

## MIRRORS OF PREJUDICE: HOW BOLLYWOOD'S REPRESENTATION OF LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS SHAPED (AND RESHAPED) INDIAN SOCIETY

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### Abstract

*This research paper aims to explore the work done in Bollywood, both Commercial and Art films, that have dealt with Homosexuality, and to identify their impact on society. This paper will be covering movies from 1990 till the present. The paper will be reconnecting the dots of evolution in Bollywood with the representation of Homosexual minorities. With each passing decade, there was a change in outlook toward the LGBT community. In some of the commercial movies, the Queer community has been represented in a very pessimistic manner. While during the 2000s homosexual characters were used as comic relief. These commercial movies had the wider scope of gaining the attention of the audience, but they did not portray the ground reality of the problem faced by the LGBT people, thus making the audience oblivion towards the reality of these minorities. The Art films created quality content, true to its cause, with the representation of the queer society, without adding any melodramatic element. Art films are aimed toward the niche market and were not accessible to everyone during the 1990s and the 2000s. In this paper, I will be doing a comparative analysis of the film produced between 1990- 2020 that have showcased homosexuality in some way or another, and the impact of these films on society.*

**Keywords:** *Bollywood, LGBT, Homosexuality, Society, Movie, Queer,*

## Introduction

The world of cinema plays a very important role in learning one's culture. The biggest film industry of India is centred in Mumbai (Bombay during 1930s) when it was formed, hence the term Bollywood came into existence. Bollywood is a play term that was derived from Hollywood. Bollywood is the largest producer of films since 1970.

Hollywood plays a very vital role in our society, as it influences millions of people, not only in India but all around the Globe. The best example of Bollywood influence can be seen in the world of fashion. How easily the audience get influenced by the actor, they adapt the way of dressing.

Bollywood is the largest producer of the film in the world, it can be easily divided into two categories, Commercial films and Art films. There is a large audience for the commercial movies, as they are produced for the masses and are structured in a way that pleases a large audience. Commercial films have formulated a simple structure of producing films, there is a protagonist and heroine which is followed by a love story and an antagonist who is trying to sabotage their life, along with lots of melodrama and over the top action which does not follow any law of Physics and in the end "Happy ending". The structure remains the same only the themes change, sometimes it's on war, nationalism, comedy, documentary, college life, etc. These commercial movies are meant for entertainment purpose, as they aim to bring profit to the production houses, but at the same time, these movies invoke our feeling and the audience get intimidated by the work depicted in the particular movie. For example, after watching the movie 'Zindagi Na Milegi Dubara' 2011, which showcased a story of three friends who went on a trip in Europe. People who were interviewed outside the theatre not only liked the film but were greatly influenced by it and told the interviewer that they would like to plan such a trip with their friends. Commercial movies produced during the 90s aims to heighten the viewer emotion, by showcasing exaggerated social themes. Not all commercial movies are made in the same way, they do carry a social message which depicts the ground reality.

Art films, on the other hand, do not have a vast audience, it is made keeping a social message in mind. It focuses on the realistic expression of the human relationship with a social message. Art films are made for a particular set of audience, to promote social awareness. The budget of these films is nothing compared with the commercial films. The aim of these films is not to turn a profit. There are no dance nor the action sequence in these movies. Art movies can also be called experimental movies, as the director tends to create something new, the best-known example is Anurag Kashyap. In this paper, I will be doing a comparative study of Art and Commercial films, that have showcased 'Homosexuality' in some way or another and what was their impact on the viewers, dividing them into decade wise from 1990 to 2020. The movies that I am taking for this research are randomly selected.

## 90s

Before the British ruled India, our society was very open about sexuality. The evidence can be found in various historical texts and poems, even there is archaeological evidence to prove it. The 90s was a perplexing time, there were films directed to burst the bubble of homophobia that has walled our society, but at the same time, there were movies that have created a stereotype around sexual minorities.

**SADAK 1991-** This movie was directed by Mahesh Bhatt, the lead actors were Sanjay Dutt and Pooja Bhatt and antagonist Sadashiv. This movie was a box office hit, it was the highest-grossing film of 1990 and the 7<sup>th</sup> most successful movie of 1991. The representation of the third gender in this movie had created a pungentness around the third gender. The role played by the actor Sadashiv as 'Maharani' a transwoman who runs a brothel, has created a horrifying image in many children's childhood memory. Maharani plays the role of evil transwomen who runs a brothel and is involved in girls trafficking and forcing them into prostitution. The character of Maharani is strong and dark, She is always surrounded by the goons who help her in scandalous activities. There were many instances in the films where her emotionless traits were seen, eg when she was forcing Pooja to accept her fate and embrace herself as a prostitute or when she ordered her goon to kill a man in cold blood. The movie had a positive ending but it might have created a shadiness around 3<sup>rd</sup> gender. The movie is an illusion and did not depict the ground reality of the 3<sup>rd</sup> gender community in society, whereas people might have created a perception about transgender being involved in such hideous activities. Showcasing Maharani in such a stereotypical way, that it surely did not burst any bubble around the minority community, but might have implanted the seed of doubt in the viewer's mind.

**FIRE 1995- Directed** by Deepa Mehta, was the first Bollywood film that tries to break the stereotype around homosexuality by portraying a Lesbian relationship. It was a romantic-drama film, let alone was ahead of its time but also a provocative topic, it shattered the dominating ideologies around same-sex love. Deepa Mehta has use references from mythologies in a very subtle manner.

Fire starring Nandita das and Shabana Azmi who plays the character of Sita and Radha. Radha played by Shabana Azmi is a subservient wife, who follow all the rules and laid down by society. She is unable to have a child, so her husband adopts celibacy and Radha's desires are subdued. Sita on the other hand played by Nandita Das is a very spirited character she is full of fire and does not hesitate to question the norms of society. She is young and does not want to be bound by the norms of society. In one incident she called her husband "A pompous fool" and slap him back, unlike in mythology Sita is a devoted wife who is governed by patriarchal rule.

Both the women find comfort and solace in each others company, as they are deprived of love. There is a vast difference between having sex and lovemaking which is clearly shown in the movie when Sita's husband have sex with her, there is no emotional connection between them and with that little shot, it was shown that it was all about males pleasure and how when the sex was over he rolls over and went to sleep. Whereas when Sita and Radha embrace each other for lovemaking there is an emotional connection between them.

The movie talks about the choices one have either follow the desires or follow the patriarchal customs and ideologies laid down by society. In one of the interview, Nandita Das says that "We have never dealt with the subject of homosexuality

before, you may find very subtly element of homosexuality in shades or camouflage”. Hollywood has always showcased women as a motherly figure or a dutiful wife, happy to be bound by the chains. The blockbuster Hollywood movies have showcased women in a very peculiar and vicious manner, but in the movie Fire, the women claiming their desire was considered dreadful for society. In the final sequence of the film the adaptation of *Agni Pariksha* from Ramayan plays a vital role, but here *Agni Pariksha* is for Radha. In Ramayan to check Sita’s purity, Lord Ram ask her to go through Fire atonement. The Fire did not harm Sita as she was pure, Deepa Mehta uses the same element in her movie climax by showing Radha’s purity.

The movie on its release took a backfire, as the member of Shiv Sena in Mumbai tried to stop its screening from many cinema halls. They claimed that the movie is showcasing something that is not part of our culture and its defaming Indian custom. “There are two scenes showing sexual acts between two women. Is it fair to show such things which are not a part of Indian culture? Masturbation is a common practice but can you do it openly?” asked Sena chief Bal Thackeray. Many cinema halls were ransacked and vandalised. In an interview Roosi Modi owner of New empire Cinema, Mumbai says that “there were around two hundred people, who were breaking windows and tearing down the banner”.

India was experiencing a march of religious extremism at that time, and showcasing a movie with such a bold topic was a brave move. Deepa Mehta said in one of her interviews “we are being told what to do, what to see, and that is a beginning of Fascism”. Deepa Mehta was shocked by the response in the International Film Festival Kerala 1997 when people were laughing and clapping at all the wrong places. The audience cheered when Radha after getting exposed went to Biji and she spits on her. ‘Fire’ was one of the most controversial movies of its time, due to which it was not welcomed by the political parties and they have made a fuss about it. One of the Shiv Sena workers has given it a religious angle by saying that, the two women shown in the movie are indulging in sexual activities that are not part of our culture and why the protagonist are Hindu and why not Muslim? The movie could have been the breaking point for the Homosexual minorities, but due to the immense pressure and negative comments, it did not reach the audience in the way that it should have been.

**Darmiyaan 1997-** Directed by Kalpana Lajmi the film is set in the late 1940s in Mumbai (Bollywood). It is a saga of Mazhuddin alias Immi played by Arif Zakaria, who is born as a hijra, and his family’s denial of him being a hijra. At the beginning of the movie when Zeenat is admiring her beauty in front of the mirror, we can see young Immi observing Zeenat and is dazzled by her, Immi tries to copy Zeenat mannerism by picking up a hand mirror and applying lipstick, from early childhood Immi is shown to incline to feminism side.

Immi is born to Zeenat played by Kirron Kher. She is showcased as a famous actress of her time, who is in self-denial that Immi is her son and thus refers to him as her younger brother. Her denial of accepting Immi as her own child shows how our society is transphobic where a person is not ready to raise a transgender child.

The character of Champa is a very Important one, She is a transgender who tries to force Immi to come to live with them and make him aware that he is a hijra. Immi ran home sobbing and crying that he is not a hijra. Champa follows him home and tried to convince them that Immi will not get any respect in normal society and that he should come and live with them, Champa is a loud character and she tries to force them to give up Immi, claiming that she can take better care of Immi, as he will be accepted among the transgender community as their own. Champa’s behaviour is very shrewd and she is shown continuously clapping her hand. In the movie, Zeenat refused to give up Immi.

*“Tum log aisi harkatein karte ho isiliye duniya tum par thookti hai! Dudkarti hai tumhe, sab ke sab hijre ek jaise ho-behuda, badimag aur badtameez!”*

Translated as: People averse you because of your behaviour. They loathe you, all of you are alike- disgraceful, wasted and ill-mannered!

This particular incidence gives us an idea of how society feels about transgenders and if one is born in a family they are not ready to accept them as their own. Throughout the film Immi faced gender denialism, Zeenat did not accept the fact that she has given birth to a transgender. To prove that Immi has all the masculine quality she tried to set him up with a prostitute. The whole plan went haywire when the prostitute came to know that Immi didn’t have a penis. Immi is traumatized by this incident. Even other members of his family did not accept him as their equal. In one of the dialogue, Ameen( Zeenat’s sister) told Zeenat.

*Immi? Tum hamari barabari woh nakara nikhatu chokre se kar rahi ho? Jo sara sara din awaragardi karta ghoomta hai. Tum use hum se kabil samajhti ho? Huh, Ammi aur tum ne uska dimag kharab kar diya hai. Usse toh bohat pehle Champa ko de dena chahiye tha, who theek hi kehti thi uski sahi jagah wahin hain- un zankhoun ke beench!*

Translated as: Immi? Are you comparing us to the useless chap? All he does is roam aimlessly throughout the day. Do you think he is smarter than us? Mother and you have ruined him. He should have been given to Champa a long time ago, that is where his place is- a hijra community!

Immi later joins the hijra community which plays a crucial role in portraying the problems faced by the Hijra community with their day to day life, the audience through Immi eyes experience the shady life they live. At one point the Hijras narrate their story of the quagmire.

*Yeh moye bank wale bhi hijroun ka khata nahi kholne dete... Khata hi kyun? Train mein nahi jaane dete, vote nahi dene dete- hum toh jaise insaan hi nahi hai... Sab jagah thu thu karte hain hamein... Mandir se mantra tak har jagah se khadaid dete hain hamein... Kuttoun se badtar zindagi jeeni padh rahi hai hamein, haye re kismat!*

Translated as: We are not allowed to open accounts in banks... Why just banks? We are not allowed to travel in trains and not allowed to vote- as if we aren’t humans... We are ridiculed and repelled everywhere... From temples to ministers we are not welcome anywhere... We are treated worse than dogs, awful luck!

Through this the director has tried to show the harsh reality of society towards the transgender, they are not even treated like a human in many cases let alone to be treated as equals. Most of these things could be seen in reality, people hesitate sitting next to a trans person. The long-prevailing transphobia in our society is depicted through the aforesaid dialogue Immi gets raped while he was part of the hijra community and decides to retrograde to his earlier life. While running away from the community Immi sees a child abandoned on the road and takes him home. Immi decides to raise him as his own, he named him Murad only to realize that people will never accept him as a father to the child. Immi received several backlashes from the hijra community as they want him back in the community even though he was not willing to go back. Champa kidnapped Murad and took the child to a temple where they were performing a castration ceremony, which was futile as Immi intervened in between the ceremony. This particular part showcases the brute nature of the transgender Jamat, which no doubt, might have created some ill-feeling towards the community.

Hopeless he gives away the child to Chitra and requests her to adopt him. Chitra wilfully agrees. In the end, Immi realizes that Zeenat is beyond repair and he himself doesn't belong anywhere. To save Zeenat from total self destruction and give himself peace that he yearned all his life Immi poisons her and himself too

**Tamanna 1997-** this story is an adaption on the Hijra name tikku. In the previous discussed movie Darmiyaan the climax of the movie was changed to show dramatic effect and sympathy toward Tikku. It won't be wrong to say that this movie is the follow up to the previous movie. This movie showed how Tikku played by Paresw Rawal is taking care of the girl child that he found and named her Tamanna. Tikku is a born Hijra but does not identify himself as on, although his action speaks otherwise. He makes a similar hand gesture and expresses emotion explicitly.

As the film progress, Tikku is seen taking care of Tamanna providing her with quality education, but she is sent to Boarding school so that she does not face the hardship and insult from the society of being the daughter of Tikku, as the society will not accept that a hijra is bringing up a child. As Tikku is getting old and he is no longer required in the film industry, Tikku resorts to the traditional role of the hijra community and started earning by dancing in ceremonies. Tamanna is completely unaware of Tikku identity and treats him as her father, Tikku even shows up in Tamanna college Fully dressed up as a proper man.

Later in the movie, Tamanna found that her father is a hijra, when she sees Tikku in female attire, she feels disgusted by it. This shows the typical stereotype behaviour of our society, where one is taught to feel disgusted by someone of such nature and ignore the fact that behind that skin is just a human, who is trying to do all the right things. It's a fact that in many scenarios we are taught not to treat people of different gender identities as a normal human. Tamanna immediately associates Tikku with the rest of the transgender community, and feel that she was abducted by him. This abduction of the children is a myth that revolves around the community is very subtly represented. She is later told by Saleem who is Tikku friend that how she was dumped in the dumpster and Tikku took her in and treated her as her child. At the end of the movie, Tikku is showcased how he is trying to save Tamanna from her biological father who was trying to kill her.

The movie showcases the simple yet the most complex structure of the society, where it is an evident fact that a transgender can not have a child naturally yet they desire to have a normal family. Tamanna mean desire and in the movie, Tikku wants to have a normal family, although Saleem who is Tikku's friend reminds him that he is a hijra and can't have a normal family, and also tells him that, society will not accept the fact that a child is being brought up by a hijra.

Being a hijra Tikku does not dress up like one and is continuously mocked by the hijra community. They say, "Don't consider us as your own, but when you die, we will be the only ones present at your funeral," implying that eunuchs are outcastes and even if Tikku doesn't believe so, he will remain an outcast as he is a transgender by birth.

Tikku is seen fighting a war between both the world, trying to find an identity for himself so that he can provide a better living environment for the child. In the progress, it is forgotten that how he is trying to provide for a living so that her daughter could have a better life, but instead, people focused on the fact that he is a hijra. Breaking the barrier and showing humanity is the tendency of human beings, and in the movie, it is spot on portrayed by Tikku.

### **The 2000s**

This decade saw a was shift in the representation of LGBT people, earlier most work of cinema presented them in a negative light. The movies during the 2000s presented the LGBT community in a very subtle way.

**My Brother Nikhil-** this movie did not share much light on homosexual relationships but mostly talked about the taboo related to HIV. The movie is presented in a unique style of storytelling with a mix of the documentary format, where the family and his friend are talking about Nikhil. Nikhil was diagnosed with HIV and the whole movie revolved around the problem he faced. The film was inspired by a real-life story of a young man named Dominic D'Souza, a wildlife photographer, and the first known HIV positive case in India. The movie was not promoted as HIV/AIDS or Homosexual movie.

The movie showcases the struggle faced by Nikhil when he was diagnosed with HIV, as at that time HIV was considered very contagious and could spread by coming in contact with the person. Nikhil was in a gay relationship which was not the theme of the movie, it was not made clear how he got infected with HIV. In early 2000 it was considered that HIV is a homosexual disease. The movie represented the reality of that age, Nikhil parents disowned him and left the city because of shame, being a state-level swimmer he was miss treated by the government and the authorities. He was kept in isolation where he was slumbering in his grief. The isolation ward was not even fit for the grave to be buried in. The only people who supported Nikhil were his Sister Anamika and Nikhil's gay partner Nigel.

Nikhil was kept in that isolation for three months and during that time his family and friends were tested for HIV. Nikhil sister knew about Nikhil's relationship and fully supported him. Anamika and Nigel approached Anjali Menezes an

advocate to fight Nikhils case. Together they started an awareness campaign, where they were telling the locals about what HIV is and how it can spread. Nikhil came home after three months and he was facing discrimination everywhere, he also lost his job although he started following his passion for teaching music. Eventually, Nikhil develops AIDS which lead to further deterioration of his health. The movie ended on a positive note, where Nikhil's Father and Mother excepted him back, and he came back to his home where he took his last breath. The Family acknowledged Nikhil's gay relationship with Nigel and accepted him as their own family. In honour of Nikhil, the family started an NGO by the name of People's Positive.

The Film uses multiple points of view, which enable the audience to know what's around them and allow them to see the opposing views.

**The Girlfriend 2004-** This movie has outdone itself by creating a parasitic view of the homosexual community. In summary, the movie is about three characters Tanya Singh( Played by Isha Kappikar) also portraying the role of Lesbian, Sapna Verma ( played by Amrita Arora) and Rahul Chaudhary(Played by Ashish Choudhry). The movie revolves around a love triangle where Rahul and Sapna are in love and wants to get married where Tanya is in love with Sapna and is her roommate for the past 5 years. Tanya hates Rahul and wants Sapna for herself and Rahul is aware of Tanya's behaviour and wants Sapna to be aware of her.

This is one of the most cringy movies portraying the homosexual community. It is full of stereotypes and misinformation about the 'Lesbian Community. Tanya who is playing the role of a lesbian is portrayed in the image of a " Tom Boy" she has masculine features and knows kickboxing and riding a bike, things which were associated with the image of a lesbian in that era. The director and writer Karan Razdan is naive with the portrayal of the lesbian. Apart from that in the movie, there is a dialogue where Rahul says to Sapna indicating towards Tanya "*Wo tumhara Pati hai tumhara Husband hai ho tumhe control Karta hai*", not only this there are several dialogues in the movie which are indicating lesbian as a man in women body. At one point in the climax scene when Tanya revealed her intention in front of Rahul she says "*Mai Ek Ladrki Jism mai kaaid Ek Ladrka*". The movie got everything wrong, the reason Tanya gives to Sapna about why she hates boys is because she was harassed during her childhood by a man and that's why she doesn't like men, suggesting that this incident turned her into a lesbian. By the end of the movie, they were treating a lesbian as a trans person. In one of the scenes where Tanya says that she is a lesbian which is followed by dramatic transition effects telling the viewer that being a lesbian is a crime.

What was the outcome of this movie? This movie faced a similar backlash that was faced by the movie Fire. Shiv Sena's stopped the screening of this movie which was followed in many regions. Bal Thakrey said "*it was not fair to show a sexual act between two women on screen because it was not part of Indian culture*", although the movie did not showcase many salacious scenes, there was a song where both the girls are dancing together with seductiveness and two scenes where it is hinted that a lesbian sexual act is being performed. The movie did not please the queer community Ashok Row Kavi of the gay healthcare Humsafar Trust agonised over the demonisation of women.

This movie has done a fabulous job in feeding false information to the audience and helped in creating an immoral image of the queer community targeting, that a lesbian is a male trap inside a female body. Apart from that, it kicked the bucket in portraying lesbians as psychopath lovers who will fall in love with straight women and will try to drag the straight person into becoming a lesbian by forcing her to indulge in sexual activity. One could easily say that the movie is was the work of a homophobic person.

## **Dostana**

Dostana is a commercial movie that presented the sanitized version of LGBTQ to the Indian audience. It's a mass pleaser film that deals superficially with the aspect and life of Gay people. This blockbuster cast was one of the finest starring Priyanka Chopra, Abhishek Bachchan and John Abraham thus creating a gateway to attract the dogmatic Indian audience and make them acquainted with the idea of gay society during 2008.

The job of introducing such a topic was well done but it failed to showcase the reality, earlier the topic of LGBT was used as comic relief but this movie is focusing on feeding the audience with the same stereotype.

Kunal (John Abraham) and Sameer (Abhishek Bachchan) are two Indian men portrayed to be gay so that they can rent a place owned by Neha (Priyanka Chopra). What follows is a series of problematic events that are cringy to their core. The portrayal of gay people is not accurate whenever they have to pretend as a gay couple, they are shown adopting feminine gestures. They are shown that as a couple either they are talking about fashion or a sexual position. Another gay character that the audience is introduced to is Neha's boss M (Boman Irani) his portrayal is very poor light. His character is lusting over other gay men that is Kunal and Sameer followed by feminine acting. There is nothing wrong with straight men or gays portraying feminine quality but putting it under the bubble of gay society is wrong.

The Kirron Kher as Sameer's mother is the depiction of Indian society she is totally against Sameer and Kunal relationship. In the song "*Maa da laadla bigad gaya*" she is showcased trying all the superstitious stuff to cure Sameer of this disease of being gay. This is exactly what most Indian think.

The movie is produced by Karan Johar being and a Gay person himself he did not do any justice toward the community the movie is full of famous stereotypes around the world especially among the blindfolded Indian audience of that era. The movie was released in 2008 and it was a necessary baby step to introduce the audience to gay society in a light tone and full of stereotypes otherwise this movie might have met the same fate as the 1996 movie 'Fire'.

**I am-** I Am is an Indian anthology film directed by Onir. In this collection of short films, there are two specific movie titles 'Abhimanyu' and 'Omar' that are portraying up the topic of homosexuality. Abhimanyu played by Sanjay Suri is haunted by his childhood memories of sexual abuse by his stepfather. This short film is the perfect example of situational

homosexuality, where the father forces his stepson into a sexual relationship each time his will leave the town. The boy did not speak about it for years and even kept it to himself till the time his father died. Only after his father death, he revelled the truth to his mother.

Omar, on the other hand, deals with gay rights especially the IPC section 377 Rahul Bose and Arjun Mathur play two guys who flirt with each other and end up making love in their car in a secluded public place. A cop shows up and started mistreating them abusing them and later demanded one lakh as a bribe. Arjun Mathur playing Omar asked Jay played by Rahul Bose for money so that they can get out of the mess. Omar went to get the money, in the meantime, Jay was left with the cop that has beaten him badly. In Omar absence, the cop forced Jay to give him a Blow job. The whole incident happened because having a sexual relationship with same-sex was a crime. Omar returned with the money which was fifty thousand, a lot less than what the policeman demanded. As the policeman demands were not met he took Jay's phone and Omar to the police station. Later on, Jay found that Omar was in cahoots with the policeman.

These particular movies did not showcase any preconceived view of gays or Homosexuals, for example they are not femenin in nature or they wear colours associated with the female gender, nor do they talk like a female, like it was showcase in Dostana. These two short films are totally in raw form and have portrayed the real essence of the queer community.

This movie failed at Box Office but did won several awards amond which National award for the best hind Film 2012. *The Times of India* called it "an important and intelligent film"and *The Film Street Journal* named it "a must watch".Taran Adarsh gave the film three and a half stars and named it "a motion picture of major significance" and "a landmark film

**Aligarh 2015-** It's an Indian Biographical drama film directed by Hansal Mehta, it is a well-crafted film that was released when the country was facing a strong surge in the support of the LGBTQ community. This movie is based on the true event of a gay professor Ramchandra Siras (played by Manoj Bajpai) of Aligarh Muslim University is who is harassed and tortured physically and mentally because of his sexual preference. He was forcefully videotaped while he was having an intimate moment with a Muslim rickshaw puller at his home.

The movie tells the story from professor Siras's view and is showcasing how inhuman society can be for the things they don't understand. At the beginning of the movie when another professor asked professor Siras to write an apology letter to the university for his conduct, he simply asked Why? this is the biggest question to the viewer and society. Professor Siras was videotaped and beaten in his own house just because he was having an intimate moment with another man. This particular event traumatised him to his core and throughout the movie, it is shown that he is always bolting the door and windows not only that he is having unrest right.

Protests are happening at Aligarh Muslim University and professor Siras is told to stay away from the University and is suspended on the moral ground from his position as Professor and Chairman of the department of modern Indian Languages, and was given seven days notice period to leave his quarter. Aligarh Mulsim university was founded on the idea to promote progressive Indian Muslim thinking, University is a place where ideas are born and theories are formulated and that same university was ready for bloodshed and is terribly politicized.

This whole event took place soon after the Delhi High Court have decriminalised same-sex relationships in private. The film beautifully shows how he was facing backlashes from society, he was not getting a place to stay, the doctor was not ready to check upon him. At one point during a case proceeding, he went to see his colleague for help and while they were having a conversation Professor Siras touched professor Sridharan's hand and he in disgust he removed Professor Siras's hand and started dusting it off as if he has tainted him somehow, further Sridharan's wife called out for dinner but he didn't offer any to Siras and asked him to fight his own battle, this scene is very beautiful it shows how he was being ill-treated not only by the city but also by the people with whom he has worked throughout his life.

Furthermore, the movie has showcased the homophobic nature of Muslim society, where AMU professors call Professor's Siras act of lovemaking 'Haram', they say such an act from a professor is unacceptable on AMU 'Paak Zameen', none of his colleagues supported him. Where everyone was afraid of Professor Siras, Deepu Sebastian played by Rajkumar Rao a young journalist was fighting for his rights. He saw how a conspiracy was webbed for Professor Siras, in the movie we see how beautiful their bond become. In one scene where after Deepu asked Professor Siras for a selfie, Siras was taken back a bit by this act as no one was willing to even talk to him whereas Deepu was having lunch and was trying to help him out, where other people were seeing Professor Siras as "A Gay" Deepu only saw a human whose rights were violated. At the beginning of the movie when Deepu interviewed Professor Siras, Siras tell him that he wanted to jump from the AMU clock tower. On being asked are you gay? he replied "I don't understand this word", then Deepu asked him so you are not gay? to which his reply was very powerful he said: "koi meri feeling ko teen akshar main Kaise samaj sakta hai." Further, he describes his feeling with poetry, 'a burning desire'

A petition was signed to revoke Professor Siras' suspension. Lawyer Vijay Grover who has previously argued against section377 was representing Siras's case. Before the climax there is a montage where Deepu is indulging in sexual activity in an open place on the other hand Professor Siras's having intimate moment with the rickshaw puller is shown which causes the whole havoc in Sira's life. This particular scene shows how one act is acceptable even if it's done openly, while the other one is regarded as a disgrace to Indian culture. They won the case and his suspension was revoked but a day before the court notice could reach the university Professor Siras passed away some poison was traced in his blood.

The movie ended on that note, what it was trying to tell was plain and simple, the harsh reality of society, where something unknown is not welcomed. It showcased how a person of the LGBT community suffers from the backlashes of society. The people start treating him as an outcast an untouchable person, a person suffering from a transmissible disease. The movie did a great job of being a biographical gay film. It landed many awards during the years 2016 and 2017

**Shubh Mangal Zada Savdhan-** The queer voices shine in this movie, released in 2020 directed by Hitesh Kewalya, starring Ayushmann Khurrana and Jitendra Kumar as a homosexual couple Kartik and Aman. The movie's creator has done excellent research on the life of gay people. The portrayal of the homosexual couple in the movie is fantastically done, the hardship of the gay couple showcased in the film is quite relevant.

The movie is set in Allahabad and revolves around Kartik and Aman trying to convince Aman's family about their sexuality. Aman's father catches him kissing Kartik and is disgusted by this concept, eventually, the family comes to know about it as well. There is a scene where Aman's mother tries to convince him that he is normal like others and she also says we get you treated. The parents started trying all the tricks available on their shelf, by getting a "namkaran" done to beating up his partner Kartik, when nothing works they forcefully tried to marry him to their neighbour's daughter.

Many Romantic Bollywood plots are used in this movie to let the audience understand that love is not related to any gender or sex. The stereotyping is kept at bay with the portrayal of a homosexual character in the movie. Kartik is seen softspoken in a feminine tone sometime in the movie but he is also the one who emerges masculine when Aman's Dad was bashing up Kartik for being gay and spoiling his son.

After the outstanding verdict to the Supreme Court in September 2018 legalizing to the queer community for the consensual same-sex relationship, India is on a long path for accepting queer marriage, whereas this movie is laying the ground for the same. A very important symbolism was used in the movie "Kali Gobhi" Black Cauliflower it symbolises the orthodox thinking of the society which is imposed forcefully on others, at the end of the movie it is revealed that the black cauliflower is rotten from inside and is being eaten by worms. Kali Gobhi is the homophobia that resides in humans' hearts.

This movie is the first Gay-romcom which have portrayed homosexuality in a very dignified way. It was and commercial film that was well received by the audience. In an interview, the director Hitesh Kewalya says "it will normalise gay relationships on the big screen". Which it did as the audience has accepted the existence of gays in society, apart from that this movie has tried to shatter the fake reflection of the queer community earlier most of the hit commercial movies were using all the stereotypes to portray the LGBT community.

### **Chandigarh kare ashique**

After the decriminalization of Section 377 of IPC many actors are taking up bold and unorthodox roles Ayushman Khurrana and Vaani Kapoor are such actors bold enough to take up this taboo topic. He played the role of Manu a bodybuilder and Vaani Kapoor played the role of Maanvi a Transwoman who is cis-passing. It is a one of a kind Indian movie that is exploring a love relationship between a transwoman and a cisgender man. Making a commercial movie on such a taboo topic is hard to hit on the right mark, not to forget the stubborn mindset of the Indian audience which is not ready to accept the concept of a transperson. Although an illusion was created that this is a generic rom-com movie and the audience was let to discover the surprise. It was a great step to lure the audience, in an interview with The Indian Express, Ayushman Khurrana said "In my last outing, Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan, a lot of people from two-tier cities didn't go for the film because they were put off by the fact that two men were kissing". There is no such Hindi film that tells the story of a trans person with such dignity. It is not a Documentary but tries to reflect the real-life experiences of the trans people's

It has hit on the right spot, the major part was to make the concept gullible to the Indian audience as most of the people in our society are not aware of the LGBTQ community and presenting an art film on such a topic will be limited in its reach. The same was done with the movie Dostana a topic of the existence of the gay community was introduced, the same footstep is being followed in this movie.

The movie failed to explore the pains of a transperson, although it had showcased the rejection faced by society and how most people react to it her performance as a transwoman is laudable. Manu ( Ayushman Khurana) is unaware of Maanvi past that she at the time of birth given male gender which she later got operated on. After getting physically involved with her several time he proposed for marriage, Maanvi tells him the truth and Manu's reaction was diabolical. He felt that he was cheated and made love with a boy, he shouted at her cursed her went home took a bath. The whole scene is well constructed. Manu was unable to process the whole thought of falling in love with a transwoman and then making out with her. It's a beautiful scene which is portraying the thought process of a common person who is unaware of what a trans person is. In this particular scene when Manvi confront Manu that she is a transwoman, Manu is unable to understand it he was unaware of the word 'trans', furthermore, he did not believe that a male could go through such an operation and change the sex.

The movie also explored around some myths related to a transperson. In a scene where he is explaining to his friend that Manvi is a trans person, they asked him how could he did not come to know about it, indicating that he was in a physical relationship with her furthermore hinting about the doubts they were having regarding the intercourse with a transwoman. Mannu's transphobic nature is further explored when he tries to kick her out of her job as a Zumba instructor and tries to dominate her by saying that she has used him for sexual pleasure. His transformation indicates the evolution in the thoughts of the common man on the streets. After researching on this particular topic Manu understood the pain she has gone through and ask for her forgiveness he says that he studied in a government school no one told him about it. This particular line clearly indicates the flaw in our educational system. He further states that "I was trying to understand, and then I realised there's nothing to understand!" in the revolutionary scene in the film, there is nothing to understand it is what it is. The movie ended on a positive note where everyone in the Mannu family has accepted her. Maanvi has been presented in a different manner carrying a very pleasant aura around her, from the previous trans characters seen before in Bollywood. One might remember Maharani (played by Sadashiv Amrapurkar) in Mahesh Bhatt's film *Sadak* (1991), who owns a brothel, and is involved in the trafficking of cisgender women,

## **Badhai Do**

Lavender Marriage is the reality of most of the people in the queer community, this movie is showcasing this aspect. The movie revolves around Rajkumar Rao as a gay cop and Bhumi Pednekar as a lesbian PT teacher. Their queer identity is hidden from society and from their family. They decided to get married to each other to escape the social stigma and pacify their parents. Such an arrangement where queer people of opposite sex decide to tie the knot of marriage is called 'Lavender Marriage'.

The movie has showcased the real-life struggle of the queer community in a very subtle way without forcefully giving it a stereotypical comical element affiliated with such a topic.

After getting married Shardul Thakur (Rajkumar Rao) and Suman Singh (Bhumi Pednekar) started their life of illusion for society. They are happy with their little cook up enjoying their individual lives with their same-sex partner. It is a marriage of convenience but the problem arises when the family started putting pressure on them for having kids which ultimately lead to uncovering the fact that both are homosexual.

Shardul who is a gay cop and also a passionate bodybuilder who wanted to pursue his career as a bodybuilder became a cop while on the other hand Suman being a lesbian becomes a PT teacher this particular element are very well written as it is showcasing that the queer people live life like a normal person there is no stereotype attached to their gender, in fact, they have outshined the queer community by showcasing that they belong to every sector of our society by breaking the barriers that were earlier created in the Indian film industry.

## **Conclusion**

Bollywood had messed up the image of the LGBT community showcasing stereotyped characters into farcical cliches like a brothel run by a transgender villain, a horny gay man with femininity, transgender predator, sexualised Lesbian etc. Furthermore they were typically casted as comic relief.

During the 90s the LGBTQ community image was easily associated with a cruel villain who could be a brothel owner, especially a transgender. Most of the movies during the 90s have featured transgender as a villain which resulted in creating a negative image in the audience.

Before British ruled India, our society was very open about sexuality. The evidence can be found in various historical texts and poems, even there is archaeological evidence to prove it. The 90s was a perplexing time, there were films directed to burst the bubble of homophobia that has walled our society such as 'Fire', 'Darmiyaan', 'Tammana', but at the same time, there were movies that have created a stereotype around sexual minorities.

We saw a shift in the representation of LGBT people between 2000 to 2010, earlier most work of cinema presented them in a negative light. The movies during the 2000s presented the LGBT community in a more subtle tone but the whole decade was filled with mixed elements. Movies like My brother Nikhil tried to bring out the problem faced by the gay community and focused on the taboo related to HIV. Whereas there were movies such as The Girlfriend that were unable to bring out the difference between a lesbian and a transgender and was filled with unconventional stereotypes. The audience was not ready to accept the concept or the existence of the LGBT community and thus were not ready to watch the film based on these characters most of the movies presented them as comic relief rather than a lead role. 2008 Dostana was the on such commercial movie that did good on box office and was able to have a wider spectrum of audience, they platted the concept of LGBT in a comical tone thus making it gullible for the audience, although the movie was filled with the stereotype the good part was the audience has accepted to watch the movie that was based on the idea of a gay couple. Whereas the 2010 movie 'I am' which was a short movie did not get any attention from the audience.

A lot was going on during the early 2010 people were coming out of the closet and breaking the mirage of the society that LGBT is a western concept, people were getting to know about the existence of queer community but were filled with doubts because of the stereotypical portrayal of the queer community. After decriminalisation of section 377 IPC, we saw more queer community-oriented movies that were breaking the myth and stereotype around the queer community that was built up in the past.

The portrayal of the LGBTQ community was in a very dignified manner. The movie produced in this time period has the core theme of LGBTQ, with the acceptance in society these movies are trying to normalise the concept of LGBTQ. Movie-like Shubh Mangal Zada Savdhan is Bollywood's first Gay rom-com, and it did quite well on the box-office as well. Aligarh has showcased the struggle of a gay professor and the acceptance of his individuality in society. While on the other hand, Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui is the first Bollywood movie that have showcased a Transwoman as a protagonist. Badhai Do is the latest in the lineup of these commercially hit movies that are talking about the LGBTQ, where a gay man and lesbian women come to the term of getting married to each other so that they can keep society at bay.

During this decade we saw the normalization of the LGBTQ community and shattering the stereotypes associated with them. Apart from this, we saw many renowned actors coming up and taking these bold roles. Although it would have been better if these roles were played by the people who belong to the queer community but most of them are afraid of being typecast. We could accept a lot in coming years as the cinema is evolving with its representation of the queer community and content so is the mindset of the common audience. A lot has changed with the quality of cinema produced and with the mindset of the audience. During the 90s we saw that movies like Fire that were only tapping on the homosexual topic were considered unethical and their screening was stopped, whereas now people have not only accepted the existence of the LGBTQ community but are also ready to watch a film totally based on the idea of the LGBTQ.

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