
QUEER AND THE SHADOWS OF HOMOPHOBIA: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MALAYALAM MOVIE SOOKSHMADARSHINI

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	ABSTRACT
Key Words: Homophobia, queer theory, homosexuality, Sookshmarshini	This article examines the portrayal of social and familial homophobia in the Malayalam film Sookshmarshini, highlighting its psychological and societal underpinnings. By analyzing key scenes, it explores how intolerance and prejudice contribute to the suffering of the film's queer characters. The discussion integrates psychological theories and cultural contexts to elucidate the deep-rooted aversion toward homosexuality, advocating for greater acceptance and representation in media.

Queer and the Shadows of Homophobia: An Analysis of the Malayalam Movie Sookshmarshini

Malayalam cinema has historically reflected Kerala's social fabric, engaging with themes that resonate deeply with audiences. However, queer representation in Malayalam films has often been marked by prejudice, stereotyping, and marginalization. One such film, Sookshmarshini, starkly portrays the cultural perspective of same-sex love within a homophobic society. This article explores how social and familial homophobia manifests in Sookshmarshini, analyzing key

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scenes that illustrate this issue and demonstrating how intolerance ultimately leads to tragic consequences for the film's characters.

Homophobia is broadly defined as the irrational fear, hatred, or aversion toward homosexuality and queer individuals. This discrimination manifests in multiple forms, from casual derogatory remarks to extreme acts of violence. Rooted in cultural, religious, and historical prejudices, homophobia restricts personal freedom and creates an unsafe environment for LGBTQ+ individuals (Herek 6).

Kerala, despite its high literacy rate and progressive movements, harbors deep-seated homophobia. This contradiction is evident in various social settings, including familial relationships, educational institutions, and mainstream cinema. Films often reflect dominant societal attitudes, reinforcing either progressive or regressive views on queer identities (Mishra 23).

The perception of homosexuality varies widely within society. Some view it as a “Western influence” that threatens traditional values, while others dismiss it as a psychological disorder or a phase that can be “corrected.” This moral policing is deeply ingrained, making it difficult for queer individuals to live openly and safely (Nandy 42).

In *Sookshmarshini*, a queer character struggles against these prejudices, facing ostracization from family and society alike. Her love is deemed unnatural, and her existence is treated as a stain on familial honor. The film highlights the clash between personal identity and societal expectations, illustrating how deeply ingrained cultural biases push individuals toward despair and tragedy.

Key Scenes Depicting Homophobia:

The Discovery and Condemnation: One of the most striking moments in the film occurs when the queer character's romantic relationship is discovered by her family. Instead of being met with understanding, she is subjected to verbal abuse, emotional blackmail, and physical violence. This scene underscores how families, often considered a safe haven, can become the primary enforcers of homophobia.

Social Isolation and Ostracization: She is shunned by her family, facing malicious words, bullying, and exclusion from family circles. This depiction mirrors real-life experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals who are alienated for simply being themselves.

Psychological and Physical Abuse: Her family attempts to “correct” her through conversion practices and psychological coercion. These interventions reflect the societal belief that homosexuality is a deviation that must be “cured” rather than an inherent identity.

The Tragic Climax: The film reaches its heartbreaking climax when the queer character is killed by her family, who consider her sexuality a disgrace. However, the heroine, who had been a silent observer of this oppression, intervenes when the family attempts to kill the queer character's partner as well. Through sheer determination, she fights back, saving the survivor from a similar fate. The film concludes with the heroine standing resilient, symbolizing the enduring fight against homophobia and the possibility of resistance against oppressive structures. While the narrative remains deeply tragic, the survivor's escape represents hope and the strength found in allies who challenge societal bigotry.

Psychological and Sociological Factors behind Homophobia

Several psychological and sociological factors contribute to societal aversion toward homosexuality; Societies conditioned by heteronormative structures see any deviation from male-female relationships as unnatural. This belief, deeply ingrained through socialization, perpetuates homophobic attitudes. Many religious doctrines condemn homosexuality, reinforcing the notion that it is sinful or immoral. Families often use religious arguments to justify their discriminatory behavior. Limited exposure to positive queer representation fosters myths and misconceptions about homosexuality, leading to irrational fear and prejudice (Connell 112).

Queer relationships challenge traditional gender roles, particularly in patriarchal societies where rigid expectations define masculinity and femininity. Homosexuality disrupts these norms, triggering social backlash. In conservative societies, individual identity is often secondary to family reputation. Homosexuality is perceived as a “shameful secret” that could tarnish a family’s standing, leading to coercion and violence against queer individuals.

Conclusion

Sookshmarshini serves as a poignant critique of societal and familial homophobia, shedding light on the devastating consequences of intolerance. Through its gripping narrative and tragic yet resilient climax, the film exposes the cruel reality faced by many LGBTQ+ individuals in Kerala and beyond.

The themes explored In Sookshmarshini are not mere fiction but mirror real-life struggles of queer individuals fighting for acceptance and dignity. Homophobia, deeply entrenched in society, can only be dismantled through education, awareness, and inclusive representation in media. The

film is a powerful call for introspection—urging audiences to question their biases and advocate for a world where love is celebrated, not condemned.

Works Cited

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