
**Exploring the Condition of LGBT in Kushner's *Angels in America* and
Nepali Society**

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Paper Received on 31-09-2024, Accepted on 01-11-2024
Published on 02-11-24; DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2024.9.4.86

Abstract:

This paper explores the condition of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* and Nepal. Kushner seems to suggest that homosexuals are a natural process, whereas Nepali society takes this practice as queer and impractical though more LGBT has increased than it was ever before. Gay represents a minority group in Nepal, and they are fighting for their rights, although the government has not addressed their presence and existence. The homosexuals have their organization, the Blue Diamond Society, for their rights. Heterosexuals hate, humiliate, harass others, exploit, and dominate homosexuals openly. This paper attempts to minimize this trend as people of the third gender are part of society. The study's findings show that the mentality of our society is still the same. This paper concerns why homosexuals are not as responsible as heterosexuals. The study sheds light on this issue as a matter of concern because homosexuality cannot be overlooked nor ignored, although the repercussions of gay practice fuel HIV/AIDS. Homosexuals alone are not responsible for this fatal disease. The concerned body must address their recognition and identity so Nepali society gradually accepts them. The major objective of the study is to treat the third gender equally, not as a marginalized group. The study adopts the prose of otherness approach as a border theory and survey methods to analyze this text.

Keywords: LGBT, homosexual, otherness, queer practice, society

Introduction: Gays as Angels in America and Otherwise in Nepal

Are gays the angels? No, the majority of people in Nepal do not agree with Tony Kushner's views. The situation of LGBT is not what Kushner says in his novel. Today, not only LGBT but also queer, so it has been LGBTQ now. Although

American societies are more open than Nepali societies, all Americans do not call homosexuals angels. They also discriminate against them remarkably. The LGBTQ does not have an exciting condition even in America. "Gale, who worked as an accounting clerk at the States Steamship Line, was immediately fired from his job. Laurence soon lost his position as editor of *Vector* as well after he characterized West Coast homosexual organization Leaders" (Carter, 2010, p.144). Hire and fire were and are very common only because of homosexuals, not because of any mistakes and weak performances. Similarly, "a lesbian Air Force nurse who had been discharged because of her sexuality" (Schneider Jr., 2019, p. 180). Several homosexuals suffered only for their sexualities.

Being a homosexual is natural, not like AI. It is not under the control of a person. Still, treating the third gender hatefully is common, though the situation seems to have become better. This is because "For many gay men who came out in the period after the Stonewall riots in New York in 1969, the seventies were a golden age of sexual freedom" (Escoffier, 2017, p. 88). The gays and lesbians fought for their rights seriously so that they gained something partially. The Stonewall riots in New York in 1969 were a milestone for ameliorating the pitiful condition of gays and lesbians. "The Stonewall Riots were a series of violent protests and street demonstrations" (Carter, 2010, prologue), which added the cornerstone of the third gender demonstration. Similarly, "The Stonewall Riots and the Gay Liberation Front would not have happened in 1969 had it not been for the enormous social vitality of the times" (Bronski, 2019, p.182). Therefore, the Stonewall riots would have been a milestone in the history of LGBTQ.

This is not the condition yet in Nepal. The Nepali society has not yet been open, even though the time demands it. Gays are taken as queer things in Nepal, and many of them do not even like to contact with such third-gender people. Most people think that it is a bad omen to see gays when they start a new journey. The make of Nepali society, which is not as open as European society, is very conservative. David Carter argues, "The situation of gay men and lesbians was radically different from what it is today. At the end of the 1960s, homosexual sex was illegal in every state but Illinois" (Prologue n. p.). Although homosexuals would not have been accepted openly even in European countries, the government of Illinois had accepted their identity. The practice of homosexuals was illegal in every state, but slowly, it got sorted. "When Hollywood made a film with a major homosexual character, the character was either killed or killed himself. There were no openly gay policemen, public school teachers, doctors, or lawyers" (Prologue n. p.). The condition of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender is getting better, but Nepali society is not ready to accept their existence openly, though the number of homosexuals is increasing everywhere in the world. There are many gay people in power these days, so the space and horizon of homosexuals have been widened easily, but it has not yet been

ameliorated.

One of the most powerful weapons to ameliorate the situation of homosexuals is writing that is gay literature. Writing like novels, dramas, or poems promotes the situation of marginalized groups. Therefore, this paper also adds a brick to the walls of third-gender demonstrations. Brookes (2009) states that “all gay male writing, however assimilative, exists in some degree of opposition to the dominant culture” (p. 42). The dominant culture belongs to the straight, not to the homosexuals. The straights are the established ones who have their religion, culture, tradition, and rituals as identities, whereas homosexuals do not have all these required things because they have identity crises. So, “The central entreaty of gay liberation, after all, was to “come out,” and the vast expansion of gay literature in the post-Stonewall period is in part a response to this call” (Brookes, 2009, p. 4). The street demonstration is one way to promote gay liberation, and gay literature is the most powerful way to finalize the target.

Like gay literature, “The proliferation of AIDS literature has revealed the importance of the written word for gay men and the formulation and sustenance of their identity as gay. However, literature has been a formative cultural influence for a long time” (Pearl, 2013, p. 5). The AIDS literature means making aware of the problems of repercussions of AIDS. It might be a poem or a story written about the danger of AIDS that can make society aware faster than other media. The print media as literary works can change the world sooner or later. Moreover, Johansen (2019) states:

There is no denying the historical significance of the Stonewall uprising that began on June 28, 1969. Sparked by a police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City’s Greenwich Village, the clash between patrons and authorities that began in the wee hours of June 28, 1969, drew unprecedented attention to the oppressions experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people in their daily lives. As such, Stonewall is commonly viewed as a turning point, ushering in the gay rights movement. (p.186)

The Stonewall uprising that began on June 28, 1969, has an undeniable historical significance. This event determined homosexual rights as they have been marginalized extremely. For all the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people in their daily lives, Stonewall was a U-turn.

“Hence, the implication of their argument is that such fiction, when found in the context of gay male writing, has a similar tendency to underwrite dominant ideology. A further implication is that fantasy in gay male writing is bent on shattering the illusion that realist fiction works so hard to create” (Brookes, 2009, p. 42).

Further, another scholar, “Mark Lilly sees gay male writing in general as driven by the notion of freedom, and specifically, of freedom as the forbidden fruit that invites disobedience” (1993, p. 60). Lilly has a belief that gay male writing helps

ameliorate the condition of homosexuals. Eve and Adam ate the forbidden fruits, and because of this, the evolution of this world took place. Similarly, homosexuals disobeyed the norms and standards the heterosexuals had made that were not the third-gender friendly. It was a Stonewall uprising. As a result, homosexuals deserved their rights. Lilly (1993) states, "Returning to what, as we have seen, is a central theme in gay male writing since Stonewall; these stories present a challenge to that cozy view of traditional domesticity and sentimental attachment to heterosexual values that underpins Holleran's fiction" (p. 176). Society has such a narrow view, even though it is an ultramodern age. The heterosexist values have only the space in several societies. It is mandatory that society has to give space to homosexuals as it is not a matter of their interests; it is because of their hormones. Who can alternate it?

David M. Robinson (2006) gives credit to gay literature as a most powerful weapon for the liberation of homosexuality. "And part of the reason for Cleland's scandalous treatment of both male and female homosexuality, she argued, is his writing for a variety of intended readers, including homosexual ones" (Robinson, 2006, p. 40). The literature's contribution is unpredictable and eradicable. Only the road demonstration is not sufficient; the role of writing is innumerable. The writing of literature not only makes the opponent groups aware but also makes the fighter groups lead ahead.

Rejection of homosexuals is not a solution. Accepting them as they are is the final solution. To accelerate this view, writing literature on AIDS, as well as gay literature, changes society's views and understanding. Pearl (2013) claims:

One of the significant ways that the literature on AIDS changed after 1994 is that it became retrospective. For example, the first "epics" of gay literature were produced at nearly the same time. Consider that in 1995, two important gay writers produced such epics: Felice Picano's *Like People in History* and Ethan Mordden's *How Long Has This Been Going On?*²⁹, both of which chronicle gay life in major cities from some time just before Stonewall to the time of writing. (p. 5)

As Pearl suggests, the epics of gay literature by Felice Picano and Ethan Mordden made society aware of such unavoidable naturalness, that is, homosexuality. The presence of homosexuals is not a problem or a challenge but an opportunity to know about the third gender. So, the contribution of the literature on AIDS and gays and lesbians helped change the mentality of heterosexuals. Tony Kushner's attempt is also in his novel.

Demonstration power is one kind of power or weapon, whereas literature power is the most unavoidable weapon by which change is possible. Therefore, "scholarship and politics that too often treat labels such as 'homosexual' and 'gay'" (Pearl, 2013, p. xii) so that the outlet of third-gender's problems can be addressed. Many powerful people were and are homosexuals. Can we avoid them? They are in the decision-making position. The following questions show that Dickinson and

Lincoln were homosexuals. "Was Emily Dickinson a lesbian?" "Was Abraham Lincoln gay?" (Pearl, 2013, p. 44). Lincoln was a state head, and Dickinson was an established writer of English literature. The subject of gay literature is still otherwise, though the situation is not so. Many scholars are not interested in working on this area. "many scholars still think of the subject as marginal, distasteful, and embarrassing" (Day, 2000, p. 89). Gay subject as such is not much of a likely subject yet. Society is so biased that it humiliates homosexuals. Because of this, several homosexual people face humiliation from the straights. Day (2000) presents the example, "Even though he loved sports, Jennings stopped playing on organized school teams after being humiliated by his seventh-grade gym teacher" (p.199). Almost all the third genders, like Jennings, have been still facing humiliation from society. Even his gym teacher humiliated him because of his sexuality. Thus, this paper proposes to correct such social stigmas.

Like Jennings, the majority of homosexuals seem to have a defeated mentality instead of revolting. In contrast, some revolting homosexual characters fight for their rights, identity, and equality. Tilo, one of the most revolting characters in Arundhati Roy's Novel "The Ministry of the Utmost Happiness," is a young woman who fights for identity and equality bravely. She seemingly has no past, caste, or family, but she never feels weak. She is a determined, dark-skinned South Asian woman who struggles against adversity. "They described how she had struggled against cabals of bullying men, how she eventually won the respect and admiration of those who had tormented her, and how she had inspired a whole generation of young women to follow their dreams and desires" (Roy 2017, p. 239). This shows that Tilo is an exemplifying character in the novel.

However, our society is so biased and selfish that marginalized groups have several challenges. "In the introduction, Jennings writes, "We, as teachers, must teach gay history because it is intellectually dishonest not to do so. . . . teaching such history may help our students to create a better society" (Day, 2000, p. 100). Jennings (2000) seems to suggest that the new generation should be trained about the existence of homosexuals so that they will never feel odd when they come into contact with them. The school teachers do not prioritize such subjects, though there is no provision in the syllabus. Lilly (1993) claims that his sexuality itself is a revolt. He clarifies, "My sexuality, and its expression in physical actions, is therefore a kind of revolt against that society, having social and political significance far beyond the sexual" (p. 42). The politics determine the several things in the society. So, for the long-term effect, the role of politics has to be crucial. Equal rights are what the modern time demands. Political correction is the final solution to the so-called problem. Homosexuality is not a problem, but it is a social construct.

The Stonewall is symbolically presented as homosexuals are as firm and rigid as the Stonewall. "But the energy of Stonewall and the Sexual Revolution of the

1960s assumed that the concept of gay rights meant the right to be sexual, the right to act upon our sexuality in the same way that heterosexuals do” (p. 181). The homosexuals wage the demonstration in the same way that heterosexuals do. Lilly (1993) clarifies that the concept of gay rights meant the right to be sexual, the right to act upon their sexuality. They are fighting because their rights have not yet been confirmed. Their present achievement is perhaps partial, though heterosexuals claim that it is extraordinary.

Herring (2007) suggests that all homosexuals have to be open or overt, not covert. He claims that homosexuals should talk honestly and openly about sex and their personal sexuality. “Until we can begin again to talk honestly and openly about sex and our own personal sexuality, we will never move ahead. Twenty-five years ago, the Stonewall Riots and the formation of the Gay Liberation Front were a revelation” (p.183). The writer confirms that they can never move ahead if they covert their sexualities. Slowly and gradually, most third-gender people dared to fight to guarantee their rights despite their minority. They waged the movement.

“The gay and lesbian movement has had extraordinary achievements in the past decade or two” (Herring, 2007, p. 195). They would not have achieved their goals if they had not fought bravely. The homosexuals had not expected these achievements because they had been dominated and exploited extremely. Therefore, their achievements were unexpected. In the past two decades, they fought for their rights sincerely, and they achieved it as “many lesbians and gays of any color and any historical period are—and were—not immune to undertaking sexual identifications of their own” (Herring, 2007, p. 230). The issue of sexual identification is more challenging than other racial identifications.

Despite all these adversities for third-gender people, some heterosexuals consider them as a good omen for them. Especially small-scale business people entertain the visits of gay men in their shops. They feel their sales get ameliorated after gays visit. So, several business people happily give them Rs. 100+ as alms with the belief of a good sale in their businesses. For instance, Sarala Ghimire, a bag shopkeeper at Chabahil behind Ganesh Temple, Kathmandu, claims that her sales are good if the gays visit her shop. All the shopkeepers do not trust that gay people’s visits make a good sale in their businesses and a mentionable enhancement, but they also have some attachments to such a belief system. Many of them have the experience of doing good business after gay people visit their shops. So, they give them a higher amount of money as alms than they give to the general beggars. Sarala wants the gay people’s visits when her sales are down. Like Sarala, several shopkeepers give gay people money without hesitation as soon as they visit their shops. This makes gay people the angels, even in Nepal. Why does it happen so? What is the relation between gay people’s visits and good sales? Several shopkeepers have similar views, although not all business people fully believe them. Still, gay

people are discriminated against and marginalized in many respects in Nepalese contexts.

I asked Sarala if she likes gay people in reality. She answers in negative. Why? This is because she is straight, and she does not like the third gender. She does not know why. Only because of her good sales does she like them, or does she not like them? Sarala might be a representative figure who reflects Nepal's scenario. Almost no one likes gay people in Nepali society. The study concerns how to bring a positive vibe in favor of gays in Nepal so that all third-gender people can breathe equality.

One of the major concerns of this study is why homosexuals are not as responsible as heterosexuals. Are they frustrated? Are they happy with their sexuality? They do not seem to be so. In the lack of their heirs and successors, they do not sacrifice like heterosexuals. Only a limited number of homosexual people like Lincoln, Dickinson, and several writers of lesbian and gay literature are responsible. Although homosexual people are more powerful mentally and physically than heterosexual people, they do not seem responsible toward society as if it is mere heterosexual people's part to contribute to society. They take their lives as freelancers. Except for a few, they do not want to do the government job. Nor are their involvements and presences in business, politics, and education. Some of them form a group and ask for money from the passengers on the trains or in shops. This makes their identity weak.

Gay practices as homosexuals have been in existence from time immemorial; however, they remain under erasure till now. But Tony Kushner makes gays angels and encourages them to come forward. The men "might be seen as heterosexually driven to obsess over female beauty, or on the other hand they might appear to be so interested in the female realm that they wanted to be women themselves" (Janes). This gay practice is not new to this modern world. The gays are opening slowly and gradually. In the United States of America, during the 1960s, when gays started raising their voices for their identity and recognition, they were brutally suppressed by the US government. They had extreme torture. But the situation has been changed. There is no option of disagreeing with third-gender society. "The enormous gap between the literary culture of Russia's educated elite and the oral culture of the folk also shaped the evolution of gay literature in fundamental ways" (Bear, 2014, p. 421). Whether it is the demand of time or otherwise, the gap between homosexuals and heterosexuals is becoming narrower and narrower. One cannot disagree with the natural orientation of the person because it is not like the conversion we find in religious groups. It is not like a Hindu converts his Hinduism to Christianity.

In this context, the study discusses the real experience of a third-gender woman by the Hello TV reporter. The interviewee claims that she did not have a feeling of a boy, though she was born as a baby son. Her name is Bipasha Maharjan,

and she is now after the surgical operation. Her name was Budhha Basnet, eighteen years ago. The interview is as follows:

When I began to feel differently, not as I was born, I decided to change my sex anyhow. My family tried to convince me not to behave what I did. They claimed I was a son when I was born. But I never enjoyed my being. My family did not support me for what I wanted, and I left the home from Kalanki. I started working as a sex worker, according to one of my similar gender senior colleagues. I earned some money, and I went to India to have a surgical operation so that I could become a girl by paying 18 lacs as hospital fees. Now, my family has accepted me, and I have been living happily with them. However, the Nepal government has not addressed our problem yet. (Hello TV)

The unhappiness of Bipasha Maharjan shows that the Nepal government has not addressed third-gender people, homosexuality.

Conclusion

This paper explores the conflict between Nepali society and gay practice. It advocates for sexual freedom and liberation because there is no alternative except assimilating with it. The LGBTQ people are still facing several challenges despite digital modernity. Tony Kushner calls them an angel, and they are. This paper might be a strong voice about LGBT's or LGBTQ's pursuit of happiness, equality, and identity amidst the adversities in heterosexual societies. Many third-gender people fought against the orthodoxies of heterosexuals and won the respect and admiration of those who othered and discriminated against homosexuals. One of the most exemplifying characters among them is Tilo. If all the homosexuals follow her footsteps without any hesitation with high precaution, equality is at the door. Some business people entertain their presence in their shops as they claim that their sales are good after the visit of gays. In accepting the gays, the Nepali society has not been that much open yet. Most of them pass a negative comment against homosexuals.

The gays are physically and mentally much stronger than the straights, and they are never inferior to the straights. It is the weakness of our society to reject their sexualities. Accept them; do not hate and humiliate them. If you do not like them, keep silent. This is also a kind of help in their struggle for freedom, equality, and liberation. One of the most remarkable things about gays is the way some of them go out to society and collect money from the public. Cannot they survive if they do not do this? They can. They look like a standard beggar, although all of the gays do not come out for the same purpose. In India, gays ask for money from passengers on trains without any hesitation, and they become angry, and they threaten them with bad mouths if they give them less amount of money or if they do not give. Some of them do not hesitate to speak vulgar words and signal sexual gestures. They say they are not beggars. This makes the public overlook them when they come close. Some immediately give them some money, and some just pretend they do not see them or

they ignore them.

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How to cite this article?

Dr. Raj Kumar Gurung & Dr. Kamal Sharma "Exploring the Condition of LGBT in Kushner's *Angels in America* and Nepali Society" *Research Journal Of English (RJOE)*9(4),PP:78-86,2024, DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2024.9.4.86