

Reassessing the Closet/Out Dichotomy and Gender Based Violence: Towards an Epistemology of Alternative Gender Categories

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Derived from hetero-patriarchal ideologies, social institutions and policies, masculinity is considered the most elevated form of gender expression in Indian social milieu. As a result, masculine bodies that exhibit unsuitable traits of masculinity, often linked to femininity, are blamed for causing dangerous anomaly of gender and prone to gender based violence. Although “closet” as propounded by Eve Kosofski Sedgwick is an emblem of protection and concealment from the earliest identification of non-normative identities, it fails to protect effeminate men in terms of their physical appearance and personality. The human body functions as a medium for communicating cultural and social narratives, effectively transmitting stories about an individual's position in society. Drawing on Kimberley Crenshaw's critical coinage of the term “Intersectionality” rooted in black feminist framework, this article focuses on select autobiographies and life narratives of such gender non-conforming categories as *hijra*, transwomen, *kothi*, *aravanis*, and *laundas*, who are perpetually subjected to class, caste, and gender-based discrimination and oppression. This analysis disrupts the notion of post-closet discourse as universally accessible to all gay and lesbian individuals. This study has selected three autobiographical works, *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010), *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* (2015), and *The Gift of Goddess Laxmi* (2017) respectively by A. Revathi, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, and Manobi Bandyopadhyay as the primary sources for discussion alongside several secondary sources.

Keywords: Masculinity, effeminate men, closet, gender-based violence, Intersectionality