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# DEPICTION OF QUEERNESS IN DEVDUTT PATTANAİK'S "SHIKHANDI AND OTHER QUEER TALES THEY DON'T TELL YOU"

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**Abstract**— "SHIKHANDI AND OTHER QUEER TALES THEY DON'T TELL YOU" is a collection of Hindu Mythological queer tales. Shikhandi, a transman plays a pivotal role in the Mahabaratha war for the victory to Pandavas. Gender issues and identity crisis arises in the tale which was portrayed in a vivid manner by Pattanaik. In accordance with the features in this tale Pattanaik narrated Hindu Mythology in this article with a touch of Queerness. Queer culture in India is framed through media and literature. Queer theory is still intrusive to this land of culture and tradition, it remains disseminated even in the Era of technology. The social and familial injustice towards LGBTQ is highlighted in this paper.

**Keywords**— Queerness, Culture and Tradition, Gender issues, Identity Crisis and Hindu Mythology.

## I. INTRODUCTION

"SHIKHANDI AND OTHER TALES THEY DON'T TELL YOU" was published by Zubaan and Penguin books India in 2014. It is a collection of Hindu Mythological Queer tales by Devdutt Pattanaik, a physician turned prolific writer in literature. He also illustrates and delivers lectures on the relevance and importance of mythology in this modern Era. He uses lucid language in his writing for more understanding the theme Queer theory.

Devdutt Pattanaik in this book attempts to expose the existence of LGBTQ people and their pivotal role in epics which played the pillar support in Indian literature. Though Hindu mythology is highlighted to enhance LGBTQ in this book; the paper tries to encapsulate the existence and the lead role played by them in crucial circumstances which also gives a chance to study their worth, whence Hindu Gods and God-like people transform by their own wish and also by curse as LGBTQ. The objective of the paper is to create a deeper understanding about their lives and crisis faced.

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transform by their own wish and also by curse as LGBTQ. The objective of the paper is to create a deeper understanding about their lives and crisis faced.

The book "*Shikhandi and other Queer tales they don't tell you*" tales from the Mahabaratha gives a lot of examples on LGBTQ. The story of Shikhandi is more relevant to current scenario in India, after the decriminalization of IPC Section. 377 on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2018. Their livelihood is at stake because of gender discrimination and alienation. It has been in a gamut of struggles and hardship that LGBTQ's venture into this society for their survival and indeed they untiringly raise their voice for their rights.

The other astute manner thrown to them are critiquing the sexual mores often in the name of conflicted and conflictual sexual politics in a menacing attitude. The majority of the LGBTQ community which exhibits their identity are Transgenders (Male to Female) are being ostracized from the family and the region.

## II. SHIKHANDI'S PAST LIFE

A princess named Amba wished to marry a man called Shalva. Unfortunately, on the day of swayamvara, Bhishma, a warrior abducted Amba along with her sisters to Hasthinapur city to marry his less-competent, half-brother named Vichitravirya. Amba supplicated to let her live the life with the man of her choice. Vichitravirya gave his consent to her plea because the notion of satisfying two wives was stressful for him. Shalva's move was even more perplexing he refused to accept her since she was tainted by another man. Amba went back to Vichitravirya but he too refused her. At last Amba went to Bhishma, who was the ultimate reason for shatter her marriage. Since, Bhishma had taken the vow of celibacy he too refused Amba to marry her but gave an option to be the maid in the palace.

Amba became furious and invoked lord Shiva to take revenge on Bhishma. Shiva pleased her intense austerities and gave her a boon that she will be the cause of Bhishma's death in her next life. Amba's revenge mood was triggered with this



cryptical message so to hasten her next birth she jumped into the fire and surrendered to death. In her next birth Amba

### III. THE SEXUAL TRANSFORMATION OF SHIKHANDINI

The story of Shikhandi is an extract from the epic The Mahabharata . A King named Drupada prayed to Lord Shiva to bless him with a Son to take revenge on Drona (Guru). Despite Drupada was blessed with a daughter named Shikhandini, he bought up his daughter like a son and provided her all privileges of a male. Shikhandini was trained martial arts which were exclusively meant for male. Drupada, a dutiful father found a bride for Shikhandini at her adolescence and in the night of marriage the secret of her gender revealed. After knowing the truth of Shikhandini's gender the new bride went back to her father and explained things which were concealed for all these years. The revelation of the gender truth reflected in a war on Drupada's kingdom. Disheartened Shikhandini left her kingdom and went to forest to kill her for the puppet life led by her in Drupada's hands. Shikhandini felt inconsolable for the shame on the night in front of a woman.

There she met a Sthuna, a yaksha to whom she explained the mishaps. On hearing shikhandini's story he lent his manhood to her for a night where she was turned to a male (Transman) went back to her kingdom to perform the duty of a husband. Pleased with Shikhandini's integrity Kubera, king of yakshas allowed to use the manhood as long as she is alive. The story takes a twist here Shikhandini became a perfect man named Shikhandi.

The key role played by Shikhandi in the tenth day of the Mahabharata war made the Pandavas won the Kauravas. According to war Dharma a female cannot enter into the battle field, the queerness of Shikhandi was taken as a powerful weapon by Lord Krishna to confront Bhishma's valour deliberately. On Tenth day of the Mahabharata war on the sight of Shikhandi rode into the battle field Bhishma refused to raise his bow uttering the words -'Born a woman you are always a woman' by the mean time Arjuna, the greatest archer in the world released a volley of arrows on Bhishma and on the Eighteen day of the battle Bhishma shed his life on the bed of arrows.

### IV. CONCLUSION

Thus the entry of Shikhandi in the battle field made turning point and the crucial victory of Pandavas was celebrated only because of Shikhandi's queerness. The story of Shikhandi depicts the social and familial injustice towards the Queer people. Masculine and feminine characters are developed in one's body. It is a hormonal imbalance in human body which determines the gender in mother's womb The Supreme Court of India has made the life of LGBTQ community a better one. Their struggle doesn't stop here, but this is a beautiful and legalized start to the life they deserve.

Law has done its justice to LGBTQ community and now it's society's responsibility to accept them and join hands to treat them with respect and provide their rights with love and acceptance. Thus the view of society on LGBTQ should develop compassion, love and respect rather they should not be ill-treated, marginalized, decriminalized and isolated from the society.

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