

# Gender Roles: An Examination of Sexuality and Socio-Cultural Tribal Identity

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## Abstract

*The identity of sex is classified based on biological characteristics which are examined and proved by physician during the birth of the child. Whereas, Gender differences encompass the behaviors, expressions, desires, roles and identities which are socially formed. This paper attempts to examine whether the gay relationship in the college environment is real or unreal. It also aims to analyse the socio-cultural identities of the select Santhal Tribe with references to the food, festivals, religious beliefs, language, and other environmental elements. The relationship between gardening and human emotions is studied from the select work. According to Judith Butler's Gender Theory and Gender Performative, gender is socially constructed by society. From her thoughts, the character in this select work assumes himself as homosexual and falls into the wrong fake relationship which destroys his mental and physical health.*

**Keywords:** Environment, Homosexual, Gender Performative, Sex, Tribe.

## Introduction

Tribal Literature involves in narration and study of tribal people and their indigenous systems. It also includes their folktales, myths, oral literature, folksongs, traditions, cultural and religious beliefs, identities and other social behaviours. The emergence of Tribal literature produced nationally after 1991 to give a literary voice against the discrimination of social identity in the country. It brought the mainstream society to understand the equal importance to be given to the tribes who survived in the forest with nature. Later, in recent studies, the researchers are involved in the study of specific indigenous groups and their history. This study helps in experiencing the indigenous people's traditional knowledge systems in medicine, agriculture, farming, construction of houses, clothing, and animal breeding. It is a concept of cultural heritage and historical legacies. In India, there are different and unique tribal communities located in different parts of the country. Each group has unique cultural features and languages. They are also considered the guardians of nature. They preserve and consume forest products in a good manner. The remote location of tribes explains their social lifestyle, rituals and

customs. The traditional knowledge of tribes is passed to the next and current generation through tribal literature.

### **The Select Work**

The work selected for this study is *My Father's Garden* written by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar. The novel is divided into three acts with the unnamed narrator. The first act is titled 'Lover' which narrates the narrator's college life and gay relationship with Samir. Unfortunately, his relationship with Samir is not meant for his whole life. It breaks in the middle, which heartbroken the narrator. The second act is 'Friend', it is his next stage of life. Here, he become a government doctor and met new people to lead a fresh life without the memories of his past love. In this stage of life, he came to understand the social issues of the Santhal Tribe by witnessing their house demolishment. The last act is titled 'Father' which refers to the title of the novel. He narrates his father's life and his emotional bond with gardening. Earlier, his father was involved in politics which results in unhappy consequences. So, his whole life is traced to his obsession towards gardening.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Judith Butler in her theory of gender performativity states that gender is merely a performance that is reinforced by an individual's behaviour and actions rather than a biological aspect of the body. Hence, being male, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or female is a performative act. In consideration of societal functions, the members should submit to gender norms without challenge. Judith Butler argues that "any effort to give universal or specific content to the category of women, presuming that that guarantee of solidarity is required in advance, will necessarily produce fact, and that, identity as a point of departure can never hold as the solidifying ground of a feminist political movement" (Butler, 1992). Butler's vision of conventional feminism emerges the new forms of hierarchy and systems of exclusion and inclusion. This paper is an attempt to interpret Butler's vision of gender performativity in the gay relationship. In many circumstances, queer people frequently avoid social meetings to protect themselves from physical and verbal abuse for their gender identity. In a few countries, they are giving equality to all genders and welcome them. They are living peacefully without abuses and encourage social behaviour. The binary construction of gender is destroyed, the gender performative is in action. The psychological conditions of the queer people are examined to bring harmonious living in the gender equality society. They also deserve love and respect as living beings on this planet. Judith Butler in her work *Gender Trouble* says, "If gender is an object which a person want to be (but never fully realized), then gender is a process or action. Gender should not be used as a noun, an existence of essence, or a static cultural label. It should be considered as a repeated behavior" (Butler, 1990). The behaviour of gender must follow certain norms to fit into the category. So, the gender confirmative needs to be taken to identify the gender and the process of normalization starts. Gender is not inherent, but is produced by the pressure of the discipline. This pressure regulates the performance, which finalizes the gender performatives.

### **Discussion**

We were friends for a little over two years before we became lovers. The suddenness of it took my breath away. At school in Ghatsila, all of my grand love affairs had played out only in my mind. And Lucknow was an alien city which had to be negotiated with great care. It allowed me space to have crushes, to discover sparks, but not much more. (Shekhar, 2018)

The unnamed narrator in the first part of the narration, first starts to exclaim about his inner emotions. He was in a homosexual relationship with his friend who is also a classmate in his college.

The beginning stage of a relationship has both mental and physical attachment with his lover. Later, it is only meant for a physical desire of his lover who is not involved in a true relationship with the narrator. The relationship faded, and soon the narrator could have contact with another person named Samir. Here, the relationship was full of love, desire and lust which is also not meant for the end of life. It was broken when Samir wanted to start his life in a new by marrying a girl not him. The narrator was drowned in the pain. His homosexual relationship with his college friends, leads to the interpretation of whether the gender performative is in an act in his life or not. Because, he is attracted to boys does not mean he is gay. In a few places, the narrator himself says that the partners involved in his homosexual relationship use him for sexual desires and money. The researcher strongly claims that neither the narrator nor his lovers are homosexuality, the circumstances choose them to behave and perform homosexual behaviours in their secret.

Even after Sunil and I became lovers, he made sure we were not seen together in public. He wouldn't even acknowledge me if I met him in class or in the corridors. Whenever he needed me, he'd give me a call. A missed call, usually at four in the morning—he studied late into the wee hours—when nearly everyone in the hostel was asleep. (Shekhar, 2018)

In the love or lust relationship of the narrator and Sunil, they kept it a secret to them. They never showed their relationship in public. It can be the fear of not giving or understanding their gender performance. The social norms surrounding them in the college environment made them not to reveal it in public. One more argument that can also be added to the justification for not revealing their homosexuality to society is that they are not sure about gender confirmation. They consider themselves male but the desire to be loved made them to involved in homosexual relationships. Judith Butler tries to explain that gender is socially constructed, and also be the appearance of natural things. "...such breakdown of gender binaries would then open up possibilities to the impossible, the illegible, the unrealizable, the unreal, and the unthinkable" (Butler, 1993). In addition, Butler argues the 'reality' of gender is a changeable, variable reality. Then, how to reconsider gender, represent the relationship with the 'power'. Concerning the characteristic features of the narrator and his lover, it seems that gender reality is not legible to the individual.

As majhi of Kessorepur, he was tasked with adjudicating and settling disputes, and most importantly, he was the guardian of the village jaher, the most sacred centre of our faith, where everyone prays during the Baha and Maak Moray festivals. It was his responsibility to ensure, along with the naikay—the village priest who worships the gods—that prayers were regularly offered at the jaher. (Shekhar, 2018)

The unnamed narrator in his second part of narration, describes the conditions of demolishing the locality where Santhal tribes are situated in the district. He also explains their religious beliefs and festivals in their village. The people of the village consider the eldest man as their guardian supportive of them. It circles their religious faith and the agricultural farming in their space. The jaher in Kessorepur was a communal tract of land where cultivation was forbidden. Trees thrived in areas where it was illegal to take them down. A massive banyan stood in the centre, and two enormous sal trees were spaced apart. Beneath these trees were the temple to our primary deities, Jaher Ayo and Marang Buru, which served as the jaher's heart. All the Santhals in the hamlet would gather for a procession during the Baha festival, with the majhi at the head of the group, and carry some sindoor for the shrine and some home-brewed haandi as an offering. At that time, the majority of educators and learners were members of the affluent upper classes and castes. It was uncommon for Adivasis to go to school, and Dadu was viewed by many as just another untouchable village Santhal lad. The fact that he was the Kessorepur headman's son was inconsequential. Teachers would talk to him from a distance, without even looking at him, let alone coming into physical contact with him. His peers weren't much better either.

The trees would need trimming, and if they were in fruit, careful scrutiny to see that bats and squirrels weren't getting at them. There were fortnightly trips to his favourite nursery from where sacks of manure, sprays and repellents of all kinds would be brought home. (Shekhar, 2018)

In the final part of his narration, the narrator relates gardening and human emotion with reference to his father's habitual duty. His father is a person who nurses and cares for plants in his garden. And he invested in my further education and profession with the same unwavering focus that he had brought to his political career and continued to pour into his garden. Maybe he wanted to make sure he would have complete control over this part of my life, just like he did over his garden. He chopped down a gnarly, old frangipani tree and then chopped down a jujube tree that produced the best fruit for kilometres. The two enormous sal trees in the jaher were chopped down one after the other, which was the worst of all. What would he have gotten out of taking these trees down? It is barbaric to kill a tree. It resembles killing a man. We were unable to speak, though. Those trees belonged to the shared area.

### **Summation**

Body acts are necessary for the establishment of gender identity. In addition to its material "existence," identity is also reinvented in the realm of culture. Gender Performativity overthrew the heterosexual gender identity model's predominance (Butler, 2010). In other words, we are biologically male or female from birth and are born as either men or women. We progressively acquire the gender identities of men and women in our culture by suppressing our need to be mothers. The narrator was absorbed in his medical studies at Jamshedpur. Studying and having the flexibility to discover new aspects of who he was, including his sexuality, desires, and love, were previously unattainable. he continued to communicate with his parents, carefully keeping our conversations focused on his schoolwork and the goings-on in the village or at home.

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