work is a real confession of a lady about her personality cult. She has expressed the Indian male perspective of woman as a holy cow in a genuine manner. As a married lady, Aastha, the heroine, grows into a devoted wife and mother. Her spouse forces her to act as “mother and father” to her children. This denies her self-fulfilment and leads to the breakdown of the marriage institution. Her dissatisfaction leads to rebellion and restlessness. Her worry, discomfort, loneliness, and isolation make it difficult for her to speak up. She is suffocated by her family's rising needs and “constantly adjusting to everyone's wants.” (227 MW) Aastha sees a married woman's role in the household as that of an unpaid servant or a slave, and believes that divorce would be the end of her Indian status in terms of social and economic status. She believes that a married woman must possess “a willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet during the day, and an obedient mouth” (MW 231). She feels alone, and empty on the inside. She considers marriage a bad decision since it exposes her to a lot of fury,

anguish, and indecision. Between duty and responsibility, religion and fact, public ethos and personal ethics, she is torn. She became emotionally and physically connected to Rohan when she reached the prime of her youth in her college years. He was the physical embodiment of her fantasies for her. However, Aastha was little more than a pleasure-seeking commodity for Rohan, and their relationship ended when Rohan relocated to Oxford for further studies. Daughter mother, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with fulfilling a crucial parental responsibility: getting her married. In their quest for a groom, Aastha's family settles on Hemant, a well-to-do bureaucrat. Aastha's married bliss is about to come to an end, and she begins to feel confined and bored. To find her individuality, Aastha, a married lady, confronts accepted standards. Aastha, who was raised in a traditional and protective household, finds herself in the most chaotic circumstances in her life. The majority of Aastha's assertion of identity was shown through her choice of companions. Being with Rohan during her adolescence gave her a taste of independence. She tries to express herself through poetry, but they were also scrutinized by Hemant. Hemant brushed aside Aastha's poems, which she used to express her sentiments. The character of Hemant, is that of a negligible chauvinist husband. He picturizes woman as a mere commodity, to do household work and please the society. Aastha's writing expressed the inner tension that Hemant would not recognize. Hemant despised Aastha's engagement with manhood and attempted to manipulate her emotionally in the guise of children and familial obligations. Here we can see the superiority complex of Hemant, where he does not like his wife, a woman to have a voice or an opinion and to be a mere follower. Even her mother-in-law frowned and reminded her that a woman's place is in the home, not on the streets, and that politics is not a sphere in which a woman should participate. Her mother-in-law gave her a stern look. 'It is not a woman's business to worry about such things,' she stated emphatically (MW186). Aastha became more determined as a result of their wickedness. Aastha asserts herself by refusing to give in to her husband's demands and even by gaining financial independence. Most Indian women have no choice but to live with and accept the horrors perpetrated by their husbands since they have no other means of surviving. Despite her economic independence, Aastha is unable to take care of herself. Aastha's money paid for the family's trip to Goa, and it was Hemant's decision to squander it on plane tickets. When Aastha asks for a certain box on the same trip, she is rejected, and she retaliates by asking, "I also earn; can't I buy a box if I want, even if it's a little overpriced?" Hemant sneered. 'What you earn is truly substantial, and it will pay for this vacation,' says the narrator (MW 165). Hemant's satirical tone reflects his negative attitude about Aastha's economic independence, which he views in a disparaging light until Aastha's paintings change his mind. This demonstrates how money alters people's perspectives. The amount of money you earn determines your family's position and serves as a social case identifier. Aastha asserts herself by requesting a separate painting place; this act defines her identity. Her want is regarded as extravagance rather than a necessity. Having one's own place is unquestionably the most significant declaration in the spatial sense. Hemant even mentions that the amount of space she has would make many women envious. Aastha's gradual realization of her differences with her husband, her transformation from gentle and hopeful bride to battered wife, and her meeting with Peeplika reveal the other side of women in their "familiar agony" (MW 188). To find her identity, Aastha questions established norms. She had lived a life of sacrifice and adjustments, but it had failed. She had wished for a husband who would value her, but as a mature woman, she expected more from herself than from others. She gains confidence as she continues to paint.

Later, Aastha experienced a sense of guilt for not meeting the social expectations. "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 242)" Aastha had experienced fulfilment in Pipee's companionship. Pipee had been a source of perennial love for her. Aastha had found a new identity and liberation with this relationship. She received affection and admiration from Pipee which she never received from Hemant. This thought shows us how Aastha knows the consequences of the marginalised community choices and hence chooses otherwise a normal socially acceptable path. Aastha thought if husband and wife

are one person, then Pipee „She had shared parts of herself she had never shared before. She felt complete with her. (Kapur 243)“ Unfortunately, their separation came in the form of Pipee’s decision to move on and pursue PhD as she could sense no future of their relationship. She was more confident and freer in her choices. Aastha turned back to stability a married woman has, her husband and her children. She was unable to break her childhood imbibed patriarchal conventions and go for what her heart yearned. Her journey towards self- realization did not move further to accomplishment. This highlights , how society plays a significant role in the psyche of marginalised community and probes them to choose an admissible path.

Conclusion

A new dimension of woman in politics has emerged in recent years all over the world. A woman is performing different roles and leaving a great impact in the society. Woman's role has changed at an amplifying speed. Formerly she was not a part of any political matter, but she has advanced in many aspects. More and more women have now been entering into politics leading to more dynamic participation and social reorientation of the country. Present scrapping of section 377 of the Indian constitution is further strengthening of a liberal society. Our society who is still living in the bondage of dogmatic social standards, prejudiced ideas, rigid stereotypes, insular mindset and stringent perceptions need such reforms. There has been an apparent change in the attitude of people towards woman’s sexuality. Woman’s expressions, feelings and self-fulfilment that have not been socially accepted as per Indian rules, values and practices are now considered crucial for woman’s individuality. Aastha’s leaning back on her husband’s shoulder may seem to be a back treat but awakening of a woman’s consciousness leading to self-satisfaction and delight is a great step towards woman emancipation. It takes courage and confidence to pursuit for emancipation from patriarchal norms irrespective of consequences. Lesbianism has been effectively used in this novel to establish firm relationship between two women and it also condemns existing forms of patriarchal exploitation. It is not just a sexual preference but an identity of a woman beyond male’s domain. Kapur has always shown respect for social institutions in her novels. She presents a liberal society whose fabric may change its hue but will retain its fundamental nature, the true nature of the society.

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