

## A Queer Perspective on The Development Of LGBTQ+ Representations in Bollywood Films



Dr. Piyali Gope<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Pooja Tyagi<sup>2</sup>, Ms. Divi Charu Kumar<sup>3</sup>, Ms. Garima Joshi<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Assistant Professor, Noida Institute of Engineering and Technology, Greater Noida, Piyali.gope@ymail.com

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Noida Institute of Engineering and Technology, Greater Noida, Poojatyagi\_27@rediffmail.com

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Noida Institute of Engineering and Technology, Greater Noida, Charukumar780@gmail.com

<sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor, Noida Institute of Engineering and Technology, Greater Noida, Garimaj315@gmail.com

### Abstract

Movies have long been a fundamental component of our society. They have astonished, entertained, encouraged, and exceeded goals and desires on various issues. Cinema is often regarded as a powerful tool for social transformation, subtly altering cultural perceptions and attitudes. Indian film has become renowned for its ability to embrace multiple genres, appealing to a broad audience. The subject constantly experiences paradigm alterations. The film opened with a diverse collection of epic stories, myths, narratives, and reinterpretations of lesser-known tales. The movie afterward concentrated on ideas of the liberation movement and Gandhi's ideology. Recently, real-life incidents have been portrayed in movies, and actors have taken up the cause of social justice. Moreover, through widespread attention, they introduced profound changes that altered politics and other political narratives. The term alludes to a broad spectrum of sexual identities, including non-cisgender identities, and the movie's content regularly samples and echoes society. Undoubtedly, films have had an important effect on the LGBT movement in India. Like other contemporary social movements, the Indian queer movement seeks to remake society by promoting an improvement in our understanding of sexuality and refuting the notion that it is mainly a fad. The aim is to challenge the existing norms and redefine the conventional perceptions of an adult's sexual world.

**Keywords:** Cinema, Gender studies, LGBTQ+, Film studies, Queer Theory, Gaze Theory.

### Introduction

For an extremely long time, movies have been a vital aspect of popular culture. It surpassed expectations and explored various topics, leaving audiences amazed, entertained, inspired, and thrilled. Film is also thought to be a potent tool for impacting society's attitudes and bringing about social change. Indian cinema is regarded as having a mix of genres to appeal to a wide range of audiences. The subject undergoes constant paradigm shifts. A range of epics, legends, fables, and reimagining of side stories were presented in the film's opening credits. Gandhi's philosophy and aspects of the independence movement are explored in the movie. In recent years, films depicted actual events, with actors playing parts that underscore the struggles for social justice. Through extensive publicity, they have begun molding politics and political narratives, bringing about substantial changes. Similarly, the movie's themes are frequently based on societal difficulties, and society occasionally reflects those themes, resulting in a never-ending loop. Further, the term is used to describe a variety of sexual identities, including non-cisgender people. Film has been a major force in advancing LGBTQ+ rights in India. Like other modern social movements, the Indian queer movement has its primary emphasis on advancing social change. A change in how we view sexuality has always been viewed as peripheral rather than standard. This work seeks to dismantle

the unfair constraints of prevailing beliefs that shape the typical adult's perspective on sexuality.

### Seeking Belonging: Flawed Portrayals of the Queer Experience

How the queer population appears in Indian films has long been criticized. When members of the LGBTQ+ community are depicted as stereotypical and bad characters in the films, it only promotes actual prejudices. Violence against gays, public executions in the Middle East, attacks and killings of LGBTQ+ individuals in Western nations, and calls for their persecution in many countries, including India, are merely some examples of how homophobia expresses itself in today's culture. But homophobia is a reflection of old or primitive ideas from the past as much as a modern one. What was previously a subtle type of homophobia in Indian tradition became a commonly accepted stance during the colonial period. Like in many of the countries that they colonized, the British made homosexuality illegal in India. Stereotypes of LGBT characters in Indian movies have done little to reduce nervousness, worry, and hatred toward the community. Indian cinema constantly highlights LGBT+ characters. Some portrayals of LGBT people in Indian cinema aim for a humorous effect, while others try to be sympathetic and sincere. Such attempts prove unsuccessful. The movies failed to challenge existing myths and thus did not break the

“taboo”. These characters were often presented as companions to the leading heroes and heroines during the “Golden Age” of Hindi cinema, which lasted from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. Some actors use distinctive outfits and mannerisms for amusing effects. Amitabh Bachchan conceals himself as a woman in the song “Mere angane mein” from the 1981 movie *Lawaaris*, letting him look like a eunuch. A prominent instance is Rishi Kapoor’s cross-dressing as a woman in the 1975 film “*Rafoo Chakkar*”. Commercial films have a long history of adding entertaining moments and songs starring male performers disguised as women.

Film is a social process in which the audience discovers meaning from its symbols or messages as auditory and visual receptors convey signals. As a type of mass response, movies are understood to be a common kind of enjoyment. A beautiful display of imitation, complemented by fantastic cinematography and sound, the film captures our attention and attracts us with surprises. Movies enchant and educate viewers, changing public opinion and advocating societal transformation. Jaikumar explores how Bollywood’s immense popularity in India and around the world can change people’s perspectives and subvert customary opinions in his 2006 book, *Film Towards the End of Empires*. Through a selection of narrative vantage points, Indian cinema, often known as Bollywood (Dwyer, 2006), depicts and probes societal traits like complexity, realities, and fantasies. Bollywood affects how we see and understand society as a whole. Realistic depictions in Bollywood include scriptwriting, location choices, cinematography, actor styles, and editing approaches, all of which have been developed with audience perception and broadcasting rights in mind. Sexual minority concerns remain significant, nonetheless, they are frequently misinterpreted and mistreated even today. Various research on their portrayal in Bollywood constantly shows an underestimation of third-gender people, as well as a lack of compassion and awareness among the general public. Unfortunately, both the illiterate and those with degrees share the popular belief that belonging to a “third gender” is a result of previous transgressions or familial behavior. Even rational individuals retain this deeply established idea. Inhabitants of big cities. She alters her behavior to show the world how third-gender people live, perceive, take action, deal with, and experience life in movies that include them. Therefore, correctly depicting third-gender identity in Bollywood is of great significance.

Mumbai in the late 1940s serves as a background for Kalpana Lajmi’s 1997 Bollywood flick. While his family denies his Hijra status, the movie depicts the journey of Mazdin, also known by the nickname Imi, who was born a Hijra. Zeenat, a popular performer

in that era, was Imi’s biological mother. Zeenat refers to Imi as her younger sibling even though she thinks he is her son. Zeenat is madly in love with Inder Kumar Bala during this period, but she eventually loses him to Chitra, another performer. Sad and heartbroken, Zeenat risks everything by engaging in illicit activities. Imi finally joins the Hijra community and experiences their difficult and unforeseeable lifestyle. Imi chooses to go back to her previous life after being assaulted there. Imi encounters an abandoned boy while away from her homeland and strives to bring him home. After deciding to raise the abandoned boy as her own and give him the name Murad, Imi concludes that society will never recognize her as his father. Sadly, he offers her son to Chitra and encourages her to take him in. Chitra accepts with joy. Zeenat’s despair and sense of estrangement are readily comprehended by Imi. After saving Zeenat from destruction and finding the hidden serenity he had long desired, Imi ends up hurting himself and her. The existence of the Hijra community in India is shown in this story realistically and intriguingly. The film is both appealing and thought-provoking since it deftly handles issues like Hijra’s sexuality, drunkenness, fame, and grief. The film powerfully depicts the Hijra’s rejection of a culture obsessed with familial ties and opposes the notion of a third gender. Kiron Kher, Arif Zakaria, and Sayaji Shinde have outstanding roles in the film, which adds complexity to the story. Despite this, the movie is a complex artwork combining two different narratives. The movie’s plot alternates between the two stories, which may prove unnecessary. Kalpana Lajmi, the director of this film, goes deeply into and entirely connects with the world of sexual minorities. This illustrates her dedication to her potent ideas. Before Darmiyaan: In Between, Lajmi directed films like *Ek Pal*. More significantly Rudaali won praise from critics. The skilled director expertly captures the late 1940s entertainment industry, this film is powerful and worth viewing.

### **An Account of the History of the LGBT Concept Throughout History**

The phrase refers to all subgroups defined by the abbreviation LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender). Both “non-heterosexual” and “non-cisgender” refer to broad categories that include a wide range of gender identities and sexual orientations. Since 1996, the letter Q has been applied to indicate those who identify as queer and those who are unsure about their sexual identity, expressing the diversity of both groups.

The concept of a “third gender” emerged in the 1860s, but it was not widely embraced in the United States until the sexual revolution of the 1960s. With its early stages of popularity, the term “homosexual”

started to be associated with negative connotations in the 1950s and 60s. Consequently, “homophile”, which ultimately became “gay” in the 1970s, progressively supplanted the term. As lesbians established more visible public identities, the phrase “gay and lesbian” became more prevalent. The killings of Mahbub Rabbi and Tonoy and Xulhaz, two LGBT activists from Bangladesh, earlier in 2016 indicated a turning point in the struggle for LGBT rights in the Indian subcontinent. Since there isn’t an improved reputation to describe the present scenario, everyone fears stirring up the already strong hetero-normative surroundings. Along with the increasing prevalence of dowry-related homicides and pregnancy among adolescents, there are also more unsuccessful marriages and abandoned children.

LGBT rights are therefore seen as a risk to the fundamental components of society. Despite a recent Supreme Court decision that recognized the dignity of transgender people, no concrete steps have been carried out to establish affirmative action policies. That is the fundamental difference.

The intrinsic instability of section 377 of the Indian Penal Code is highlighted by its specific history. Current rules, enacted during the British administration in 1860, make consenting sexual acts between two adults that fall under the category of typical heterosexual couples illegal. Indian authorities are frequently involved in criminal activities such as bullying, pressuring, and extorting money from sexual minorities and sex workers. The law believes anything sexual that is “against the order of nature” to be illegal. Three main underlying factors remain to be addressed concerning this legislation. These include misreading the law, an anxious trust in the term “natural”, and outright contempt for equality. With the youngest population in the world, India needs to concentrate on educating its eventual voters. Section 377, a law that discriminates against women, must be recognized as a hurdle to India’s development into a global superpower. Furthermore, high-profile rape cases harm the nation’s worldwide reputation.

Section 377 should be considered international law. The United States is one of numerous Western nations that have recently allowed same-sex marriage. An analogous law does not exist in the UK. Nepal, which is north of India, on the other hand, has a new constitution that specifically highlights the important role of “securing, empowering, and expanding gender-based and sexually-oriented minorities.” India is the greatest democracy in the world, and its economic progress has been impeded by Section 377. People who are protected under Section 377 will always be protected based on their gender and sexual orientation. Section 377 must be repealed if India desires a genuinely robust

functioning of democracy, transformative learning, equal opportunity for women and men, a healthy economy, and a society characterized by human decency.

### Finding Gender Outside of the Binary

The dominance of binary orientations and more general interpretations that include lesbians, homosexuals, bisexuals, transgender people, and queers further muddy the understanding of the “third orientation” and its ramifications. The conventional description of “character” is essentially based on the concepts of gender and sex, which are very frequently used together. Gender refers to traits categorized as masculine or feminine by an individual or society. In contrast, sex refers to biological differences such as chromosomes, hormone profiles, and internal and external reproductive systems.

Simone De Beauvoir claimed that womanhood is a social construct rather than an inherent trait. She stressed that cultural restraints and limitations considerably burden women’s moral and cognitive development, to the point that these inequalities appear to be natural rather than socially imposed. Beauvoir’s notion that one is not born but becomes a woman could potentially be read as a question of socialization: females become women through a process of gaining feminine traits and learning feminine behaviors. Both masculinity and femininity are understood as products of an individual’s upbringing. Haslanger (1995) contends that gender is a social construct. Social forces play a key component in the formation and shaping of gendered persons, impacting both how people identify as men and women, as well as how they experience and express their gender. Moreover, social learning forms the basis that advances the developmental process. Kate Millet, for instance, contends that social variables, not natural nature reasons, are the main source of sexual orientation variances. She argued that these differences are caused by how people are socialized and treated. According to Millett, sexual orientation comprises the full spectrum of societal conventions and views of what constitutes proper behavior, persona, hobbies, social standing, value, movement, and goal setting, for each sexual orientation. The emphasis on sexual orientation as a distinguishing feature excludes transsexual people, further isolating and delaying their personality development. This exclusion is especially problematic because sexual orientation is a social construct and an aspect of societal expectations.

To provide clarity and precision, the term “Third Gender” will apply to a wide spectrum of people whose gender identity differs from the one provided to them at birth, following the Indian High Court’s

order granting legal recognition to the Third Gender 2) Acts and identities that bring into doubt a culture's binary male/female gender paradigm. 3) Anyone whose self-perception or presentation defies accepted ideas of male and female, who transcends above the usual conceptions of man and woman. Stringer, JAC (2013) The transgender community, or Hijra in India, will be the center's main priority. While we have established a formal description of the third gender to guide this work, we must understand that no single definition can entirely encompass the concept of gender.

The rigid boundaries between masculine and feminine are not static categories that do not ever come into interaction. These divisions have always been stretched due to how people perform or express their gender. Orientation is neither a stable or continuous state nor an arbitrary categorization. Instead, it is a dynamic idea that grows, shifts throughout time, and crosses with other social categories. There is no method to design a class that is both fixed and clearly stated. *Sadhak* broke new ground in Hindi cinema with the inclusion of a transgender character, Maharani, an eunuch, as the main adversary. The actor received a Filmfare Award for the part, but it did little to improve the societal perception of eunuchs. Stereotypes about the trans community developed in mainstream Indian society as a result of the large amount of screen time devoted to transgender characters, which continually promoted negative ideas about the trans community. Though Indian cinema has attempted to explore homosexual issues, many depictions of same-sex sex relationships remain typical and disrespectful, unable to address the nuances of these experiences with sincerity and intensity. With very few exceptions, the situation is not improving significantly today, especially in mainstream domains. A considerable number of transgender characters in the media are represented as victims of abuse. Transgender people often appear in the media as either excessively feminine caricatures aiming for humorous effect or as sexually aggressive toward male heroes, frequently without their consent. He rarely has large roles in commercial films. When he does appear, it's typically for humorous relief, a recurring cliché in many Bollywood movies. They can reflect presumed psychological disorders, give lighthearted comfort represent Hijra's identities, or illustrate the multifaceted realities of LGBT people. The underrepresentation of LGBTQ+ people in mainstream film was an ongoing source of controversy for an extended period. Several films, namely *Dostana* (2008), *Mastizaade* (2016), *Bol Bachchan* (2012), and *Kal Ho Na Ho* (2003), have deceptive depictions that encourage bias and mock LGBT rights. According to a few sources, LGBTQ+

characters have frequently been portrayed in Indian cinema in a categorized and disparaging way. This film has the potential to be entertaining, but its capacity to honestly describe the LGBTQ+ community on the big screen remains to be seen. We had been taken aback to discover we were in a precarious position. In addition, an inconsistent depiction of a gay character whose one evident motivation is to attack others has been shown. If you can come up with a particularly humorous line, dress like a woman, deliver it cautiously, and then wait for the laughter to start! Because of communal and cultural considerations, the phrase "he's gay" is often employed in India in place of "he's gay". This language inclination could explain why similarly basic and stereotyped depictions of LGBTQ+ people are pervasive in Indian movies. It has long been acceptable in society for one to set oneself apart from homosexuals. When I came across someone with an unclear identity regarding their gender, I switched my attention to a younger demographic. Although there is still a misconception on the distinction between gender and sexuality and reasons why they cannot be used mutually, filmmakers are trying to approach the topic with empathy, understanding, and consideration. They intend to make films that address the above issues while emphasizing rationality. The fundamental notion of treating everyone with equality and respect is straightforward and doesn't require any particular training, despite its apparent sophistication.

### Portraying Third Gender Identities

Media representations have further triggered the group into the shadows of harassment, humiliation, nervousness, and mocking, which has further complicated the definition and understanding of the third gender, particularly when it comes to transgender people. The transgender character is typically a supporting character in hetero-male-centric Bollywood stories, serving as a source of entertainment, or more commonly, being lumped in with other sexual 'deviants' which include gays, homosexual people, or drag queens. Because of how the hijra identity and image are constructed in a hetero-patriarchal society, they are seen as marginalized and frequently mocked individuals who are usually limited to the grotesque or comedic. The presentation of transsexual people in mainstream Bollywood regularly shifts between two extremes: utter invisibility and the perpetuation of hurtful untruths. These stereotypes tend to constitute transgender people as caricatures with accentuated feminine traits, including ostentatious behavior, hypersexualization, and an indication of instability in their minds. Furthermore, they are frequently depicted as experiencing continuous

discrimination, abuse, and exclusion from society. Many have been victims of offensive jokes, particularly in humorous contexts meant to make others laugh.

Unquestionably, social norms and acceptance or rejection of transgender communities in India are the foundation of these media representations. Nonetheless, they sometimes represent the transgender person in basic roles or appearances that lack nuance and viewpoint, thereby normalizing transgender people as “the other”. The available literature on hijras is scarce, unclear, conflicting, and sometimes hostile. With few exceptions (Salunkhe, 1976; Sinha, 1967), it does not depend on fieldwork or in-depth interviews. The primary issue in this research has been whether the hijra function encompasses homosexuality. According to Nanda, the primary social uniqueness of the Hijra function is its non-reproductive nature. Evidence does, however, also suggest that quite a few hijras are active in the LGBT community. This gap between the social standard and real conduct causes social friction (Nanada, 1999). As well, some members of the third gender group want to be classified as either male or female and contest the designation of a distinct “third gender”. It is believed that sexual orientation is a variable and continuous concept that is further supported by the internal diversity within the community, which adds to ambiguity around the definition as well as the knowledge of third-gender identities. Stereotypical images and slanted interpretations based on hearsay, gossip, and assumptions have resulted from this lack of understanding of the community. Bollywood’s portrayal of transgender people frequently reinforced preconceptions by providing them with cliched roles in films. This limited representation diminishes viewers’ ability to acknowledge and appreciate the different realities of the transgender population. This paper examines a few Bollywood films that have challenged stereotyped depictions of transgender communities on screen. Even though some of these chosen films use cliched depictions, like bright conduct and excessive makeup, they eventually go deeper. These films explore the intricate social truth, varied characters, and various private challenges that transgender people know.

While films have made advances in infractions of strict social norms concerning third-gender identities, their limited economic success illustrates the wide gap between on-screen representation and real-world acceptance. The third gender is frequently viewed negatively in the discourse, emphasizing ideas of inadequacy or incapacity. It is sometimes viewed as something that defies conventional gender conventions and is odd, fraudulent, or undesirable. The third gender is often overlooked, misinterpreted, and treated with scorn

in society, which is reflected in this paper. To illustrate the particular individuality and nuances of character within the transgender community, besides those seen within any other group, these films aim to alter the narrative and present the community in an increasingly complicated and realistic way. The harsh economic circumstances that third-gender people are suffering have been effectively shown in films. These depictions frequently highlight how their financial difficulties compel them to resort to more conventional sources of income, such as dancing and begging. In doing so, movies illuminate this disadvantaged community’s fight for survival and dignity by mirroring the structural obstacles and limited possibilities they face. While these films are just a small step forward in mainstream Bollywood, they are a huge improvement over their previous precedent of either completely disregarding the existence of the third gender minority or reducing them to simple objects of mockery and environment.

The legalization of homosexuality in India in 2018 has substantially altered how gay themes are expressed and viewed by Indian audiences and filmmakers. The discourse surrounding LGBT love tales in Indian cinema has been an emotive one with many peaks and lows. In India, homophobia is nevertheless common, with heterosexual people frequently retaining prejudices against gays. The way society regards homosexuality has changed dramatically in recent years. Indian media and films are witnessing a dramatic rise in the representation and debate of the queer community. Indian cinema has experienced a tremendous transformation in recent years, with LGBTQ+ themes and portrayals becoming more readily apparent and complex. The emergence of queer politics in India is a major reason for the greater representation of LGBT characters in film narratives nowadays. But it’s yet unclear if these changing representations will accept queerness in its truest form or simply accommodate queer characters into the heteronormative framework that frequently rules mainstream Indian cinema. The positive representation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, hijra, and queer-identifying people in films has provided satisfaction and respectability to the community as a whole. Indian society is experiencing a major conversion, reflected in shifting ideas and attitudes. Many topics remain unexplored, even if few directors have included queer themes in the films, they have made. In movies, the community wants a more complete and truer picture of itself. Understanding and tackling the urgent problems that our society is facing at present is essential. A lot of people in India are afraid of coming across prejudice from mainstream society, hence they do not freely disclose their gender identity and sexual orientation. For those who are

still in the closet, to have the opportunity to talk, there must be more representation in films. Increasing the community's acceptability in society involves ensuring LGBTQ+ characters are accurately and positively portrayed in movies. Non-heterosexual characters in the supporting cast are becoming progressively more common in major movies, where they are usually portrayed as the main character's "gay best friend" - a kind sage who guides them toward happiness. To their narrow target audience, "art-house" movies involving LGBTQ characters or topics will probably have little to no impact on public perception. Many Indian queer film festivals, including the Lesbian and Gay Film Festival at Panjab University in Chandigarh, the Kashish; Mumbai International Queer Film Festival, The Nigah Queer Fest in Delhi, the Bangalore Queer Film Festival, and Dialogues: Kolkata's Annual Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Film and Video Festival, are essential to promoting queer cinema to both queer and mainstream audiences. Since Indian cinema is bringing the LGBT community into the mainstream, the films that most regularly appear at festivals represent those that fully and effectively reflect the community's struggles and reality. These are touching tales that are intended to impact people rather than just take them on a journey. The film portrays him as a weak and humorless figure, undoubtedly included only to provide insensitive humorous relief within the plot. From 1996's "Fire" to 2021's "Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui" and 2020's "Subh Mangal Zyada Savdhan" the portrayal of LGBT characters in Indian cinema has developed substantially. Despite this development, some films continue to employ these characters exclusively for comedic relief and derision, reinforcing damaging stereotypes. Be truly yourself and embrace who you are. In the past, there were numerous dangers and difficulties associated with the release of such films. The release of "Fire" for instance, was accompanied by an abundance of political unrest, but "Subh Mangal Zyada Savdhan" soon made millions at the box office, highlighting the growing acceptability and accountability of modern society. Films that approached the topics with immense honesty, sensitivity, and maturity were also showing notwithstanding some improper depictions of irregularities. This calls into question the genuine motives behind these behaviors along with how the LGBTQ+ community is used as pawns in the fight for societal purity and perceived morality. The movie explores how prejudices affect people's lives and eventually led to the early death of Aligarh Muslim University professor Ramchandra Silas, who passed away in 2010 after a video of her having sex with another man went viral. A filmmaker might not attract a sizeable audience if they are cognizant of the diversity of the LGBTQ+ community which

comprises people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, intergender, asexual, and more. The complexity and diversity of sexual and gender identities stated by the term LGBTQIA+ might be tough to comprehend. Within the LGBTQ+ community, there are numerous types of prejudice and discrimination; homophobia and transphobia are only a few instances. I still have quite a way to go until I can express emotions. A topic that rarely gets addressed in public and that many people steer clear of is homosexuality. It incited numerous arguments and disagreements. Since the film business has enormously impacted people's lives in countries with big moviegoers, people sometimes accuse it of causing societal issues in the nation. They contribute to significant societal changes by presenting homosexuals as comparable to regular individuals, with varied sexual preferences.

Amy Villarejo (2007) claims in her book "Film Studies: The Basics" that film can show an independent blend of economic, political, social, cultural, historical, modern, scientific, philosophical, creative, psychological, and personal elements of human experience. The combination of every one of these components portrays the essence of cinema. The film can penetrate all aspects of our private and collective existence. Films use beyond simple words to portray meaningful experiences. They are persuasive, captivating, and boundless. Movies consistently rely on our emotions, opinions, and responses. They affect our experiences, mold our knowledge and understanding, and eventually assist us in developing our individual and societal narratives. The audience for a film is critical. Focusing on a film helps you to further develop and formalize your informal cinematic education. We should pay close attention to film because it is an effective medium for analyzing the complex interplay between individual dreams, scientific achievements, and the changing cultural and social landscapes of various countries.

Subhan (2013) cites three key trends in the presentation of people with third-gender identities in Hindi cinema. From the outset, some films portray a negative image of the third gender, others question the standard sexual discourse, and yet others analyze the tension between dominant and deconstructive sexual narratives, generating debate regarding reproduction vs deconstruction. Societal attitudes and mainstream discourses about third-gender identities have a tremendous impact on how these persons are depicted. Third-gender people's presence in mainstream Indian movies is primarily reduced to a source of amusement. The film has regularly concealed the real-life challenges experienced by such individuals. Alternative films challenge the conventional status system and depict

marginalization issues accurately, identifying issues and offering possible answers.

When it applies to representations of the LGBTQ+ communities in mainstream Indian cinema, there are frequently more hazards and challenges than in Western countries. Even though many Western media outlets, are beginning to portray LGBTQ+ people in a more nuanced and polite manner, more work has to be done to combat stereotyped and humorous portrayals.

**Theory of Eccentricity:** In his 2015 book titled 'Starting Film Studies', Dix states that queer theory has connections with the 'New Queer Cinema' movement. The phrase was first used in *Sight and Sound* magazine in 1992 by scholar B. Ruby Rich to describe and draw attention to a movement in independent filmmaking with a queer theme that began to take shape in the latter year of the 1990s. They play a role in philosophical connotations to this new generation of filmmakers, who are identified by a wide variety of techniques and processes, from the campy to the cerebrally demanding, in addition to a readiness to take on unexpected and even contentious subjects. The strict definition of "gay" is contested by queer theory, which maintains that all gendered identities are complex, flexible, and continually changing. Queer theory proposes that a concept of 'eccentric' can embrace a wider range of human sexualities outside the established categories, including heterosexuality, hence challenging the normative assumptions about sexual orientation. With the backing of queer theory, queer filmmaking can examine a wider spectrum of gender and sexual identities than are generally accepted in society at large.

Film studies started incorporating queer theory in the late 1980s until the beginning 1990s. Using queer theoretical frameworks, scholars such as De Lauretis (1991), Fuss (1991), Gevertz (1993), and Creemkur (1995) examined how films created and depicted LGBTQ+ identities using a variety of lenses, such as "positive" or "negative" portrayals. Many academics have used queer theory to assess the various ways that eccentricity expresses within different groups of people (Doty, 2000). According to certain critics, one must recognize some films as queer because they frequently use a third gender in creative and unusual ways, particularly in suspenseful films, musical films, noir, and animated films (Benshoff 1997; Farmer 2000; Griffin 2000).

This review helps explain the concepts that films deliver to the general audience about LGBTQ+ people. This idea is significant to the current study because it explains how the general public relies on information from films. Additionally, it is crucial to comprehend these messages since young LGBTQ+ people frequently utilize movie depictions to find their own identities and form a sense of self.

**Theory of Media Representation:** Serge Moscovici developed the theory of social representations, which greatly influenced media studies. This theory offers a different framework for comprehending how shared meanings and interpretations happen within society via cycles of collective significance-making. The theory of media representation looks in particular at how the media creates and shapes the audience's perceptions and understandings. It focuses notably on media, provoking arguments, diverse choices, dispute resolution, ethical conversations, and modifications in how society sees things. Media changes have a significant effect on the audience's real-world viewpoints. This may have unknown negative effects. Some things may prejudice media representations, such as creator bias, audience errors of judgment, audience preferences, media surroundings, cultural context, lack of distinct perspectives, politics, perceptions, and generalizations. Media conveys information to the public through careful selection and construction. The common comprehension of people, their variables, thoughts, and situations will be the thing that makes these reintroductions significant. Each portrayal thus has its underlying idea. Media theorists claim that media purposefully include particular messages in their content, quietly affecting how viewers perceive and comprehend the world, drawing on the work of Claude Levi-Strauss (1958).

One method of research is looking for instances of generalization in media portrayals. The media frequently fosters stereotypes, whether through images of heroes, housewives, or workaholics. In severe cases, generalizations can result in ironic, criminal, or limiting representations of characters. Unequal power dynamics can drive the usage of generalizations. Generalizations are frequently hired in media, including news programs, narratives, and motion pictures, as they render challenging topics accessible and provide a narrative that the audience can readily follow. These media outlets usually use well-known imagery and narratives that are appealing to viewers. Barker (1989) attacks generalizations for corrupting the truth and misrepresenting facts. Furthermore, he says that generalizations only work when they get adopted and approved by the audience and that they occasionally get too near to reality. Generalizations in the media frequently result in predictable plots, as noted by Dyer (1977). For example, the moment we know a movie is about an alcoholic, we frequently foresee either a horrible demise or a successful recovery. One potential application of generalizations in media is to depict characters who, while initially seeming to correspond to a provided stereotype (via apparel, attitude, etc), eventually break those expectations by illustrating unusual

depictions or engaging in a typical storyline. As part of a generalizing effort, TV specialist John Hartley (1982) observed that TV moderators' voices are altered to sound dramatic joyful, sorrowful, and so on. This implies that moderators are trained to showcase specific characteristics that are generalized to the audience.

### Methods and Procedures for Investigation

This study used content analysis as its method of analysis. An investigation is underway to look into how LGBT characters are portrayed in Hindi movie themes. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities and orientations are now presented in Bollywood movies because of the 1990s' triumph of the homosexual rights movement in Indian society. In Hindi cinema, transvestism or demeaning representations of LGBTQ+ people were common in previous decades. A list of associated stereotypes has been created as well and the portrayal of LGBT characters in Hindi cinema was also studied.

LGBTQIA+ difficulties have been handled more frequently in popular Hindi cinema. Bhumi Pednekar and Rajkumar Rao's 2022 film "Badhaai Do" recently discussed issues like adoption rights and marital inequality, focusing on the challenges confronting same-sex couples. The film displays same-sex attractions and the ordinary obstacles that queer people confront, effectively capturing the feeling of being gay in the context of a heteronormative and patriarchal household. Members of the LGBTQ+ community generated previously unknown degrees of friendship and solidarity due to this movie. Although it relied on some of the very beliefs it aimed to clarify, Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui (2021) desires to start conversing about the need for sympathetic and affirming portrayals of transgender people.

Characters such as Maharani in 'Sadak' frequently engage in supporting parts in Hindi cinema. They generally appear in cliched ways, either sadly killed off to advance the plot or reduced to comic relief, as shown in films like 'Masti' and 'Laxmi'. Transgender people have encountered immense difficulties as a result of their historically poor illustration. The cis-heterosexual male viewpoint is served by these portrayals of "other" people, who are already marginalized owing to their sexual identities, and by any humor generated from making fun of these groups.

According to a psychological study, the way LGBTQIA+ persons appear in the media has a significant impact on how members of the LGBTQIA+ community genuinely live their lives. This study additionally indicates how media portrayal affects how queer youths navigate their identities and visibility in the world. (Watching 'Disclosure' (2020) on Netflix might give helpful knowledge on how

media portrayals influence the lives of those who are underrepresented).

### Casting

Authentic casting decisions are essential to create accurate and genuine portrayals. The casting of Vijay Raaz, who previously acted in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's "Gangubai Kathiawadi" as Razia Bai, a transgender woman sparked outrage in the LGBTQ+ community and the general public. This came after the good reaction to "Gangubai Kathiawadi" (2022), which presented sex workers in a more nuanced and able light, raising expectations for more sensitive and accurate depictions of neglected people. Given Raaz's recent portrayal of a character in "Gangubai Kathiawadi," some saw his casting as an occurrence of some cliché, despite the film's goal to give a more nuanced portrayal of transgender individuals. Even while the film earned a lot of praise for representing sex workers as tough and strong, harmful portrayal of homosexual people as assumptions could result from non-queer actors misappropriating queer experiences. The fact that LGBTQ+ actors and actresses are frequently excluded from professional possibilities is a severe repercussion of underrepresentation. This denies audiences positive and inspirational role models by limiting the visibility of successful LGBTQ+ people in the film industry. Many others expressed similar concerns with the casting of Vaani Kapoor in "Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui".

In regards to a query concerning the portrayal of a gay character in the film "Made in Heaven", Arjun Mathur said that his character's sexual orientation was the one characteristic that set them above him. Mathur, a self-described cisgender straight male, surely did not wish to offend when he made an analogy between himself and his character. The considerable disparities in position, authority, and lived experiences between straight people and the LGBTQ+ community tend not to be appropriately highlighted in these kinds of narratives.

### LGBTQ+ Experiences in South Asia

Sheer Qorma is a short film directed by Faraz Arif Ansari about a nonbinary Muslim protagonist. This film explores pertinent issues, including self-discovery, coming out to one's mother, and fostering an effective mother-child bond. The trailer combines symbols associated with South Asia, such as mehndi, and depicts an intimate moment between the characters as they worship their respective deities. Ansari reclaims the theological and social consequences of queerness by fusing ideas and symbols from non-western cultures.

Swara Bhaskar's character in the movie has a moving scene in which she tells her lover, "Mohabbat gunah nhi hai," which means "Love is not a crime." Bhaskar

states this while embracing him. The claim that being homosexual is an “unholy” lifestyle choice has been challenged by the use of Urdu as a medium for LGBTQ identity affirmation. We frequently use Western phrases and frameworks when talking about LGBTQ+ experiences in informal discussions, forgetting the rich and varied understandings of gender and sexuality found in indigenous cultures and languages. Western cultural contexts gave rise to phrases like “love is love” and “coming out of the closet”, which went on to become significant rallying points for the LGBTQ+ rights movement. A single way to improve someone’s visibility and approachability is to utilize terms and descriptors that are meaningful and relevant within their cultural context. This emphasizes how queer experiences are found in several countries and are not limited to any specific society.

### Concluding Remarks and Suggestions for Future Work

Being a developing country, India needs effective laws that guarantee everyone equal rights and opportunity so that everyone can make a substantial contribution to the future growth and development of the nation. An extremely prejudiced Victorian-era law has finally been repealed in India. However, same-sex marriage still fails to receive legal recognition. As a legal institution, marriage confers specific liberties and responsibilities on couples, such as the ability to adopt a child, inherit property, and take advantage of life insurance benefits and tax planning, among other legal and social privileges. Marriage is a fundamental human right, but in a nation like India, where it is assigned significant significance, LGBT people are still denied access to it. Why do same-sex couples still not have the same rights as heterosexual couples, especially the ability to marry, if homosexuality is legal in India? The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act was criticized for its shortcomings and perceived shortages in meeting the needs of the LGBTQ+ community, even though it was passed by the Lok Sabha in 2019 after much work. These studies aim to promote changes to the transgender law that might boost its efficacy by making it more inclusive of the LGBT community. Legalizing same-sex marriage is essential for erasing this stain from Indian history. If society chooses to ignore or deny the existence of homosexuality, the stigma attached to LGBTQ+ people will eventually continue. The government has a responsibility to educate the general public and generate awareness about sexual minorities in society. To ensure that the LGBT population in India has a future of dignity, sexual autonomy, and individuality, the three parts of the Indian government, along with society as a whole, must

maintain the Constitution’s values and principles to guide the country accurately.

Sexual minorities are gradually gaining importance in Bollywood tales. This community finds catharsis and affirmation in the positive portrayal of LGBTQ+ people in films, including their identities and experiences. It’s difficult to make films that both acknowledge and address the subtle, frequently overlooked homophobia and transphobia that exist in a place while also accurately portraying the lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ people there. Cinema has revealed previously unknown and untold biographies among the historically rich fabric of socially woven artworks. However, it is the unique and expanding social developments in India and around the world that stand for a serious challenge to traditional heteronormative standpoints, demanding a re-evaluation of existing definitions for terms such as “marriage” and “family”, as well as the gender roles connected with them. In an era where unchanging, traditional ideas of the “ideal wife”, “ideal family”, and the appropriate role of women restrict us, it is critical to acknowledge and comprehend the new threats to these standards that society is facing right now. It’s important to keep in mind that characters are frequently passively portrayed as homosexual in Indian films, with minimal consideration accorded to their backgrounds or experiences. Why couldn’t at least some filmmakers devote their efforts to examining LGBTQ+ themes and storylines in their work, given that the film business can easily generate films about heterosexual relationships? In the words of Onir, whose film ‘I Am’ won the 59<sup>th</sup> National Film Awards’ best Hindi Film award, “This is more than just a personal triumph. It’s a notable triumph for LGBTQ filmmakers and film, which has been largely ignored in national accolades and esteemed awards.” Homosexuality is not detrimental nor wrong.

### REFERENCES

1. Amala K.B et al., Accepting the Legal LGBT Visuals of Culture, 8 International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Technology, (2019)
2. Aniruddha Dutta, Claiming Citizenship, Contesting Civility: The Institutional LGBT Movement and the Regulation of Gender/ Sexual Dissidence in West Bengal, India, 4 Jindal Global Law Review, (2012).
3. Aparup Khatua et al., Tweeting in Support of LGBT? A Deep Learning Approach, CODS-COMAD’19, (January 2019).
4. Bakshi, S. (2004). 'A Comparative Analysis of Hijras and Drag Queens: The Subversive Possibilities and Limits of Parading Effeminacy and Negotiating Masculinity', Journal of Homosexuality, 46(3/4): 211-223.

5. Butler, J. R. (2003). Transgender DeKalb: Observations of an advocacy campaign.
6. Journal of Homosexuality, 45(2-4), 277-296. doi: 10.1300/J082v45n02\_13.
7. Chatterjee Subhrajit, Problems Faced by LGBT People in the Mainstream Society: Some Recommendations, 1 International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS), (2014)
8. Cohen A. J. (1999). The functions of musician multimedia: A cognitive approach. In Music, mind, and science, (ed. S. W. Yi.),53-69. Seoul, Korea: Seoul National University Press
9. Dwyer, R. (2006). Bollywood's new dream: Indian cinema has a global future in its sights. Cover story. New Statesman
10. Geetanjali Misra, Decriminalizing homosexuality in India, 17 International journal on sexual and reproductive health and rights, (2009)
11. Halliday, M.A.K. (2004). An Introduction to Functional Grammar. (3rd ed, revised C.M.I.M Matthiessen).
12. Kalra, G. (2012). Hijras: the unique transgender culture of India. International Journal of Culture and Mental Health, 2(5)
13. M. V. Lee Badgett, The Economic Cost of Stigma and the Exclusion of LGBT People: A Case Study of India, Human Rights Watch, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), and the United States State Department Reports on Human Rights Practices, (2014).
14. Reddy, G. (2006). With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India. The Chicago University Press
15. Saxena. P. (2011). Life of a Eunuch. Shanta Publishing House. 131-135
16. United Nations (2015). The Concept of Third Gender. General Assembly Third Committee. Retrieved from <http://tomun.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/The-concept-of-third-gender.doc>
17. Zijah Sherwani, Youtuber Carryminati's roast video of TikTok was reported & YouTube took it down for using homophobic slurs, The Quint, (July 20, 2020), <https://www.thequint.com/neon/gender/carryminati-tik-tok-vs-youtube-roast-videoremoved-homophobia>