

Uncovering the Heteronormative Sexuality: A Study of Devdutt Pattanaik's The Pregnant King

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Abstract Men should not cry or should be "tough" enough. Women should not dress or play like a boy. People act like a man or woman and anything against this is thought of as unmasculine or unfeminine. One's inability to hold fast to the relative gender role is appropriately rebuffed and definitely hushed in unwavering adherence to the heteronormative codes. This paper means to investigate the transsexual voices which are stifled by the standards of heteronormative codes and those that do not fit in with this binary are consigned to the edges and skilfully destroyed. The paper additionally talks about how society is confounded between the term sexual orientation. It also enquires into the role of power that characterizes "Truth" which can be comprehended as an orderly strategy which produces, disperses, manages and flows.

Keywords: gender roles, heteronormative codes, biological sex, transsexual voices, marginalization, gender politics

I. INTRODUCTION

Individuals perceive the planet in dyads –proper/horrific, day/night, boy/girl etc. People who fail to comply with this twin make-up are relegated to the margins and at the appropriate time are adroitly crushed. Devdutt Pattanaik's novel *The Pregnant King* is an investigation of society's endeavours to quiet all human practices that record either a certain or unequivocal infringement of this binary construct. Simone de Beauvoir distinctively observes that "one isn't always born, but particularly becomes, a lady" (Beauvoir 301) inferring, the foundation of the gendered individuality is certifiably not an organic marvel, but a social invention. This is acquired via "repeated stylization of the body." (Butler 33). However, humanity views this characteristic of sexual orientation to be an indivisible component of an individual's anatomical structure, collectively comprehensive, where there exists an impartial compatibility between natural sex and its particular sexual orientation. Butler calls this cultural assimilation of the "punitive consequences", that is, "those who bomb to sort out their gender absolutely are consistently punished." (Butler 522)



utilized Hinduism's complex mythology to weave this story about Yuvanashva, the King who gave birth to a child. Yuvanashva's confusion about his maternal feelings for his son and gender identities forms the rest of this extraordinary story. Several such instances are elaborated inside the involved novel wherein the inability to stick onto one's comparing gender position is penalised and necessarily suppressed. Heteronormativity is the perception or concept that all individuals are hetero sexual or that heterosexuality is the default or typical condition of a person. This term is popularized by Michael Warner. Men and women are the only gender category in the common parlance. By means of delineation, they exclude, forget about, and oppress homosexual, intersex, bisexual, and transgender identities. This paper is categorized as follows: the primary segment starts with a presentation of



society's perception of sexual orientation and heteronormativity. The second segment discusses the methodology used in this study. The third phase is an analysis of the mythological regulations and norms that hinder and alter the rights of non-binary characters in the light of Foucault's theory of power and truth. It is further explained with pie charts. The fourth session studies the contemporaneity of how far have we moved from the issues discussed in the myths. It also delves in to the gender discrimination faced by the LBTQI members.

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.The book is an awesome voyage into Indian mythology and the peculiarities that it contains. Devdutt Pattanaik has

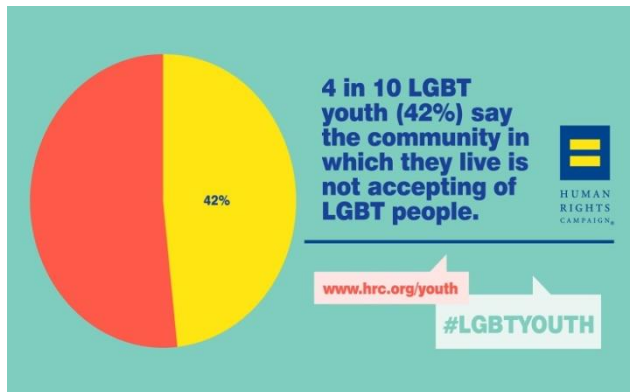


II. METHODOLOGY

The analysis is done with the help of Foucault's theory of power and truth. Pie charts and graphs are used to lay bare the present day reality across cultures and nations. All through the route of the research, the paper has encountered with certain questions and has tried to answer those questions which have appeared in the path of the study and evaluation of uncovering the heteronormative codes. The following are the questions have been encountered during the course of research.

1. What is a patriarchal society?
2. How does mythology support binary gender system?
3. How is truth created and what is the role of power in it?
4. What would it lead to after coming out of the binary gender system?
5. How far have we moved from mythology/tradition?

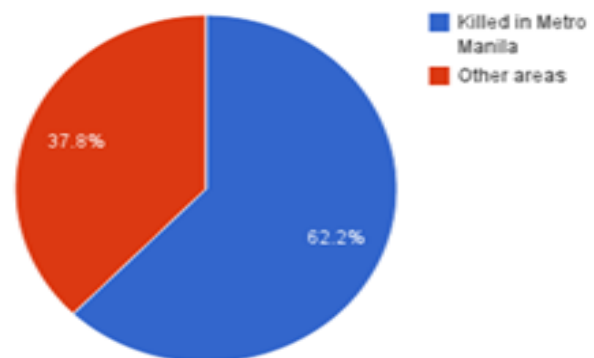
III. ANALYSIS WITH PIE-CHART PRESENTATION



Patriarchy refers to an ethos of communal warrant shaped by men for men. Altogether the convention and shared norms favour the heterosexual male. The educational, legal, political, and economic systems contain a built-in bias that favours the heterosexual male. A patriarchal refinement attributes the heterosexual gentleman supreme power and naturalizes the negation civil rights to women. The epic focuses on Yuvanashva, a ruler who gets pregnant and inadvertently slips into the grey spot between fatherliness and motherhood. Accordingly, the novel portrays a couple of different stories that investigate the issues of understanding sex and sexual orientation and furthermore the glaring concealment of voices that alter their course from socially united sets of principles. The epic, for example, portrays the narrative of Arjuna and his camouflage as Brihanalla, a eunuch in the square of ruler Virat. Besides, the tales of Somvati transformed from Somvat and of Aruni, who took on the appearance of a female was compelled to accept the seed of each Indra and Surya; it likewise makes reference to the story where Ila practiced both being a father and mother. Ila's story "was secret to the rituals of the temple" (Pattanaik 316) according to the bards. Illeshwara the god/goddess is escalated to Divinity and is not seen or is excluded from human being history. An elixir intended to fertilize Yuvanashva's spouses is unintentionally taken in by him and in conclusion, an offspring develops in his left thigh. At this juncture starts his distressed endeavours at consulting with his chipped

sexual and sex character. His tenacious battle in opposition to society's constant labour at covering the gaps to maintain its "non-existence" which by deduction is "an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know" (Foucault 4). Asanga, Yuvanashva's physician consigns his pregnancy as supernatural and to an otherworldly status. Shilavati Yuvanashva's mother in nauseating of this unnatural development of life inside her child, she peels off her human side and chooses to execute it. "What if it is a monster? A parasite...Cut it out. Pick up the monster out of his body." (Pattanaik 193-194) Moving away from the heteronormative, hegemonic body or sexual norms is an extreme violation that disqualifies him for the "human" status and is consequently silenced. Yuvanashva faces this discrimination at the hands of his own family members. In faithful obedience to the heteronormative codes, Yuvanashva is prevented from securing the information about the child he gave birth and lastly when he realizes it his access to the child is turned down. Under harsh directions of Shilavati, the child is accommodated to the lady's quarter and its entrance is shut for Yuvanashva and says "Let motherhood remain with the women" (202), Heteronormativity, as Jillian Todd Weiss puts it "Power to define our place in the hierarchy, to control those below us, and to be controlled by those above us and to step out of the hierarchy is to lose power and control, to lose congruity. To separate sex and gender is to disassemble the coiled binary structure from which our power, control, and sense of congruity derives." (Weiss 185) The prioritization of prescribed gender roles deprives Yuvanashva the right to nurse his own child his wish is later granted without any knowledge of the public. He urgently looks for verifiable examples to determine the polarity he encounters among maternal and devoted feelings however history that "organizes...distributes...orders...arranges...establishes series" (Foucault, The Archaeology of

Gay Victims

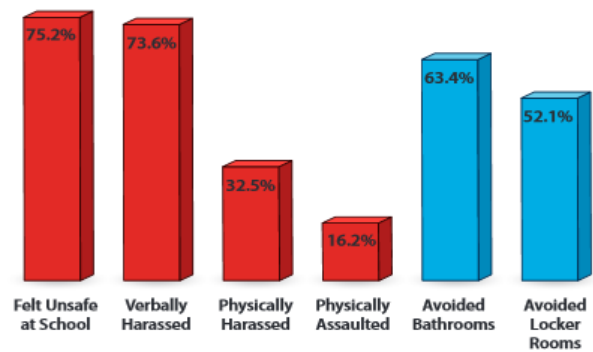


realization 6-7) hardly ever gives credentials to such cases and if it does renders them inappropriate within the circle of society. The above pie chart demonstrates the crime rate of Philippines towards the members of the non-binary structure. In addition to the high rates of domestic and sexual violence, Gender minorities becomes the object of transphobic hate crimes and state violence. It



islikewise discovered that sexual minorities, such as the transgender community, are vulnerable to physical and psychological well-being challenges due to exposure to constant life stress. The investigation further finds that the transgender community in the U.S. have pre-conceived thoughts of dismissal, hostility, and discrimination from gender identities outside their groups. To elude away from a comparable destiny with respect to the little ruler Mandhata, stories are manufactured at his felicitation decorum to encourage his open acknowledgment. Simantini relevantly calls attention to “people see what they are shown” (231) Foucault observes, on the reverse, every circle has its apparent “regime of truth” (Rainbow73) incited and continued as the encapsulation of actuality. Therefore History does not keep track of truths, but realities which are tampered for convenience. The narration of Bhangashvna’s story, the man mutually tended by his children as father and mother was deliberately hidden by the bards from Yuvanashva revealing that such stories are in no way cherished as facts but treated as sheer spectacular constructs. Anxious to endorse his position, Yuvanashva attempts to collect every single data from Arjuna. Arjuna refuses this request and says “Some stories are not meant to be remembered” (Pattanaik 241). But a response to Yuvanashva’s anxious plea, he narrates his experience as Brihanalla and confesses his desire to annihilate it from his memory: “Please don’t ask me to remember that year”, comes his earnest exhortation, “...It is terrible to appear as a woman and still have a man’s heart” (242). Enforcing exact adherence to events and expressions deemed fit for the respective sex is consequently too large that any violation of it directs to dishonour. Arjun describes how Uttara, questioned his sister’s tendency for arrow based weaponry asserting it to be a manly accomplishment, to which Uttari answered that her sibling’s affinity for dance ought to likewise be denounced, which acquires a feminine status. Men’s taste for Archery and women’s taste for dance is seen “the various acts of gender” by Butler that “create the idea of gender” without which “there would be no gender at all” (Butler, Performative Acts and Gender Constitution 522). To pursue their desires, which are unruly of their prescribed do gender codes they practice it in secrecy. Once Yuvanashva communicates his longing of being tended as a mother by Mandhata, Simantini contends that such rearranging is prohibited and revokes his wish. She alerts him against the embarrassment of putting his parental category as mother. It may jeopardize against his economic wellbeing as ruler, which is certainly manly. Simantini negates Yuvanashva’s wish to be both as: “To be mother you must be a woman.... If you are a woman you have no right to sit on the throne.” (258). It is for the same reason there is no track of Shilavati as a competent ruler who aggravated their kingdom to opulence on the loss of her companion in the Yama’s book of records. She is described in her female roles as “the dutiful daughter of Ahuka.... and doting mother of Yuvanashva” (337). Simantini, implores Yuvanashva, “Let the world see you as it wants to see you.... Virile and strong and obedient... Be a father. Leave motherhood to me.” (259). Still, when Yuvanashva does not yield, Simantini alerts him against the disciplines that anticipate such flexible deviants like him, a destiny

Figure 5: Experiences of Transgender Students in School Based on Their Gender Expression (% of transgender students)



Source: J.G. Kosciw, E.A. Greytak, N.A. Palmer, & M.J. Boesen, “The 2013 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation’s schools,” GLSEN, 2014, www.glsen.org/nsccs.

accomplished by himself concerning Sumedha and Somvati. The above reference chart demonstrates the level of physical and verbal harassments experienced by LGBTQI students at school. Education Week reports that as per the overview, verbal provocation of transgender students increased during 2015 and 2017. Even though nearly everybody in the survey said that they had the help of one or two staff of their school, the greater part of LGBTQI students received homophobic remarks from the staff and school mates. Students who have been harassed face serious physical, emotional and social issues, including depression, anxiety, eating or sleeping impairments, lower academic achievement, lower attendance, a more prominent probability of dropping out of school, and drug or alcohol abuse. The GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) reports that almost 20% of LGBTQI students changed their schools as they found the atmosphere hostile and awkward. More than 33% of them missed at least one school day in the most recent month as they felt unsafe.

To be mentioned at this point is the account of youthful Brahmin boys Sumedha and Somvati. Their wedding had already been arranged with the two daughters of Kaveri under a condition that both should own a cow. Though Sumedha figured out to get one, Somvat was wrecked. As a solution the two made a plan to pose as a Brahmin couple at the cow giving ceremony of Yuvanashva. They were caught and were put behind the bars. Their crime was scandalous as they tried to delude the noble family, yet progressively awful was their falsifying as a “married couple” of equivalent biological sex. The evening of their imprisonment, Somvat awfully deplored his masculinity. He imagined if he was a woman they would have left him. Immediately to Somvat’s rescue Sthunakarna, a yaksha, removed his masculinity. In any case, next morning the circumstance intensified. At this point when Somvat’s change to a woman became exposed against the biological sexual category to which he was born he was much more denounced. Yuvanashva proclaims; “The dharma-shastra say that roles and responsibilities of a Manava are determined at birth by his biology... You are born a man... You are forever a man” (Pattanaik 159). It is ironical that Yuvanashva who has lived



the gender role assigned to him by society cascades in its vicious frills and hence Simantini warns “The world must not know that you are an aberration. They will cast you into the same pyre into which you cast those two boys.” (259). However, though prepared to put Yuvanashva's social status in question Yuvanashva is rejected by his son Mandhata. In firm declaration of predominant sexual orientation generalizations, he eagerly rejects Yuvanashva's apportionment of maternal character. He urgently attempts to confirm its non presence: “Nothing had changed. The conversation in the maha-sabha had not taken place. He tried hard to forget it.” (Pattanaik 294). Mandhata's obsession to the public codes compels Yuvanashva to give up the world. However he never again asserts his identity as “mother”. Following quite a while of deliberate silence at last, when he articulates reality the public stamps him mad. Indeed, even Shilavati, in fear of losing the position of the regal family confirms her child's mystic unhinging with others. Pattanaik, however, does not stop with Yuvanashva's story. The fact that many stories like this have been decided for a retelling bespeaks the changing view of sex and sexuality in the contemporary age. Even though women are still considered as the “field” (Pattanaik 18) owned by the husband it is fascinating to take note of how Yuvanashva, a male, turns into the “field” by taking in the potion (seed) concocted by two men. The position of a life giver is ascribed to women as it is Simantini who gives Mandhata the stability of normative life. Yuvanashva has both 'fathered' and 'mothered' children. His title as the King, a virile spouse and that of a supporting mother longing to suckle his child appear to be strikingly incongruent. The Pregnant King is, therefore, the story of a mother who rules and a ruler who mothers. Thus, methodologies utilized at hushing diverge sexualities by the society are different – extending from voluntary submission to influential forgetfulness and penalizing measures. Each individual is forced to sustain the potential power structure. Over the span of investigating the issues of politics with in gender, Foucault maintains that the activity of power is neither unidirectional “extending from the top down” (94), nor an “all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled” (94). It is rather a “complex strategic situation in a particular society, exercised from innumerable points” (Foucault 93-94). This is the reason, normal people, like Sumedha and Somvati as well as, the ones in the prominent chairs like Yuvanashva, finds himself at its mercy.

IV. CONCLUSION

Devdutt Pattanaik's work blurs all the distinctions between what constitutes male and female, masculine and feminine, thereby upholding the subtleties of terms like gender and sexuality. The real impulses behind Yuvanashva's act of transgressing and re-constructing those gender values that he once maintained are perceived in his naming the crown ruler Mandhata: “I like him to be called Mandhata” which means “he who was nursed by me” (Pattanaik 205). The association here is with maternal instead of paternal, articulating Yuvanashva's non-heteronormative existence. Through the postcolonial Indian English novelist,

the mythological past takes special shapes. The novelist re-narrates the past but from a distinct angle that it demolishes authority, stereotypes, icons and sexist values. In the contemporary society retellings provide the subaltern a voice of chance to speak. Individuals of this present age limit their understanding of hegemonic notions of gender with layered meanings. Although People have made large strides in attaining equal rights, the battles of the LGBTQI members vary significantly across countries and cultures. There are many countries in which gay marriage are still a distant dream and in a few nations, gay relationship itself is a criminal offence. Culture is not static; it changes slowly in relation to many external and internal factors. Freedom could be achieved only through a genuine interaction and association between the mainstream and the marginalised. Gay or straight, male or female the identity of an individual is not formed only on the basis of gender and sexual orientation.

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