

ATYPICAL ASPIRATION: RECONSIDERING 'DESIRE' IN TWO INDIAN ENGLISH FICTIONS

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Introduction

Religion forms a significant institution in Indian society in particular and in almost every society in general, in shaping attitudes and outlooks regarding sexuality. This paper is an attempt to trace the trajectory of change in response towards the non-heterosexuals in Indian society by discussing the religious prescriptions laid down by spokesperson/testimonials of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity. The aim of this venture is to highlight how the concept of an imported/borrowed/Westernized queer identity, as often projected by the nationalist (not only the Muslim fundamentalists but more often the Hindutva-vadis) critics of queer liberty in India, is a flawed and motivated one—rather it is the infiltration of the Victorian Christian concept of sex in totality as a sin and the same-sex as a deadlier one in particular that had resulted in intensification of the stigma associated with the Indian LGBT group. The method adopted here is mainly the documentation mode of citing the portions of classical religious treatises that deal with sexuality (i.e. the way people act/fantasize) and gender.

Sex and Utility: Vatsyayana's Viewpoint

The principal premise on the basis of which the conclusion that homosexuality/same-sex love is a sin/abnormality has been drawn is that all normal sexual performances are performances exclusively directed towards reproduction. That is, sex can never be an aesthetic affair intended solely for entertainment; rather it ought to be always a utilitarian act motivated towards procreation. In the classical Hindu text like *Kama Sutra* we can see how the scholar has treated sex as a part of *kala* i.e. art form aimed at producing certain *rasa* or aesthetic sensation through *rati-kriya*, meaning erotic gesticulation. Moreover by commentating at length on anal and oral sex, Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra* becomes the classic treatise that not only accepts non-heterosexual sex but also treats sex as a non-reproductive yet gratifying event. The *Kama Sutra* states in no derogatory tone, "Copulation below, in the anus, is practiced by the peoples of the South." (II. 6:49). The next sutra affirms, "Penetration of men (*purushopasripta*) will be discussed in the chapter on women behaving like men (*purushayita*)" (II. 6:50). Regarding women as playing the active part, Danielou considers it through his translation, as anal penetration of the man by the woman with a dildo. Another term used here to refer to women's action is *yuktayantrene* (joining of instrumentals)—*yantra* is used in *Kama Sutra* to refer both the genitals as well as a dildo. Since *upasripta* is the term used for 'vaginal penetration by a man' by Vatsyayana, Danielou argues that *purushopasripta* is equivalent to sodomy. In chapter IX, Vatsyayana elaborates mouth congress (*Auparishtaka*) which again underscores the non-procreating yet entertaining aspect of sex. Moreover, sutra 35 and 36 are

essentially significant. Sutra 39 says that “young men servants, wearing earrings and flowers (these are worn by the elegant male city dweller too), perform oral sex on men”. Sutra 36 describes as *sadharana* a mutual act of mouth congress achieved by two male friends on one another. These friends according to Vatsyayana are *nagarika* that is having complete status of the city dweller. This sutra also clarifies that two such men need to be well wishers of one another and should share deep trust and thereby partake mutually in the act of mouth congress. In *Kama Sutra* Vatsyayana has left no item untouched related to sexuality, that can be practiced to enhance the pleasure if not reproductive capability, like sex with animals, different types of group sex, sex between women (III. 3:9), use of penis sheaths and dildos (VII. 2:4-14), piercing (VII. 2:15-24) and other sadomasochistic performances like biting, scraping, or even beating. Obligatory sex for mandatory reproductive purpose never seems to be the perspective of Vatsyayana; rather his chief concern centers on the aesthetic and entertaining aspect of sex.

LGBT and Hinduism

By the third century CE, in all the Hindu Brahmanical beliefs regarding *linga* or gender based on procreativity, a collective position has been taken that a person could be assigned to one of the three genders—*purusa*, *stri* and *napumsaka* (the impotent)—and the fact that all these three have the right to sex again justifies how in Hindu school of thought sex has never been seen as solely utilitarian. Furthermore, the various terms to denote infertile people who are allowed to participate in sex, like *kliba*, *pandaka* etc provide historical evidence for a pre-modern (and pre-Islamic) concept of diverse sexuality and a queer category of sexual thirdness in India. Various regional and cultural (Vaishnava, Shaiva and Shakta) interactions along with the existing *Vedas*, *Puranas* and epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have resulted in the celebration of multifaceted sexual orientations in Hindu tradition. Details of these can be found in Giti Thadani’s *Sakhiyani: Lesbian Desire in Ancient and Modern India* (New York: Cassell, 1996) and *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History* (Macmillan India, 2001) edited by Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai. Here let me provide one instance for each of these Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual categories.

Lesbian appears in the *Kama Sutra* translation of Danielou as the rendition of the term *svairini*. Lesbian family occurs in the Bengali *Ramayana*, written by the fourteenth-century poet Krittivasa, who assigns the birth of Bhagiratha to the divinely sanctified sexual intercourse between two women. The story as illustrated in the *Adi Kanda* of *Sachitra Krittivasi Saptakanda Ramayan*, informs that with the death of Dilipa, the king of Ayodhya, the gods in the heaven have become worried as how would Vishnu be born in the family of the sun if the very lineage comes to the end. As per the unanimous decision taken by the gods, Shiva riding on his bull, comes to Dilipa’s two widowed queens and forecasts that one of them will be blessed with the ability to give birth to a son. The widows automatically are astonished. Mahadev then asks them to have intercourse with one another. The two wives, having taken their bath, start making love and one of them conceives consequently.

The *Kama Sutra*’s terminology of “the third nature” (*tritiya prakriti*) refers to a man desiring other men. The *Manusmriti*, as per the interpretation of Pratap Chandra Chunder, seems to be less condemnatory in its prescription (XI: 175) that a man who has sex with a man, or with a woman in a cart pulled by a cow, in water, or by day, should bathe with his clothes on. As per Manu’s law advocated in XI: 68, “sexual union with a man is traditionally said to cause loss of caste”. However recommendations have been given by Manu in XI: 174 that “a man who sheds his semen in nonhuman females, in a man, in a menstruating woman, in something other than a vagina, or in water has to perform a minor penance

consisting of eating the five products of the cow and keeping a one-night fast". Gay-coupling finds its legendary counterpart in the Hindu rendering of the myth related to the birth of Kartikeya:

In the *Shiva Purana* (ca. 750-1350), a later text, appears the better known account wherein Kartikeya is born from Agni[male] swallowing Shiva's semen...in the *Smritis* and *Sutras* oral sex between males...is far from being an unforgivable or even uncreative act. Agni suffers from a "burning sensation" which is relieved when, on Shiva's instructions, he transmits the semen into the wombs of the sage's wives who in turn drop it into the Ganga. Falling from the Ganga into a forest of grass, the semen produces the beautiful Kartikeya who is adopted and nursed by Parvati...In the *Skanda Purana*, a text devoted to the celebration of Kartikeya, Agni, disguised not as a dove, but as a male ascetic, interrupts the intercourse of Shiva and Parvati, and then receives the semen in his hands and swallows it (I.i.27). The rest of the story is basically the same. In the eleventh-century *Kathasaritsagara*, it is Shiva who summons an unwilling Agni and deposits his semen in him . . . (*Same-Sex Love in India*, 79)

Bisexuality can be traced out in the two magnificent male characters of the *Mahabharata*, Arjuna and Krishna, who despite their involvement in multiple heterosexual affairs, exhibit a strong homo-erotic cum homo-social bond. It must be kept in our mind that in some branches of medieval Vaishnava devotion, *madhurya* or 'erotic-love' has been acknowledged as one of the dominant forms of devotion. In *Saṃskṛita Parva* Krishna states, "Phalguna [Arjuna] than whom I have no dearer friend on earth, that friend to whom there is nothing that I cannot give including my wife and children ..." (*Saṃskṛita Parva* , XII).

In *Drona Parva* when all Pandavas are lamenting on the death of Bhima's son, Ghatotkacha by Karna, with the weapon he has been safeguarding to kill Arjuna, Krishna alone rejoices and justifies his enjoyment by confessing:

I do not regard my sire, my mother, yourselves, my brothers, ay, my very life, so worthy of protection as Vibhatsu[Arjuna] in battle. If there be anything more precious than the sovereignty of the three worlds, I do not, O Satwata, desire to enjoy it without Pritha's son, Dhananjaya [Arjuna] to share it with me. (*Drona Parva*, CLXXXII: 424)

Again in this *Drona Parva* Krishna almost projects Arjuna as his better half:

...My wives, my kinsmen, my relatives, none amongst these is dearer to me than Arjuna. O Daruka, I shall not be able to cast my eyes, even for a single moment, on the earth bereft of Arjuna...Know that Arjuna is half of my body. (*Drona Parva*, LXXIX: 153)

Arjuna in the *Mahabharata* has cross-dressed in order to play in disguise the feminine role of Brihanyala. In the second part of a Vaishnava text titled *Maha Padma Puranam*, (Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1984) we find how Arjuna's love for Krishna stimulates him again to alter his sex, like that of the transsexuals:

Arjuna asks Krishna about the secret of his divine sport and how it can be witnessed. Krishna says Arjuna should not desire to witness it. Arjuna falls on the ground in despair. Krishna raises him lovingly in his arms and tells him that he will experience if he worships the goddess Tripurasundari. Arjuna does so... the goddess said: "After taking a bath in this lake go to the eastern one, and having bath in its waters, fulfill your desire." She disappeared as soon as Partha [Arjuna], on hearing her words, plunged into the water... Emerging from the water, and looking all around, the one with the charming smile was confused. She found herself with an incomparable, pure, radiant form

emanating golden rays, with the sparkle of youth and a face like the autumn moon... This epitome of beauty looked at herself in wonder. She had forgotten everything about her previous body owing to the illusion created by the beloved of the cowherd women... Arjuni meets the cowherd women, who give her a bath and help her to worship the goddess Radhika. She worshipped the goddess... Then the goddess, the granter of boons, who was compassionate toward her devotees, spoke. She said: "The words of my female friends are true. You are my dear friend. Get up and come with me, I will fulfill your desire." Having heard the words of goddess... she felt at the goddess's feet. Then the lord, the son of Yashoda, pleased with [her] devotion smiled, glanced at the goddess Radhika and said: "Bring her here quickly"... She, on coming before the lord Krishna, was overwhelmed with love and, wonderstruck by all that she saw, fell on the golden floor. She raised herself with difficulty and slowly opened her eyes. She broke into a sweat, her hair stood on end, and she trembled. She saw that the place was wonderful and charming... It was enchanting with flowers of all seasons... She saw Krishna whose shiny, dark, curly, fragrant hair was tied with the finest plume of an intoxicated peacock... His beautiful smiling lips, red like the bimba fruit, inflamed desire... His penis was covered with a part of his yellow garments... His every limb seemed to be that of the god of love, satiated with the pleasure of *rasa*... On seeing Radhika humbly offering a betel leaf to the one with the charming smile, who seemed to be to her left, Arjuniya was overcome with desire. Seeing her in that state, the all-knowing Hrishikesa [Krishna] took her hand and indulged in all the sports in the forest. The great lord sported with her secretly, at will. Then putting his arm on her shoulder... he said: "Quickly bathe this slender, gently smiling lady, who is exhausted with play, in the western lake."... She who entered the lake was transformed once again into Arjuna... Krishna, seeing that Arjuna was depressed and heartbroken, touched him with his magic hand, so that he became aware of his nature. Shri Krishna said: "O Dhananjaya... you will curse me if you talk to anyone about the secret which you wanted to know and have experienced. (*Same-Sex Love in India*, 91-93)

All the above cited sagas emphasize the inclusive attitude of the Hindu tradition so far the queer community is concerned.

Female-bisexuals in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*

The critics have usually failed to overcome reasonable reservations while discussing about the lesbian episode in *A Married Woman*. Astha's physical relationship with Pipee can be regarded as lesbian bonding between two women, even though the narrative does not use the word 'lesbian' for either of them. They enjoy being together; they desire each other and revel in each other's bodies. There exists a passionate sexual union between the two. The narrator tells us, "they had been skin on skin, mind on mind with nothing in between" (p. 303), which would gladden lesbian theorists like Catharine Stimpson for whom, Lesbianism represents a commitment of skin, blood, breast and bone. A mere touch is enough to give orgasmic delight: "[Pipee] closed her hands over me, and I could scarcely breathe with the pleasure," effuses Astha (p. 256). A woman who lives openly as a lesbian is a rebel, ready to take on society, ready to make sacrifices. But in *A Married Woman* while Astha and Pipee have shared tender moments together during their love making, the relationship is not allowed to travel the expected trajectory. The author making Pipee abruptly leave for the U.S. to pursue her Ph.D. is a narrative strategy which Patricia Juliana

Smith calls 'lesbian panic'. Kapur seems to lose nerve and ends the novel on an unconvincing note which seems arbitrary and lacking in aesthetics.

Basing on Patricia Juliana Smith's definition of lesbian panic as, "the disruptive action or reaction that occurs when a character—or conceivably an author—is either unable or unwilling to confront or reveal her own lesbianism or lesbian desire" ("And I wondered if she might kiss me", 567-607), critics have tried to project Astha's engagement with her family as the internalization of the traditional heterosexual union, as ordained by patriarchy—an exploitative and oppressive institution:

Astha prioritizes this family over the family which Pipee suggests: a union of two women, an egalitarian, symbiotic lesbian relationship. Astha's refusal to give up on family, home, children is inexplicable in view of the false, oppressed 'migrained' existence she leads, except in terms of the lesbian panic which thwarts the possibility of their joyful life together—a life free of 'migraines.' The novel ends on a note of defeat for Pipee, and for lesbianism. As in Smith's concept, unwillingness to confront the situation squarely, when a choice has to be made, and indulging in 'bad faith' are definite signs of lesbian panic in a text, and this precisely is what happens in *A Married Woman*. However, emphasis on sexuality implicitly defines a lesbian as a woman whose primary focus of sexual desire is another woman. This is not the case with the protagonist of *A Married Woman*. We find that Astha is married, has two children, and feels morally responsible and emotionally attached to them. Even when she is with Pipee, she worries about the children and wonders how Himanshu (her son) and Anuradha (her daughter) would be managing things without her. Her commitment to heterosexuality is further reinforced by her steadfastness in continuing with her family irrespective of her meaningless existence. Another clue to her heterosexual leanings is provided by her aroused sexual response to Aijaz's flirtatious comments during their interactions at the school where Astha teaches (Aijaz had come there to hold a theatre workshop for the children of the school). At best she wants to straddle both the worlds—and paradoxically the heterosexual world becomes one of choice and the lesbian world an incidental happening, which she enjoys but which she is not prepared to acknowledge to the world by 'coming out,' nor is she prepared to give up on her children and husband and home. She is not a woman whose sexual desire is focused on another woman. Astha's bonding with Pipee is not a choice exercised by a woman who would take the initiative to start and sustain a lesbian relationship. It could be interpreted, in a certain sense, as an act stemming from resentment of her particular situation: 'When she was with Hemant she felt like a woman of straw, her inner life dead, with a man who noticed nothing' (*Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context*, 287).

It is true that Pip-Astha relationship is an important link in the novel without which it could appear to be rugged story of a couple who become poles apart because of their lack of concern in love, yet it is through Astha that the readers have learnt how Hemant is a peerless performer in bed and how their honeymoon in Kashmir has registered the ecstasy of their love. While at one point, the female pair has sought out to belong to homosexual community in their attendance at a gay and lesbian film festival, the narrative ultimately ends with Astha's choice of heterosexual marriage, family and children. Moreover by portraying both Pipeelika and Astha as married women, Kapur, though not deliberately, has highlighted the issue of bisexuality.

Judith Butler's famous formulation of 'gender' as 'trouble' and her analyses of gender through and as 'performative acts' find resonance in Manju Kapur's assertion, "There is a man within every woman and a woman in every man when manhood is questioned and womanhood is fragmented." (Bhagabat Nayak, 137). Pip's ambition to pursue her Ph.D. in a foreign university makes Astha realize, "

I live my life in fragments, she is the one fragment that makes the rest bearable. But a fragment, however, potent is still a fragment." (A Married Woman, 264).

Pip has evoked in Astha her hidden desires and has made her realize that the true union in love meant not only the meeting of bodies but also of souls, sentiments and ideologies. Moreover, Astha finds independence be it in her relation, in her passion for painting and in her opinion on politics. Yet equally true was the great relaxation which Astha's aching heart used to find in the luxurious ambience of Rohan whom she met in her college. Permitted by her mother to take exercises in fresh air, Astha had made it a routine to roam freely with Rohan. Initially embarrassed though, Rohan kindled and fondled her. The eager youngsters forgot all restrictions and helped each other culminate in the name of love. Astha longed for such stealthy meetings regularly and responded to countless kisses in the car. Her desire burnt her and Rohan's explorations on the parts of her body obliged her. Breaking all conventions she presented herself before the expectations of Rohan, " All she wanted was for him to start so that the world could fall away and she be lost. This is love she told herself no wonder they talk much about it." (A Married Woman, 24-25). Again while mixing with Aijaz, a sudden touch on her knee has revealed her secret longings and has compelled her to introspect:

What did it mean, did he like her did he want to have an affair with her, why had she been so startled by his hand on her knee, why hadn't she responded but she was a married woman with two children and those right before her eyes. (A Married Woman, 114)

Hence Astha, with her premarital heterosexual affair (with Rohan), extra marital heterosexual yearning (for Aijaz), post marital lesbian relationship (with Pipeelika) and finally adjusting with the heteronormative conjugal life with Hemant portrays the trajectory of a bisexual.

Incest in Hinduism?

Due to the strict restrictions and regulations one feature arose that is apparently more common in Hindu society than in any other part of the world: incest. References to this practice abound. References abound even in the Rig Veda, showing that the perversion of brother-sister incest was introduced by the ancient Hindus:

Pushan is the lover of his sister (Rig Ved VI.55.4)

Agni is the lover of his own sister (Rig Ved X.3.3)

The Ashvisns married Surya and Savitri who is their sister (RV I.116.19)

Agni is the son of his father and his sister (Rig Ved.I.91.7)

Yama wards off his sister Yami, saying marriage between brother and sister is forbidden (R.V.X.10)

Father-daughter incest occurs in the famous story of Prajapati (later identified with Brahma, in turn incorporated as an incarnation of Vishnu) and his daughter (RV III.31.1-2). Moreover, this was punished. Prajapati is thought to have done something wrong, and Prajapati was pierced by Agni as a punishment (Sat.Br. XIII.9).

Raj Kamal Jha's *The Blue Bedspread*

The narrator of Raj Kamal Jha's novel gets stimulated by the unexpected call that he receives from the police officer, informing him of two antithetical incidents: the death of his only elder-sister and the survival of the baby girl whom she has given birth. He brings the girl home, tries to provide her with all comforts possible:

I am not going to type since the noise may wake you up...My tap drips in the bathroom, I have tried many things...But the water continues to drip on the red tiles. We'll muffle the sound tonight, put dirty clothes below the tap, my trousers, my shirt with the city's fingerprints on the collar and the cuff. If that doesn't work, we shall tie a handkerchief to the tap, let the water collect in the pouch, drop by drop.

The fridge also makes a noise but that's very light, as light as the old man coughing in the downstairs flat, once an hour or so. That shouldn't bother you. (*The Blue Bedspread* 13-14)

The anonymous narrator is not only concerned of the baby's present comforts but also of the bafflements that might disturb her when she'll become a grown-up in near future; the result is these stories:

...after several summers and several winters, when the city has fattened, its sides spilled over into the villages where the railway tracks are, where the cycle-rickshaws ply, if you grow up into the fine woman I am sure you will, one day you will stop.

Suddenly.

Something you will see or hear will remind you of something, missing in your heart, perhaps a hole, the blood rushing through it, and then like a machine which rumbles for a second just before it goes click, just before it begins to hum and move, you will stop and ask: "Who am I?"

They will then give you these stories. (*The Blue Bedspread*, 2-3)

But this is only partially true. The other half of the truth lies in the fact that he has been taught by his father, the most important lesson :

...when you find it difficult to say something, when the words get trapped in your chest, your lips quiver, as in winter, you can always write it down. That's why, my child, I have nothing to worry about tonight, I am prepared. (*The Blue Bedspread*, 35)

He is indeed prepared to speak out before the world, all "the words growing and growing until they filled his lungs" (226), and this very step is indispensable to complete the course of re-sketching his own image/identity— making the real happenings public, wrapped up in the mode of story-telling; scribbling down the facts about the incidents that are at once true-life & illicit, true but are forbidden and proscribed as 'incest'.

Mother, who departed even when the narrator was yet to be mature, is remembered 'indistinctly' by him, not only through "her giant photograph, two dead cockroaches trapped in its glass frame" hung up in the room where he used to sleep with his elder-sister, but also through fragmented memories. Sometimes when "the scene shifts as if in a movie", he can promptly evoke himself as a child, witnessing how "Father beats Mother":

His hand now free, he moves closer, pulls Mother up by her hair...In the garden now there are several sounds: the chair being pushed and then toppling over, the screech of the table's legs against the floor, Mother's bangles cracking...Father is gone and Mother, perhaps, is still there lying on the floor. The curtains, as always, rise and fall and the child

continues to look at the window, this time bent and curved, through the water in his eyes.
(*The Blue Bedspread*, 51-52)

Some other times, standing before the washbasin the narrator begins to excavate his blurred out memories:

I am a child, three or four, naked, standing in the washbasin...And while she[Mother] is bathing me, suddenly she stops and turns...She looks out, across the roof of the shanties, over the train wires, to the bus stop where a man stands, a tall man with glasses, and she waves to him, she lifts my hand and waves it too, the man waves back, he's smiling, she smiles back, she turns quickly, picks up the soap, the tap is running so the water by now has formed a pool near my legs, she scoops some of it, pours it onto my shoulders. (*The Blue Bedspread*, 80-81)

Now when he further tries to recall the whole incident, "my mother is back to bathing me" (81), all that he can remember is "the red vermilion in the parting of her hair. And that the man across the street wasn't my father." (*The Blue Bedspread*, 82).

Father of the narrator again has failed to play exclusively the sole father of both his children. In the chapter titled "Straight Line" the narrator writes of an incident that accentuates father's non-straight incestuous attachment for his daughter. The incident starts with the detailed description of the narrator's sister, titivating herself for the likely rendezvous with her friend's brother who has arrived from United States, with her lips colored in red lipstick, wearing blue skirt and a white top with tiny blue stars: "Sister never looked so beautiful." (*The Blue Bedspread*, 149). She has even bought tickets for the evening show in Globe Cinema. Father, "louder than the traffic", enters the house; narrator's sister orders him to go to the other room and remain there with eyes closed and ears shut, so that he would not see 'Wicked Witch' in his dream; the narrator followed her, however not in ditto—rather he leaves the room but hides in the favourite place behind the drapes and cheats:

I cheat again...Father looks at the tickets and laughs, Sister smiles, he tears the ticket in two and laughs harder, he teeters for a while, tries to balance himself by holding my sister's shoulder and suddenly his face changes, he's not laughing any more, he's making a face as if he's in pain. And he throws up what I think he had for lunch...Both Father and Sister are laughing...'Stay at home', he says. 'It's too hot outside'. It takes five minutes, this whole thing, and I am scared Sister will find out that I saw and heard. So I fling the drapes aside, run to the bedroom and lie down, close my eyes. When I got up, it's an hour later, dark and quiet in the house...She has changed into the house clothes...She smiles and gestures me to go away. (*The Blue Bedspread*, 150-151)

This episode is somewhat indicative; while the other one that divulges Father's incestuous yearning is thoroughly explicit. In the chapter "Blue bedspread" the narrator first informs us that being his father's ideal successor he has inherited in his collective, the 'shadow' strong enough to overshadow the 'hero'; resembling his father, the narrator as well confesses of cherishing his incestuous allure towards his sister:

She was fourteen, I was ten, and it was on our ninety square feet of fabric sky that we first kissed and, later, touched each other in what then we thought were the wrong places. And it was this daily theatre of pleasure and fear, played out on our blue bedspread, that carried us as if on a wave from one night to the next. For a moment, after we had bolted the door, nothing seemed to matter...Just the stars caressing our bodies, lying still in the

darkness, the only sound our two hearts, and sometimes a Bengal-Bihar cargo truck rumbling by. (*The Blue Bedspread*, 56-57)

And then, the narrator starts recollecting of one July evening, when returning from his school he discovered that Sister had gone to the British Council to return some of the borrowed books and Father “came home drunk and laughing”. Other times when father was drunk he used to do things like hiding Sister’s sanitary napkins and thereby compelling her to use her brother’s handkerchief. That day Father smiled and said that he wished to see his son naked:

‘Let’s see how grown up you are now,’ he said. At first, I thought it was yet another of his drunken jokes, but then he stood in the middle of the bedroom, the smile melting away, and he told me that he knew what Sister and I were up to at night. If I didn’t undress, he said, he would tell Sister all about it. Or better still, make us sleep in different rooms...Maybe I should have protested but that afternoon, with Father drunk and laughing, with Sister gone and my only secret lying suddenly exposed, I closed my eyes, undressed and on Father’s orders lay on the blue bedspread...Someone laughed from the street outside; I think I shouted, I’m not sure. Even if I had, my scream wouldn’t have gone beyond places where buses go. What happened later is split, torn, and then welded together, as if in a dream. I fell asleep; I remember that I woke up...I can recall crying. (*The Blue Bedspread*, 58-59)

This experience has made manifold significant impacts upon the narrator. First the occurrence has made the latent incestuous preference cognizant—he at once started hating Father and loving him as well for his father has released him from the burden of doing something exceptionally erroneous. Along with the traumatic memories of “my muffled screams, with adjectives in my mind” the narrator has also “embellished Father’s heavy breathing”; as a result though Father has failed as a father, the narrator wonders while apprehending how “so much hatred and pain have gracefully coexisted with so much love and joy” (*The Blue Bedspread*, 63) for his father. In the novel the odious incident of molestation is followed by the incident of ecstasy, both centered round the narrator’s father. In the very next chapter, entitled “Sunil Gavaskar” the narrator rethinks how Father had shared with his children, his gladness on the occasion of Gavaskar scoring two hundred: “Father walks into your room and kisses you on your forehead.” (*The Blue Bedspread*, 70). The next day when everyone in the school was talking of how they had celebrated Indian team’s victory with crackers, the narrator and Sister didn’t say much: “we smile and turn away because we can still feel father’s lips on our foreheads...and we know that for the next one week, maybe even two, we will be the happiest children in the city.” (*The Blue Bedspread*, 71). The son also needs to be grateful to his father for having himself failed to play the father, he has given narrator the opportunity of “keep using him as an excuse for failures of my own making”. The second major outcome of Father’s pedophilic take is that the narrator has got the stimulus that made him aware of his inherent incest mount up in his ‘collective’ along with the accommodative drive to assimilate the ‘personal’ with the ‘collective’ through rationalization of the incestuous desire, keeping the exemplary model of the father. Hence, that very night, the narrator along with the sister started engaging themselves in conscious incestuous behavior, different from former naive games:

That night, my sister didn’t switch on the bedside lamp. And with all the stars locked in the blackness of the bedroom, we held each other tight. The bedspread was dark of the rain, stained and crusted where the come had slipped off my legs. But my sister didn’t seem to notice as she lay, not speaking a word, her red shirt rolled up to allow my lips shelter her nipple, my chin to rest on the small pillow of her breast and my hands pressed,

warm and soft, between her legs...I could feel the rise and fall of her breasts, hear the gentle rush of her breathing...She turned in her sleep but she didn't let me go and my head came to fit exactly in the curve of her neck, her arms came to rest across my back...And although my body still hurt, where Father had put his entire weight on that evening, I kept drowning in a stream, a river and then an ocean of happiness. (*The Blue Bedspread*, 61-62)

Although the sister walked out of home at her age of nineteen, with someone she loved, the narrator felt her absence in every waking moment, as if he has missed that which had been an integral part of himself, "moments that were key to our survival" (*The Blue Bedspread*, 63). Having grown up, the narrator failed in his love affair and the sister made a mess of her married life. Eventually the sister has returned back to her father's house on an April night—the moment that has brought them together, "finally...even if it was for a day and half a night." (*The Blue Bedspread*, 206). The vital consequence of this togetherness (the confession about which is the purpose of this novel writing, along with the intention of authenticating his own identity along with that of the new born child) has been affirmed by the narrator in the last two paragraphs, by segmenting the single sentence into eight disjointed words, which taken collectively turns out to be: *I am the father of my sister's child.*

Conclusion

It can now be concluded that queer has always been a part of pan-Indian (religious) consciousness and the traditional/pre-colonial India has always taken into account the communities with non-stereotype orientation of desire while making their rules or creating their legends. It may therefore be said that in a neo-colonial mode we are irrationally continuing with the superimposed aversion for the Indian queers. All the most ridiculous one feels at the reaction of the Hindu icons against the Delhi High Court's recent attempt to decriminalize the Indian queers, where even the Hindu revivalist like Baba Ramdev has been seen to be denouncing the verdict as anti-tradition and transmitter of evils like that of a typical Victorian Papal authority. Let there be earnest attempts made to recover the reality of early Indian population with desire of different nature and scrutinize the position of the conventional religious doctrines on queer issues, which would definitely help us to get rid of the anxiety of compulsive institutionalizing of socially stereotyped straight desire—a phenomenon that has been reinforced in India through regulative penal codes resolved by the non-Indian European colonizers.

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