



Talking of Muskaan - Young adult fiction envisaging queer as normal

Darsha Jani

Smt S.R. Mehta Arts College, Ahmedabad affiliated to Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, India
jani_darsha@rocketmail.com

Available online at: www.isca.in, www.isca.me

Received 21st March 2021, revised 24th May 2021, accepted 3rd August 2021

Abstract

Himanjali Sankar, a contemporary Indian author of children books, Young Adult (YA) novels and Adult fiction contributed to writing which is far away from mainstream literature. Her novel "Talking of Muskaan" is a queer young adult novel, based on bullying and homosexuality experienced by Muskaan in high school. The novel aims at exposing false and rigid social ideas based on gender, class, caste, and creed that destabilizes the mental state of an individual, leading her to attempting suicide. The novel is an account of emotional state of a teen age girl Muskaan who gradually realizes that she is a lesbian. The present paper focusses on the need of exploring the mental health of individuals who feel differently; necessity of creating equal space for everyone; generating better support systems for young adults and to empathize, understand and realize their problems.

Keywords: Homosexuality, lesbian, young adults, queer identity, heterosexuality, heteronormativity.

Introduction

Born and brought up in Kolkata; Himanjali Sankar acquired her M.A. and M.Phil in English literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. She taught English to undergraduate students at the University of Indianapolis in US. She worked a great deal with the Department of Centre for Women's Development Studies in India. She served as an editor of fiction, non-fiction, travel books and academic journals. She performed her duty as an editor for the "Indian Journal of Gender Studies" and for the research project, "A Century of Women's Expanding Horizons." Her novel for young children, "The Stupendous Time-Telling Dog" and her young adult novel "Talking of Muskaan" were shortlisted for the Crossword Award for Children's writing in 2013 and 2016, respectively. She is currently the Editorial Director at Simon & Schuster India and Associate publisher at Bloomsbury India.

Himanjali's works deal with the issues related to young adults between the age group of 12 and 19. She delves deep into the psyche of teenagers – their queerness, parental influence, gender problems, hormonal changes, and their sexuality in the process of growing up. The novel "Talking of Muskaan" explicates the need to sensitize the society towards issues of queerness so that people do not ostracize, mock, and bully the young adults who are struggling to understand their own psyche and are yet to realize the needs of their own bodies.

Concept of 'Queerness'

The term 'queer' is often used in a deprecatory sense for homosexuality or effeminacy as well as something that is out of ordinary and which the society is reluctant to accept. The queer

associates its name with a group popularly known as LGBT that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered. These individuals suffer from Gender Identity Disorder and feel some discordance between their bodies and their inner sense. Abes & Kasch asserts that queer theory "critically analyses the meaning of identity, focussing on intersections of identities and resisting oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation and gender¹.

"In the essay "The Theory of Seduction and the Problem of other", Jean Laplanche writes of a concept that attractively resonates with the term queer, insofar as queer sexuality is quintessentially defined by its inexplicability, incoherence, volatility, and contingency in contradistinction to a sexuality whose owner would claim is stable, fixed, and identifiable as an integral part of the self...Laplanche speaks of *das Andere*—the other thing in us, the otherness of our unconscious – that all attempts at psychoanalytic interpretation cannot master...*Das Andere* is hence the internal otherness that we perpetually carry within us and that de-centers us, but that is founded by contact with an external otherness"².

According to Halperin, "Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers...It is an identity without an essence"³. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1993) observes "queer" as "a continuing moment, movement, motive – recurrent, eddying, troublant"; in fact it represents an "immemorial current"⁴. Braidotti argues that the body is to be understood as "neither a biological nor a sociological category, but rather as a point of overlap between the physical, the symbolic and the material social conditions"⁵.

Ellis Hanson is of opinion that “Queer is wonderfully suggestive of a whole range of sexual possibilities (deemed perverse or deviant in classical psychoanalysis) that challenge the familiar distinctions between normal and pathological, straight and gay”⁶. Travers writes, “Many of the trans kids... regularly experience crisis as a result of the restrictive ways in which sex categories regulate their daily lives and put pressure on their internal sense of who they are in gendered terms”⁷. According to Drescher & Jagose, “Queer theory destabilizes and denaturalizes genders (masculine /feminine) and biological sex (male/female) questioning the assumed connectivity between sex and gender”⁸. The queers struggle to seek answers for personal, social, physical, and emotional trauma as they themselves fail to realize the root cause of their own anxieties. The intolerance and outright violence by the society shatter their psyche and they feel lost, frustrated, and excluded.

Queerness – A paramount theme in the young adult fiction

Young Adult Fiction is a genre that is different from Children’s literature. It talks about life circumstances of interest to young readers aged approximately 12 to 18 years. According to Cole, the literature that deals with and are for young adults is also called “adolescent literature, juvenile literature, junior books, books for teens, and books for tweens”⁹. Young Adult Fiction (YA) include common themes related to YA that includes friendship, first love, relationships, and identity. Themes in YA stories often focus on the challenges of youth especially when they enter the adult world and struggle to cope up with the contemporary social set up. Queerness is one of the paramount themes found in YAF. This fiction deals with specific traits and issues encountered by a queer young adult that includes sex and alienation, suicide, child sexual abuse, gender bias, queer identity, drug addiction and conflicting social realities. Robert Carlson observes:

“Young Adult Literature is literature wherein the protagonist is either a teenager or one who approaches problems from a teenage perspective. Typically, they describe initiation into the adult world, or the surmounting of a contemporary problem forced upon the protagonist by the adult world. Though generally written for a teenage reader, such novels – like all fine literature address the entire spectrum of life”¹⁰.

“Talking of Muskaan” – An Insightful YA Fiction

The story of the novel begins with the school Principal summoning Muskaan’s classmates Aaliya, Rashika, Subhojoy, Divya and Sriniji to apprise them of Muskaan’s attempted suicide. She wishes to know through them what was bothering Muskaan that she took such a step. The story takes the reader back to five months to unfold the happenings that led to Muskaan’s desire to end her life. The novel is narrated in alternating voices of three of Muskaan’s classmates–Aaliya, her best friend since childhood; Prateek, a spoilt boy with affluent

but conservative background, who liked Muskaan but she rejected him; and Subhojoy, Muskaan’s newest school friend. All the three teenage voices are strong, starkly different and offer a new perspective on the same story. The novel delves into the intense emotional turmoil when a teenager Muskaan realizes that she is homosexual. The society considers only heterosexuality as normal; therefore, Muskaan is labelled as ‘weirdo’ for her predilection towards girls instead of her proclivity towards boys. A seemingly strange person – Muskaan starts acting ‘weird’ with even her close friends; she gets withdrawn with each passing day, finally attempting to end her own life. As her classmates begin to come to terms with her suicide bid, several truths topple out from the not-so-perfect lives of Muskaan’s friends who could have possibly averted the tragedy by acting on time.

Muskaan – A Queer Protagonist

Muskaan, a fifteen-year-old girl, is attracted towards her classmate and best friend Aaliya with whom she experiences a great physical bonding. But her mental peace and solace is crushed by the attitude of her peers who push her into dark abyss of social seclusion and rejection by their bullying, teasing, mocking, insulting, and isolating her. Muskaan is unable to bear the peer pressure and social stigma of being different, which is continually reminded to her by her own friends. Dejected and crestfallen, Muskaan makes a suicidal attempt by consuming a heap of pills. When Aaliya receives the news, she is unable to sleep at night because of “a garbled mess of sluggishness and frenzy that had made sleep impossible”¹¹. She starts praying for Muskaan’s life – “Please god, please god, please Christ, please Allah, please Krishna...Who knew which god took care of suicide cases”¹¹? Aaliya is Muskaan’s former best friend who had withdrawn herself from Muskaan on learning about her sexual orientation and inclination towards girls.

Muskaan faces a tough time as she finds herself in acute dilemma between her strong fascination for girls and the societal pressure, expecting her to behave in a particular manner. She is always clad in jeans and shirt, and dislikes dressing up in feminine clothes in front of the world. When asked to wax her hands by her friend Divya, “Muskaan frowned and, instead of getting up, lay down fully on the ground, with her arms crossed behind her head”¹¹. Aaliya rebukes Muskaan, “Stop being macho girl, Muskaan. Give up. Today the makeover begins”¹¹. Muskaan retorts, “Everyone doesn’t feel good about the same things. Why can’t you guys get that”¹¹? “I might not want to look like you... I might want something else for myself... Suppose I force you to not wax, get a crew cut, would you be happy?” No...”¹¹. Muskaan continually tries to convince her friends that everything that interests them, does not excite her.

Muskaan–A Macho Girl

Muskaan is beautiful; she is fair with green eyes. She is a great swimmer; always polite but not very friendly.

Her family is classy; her mother is a renowned interior designer who has been hired by Aaliya's father and Tauji to renovate their office. Her classmate Prateek proposes her to be friends with him, as he had "been secretly crushing on her for over a year now"¹¹. But she rudely rejects his proposal. Subhojoy, Muskaan's another classmate, observes that "she is a bit strange in any case. Quite pretty, and she is always hanging out with her group of girls. But she is not very friendly"¹¹.

Muskaan's friend Aaliya addresses Muskaan as "Macho Muskaan" and finds that Muskaan has a "certain irresistible masculine charm..."¹¹. Whenever Aaliya hugged Muskaan, she never hugged her back. Her body used to get stiffened up and she tried to move away from Aaliya. When Aaliya asks Muskaan the reason of this kind of behaviour, Muskaan replies, "But there are things about me you don't know"¹¹. Muskaan leans forward and gives Aaliya a light kiss on her lips. Contrary to her expectation, Aaliya returns the kiss to Muskaan. Muskaan puts her hand on Aaliya's cheek and strokes it, and Aaliya leans towards her again "and this time we both knew we wanted to"¹¹. Aaliya admits "We kissed again and again, bolder each time. Till I finally leaned back and pushed Muskaan away"¹¹.

Muskaan knew forever that she was a lesbian. She asserts, "I think I've known I like girls forever"¹¹. She accepts the fact that "the kissing helped" and then questions Aaliya who decreed that "it has to be between people of the opposite sex"¹¹? Finding Aaliya a bit disturbed, Muskaan consoles her, "Okay, wow, chill...Let's not spoil what was a beautiful moment between us. Beautiful for both of us, I hope"¹¹. Muskaan reveals that she used to find it difficult and feel clueless and pathetic when her friends wanted her to do all girly things like dressing, dating guys, waxing and hairdos. She admits,

"The last year or two have been pretty shitty. You guys have been so...so interfering...The last few years have been so confusing and unfair. You four have been my best friends but I feel so far away from all of you"¹¹.

Muskaan feels that all her friends were chasing her like "a pack of howling hyenas" and she felt as if she was "...under water all the time...without my oxygen tank. And all of you are on the boat having a party"¹¹.

Aaliya – A Bisexual Being

Though Aaliya enjoyed the kissing, yet she gets upset after coming to her senses – "All that kissing? All that homosexuality? But I didn't expect that to happen. It was totally out of the blue for me"¹¹. She tells herself that she is not lesbian and tries to think of all the good-looking boys she knew. Aaliya and Muskaan were friends since kindergarten. Aaliya loved Muskaan more than any other friend. But after this kissing incident, she stops talking to Muskaan and decides to focus all her energies on learning dance.

Aaliya attends a farmhouse party with Prateek's friends from golf or polo and decided to have fun. One of Prateek's friends Rishi comes up to her when she is on the dance floor and praises her that she "danced like a dream"¹¹. He admires her beauty and then suddenly leans on her and kisses her. Aaliya also leans towards him and they kiss properly this time. Aaliya takes a sigh of relief,

"It was nice and I know for a fact now that I like boys ...I'd kissed a boy at last. I didn't want to be lesbian or even bisexual. Everyone made fun of gays. I'd just kissed a guy I didn't know at all and quite enjoyed it. I am so not gay"¹¹.

The next day, she tells her friend Rashika that she was carried away last night and now she does not want to talk to Rishi. She exclaims, "I don't know why I let him kiss me. It was...just I didn't really like him much or anything...I guess I am confused, after all...Sometimes I don't know what I'm doing or why"¹¹.

Aaliya tries to convince her own self that since she could kiss a boy, she is not a lesbian. In fact, she had kissed Muskaan with the same passion that he had kissed Rishi. Though her obsession for Muskaan was much more than anyone else yet owing to the fear of societal norms of acceptance, she behaves in a way different from what her mind and heart says. After stopping talking to Muskaan, she feels an acute void in her life. She confesses that "gender didn't matter to me – it was the person. I could equally well be attracted to a boy or a girl"¹¹.

Aaliya recalls how she called Muskaan after five months of silence between them, only to ask her whether she was aware that IPC section 377 declared homosexuals as criminals; whether she knew that she was a criminal; that she should really be in jail? "You do know that, right"¹¹? There was a complete silence from Muskaan's end. After five minutes, the phone was disconnected and then, "Chapter closed." Aaliya imagines, Muskaan "would have poured herself a glass of water. She would have swallowed the first pile of medicines, as quickly as possible. And then the next and the next, till she was all done"¹¹.

After hearing the news of suicide attempt by Muskaan, Aaliya desperately rushes to the hospital. She feels relieved when the doctor declares that she is out of danger. Muskaan's parents also take a sigh of relief that their daughter is saved. Aaliya, Subhojoy and Prateek go to Muskaan's room. Aaliya does the strangest thing as she goes up to Muskaan and "kissed her on the lips...Right on her lips"¹¹ and Muskaan's eyes fluttered when she kissed her. Muskaan realized that even Aaliya loved and cared for her. Subhojoy tells Aaliya that "She [Muskaan] missed you a lot. She loved you so much. She did not hate you. She was upset with you, but I don't think she ever hated you"¹¹.

Subhojoy's Association with Muskaan

Subhojoy hails from a humble family background. He is good at studies just like Muskaan.

He eventually becomes a good company for Muskaan and sympathizes with her whenever she is upset. But her classmates mock her for befriending Subhojoy because he belongs to a middle-class family and not to elite class like her. Moreover, she is scoffed at for rejecting Prateek, “who is wealthy and cool and good-looking and all that”¹¹. Subhojoy tells Muskaan, “...I feel like a misfit sometimes... My family is very different. Not...well-to-do, like most of the kids in the school...it makes me feel... like an ... outsider”¹¹. By the collocation of Subhojoy and Prateek, Himanjali has highlighted the concept of privilege, that is ubiquitous throughout the globe.

On one hand, Subhojoy is contended with his middle-class family mannerism and works with diligence, perseverance, and determination to achieve his life goal; on the other hand, Prateek brags about his riches and believes that he can achieve everything with the power of money.

Muskaan tells Subhojoy that she does not get attracted to boys. He is surprised because he believes that “Not liking boys was not as shocking as liking girls if you were a girl”¹¹. But he does not let Muskaan read his mind and keeps his face devoid of expressions. He in fact feels “crappy the way the kids are going after her just because they think that she is gay”¹¹. He considers it Muskaan’s weakness when, in spite of being a good student, she scores only eighteen out of twenty-five marks in Maths examination. He tells Muskaan to forget about those idiots in her bus and focus on her studies because “people do not bother you as much when you are the best”¹¹. But Muskaan contends that she was one of the best even a few months back but that did not stop anyone from harassing her in the bus. She painfully reveals, “My life is falling apart...I’ve not grown up contesting odds...I don’t know why I feel so disinterested in everything I’m not able to focus the way I used to”¹¹.

When Subhojoy visits Muskaan’s house, he is wonder struck to see the grandeur of her house. He feels that Muskaan’s house was a fantasy world while his was barely a hole in the wall. Despite all the luxury, Muskaan is not happy because something inside her is troubling her. She tells Subhojoy, “You should appreciate the fact that you’re straight, that you like girls, the way ‘normal’ people do! That’s one luxury of thought I don’t get to have”¹¹. Muskaan tries to justify her homosexuality; she asks, “Do you know that homosexuality is common in the animal world too, contrary to what people think?...I read about female-female pairings in albatrosses and homosexual relations between rams”¹¹.

She explains Subhojoy that her mind is “no longer able to escape to the ocean; it no longer soothes her like it did before. When she tries to think of scuba diving and the ocean, she has this image of drowning instead...she just keeps going upwards, never reaching”¹¹.

Muskaan keeps struggling with her own self to come to terms with her identity but fails to balance her inner and external self.

Prateek–Rich Teenager with Conservative Mindset

Prateek considers Muskaan a ‘weirdo’ and even a ‘psycho’. He often sees Muskaan going swimming or horse-riding or otherwise sitting in the clubhouse with a drink or sandwich while reading a book. Since Muskaan is good at studies, Prateek feels that she makes an appearance of being too smart. He is not happy with the idea that she spends a lot of time talking and ‘whispering’ with Subhojoy in school. Since Subhojoy is not rich, Prateek believes that she will land up in trouble in future if her association with Subhojoy continues.

After getting rejected from Muskaan for a date, Prateek tries to approach Muskaan’s friend Rashika who was his science lab partner in the school a week before. He proposes her to go out with him which she readily accepts. He finds her pretty with lovely skin, soft brown eyes and a nice smile. He feels happy in her company because “she makes me feel calm and good”¹¹. Prateek remembers his tenth birthday when he invited all his classmates of primary school. He remembers how Subhojoy clung to his mother’s sari all the time in the party. When in primary school, Prateek used to make fun of Subhojoy’s poor family when his mom came to pick him up in the school and she looked like a maid...in a sari and oily hair”¹¹. After primary school, Prateek never invited Subhojoy to any of his birthdays. His parents always encouraged him to make friends with rich families only.

Prateek claims to be a professional golfer and polo player and that would explain his bad grades at school. When he realizes that Muskaan is homosexual, he makes fun of her. He says, “No wonder she didn’t want to go out with me! I should’ve guessed”¹¹. Prateek takes a sigh of relief saying, “Thank god! I don’t know what had made me like Muskaan – thankfully, I came to my senses real quick and chose Rashika”¹¹.

When Prateek tells his father that Rashika’s closest friend is a homo, he sharply reacts, “You should not really be friends with such people. These homosexuals are just trying to get attention. Best to avoid them”¹¹. Prateek also advises his girlfriend Rashika to maintain a bit of distance from Muskaan since “homosexuality is not quite normal”¹¹ and “being around abnormal people like Muskaan isn’t good for her or for anyone”¹¹. He believes that, “Muskaan is not only homo, she’s also rude. May be homos are like that only”¹¹.

Prateek’s father always told him that homosexuality is not normal. Such conformist views had a great impact on Prateek’s mind; he decided not to be friendly with Muskaan anymore. He in fact did not miss any chance to humiliate and embarrass her in front of the class. When the Supreme Court gave a verdict declaring homos as criminals, Prateek declares, “Muskaan would be knowing that not only me but the laws of the country didn’t support people like her”¹¹.

Prateek remembers an incident when someone hacked his Face Book account and posted something objectionable. He puts the blame on Muskaan saying that she had all been confused since he proposed her. Now, since he has another girlfriend Rashika, she is feeling jealous. "And then she is homosexual, after all. You never know how these kids think...Muskaan's been messing with my life big time...she is getting on my nerves. Always nervous and preachy"¹¹.

Despite all the dislike towards Muskaan, when Prateek hears of Muskaan's suicide attempt, he is shocked. He exclaims with guilt, "Man, how was I know that Muskaan would commit suicide because of what I told her? I mean, I hadn't known she cared that much for me. Isn't she homo or what"¹¹? Prateek's parents and Tauji go to the hospital with Prateek to see Muskaan. They buy a big bouquet of flowers from the hospital flower shop. Prateek's father says, "Let's buy something bigger and better they notice. They should not forget that we came to visit and were concerned about their daughter"¹¹. All this was done from Prateek's family as a part of strategy and not out of concernment for Muskaan. Prateek feels that "Papa is good at strategies and negotiations. That is how he has taken the business to where it is"¹¹.

Prateek is highly influenced by conservative views of his family which is unaccepting of differences. It is firmly ingrained in his mind that homos are not normal. His family does not accept different dynamics and look at queers as a threat to the society and culture. As an affluent and spoiled teenager, Prateek feels that he is always right and is always unwilling to accept Muskaan's way of being.

Familial Influence on the Psyche of Queer Children

Recent studies have shown that families play a crucial role in the lives of queer children. Unsupportive families mitigate the chances of positive outcome of their queer child whereas protective and compassionate families help in pragmatic growth of their children. Anjali Malik remarks,

"Erasing misconceptions and negative stereotypes, as well as dispelling hatred and fear towards homosexuals, building strong support systems, seeking accurate information, and fostering open communication would help develop an acceptance of queer sexualities in society"¹².

Many LGBT young adults are afraid of exclusion: they experience rejection and censure; they develop heightened state of depression, dejection, frustration, apprehension, stigmatization, and suicidal attitude. They experience violence at home and believe that they are detestable, contemptible, deplorable, and not worthy of parental affection. These individuals are either driven out by their families or they themselves leave their homes due to clash with their family members with respect to their sexual preference. Professionals

who work with them believe that LGBT youth need acceptance, support, and validation. If they are given favourable environment, they exhibit no mental health problems and work with same efficiency as their heterosexual peers. In an interview by Swati Gautam in 47th Session of an Author's Afternoon on August 12, 2017 with Himanjali Sankar, she (Himanjali) says, "I think it's important to introduce differences to children so that they don't grow up to be insufferable, insensitive, unidimensional adults"¹³!

Objective of YA Fiction

The purpose of YA fiction is to sensitize the young readers and make them understand a community better; respect the sexual orientation of others and empathize with those who think and act differently. According to Jenkins and Michael Cart, Young Adult Queer literature "has begun...from being an isolated or 'ghettoized' subgenre to becoming a more integrated part of the total body of young adult literature"¹⁴. Jacqueline Rose observes,

"The unconscious constantly reveals the "failure" of identity. Because there is no continuity of psychic life, so there is no stability of sexual identity, no position for women (or for men) which is ever simply achieved...there is a resistance to identity at the very heart of psychic life"¹⁵.

Highly qualified, cultured, and well-educated heterosexual women in India uphold and conform to the patriarchal norms prevalent in the society. They raise their children within the same limited environs. In "Talking of Muskaan", teenagers like Rashika, Prateek's girlfriend and Aaliya are raised to believe in conformity with such patriarchal rules that restrains woman's space. But as the novel progresses, Himanjali Sankar shows assertiveness in both these teenage characters. Rashika rejects Prateek as a boy friend due to his self-centred nature and Aaliya visits Muskaan at the hospital after the attempted suicide and kisses her "right on the lips" without shame or hesitation. In this way, Sankar presents a vision of a society that is gradually accepting the homosexuals and hinting at subverting the concept of heteronormativity. The novel "Talking of Muskaan" reflects the everyday situations and anxieties teens face in present times. It does not attach any moral tags to homosexuality/ lesbianism but present it as a normal, natural, God-given state, which is to be accepted not ridiculed.

Conclusion

Despite "Talking of Muskaan" being a young adult (YA) fiction, it needs to be read by both parents and young adults. As Muskaan struggles for her survival after her suicide attempt, it is necessary to realize how terribly lonely and difficult her life had become because of her homosexuality, despite all the privileges of fascinating looks and good money. Muskaan is constantly reminded that she is not normal; she is shamed not only by her friends but also the parents of her friends.

The immense trauma, depression, low self-esteem, lack of approval of peers, parents and society drives her to suicide. Her conflict between her inner self and external self gives rise to an identity split leading further towards identity crisis. The ridicule, harassment, hostility and repression by peers and society lowers Muskaan's self-esteem and she fails to cope up with reality, resulting in frustration and melancholy leading her to attempting suicide. Her role is more as a victim targeted by the society that considers queer as a misfit. The novel highlights how the attitudes and prejudices of parents have a deep impact on the psyche of their children! The fear of being labelled as weird or abnormal by others is acute among teenagers because the society considers only heterosexuality as normal.

Parents as well as teachers need to be empathetic to the working of a young adult's psyche and strive to understand the 'abnormal' behaviour, if any, of these teenagers. There is an increasing amount of pressure on them to perform contradictory roles thrust upon them by social institutions. This very conflict between tradition and modernity, strains young adult's existence. It is only through open and free communication that equal spaces for all the people could be created; only an amiable relationship with children can instil confidence in them; with the result that they get rid of the burden of being ostracized, mocked, or bullied by those around them.

The talk of teenage sexuality and gender in Indian literature is the utmost need in present times. It is inevitable that the issues of homosexuality are discussed with adolescents in an open, unbiased manner. The time is ripe when the teens understand the trauma, intense isolation, and turmoil that homosexuals and other marginalized people face every day, and become more open, inclusive, and welcoming for these individuals.

References

1. Abes E.S. & Kasch D. (2007). Using queer theory to explore lesbian college students' multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48, 619-636.
2. Kuzniar, Alice A. (2017). Identity: Precarious Sexualities: Queer Challenges to Psychoanalytic and Social Identity Categorization. In Giffney N. & Watson E. (Eds.), *Clinical Encounters in Sexuality: Psychoanalytic Practice and Queer Theory*. Punctum Books, pp51-76, ISBN: 13:978-0-998518-5-4.
3. Halperin, David M. (1995). *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. New York. ISBN: 0-19-511127-3.
4. Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky (1993). *Tendencies*. Durham: Duke University Press, Durham. ISBN: 13: 9780822314219.
5. Dowerah, Bornali Nath (2019). Foregrounding Queer Spaces in Contemporary Indian English Fiction for Young Adults. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR)*, 6(6), 941-949.
6. Hanson, Ellis. (1993). Technology, Paranoia, and the Queer Voice. *Screen*, 34(2), 137-161.
7. Travers, Ann (2018). *The Trans Generation: How Trans Kids (and Their Parents) are Creating a Gender Revolution*. New York: New York University Press. pp 1-288. ISBN:978-1479885794.
8. April S. Callis (2009). Playing with Butler and Foucault: Bisexuality and Queer Theory. *Journal of Bisexuality*. 9(3-4), 213-233.
9. Cole, P. B. (2006). Literary Theory and Young Adult Literature: The Open Frontier in Critical Studies. *The Alan Review*, 33(2), 78-82.
10. Vanderstaay, S (1992). Young-Adult Literature: A Writer Strikes the Genre. *The English Journal*, 81(4), 48-52.
11. Sankar, Himanjali (2014). *Talking of Muskaan*. Duckbill Books, Chennai, pp 1-154. ISBN: 978-93-83331-19-2.p.1
12. Malik, Anjali (2020). Decoding Gender Complexities in Young Adult Literature. *Foretell*, 41, 95-104.
13. Swati Gautam (2017). Interview, 47th Session of An Author's Afternoon, August 12 (2017). <http://anauthorsafternoon.in/himanjali-sankar/> Accessed March10, 2021.
14. Jenkins, C. A. & M. Cart (2006). *The Heart Has Its Reasons: Young Adult Literature with Gay/Lesbian/Queer Content. 1969-2004*, Scarecrow Press, New Jersey, pp 1-232. ISBN: 13: 978-0810850712.
15. Rose, Jacqueline (1986). *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*. Verso, London, pp 1-318. ISBN: 13: 978-1844670581.