

Evolution of LGBTQIA Related Literature: The Neglected Part in Indian Knowledge System

Avijit Chakrabarti

Dept. of Library, Maharaja Srischandra College, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

E-mail: avijit.chakrabarti@yahoo.com

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Abstract

In India, adopting a LGBTQIA identity is a personal decision that rejects the hegemony of heterosexuality as the sole acceptable gender behaviour. LGBTQIA spaces in Indian literature have historically been marginalised in its rich culture and have been subject to censorship and taboo. The homophobic demography, whose conception of queerness has been shaped by colonial norms and its understanding of gender spaces, has made it challenging for Indian queers to be visible in the literary arena. In India, queer writing has been disguising itself under the feminism flag while maintaining its own boundaries. It has come out of its own closet today with the development of activism, but the general consensus has not granted it the literary freedom or inclusivity. With autonomous publishing rights and the ability to distribute content on social media and digital platforms, LGBT literature is currently expanding across the nation. The aim of this paper to examine how these literatures has consistently been outspoken and prominent as a catalyst for relief for the country's suppressed sexual minority.

Keywords: *LGBTQIA, Transgender, Homosexuality, Indian Knowledge System, Indian Literature.*

Prologue

The term "homosexuality" has been used to describe people in a variety of contexts and with a variety of meanings. Michel Foucault, Lillian Faderman, and David Halperin say that the difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality started in the 19th century. On the other hand, essentialists like John Boswell say that men and women's sexual and emotional tendencies used to be called different things. The biologically formed sex is not the same thing as gender identity and gender expression. One's gender expression is how they choose to show the world that they identify as a particular gender. While the "man-woman dichotomy" is a common one, there are many alternative ways to define oneself. There are people who call themselves

agender, transgender, multiple-gender, or have a gender-fluid identity. Commonly, members of the LGBTQIA group identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual. The following terms and their descriptions highlight the similarities and differences among the LGBTQIA community –

- A **Lesbian** is a woman who is attracted to other women on all levels.
- The term "**Gay**" refers to a person who experiences romantic, emotional, and mental attraction to others of the same gender. Either men exclusively or all members of sexual minorities are referred to by this term.
- One who feels attraction to people of both sexes on several levels is **Bisexual**.

- The term "**Transgender**" refers to a person whose internalised gender identification does not correspond with their external, biological gender.
- "**Queer**" is an umbrella term meant to include all the various identities and expressions that make up the LGBTQ+ community.
- Someone who does not conform to the binary conceptions of male and female is said to be **Intersex**.
- One who does not experience sexual desire or attraction towards any group of persons is said to be **Asexual**. It has several different subgroups and is not the same as celibacy.

Introduction

India is a cultural mosaic, with influences from many different civilizations. It has been a witness to countless legal codes and paradigm shifts, from the Vedic era to the colonial period. Homosexuality is an emotionally charged topic in India, given the wide variety of faiths practised by the country's population. Homosexuality was discussed in classical Indian literature through the use of poetic metaphors referencing past men or occurrences associated with homosexuality. Physically speaking, anal and oral intercourses are shown as the different types of homosexual intercourse in vernacular literature, early sex manuals, and classic sex manuals. According to N. Tiwari (2010), "Queer representation in Indian literature has developed its own "unique" space over time, and it is this status that has been branded with queerness". An examination of the available literature reveals the existence of same-sex relationships within Indian culture and society, such as Tantric initiation rites that evoke the idea of universal bisexuality in human personality, Hindu festivals and sex that celebrate homosexual acts, the court customs of Babar,

references to women loving women in the Mahabharata and Ramayana, and more. According to A. Dasgupta and G. Kaur (2021), "LGBTQIA identities and communities in Indian literature have long been suppressed due to social stigma". In independent India, the LGBTQIA was seen as a danger to heterosexual norms due to the country's sexual politics. This was due to the British anti-sodomy law of 1861, which made homosexuality a crime in India. Right-wing political parties in India have displayed rigid heterosexual norms by saying that LGBTQIA identity is incompatible with the Hindutva state's very foundation. The LGBTQIA identity in Indian literature has been outspoken and present from the Vedic period to the colonial era, but it has had to fight to portray the silenced voices of the nation's sexual minorities in recent years. With the rise of activism, it is now out in the open, yet mainstream literature still refuses to embrace or normalise it. Right now, LGBT literature is growing all throughout the country thanks to the advent of self-publishing and the ease with which work can be shared via digital and social media channels (A. Chakraborty, 2018). This paper aims to analyse how these texts have been constantly vocal and crucial in bringing about change for the country's marginalised sexual minorities.

Historical background of Indian Literature

Indian literature is one of the oldest in the world, comprising of writings in various Indian languages, including Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali, Bengali, Bihari, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Oriya, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Lahnda, Siraiki, and Sindhi, among others, as well as in English. The first ever ancient Indian literature was Sanskrit literature comprising of Rig Veda, the Ramayana, and Mahabharata which were written in the first millennium BCE. The period of

ancient Indian literature can be delineated by those very first orally transmitted which gradually were replaced and revived in the Vedic Period. The medieval period saw the flourishing of Indian Muslim literature, most notably in Persian and Urdu. Modern Indian literature provides a broad sense of the subcontinent's literary traditions from the 19th century onwards, with the introduction of the use of vernacular prose on a major scale. Such forms as the novel and short story began to be adopted by Indian writers, as did realism and an interest in social questions and psychological description. A tradition of literature in English was also established in the subcontinent.

Homosexuality in Ancient Indian Literature

The Indian subcontinent has a long history of gender nonconformity and homosexuality, and role playing, including sex exchange, is normalised and considered a natural element of the life cycle in Hindu mythology. The construction of gender and sexuality in Hindu mythology and folklore has been a fertile ground for the development of LGBTQIA identity. Effeminate men are portrayed as the third gender in ancient Sanskrit texts, and they have an advantage over heterosexuals in that they can engage in both giving and receiving penetration by switching between male and female forms. Several accounts in Hindu mythology support the idea that same-sex attraction is sanctioned by God, and the divine connection in these texts is a pattern for insemination by the male gods or that it's used to legitimise homosexuality in the existence of an unquestionable supernatural entity. Men's expressions of sexuality vary widely across the lifespan, with adult men typically playing the more assertive sexual role and boys and teenagers more likely to take on a more passive one. India is home to an extensive history of homosexuality, with the Rig Veda

describing a pre-patriarchal age of triadic, anti-binary, and female-centred thought. Rigveda's statement that Vikruti Evam Prakriti (perversity and diversity are what nature is all about) is made in reference to Samsara The concept of yoni, which represents the womb and the limitless source of energy, was given more weight than the male-female partnership during the time of the Rig Veda. It was symbolically represented as a triangle with two bright spots representing the female twins and a dark spot representing Earth. The Rig Veda also celebrates individual deities, but when it does celebrate pairs, they are predominantly same-sex pairs, such as twins, sisters, co-mothers, and friends. Across India, temples and ruins openly celebrate the sensuality that brings them pleasure, but Hindu law seems to run counter to the epic and Puranic texts. LGBTQIA people and those who identify with different sexualities were welcomed into conventional society, but their stories have been silenced in Indian literature if they were included in Vedic times. The "Mahabharata" and the "Aravani" ritual originated in Kovugam, Tamil Nadu, where Aravan's approval of Vishnu's sexuality is still widely practised today. The Kama Sutra, which translates to "Aphorism on Love," was composed by Vatsyana and contains references to same-sex sexual behaviour. It is well-known as an influential and ancient text on sexuality and gives an accurate depiction of sexual mores in the modern day. The chapter on Auparishtaka contains descriptions of female and male homoeroticism, which attests to the widespread practise of oral sex. The members of the third sex were further subdivided into categories such as masculine and feminine gays and lesbians. The Kama Sutra acknowledges homosexuality as a natural universal constant but does not promote homosexuality as the ideal natural dharmic path. It is meant to teach rather than prescribe, and one should follow local norms as well as one's own instincts and preferences.

In the Vedic texts, queer identity was not only acknowledged but also celebrated. Ardhanarishvara, the divine offspring of Shiva and Parvati, is credited with introducing the concepts of cross dressing, gender-bending, and role-playing. Gender theorist Judith Butler presents the concept of hegemonic sexuality and discusses how the body incorporates and expresses hegemonic gender and sexuality. Shikhandi exemplifies the mythical significance of the third gender and asexual identity, which stood for strength and bravery. Arjun's character subverts the traditional concept of masculinity by embracing his own androgynous identity. This third sex, or gender, is also described in Sanskrit scriptures like the Narada-smriti. The Hindu philosophical concept of a third sex or third gender (tritiyaprakriti) is reflected in the queer identities of ancient Indian literature. This includes people who are transgender, intersex, androgynous, or otherwise unable to fully identify with either gender.

Religious-cultural traditions are deeply rooted in Indian history and have persisted despite the slander levelled against them by the British. A good example of a subaltern identity that has endured the test of time is the Hijra transgender community, which subsists on prostitution, extortion, and other forms of social parasitism. Bahuchara Mata, the goddess of the Hijras, or transgender people, is venerated in myths and legends. In older, Victorian British translations of the Kama Sutra, these are described as "third sex citizens" who get married together. This is looked down upon by society as a whole, but notably by Brahmins and other persons of honour.

Valmiki wrote in the Ramayana that Hanuman saw the women of Ravana's palace and other homes in Lanka passionately kissing each other. From the fifth century B.C. until the second and third centuries A.D., patriarchal ideas were firmly in place, and human sexuality, especially

women's sexuality, was controlled and written down in legal, medical, and even legendary texts.

Some old Hindu texts say that Shiva and Parvati cursed King Ila to switch between being a man and a woman every month. Ila and Budha's wedding take place during such a time (the god of the planet Mercury). Budha recognises Ila's gender fluidity, but he doesn't educate the "male" Ila. Only when Ila is a woman do they live together as husband and wife. Third-sex and homoerotically inclined individuals have long looked to a wide variety of deities as patrons. Conner and Sparks claim that lesbian eroticism is implicit in rituals honouring the goddess of fire, love, and sexuality, Arani. One such ritual involves rubbing two pieces of wood seen as feminine—the adhararani and the utararani—to simulate a spiritual lesbian relationship.

In the Bhagavata Purana, Vishnu and Siva's sexual relationship leads to the birth of Ayappa, who was not conceived when Mohini became pregnant but rather when Shiva ejaculated into Mohini's womb. In an alternate timeline, the Pandyan monarch Rajasekhara of Pantalam takes the infant in as his own, and Ayyappa is given the names "not born from a vagina" (ayoni jata) and "the son of Vishnu and Shiva" (Hariharaputra).

The Laws of Manu (Manusamhita), also known as the "Manav Dharmashastra," is one example of such a text. Homosexuality was normalised in sexual behaviour, but this did not always mean it was welcomed. In the Manu Smriti, there were penalties for homosexuality, such as a lyric that implies a terrible punishment for sexual contact between an older woman and a virginal girl, but the line about two virgins having sexual relations hints at a more lenient sentence. Male offenders who committed gay acts received fewer sentences. Oral sex, manual sex, anal sex, sex with animals, and masturbation in water, into a pot, or some other aperture all fall under the umbrella term "ayoni sex," or non-vaginal sex, as

defined by prescriptive books like Kautilya's Arthashastra.

The Hindu medical text Sushruta Samhita talks about two types of gay men (Kumbhika and Asekya) and one type of transgender person (Sandra). It also claims that transgender individuals, whether men who act like women or women who act like males, are predetermined to be one or the other at the time of their conception. The Kamatantra and Smriti-Ratnavali of Vacaspati, as well as the Sabdakalpa-druma Sanskrit-Sanskrit dictionary, each list twenty kinds.

Mira Kumar's book "Lesbians in Indian Texts and Contexts", looks at lesbians in the main texts of the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins and compares them. Kumar argues that the Mahabharata, the Ramayan, the Arthashastra, and the Manusmriti are all repressive weapons used to suppress lesbian desires with severe punishments. Stories told from a lesbian perspective reveal how the practise of homosexuality was stigmatised in some pre-colonial societies.

Homosexuality in Medieval Indian Literature

In the Middle Ages, homoeroticism received 'official sponsorship' with the Arab-Persian-Islamic cultural invention of the subcontinent. The term "chapti" was employed in Mughal era Urdu poetry of the late mediaeval period to refer to sexual encounters between people of the same gender. Amarad Parast was a term for men who preferred younger men. Special administrative positions were set aside in the courts of seven out of twenty Emperors and even in his "harems" for trans men and women who were in support of and loyal to the King. Favorites is a political term, not a description of their inherent sexual nature, and hence it is used to describe the men

who had sexual connections with the emperors in the earliest records.

Several things from his history show that Alauddin Khilji seemed to like young men. During his conquest of Gujarat, he bought a slave named Malik Kafur because of the stereotypically feminine beauty of the area. Many texts, such as "Tarikh-e-Firozshahi," document this occurrence.

According to the Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association, Urdu and Sufi poets praised the practise of courtly love between lads and their Muslim monarchs, and the first Mughal Emperor of India, Babur, had a passionate love affair with a young boy named Baburi while shopping in an Urdu market and developed gay tendencies.

A Jewish friend of Dara Shukoh named Sarmad was found guilty of many things and sentenced to death. Before he was killed, the Mughal court did not think that his being gay was a good enough reason to kill him for treason.

Several Pathan tribes openly celebrated and accepted homosexuality, and sculpture from the Middle Ages shows that it was a part of their culture. Images of women hugging each other and men showing their genitalia can be seen in carvings that date back to the Middle Ages.

The love story of Shola-I-ishq has a Muslim and a Hindu man who fall in love with one another. In his notebook titled Muraqu ha Delhi, Dargah Quli Khan recorded his observations of gay activities and homosexual relations in the daily life and culture of Delhi. Slavery and harems are two more institutions that grew significantly in pre-Islamic India, with young boys being used almost exclusively as slaves and eunuchs being highly sought after.

Poets in the Bhakti tradition, like Kabir and Jiyasi, often wrote from the point of view of a woman to show how much they loved God, who is a man. The male deity Krishna is admired by his male devotee Chaitanya in the stories of

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu from the Vaishnava tradition of eastern India.

There is also an intriguing story of two queens who conceived a child together in a rendition of the *Krittivasa Ramayana*, the most prominent Bengali text about the past times of Lord Rama. After King Dilipa of Ayodhya passes away childless, the Gods Brahma and Indra become concerned, as this could put at risk the divine plan for Vishnu to be incarnated in the lineage as King Rama, destroyer of demons. After much deliberation, the gods decided to dispatch Shiva to Ayodhya to deliver the good news that they would have a son thanks to his benediction. Lord Shiva tells the widows to "have sexual intercourse with each other" when they inquire how this is possible. The *Ashtvarka* gives the newborn the name Bhagiratha, meaning "two vaginas," during the naming ceremony.

Homosexuality in Indian Literature during the Colonial Period

The systematic eradication of depictions of homosexuality and other forms of sexual expression began with the first days of British colonisation, and the puritanical moral code of the Victorian era included some deeply conservative views on sexual reproduction. Indian law specifies this offence under Article 377 of the 1860 Penal Code. The Judeo-Christian worldview condemned as "unnatural" and "against the order of nature" any sexual behaviour that was not intended to produce offspring.

Indira by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is one of the earliest Bengali books to talk about being gay. *Indira*, which is widely thought to be one of the best books of the 1800s, is about the main character's deep friendship and affair with another character, Subhashini. *Indira* develops feelings for Subhashini despite the fact that she is already married.

Rabindranath Tagore had a big impact on Bengal's and India's literary scene, and his work focuses on the queer experience in a unique way. He fought against the colonial system of the 19th and 20th centuries, which gave men and women strict roles to play. *Sampadak*, also known as "The Editor," is a short story by Tagore about a man who takes a job as an editor in order to provide for his family. The protagonist neglects his responsibilities as a family man in favour of pursuing fame and fortune in the public eye, and the dynamic of his relationship with his daughter is reversed. Tagore draws attention to the way gender roles are established at the threshold between the private and public spheres, where public space is seen as a man's territory and his economic prowess is measured against the stars. In his nationalist novel *Ghare Baire* Nikhilesh and Sandip, two men, play of each other well, with the former being quieter and less outspoken than the latter. Bimala, the narrator's wife, is torn between the two of them and decides to venture out into the world with Sandip. Tagore stresses that aggressive behaviour is necessary for a man to become respected and loved by his wife and others, and he depicts Bimala's defiant streak as she goes against conventional gender roles by engaging in male-dominated activities without her husband's consent. In his story "Ginni", Ashu is a shy boy who is tormented by his English teacher, Shibnath, who promotes a misogynistic, traditionalist view of gender roles and a strict approach to raising children. Tagore explores the violence and intolerance of conventional gender norms when it comes to alternative sexual practises the short story "Divide" by Rabindranath Tagore is an example of a homosocial bond and the love that underlies it. It is an emotional drama revolving around the friendship of two middle-class Bengali youths, Banamali and Hiamngshu. Tagore's story is based on his own childhood, which he spent in the stifling environment of an aristocratic household and which featured strained relations with his

tutors. He condemns the "bhadrak" of Bengal for remaking themselves in accordance with the British concept of sexuality, and emphasises the Bengali elite's concern about being seen as weak. The story's word choice is a throwback to Vaishnava poetry that describes erotic unions, and it reminisces about the divine union of Radha and Krishna by employing garden metaphors. The character arc of Banaamli, who begins as a nurturing mother who devotes herself to Balgopal, is a perfect fit for Banamali's character (infant Krishna).

Sunil Gangopadhyaya's work "Sei Samay" was originally released in serial form in a magazine. The novel's protagonist, Kaliprassana Singha, is thrust into the orbit of Bengal's most notable figures, from Debendranath Tagore to Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, against the backdrop of Renaissance Bengal. The public and critics alike questioned the need to present a popular figure in such a negative light due to Gangopadhyaya's portrayal, which implied that Michael Madhusudan Dutt engaged in homosexual behaviours and shared a dynamic with women. Many people found its blasphemous tone offensive.

Suryakant Tripathi Nirala wrote in his poem "Kulli Bhat" that, back in his day, homosexuality was not only illegal but also socially unacceptable and taboo, making it dangerous for openly gay individuals to speak up and be themselves for fear of persecution.

Ismat Chughtai is a controversial figure in the LGBTQIA literary world. Her best-known work, "Lihaaf," is known for its portrayal of a lesbian relationship in Urdu literature, which makes it stand out. The story stems from her real-life experiences as a child, when she was a bystander to an event but was unable to fully understand its significance. In the story, Begum Jaan and her masseuse and handmaiden Rabbo are depicted engaging in sexual activity, which is seen as immoral. A teenage girl whose mother is

employed in the royal household has seen her interacting with Rabbo and is sent to the "zenana" to purge her tomboy ways and learn proper female behaviour. She is supposed to observe the Begum and Rabbo in order to learn about female virtues, but instead she sees their forbidden relationship.

Author Pandey Bechan Sharma's "Chocolate" (May 31, 1934) In "Ugra," we see Dinkar Prasad's romantic involvement with a young man named Ramesh. Ramesh is described as Dinkar's "chocolate" by the author. Mohan wants to know what the word "chocolate" means, so Dinkar's friend Gopal explains: "Chocolate is the name of those innocent, tender, and beautiful boys of the country whom society's demons push into the mouth of ruin to quench their lusts. "Dinkar, in Gopal's view, was Sex, Different" who committed the sin of homosexuality and duped the naive Ramesh into participating in his evil scheme. Dinkar's defence of his behaviour and sexual orientation rings hollow in the eyes of the general public.

Homosexuality in Contemporary Indian Literature after Independence

People say that the time after India got its independence is when the country learned about free speech, equal rights, and personal freedoms, and when the Indian Constitution was written. The Stonewall uprising in New York City in 1967 marked the beginning of the gay and lesbian liberation movement, but it wasn't until the late 1980s that South Asian homosexuals and lesbians in the Diaspora experienced a wave of liberation. In 1991, the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Association (USA) was founded, and in 1994, Saath came out. South Indian immigrants had ties to India, both through family and social networks and through travel, and were able to meet regularly with their peers there.

The home was the source of the suppression of lesbian voices and desires, as parents ignored or physically punished their daughters for expressing their sexuality. Indian women on the right have stigmatised the lesbian as the "other" woman, and Kamala Das's lesbian desires take on a confessional tone in her writing. Her autobiography, "My Story," details her experiences witnessing lesbian acts at her boarding school and her internal struggle to accept her own feelings of attraction to female sex. Her short story "The Sandal Trees" describes her longing to satisfy her sexual needs with a woman. Das does not hold back in his poetry when it comes to the sexual treatment of women by their husbands. Kamala Das is an activist for ending patriarchy and male dominance in society, and her poetry is based on her own sour marriage experience.

In 1978, Shakuntala Devi published the first study on homosexuality in India. It provided new avenues for study in the field of queer anthropology.

Khushwant Singh wrote a lot and worked for liberal causes. Many of his books were about sexual liberation. Transgender people are underrepresented in literature, but A. Revathy's "The Truth About Me" and Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's "Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life" are two exceptions. Transgender people are often forced to beg or do sex work due to negative stereotypes and discrimination. They are subject to social stigma and legal repercussions for engaging in any form of income generation, including sex work, and have been jailed on suspicion of working in the sex business or because of their gender identity. They experience the horrors of sex and physical assault in prison, on top of the discrimination and misery they already face in the outside world. Revathy's autobiography, "The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story," details her transition to Islam. After grappling with some existential issues, renowned

transgender campaigner Laxmi Narayan Tripathi realised who she really was: Laxmi, a hijra. In her book "Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life," Laxmi bares her soul to reveal the tales of the men who have shaped her life, whether they be the architects, conservators, lovers, donors, or abusers.

Bombay Swastika, which was written by Braham Singh in the 1990s, is a great example of how LGBT fiction was making a comeback at that time. In an interview, he says, "Mine is not a book on homosexuality but a book in which a homosexual character intervenes in the most extreme normality as part of history and as part of the world. Because of my upbringing with a gay brother, I view interacting with others of a different sexual orientation as an opportunity to learn about and contribute to a vital and ever-present facet of modern society.

In his 2008 novel, *A Life Apart or Past Continuous*, Neel Mukherjee draws a striking contrast between the treatment of gays in India and other countries. The protagonist, Ritwick, has a double life because he is closeted and cannot express himself openly in India. In England, where homophobia is history, he is finally free to be himself. The opportunity to be myself here is something I value enormously," Ritwick says of the campus.

"Holdey Golap" (*The Yellow Rose*), written by Swapnamoy Chakraborty in the twenty first century, represents a paradigm shift in its attempt to dismantle prejudice against the LGBTQIA communities. Independent publishing and the freedom to publish on various platforms have contributed to a recent explosion in LGBTQIA literature across the United States. LGBTQIA literature challenges the social order by voicing opposition to control over sexuality and providing a safe haven where identities can be affirmed and celebrated.

The Boyfriend by R. Raja Rao, published in 2003, depicts the gay community of 1990s India through the eyes of Yudi, a freelance writer, and Milind, a Dalit. Yudi and Milind's courtship occurs in the enclosed spaces of places with restricted queer walls, such as Café Volga and Testosterone. Yudi's socioeconomic rank allows him to make more arbitrary choices, while Milind's position is made more precarious due to his Dalit identity. The city of Bombay serves as a closet for the city's male gay community, which is "stuck in schizophrenia that fluctuates between unwilling presentations of heterosexuality and covert pursuits of same-sex love" (Choudhuri, 2009). Raj Rao's "Hotel Room 131" is a novel about two college students, Siddarth and Sudhir, who are having an affair. Siddarth lodges a formal complaint against Sudhir's homophobic family, who have taken him into custody and thrown him in jail. Siddarth's family threatens Siddarth's life. The family's ingrained homophobia drives them to send their child to a remote ashram, where he will be subjected to electroshock therapy in an effort to "cure" him of his homosexuality. In order for Sudhir and his boyfriend to be married, the couple decides to have him undergo a gender change procedure with the help of a gay support organisation. Given India's long history of homophobia, it is unlikely that the two of them will ever be able to live together legally.

Bravely Fought the Queen by Mahesh Dattani is a well-known story about being brave when people try to hide your true sexuality. In the play, the relationship between Praful and Nitin is seen as normal, and Praful marries off his sister Alka to Nitin to hide the fact that they are gay. To succeed in a homophobic society, one must make sacrifices, such as getting married for social reasons.

On a Muggy Night in Mumbai is an Indian drama about friends of different sexual orientations who hang out together. It features some of the first

same-sex couples to appear on stage in an Indian drama. Prakash tries to kill himself because he is having trouble figuring out who he is because he is gay. He ponders issues like "What defines a man as a man?"

The biography *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi*, written by journalist Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey, follows Manobi Bandyopadhyay's transition from male to female. It tells the story of how Somanath came to be, how he became Manobi, and how Manobi overcame many challenges to become a successful student. The book's continued emphasis on transphobia and othering is indicative of the way society views and responds to transgender individuals.

Aftab is a young boy who decides to become a girl in Arundhati Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Because he doesn't fit either the male or female gender, his classmates made fun of him, so he stopped going to Khan's classes. The only place he knew of where he could transform into a woman was in Khwabgah, the house of dreams, where he became Anjum. Khwabgah got the moniker "Holy Souls Liberation" due to its mission to rescue "holy souls trapped in the wrong bodies." They claimed that the turmoil within was far more hazardous and unpredictable than the volatility elsewhere, and they started a rebellion against the rich cultures of India and Pakistan.

LGBT Issues in the Present As the new millennium arrived, India was already deeply influenced by "western," or British, culture, to the point where it absorbed British ideas from the 19th century. Ideas of secularism and empowerment were slowly but surely making their way into the collective Indian consciousness, ushering in a period of national self-discovery.

Conclusion

Literature studies have shown that same-sex relationships have been around in India since the Vedic period. This is shown by the fact that ancient literature mentions them. Before and during the Vedic period, people were more interested in sexual pleasure than in having children. There are stories in the Hindu storytelling tradition about gods and humans switching genders. Several Hindu deities, including Ardhanarisvara, Aravan, Harihara, Gadadhara, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Mohini, Vaikuntha Kamalaja, and Bhagiratha, are examples of deities with ambiguous gender identities. The Hindu law condemns homosexual behaviour in Brahmins and other individuals of godly repute. The invasion of Arab, Persian, and Islamic culture into the Indian subcontinent during the Middle Ages legitimised homosexuality in official circles, and the homoeroticism of the Middle Ages can be inferred from mediaeval sculptures. Beginning with the beginning of British colonisation, there was a systematic elimination of images of homosexual expression and sexual expression in general.

Many LGBTQIA literary works use the "closet" as a metaphor, where every possible LGBTQIA identity finds a safe haven from the scrutiny of society in the privacy of one's own closet. That's a metaphor for how they're trying to suppress their sexual urges. In the last few decades, men who have sex with males in India have seen rapid changes in their social and political lives due to the concern for HIV/AIDS and the shifting social climate. This has been due to the proliferation of South Asian lesbian, bisexual, and gay groups in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Additionally, the presence of so many different faiths among the country's population makes the question of homosexuality particularly thorny.

Indians who identify as LGBTQIA do so as a matter of personal choice, and in doing so, they actively oppose the dominant ideology that promotes heterosexuality as the only acceptable gender norm. The LGBTQIA community in India can always use more diverse narratives and points of view. Unfortunately, there are still many whose thoughts are rooted in the past, despite our progress in social and legal protections against this group.

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