

# Image of Indian Gay Culture in Raj Rao's The Boyfriend

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## Abstract

*The Boyfriend is a novel by R.RajRao, he compares untouchability with homosexuality. Yudi, the protagonist is a freelance Journalist and secretly lives a bachelor gay life in Mumbai .In this novel Raj Rao neatly drawn the picture of caste, class, religion, masculinity and the gay cultural sub-group in India. Existence of Queer in society is highlighted in this book.*

**Keywords:** Gay, cultural sub-group, caste, class, religion, discrimination.

'The Boyfriend' was published by Penguin books India in 2003. It is a gay novel by Raja Rao a professor of English at the University of Pune. This is first novel of Raja Rao, he edited ten Indian writers in interview and edited Image of India in the Indian novel in English (1960-1980 )he uses pellucid language in his writing for more clarity in knowing queer theory. He is one of the most prominent gay rights activist in India .Raj Rao in this novel depicted a clear cut image of gayness and homosexuality. Queerness through his fictitiously framed characters called Yudi and Milind. The novel is considered as a morning-voice to LGBTQ people in India.

This book is really an eye opener and astonishingly thought provoking to ensure the rights and freedom of gay men in traditional and culture bound country like India. The Boyfriend pictures an unsentimental Mumbai - a crazy, heartless, multi layered and convoluted city, both physically and psychologically, full of cultural chaos, customs and class conflict, where people lapse through their lives, making every penny, trying their luck, searching for affection in all the wrong places

The story line of this book resembles the current problems encountered by gay men in day-to-day life in society. Gay men also faces troubled life but they are sublined by big ideas and issues in the country. The life of LGBTQ people have become a castigate and flagrant in their own mother land.

Yudi, a gay journalist lives a bachelor life to hide his Gay identity in society. It was on a fine Sunday morning in 1992, Yudi indulged in

a hurried sexual intercourse with a 19 year old boy in Church gate loo and gets rid of him, fearing that he is a pimp. Actually that was a brief encounter apart from a lot others and Yudi turned to his freak normal life in his flat, Nalla Sopara and sex with unidentified people.

The young boy gave Yudi his fake name as Kishore Mahadik and left the loo. Post riots in Mumbai, Yudi was disturbed with Kishore's thoughts and inadvertently found he was in love with him, since his address and name was fake Yudi could not find him and was disturbed for time. Meanwhile, Yudi's editor introduces Gauri, a promising upcoming painter to him and through her Yudi got an opportunity to meet Kishore in an elevator. Kishore revealed his true name as Milind Mahadik and he is an untouchable (Dalit). Though Yudi belonged to orthodox Brahmin family and raised by his mother he is unruffled and his homosexuality made him an outcaste too. Milind and Yudi spend happy time for some days in his flat because of Milind's innocence and timid character Yudi yearned to care him. Milind has not travelled anywhere from his village Marathwada so he was taken to many places by Yudi. Milind made Yudi happy by his cooperation and enjoyment in bed. But for all Yudi's love theory, Milind does not belong to Yudi's world and when Yudi realises he cannot keep Milind with love alone, he does not hesitate to offer his wallet. Gays have to live a double life to conceal their identity, or wearing a mask and taking it off. It is this gender fluidity of identities that Yudi's flanderies in 'The Boyfriend' are directed at and result in concealing their gayness that ensures the survival of socially inadmissible claims in a hostile surrounding.

Yudi and Milind went to a tour to Shravana belagola where the plot thickened between the couple, the significant aspect here is to be noted is that Milind was called illiterate and slave by Yudi. This took a turn in their relationship and there comes a break-up. When caste and class lost their terms once loved exposed, but when the toll comes there arose the same class and caste which made Milind leave Yudi and joined the A.K. Modeling Agency, a Gurukul. Being a gay Milind was exposed to bisexual flesh trade by a Bollywood actor and a model. For the sake of family and livelihood Milind married a woman of same caste, but continued his relationship with Yudi for financial assistance.

Occasional and unidentified sex is so much the typical norm that the gay couples are committed in relationships and particularly when one of the protagonists Yudi (who is Brahmin by caste) says to Dalit boy Milind

“Homos are no different from Bhangis. Both are Untouchables. I am a homosexual. Gay by caste. Gay by religion.” “Outcastes” he says, “can only expect to be friends with outcastes.”

Through the object of Yudi's irrational preoccupation of thoughts on Milind Mahadik, a semi-literate and Dalit boy was fully exposed by the author which shows the threatening and obsessed exercise of present time Indian issues like class, caste, religion and masculinity in Gay relationship.

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