The Challenge of Translating Queer Experiences with specific reference to Hindi and English

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TRANSLATION STUDIES

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DECLARATION

I, Karishma Anand (Regd. No. 17HATL04), hereby declare that this dissertation titled "**The Challenge of Translating Queer Experiences with specific reference to Hindi and English"**, submitted to the University of Hyderabad, under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Sriparna Das, Centre for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India, is a bonafide research work, which is also free from plagiarism. I also hereby declare that it has not been submitted in full or in part to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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CHAPTER- I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation titled 'The Challenge of Translating Queer[1] Experiences with specific reference to Hindi and English' attempts to investigate the inconsistencies in Hindi and English translations of queer bodies and experiences in various pre-modern and modern texts.

Translation theories started engaging with gender as the feminist writers and translators started addressing issues related to unravelling the gender and gender inequalities through translation. They also challenged the ways through which the silence and invisibility of women can be imposed or questioned through translation itself (Godard 1990, von Flotow 1999, Simon 2004). Currently, there is a conscious move towards widening the scope and including other gendered and queer identities into academic research to understand how these bodies are constructed in writing and performed through translation (Mazzei 2007, Spurlin 2014). Further, recent studies also focus on how queer theories can support the questioning of the dominant models of the theory and practice of translation and vice-versa (Santaemilia 2017, Baldo 2017). For the purpose of this dissertation, I will work with two languages, Hindi and English, to point out the hegemonic and vertical relationships embedded and embodied in these two languages which share an unequal power index due to various reasons.

[1] In Sedgwick's words, "Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive – recurrent, eddying, troublant. The word 'queer' itself means across – it comes from the Indo-European root *-twerkw,* which also yields the German *quer* (traverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English athwart. . . . Keenly, it is relational and strange" (Tendencies xii).

My purpose with this dissertation is two-fold. Firstly, I would analyse the difficulties that a translator encounters when one translates pre-colonial Indian queer terminology into English. I would aim to compare the original text with the English and Hindi renderings to unveil the cultural specificities and intricacies which make the translation of terms an aporia. Since, we are dealing with texts like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Kamasutra* etc. which have all been originally written in Sanskrit, it forms a big chunk of my dissertation but the primary focus would be on the former two languages. The referencing and citations have been done as per MLA 8th edition.

Keith Harvey's groundbreaking work on the complexities of translating gay bodies and homosexual camp style turned the focus of translation theory towards queer/trans bodies. Although scholars in this field appeared few and far between, there has been a rapid succession of works like the special issue of the journal *In Other Words* (2010) edited by B.J. Epstein and Christopher Larkosh's edited volume *Re-engendering Translation* (2011), also a special issue of the journal Comparative Literature Studies (2014), edited by William J. Spurlin; the collected volume *Sexology and Translation* (2015), edited by Heike Bauer; a special issue of the Transgender Studies Quarterly titled *Translating Transgender* (2016), edited by David Gramling and Aniruddha Dutta; and *Queer in Translation*, edited by B.J. Epstein and Robert Gillette (2017). These scholars try to destabilise the traditional modes of representation and expose how language perpetuates hegemonic constructs by engaging with queer sexuality and gender variance embedded in the politics of translation contextualizing it across various languages and cultures and "specifically how observations of the body and its desire were translated into new knowledge formations and disciplinary practices" (Bauer 08).

However, since language is ideologically layered, the practice of translation gives birth to new codifications, textualities, and cultural meanings. Translation is a transcultural and mediating practice; it is essential to pay attention to the multiple strategies employed for moving a text from one language because that can lead one to the intentionality of the translator. Much of the contemporary debates which center around the cultural untranslatability of terms for "alternative" gender and sexualities oppose the pervasiveness of monolingualism, that seeks to homogenize non-normative bodies and their linguistic representation in an increasingly globalized world. In India, with the exception of a few scholars like Aniruddha Dutta and Raina Roy, Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai, Akshay Khanna, Akhil Katyal; little work has been done on the problematics of transcultural queer translatability. This work attempts to fill the lacuna in queer academic research with special regard to Hindi language. Queer translations across eras make visible the rich multiplicity of queer identities and queer writing/translation in India. A careful rereading of the canonized works of literature and history and the review of social codes, manuals, and mythological archives is the methodology which would be employed to locate the 'abject'[2] in all its original intentionality. A particular focus would be on interpreting the silences wherever sexual infractions are suggested. Secondly, there would be a brief examination of post-colonial queer literature to examine the kind of evolution the language, and representative terms have undergone beginning with colonial occupation to contemporary times.

[2] Abjection literally means "to cast out". The psychoanalyst and linguist Julia Kristeva developed the term which refers to the process by which identificatory regimes exclude subjects that they render unintelligible or beyond classification.

The focus would be on the intricate representations of 'alternative sexualities' and desires to examine the process of translation and how it is effected by the changing sexual and gender mores in the society and how the attitudes, in turn, reflect on the depiction of queer bodies. Both the analyses would be accompanied by a detailed terminological investigation from both the above mentioned periods.

Earlier studies in the Indian context generally sought to trace queer local histories through translation of a wide range of literary and mythological texts. Significant texts include the book, *The Origin of Evil in Hindu Mythology* by Wendy Doniger (1976), the author briefly talks about the trope of 'the Androgynous Parent' (352) in Hindu Mythology, the theme of androgyny is given a more elaborate treatment in the book titled, *Women, Androgynes and Other Mythical Beasts* (1980), in *Splitting the Difference: Gender and Myth in Ancient Greece and India* (2000), Doniger examines in the chapter, "Bisexual transformations", the difference between the sexual transformation of the body and the gendered transformation of the mind and memory and brings out the subtext of implicit 'homosexuality' in the narratives. In the article '*The First Medicalization: The Taxonomy and Etiology of Queerness in Classical Indian Medicine'*, by Michael J. Sweet and Leonard Zwilling (1993), the authors unearthed the terms in the Indian medical literature like the *Ayurveda*, the *Charaksamhita*, the *Susrutsamhita* used for non-normative sexual orientation, sexual behaviour and gender role and warned against the tendency to conflate Indian and Western queer categories; *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History*(2000), as well as Devdutt Pattanaik's *The Man Who Was a Woman and Other Queer Tales of Hindu Lore* (2002) and '*Shikhandi and Other Tales They Don't Tell You'*(2014) are collections of tales of 'queerness' from

various sources of Hindu mythology. In Vanita's edited collection, *Queering India: Same-Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society* (2002), Michael J. Sweet's examination of queerness and sexuality in English translations of the *Kamasutra* is particularly relevant (2002). Sweet uses Alain Danielou's translation of the *Kamasutra* and draws on specific textual examples to illustrate the various meanings conveyed in the descriptions of sexual activity. Amara Das Wilhelm in his book, *Tritiya-Prakriti: People of the Third Sex: Understanding Homosexuality, Transgender Identity and Intersex Conditions Through Hinduism* (2004), has challenges the anterior and interior, misinformed and homophobic discourses and looked into ancient Hindu scriptures with an intent of validating queer cultures which were constructively incorporated into ancient Hindu society. Hoshang Merchant's *Indian Homosexuality* (2010) gives useful insights into the presence of queer in India from ancient to modern times. Vanita's *Gender, Sex and the City: Urdu Rekhti Poetry in India, 1780–1870* (2012) also considers the issue of translation of specifically Urdu romantic poetry or ghazals. Vanita outlines her strategy for translation, writing specifically about translating Urdu references to lovers and railing against Western critical interventions that 'privilege the heterosexual' (2012). Vanita has also translated *Chocolate* (2009), a collection of eight stories in Hindi (1927) by Ugra. Vanita says that even if the stories were written to censure male homosexuality, it was the only way in which one could speak about it (Palekar17).

To the queer readership, this kind of explicit enunciation of homosexuality was better than complete invisibility in literary/public culture. Indeed, as Vanita points out, critics of *Chocolate* alleged that Ugra made homosexuality look alluring (Epstein and Gillett 18). But while these works like Pattanaik's serve an important function in historically

situating queer bodies in ancient India which has in recent years also become a tool for social activism, some scholars are also concerned about the problematics of translations that overlook the inherent slip in promoting a certain kind of homogeneous queerness. Palekar (2017) cites an anonymous blogpost in her paper which I found very appropriate to quote in the present context :

> [we must] take a hard look at this business of 'finding queer practices' in many 'third world cultures' that authors like Devdutt Pattanaik and Ruth Vanita are invested in. Such studies and fictional retellings are almost always along the lines of, 'See these people can be queer too' or (worse) saying, 'This is our legacy! This is our history!' without seeing the 'we' is constructed at the cost of excluding [any Indian] who doesn't have 'sacred Hindu texts' as a part of their history. The more dangerous subtext of this emerging genre is, queerness can exist in [a regional language], but has to be rescued by English, receive its marks of legitimacy and then we can have a 'tradition' to consume and call our own (18).

Queer translators should be careful of this tendency that tries to look at queer bodies around the world through the same lens. However such historicizing is also seen as important to counter nationalist claims of queer being a foreign disease (Palekar 18). An improve-the-west attitude prevalent in Indian academia contributes to the long-standing myth that queer identities were 'glorified' and 'held in high esteem' in ancient India. One needs to acknowledge that these identities came from a place of tolerance rather than acceptance, as will be illustrated in later sections.

My first comparative analysis pertains to Devdutt Pattanaik's English renderings (above mentioned texts) of mythological stories which are originally in Sanskrit, which are then subsequently transferred from English to Hindi in the translated version (along with an investigation of the paratext in the translated version).Together with historiography, anthologizing and criticism, Ruth Vanita's '*Same-Sex Love in India'*(2000) is an important resource text which would also be analysed for queer lexicon and language. When moving a text from one language and culture to another, one should be careful not to lose sight of the ideological inflexions and cadences that are imbricated within a textual and cultural practice. The following quote by Ruth Vanita is telling as to how translations affect cultural mores :

> Baba Ramdev's word "aprakritik" (unnatural) is not found in any Hindu scripture in connection with same-sex sexuality. First-century medical texts frame certain genders and sexual behaviours as medical problems occurring in nature.The Kamasutra refers to men who desire men as tritiya prakriti (third nature). The notion of anything being unnatural is incompatible with the Hindu philosophical idea of Nature…..The word aprakritik is a modern translation of the English word "unnatural." In relation to gender and sexuality, this word derives from St Paul, in the Book of Romans, who refers to women having sex in a way that is "against nature" (King James Version, 1611). He then refers to men leaving "the natural use of the woman" and having sex with each other. This idea was picked up by St Augustine (354-430 AD), who viewed all sex as sinful, and considered same-sex sex the worst because it is against nature (Vanita 2).

The semantic negotiations produced in translation are not simply manifested in textuality alone, but similar to Butlerian performativity where gender is not a biological-given, these meanings are located culturally or transculturally, always questioning the originality of meanings (Spurlin 2014). In recent years, queer studies have undergone what Patricia Ticineto Clough (2007) and others have called an 'affective turn', as more and more scholars pay attention to the roles that cross-cultural and cross-temporal identification plays in shaping ideas about sexuality. The questions I would be looking to answer in this thesis would be – how do we negotiate with the act of translating terms for representing non-normative gender and sexuality in comparing texts and cultures of the past which are seemingly untranslatable to contemporary understandings of queer difference? How might we work with the specificity and simultaneous polysemanticism of the term queer, which has its origins in western Anglophonic cultures, when translating texts from non- Anglophonic and non- western contexts? What new translation issues arise when we work within postcolonial cultures, for example where terms for same-sex sexual desires may not be embedded discursively in indigenous languages, or, if they transpired within a different set of cultural , ideological and material conditions? Transcultural representations of queer sexual identities and communities take many configurations, and translation is most certainly a very substantial one.

Therefore, literature about queer desire and identities has often taken on special meanings for sexual minorities. Especially in societies where minority sexualities and gender deviances are met with silence, homophobia, legal oppression, or blatant violence, it is not uncommon for people with those interests to seek out examples of similar people like

them. Often sexual minorities turn to history in order to make cross-temporal, affective connections between "lives, texts, and other cultural phenomena left out of sexual categories back then and, on the other hand, those left out of current sexual categories now" (Dinshaw 1). Such instincts are rooted in the attempt to extend "the resources for self- and community-building" and to create an "affective connection" (Angles 87) across distances of space and time. In addition to turning to the past for succor, people often turn to the writing of their contemporaries or near-contemporaries in other nations to learn about how people in other places deal with feelings outside their own societies. Through identifying across the boundaries of time and culture, many activists have gained the confidence to argue that compulsive heterosexuality has not necessarily been the norm everywhere across time. The demand for queer literature has seen a phenomenal rise in recent years in India (evident from the number of books and movies being churned out on the subject), which indicates shifting societal mores around the cloak of shame and silence, which usually enveloped queer practices. The ground-breaking Supreme Court judgment on September 6, 2018, which decriminalized homosexuality bore testimony to the fact that attitudes towards gender deviance had indeed come a long way.

One of the key assumptions of the first chapter is that in writing the history of queer thought and identity, it is crucially important to examine the kind of cross-temporal and cross-cultural 'affective links' which translators form through their interventions. Rather than treating the gateway of translation as an invisible, free opening that allows unfiltered access to another culture, one should pay attention to what is being translated, who is translating and also how translators shape the various kinds of affective links that emerge.

This chapter consists of an elaborate sketch of the history of queer culture in India. However, it must be mentioned that care must be taken while assigning the term 'queer' on ancient Indian narratives since this term is a western construct. Even the acts and articulations that we now describe as queer have existed in different epochs and cultures. The modern understanding of sexuality somewhat differ from those early characterizations and hence what may be perceived as queer by one would not hold the same meaning for another. For the purpose of this dissertation, the term queer has been used as an umbrella concept which encompasses all the gender deviant identities and non-heteronorm practices. Queer bodies went through a different kind of devaluation during the colonial regime and in the subsequent years. In a parallel strain to the Indian society as to what happened to the Arab world, Assab (2017) speaks about the "homoeroticization of the Arab" which validated colonial rule and resulted in the denegration of same-sex sexuality in their region itself (Epstein and Gillett 31).

As a reaction to the totalizing logic of colonial order , a kind of oppressive rhetoric around sexuality and gender deviance was mobilized by the Indian nationalists which eventually became central to the emergent bourgeois-capitalist notions of freedom and nation. A reflection on the problematics of too much dependence on history and faulty interpretations/ translations of the narratives has also been undertaken in this chapter.

The second chapter titled "The Problematics of *Tritiya prakriti"* deals with the issue of translation from the point of view of the theorisation of Indian non-normative sexualities and the queer politics. India as a geographic demarcation for queer involves a complex cultural dynamic in which bodies have conducted and been transformed by practices, meanings, and policies of sexuality that are very specific to the historical processes and

social matrix of the region. It can be summarized, the Indian 'border-body' queer conversation in the following statements: a) Indian queer studies and translation have mostly been undertaken in a transnational dialogue, which implies a politics of cultural translation; b) colonialism/decolonisation is a tension implicit in the articulation of queer dissidents; c) queerness has been associated with modernity (Western) in most twentieth-century debates on gender and sexuality; and e) machineries of consumption and neoliberalism complicate the processes of body liberation and queer expressions (the monolinguistic hegemony of English).

The theoretical task of translation as politics and the in-between position of the queer subject confirms the fluid and shifting nature of the interdisciplinary area we are working upon. Even on the level of terminology, queerness has already been re-appropriated, refracted and even distorted time and again.

The third chapter, 'Bodies and Borders in Pre-Colonial India: Conceptualization in Terms of Translation' builds on the second chapter in the sense that the terminological investigation and debate undertaken is indicative of more fundamental problems connected to the intercultural transmission of ideas and attitudes about expressions of queerness between identity politics and the performative and anti-essentializing tendencies of queer thought. As Butler (1993) argues in "Critically Queer", " if the term 'queer' is to be a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage.." (19). Cross-cultural language crossings involve deterritorializations and reterritorializations of linguistic and cultural fields, rather than a simple transfer of

meanings from one to another linguistic code. The field of Translation Studies should emphasise on the multiplicity and fragmentation of queer identities specific to regions (especially in Indian context), instead of invoking queer as a universalist category. In what follows is an in-depth terminological investigation of post-colonial and contemporary Hindi terms which will uncover the multiple intersections of queerness and Indianness situated in the larger field of the global and the local articulations. Not only the circulation of 'queer' knowledge and expressions is a type of translation, but also of scrutinising how queer-themed texts are translated and thus put back into the global circulation of queerness (Pattanaik, Vanita and others who have translated Sanskrit and Hindi narratives into English) will help me develop this double perspective by analysing modern queer-themed novels in Hindi and their available translations into English.

The fourth chapter, "Representation: Issues and Challenges within Different Domains" along with the observations that are drawn from the preceding chapters, focuses upon the processes through which non- normative bodies are assimilated and subsumed into hetero-normative experiences. Queer practices are reduced to a normativized system of sexuality and subsequent procreation (as opposed to the non-procreative aspect of queer sexuality), For Example, Pattanaik (2014) narrates that in the *Krittivasa Ramayana*, two women are asked to copulate for obtaining a child (Bhagiratha) (91-94), in another story Shiva becomes Radha to stay with Kali who incarnated into Krishna (resorting to queerness to replicate paradigms of heterosexuality) (63-66).

In the Conclusion, I summarize my observations on asymmetric relationships in Indian mythology which are revealed through review and translation of various Hindu mythological narratives. The investigation of pre-colonial law reveals that texts have also

exhibited homophobic attitudes with some or the other form of punishment prescribed for indulging in same-sex activity, however mild that may be in nature. I would like to mention here that pre-modern laws in India censured cross-caste affiliations more than same-sex sexuality. As the praxis of caste is beyond the scope of our present research, I would only be concentrating on the areas of Translation and Queer.

If we talk about the contemporary times, in India, people mostly do not look at gender through the prism of performativity because 'Indian' associations of queerness come with the outer forms of the body (evident through the mythological stories and texts) and not with inner feelings like the West. For Example, Hijras are widely believed to be hermaphrodites (it is the archetypal image) whereas they are mostly biological males. Identifying with the word 'homosexual' or 'queer' would make them an anomaly, which is highly problematic in Indian society. Merchant (2009) states in his book Forbidden Sex/ Texts that it is not the act which is bewildering to most men but the identification which gets attached to it, is. Portrayal in Hindi literature is equally problematic because most of the times one comes across disturbing beliefs about homosexuality always being 'situational' or 'circumstantial', it being a disease only existing within the upper and middle classes and at times it has the evil function of unleashing sexual abuse on a victim. In a different direction, scholarship on indigenous sexualities opens up the discussions to decolonise questions of sexuality, gender, and conceptualisations of the 'deviant' body. At the same time, native queer politics challenges the notion of the nation to prioritise the notion of identity, in turn prioritising multiple practices of sexuality.

Queering translation and by rendering queer phenomena across languages and cultures expose the unnaturalness of norms to reveal the hegemonic discourses of

heteronormativity and also forces us to question our understanding of translation as a theory and practice.

CHAPTER - II

AN OVERVIEW OF *TRITIYA PRAKRITI* AND ITS DISCONTENTS ACROSS VARIOUS HINDU PRACTICES

History of sexuality studies in/about India has always been overshadowed by the Orientalist discourses by European scholars, so much so that studies on ancient Indian texts have been inaccurately represented and analyzed (Wilhelm 368-69). Most of the western scholars believed that a systematic discourse about gender variance was first created by modern Europeans and non-western cultures had no concept of labelled identity categories (Foucault 43). This belief was challenged by scholars demonstrating the formulation of sexual categories, presenting revised, re-translated collection of writings from ancient period. In their zeal for countering the West, scholars have gone to the extent of inaccurately translating queer histories in their respective texts.

The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of the pre-existing attitudes in ancient India so that a foundation could be laid for the next chapter where we can bring out the inconsistencies of the accounts, interpretations and most importantly, translations of various authors as discussed in the Introduction. The succeeding sections also bring out the dangers of such an undertaking. Books like Pattanaik's *Shikhandi and The Man Who was a Woman*, Wilhelm's *Tritiya-Prakriti: People of the Third Sex*, Vanita's *Same-Sex Love* conceptualise a kind of queer utopia during India's ancient past. This chapter seeks to counter those claims by examining the social and moral censure which gender variance faced. Along with an overview of the past this chapter also traces the history of queer in modern India to understand the ramifications it has on the translatorial choices of the

translators and vice-versa.What would be the effect of the choices? What is the reason for them to make those choices? What are the dangers involved in these extreme juxtapositions of queer meanings in documented texts? What about the question of ethics, on the part of the translator, of transplanting western experience in the Indian context? - are some of the questions we would ponder in later sections.

Sweet and Zwilling (1993) unearthed terms for non-normative bodies in the pre-modern Sanskritic medical texts like the *Charaksamhita* and the *Susrutasamhita*. They critiqued the erroneous tendency in academia to conflate Indian and Western queer categories because in West, same-sex object choice and sexual behavior were the markers for labeling where as in ancient India, the "atypical gender behavior and coital role" (Sweet and Zwilling 595) of such an individual would be crucial in perceiving him as 'queerly' different. Though not ostracized from the society and confined in asylums like the West did, the queer, unable to perform the procreative function was put in the category of deviants (*Manusmriti* 3.150). One also comes across lists of *napumsa* (the third gender) in major Hindu texts like *Mahabharata*, *Puranas*, *Manu-smriti*, *Charaka-Samhita*, *Sushruta-samhita*, *Narada-smriti* etc. For example, there are eight types of *'napumsa'* in *Charaka-Samhita* which are *dwiretas, pavanendriya, samskaravahi narasandha or narisandha, vakri, Irsyabhirati* and *Vatika- sandhaka* (Sharma 414). In the *Manusmriti* (c. 500 C.E.), the *kliba* is excluded from sacrifice, rituals (3.150, 3.239, 4.205), he was also not allowed to possess property (9.201). *Kliba* was actually a derogatory term (usually used to refer to an impotent male or the characteristic associations of impotency) which did not have any fixed meaning. *Narada-smriti* describes fourteen different types of *klibas* (12.18). In the *Kamasutra* (2002), there are a few instances of 'queer' gender

and sexuality in the text, primarily in the sections on "Oral Sex (*Auparishataka*)"(65), "Women of the Royal Harem" (48) and "Women who can be Won without Effort" (108). The *Kamasutra* categorizes the *Tritiya prakriti* into *purushrupini* (one who acts and dresses like a male), *strirupini* (one who behaves and acts like a female). The existence of queer is also explained in texts that deal with *jyotisha*. In fact, the planet Mercury or *Budh*, one of the nine celestial bodies, is visually imagined as sometimes male, sometimes female, riding a chimeric beast that is neither lion nor elephant (Pattanaik 13).

According to the *Skanda Purana*, Vishnu (the male God) is said to be the form of the female God (on account of Vishnu's transformation into Mohini). *Agni Purana* mentions a ritual purificatory bath after homosexual activity, the Linga Purana mentions "sex from the back", the *Brahma Purana* censures homosexuality saying it will make men impotent. Self-sex finds a mention in *Padma Purana*, for the sexual satisfaction of the thwarted or widows. The sexual transformation of Iil to Ila finds a mention in *Brahma Purana* and *Linga Purana*, the legend of Sumedhas and Somavat is present in *Skanda Purana*, the sex change of Narada is narrated in *Brahma Purana , Varaha Purana* talks about a Brahmana named Somasarma who got changed into a woman. Additionally instances of cross-dressing are also recorded in *Brahmavaivarta Purana* (Dange 1279-1283).

Doniger (2000) evokes the myth of the union between Shiva and Mohini (Vishnu). Though turned into a woman, Vishnu never loses his male memory and essence which turns this apparent case of transsexualism into a case of closeted homosexuality. This finds an interesting parallel in the myth of the enchanted forest of Shiva where every creature transformed into a female. In a different version of the story, even Shiva, who is making love with Parvati in the forest turns into a female, which becomes an instance of

lesbianism. She draws her analysis that: “a homophobic society often inspires a closet homosexuality encoded in texts that make it necessary or useful for us to employ a hermeneutics of suspicion if we are to understand them”.(300)

Tales of queerness abound in Hindu mythology, one in which Shiva turned into the mother of his devotee to deliver her child, he does so because his devotee would have been more comfortable with her mother than the wild appearance of himself. Another popular story is of Vishnu in which he transforms into an enchanting damsel Mohini to kill Bhasmasur and sexually unites with Shiva to give birth to many offsprings. Elsewhere she/he unites with Aravan to fulfil his wish to marry. Many male to female transformations happen either to kill a negative character by enticing them through their sexual availability or to seek sexual/sensual pleasures and produce children, which happen to Narada (who happens to completely forget his male essence), to Samavan who becomes a woman and requests his friend to marry him. Lord Shiva becomes a woman to dance and playfully sport with Krishna (while Radha and Parvati look on, they withdraw themselves from the scene and give them a kind of homoerotic/homosocial space). In another story, Shiva becomes Radha to stay with Kali who incarnated into Krishna (resorting to queerness to replicate paradigms of heterosexuality). Aruna became Aruni and had an offspring with both Indra and Surya. Instances where a female becomes a male are relatively rare, Shikhandi is the most popular example, here she became a male to satisfy her/his wife (still not free from the rubric of reproduction and sensual pleasures though seeking vengeance was the greater aim). Chudala became a man because her husband was not ready to receive knowledge from a woman (a man is intellectual and a woman sexual). Transvestism also happens to entice men to their dooms (often men wear

women's clothes). For example Bhima kills Kichaka to save Draupadi, Arjuna wore women's clothes to entice Pormannan, a sorcerer. Samba, Krishna's son plays a prank on rishis by acting like a pregnant woman and incurs wrath with catastrophic results. Stories of miraculous births are also retold , Mandhata who came out of king Yuvanashva's side, Bhagirath who was the son of king Dilip's widows, Urvashi who came out of Narayana's thigh (Nara draws an image on Narayana's thigh from where she emerged.Other category of myths are those which are characterized by female only or male only homosocial spaces, e.g Ratnavali and Brahmani , queen Alli , Pramila (though self-sufficient , she required a male for reproduction, unlike other male characters who could bring forth children on their own), Rishyashring and Lord Karthikeya are the representatives of the male-only space. Although there are images of male-male and female-female friendship, one is never sure if this love is platonic, romantic or sexual, leaving them open to interpretations.

In a heterosexual and patriarchal construct, transformation of sex (especially from male to female), same-sex intercourse etc. are bound to invite censure. Unlike a heteronormative marriage that fulfills the greater aim of procreation, a homosexual relationship constitute two ritually polluting paradigms: sterility and lust. *Dharmashastras*, the law books in pre-modern India, was especially harsh towards men who could not produce children and were severely condemned. The scripture reads: "Priests who steal, fallen men, non-men (impotent men), atheists (those who do not consider Vedas to be divine revelations) are unworthy of making offerings to the gods and ancestors." In the *Manusmriti*, men bereft of procreative abilities are supposed to recommend (Niyoga) a sage or his brother to produce offspring on his behalf (9.167).

Notably, the *ashrama* system was embedded within Hinduism's caste system, and only the upper three castes were supposed to follow the past prescribed by the *Shastras*. Therefore according to the ancient law texts, any 'homosexual' activity is met with censure if committed by a Brahmana than a Sudra, on whom no social sanctions apply. In fact, many forms of heterosexual sex (like cross-caste sex) might invite greater disapproval than same-sex practices (11.174). In the fifteenth-century digest (*dharmanibandha*) composed in Mithila known as the *Daṇḍaviveka*. Its author, Vardhamāna Upadhyāya, defines *ayoni* as 'organs other than the genitals of a woman' and further distinguishes two types: first, other parts of the bodies of women and men, and, second, the private parts of cows and other animals (Ali 09).

The only way queers can escape from the dictates of the society is by creating a caste/community of their own, the hijra community that functions very much like monastic orders (Buddhist *viharas*, Hindu *mathas*) with a leader and followers. Hijras are organized communities of males whose gender expression is that of a woman. Their community generally comprises of hermaphrodites, transvestites, eunuchs, and transsexuals. Hijras believe that they do not belong to either sex and claim to be the descendents of the ancient *kliba/kinnar/kimpurusha* (though these claims cannot be validated). Nanda (1999) extensively describes about origin myths of the hijra clan in her book. According to hijra folklore, Rama declared that they would become the rulers in the *Kali Yuga* and blessed them with the ability to bless and curse. In another lore Bahucharaji (patron goddess of hijras, worshipped in Gujarat), castrated her husband because he behaved like a woman instead of consummating the marriage with her. In another story, the man who tried to molest Bahucharaji was cursed with impotency. He

was forgiven after he worshipped the goddess, dressed as a woman (33-37). However, in the *varna/jati* hierarchy, the hijras are far from the mainstream, below all *varnas*, as the only professions available to them are singing, dancing and prostitution, the hijras in effect, were, seen as polluted by the village, and therefore the resultant vilification as 'criminal communities' during British rule. British laws had a hugely negative impact on the hijra and other traditional transgender communities. Ancient Jain scriptures delineate a concept of gender assignment not on the basis of primary and secondary sexual characteristics or on the presence or absence of procreative abilities but on the basis of concepts like biological sex (*dravyalinga*) and physiological sex (*bhavalinga*). (Zwilling and Sweet 365). Actually sexuality figured in determining the worthiness of third-sex persons to get ordained or serve either as lay disciples or as donors from whom a monk may accept food, clothes or lodging. Where characteristics such as "cross-dressing, impotence, physiological sexual anomalies, and same-sex orientation", are signifiers of a pathological femininity or masculinity in the West, among the Jains these characteristics indicate membership in a discrete third-sex category. The Jains' ability to differentiate between a psychological sexuality or sexual orientation and biological sex foreshadows the complex typologies of modern sexological theory, with the proliferation of categories such as gender role, sexual identity, sexual orientation, and genetic and morphologic sex, which may or may not be mutually commensurate (359-384).

2.1 The Problematics of Historicizing 'Queer'

The past decade of scholarship in India has witnessed a rich outpouring of queer archives and its varied instantiations. The scientific process of "queering" pasts has been undertaken through corrective reformulations of "suppressed" or misread pre- Vedic and

Vedic materials. Implicit here, is the assumption that the ancient texts and mythology, in all its multiple articulations, hold a favourable disposition towards the 'queer'. The inclusion of ethnographic data, oral histories, popular culture, and later interpolations may have fractured the original texts, but the aim of knowledge production is still deemed approachable if only one can think of more capacious ways to differentiate the huge difference between acceptance and tolerance (Arondekar 11). Nevertheless, such ritualistic activism has resulted in creating awareness for the queer movements and giving impetus to queer literature, activism and this huge movement culminated into the decriminalization of the draconian 19th century law that criminalized homosexual activities in September 2018.

A kind of activist literature which has multiplied in recent years draws on the queer sense of history to counter the argument that 'queer' is a western construction, which is indeed problematic as:

(1) there is no one label to designate the wide range of pre-queer, same-sex behaviours, desires, psychologies and socialities, as well as the various forms of gender deviance that today fall within the queer category, a number of these identity categories persisted in various forms for thousands of years before the modern term or concept of queer was invented.

(2) Due to cultural differences, there is a kind of definitional uncertainty of what constitutes queer especially in the Indian context where men who engage in homosexual activities do not necessarily identify as homosexual or queer.

(3) We need to take cognizance of the fact that there was a diversity of attitudes with which a queer body was viewed in ancient India, the dichotomy between acceptance and tolerance is mostly overlooked. Giti Thadani's work does not prove that same-sex relationships were "socially acceptable" and "highly esteemed" several thousand years ago in some parts of South Asia (Shah 1993).

The presumption here is that sexuality is a definable and universal activity, ignoring the variety of cultural patterns and meanings. Does sex have the same meaning as it does for us today? How does one validate that certain social practices are acceptable or highly esteemed? What kind of evidence does one need to make those kinds of claims? It is necessary to understand the context, the map of social reality, at the time. Trying to reconstruct the context of ancient India is difficult. Yet we can begin by reading sacred narratives, religious documents, ancient law books, and even the placement of the sculptures within architectural complexes. These texts, of course, are usually prescriptive. They cannot be used to understand the behaviours, motives or attitudes of the common people. It is also assumed that the earlier pre-colonial period had more flexible sexual codes, but this may be because we have more archival information on the colonial period (Gupta 322). We can use these texts and materials to speculate about how people lived and thought. Perhaps, the only people we will know anything about are the elite men who wrote and were written about. These are the conditions of our knowledge of the past. Such analytical models of recovery should be analyzed with discretion.

Nayan Shah’s (1993) essay warns against an unmediated recovery of the past. He questions the dependence on a recovered history to sanction our surviving present: "We may trap ourselves in the history to sanction our existence. South Asian lesbians and gay

present now. On that alone we demand acknowledgment" and however, while maintaining that "the past is not a thing waiting to be discovered and recovered," Shah (2009) advocates strategies of the historical that derive from a differentiated language of loss and discovery. By relying on the coming-out materials of his contemporaries and to think critically about the archives, grafts a lexicon of "resisting silences" or "liberation" onto the project of archival research. Working in this vein, Maya Sharma (2007) has documented the stories of North Indian working class lesbian women to shatter the myth that lesbians in India are all urban, westernized and from the upper and middle class. Sharpening our present political struggles demands an understanding of our current historical context. We can begin by acknowledging that, although there may have been homosexual acts in the past, "what is perhaps relatively new is the idea and development of a 'gay relationship.'" Gay identities and relationships are historically particular to the twentieth century. Shivananda Khan asserts that gay relationships are not limited to "emotional and sexual bonds akin to marriage between heterosexual couples" (Eng 149). Over the past several decades lesbians and gay men have developed a variety of social arrangements and relationships. Recovering histories of both the ancient and recent past challenges us all to understand the possibilities of alternative sexualities and social arrangements. Through mobilizing histories, re-appropriating languages, and other cultural strategies, we may be able to gain affirmation and support for queer desires and relationships.

2.2 Sexuality: Diversity of Attitudes

In order to understand the ancient attitudes towards queer in India, one has to place it in the context of Hindu attitudes towards sex, gender, pleasure, fertility and celibacy. Most

of the Hindu attitudes towards sex are related to procreation. Some Upanishads compare Vedic rituals to sexuality, such as the oblation of butter into the fire resembling the acts of procreation. According to *Manusmriti*, non-procreative sex amounts to sin. Karmic faiths believe that the living owe their life to their ancestors and so have to repay this debt (*pitr-rina*) by marrying and producing children. This is a key rite of passage (*samskara*). This is a major reason for opposing same-sex relationships, which are seen as essentially sterile and non-procreative. Therefore to beget a son is referred to as paying one's debt to the ancestors. In the Hindu liturgical calendar, the "festival of the dead" (*pitripaksha mela*), two weeks in mid-September, always occupies a prominent place (Pattanaik).

The human couple itself is valued by the Vedic literature for the rituals are to be accomplished by both the husband and wife together. Men who refused to lay with women during their fertile period, for whatever reason, were cursed and doomed, since they were denying an ancestor a chance to be reborn. In the *Brahmavaivarta Purana* (750 to 1550 C.E.), the enchantress Mohini tells Brahma, "Any man who refuses to satisfy a willing woman in her fertile period is a eunuch." This idea is explicit in the Mahabharata when Arjuna is deprived of his manhood after he spurns the sexual attentions of the nymph Urvashi. Although sexual relations within a Hindu marriage are meant to be for procreation, however it is expected that couples will be intimate for pleasure also. Sex for the purpose of pleasure, in fact, was from very early on a recognised and legitimate pursuit for the male elite (Ali16). With some exceptions, most of the early treatises on *kama* is mainly didactic in nature and viewed as a duty of an individual. It is also notable that female sexuality is censured by dictates of chastity and male sexuality is only warned against lust. Spilling the seed is equated with loss of merit

they accumulated through asceticism and celibacy. It can be exemplified through the wrestling culture (*Akhara*) where wrestlers are encouraged to adopt an ascetic lifestyle with their presiding deity being Lord Hanuman, who is himself a *Brahmchari* (celibate). Interestingly, Kakkar (2011) reports that two categories of *panthi*, i.e., *komat panthis* (who engage in oral sex only and who believe they will become powerful by performing oral sex on younger men) and *dhurrati panthis* (men who have sex with other men because the semen would make them twice as manly and an efficient sexual partner for their wives) are also respected teachers in body-building gymnasiums (Berlatsky 87-88). Contrastingly, the celibacy of women which came into prominence with the rise of the *Brahmakumari* culture looked at sexuality as polluting for women.

In Indian epics and chronicles, there are occasional references to same-sex intercourse. In the Bengal version of the Padma Purana is the story of a king who dies without an heir to the throne. The widows, directed by a sage, make love to each other (one behaving as a man, the other as a woman) and conceive a child. But since, two women are involved in the act of procreation, the child is born without bones or brain (according to Sushruta Samhita, the mother gives the foetus flesh and blood, while the father gives the bone and brain). These stories represent same-sex sexuality as a last resort or a poor substitute to the privileged heteronormative structures of marriage and family. The point to note is that if the child belongs to a male parent than the offspring is whole and complete, as in the story of Mandhata, unlike Bhagiratha who was born as a chunk of flesh (*kalala*). This reasoning seems to not apply to male parents. There is a strong undertone of womb-envy apart from the overtones of misogyny.

Androgynity is a recurring theme in Hindu mythology. Doniger (2000) sees the idea of androgynity in Hinduism in the context of the evolution of the relationship between male and female. She deconstructs the often romanticized image of *Ardhanarishwar* which is regarded and often cited as an example of queerness, saying " *Arshanarishwar* is often regarded as a form of Siva, not a form of Siva and Paravati ; the literal meaning of his name is "The lord (isvara) who is half (ardha) a woman (nari)." a masculine noun for a male androgyne (317) . Even the siva linga , the male (linga) is surrounded by the female (yoni) , representing the sexual union , despite the presence of such strong female symbolism surrounding the linga, "it is traditionally regarded as a form of Siva alone and it functions in mythology as a phallus pure and simple "(318). She strips us of the understanding that Ardhanarishwar is not the symbol of "perfect union and balance" between the male and female principle. In the Skanda Purana , Siva is mocked: " …. Daksa's scornful diatribe against Siva : He belongs to none of the four classes (god, demon , mortal and animal) and is neither male nor female and he certainly cannot be a eunuch , because his phallus is an object of worship" (323). Confirmation to societal categories seems to a prerequisite for respectability. Doniger even gives references to Sanskrit poetry to make explicit how emotions ranged from humorous sympathy to scathing satire for the androgynity of Siva. She also talks about the 'female androgyne' and shows the negativity (heteropatriarchy at play) which surrounds even this figure. It is symbolized as an instance of a bad union. She concludes; "when the androgyne is primarily male , there are problems within him; he is weakened , or mocked, or unable to give birth, or threatened with death when he tries to give birth , but when the androgyne is primarily female , the physical dangers are replaced by moral dangers" (333).

In Buddhism, a number of rules and regulations were laid down by the monks in the monastic tradition for practice, including rules on sexual behaviour and what were seen as 'unnatural' sexual acts – both heterosexual and homosexual. However, this emphasis on monasticism does not indicate that Buddhism is necessarily queer-phobic. Indeed, in all of the voluminous texts on the doctrine (the suttas), we never encounter any general prohibition on homosexuality as such. Amidst all this, the pandaka men, who were deemed to be effeminate, promiscuous and self-advertising, were specifically forbidden from entering the monastery. It appears that the condemnation of pandaka men was not for their homosexual identity as much as it was due to the fear of them luring other monks into sexual indulgence and disrupting the equanimity of the monastery. (Pattanaik)

An overview of the religious scriptures, narratives and temple sculptures does suggest that homosexual activities in varied forms, did exist in pre-colonial India. Though not part of the mainstream, its existence was acknowledged but not approved. There was a degree of tolerance when the act expressed itself within the framework of heterosexuality – when men 'became women' in their desire for other men. The question we are left with are: How different are modern day attitudes from ancient attitudes towards non-normative sexual attitudes? Does our past bear an effect on us in regard to same-sex affection and intercourse? And while we think over these questions, we must be aware that the ancient attitudes that denigrated homosexual conduct, also institutionalized the caste system and approved the marginalization of women.

2.3 Prejudice and Resistance In The Indian Society

The repression of dissident genders and sexualities certainly pre-existed colonialism, as should become evident from the preceding sections, however pre-colonial repression differs from current forms in extent and in content . Pre-colonial queer repression was not a continuous, homogeneous attitude through India. From the colonial period until the adoption of anti-sodomy provisions in IPC 377 in 2018 (with a temporary reprieve between 2009 to 2013), the Indian queer repression was essentialized and territorially generalized through inscription in the laws. Where pre-colonial conduct was never punished with harsh treatment like permanent exile. Yet, till the scrapping off of IPC 377 in 2013, queer sexualities were criminalized.

The preceding sections show how homosexuality and gender deviance were viewed with a variety of attitudes in ancient times. The Shastras and texts are often silent about the subject or do not talk about it explicitly. At the most, a ritual bath and some purificatory regimes were prescribed if homosexuality is committed. Gender deviance too was tolerated and found a place. Of course, ridicule and mockery has regularly been used to depict them in literature (evident from the 12th century play Ubhayabhisarika by Vararuchi), there was no documentation of intense violence or hatred manifested in the societies during those times .The most explicit reprimand came from the British who implemented a law in 1861 known as the ‘Criminal Tribes Act’ censoring Hijra practices and male homosexual encounters of any kind. In Kristevan terminology, the Hijra body came across as an ‘abject’ body to the colonial masters which disturbed their ideas of conventional identity and cultural concepts (Hinchy). It was an attempt, by the rulers to ‘morally uplift’ and Christianize the ‘natives’ based on their notions of religion. As Greta

Gaard has shown, gender and sexual 'deviancy' provided the rhetoric of justification for the colonial conquests. She cites various examples of British and Spanish conquests to show that " the range of colonial assaults on sexuality—from gender roles to same-sex behaviours to heterosexual practices – is the reason that the colonizer's perspective should be named erotophobic rather than simply homophobic". Britishers labelled and segregated marginal populations and targeted them for experiments in "population management" from 1860 onwards (Hinchy 52).

In the Hindu worldview, fatalism is an important factor, the status of hijra is of a particular lifeform who is performing his svadharma, on its path to release (moksha) (Kakkar 37). This aspect of Hindu religion, gave space for hijra communities to exist within society, inspite of its highly patriarchal structure. Colonial administrative policy initially targeted themselves, beginning with the Imperial Army. To deter queer practices, British administrators passed the Army Act of 1850 which "punished British homo- sex with imprisonment of upto seven years." It was later in 1861, that sodomy, and thus same-sex acts (again, among men) were outlawed among Indians across the whole of the British –held subcontinental territory (via IPC article 377). Britishers also filtered texts (from Indian mythology) which validated their notions of masculinity (Doniger).

In doing so, they put in place the forms of misogyny that would underlie postcolonial queerphobia. Some examples are the *Dharamshastras* (law books) such as the *Manusmriti* which castigate homosexuality as sinful and the epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana where wars provide a backdrop for interpretive procedures regarding masculinity. Texts and sources that contained non-hegemonic ('little tradition') or queer elements were sidelined and ignored. Colonialism justified itself through masculine

images, contrasting the manly British with the effeminate colonial subject (Nandy 1995). Masculinity was expressed in different ways: from Vivekananda to Gandhi , from *Sanatan Dharmists* to *Arya Samajists*, from notions of *Brahmcharya* (celibacy) to the images of a warrior Krishna , but they all upheld heterosexual dominance, procreative imperatives and modern monogamous ideals of marriage (Gupta 323).'Deviant' sexuality was thus, uniformly seen as stigma and disgrace and not tolerated by both the British and Indian elites.

Hindu nationalism has the dubious distinction, in India and globally, for its high profile, extremist anti-Other practices in contrast to Indian nationalism which is pluralistic and inclusive. Hindu nationalist constructions of queerphobic gender, sexualities and affective relationalities are mainly effects of Hindu nationalist re-workings of colonial misogynist notions of gender and sexual normativity. Xenophobic queerphobia is a particular type of queerphobia that justifies itself by constructing the self- identified Indian queer as originating outside the nation. In this logic, Hindu nationalists claim that queer is 'not Indian' and that the British brought homosexuality to India. The primary objects of Hindu nationalists' queerphobic xenophobic operations have been Muslim men. The self-identified queer Muslim (or other Other) stands at the intersection of xenophobic queerphobia and queerphobic xenophobia (Bacchetta 122-123).

The "ideal Hindu nationalist citizen-body" constitutes itself by excluding 'Others' who embody improper gendering and sexuality. The RSS similarly constructs the nations and citizen-body of the West in hyper-masculine-sexual terms. Twisting the colonizer's construction of India as the "porno-tropics", the RSS represents the west as a 'porno-

west' (Bacchetta 131-133). Its degenerate sexuality seems like a threat to feminize and destroy the Hindu nation which whips up associations with sexual violence. Closer to home, the RSS is very interested in denouncing 'westernized Hindu men'. The porno-west serves as its backdrop for this operation. For example, the Hindu nationalist response to Mehta's film Fire, which portrayed a lesbian relationship between two sisters-in-law in the same house-hold. In December 1998, after the film's release in India, Hindu Shiv Sena activists protested by pillaging the cinema halls in which the film was shown. The RSS declared:

> The Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray may be accused of using force and 'lumpen methodology' to suppress the voices that do not suit his cultural worldview. But the attack on the indigenous value-system by the ultra westernized elite, who regard the nation as not more than a piece of land with a bundle of cultural and political rights, is more appalling than the action of the Shiv sainiks (Sinha 1997:17).

On 13 December 1998, Thackeray observed : first , has 'homosexuality' erupted as an epidemic in India that one has to produce a film on the subject? And second, the Sena would willingly extend warm support to Fire if the names of the two protagonists Radha and N/Sita were replaced by Shabana and Saira (Bandyopadhyay 2002). The Hindu queer subject is transformed into a sign of western secularism, the disease that provokes the end of the Hindu nation and the two suggested names maps the anxieties related to the Other onto the Muslim community. This homophobia can be traced to influences of conservative Christian and Islamic frameworks and to Hindu supremacists trying to reframe Hinduism along Abrahamic lines. (Pattanaik)

Heteronormative masculinity stands in an opposition not just to femininity but also to those manners of being male that are seen to deviate from the hegemonic ideal of being male. In Indian culture, where the desire to have sons is so over-abiding that doctors will perform illegal ultrasound tests on mothers to determine a fetus' gender , the thought of a son voluntarily becoming a hijra is bewildering to parents. Homosociality, this category of male-male bonding, Eve Sedgewick, described in 1985 as both on a continuum with and in opposition to homosexual desire is of special importance in Indian context. Suggesting that the culturally specific categories of "yaari" (friends) and "yaarana" (friendship) are a hallmark of Indian culture " that defines our bonding patterns globally," Raj Rao's insider account identifies the ways male same-sex friendship within south Asian culture complicates the muddy landscape of sexuality and heterosexual marriage, in general, and the specifics of HIV transmission and gay relationships, in particular. For the Indian society, it is perhaps a practice that does not merit definition, categorization or even condemnation. As long as it does not threaten the dominant heterosexual social construct. Returning to the praxis of the law, Section 377 of the Constitution of India which was often cited as being discriminatory towards queer and especially homosexuality was itself flawed. It foreclosed the possibility of change, because it had already made up its mind that homosexuality was "unnatural". The section was worded as follows:

Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine. ("Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code")

Though the fight for queer rights started around 1991 with AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA) releasing a report on the extent of torture faced by queer people, it took around 18 years before the Section criminalizing same-sex activities was read down in July 2009 by the Delhi High Court. After a review petition filed by a Delhi-based astrologer, the Supreme Court criminalized homosexuality again in December 2013. Finally, in September 2018, in a unanimous verdict, the Supreme Court decided to scrap section 377, which chief justice Dipak Misra described as "irrational, indefensible and manifestly arbitrary," and reversed its earlier verdict.

People of alternative sexualities, whether they are homosexual, lesbian or they inhabit the spectrum of transgender identities- are particularly vulnerable to violence and what is directed at them mostly carries a hatred of anything that represents 'difference', or anything that questions the status quo. Many transgender people live on the margins of our society, and are not considered worthy of rights or privileges. Anger and resentment against transgender people is also particularly acute because of their relative openness about issues of sex, or indeed of the involvement of some of them in sex work (associations of sinful behaviour were morals were jettisoned). This makes them fair game for specific kinds of violence, and their lack of recognition and acceptance in what is known as 'normal' society.

Same-sex desire seems to be inextricably tied up with caste, status , class and other social axes. Scholars often cite the example of these laws saying 'homosexuality' was not countered with explicit punishments and if any were limited to purificatory baths. But the thing being elided here is that Brahmanas were the most privileged section of the society (who sat at the highest rank in social order) and the society considered same-sex desire to

be polluting and too lowly for the higher castes. The laws on loss of ‘chastity’ are insightful too. They are very symptomatic of a society which invests a girl’s chastity with a lot of value. Nothing about self-will and desire of the young girl is mentioned in the law. Thus, our review of the attitudes towards non-normative sexual practices in pre-modern to modern India would help us in positioning the queer body in conjunction with translation and its interventions.

CHAPTER-III

BODIES AND ITS BORDERS IN PRE-COLONIAL INDIA: CONCEPTUALIZATION IN TERMS OF TRANSLATION

> What happens to the subject and to the stability of gender categories when the epistemic regime of presumptive heterosexuality is unmasked as that which produces and reifies these ostensible categories of ontology? (Butler 1999[1990] : xxviii)

Historical and socio-cultural practices which are arbitrary contribute to the regulatory systems which controls and structures our society, mask the fact that they have no basis in reality. These power relations normalizes certain practices in our society and simultaneously create aberrations. When the queer entered the postmodern era, an urgent need was felt to expose the formal social structures that resonated with the cultural notions of universal "truths", and launch an investigation to dissect the historical events that have served to constitute people as subjects (Foucault 1969;1976). The scholarship on power/knowledge and politics of epistemology (Foucault 1980; Haraway 1988; Hill Collins 1990; Said 1979) have inspired translation studies scholars as well as queer theorists to note power asymmetries between languages and cultures, which affect not only what languages or cultures are likely to be "translated" and made intelligible for whom, but also the particular framing such translation will take (Savci 2018). For instance, Talal Asad (1993) reminds us that "cultural translation" between two cultures happens in a global context, where "because the languages of third world societies . . . are seen as weaker in relation to Western languages . . .they are more likely to submit to

forcible transformation in the translation process than the other way around" (190). This is especially due to the asymmetrical political-economic relations of "cultures" as well as to the fact that "Western" languages are often the dominant producers and distributors of desirable knowledge worldwide.

In the previous chapter, we reviewed the 'queer' bodies in the Indian context which helped us to locate the attitudes towards gender variance and 'alternative' sexualities. This chapter builds upon the reviewed discourse to point out the inconsistencies and contradictions in the translation of these 'queer' bodies. I would be problematizing modern translations of select pre-modern Indian 'queer' texts to examine the gap/s of the translated text/s not just in terms of equivalence and other translatorial parameters but to expose the social structures and intents behind both the Western and the Indian world-view texts which are primarily based on the notion which concedes Indian 'queer' groups to a third-gender/sex status because the West functions on a pre-existing two-gender axiomatic (either/or duality). The third-sex model has been critiqued by various scholars (Zwilling and Sweet 2000; Ross 2016) and argued for an alternative way should be developed to approach the Indian context. Fuss'(1991) theory of 'inside/outside polarity'(01) can be utilized for understanding the position of the 'queer' in Indian society, "outside of systems of power, authority and cultural legitimacy"(02), their body has been founded upon this idea of negative exteriority where their intelligibility emerges through the incorporation of a "negative interiorization"(03). It can be exemplified by the concepts e.g., a kliba is a non-male and a shandhi is a non-female. They do not have third-sex status, these bodies are founded upon a lack (primarily of procreative abilities). Moreover, the [third gender] includes children, the elderly, the impotent, the celibate, and

all the people who cannot procreate (Wilhelm 16), therefore the channels between the genders are obviously porous since some reproductive disorders are curable, children can grow up to have procreative abilities etc. So, what is needed is a model based on a more fluid concept. Secondly, most scholars translate Indian queer categories into western terminology which becomes problematic on various levels, as we will be discussed in later sections. This disjunction between the area of Translation and Queer could be remedied if both concepts work in tandem, if both fields transact in their respective scholarship on power/knowledge. E.g.Wilhelm translates 'nastriya'(literally non-woman/not-woman) to 'lesbian' which is problematic because 1) , lesbian as a category has historical and political associations which cannot be juxtaposed with a pre- modern term. 2) here, the translator treats the term as an equivalent to the term for male homosexual i.e, gay which is inappropriate because the lesbian is a doubly marginalised figure and cannot serve as a female equivalent for male homosexual. Queer theory reveals the contructedness of non-normative identity categories by historicizing and theorizing them as discourses that are historically variable. These categories are not biological givens and thus are not essentialist categories to be juxtaposed indiscriminately. Thus, taking cues from both the areas, we would be conducting an in-depth analysis of the translations to point out the fractures and disjunctions.

In this chapter, we are going to look at how these bodies represent the 'socius' of a period and how translation of these very categories into another culture reveal the universal dynamic assumed by such western categories. Modern translations make use of popularly available western queer categories which preset boundaries through which these ancient

queer bodies seemingly seep through. Because the terminologies do not fit the categories which these bodies represent.

In modern India, few terms exist to represent the queer bodies in comparison to the pre-modern period, resulting due to a systematic erasure by the "complex strategical situation" of the ruling class. It will be dealt in detail in the following chapter. As mentioned earlier central texts to this project are Pattanaik's *Shikhandi and the Other Tales They Don't Tell You*, Amara Das Wilhelm's *Tritiya Prakriti: People of the Third Sex* and few modern translations (English and Hindi) of the *Kamasutra by* Vatsyayana . I would be also attempting a detailed terminological examination of the pre-modern queer terms to reveal the dichotomy between the liminal nature of Indian 'queer' and the tightly bound, circumscribed nature of western 'queer'. I want to study these marginalized Indian expressions of queer bodies to show that gender and sexuality in pre-modern India functioned on multiple semantic planes and did not have rigid boundaries or represented an objective concept.

3.1 Epic and Puranic Literature

As we discussed in the previous chapter, the vast written traditions in Hinduism, teem with gendered narratives of figures transforming themselves into the opposite sex, of cross-dressing, of same-sex couples giving birth. Shikhandi, who became a man to seek vengeance, Chudala, who transformed into a man to enlighten her husband, Samavan, whose disguise, transformed him into a woman are some of the tales who appear to be gender bending. Pattanaik recently brought out books on queer themes based on Hindu mythological stories which were hugely publicized and marketed as a validation of our

queer past and how way ahead our forefathers were than us. Having said that I do not want to get misconstrued on homophobic terms. Here, we would be looking at the problematics of such a claim. First and foremost, these books were published in English (and later translated into Hindi, which will be discussed later) which has a set of signifiers and history alien to our pre-modern Indian culture. Secondly, the books make claims that a certain concept existed in our past which is very specific to the neo-liberal political scene of contemporary times. Contemporizing the past would have its own footfalls which I would be highlighting in this section. Pattanaik, in the Introduction to his book *Shikhandi And Other Tales They Don't Tell You*, tries to reveal the unique Indian way of making sense of queerness . What remains to be analyzed are the structures, intent, situations in which these transformations come about. Doniger points out:

> ..though, it is often correctly pointed out that Hindus recognize a third sex, this fact should not be adduced to imply that Hindus approve of this third sex or use it to counteract what we think of as "western" dualism and homophobia. Hindu ideas about homosexuality and *klibas* do not support a gay agenda.()

I would analyze how, because queer boundaries are continually redrawn, due to globalizing processes that challenge their salience, it becomes problematic for one to homogenize and say "*Shikhandini*, who became *Shikhandi*, is what modern queer vocabulary would call a female-to-male transsexual, as her body goes through a very specific change genitally." I have already mentioned that the Hindu world view doesn't look at transsexuality as transformation but as coming back to where one originally belongs.(doniger) The concept 'queer' was the product of a reverse-discourse where the

semantics of the word was turned on its head so that it gave the marginalized sexualities the power to herald themselves as viable entities that cannot be marginalized. (Foucault) Queer body becomes "polysemantic" and "polyfunctional" when given agency through queer writing, perhaps what Devdutt aimed at. But imposing improper structures unique to Western experience weans away the fluidity of the narrative by pigeon-holing *Shikhandi* into some kind of a 'queer' hero. *Shikhandi* stood for marginalized beings, no doubt about that, but by categorizing it as a 'transsexual body' or 'FTM', one is perpetuating faulty ideology completely overlooking the fact that *Shikhandi* actually did not grow up with this desire to gain 'manhood', she/he only when faced with a crisis and impending danger to her/his kingdom did urge the *yaksha* for help (which she/he actually chanced upon). His one single aim to kill Bhishma is also not granted to her/him because of his dubious status (of being a transsexual ?). Even Bhishma does not recognize her/him as a suitable opponent:

> "Even--this is my vow, known over all the world, viz., that I will not, O son of Kuru's race, shoot weapons upon a woman, or one that was a woman before or one bearing a feminine name, or one whose form resembleth a woman's. I will not, for this reason, slay Sikhandin. Even this, O sire, is the story that I have ascertained of Sikhandin's birth. I will not, therefore, slay him in battle even if he approacheth me weapon in hand. If Bhishma slayeth a woman the righteous will all speak ill of him. I will not, therefore, slay him even if I behold him waiting for battle!" (Kisari mohan Ganguli, tr. 372)

She/ he is used as a shield, a deceit to kill Bhishma, she/he was denied male privileges and agency inspite of transforming into a man. The functionality of her manhood gets

limited to satisfying her/his wife sexually which Pattanaik promotes explicitly with the chapter title “Shikhandi, who became a man to satisfy her wife”. By reducing her to a “sexual being” (Pattanaik actually refers her by this epithet in his book as a contrast to the celibate Bhishma(47)) she/he cannot be a queer hero who never had the intention of being one herself/himself in the first place (identity gets constructed through sexuality not a part of identity politics). He also commits a mistake when he calls Bhishma asexual and celibate simultaneously, because asexuality is distinct from abstention from sexual activity and from celibacy, which are generally motivated by personal or religious beliefs (“asexuality”).

3.2 Heroic Cross-Dressing

If we look at the instances of cross-dressing in Pattanaik’s book, e.g. Bhima, who in the Mahabharata dressed himself like a woman to punish Kichaka who had harassed his wife (129-132), Arjuna who transformed himself into Brihanalla (though the change is also ontological) during his period of exile (109-166), Sinfield (1994) in his book argues that these instances are far from being expressions of ‘alternative’ sexuality, he talks about Antony who dresses up in Cleopatra’s clothes and she wears his sword, with no threat to his masculinity. A real man can only undertake such an ambitious project and do whatever he chooses, after all, Hercules, too with whom Antony is identified, dressed up as a woman (37). The language gives away a lot when examined, bhima, arjuna are still described in masculine terms, their attire as something incongruous on their bulky, muscular bodies. They don’t embody the queerness which is suggested by these authors:

> Next appeared at the gate of the ramparts another person of enormous size and exquisite beauty decked in the ornaments of women, and wearing large ear-rings and beautiful conch-bracelets overlaid with gold. And that mighty-armed individual with long and abundant hair floating about his neck, resembled an elephant in gait. And shaking the very earth with his tread, he approached Virata and stood in his court. And beholding the son of the great Indra, shining with exquisite lustre and having the gait of a mighty elephant,--that grinder of foes having his true form concealed in disguise, (BOOK4.SECTION XI)

3.3 The Translation Conundrum in the *Kamasutra*

Kamasutra was recompiled around 300 A.D. from several earlier texts on erotic science by the sage, Vatsyayana. It has since been marketed as an erotic sex manual, but the actual unabridged Kama Sutra is an insight into the understanding of sexuality and gender in ancient Vedic India. We would be looking at various translations and the accompanying intentions and cultural notions driving the process. The first translation of Kamasutra in English was by Sir Richard Francis Burton in 1883.Another influential translation was from Alan Danielou's French edition (1992) which came out in English in 1995. Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakkar published their translation in 2002. Among the Indian translators S.C. Upadhyaya's (1961) version has been a popular one and among the Hindi translators versions of Pandit Madhavacharya and Pandit Parasnath Dwivedi translations are well-known. Scholars (Doniger (2003), Puri(2002), Roy(2000), Vanita) points out the problematics of various translations in their respective essays. The rupture points being : 1) Faulty translations of the exegesis and commentaries by various commentators as the actual sutra 2) bowdlerization by Burton to suit the Victorian taste

(sutra 1.5.27, Burton edits out the fifth kind of nayika i.e. the prakriti. 3) Terminological inconsistencies due to lack of terms and improper understanding, 4) Erasure of female agency and effacing problems of gender inequalities (sutra) 5) Homogenization of the text in a bid to essentialize the subject matter as 'universal' by imposing western categories (sutra 1.5.27, Danielou translates tritiya prakriti as ' the third nature [Tritiya prakriti], the inverts or homosexuals'(82)). Let us look at some of the major points of contention regarding various translations of Kamasutra.

Table 1 : Improper Understanding of '*parigraha*'

तथा नागरकाः केचिदन्योन्यस्य हितैषिणः ।
कुर्वन्ति रूढ़विश्वासः परस्परपरिग्रहं ॥ ३६ ॥

ʈ̪əʈ̪ʰɑ: nɑ:gərəkɑ:h ke:cid̪̪ənjo:njəsjə ɦiʈ̪ɑ:iʂiɳəh ।
kurvənʈ̪i ru:ɖ̦vis̪vɑ:səh pərəspərəpərigrəɦəⁿ ॥ ३६ ॥

Burton	**Danielou**	**Doniger**
"It is also practised by some citizens, who know each other well, among themselves" (Burton 1964:2.9.36).	"There are also citizens, sometimes greatly attached to each other and with complete faith in one another, who get married [parigraha] together" (Danielou 1994:191).	"And, in the same way, certain men-about-town who care for one another's welfare and have established trust do this service for one another" (Doniger 2002:68).

Commentary: Danielou translates the term 'parigraha' in this sutra to marriage. Wilhelm repeats this mistake in his book too. Parigraha here is used in the sense of receiving (here pleasure through oral sex). The word is also used for taking someone in marriage but the Jayamangala commentary uses the same phrase (as in the sutra) and follows it by explanation of two women receiving pleasure with each other through oral sex. He even mentions about women in the 'harem' which is discussed in a later section in context of oral sex. Moreover, given the heteronormative atmosphere, same-sex marriages would have been against the '*dharma'* of procreation.

Table 2: Confusion over '*Svairini*'

स्वैरिणयां यथासात्म्यं यथायोगं च । अलके चुंबनार्थमेनां निर्दयमवलम्बेत् हनुदेशे चाँग्डुलिसंपुटेन ॥१३॥

sva:iriɳəja:ⁿ jəʈʰa:sa:ʈmjəⁿ jəʈʰa:jo:gəⁿ cə । ələke: cuⁿbənɑ:rʈʰəme:nɑ:ⁿ nirɖəjəməvələmbe:ʈ ɦənuɖe:ɛe: cɑ:ँ̆gŋulisəⁿpuʈe:nə ॥१३॥

Burton	**Danielou**	**Doniger**
"If however she is a seasoned woman, he should do whatever is agreeable either to him or to her, and whatever is fitting for the occasion. After this he should take hold of her hair, and hold her chin in his fingers for the purpose of kissing her" (2.8.13).	"How the lesbian sets about it when she couples with her similar. In order to kiss her goatee [alaka], she seizes hold of the chin [pubis], slipping her finger into the slit" (171).	"If she is a loose woman, he does what is suitable and feasible. He catches hold of her by her hair, mercilessly, to kiss her, and cups his fingers to grasp her chin"(62).

Commentary: Svairini is another reference (1.5.5, 6.6.50) which Danielou and (subsequently Wilhelm) gets wrong . It means a woman who is sexually unabashed. Naradsmriti describes four kinds of svairini(12.49-52), the first who deserts her husband, she who goes away leaving her brother-in-law or kinsman with a stranger through carnal desire after her husband's death ,she "who gives herself to another man , saying "I am thine" having come from a different country, or being purchased with money, or oppressed with hunger and thirst, and she who is given by her parents to a 'sapinda' of equal class on failure of brother-in-law is the fourth kind." This is an important point of contention because the chapter on Purushayita gets translated as a lesbian's acts on a virgin woman by Danielou.

Table 3: Misinterpretation of the sex-act:

नायकस्य संतताभ्यासात्परिश्रममुपलभ्य रागस्य चानुपशमम् , अनुमता तेन तमधोऽवपात्य पुरुषायितेन साहाय्यं दद्यात्॥ १ ॥ (2.8.1)

nɑ:jəkəsjə səⁿʈəʈɑ:bʰjɑ:sɑ:ʈpəriɛrəməmupələbʰjə rɑ:gəsjə cɑ:nupəɛəməm , ənumətɑ: ʈe:nə ʈəməɖʰo:Ɔvəpɑ:ʈjə puruʂɑ:jiʈe:nə sɑ:ɦɑ:jjəⁿ ɖəɖjɑ:ʈ

Burton	**Danielou**	**Doniger**
"When a woman sees that her lover is fatigued by constant congress, without	"When the boy, wearied after his uninterrupted sexual exercises, seeks rest	"When she sees that the man has become exhausted by continuous

having his desire satisfied, she should, with his permission, lay him down upon his back, and give him assistance by acting his part"(81).	and is no longer dominated by passion, with his agreement, the girl descends to his anus [adhah] and, with the aid of an accessory [sahayya], imposes her virile behavior on him"(168).	repetition, but that his passion is still not quenched, she may, with his permission, roll him under her and give him some help by playing the man's part herself"(60).
Commentary : Burton's translation is closest to the original sense of the sutra. Danielou translates 'sahayya' to be an accessory (or a dildo) through which the woman sodomises the man. 'sɑːɦɑːjjəⁿ' is actually used in the sense of giving help to the partner in realizing climax but Danielou gives an opposite meaning to the whole sutra. Though this explanation is backed by Vanita's claim that sutra 13 of this chapter describes the sex act between a virgin and a man, which according to her becomes irrelevant in a chapter concerning the woman's role (since various sex acts have already been described in chapter 6, if we take up Danielou's translation then this sutra gets interpreted as a woman's sex act with a virgin girl (that is why he renders svairini as lesbian) which according to the chapter fits the bill. What these scholars elide is sutra 50 of chapter 6 in which Vatsyayana says that the manner of initiating sex would be discussed in the chapter concerning purushayita.		

Doniger (2015) also notes that Kamasutra makes a marked departure from the attitude, classical Hindu mythology has towards non-normative gender and sexuality. Vatsyayan uses *Tritiya prakriti* instead of the pejorative "*kliba*" (xxxiv) (though I beg to differ because he actually uses the word in the text , i.e.-

ईर्ष्यालुपूतिचोक्षक्लीबदीर्घसूत्रकापुरुषकुब्जवामनविरुपमणिकारग्राम्यदुर्गंधिररोगीवृद्धभार्याश्वेति ॥ ५४ ॥ (5.1.54) (Madhavacharya 773)

iːrʂjɑːlupuːʈicoːkʂəkliːbəɖiːrgʱəsuːʈrəkɑːpuruʂəkubɟəvɑːmənəvirupəməɳikɑːrəgrɑːmjəɖurgəⁿɖʱirərоːgiːvɪɖɖʱəbʱɑːrjɑːɛrveːʈi

This verse lists various men whose wife can be weaned away easily. The sense indeed comes out as pejorative. Vanita also in her book repeats the same mistake.

Another term which is contentious is '*adhorata*'(2.6.49), Vanita says that the term is not pejorative. But Kakkar argues that the sutra which states that people living in the south indulge in it, is a geographical marker for debased attitudes (and their sexual position: down under). Doniger also observes that Southerners have a poor reputation in the text composed in the North. The South Indian kings are the ones who indulge in sexual excesses (2.7.28-30).

MEDICAL LITERATURE

It classified the *Tritiya prakriti* or *kliba* on the basis of sexual dysfunctions (non-functioning of reproductive system of both men and women) and also on the basis of their curability. In the table below, we present as discussed in Sharma(2014) and Wilhelm(2003)

Table 4[3]: The relevant terminologies and their respective translations.

Term	**IPA**	**Translation**	**Commentary**
क्लीबः	kliːbəh	Homosexual/transgender/intersex (Wilhelm 2003:34)	Has a range of meanings from an impotent person to someone who bears only female children to someone who lacks manliness, term also employed medically.
षंडः	ʂəⁿɖəh	Homosexual/transgender/intersex/ he has the qualities of a woman; behaving and talking as they do, he may castrate himself. (Wilhelm 34-35)	Referred to an impotent or sterile person, no proof/information -n to validate the

[3] The Sanskrit terms have been compiled from Sharma(1998) and my commentaries have been drawn from Das(2003).

			claim of castration by Wilhelm.
द्विरेतसः	d̪vire:t̪əsəh	Hermaphrodite (Sharma 414), he has both male and female seed/ hermaphroditism (Wilhelm 43)	Retas literally means semen, so the term is debatable (as a woman cannot possess semen), it has been speculated that the term stands for someone with undeveloped secondary sexual characteristics, cross-bred animals can also be referred by this term.
पवनेन्द्रियः	pəvəne:nd̪rijəh	devoid of semen (Sharma 414)	Someone who cannot produce semen.
नरषंढः	nərəʂəⁿɖʰəh	Sterile man (Sharma 414)	A man who cannot reproduce.
नारीषंढः	nɑ:ri:ʂəⁿɖʰəh	Sterile woman (Sharma 414)	A woman who cannot reproduce.
वक्री	vəkri:	his penis is severely curved or deformed (Wilhelm 35)	Someone with a curved penis.
ईर्ष्याभिरतिः	i:rʂjɑ:bʰirət̪ih	he is aroused only by the jealous feelings of seeing others in the act of sexual union(Wilhelm 35)	Voyeuristic, jealousy arouses him.
वातिकः	vɑ:t̪ikəh	he is born without testicles (Wilhelm 35)	Who does not have proper genital organs or his testicles get damaged later.
वार्ता	vɑ:rt̪ɑ:	her female “seed” is afflicted in utero (Wilhelm38)	A sterile woman
तृणपुत्रिकं	t̪ɹ̩ɳəput̪rikəⁿ	his male “seed” is afflicted in utero(Wilhelm43)	Also called *purushvyapad*, literally a boy made of hay , a woman who has such a son
आसेक्यः	ɑ:se:kjəh	he is aroused only by swallowing a	Someone who

		man’s semen(Wilhelm 35)	swallows semen (modern day komat panthis also do this to gain manly vigour)
सौघन्धिकः	saːugʱənd̪ʰikəh	he is aroused only by smelling the genitals of others(Wilhelm 35)	Someone who smells genitals to get aroused.
कुम्भिकः	kumbʰikəh	he takes the passive role in anal sex(Wilhelm35)	Kumbhika literally means a pot, also has associations with the description of buttocks in ancient texts which are often compared to kumbha.
ईर्ष्यकः	iːrʂjəkəh	he is aroused only by the jealous feelings of seeing others in the act of sexual union(Wilhelm35)	Same as irshyabhirati.
रोगाद्	roːgɑːd̪	he is diseased (which may pass)(Wilhelm37)	Someone who has become impotent due to a disease (it is not a name for such a man but a reason)
देवक्रोधात्	d̪eːvəkroːd̪ʰɑːt̪	he is impotent due to a god’s anger.(Wilhelm37)	Someone who becomes impotent due to god’s anger or curse (like Arjuna is cursed by Urvashi)
निसर्गः	nisərgəː	he is born without proper genitals(Wilhelm36)	Without proper genital organs
वरधरी	vərəd̪ʰəriː	his testicles have been cut out(Wilhelm37)	Without proper genital organs. (If castrated not clear)
पक्षषंढः	pəkʂəʂəⁿɖʰəh	he is periodically impotent with women (every other fortnight, month, etc.) (Wilhelm36)	He is impotent for durations and behaves like a female in those durations.

अभिशापादगुरो	əbʰiɕɑːpɑːd̪əgurɔː	he is impotent due to the guru's curse.(Wilhelm37)	Impotent due to guru's curse. (Indra is castrated by Sage Gautama)

In the above table we looked at some categories constructed for the third nature in pre-modern medical discourses. One cannot help but marvel the relevancy of Foucault's idea of power, discourse and knowledge being inextricably linked. Which comes into play in the various power relations situated alongside the sexual pleasures promised by the Kamasutra, the bio-politics of Dharmshastras in regulating bodies and the nosographic medicalization of Sushruta and others. The purpose of categorizing individuals is to select potential partners for marriage whose procreative potential was unmarred. All of the texts aimed at regulating the society (evident from the prescriptive tone assumed) at large from the micro-level of individuals (Kamasutra) to the macro-level of populations (Manusmriti). Scholars like Pattanaik, Wilhelm and Vanita have repeatedly stressed on the relevancy of Hindu myths to the current LGBTIQ scene. I have critiqued this obsession in the previous section. Pattanaik's text opens up a lot of cracks because of his imposition of western constructs and a western language on indigenous mythical structures. When these texts are translated into a modern native language such as Hindi, a whole new range of problems come into existence as Hindi due to various reasons, which will be discussed in the next chapter, has a very limited queer vocabulary. If we place Indian classical medical texts in Foucauldian perspective, it would be easy to understand how reproduction and procreative capabilities was used as the basis for distinguishing subjects also takes on a cultural dimension because it positions people in the society differently. One's lived experience would differ according to the kind of body one

possesses. Therefore, in the pre-modern Indian society one's role in reproduction decided his/her social positioning. For example, an impotent person is the subject of ridicule (exemplified through Vararuchi's *Ubhayabhisarika*). So, a medical condition translates into a social experience/identity. One is not wrong if one says that the medicalization of transsexuality involved the perpetuation of heteronormative norms. This medicalization further reinforces the theory that queer bodies were seen as diseased.

CHAPTER- IV

REPRESENTATION: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES WITHIN DIFFERENT DOMAINS

In the previous chapter, we looked into the English 'translations' of pre-modern Indian queer phenomena and the resulting semantic instabilities. This chapter is an extensive review of Hindi literature (and Hindi translations). Here, we would be looking at how those bodies are doubly translated into Hindi especially with respect to Pattanaik's book. In the subsequent sections we will explore the cultural climate of modern Indian society through the lens of Hindi literature.

And thereafter, two case studies would be considered to understand the nature of challenges the translator might face while encountering queer bodies in the Hindi language. I would be exploring the "connections between the imperfect act of translating language and the imperfect act of expressing or translating gender and sexuality."(Wolf Oberman157). My specific attempt would be to look into the shifts of emphasis when the text is moved from one cultural and literary frame into another. Rather than simply pointing out mistakes it is important to perceive the intent behind the mobilization of the translation process which would be revealed through an in-depth analysis of modern Indian attitudes towards queer practices. However, by laying emphasis on "distinct readings" and "different conceptions," I have argued to foreground the significance of dissecting the multilayered structure of a particular culture and the issues which arise with transfer of linguistically encoded signs that are prevalent within a speech community to another. I have evaluated how these relations function in modern Hindi texts taking

cues from social lives and the inherent politics embedded within. Moreover, when these texts are translated into English, these queer bodies demand a reinterpretation of their identities and sexual space.

4.1 Exploring Cultural domain through Hindi literature

Even in the ancient times, as we have observed in the previous chapter, queer bodies were primarily categorized on the basis of bodily anomalies and their capability for procreative marriage. The culture, history and the power relations working through the existing societal structures contribute to the language and the mode of sexual expression in a given society. (Foucault 1976). Though non-normative sexualities had always been in existence in traditional societies, identity politics has recently gained momentum in these societies. Kole (2007) talks at length about Indian queer climate in his article, *Globalizing queer? AIDS, homophobia and the politics of sexual identity in India.* He says that the Indian society which is highly gender segregated is dissimilar in comparison to the West which is known for segregating people on the basis of sexual orientation. Consequently, homosocial spaces and intimate friendships between people of the same gender are not discouraged or censured. And behaviors such as “sharing a bed, body massaging, hugging or kissing between same sex members” is not looked upon as homosexuality (n.pag). Thus individuals in India may indulge in same-sex sexual relations yet not assume any identitarian labels as "gay" or "lesbian." In one of the interviews, conducted by Raj Rao and his co-editor in the book Whistling in the Dark, a certain respondent Aslam Shaikh, “ an auto-rickshaw driver by profession who is also married with kids, when probed about charging for sex said” :

> "Women are commodities, not men. I don't know what you mean by male prostitution … okay, so I have had sex with men, but that's different. That wasn't my job. I did it for the heck of it. If women are not available, any man turns to other men. But we don't talk about it the way we talk about our encounters with women, or even boast about them. If we did, the person opposite will think we're mad and should get our heads checked." (Rao and Sarma, 2009:124)

The paradigm of shame is inextricably bound with duty based cultures (like in India) where society is given primacy over the individual and on the other hand rights based society which are individualist are tied up with the culture of guilt which is bound with the personal (Rao 2017:76). Hence, in Indian society, a person is expected to marry, procreate and raise a family (as we have also seen in ancient India where *nagarakas* indulge in sex with young boys (Kamasutra, Vatsyayan 2.9.35) while they simultaneously marry and procreate). The Indian society does not seem to have a problem with homosocial relations unless people publicly acknowledge their sexuality. The juxtaposition of the framework of "being in the closet" and "coming out" may look incongruous in tranditional societies such as India or other South Asian countries (Kole 2007 n.pag).According to the Census of India, 2011, there are around 52,83,47,193 people who reported that Hindi was their mother tongue, which is 43.63% of the total population. According to an article in The Hindu which came out on 19th May, 2017, Hindi is spoken by around 50% of the Indian population. Given the figures, it is obvious that Hindi readership forms a huge chunk of the total audience in India and dissemination of information through Hindi becomes crucial. Since the currently ruling Hindu nationalist party, the BJP has assumed office in the Centre, it has been incessantly

promoting Hindi. Apart from the support they get from the Hindi heartland, "the BJP's focus on Hindi also stems from its promotion of all things 'Bharatiya' — or Indian — as opposed to things that are considered foreign, such as English." (Gahlot n.pag) As discussed in Chapter two, after our colonization, most Indian nationalists constructed an ideal Indian identity on the exclusionary principle of what the rulers considered vice.

Modern 'homophobia' is inextricably intertwined with modern nationalism. The 'Fire' episode and its aftermath is an illuminating example as to how the Hindu nationalist ideology works (not to forget, the RSS wing, the parent institution of the BJP, which raised a huge furore to ban the film) (Gopinath 2005:131-160). 'Homophobia' is also found to be the most pervasive in the educated middle class of our country which shapes the public opinion, more than the elite and the poor classes. Syllogistically, the medium of expression for the ideologies which had a voice in our society for the most part has been Hindi. English, which is also an official language, has evolved to be one of the popular mediums for the middle class and the elites in India. At a global level, English is the one of the most preferred language to report latest advancements and ideas, which means that the scholarship and literature in English is being constantly enriched and nurtured with information from across the world. Hindi literature, on the other hand, subsists for the major part on English (and translation) for latest developments. Not to mention, the prevalent power dynamic in Indian society between the two languages. It would be worthwhile to mention the power tussle that Hall (2005) talks about where she says that Hindi indexes a lower class sexuality like the hijras and English stood as a marker for upper-class, metropolitan gay identity (127).

Since, Hindi, as evident from the above discussion, shares a problematic, unevolved and to an extent a stagnant relationship with queer, it becomes an ideological challenge for the translator when he/she confronts a culture which stands in opposition to the socio-liberal politics of the present LGBTQI+ landscape. Modern Hindi fiction has depictions of queer bodies with different degrees of homophobia. Same-sex desire between women are pathologized and are often situational, usually written in a manner to cater to male voyeurism. The homosexual characters are often essentialized which implies that a a subject cannot act differently to the characteristics of essence ascribed to him/her:

> "Murgikhana is a symbol. The educated, unmarried protagonist of the novel, Sheila's homosexuality has been portrayed through this symbol. Most of the female characters connected to the novel are one of the educated middle- class and experts are of the opinion that this section is the most susceptible to such tendencies. But it is a truism that homosexuality can satisfy a woman's thirst for carnal pleasures but she always pines to be a mother. Sheila went through the same pain" (translation, mine).

There is also a widespread belief prevalent in Hindi literature which leads one to believe that there is a section of 'lesbian' women who turn to same-sex partners because of a fear of men because they had a history of sexual violence. Pradeep Saurabh's *Teesri Tali* (*The Third Clap*) is one such example. The idea that a man is primally, a violent creature and someone who cannot be expected to be tender and loving runs through much of the literature for example, in *Dohri Joon (A Double Life)* by Vijaydan Detha , when one othe same-sex couple is turned into a man, their relationship turns abusive because the man rapes his/her partner brutally, eventually the man realizes that he was better off being a

woman because it was when equal love could blossom between the two. A similar strain runs in *Murgikhana* where Sheila justifies her same-sex proclivities by saying:

"I had read somewhere - what the woman gives to the world, she hopes to get back. She gives tenderness and longs for that ... but a man is not gentle .... Then how she or women like her ,who desire women, can be wrong? " (translation, mine).

This idea has its root in the age-old tendencies to essentialize genders, extreme gender segregation and nurturing of the traditional ideals in each of the genders. A scientific manual from 1988, titled *Kaam Bhav Ki Nayi Vyakhya* (*A New Interpretation to Sexual Desire*) quotes:

> "According to some people, homosexuality is an inherited habit. But we don't think so. Actually , the societal environment surrounding the practitioner plays a main role. The person's mentality is also helpful in this role. For example, a girl can be frightened by the cruelty of a man's sexuality and can make a female friend her sex partner.It may also be that a young girl is attracted to men but do not consider their appearance to be worthy of his. This inferiority complex can also make her 'homosexual'" (translation, mine n.pag).

It further states:

> "If on one hand , the girl can become a homosexual fearing the cruelty of a man, then on the other hand, the boy can stay away from the girl of his choice thinking that she is so soft that she will wilt at his touch"(translational mine, n.pag).

In the face of such misinformation, as we encountered above, a translator's is ought to feel challenged about his task as a translator.

4.2 Deconstructing Contemporary Terminologies

We discussed Pattanaik's Shikhandi in the previous chapter in the light of the inconsistencies of English 'translation' of Indian categories of queer sexualities. In this section we would look into the Hindi translation (by Ramesh Kapoor) of Pattanaik's book. Let us look into the neologisms 'contrived' by the translator to juxtapose English terms:

Table 5: Original and Translated Terms Compiled from the Glossary of the Hindi Translation of Pattanaik's Shikhandi

ORIGINAL TERMS	TRANSLATED TERMS (HINDI)	IPA
Asexual	यौन- विमुख	jaːunə- vimukʰə
Bi-sexual	द्वि - लिंगकामी , उभय- लिंगकामी	d̪vi - liⁿgəkɑːmiː , ubʰəjə-liⁿgəkɑːmiː
Bi-Sexuality	द्वि - लिंगकामुकता, उभय-लिंगकामुकता	d̪vi - liⁿgəkɑːmukəṯɑː, ubʰəjə-liⁿgəkɑːmukəṯɑː
Cross-dressing	विपरीत -लिंगी वेषधारण	vipəriːṯə -liⁿgiː veːʂəd̪ʰɑːrəɳə
Cross-dresser	विपरीत- लिंगी वेषधारक	vipəriːṯə- liⁿgiː veːʂəd̪ʰɑːrəkə
Gender	लिंग	liⁿgə
Heterosexual	विपरीत- लिंगी यौन आकर्षण	vipəriːṯə- liⁿgiː jaːunə ɑːkərʂəɳə
Heterosexuality	विपरीत- लिंगी यौन आकर्षण	vipəriːṯə- liⁿgiː jaːunə ɑːkərʂəɳə
Homosexuality	समलैंगिकता	səməlaːiⁿgikəṯɑː
Intersexed	समलिंगी स्त्री	səməliⁿgiː sṯriː
Lesbian	स्त्री - समलैंगिकता	sṯriː - səməlaːiⁿgikəṯɑː
Lesbianism	असामान्य यौनपरक, असामान्य यौनप्रवृत्ति	əsɑːmɑːnjə jaːunəpərəkə, əsɑːmɑːnjə jaːunəprəvr̥ṯṯi
Queer	असामान्य यौनपरक, असामान्य यौनप्रवृत्ति	əsɑːmɑːnjə jaːunəpərəkə, əsɑːmɑːnjə jaːunəprəvr̥ṯṯi
Queerless	सामान्य	sɑːmɑːnjə
Queerness	असामान्य यौनप्रवृत्ति	əsɑːmɑːnjə jaːunəprəvr̥ṯṯi
Transsexual	पार- लिंगी	pɑːrə- liⁿgiː

Transgender	पार- लिंगी	pɑːrə- liⁿgiː

Source: Devdutt Pattanaik, Shikhandi Aur Kuch Ansuni Kahaniyan, Translated by Ramesh Kapur, 189-190 (Rajpal and Sons), 2015.

The Hindi translator of Pattanaik's book *Shikhandi* struggles with the use of pronouns (as Hindi has a very gendered system of grammar with feminine and masculine endings), language and most of all, terminologies. As we have observed during my research, other queer bodies who do not fit into the delineated'three-gender category' of the Indian society do not have a vocabulary in modern Hindi language. So much so, that there are no separate words for 'sex' and 'gender' (Kapoor 189), which gives rise to much of the confusion among the terms. The equivalent Hindi terms available are 'yon,'linga' etc. and all of them translate into 'sex'(in biological terms).

Kapoor had to construct neologisms to counter the translation challenges but fails at capturing the unique experiences embedded in the mythologies. He just literally translates the western terms which Pattanaik uses, e.g. *dvi- lingakami or ubhay- lingakami* for bisexual, *viprit- lingi veshdharan* for cross-dressing, *dvi-lingi*, *ubhay- lingi* for hermaphrodite, *antarlingi* for intersexed, *par- lingi* for transsexual and transgender both, *asamanya yonparak* or *asamanya yonpravritti* for queer and *samanya* for queerless. Construction of neologisms becomes highly problematic because the translator may achieve literal equivalence but one also has to look into the semantic history of the terms employed. *Yon-vimukh* which has been used for referring to an asexual person is misleading. An asexual person although is not sexually attracted to someone, may showcase sexual desires albeit their desires are not pointed at anyone (Soares Parente,

Alencar Albuquerque 2016: 2). This complexity arises also because the concepts of 'sexual attraction' and 'sexual desires' are not clearly delineated in Hindi language and thus they do not have separate words for the above two terms. Bi-sexuality's translation into Hindi suggests an oft repeated issue among the theorists of bisexuality (Garber 1995; George 1993; Gustavson 2009).

Scholars seek to uncouple bi-sexuality from non-monogamous sexual behavior, the idea that which the Hindi term, dvi-lingkami, problematically resurrects. As we have discussed earlier, 'lesbian' as samlingi stri brings up the problematics of equating lesbianism with male homosexuality. The Transgender and Transsexual identities are different from each other, with a transsexual person being referred to someone who has undergone gender reassignment surgery whereas a transgender person may/may not be a person who had had the surgery. Queer literally means something strange or peculiar which actually was a derogatory term, later reclaimed by LGBTQI+ people. If that term is literally translated it becomes pejorative. Similarly, a queerless person has been called '*samanya*' which back-translates to normal! A book written to support and highlight queer self- expressions simply beats its own purpose when indigenous language and terminology are sidelined to cater to the western audience by resorting to the historically available definitions in the West. More or less, every translated term lacks bi-directionality, looks contrived and does not suffice the queer categories which have evolved over a period of time with a distinct sense of their terminology.

My aim here, was to put pressure on the anglophone biases of the field of Indian queer academia to explicitly explore the perspectives through which languages view non-normative bodies as a label. I recognize the fact that this methodology might look as one

harking back to the anglonormativity I have set out to contend but the lack of theorizations and terminology on the 'Indian' queer bodies makes me fall back upon western epistemology. Translating the language of queer and gender variance, therefore, is not a neutral move but a political undertaking, with significant ideological and linguistic entanglements, also recording the translator's attitude towards prevalent conceptualizations of non-normative bodies, social and moral standards.

Contemporary Indian queer politics took form as a result of increasing globalization, the onset of HIV-AIDS activism and the 'ngo-ization' of grass-roots politics. Scholars like (Dave 2012; Kole 2007) have pointed out as to how "the emergence of collectivized gay and lesbian politics in India in the late 1980s and early 1990s coincided neatly (and not coincidentally) with the liberalization of India's economy in 1991 and the acceleration of the global fight against HIV/AIDS"(Dave 10). Indian activists incorporated LGBTIQ+ acquired from the West so as to provide a language which would resonate with the sexual minority of the country. But the effort to nativize 'modern' nomenclature which in turn would diminish social stigma, and bring an end to oppressive and derogatory terminological structures, proved to be exclusionary to local categories. And investigating and unearthing of ethno-local categories which by default has the tendency to stand anterior or outside to the metrocentric narratives also runs the risk of getting subsumed by it. As a case in point, Reddy's ethnography of hijra and kothi communities depicts their cultural mores to be at variance from "institutionally-mediated gay/GLBT formations", though she points out that they might "increasingly co-exist, intermingle or hybridize with the latter." Naisargi Dave (2012) rightly points out:

> "The incommensurability of ‘‘lesbian [homosexual]’’ with ‘‘India’’ is "something that is actively produced—by analysts invested in local cultural difference, nationalists invested in cultural integrity, or international donors and NGOs invested in a diversity of fundable niches." When activists then call up such ‘‘indigenous’’ substitutes as *samlaingik* log, those words feel foreign because they are—contrived markers rather than sites for passionate subjective attachment or collective mobilization"(Dave15).

In modern India prevalent idioms denoting same-sex desire, include baazi (habit, addiction), of friendship, masti (fun, play), yaar (friends, buddy but also charged with homoerotic connotations) and yaarana (friendship) (Katyal 2011:3).

As has already been discussed in the preceding sections, several scholars engaged in the history of queer in India to unearth the long effaced terminologies. Some pre-colonial terms include "samlingbhogi (enjoying of, experiences the same sex); dogana, as an Urdu term from the early nineteenth century for a woman's female lover; and chapti (rubbing, clinging) to describe what those lovers do" (Vanita 2005, 62). The above mentioned terms proves the indigenousness of same-sex love and desire in our country. Though many terms were excavated but most of the terms and categories are either anachronistic or suffers from some other kind of representational dilemma. Various queer subcultures and indigenous sexualities which have a distinct nomenclatures are clubbed together under capitalistically produced unjustified categories, e.g. the entire hijra clans (which have various categorical distinctions amongst them), Jogappas , Thirunangis are clustered under the third gender or transgender (TG) category under the Indian Law and The hijra and Kothi, panthi models of identity between men are often unjustly subsumed into the

“gay” category, or MSM in activist and NGO spheres. However, activists and scholars have been working on inventing and evolving culturally rooted and relevant terms for the existing sexual subjectivities in India (Dave19).

Dave in her book enlists various terms which are currently in use in queer activist circles: *jinsi* for sexuality and *humjinsi* (Urdu for "relationship of people of the same sex" to refer to same-sex sexuality); Stree Sangam (meaning, a confluence of women, a lesbian collective in Bombay but later changed to LABIA, or Lesbians and Bisexuals in Action.); Sangini, (signifier for a wife or lover who is a constant companion). Hindi phrases as *aisi mahila jo dusri mahilion ki taraf aakarshit hoti hai* (the kind of woman who is attracted to other women) are also in use within activist circles (Dave 18). And as far as queer scholarship is concerned , Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai (2001, xxi) opt for ‘‘homoerotically inclined’’; Suparna Bhaskaran (2004) coins the term ‘‘khush sexualities’’ (in an attempt to literally translate ‘gay’) ; Jeremy Seabrook (1999) argues for a more indigenous kothi (effeminate, mostly non–English speaking men who are penetrated in sex), and panthi (the masculine men who penetrate kothis) model. He is of the opinion that the concept of homosexuality is ill-fitting in the Indian context and advocates for a system of terminology that would represent the fluid nature of behaviours rather than westernized straitjacketing or categorization into watertight compartments. Even untranslated rough phrases like ‘‘women who love women’’, “a woman who lives with another woman”, ‘‘single women’’ have been advocated by a section of feminist and lesbian activists as more fluid substitutes for the politicized, sexually speciated category of ‘‘lesbian.’’ These oblique terms have been carefully engineered so that these women can take advantage of the culturally sanctioned spaces of homosociality, or for women

who don't want their other political commitments — like class or anticommunalism to be overshadowed by their ''lesbian'' identification. Also, these terms are intelligible to women who are illiterate or come from uninformed, rustic backgrounds (dost, saheli, sathin, sakhi etc. were reportedly popular in villages and small-towns, with rare instances of the couple also being addressed as "miya-bibi jodi"(husband-wife pair)). On the other hand, some activist groups like 'Caleri' have consciously advocated for the term 'lesbian' to be used to constitute them as viable political subjects under the Indian Law (Sharma 2007; 251).

Apart from the terminological inventions of the activist and analyst spheres, historically, modern literature has also produced queer discourse and has actively contributed in the mobilization of discussions and conversations around the taboo subject. One such important Hindi text of the modern era was Chaklet (or,Chocolate), witten by Ugra in 1927, it comprised of eight short stories which were seemingly written to warn parents and guardians of young boys to save them from predators who indulged in the vice of male homoeroticism. About the title of the book,

Ugra writes:

> "Chocolate is the name for those innocent, tender and beautiful boys of the country, whom society's demons push into their mouth of ruin to quench their own lusts." (Vanita 2000:246)

Chocolate has erotic connotations and suggests decadence, it also indicates supposedly western origins of male-male desire. Chocolate is also associated with luxury which also indicates that these vices mostly afflict the rich and the upper-classes. Ruth Vanita translated the text into English in 2009 as "Chocolate and Other Writings on Male Homoeroticism". In her introduction, she has talked about the difficulties in rendering

"...Sanskritic, Perso-Urdu and regional language terms for sexual preferences such as batukprem (boy love), laundebaazi (boy-chasing), paatalpanthi (followers of the path of hell), and with idiomatic turns of phrase". Vanita credits Ugra "with creating and accessing a minor lexicon of terms relating to male- male desire." He variously uses generic words like' bura kaam' (bad act), vahi kaam (that act), vyabhichaar (illicit sex), dushcharitra and charitrahin (characterless or bad character) which generally refers to sexual immorality in the context of heterosexual adultery. These terms also symbolise that the homoerotic tendency is just another vice like rather than being a natural proclivity. Code terms like "pocket-book","money- order", "paalat" have been invented to refer to an attractive young male. Terms used for the practitioners of same-sex activity were: Langot ka kacha (Langot referring to the underwear and kacha implicates rawness or immaturity, used in *Apni Khabar*) to refer to homosexuality or bisexuality and sarvabhogi (taking pleasure in and consuming everything) and ranginmijaaz (of colouful temperament, an Urdu term which connotes same-sex desire). Vanita claims that 'chocolate' is a street lingo still in use among non- English speaking homosexual men to refer to attractive effeminate man or boy. Though she does not rule out the possibility that Ugra may have brought a subcultural code into the mainstream instead of being the other way round. Another word which came into existence after the heated debates on this text was 'samlingi rati'(love/sex between the same-sex), which is said to be in non-existence before the 1920s.

Traditionally, same-sex desire between men has always been viewed to be more of a habit, an excess which mostly the rich and the decadent indulge in. In the northern states of India, '*Laundebaazi'* has connotations of play, habit, feudal excesses etc (Katyal

2011:56). The following extracts from Pradeep Saurabh's '*Teesri Taali'* (2013) helps in elucidating the culture of *laundebaazi* :

> In Baliya, kept boys were called elephants. It is an old saying that rearing an elephant is not everybody's cup of tea. An elephant keeper inspires awe. The same went for the kept boys. Having a kept boy increased respect in the society (translation, mine,47).

Interestingly, the metaphor of elephant also figures in Chughtai's 'The Quilt' which has connotations of luxury and indicates feudal decadence, corruption and self-indulgence. The most visible form of queer in the Indian society is the hijra community. In Hindi literature, hijra characters prominently features in most of the stories on/of gender variance. In fact, there are more stories and fiction on hijras, than there are on same-sex sexualities. Especially, due to their cementified position in the Indian society.

Linguistically speaking, the word '*hijra*' derives from the Urdu word '*hijar'*, it also may have roots in the Semitic-Arabic-Persian root *hijr*, which may mean not having a proper place in a tribe. Contrastingly, a hijar is a person who abandons the mainstream society. Since the nineteenth century they were variously known as *hijras, khojas, khusras, pavaiyas* .

Today, in the northern states of India, 'hijra' has become a referent for this community and has also acquired abusive associations of impotence and unmanliness:

> Uncle… now boys would be boys… they are not 'hijras' that they will sit at home. (translation, mine 143)

The lack of masculinity and virility are mapped on to the hijra body in the above line which are prized ideals in a patriarchal culture. The next example throws light on the

usage of the abuse at multiple levels, hijra- ness is also ascribed to be a kind of mentality, which is corrupt and dishonest:

> There is no difference between a hijra and a common man! Both of them are creations of the same God. I consider him a hijra who cannot make an honest decision and wimpers away showing his back (translation, mine 82).

Various regional terms in the Hindi belt of our country are also actively used to describe this community. Neerja Madhav's '*Yamdeep*' is a novel completely based on the hijra community. She has used the Benarasi dialect to refer to this group : छिबरी (chhibri- hijras without a penis), कड़े ताल (kade taal – a male cross-dresser), खारगळले (khargalle- hijras who trespass other territories), पनके (panke- hijras of one's own territory).

Another word which has been widely associated with this community since ancient times is kinnara . It literally means 'what-men?'. Since it is considered more respectful than the former term , it is now being increasingly used in Hindi print and visual media. Pattanaik says that this term was also used for gods and devotees who reject their masculinity in the quest for the divine.

Another similar term is 'kim-purusha'. In the Mahabharata, the term kinnara was actually used for a branch of a Gandharva tribe who used to reside in the regions above the Ganges valley, round the mountain Kailasa, Manasa lake and farther north . It is unclear as to when kinnara came to be associated with the 'hijra' group. In one of the stories, a person from this hilly region is shocked when he comes to know that the name of his community is associated with the neuter group.

Our review of the terminologies associated with non-normative bodies conducted above would help us to gain a wider understanding of the position and status of queer groups in modern India and their numerous conceptualisations which in turn registers itself in the Hindi literature. After what we witnessed in the translation of Pattanaik's book, it is imperative for a translator to be aware of the terminological intricacies of the Indian queer struggling alongside the western hegemony of identity politics.

4.3Analyzing translations: Two Readings

Should the lack of awareness of the time in which a certain text was written regarding queer issues or a widespread cultural belief be channeled to incorporate a more politically geared or 'appropriate' stance? As proposed by Epstein, should one resort to the strategy of 'acqueering'? By which a translator can add in queer sexualities, sexual practices or gender identities or change straight/cis identities or situations to queer ones; remove homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic language or situations, or highlight it in order to force a reader to question it; change spellings or grammar or word choices to bring attention to queerness, or add in footnotes, endnotes, a translator's preface, or other paratextual material to discuss queerness and/or translatorial choices.

The comparative analysis would look upon texts focusing on female same-sex relationships and their translations. The first text is Ismat Chughtai's *Lihaaf* (The Quilt), published in 1942, it led to an uproar for its controversial content eventually culminating into an obscenity trial. I take up its Hindi translation which was done by Surjit and published by Rajkamal Prakashan in 2016 and try to read it against its two different English translations out of which one was done by M. Asaduddin published by Manushi

(no date provided) and other was done by Syeda S. Hameed in 1994 by the The Sheep Meadow Press respectively.

In the Hindi text, the relationship between Begum Jaan and Rabbo has been depicted with a degree of disgust. The narrator's tone in one of repulsion at the sight of Begum and Rabbu's activities. The translation by Asaddudin follows close on the heels of the Hindi text even going a notch higher in the tone of disgust. But the second English translation dramatically changes the tone rendering a softer and milder disapproval.

Table 6: Comparison of Translations

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">"रब्बो को घर का और कोई काम न था … बस वह सारे वक़्त उनकी छपरखट पर चढ़ी कभी पैर और कभी सिर और कभी जिस्म के और दूसरे हिस्से को दबाया करती थी । कभी तो मेरा दिल बोल उठता था , जब देखो , रब्बो कुछ न कुछ दबा रही है या मालिश कर रही है । कोई दूसरा होता , तो न जाने क्या होता … मैं अपना कहती हूँ, कोई इतना छुए भी तो मेरा जिस्म तो सड़- गल के ख़त्म हो जाए।"</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">rəbbo: ko: gʱərə kɑ: aːurə koːi: kɑːmə nə ʈʰɑ: … bəsə vəɦiə sɑːre: vəkʈə unəki: cʰəpərəkʱəʈə pərə cəɖ̤i: kəbʰi: paːirə aːurə kəbʰi: sirə aːurə kəbʰi: ɟismə keː aːurə ɖuːsəreː ɦisseː koː ɖəbɑːjɑː kərəʈi: ʈʰiː । kəbʰi: ʈoː meːrɑː ɖilə boːlə uʈʰəʈɑː ʈʰɑː , ɟəbə ɖeːkʱoː , rəbbo: kucʰə nə kucʰə ɖəbɑː rəɦi: ɦaːi jɑː mɑːliɛə kərə rəɦi: ɦaːi । koːi: ɖuːsərɑː ɦoːʈɑː , ʈoː nə ɟɑːneː kjɑː ɦoːʈɑː … maːiⁿ əpənɑː kəɦəʈi: ɦuː, koːi: iʈənɑː cʰueː bʰi: ʈoː meːrɑː ɟismə ʈoː sə- gələ keː kʱʈmə ɦoː ɟɑːeː।</td></tr>
<tr><td>Translation 1:
"Rabbu had no other household duties. Perched on the couch she was always massaging some part of her body or the other. At times I could hardly bear it— the sight of Rabbu massaging or rubbing at all hours. Speaking for myself, if anyone were to touch my body so often I would certainly rot to death" (Asaddudin 37 no.110).</td><td>Translation 2:
"Rabbo had no other household duties. Perched on the four- poster bed, she was always massaging Begum Jaan's head, feet or some other part of her anatomy . If someone other than begum jaan received such a quantity of human touching , what would the consequences be ? speaking for myself , I can say that if someone touched me continuously like this, I would certainly rot" (Hameed 1990:10-11).</td></tr>
</table>

Here, queer intimacy is marked on bodies as dirty, sinful and repulsive. Nevertheless, Hameed's version is significantly different from the earlier two versions in the sense that the intense abhorrence and loathing which the two former narratives inspire in the narrator (and in the reader) are significantly missing in her translation.

In the climax of the story, where the narrator witnesses the reality of the relationship between the two women, Hameed's translation changes the scene by bringing down the shock value for the narrator. She introduces a whole new sentence which gives the narrator an air of self-awareness. The narrator in Hameed's translation appears less traumatized.

Table 7: Comparison of Translations (2)

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">"आ... न … अम्माँ…" मैं हिम्मत करके गुनगुनाई , मगर वहाँ कुछ सुनवाई न हुई और लिहाफ़ मेरे दिमाग़ में घुसकर फूलना शुरू हुआ । मैंने डरते - डरते पलंग के दूसरी तरफ़ पैर उतारे और टटोलकर बिजली का बटन दबाया । हाथी ने लिहाफ़ के नीचे एक कलाबाज़ी लगायी और पिचक गया ।... कलाबाज़ी लगाने में लिहाफ़ का कोना फ़ीट भर उठा …
"अल्लाह …! " मैं गड़ाप से अपने बिछौने में…!”</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">"ɑ:... nə … əmmɑ:ँ…" mɑ:iⁿ ɦimməʈ̲ə kərəke: gunəgunɑ:i: , məgərə vəɦɑ: kucʰə sunəvɑ:i: nə ɦui: a:urə liɦɑ:फ़ me:re: ɖ̲imɑ:ग़ me:ⁿ gʱusəkərə pʰu:ləɳɑ: ɛuru: ɦuɑ: । mɑ:iⁿne: ɖ̲ərəʈ̲e: - ɖ̲ərəʈ̲e: pələⁿgə ke: ɖ̲u:səri: ʈ̲ərəफ़ pɑ:irə uʈ̲ɑ:re: a:urə ʈ̲əʈo:ləkərə biɟəli: kɑ: bəʈ̲ənə ɖ̲əbɑ:jɑ: । ɦɑ:ʈ̲ʰi: ne: liɦɑ:फ़ ke: ni:ce: e:kə kələ:bɑ:ज़ी: ləgɑ:ji: a:urə picəkə gəjɑ: ।... kələ:bɑ:ज़ी: ləgɑ:ne: me:ⁿ liɦɑ:फ़ kɑ: ko:nɑ: फ़i:ʈ̲ə bʰərə uʈ̲ʰɑ: …
"əllɑ:ɦə …! " mɑ:iⁿ gəड़ɑ:pə se: əpəne: bicʰa:une: me:ⁿ…!”</td></tr>
<tr><td>Translation 1:
“Aa... Ammi... I whimpered courageously. No one paid any heed. The quilt crept into my brain and began to grow larger. I stretched my leg nervously to the other side of the bed to grope for the switch and turned it on. The elephant somersaulted inside the quilt which deflated immediately. During the</td><td>Translation 2:
“Ammi! I spoke with courage , but no one heard me. The quilt meanwhile, had entered my brain and started growing. Quietly creeping to the other side of the bed I swung my legs over and sat up . In the dark I groped for the switch . The elephant somersaulted beneath the quilt and dug in. During the somersault, its corner was lifted one foot</td></tr>
</table>

somersault the corner of the quilt rose by almost a foot... Good God! I gasped and plunged into my bed" (Asaddudin 40).	above the bed. Allah! I dove headlong into my sheets!! What I saw when the quilt was lifted , I will never tell anyone, not even they give me a lakh of rupees" (Hameed 1990:19).

While the above misrecognition is easily identified by a comparison between the translation and the original text, but it remains of interest as a reminder of the ethical dimension of the task of the translator, linked to the reader by an ethical contract of trust, and as testimony to the systematic attempts to erase queer sexualities. Whistling Woods International produced a short film, based on the above story, directed by Rohan Sonawane in 2009. In the film, the end comes when the child narrator, named Amiran here, leaves the mansion, in an act of self-assertion and protest against the molestation she suffers. In the story, though the narrator laments her incapability to move out of the situation and lacking freedom , the film, in an interesting twist to the plot, lets Amiran leave the house while one can hear Begum Jaan's painful screams in the background.

4.4 Investigation through Scholarship

Since queer scholarship has been an important point of for me, translation include queer scholarship to (the act of interpretation as translation).

The next example focuses less on the literal equivalence and traditional idea of translation. In 2013, Tirohit (2001) by Geetanjali Shree, was translated by Rahul Soni as The Roof Beneath Their Feet which is an account of two women Chachcho and Lalna. The sexually frustrated and emotionally lonely Chachcho finds refuge in Lalna, her maid-servant. An encounter between the two women gets interpreted as a heterosexual encounter between Lalna and Chachcho's husband by the narrator's (who happens to be

Chachcho's nephew) friend Paresh. But actually, the narrator finds both of the women engaged in different activities when he returns to his home.

The author of the novel in a conversation with the translator quotes :

> "… There are instances in the book where two women are together, but the people can only see a male and a female; or peeking down into houses, the youngsters see what they are conditioned to be excited by and not what really is there. Like the scene in which one woman squeezing lemons and another mopping the floor are conjoined into a motion suggesting oral sex between a man and a woman!" (A conversation between Geetanjali Shree and Rahul Soni n.pag)

Kuhu Sharma Chanana, in her paper, " Plurality of the Significance of Lesbian Existence in Modern Indian Writers" (2015) has interpreted their relationship as explicitly lesbian. Chanana's interpretative violence (to bring together form and content) to the original text is probably of greater interest than the accuracy of some translation. Dèmont in his paper, "On Three Modes of Translating Queer Literary Texts", characterizes three strategies which translators adopt to approach the multitudinous aspects of queer: "the misrecognizing translation, the minoritizing translation, and the queering translation." Of especial importance, here, is the minoritizing approach which "congeals queerness's drifting nature by flattening its connotative power to a unidimensional and superficial game of denotative equivalences." Dèmont discusses D.A. Miller's "Anal Rope" (1991), an essay on Alfred Hitchcock's 1948 Rope, which claims that the pre-occupation with the film's technical aspects have led the viewers to gloss over the homosexuality of the characters. He looks at it "as a translation, a transference or a displacement of the fascination with homosexuality." He further elucidates as to how Miller considers the

device of connotation to be doing a disservice to the queer content of the movie. Minoritizing translations form a part of the complex processes of identity politics that tries to captures the queer in all its explicitness. It strips the text of its fluidity . Dèmont further states "If the text is based on layers of meaning, its literary quality resides in its ambiguity and its capacity to (de)construct its own narrative/meaning." Minoritizing cancels the ambiguity to fit the text into the scheme of a larger political spectrum by attaching fixed meanings to it. Placing Chanana's example within the minoritizing praxis, it can be said that she tries to translate the text's supposedly homosocial dynamic and juxtaposes it with an explicit lesbian identity. Her minoritizing translation disrupts the pregnant ambiguities and suggestive disruptions of the relationship of the characters. She goes on to theorize their 'invisibility' through the conceptual framework of Terry Castle's, "ghosting of lesbians" or "apparitional lesbianism". The themes of patriarchal oppression and class dynamics are completely elided whenever a reference to silencing and invisibility comes up:

Oh, how I loved that gaze! Insects are afraid of being seen because they'll be squashed. I, on the other hand, would step out like a lioness. Let them worry about my claws! I will dance. I will sing. If I feel like it, I will scratch my thighs. Why shouldn't I, if they itch? Should I kill myself to get their respect? When they can't even see me, how will they see me scratching myself ? " (Shree n.pag)

The above lament by Lalna over her not being paid attention to by the householders and her following assertion for freedom and liberty from the class oppressions buttressed by the claustrophobic patriarchy is eroticized and turned into a frustrated urge for sexual satisfaction. The 'itch' is even compared to the 'itch' which Begum Jaan suffers from in

The Quilt. Much attention should also be paid to the scholarship surrounding the translated text in order to respect and to make salient the ambiguities of the text.

CHAPTER- V

CONCLUSION

This dissertation looks at both Queer and Translation as mutually transacting dialogic areas. My fundamental research praxis of looking into the various translations of queer sexualities and gender variance brings up the crisis of identifying oneself in sexual terms in the Indian society.

In ancient times, 'queer' bodies were strictly constructed on procreative abilities and not on sexual orientation, validating Raj Rao's arguments about traditional, duty-based societies which we explored in Chapter 4. During the course of collecting and examining mythological and scriptural stories talked about in Chapter 2 and 3, it was observed that there were less stories on female same-sex desire and companionship than stories on male bonding. But the narratives on female same-sex desire in modern fiction and literature in Hindi outnumbered the narratives on male homoerotic bonding albeit hinged on homophobia. In most of the instances, the stories were male-authored which smacked of voyeurism. Kewal Sood who is the author of *Murgikhana* positions himself as an iconoclast and claims that the subject matter for the book is progressive which we analyzed to the contrary in the previous chapter. It shows how problematic it becomes even when writers think they are subverting the normal. Amongst the queer bodies, Hijra narratives have an abundant presence in Hindi literature (*Teesri Taali, Main Kyu Nahi, Kinnar Katha, Yamdeep* etc.) owing to their cementified status as the 'third-gender' in Indian society. Generally depicted as being garish and exhibitionistic in attire, in most of

the stories the hijra figure is the archetypal hermaphrodite, people born either with a sexual disability or a biological identity which couldn't be assigned to either of the two categories. This maybe symptomatic of the comfort Indian society has with external forms of queer visibility than with desires (Pattanaik n.pag). In a patriarchal society like India , it is almost unfathomable that someone would give up his privileges as a male to assume a female role and gender. It also becomes a narrative requirement to show how intersexed persons, devoid of procreative abilities are marginalized and treated unjustly in a phallocentric society from the moment he/she is born. The central texts in this project put under scrutiny, unearth major fissures in the conceptualization and the translations of Indian queer bodies. Our review of mythological texts of the Hindu religion in Chapter 2 gave us an insight into the social attitudes of Indian pre-modern society towards 'alternative sexualities'. This chapter further solidifies our crux argument that non-normative bodies were subject to socio-economic exclusion and disdain contrary to the ideas propagated by recent queer scholars. Chapter 3 unearths the fissures in the mythological narratives alongside the translations of various authors and dissects the terminological unsuitability of juxtaposing western constructs on Indian formulations. On one hand we have formulations on the basis of reproductive abilities and on the other hand nuances of liberatory identity politics exemplified through the "Bhishma is an asexual" declaration by Pattanaik. We have also followed the various translations of the Kamasutra to understand various the incoherences of employing contrived language and terms to describe subjects of a different time period. In Chapter 4, I take up the issue of Ramesh Kapoor's Hindi translation (2015) of Pattanaik's Shikhandi, I dwell into an in-depth terminological investigation of Kapoor's queer neologisms to the modern terms. As

discussed previously, the terms were found to be lacking bi-directionality and obviously so. Kapoor in the form of paratextual material provides a glossary at the end of the book and explicate that the advancements in the field of Gender and Sexuality in the West has led to huge semantic changes over the years. He also adds that due to various reasons there is a dearth of terms related to sexuality in Hindi without adding the reasons (189). I have also taken up two examples of how translation plays an important role in suppressing and making queer explicit repectively. This section explores the shortcomings and advantages of a translator's agency while translating queer content. Sometimes, a translator becomes the spokesperson of a given text and these are the moments when the he/she feels challenged about his/her ethical relationship with the source text. I have used Epstein's (2017) framework of 'acqueering' and 'eradicalization'(121) to tackle the examples I discussed above.

We have noted earlier how Hindi and English, are languages infused with class associations and the use of Hindi indexes a backward and traditional idea of sexuality.From what I found during my research, positive queer content in Hindi literature is a rarity and also the need of the hour.

This process can also start with appropriate translations of latest developments in the field of Queer sexuality so that queer positive knowledge and ideology gets disseminated through Hindi literature so that it leads to new ways of visualizing queer culture.

The discourse should never stagnate. My aim in this dissertation was to point out the irregularities in queer translations to Hindi. It was this stagnation of queer concepts and knowledge I wanted to focus upon. This work was also aimed at the recent trend of

discourses which promoted an idealistic view of our pre-modern society. I am not anti-LGBTIQ+ but we need to acknowledge the lacuna in the socio-cultural body of the Indian society which has not allowed queerness to flourish and grow. I have already discussed the dangers of harking back to history in Chapter 2. Indian queer community who have limited access to English is undergoing what Miranda Fricker (2008) calls, 'hermeneutical injustice'. According to her, people from marginalized sections are prevented from creating concepts, terms and other representational resources that could be used in order to conceptualize and understand their own experiences by people in the position of power (147-175).

Through this work I tried to bring Queer studies and Translation studies together to bring focus upon :

- The insufficient queer knowledge systems in Hindi literature
- Queering the creative resistance between English and Hindi through translations
- Translator's undeniable agency in bringing forth this change
- The shortcomings involved in glossing over the pre-modern queer past

Therefore, these two areas will only enrich each other if they work together. One of the ways to counter hegemonic control over the hermeneutics and presentation of queer content is to provide corrective histories, re-imagine and rewrite past and present queer discourse through translation. (Bankhead 2014: iii)

Translation Studies can open up possibilities for queer theorization from an Indian perspective. I have already discussed in Chapter 2 that the three-sex/gender model is

insufficient to encompass Indian queer reality. As I have demonstrated in this dissertation, translation can reveal the gaps in the ideologies of a culture. The analysis of pre-modern texts and contemporary fiction reveal the processes of Indian 'queer' identity-formation and translation can function as a tool to both analyse and empower these identities through its control over the narrative. The areas of Queer Studies and Translation Studies present us with limitless possibilities through which we can work towards the empowerment of Indian queer.

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