

**Voices of the Third Gender (margin) and representation of the Culture
(beyond the border): a rethinking in the context of the literary canon of
Kunal Basu**

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Abstract

Today's society includes the marginal sections, marginal community, marginal people who live not in the centre but in the periphery of the social position. Social inclusion has become a key term of the social sciences. Social inclusion gives a social voice to the marginal people. These marginal section are the immigrants, homosexuals, the various-abled people, the Trans genders, the bisexuals and other gendered identity groups. These transgender and other Sexual oriented gendered groups are known as the L. G. B. T. Q in the discipline Gender Study. Kunal Basu is a bilingual creative writer. Kunal Basu's writings are on these marginal Third Gender communities and the cultural life of the people beyond the border. He has given space to these marginal people in his fictions as well as his non - fictions. Not only this, Basu's writing deals with the foreign culture crossing the border, beyond the border. My research paper is an attempt to explore the representation of these Third Gender marginal communities by the writer, Kunal Basu and his depiction of foreign culture beyond the border through his creative writings.

Keywords: Inclusion, sociology, postmodernism, marginal, transgender, culture, foreign.

The marginal section of the society are the farmers, working classes, the women, the orphans, the immigrants, homosexuals, the various-abled people, the trans genders, the bisexuals and other gendered identity groups. These transgender and other sexual oriented gendered groups from various ethnic races are known as the L. G. B. T. Q in the discipline of Gender Study. These various sexual oriented people are known as 'Others' as well as subaltern by the majority of the society. Regarding the various sexual orientations of this L. G. B. T. Q community, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies describes:

Based on these considerations, the committee adopted the following working definition: sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of or disposition to experience sexual or romantic desires for, and relationships with, people of one's same sex, the other sex, or both sexes. As this definition makes clear, sexual orientation is inherently a relational construct. Whether a sexual act or romantic attraction is characterized as homosexual or heterosexual depends on the biological sex of the individuals involved, relative to each other. One's sexual orientation defines the population of individuals with whom one can potentially create satisfying and fulfilling sexual or romantic relationships. Such relationships help to meet basic human needs for love, attachment, and intimacy and are, for many people, an essential aspect of the self (Herek, 2006; Peplau and Garnets, 2000).

[p - 27, **Context for LGBT Health Status in the United States**]

The Third Gender community is highlighted by the writer Kunal Basu in his creative writings. His main interest is in the representation of untold history of the marginal queer section of the society and untold stories of the unfamiliar cultural life of the foreign land. My research paper will project the depiction of the marginal Third Gender group by Kunal Basu and his projection of foreign culture beyond the border.

Kunal Basu is a bilingual creative writer He has written his writings on the various marginal classes of the society.. Kunal Basu's writings are on the presentations of Third Gender communities who are a part of L.G.B.T.Q group and the cultural life beyond the border. The full form of L.G.B.T.Q is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender and Queer. Third Gender people are neither male nor female from their birth. In the Indian context, they are known as the 'hijra' community. This group is a marginal section of the mainstream of the society. The people of this community feels generally the same sex attraction emotionally and psychologically. This marginal community demands human rights for them now-a-days. Like Mahesh Duttani, he describes the other sexually oriented marginal people and their identity— eunuchs. Basu is able to draw the gender identity of this community. Regarding gender identity, P. K. Nyar comments:

Butler argues in a reading of Simone de Beauvoir's famous claim that one is not born, but rather becomes a woman, that women is a process, a becoming, rather than a fixed identity. This ongoing process is constituted by discourses. Gender is a series of acts within specific discourses of law, medicine, religion, family, sexuality that a body performs, which in turn identifies her as a woman, One cannot,

Butler suggests, act a acquire an identity outside this system of discourses.

[P- 189, **Queer Theory**]

Not only has he depicted the marginal classes in his writings, but also he has described the cultural life of the foreign people crossing the border. His canvass focuses on the cultural life of the foreign countries crossing the border. Derrida has discussed borders in his deconstructive theory. Cultural Studies deals with the cultural lifestyles of the communities of the whole world. Culture has a relation with one's own root and identity. Regarding the culture, P.K. Nyar quotes:

Culture is now seen as constituted by contested codes and representations. As accounts of culture - literary, historical, anthropological - ethnographic - are stories about events and people, marked by the usual structures of language. Culture is a text, a system of difference, arbitrariness and ideology.

[P- 205, **New Historicism and Cultural Materialism**]

There is a common pattern in the cultural practices of the communities in their cultural life. Cultural Studies has analysed the cultural practices and the rituals of the people of the world. Christopher Norris has mentioned regarding this pattern under the cultural practices of the communities of the whole world:

Levi- Strauss rests his analyses of myth and ritual on the conviction that, behind all the surface varieties thrown up by the world's different cultures, there exist certain deep regularities and patterns which reveal themselves to structural investigation.

[P - 37, **Deconstruction: Theory and Practice**]

Kunal Basu has not only represented the marginal people of the society in his creative writings, but also depicts the other sexually orientated group known as L.G.B.T.Q Community. Basu as a writer has a keen observation power and imagination. He is a social critic par excellence. He can weave stories to attract the readers. In the text Kalkatta, Jami has come in contact with various marginal figures in relation to his job as a play boy and they belong to Third Gender Community – Rani, Swati, Ratna, Lilly, Pom. Rani was a marginal bi – sexual person. She was brave also. From the conversation among Pom, Lilly, and Jamshed, Rani's past life is revealed. Basu describes their conversation:

'How can a hijra be married?'

'Well, practically married, you can say. '

Rani's mother Lakshmi worked as Swati ma' am's maid. She was a strong woman. When her only child turned out that way, she didn't panic, didn't hand the little one over to a hijra gang that treat their wards like slaves. She raised Rani like a girl...

[P – 127, **Kalkatta**]

In this text, Basu has also projected the aristocratic culture through the character Mandira Goswami as well as the marginal culture through the characters Jami and Rani.

Antonio of the story, *The Yellow Emperor's Cure*, has come to China to find out the medicine for his father. He is acquainted with the Governor and the servants of the house. The servants are the third gender category. They are known as the L.G.B.T.Q category. They are not organised and united. They are the marginal class without any social and political consciousness. Tianfen and Wangsheng are the marginal servants. Basu depicts:

Tianfen was his favourite nephew, Wangsheng said. He had brought the little boy over to the palace to save him from hunger after their family had been devastated by floods...

[P - 118, **The Yellow Emperor's Cure**]

Basu has also depicted the marginal community of the past in **the Miniaturist**. Slave market was the place for selling and buying the slaves. These slaves were the marginal community without any kind of social and political voice and consciousness. Basu narrates the marginal community along with their culture:

Without much left to interest him there, Bihzad went to the slave market, an open court reached through dark and dirty lanes at the back of the stalls. Gradually, it became his favourite.

The slaves and their owners sat in rows, row upon row stretching out to the courtyard's boundaries.

[P – 139, **the Miniaturist**]

Apart from prostitutes, human rights are not given to the widows, orphans and prisoners in the story *The Opium Clerk*. They are treated as criminals by the majority of the society. They are deprived of their educational opportunities as well as the basic human rights. They are considered as the marginal section of the society. They are not conscious of their rights. Basu depicts:

Hiran recalled overhearing Annada's tales of the tantric's cure for barren women. A cloud passed over his face.

...

Hiran felt unsure. Was it yet one more of Vinny's fantastic stories? Why would a prison house an orphanage? He gave Vinny that half - believing look.

[P -107, **the Opium Clerk**]

Racists describe the marginal people. Basu depicts them in the story *Racists*:

Quartley shivered, imagining the children in a penny Gaff. It would be better for them to become Louisa's servants, or to be sent to an asylum even. And North? What did Beats have in

store for her? Was he thinking of turning her into a Jenny? Of holding her prisoner at the Madhouse?

[P - 148, **Racist**]

Human love without any kind of face to face meeting between two persons and between two countries grows to the level of marriage virtually via mails becomes possible in the mythopoeic imaginary story of kunal Basu in his short story The Japanese Wife. Here Miyage becomes ill and a patient. She becomes a marginal figure without her parents as she feels helpless during her illness. The lifestyle of the foreigners is also reflected in their leading of cultural life. Miyage, the Japanese lady used to write her pen using the colour. Basu tells:

In her next letter, she was strikingly different, almost a stranger. After the usual beginning, she changed the colour of her ink and wrote in piquant blue.

[P - 6, **the Japanese Wife**]

On the other hand, Japanese Culture is also projected by the writer. This foreign culture is represented by the lifestyle of the people crossing the border. Basu narrates:

She sent him a print of a marooned village.

[P - 5 , **the Japanese Wife**]

The family relationship is also related to cultural life. Foreign life supports family bondage. Miyage, the Japanese beloved, informs Snehamoy regarding her illness. She says that she would live with her brother. Basu says:

Now Snehamoy, I must tell you something important. My doctor says I am sick, very sick. He has asked me to leave my job and go to live with my brother's family in shirone. I think I will be fine soon. You mustn't worry. I am sending you my will in a closed envelope. You may read it when I am no more...

[P - 11, **the Japanese Wife**]

The cultural life is presented vividly through the daily practices of food items and the cultural programs of a country. In this short story, Grateful Ganga, Basu has described:

The maid brought her tea and she took in the city in slow drags of her cigarette. She heard the usual bustle - flower- sellers, wailing its landing gear. Out of habit she glanced at Yoginder's room and saw the Konika Girl peeping behind the curtain. The red light was on, but no music.

[P - 33, **Grateful Ganga**]

Music is another cultural practice of a nation. Evelyn was fond of music. Her taste of music has made her closer to Joginder. Basu says:

So, borrowing the children's guitar, she played her chords...

'If you see me now ... baby...

Holding flowers

Turning over in misery

If you come too close ... baby

Beyond shame and ... memory

If you lay your hands

On me ... baby ...'

There was a round of applause, and soon the prospect got up to leave.

[P - 31, Grateful Ganga]

Even the sports, dresses, and foods of a community reflects the culture of that community. In this story Lenin's Cafe, Basu has mentioned:

The cafe seemed to have filled with newcomers, dressed in winter's long coats and a cornucopia of hats: berets, astrakhans, and fur-trimmed bearskins. A thin crust of snow covered the cobblestones outside. Voices - Russian, German, and French - drowned the clash of cups and saucers.

[P -43, Lenin's Cafe]

Basu continues the cultural life in its negative way during the agitation period of the students in the story Lotus - Dragon:

Leaving their flat, they were ensnared: marching students jammed the streets, and the crowd swelled at busy crossing; a stream of bicyclists waving brilliantly coloured flags flashed them 'V's. They held onto each other as in a flood. Suppie took out her camera, catching to deafening applause as they arrived to join the marchers. All around her the crowd.

[P- 56, Lotus - Dragon]

In this way, Kunal Basu has focussed on the identity of the L.G.B.T. Q people. He has gone through the deep roots of the problems of this marginal community and how they become the victim of man - made violence and social discrimination. This L.G.B.T. Q people are generally homosexual and marginalised. Regarding the homosexuality and the marginal position of this L.G.B.T. Q people, Clarke, V., Ellis, S., Peel, E. and Riggs, D. W. quotes:

It has been widely argued that the most significant impact of the work of first wave sexologists was the popularisation within western culture of the idea that we all possess an innate sexual orientation that organises our sexual behaviours. In the words of the French post-structuralist theorist, Michel Foucault (1978: 43):

Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.

In other words, early sexologists were influential in the development of the concept of sexual identities: there was a shift from viewing sexuality in terms of behaviour (practising sodomy or non-reproductive sexual acts) to viewing it as central to our sense of self (being a „sodomite“). Foucault was also commenting on the popularisation of a gender inversion model of homosexuality alongside the linking of sexuality and identity.

[P- 8, Sigmund Freud]

Even gender roles for these people are not traditional ones but they have to accept the challenges. He has given a space to these people in his literary world. He has also highlighted the cultural life of the foreigners beyond the border. His use of storytelling methods is highly appreciated in the recent academic world.

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