



Reflection of Patriarchy and Community Honour in the Film *Savari- Love Beyond Gender*

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Abstract

This paper describes how customs, traditions, and local social norms shape the narrative and impact of the film *Savari – Love Beyond Gender*, a rural drama in which a native villager Bhavar from Rajasthan is married to a third-gender person (Savari) through deception or arrangement. The film functions as a lens on rural patriarchy, community honor, and the ambivalent position of third-gender people in everyday religious and social life. Using the context in film textual analysis combined with legal and sociological literature on the third gender in India, the paper argues that the film

- i). Exposes the tensions between customary marriage norms and emerging rights/identities,
- ii). Reveals how rituals, patriarchy and kinship obligations are mobilized to accept or ostracize difference, and
- iii). Suggests that cultural performance (hospitality, secrecy, ritual inclusion/exclusion) both reproduces and can subvert stigma.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Community Honour, Third Gender, Savari.

1. Introduction

In rural India, marriage is a private union and it is a ritual invested with society norms also it is a kinship tied with community, caste and honour. The film comes up with unacceptable tie between third gender and a local male Bhavar which questions itself according to social norms in rural India. Pallavi Roy's *Savari*, a Rajasthani-language drama, boldly challenges the patriarchal and heteronormative structures that define traditional Indian society. Through the unconventional marriage between a third-gender individual and a Haryanvi villager, Roy examines how deeply entrenched patriarchal values and notions of community honour govern social behavior, gender expression, and interpersonal relationships. The film presents a poignant critique of the social mechanisms that enforce conformity, suppress difference, and equate honour with control over sexuality and identity.

2. Film Background:

Savari – Love Beyond Gender is directed by Pallavi Roy which is a rural Rajasthani drama. The plot summary used here describes Bhanwar, a simple rural man seeking a bride; he is deceived and married to Savari, a third-gender person. It was a blow to Bhavar when he disclosed that he is being cheated and married to a third gender. But he could explain it only to his uncle. Out of social norms and community honour they decided not disclosed it to community people. The

household keeps Savari's identity secret at first; over time Bhanwar and Sanvari develop bonds and confront ostracism, prejudice, and the limits of customary marriage norms in their village. The film foregrounds ritual moments (weddings, village gatherings), daily labour, and the social mechanisms used to police gendered roles. Savari is sexually harassed by in laws uncle and becomes victim of patriarchy. Finally, thrown out to live the life of hijara or third gender.

3. Social Context and Queer Theory

According social norms the coupling of such heterogeneous couple is not possible on some theorists have applied their views such as Judith Butler describes gender is not an essence but a repeated performance; acts create the appearance of a stable gender. Film scenes that stage rituals are prime sites to read performativity (web). Adrienne Rich proclaims local social structures assume heterosexual marriage as the organizing institution; cinematic disruption of marriage exposes this norm. further as per Jack Halberstam; Lee Edelman; queer kinship studies queer lives often rework normative life stages (marriage, reproduction); films that put a third-gender person into the institution of marriage invite analysis of temporal and familial logics. (web) Reading move: argue that the wedding reveals gender as enactment rather than essence — the community's response depends less on a metaphysical "truth" and more on whether the performative series coheres with social expectation.

4. Literature Review

Customs, Marriage, and the Third Gender in India:

It has been recognized and reviewed about rights of third gender legally and rituals and customs of marriage especially rural areas like Rajasthan. India's Supreme Court recognized transgender persons/"third gender" in *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014), affirming constitutional protections and calling for affirmative measures; later case law (e.g., *Navtej Singh Johar*) and subsequent litigation have shaped the legal climate around queer rights. However, legal recognition has not automatically translated into social acceptance—especially in rural areas.

Marriage in rural India remains deeply embedded in kinship, ritual purity notions, and community honor. Several legal analyses and sociological studies highlight that while transgender persons can sometimes register marriages under existing frameworks (often by being recorded as male or female), formal legal recognition of transgender marriages—especially same-sex and non-binary unions—remains contested. Court judgments have produced a mixed picture on registration and recognition.

Ethnographies and sociological reviews show that "hijra"/third-gender communities occupy complex positions: ritual roles (blessings at births and marriages), public marginality, and periodic social acceptance in ritual contexts, contrasted with persistent exclusion from stable economic and familial institutions. These ambivalences are central to cinematic portrayals that depict both sacred roles and social stigma. (web)

In rural Indian society, patriarchy operates as both a cultural and moral framework dictating how individuals should behave according to gender. Honour (izzat), particularly in North Indian communities such as those in Haryana and Rajasthan, is tied to the control of women's bodies, sexuality, and social conduct. Pallavi Roy's *Savari* situates itself in this terrain, exposing how these concepts of patriarchal authority and communal pride extend beyond the gender binary and affect marginalized groups such as the third gender (transgender, hijra, or intersex individuals).

The film's central conflict — the marriage between a third-gender person and a cisgender male villager — becomes the lens through which Roy explores the fragile balance between love, acceptance, and social conformity.

5. The Structure of Patriarchy in *Savari*

Patriarchy in *Savari* manifests in multiple ways:

- **Control over Marriage and Sexuality:** The marriage at the heart of the film is not only unconventional but perceived as a direct challenge to the patriarchal order. In patriarchal societies, marriage is often viewed as a mechanism for maintaining lineage, caste purity, and male dominance. By marrying a third-gender individual, the Haryanvi villager transgresses these norms, disrupting social hierarchy.
- **Masculinity and Power:** The male characters in the film often display anxiety over their perceived masculinity. The protagonist's decision to marry outside societal expectations is seen as emasculating — a betrayal of community codes. Roy's portrayal of this anxiety reveals how patriarchy not only oppresses women and queer individuals but also rigidly confines men within socially approved masculine roles.
- **Women as Guardians of Honour:** Interestingly, the film also portrays women as enforcers of patriarchal honour. Female relatives, particularly mothers and sisters,

resist the marriage not because of personal hatred but due to social conditioning. Their fear of dishonour reflects the internalization of patriarchal values, where honour becomes a collective responsibility rather than individual morality.

6. Community Honour and the Social Order

In *Savari*, community honour functions as an omnipresent moral authority that transcends the family unit. The village's reaction to the marriage serves as a microcosm of rural Indian society's obsession with reputation and conformity.

- **Honour as Surveillance:** Every act in the village is watched, judged, and circulated through gossip and rumor. This collective surveillance ensures that individuals remain obedient to communal values. The marriage, once public, threatens the "moral fabric" of the community — not because it causes harm, but because it exposes the arbitrariness of its moral boundaries.
- **Punishment and Ostracism:** The couple faces ostracism, humiliation, and violence. Their love becomes a site of social punishment, illustrating how communities weaponize honour to silence dissent.
- **Intersection of Caste and Gender:** Roy subtly shows how patriarchal honour is intertwined with caste hierarchy. The fear of dishonour is not only about gender but also about preserving caste purity, further deepening the social exclusion faced by the third gender.

7. The Queer Disruption of Patriarchal Logic

Roy's *Savari* queers the traditional narrative of love and marriage. The union between the third-gender individual and the villagers destabilize the binaries that uphold patriarchy — male/female, pure/impure, honour/dishonour.

- **Subversion of Normativity:** The film's queer relationship forces the viewer to question the very foundation of patriarchal control. It asks: if love and partnership exist outside biological reproduction and gender conformity, what then becomes of honour?
- **Agency and Voice:** The third-gender protagonist is not portrayed as a victim but as a symbol of resistance. Through them, Roy restores voice and agency to those historically silenced by patriarchy.
- **Reimagining Honour:** The film ends not in reconciliation with the community but in self-assertion — a redefinition of honour as personal dignity rather than social approval.

8. Visual and Narrative Techniques

Roy employs visual realism and regional aesthetics to heighten the social critique. The rural setting — dusty landscapes, traditional attire, and local dialects — grounds the story in authenticity.

- **Use of Silence and Space:** Long silences and wide shots emphasize social isolation and the weight of judgment.
- **Symbolism:** Wedding rituals, veils, and public gatherings become sites where patriarchal control is visibly performed. By including the third gender in these spaces, Roy reclaims them as spaces of defiance rather than oppression.

Conclusion

Pallavi Roy's *Savari* stands as a landmark in regional Indian cinema for its intersectional critique of patriarchy and honour. The film unpacks how these forces function not merely as abstract concepts but as lived realities that police love,

identity, and existence. By foregrounding a queer relationship in a traditional setting, Roy dismantles the moral authority of patriarchal honour and reimagines a world where authenticity replaces conformity.

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