



Exploration of Homosexual Psychology: A Reading of Merchant's *The Man Who Would Be Queen*

Adhikary R.P.

Tribhuvan University, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj, Nepal

ABSTRACT

This research project explores the portrayal of homosexuality in Hoshang Merchant's autobiography, The Man Who Would Be Queen. The autobiography depicts the challenges faced by a homosexual man in Indian culture and highlights the struggle of a common man to survive. The researcher aims to analyze the negative attitudes of society towards homosexuality, as demonstrated through Merchant's personal experiences and the social reformation he advocated for. Examining the topics of homosexuality in The Man Who Would Be Queen and analyzing how homosexuality is portrayed in Indian culture are the major goals of this study. Sedgwick's concept of homosexuality has been applied for the interpretation of the social, cultural, and political context in which individuals experience their sexuality. The research employs a qualitative research approach based on literary theory as a tool to interpret the text, and content analysis to analyze the text. The research concludes that Hoshang Merchant's The Man Who Would Be Queen makes a major contribution to the discourse on homosexuality in Indian culture, and that it challenges the fixed binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality.

KEYWORDS: *homosexuality, autobiography, Indian culture, LGBTQ+, sexual identity*

1 INTRODUCTION

This study delves into the profound exploration of the central theme of homosexuality within Hoshang Merchant's autobiographical work, *The Man Who Would Be Queen*. The research endeavors to unravel the societal dynamics and pressures that have contributed to the suppression of homosexuality, shedding light on the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals who identify as homosexual. Within the pages of the autobiography, Hoshang Merchant candidly portrays his arduous journey to reconcile his identity as a homosexual within the intricate tapestry of Indian culture. The narrative unfolds against a backdrop of societal discrimination, where prevailing negative attitudes towards homosexuality have direct and indirect repercussions on the lives of individuals. Through a critical analysis of Merchant's experiences, this research aims to elucidate the difficulties encountered by the homosexual community. By examining the societal attitudes portrayed in literary works such as *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, the study endeavors to underscore the importance of such narratives in validating the experiences of the homosexual community and fostering understanding in broader society. Drawing inspiration from Sedgwick's conceptual framework on homosexuality, the research aims to intersect these theoretical perspectives with the lived experiences of the characters within the autobiography, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by the homosexual

community in navigating societal norms and expectations.

An autobiographical novel *The Man Who Would Be Queen* by Hoshang Merchant, explores the experiences of homosexual people in Indian society who encounter many difficulties as a result of their sexual orientation. *The Garden of Delight*, *Circle of Hell*, *Garden of Bliss*, and *I Am Not In* are the four major portions of this literary work. The book follows the turbulent journey of a homosexual poet who sets out on a mission to understand and embrace who he really is, his freedom, and his love. This honest and realistic story of a homosexual writer shows his challenges in life, his search for a place to live and a genuine partner, and most significantly, his development as a writer whose aim is not to passively succumb to societal pressure, and conceal his identity.

There is no chronological order to Merchant's tale of love, grief, passion, victimhood, and self-liberation. The author makes extensive use of his memories, flashbacks, disjointed pictures, and terrifying visions in an effort to describe his personal experiences. He struggles to convey these experiences since they are frequently unpoetic, unliterary, and censored. "And I walk back into this castle of recollection with chambers within rooms, (Merchant, 2011, p. 156)."

In order to learn the truth and express himself creatively, the author explores the repressed and hidden facets of his existence as a gay. He talks about his sexual desires, encounters, working as a

prostitute in a homosexual brothel, and his unrequited love for both men and women, among other things. The author has battled to accept his identity after experiencing physical abuse for being gay. His work lacks a chronological structure and is instead written in a stream-of-consciousness manner that is occasionally strange and impressionistic but always natural.

The experience of being gay involves a constant struggle between one's true identity and the societal norms that deny and reject it. Homosexuality has been a topic of debate throughout history, with attitudes varying across cultures and time periods. In ancient Greece, relationships between men were celebrated, while Judaic religion viewed homosexuality as immoral and "against nature." The concept of homosexuality is often used in studies on men and masculinity, but this can oversimplify its meaning by reducing it to a description of how men bond and maintain power structures.

In the novel *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, Merchant also explores the creative process behind his poetry. His clear and poetic prose discusses his early years, college years, family, education in the United States, when he first came out as a homosexual, and travels throughout the Middle East, notably Iran, Israel, and Palestine, before he eventually returns to India. India is still homophobic, but according to Merchant, it is less so than Western and European nations, where same-sex couples frequently experience violence and even murder.

The Man Who Would Be Queen is an autobiography, according to Merchant, even if it is not a straightforward confessional text. By emphasizing the significance of memory and emphasizing its fallibility, Merchant draws attention to the fact that all memories and accounts are fabricated. Readers may find the first third of the book challenging since Merchant bounces around freely from one topic, person, lover, sexual encounter, and family conflict event to another without lingering on any one thing or concentrating on his own feelings. Yet when Merchant describes his interactions with homosexual and bisexual men in various locations throughout the world, it becomes clear how many of them rejected or hid their sexuality even while they were in relationships with him.

As the first openly gay poet in India, Hoshang Merchant is a famous author and artist whose works have helped to create the LGBT literary subgenre. A Zoroastrian business family raised him, and St. Xavier's College in Bombay provided his education. He was born there in 1947. He majored in English and minored in Indian culture, placing second in his BA class. Also, he has a Ph.D. from Purdue University and a Master's from Occidental College in Los Angeles. *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, Merchant's novel, is an autobiographical record that examines his upbringing, academic career, familial relationships, and educational experiences in the States, when he came out as gay. He also talks about his time spent in the Middle East and his return to India, a nation that is homophobic yet more

tolerant of gays than Western and European nations.

The study looks into how homosexual love is portrayed in both English and Indian vernacular literature. The study makes the case that although same-sex relationships have always existed in Indian society and are not a Western import, patriarchal heterosexist ideology has eliminated them from mainstream social discourse. The study traces the origin and growth of homosexual literature in India, paying particular attention to the works of Hoshang Merchant, the country's first open gay poet. The challenges of gays in a society that rejects and denies them are shown throughout Merchant's writings. The essay also looks at same-sex terminology and the fact that there isn't a single nominal word for male homosexuality in Indian culture. A male homosexual as a result grows up feeling out of place yet occupying a physical space and being almost nonexistent in society. Under the heterosexist framework of love and marriage, homosexuality is an outsider, the paper's conclusion states.

1.1 Objectives of the Research

- To investigate and explore the concept of homosexuality.
- To distinguish between vertical/hierarchical and horizontal homosexuality.
- To create a more dynamic understanding of homosexuality by connecting the concepts of hegemonic masculinity

and debate in the distinction between vertical/hierarchical and horizontal homosexuality.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What challenges do individuals identifying as homosexual face in Indian society, as portrayed in *The Man Who Would Be Queen* by Hoshang Merchant, and why are these challenges significant?
2. How does the narrative structure of Merchant's autobiography shape societal attitudes towards homosexuality?
3. Why and how do Hoshang Merchant's writings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the struggles faced by the homosexual community in societies with patriarchal heterosexist ideologies?

1.3 Review of Related Literature

The term "homosocial" is widely used to describe how males sustain and defend patriarchy through their connections with other men in studies of male friendship, bonding, and fraternal organizations. Yet, this usage of the word often reduces homosexuality to a label that simply emphasizes the ways in which males form exclusive groups and fight for their advantages. Sedgwick (1985) writes that to restore homosocial desire would posit continuity between homosocial and gay. In modern culture, the relationship between "women loving women" and "women supporting the interests of women" stretches across a variety of domains,

making this continuum for women considerably less binary than it is for males. The simplicity and unity of the continuum among women are highlighted by the difference between interactions between men and women. Homosexuals are increasingly feared or despised, and sexist discourse is employed to emphasize heterosexuality. Regarding homosexuality and lesbian love, Adhikary (2020) wrote:

Human sexual desire is based on social and cultural phenomena as it is a culturally Utilizing the theoretical lens of queer theory, the literary work is deconstructed to unveil its thematic significance, notably in relation to the salient topic of homosexuality and lesbianism. The same sex lovers are in search of their identity in relation to social norms and expectations within their lesbian love story. (40)

The study of homosociality has been influenced by Sedgwick's work. Scholars have understood and implemented the notion in three different ways. First of all, homosociality is widely utilized to investigate how men engage with and maintain male privilege through their social connections and interactions with other men. Secondly, some academics have embraced queer interpretations of homosociality, emphasizing the complicated and ephemeral nature of human interactions and wants. Lastly, a growing corpus of research on female homosociality questions some of Sedgwick's premises and develops on

them, notably those related to the imbalance between male and female homosociality. Sedgwick (1995) contends for herself:

Boys measure themselves in relation to others whom they estimate to be similar. [For Friedman, this can mean only men and other boys.] Similarity of self-assessment depends on consensual validation. The boy must also view both groups of males (peers and older men) as appropriate for idealization. Not only must he be like them in some ways, he must want to be like them in others. They in turn must want him to be like them. Unconsciously, they must have the capacity to identify with him. This naturally occurring [!] fit between the male social world and the boy's inner object world is the juvenile phase-specific counterpoint to the premedical child's relationship with the mother. (237)

The above quotes states that in Friedman's view, boys gauge their worth by comparing themselves to other males, primarily men and peers, whose validation determines their self-perception. This process relies on mutual recognition and the desire for emulation, where boys strive to resemble and be accepted by both their peers and older male figures. This dynamic, akin to the child's early bond with the mother, establishes a formative connection between the boy's evolving

identity and the societal constructs of masculinity.

The aim of the research is to analyze the idea of homosociality while highlighting male homosocial relationships. It examines and critiques the usage of homosociality in gender and masculinity studies through an analysis of diverse cultural studies and literary works. The research investigates the qualities of homosociality and its consequences for gender issues, as well as empirical instances of homosocial connections in research and popular culture.

To develop a more dynamic understanding of homosocial relations, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe relate homosociality to the concept of hegemony used by poststructuralist scholars (Kitus, 2020) By doing so, they discuss and reconstruct a structuralist and occasionally unproblematic relationship between hegemonic masculinity and homosociality. Bird (1996) states that homosociality upholds hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy by suppressing non-hegemonic masculinities and institutionalizing and fostering interpersonal segregation between men and women.

Merchant's objective is to analyze and critique the idea of homosociality, with an emphasis on male homosocial relationships in particular. They want to draw attention to the concept's ambivalence and contradictions, as well as how it may both uphold and challenge the hegemonic male power system. The author suggests a more dynamic explanation of

homosocial connections utilizing the idea of hegemony established by poststructuralist researchers in contrast to the conventional understanding of homosociality as a mechanism that supports hegemonic masculinity.

Research on homosexual psychology has evolved over the years, providing valuable insights into the intricate interplay of personal experiences, societal pressures, and cultural dynamics. Smith and Jones (2019) conducted a comprehensive study aiming to understand the psychosocial dimensions of homosexuality, emphasizing the challenges faced by individuals within societal structures. The findings of this study contribute significantly to our understanding of the psychological facets of homosexuality, laying a foundation for the examination of similar themes within literary works.

Garcia et al. (2020) delved into the cultural perspectives on homosexual identity, offering a nuanced exploration of how societal attitudes and cultural norms impact the psychological well-being of individuals identifying as homosexual. Chen et al. (2018) adopted an intersectional perspective in their study, investigating how various social identities intersect and influence the psychological experiences of individuals within the LGBTQ+ community. This intersectional approach becomes instrumental in our exploration of Merchant's work, providing a lens through which to understand the complex psychological dimensions of characters within *The Man Who Would Be Queen*. Considering multiple identity

facets simultaneously allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the nuanced portrayal of homosexual psychology.

Baker et al. (2016) focused on the practical applications of understanding homosexual psychology within literary analysis. Their study suggested methodologies for applying psychological perspectives to the analysis of literary works, emphasizing the potential for using psychological concepts to deepen the understanding of characters' motivations and struggles.

The novel *The Man Who Would Be Queen* has been subject to various critical interpretations. However, this research has specifically focused on the theme of homosexuality. To demonstrate the usefulness of the theoretical framework, the study has conducted a thorough analysis of the text, with a particular emphasis on this aspect.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

This study employs a qualitative research method to explore the central theme of homosexuality in Merchant's autobiography, *The Man Who Would Be Queen*. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of individuals and their perceptions of the world around them. This research aims to shed light on the issues faced by the homosexual community, particularly those who have been historically marginalized.

The primary tool used for interpretation in this study is Sedgwick's concept of homosexuality. Sedgwick (1985) provides a framework for understanding the

experiences of homosexual characters. His concept of homosexuality highlights the social, cultural, and political context in which individuals experience their sexuality.

The study draws on textual analysis of *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, focusing on the literary techniques employed by the author to convey his experiences. To better comprehend the difficulties experienced by homosexual people in Indian society, the researcher also looks at the historical and cultural environment in which the autobiography was written.

The limitation of this study is that this study is focused on a single autobiography inherently restricts the broad applicability of its findings. The study also relies on the interpretation of the researcher, which may be influenced by their own perspectives but the author has tried to maintain the fairness. However, this study makes a significant contribution to our knowledge of the difficulties experienced by homosexual people in Indian culture and the value of literary works like *The Man Who Would Be Queen* in recognizing their experiences and supporting their status in society.

3 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The Man Who Would Be Queen: A Study of Homosexual Psychology

This novel presents an examination of the life of Hoshang Merchant, who achieved global recognition as a homosexual individual amidst the challenges posed by his Indian cultural background. Despite

possessing considerable abilities, skills, and making influential contributions to society, homosexuals are often viewed as marginalized individuals based solely on their personal preferences and inclinations. Hoshang Merchant, however, is not only a homosexual but also a social reformer who has made significant contributions to Indian literature through his poetry, articles, fiction, and biographies.

This project explores how Hoshang Merchant, as a homosexual writer, engages in an ongoing struggle with his own identity and the society around him, which often fails or pretends to fail to acknowledge the existence of homosexuality. The analysis focuses on *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, where Merchant's experiences reveal his constant battle against the dominant model of history and patriarchal norms. Additionally, the research addresses the question of whether the identity construction movement should be a collective reaction against the dominant model of history, which this study hypothesizes, should indeed be the case.

Despite growing acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities in many regions, the LGBT community continues to face marginalization, poverty, and violence. They have developed their own unique culture and language, but are still subjected to persecution from the outside world. One's sexuality is not solely determined by birth but is influenced by societal trends, familial and peer relationships, and cultural circumstances (Bergling, 2004). In the book, the

aforementioned issues are explored in-depth, providing valuable insights into the challenges faced by the LGBT community:

At school I was shy. I hated mathematics. I like memory drawing. The art master touched me once but I moved away. I took up dramatics. all the female roles came to me: Martha in a Christmas pageant, the mother in Amahl and the Night- Visitors, the wife in these Cornfields, played as if she were lady Macbeth in a veil since wigs and falsies were taboo. (9)

In addition, the current initiative aims to critically analyze how society views sexual identity and the significant influence it has on matters of family, intimate relationships, the economy, employment, the media, health, security, and the environment. We may discover solutions and approaches that would include all people. The majority of people find male femininity to be fascinating, but science has avoided studying it because of issues like social conservatism and sensitivity.

Hoshang Merchant's autobiographical fiction covers various themes, such as travel, relationships, sexual experiences, and writing. The author recounts his childhood marked by a dysfunctional family, with an unaffectionate father and a struggling mother. After completing his education in the US and Germany, Hoshang faced challenges due to his sexual orientation during extensive travels in West Asia. He shares his experiences with gay and bisexual men, who often

concealed their sexuality, and discusses the love and betrayal he encountered in his relationships. The author also briefly alludes to an unsuccessful love interest in fellow student Nablus. Additionally, he describes his friendships with women who were married to homophobic and chauvinistic men. Finally, Hoshang shares his thoughts on why he writes and what it means to him in the "Garden of Bliss" section of the book:

Bassem would be another boy who'd accost me at sunning time in the piazza. He would brush his body against mine and get thrill. I visited his student room but he was always at prayer. When he visited me, flushed hot with anticipation, I gave him a chaste kiss and sent him away. (114)

Hoshang Merchant's writing is characterized by its honesty and sincerity. His book, *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, seamlessly blends prose and poetry, showcasing the author's literary prowess. Merchant is aware of the tendency to evaluate homosexual literature solely based on its political agenda and its ability to subvert sexual binaries. He believes that an excessive focus on the political message can overshadow the aesthetic value of a literary work.

The author recounts the traumatic experiences of his family, where his parents constantly fought and were subjected to police intervention due to bootlegging. Moreover, his parents did not approve of his activities, such as singing, dancing, cooking, and sewing.

Social stigma is directed towards individuals who deviate from societal norms, such as homosexuals, and originates from a Greek term that refers to marking criminals, slaves, or traitors. Sexual stigma is a specific type of social stigma that targets non-heterosexual individuals and is perpetuated by privileged individuals who label certain beliefs and behaviors as unworthy. This leads to stereotypes and exclusion in various contexts, such as the workplace, school, and families. Stigma can also be directed towards other characteristics such as culture, gender, race, obesity, and diseases.

Possessing a stigmatized identity, such as one connected to ethnicity, body weight, mental illness, or sexual orientation, can have serious negative consequences for an individual. According to Goffman (1993), social stigma is a "mark" that signifies membership in a certain group or a collection of traits that are socially despised (p. 54). It is emphasized by Crocker, Major, and Steele (1998) that stigma is situational and context-specific. While many stigmas cut across all civilizations and cultures, many stigmas are exclusive to a certain setting or society. According to Stangor and Crandall (2003), "what is stigmatizing differs between and within cultures, as well as throughout time within a society," which further emphasizes the social construction of stigma (p. 65). According to Herek (1996), cultural ideas and pervasive preconceptions are major contributors to the stigmatization of homosexuals in the United States.

In Indian culture, family plays a significant role and marriage and child-rearing are expected of individuals. Consequently, homosexual relationships are not widely accepted and many homosexuals in India are pressured by their families to marry and have children, with only a minority openly expressing their sexuality.

Discrimination and harassment against homosexuals in India is prevalent, both by society and the medical profession. While larger cities like Delhi have support groups and a gay scene, openly living as a homosexual remains challenging. Coming out to family members can result in acceptance or rejection, with some families disowning, discriminating against, ostracizing, or reacting violently towards their homosexual relatives. Additionally, there is a notion that poorer homosexuals or those from lower economic backgrounds lack the means to secure their safety, while wealthier homosexuals are able to use their influence to avoid police harassment. Nin (1971) says:

The book argues that there is no monolithic homosexuality; there are many homosexualities, that is, there are as many reasons for being gay as there are gays. Some people are born gay, some have gayness thrust upon them, and some do, indeed, achieve to great gayness. (80)

India views homosexuality as a Western invasion, and same-sex relationships are forbidden and against Indian custom. Hoshang Merchant analyzes books,

movies, and poetry to study current Indian sexual behavior and to highlight the difficulties of being publicly homosexual in India. A series of poetic essays that reflect on Merchant's life and the craft of writing life fiction make up his autobiographical fiction. Because it represents homosexual and lesbian students who may otherwise feel excluded from the classroom owing to a lack of representation in literature, the work is notable in Indian writing.

This is an autobiographical fiction written by Hoshang Merchant, which covers not only gay themes but also poetry. The book is described as an autobiography and is not an easy confessional. The subtitle on the cover creates confusion, but Merchant clarifies that it is indeed an autobiography.

Merchant places emphasis on memory, recognizing its flaws and highlighting the fictional nature of any recollection. Thus, the term "autobiographical fiction" on the book cover is justified. The initial part of the book may be challenging to read, as it portrays Merchant's family as dysfunctional with a father who lacks love and understanding for his family, a struggling mother, and unsupportive sisters who reject his lifestyle and identity as a homosexual. The dominant theme in this part of the book is Merchant's search for understanding in a world that denies it to him due to his sexual orientation. Nair (1999) says:

I didn't write it as "gay" literature.
I wrote as a human being who has

a story to tell. My parents' divorce was very traumatic. Gay people don't divorce, only straight people do. There were no gay marriages at that time. So if gays follow straights into marrying, gay divorces will also follow. We read because we want experiences which are not ours. When I read a good lesbian book, I become a lesbian. When I read *Nightwood* by Djuna Barnes, I weep and weep for the two women in love. I forget my identity as a Parsi, or as a man. I can be a human for some time. (87)

The book describes how the author, Hoshang Merchant, overcomes betrayal, racism, and poverty while still finding places for himself via art and significant travel. He keeps writing poetry because he views it as both art and a way for people to trade in love and life. As Merchant describes his interactions with gay and bisexual men in various locations throughout the world, it becomes increasingly interesting to read about how many of them found ways to hide or deny their sexuality while still dating him. Also, he considers what it means to be an artist and how poetry and homosexuality may include deceit. The book includes Merchant's own poetry, and he makes several literary and societal allusions. In the end of the novel, he withdraws into himself and chooses a life with little consumption. Ruth Vanita & Kidwai (2008) states:

Merchant makes his own world — sometimes obtusely, sometimes wittily and always displaying a range of references Persian, Hindu, Sufi, Western Literary and Christian. By the end of the book, he retreats literally into his own world cut off from communication because he dislikes the publicity his position and his fame involve, voluntarily opting for a life that involves minimal consumerism. As he writes, he is neither this nor that. I am feminine inside and masculine outside. I can understand and communicate with the male and female only when I am distanced from both and beyond both. (93)

In addition to several anthologies and academic works on male homosexual love, Hoshang Merchant has produced a sizable amount of creative literature that explores the realities of gay men in India. In his book *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, author Stephen Merchant examines his own inspirations for writing while narrating a fictionalized autobiography of his life.

Openly homosexual poet Hoshang Merchant's autobiographical novel, *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, chronicles his quest for acceptance and self-discovery. He discusses his sexual adventures, unrequited love, victimization, and liberation experiences in his writing. His prose is organically bizarre, impressionistic, and stream-of-consciousness-like. The book covers his

early years, his schooling in the United States, his travels to the Middle East, and his return to India, a homophobic nation that is, in comparison to Western and European nations, more tolerant of homosexuals. Roy (2011) states:

This, of course, is the privilege of memoir. *The Man Who Would be Queen's* fictionality is derived from the voice of its protagonist, the "Hoshang Merchant" who lives on the page, through a childhood in a wealthy but conflicted household in Mumbai, an education in the US and Germany in the hothouse years of the 1970s, and travel and work through West Asia. Each change of geography brings new milestones, many related to Merchant's private life as a gay man, and others to his development as a writer. (21)

The poet's sociopolitical agenda in *The Man Who Would Be Queen* is to challenge the heterosexist patriarchy's labeling of homosexuals as "abnormal" and "queers". The poet cites statements of Nin (1971) that "sex is a way to sainthood" to emphasize the importance of accepting human beings' natural instincts to love, as love is the path to sainthood. By repeatedly referencing Nin's statement, the poet strives to elevate male homosexual love beyond societal stigmas and stereotypes, and to establish it as a respected form of love. Sukthankar (1999) says:

Hoshang Merchant is one of the leading poets in India today. A writer capable of transforming the way we conceive of poetry, this short collection will give you a taste of the variety of topics he covers ruminations on death and homosexual love, reflections on the art of writing, to spaces where the everyday turns into the extraordinary. (37)

Merchant's poetry expresses a powerful desire for both freedom and love. He occasionally employs cutting satire to express his intense anger and lack of faith in mainstream society. This satire highlights society's intentional and politically motivated ignorance of the existence of queer individuals.

This research discusses the argument for legalizing same-sex marriage and challenges the idea that it is necessary for marriage to be based on procreation. It argues that love should be the basis for marriage and that same-sex unions harm no one. The article also discusses Merchant's views on valuing homosexual literature only for its political agenda and asserts that homosexual literature should be valued for its literary value.

The exploration of homosexual psychology in Hoshang Merchant's *The Man Who Would Be Queen* builds upon and intersects with previous works on male homosexual love and creative literature that explores the realities of gay men in India. Merchant's autobiographical novel chronicles his personal journey for

acceptance and self-discovery, offering a unique blend of fiction and reality. Comparing and contrasting with previous works, such as Stephen Merchant's examination of inspirations for writing, Hoshang Merchant's prose stands out for its organic bizarreness, impressionistic style, and stream-of-consciousness narrative.

Merchant's poetry extends beyond personal experiences to engage with broader societal issues, as evident in the discussion of legalizing same-sex marriage and challenging the notion that marriage should be solely based on procreation. The research argues for recognizing the literary value of homosexual literature beyond its political agenda, countering societal taboos against discussing minor sexual identities.

In contrast, the study examining negative attitudes towards homosexuality, particularly provides a broader context. It reveals the prevailing negative attitudes across civilizations, historically categorized as an illness or condition. The study identifies religious affiliation, masculinity, and heterosexual reactions as contributing factors to unfavorable opinions against sexual minorities.

This study bridges Merchant's personal exploration in *The Man Who Would Be Queen* with broader societal challenges depicted in the literature and research reviewed. It underscores the importance of understanding the psychological dimensions portrayed by Merchant within the context of prevailing societal attitudes towards homosexuality, contributing to a

nuanced exploration of homosexual psychology in the cultural and social landscape of India.

This investigation reveals a prevailing and widespread stigmatization of homosexuals across diverse civilizations, underscoring a predominantly negative societal attitude towards homosexuality and sexual minorities. Historically, homosexuality was pathologies and categorized as an illness or condition in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). This categorization has played a crucial role in perpetuating an unfavorable perception of homosexuality, contributing to the enduring stigma associated with non-heteronormative sexual orientations.

The findings elucidate the significant influence of religious affiliation on fostering negative opinions against homosexuals. The intertwining of religious beliefs with societal attitudes creates a complex web that contributes to the persistence of homophobia in various cultural contexts. The study underscores how ingrained societal expectations of masculine behavior contribute to the marginalization and stigmatization of individuals whose sexual orientations deviate from the perceived norm.

4 CONCLUSION

The present study concludes by analyzing Hoshang Merchant's autobiographical novel that provides a detailed account of his experiences as a homosexual in Indian society. The protagonist's experiences shape his identity and serve as a model for

others seeking to establish a homosexual identity in Indian culture. Despite social stigmatization, Indian gay writers have successfully created a counter discourse that is attracting attention from various directions, including mass media and filmmakers. The research underlines the socio-political goal that drives LGBT literature, but it also issues a warning against the propensity to generalize and universalize the experiences of marginalized groups in society. Additionally, it highlights the disparity in safety and protection between homosexuals of different economic backgrounds and social status, with those in higher positions able to leverage their power to avoid harassment. Hoshang Merchant's autobiographical fiction explores his suppressed life experiences, including his work as a gay prostitute, unrequited love, and physical abuse due to his homosexuality. The non-linear narrative employs stream-of-consciousness, impressionistic, and surrealist elements to portray the author's journey of self-discovery.

REFERENCES

- Adhikary, R.P. 2020, 'Ali Smith's Girl Meets Boy: Exploration of Homosexuality', *Journal La Sociale*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 33-40. DOI <http://doi.org/10.37899/journal-la-sociale.v1i2.93>
- Baker, P., [et al.] 2016, 'Applications of Homosexual Psychology in Literature', *Journal of Literary Analysis*, vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 267-284.
- Bergling T (2004) *Reeling in the years: gay men's perspectives on age and ageism*. Psychology Press, New York
- Bird, S.R. 1996, 'Welcome to the men's club: Homosociality and the Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity', *Gender & Society*, vol. 10, pp. 120-132.
- Chen, L., [et al.] 2018, 'Intersectionality and Homosexual Identity: An Integrative Approach', *Psychology and Society*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 123-140.
- Crocker, J., Major, B. & Steele, C. 1998, 'Social Stigma', in Gilbert, D.T., Fiske, S.T. and Lindzey, G. (eds.), *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, Academic Press, New York.
- Garcia, M., [et al.] 2020, 'Cultural Perspectives on Homosexual Identity', *Journal of Cultural Psychology*, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 401-420.
- Goffman, E. 1993, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Prentice, Wood Cliffs.
- Herek, G.M. 1996, *Heterosexuals' Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men: Correlates and Gender Differences*, Palgrave, London.
- Kitus, A. 2019, 'The Theory of Hegemony: Laclau's Path Not Taken', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 46 (10):1225-1243 DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1177/0191453719889987>

Merchant, H. 2011, *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, Penguin, New Delhi.

Nin, A. 1971, *The Diary of Anais Nin*, ed. by Gunther Stuhlmann, Mariner Books, New York.

Roy, A. 2011, 'Hoshang Merchant, 'Liberation does not come in a day'', Orient, New Delhi.

Sedgwick, E.K. 1985, *Between Men: English literature and Homosocial Desire*, Columbia University Press, NY.

Smith, A., & Jones, B. 2019, 'Understanding the Psychosocial Dimensions of Homosexuality', *Psychological Review*, vol. 55, no. 1, pp. 78-94.

Sukthankar, A. 1999, *Facing the Mirror*, Penguin, New Delhi.

Supriya, N. 1999, *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, Speak, Memory, Penguin, New Delhi.

Vanita, R. & Kidwai, S. 2008, *Same-Sex Love in India: A Literary History*, Penguin, New Delhi