Gender, Sexuality and (Be) longing: The Representation of Queer (LGBT) in Hindi Cinema

Pushpinder Kaur
Punjabi University, India

Abstract

We do not yet live in a world free from homophobia, transphobia, prejudice and discrimination and we live in a world where majority wins and overpower the voices of the minority. In India, we need a space that listens to those who need to be heard. Sexual minority comprises of all those people who fall under the categories of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender and they are exactly that-a minority within our own homes, families, schools, institutions, communities, work places etc. Adding to their woes is Section 377 of the Indian penal Code which criminalises Homosexuality. Many of these problems leave many among them feeling isolated, afraid, depressed and even suicidal. So a space for LGBT is needed to look at these specific issues not from a hetero-normative perspective or with pre-conceived binary notions. LGBT is in fact short for LGBTTQQIIA+? It includes, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transexual, queer, questioning, intersex, intergender and asexuals. Films that depict reality are of supreme importance. It is also quite important that we start to desire for films that have characters belonging to the community, living a usual life, facing normal societal or personal conflicts and not discriminatory or oppressing ones. Cinema is an all-pervasive tool that reaches so many people at once and challenges the conditioning of the society and even in cinema, if members of LGBT community get casted as manipulative, negative and fearful characters; it simply reinforces the existing hatred in the real world. LGBT people don't need sympathy but understanding, acceptance and dignity just as all other human beings. Society terms anything which is different as 'not normal'. Hence, condemning a person for being who they are is completely unjustified and so is society's power to exercise unnecessary control over an individual's gender or sexuality. The study makes an attempt to take this Queer movement forward through the medium of films. The study will make an effort to bring to the forefront the various myths associated with LGBT people in Hindi cinema and will explore how LGBT people, their queer desires and aspirations are made visible through queer films.

Key words: Gender, Sexuality, Queer, LGBT, Hindi cinema.

Introduction

Cinema is a powerful medium to catalyze social change. Like other art forms cinema is both a part of social reality and also a medium of portraying it. Films have subtle influence on society's way of thinking. Cinema has undoubtedly contributed a lot to the queer movement in India. Sexual minority consists of all those people who fall under the categories of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgenders. Projection of gender stereotypes in films forms society's perception of gender roles. The over-saturation of gender stereotypes in the films results in the misrepresentation of gender roles which gets embedded in the human mind and is passed on from generation to generation as an acceptable view.

Homosexuality is still considered a taboo in India. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code which criminalizes homosexuality was introduced by the British in colonial India in 1861 and it still stands in the country's books. The community which has long been marginalized and deprived of their true identity and representation in the social and cultural gestalt of society deserves critical attention. The LGBT community in India faces a lot of struggle in daily life from lack of acceptance in society to discrimination. The struggle is to find a space in society where gender non-conformity is not being condemned as abnormal. They are never portrayed as an accepted member of the society. They are majorly portrayed as outlandish characters who are only there in the movie just as comic quotient. Doubted, ostracized, stigmatized and criminalized for centuries, the sexual minorities are now stepping out from the shadow of invisibility.

In a country like India where cinema has the potential to shape the perception of majority of the population, realistic films about the LGBT community will definitely have a massive positive impact on the mindsets of the people. Over the years the representation of LGBT community in Hindi cinema has found itself under the scanner. Hindi cinema has witnessed a steady display of LGBT characters some for the comic effect and some, however, stayed true to reality and made an effort to treat the subject in a very sensitive and realistic light but unfortunately to a larger extent these films could not challenged the traditional myths and have failed to break the 'taboo'. It is been observed that these

people are often judged in terms of sexual behaviour. The violence on the issues of sex and body is not only sexual violence but it is also a kind of denial of identity and voice in the society.

According to India's census[5] of 2011, that counted transgender population for the first time, India has an estimated 4.9 lakh Transgenders who identified themselves as 'third gender'. According to a Government report submitted to Supreme court, India has an estimated 25 lakh gay population and about 7% (1.75 lakh) of them have HIV. Homophobia still exists in India which creates a hatred for homosexuals in the society by heterosexuals. Public discussions on homosexuality in India have been prohibited. In recent years, the attitude towards homosexuality has witnessed a change. There has been increase in depictions and discussions on homosexuality in the Indian news media and cinema. The historic judgement by Delhi High Court on 2 July 2009 on de-criminalising homosexuality as a result of the petition filed by an NGO named NAZ Foundation working on HIV/AIDS and gay rights in 2001 brought cheers to the LGBT community. After eight long years of legal proceedings, it was only in 2009 that homosexuality was de-criminalized in India. But in the year 2013, the Supreme Court of India re-criminalized homosexuality which disappointed many belonging to LGBT community. However, the Supreme Court of India on 2 February 2016, agreed to reconsider its judgement, stating it would refer petitions to abolish Section 377.

However, 2014 came as a year of relief and celebration for many belonging to LGBT community in India. In a landmark judgement[8] on 15th April 2014, the Supreme Court of India legally recognised the transgender community as *'Third Gender'* and observed that "The tansgender community, generally known as "hijras" in this country are a section of Indian citizens who are treated by the society as "unnatural and generally as objects of mockery and even on account of superstition". Protecting one's right to personal autonomy and self-determination under Article 21, the court observed that *"the gender to which a person belongs is to be determined by the person concerned".* The court also protected one's gender expression by invoking the freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) and held that *" no restriction can be placed on one's personal appearance or choice of dressing, subject to the restrictions contained in Article 19 (2) of the Constitution".*

The path-breaking[2] event responsible for bringing LGBT rights into the public discourse in India was when two young women from a village in Madhya Pradesh in the year 1987 decided to marry in the temple of the village but were harassed by the police, who physically assaulted and threatened them. After that, when they got married, they clicked photographs of their marital rites and this caught the attention of media and brought into focus the issue of LGBT rights in the public sphere. The second significant event was when AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA) took out a *'gay rights protest'*, and submitted their report titled *'Less than gay'*, that reported police inhumane acts on homosexuals, in 1992. Another time when the issue of same-sex marriage caught attention of the public in India was when a film on lesbians, titled *Fire*, directed by Deepa Mehta, in 1998, was due for release. The film faced a lot of protests from various fringe groups. The fundamentalists caused a great deal of physical damage to the cinema halls screening the movie.

Research Objectives

1. To study the representation of LGBT people in Hindi queer cinema.

2. To study the LGBT characters, their problems and issues as raised and discussed in Hindi cinema.

3. To study the common myths associated with the representation of LGBT people in Hindi Cinema.

Hypotheses

1. Hindi queer cinema portrays stereotyped LGBT characters.

2. The Hindi movies fail to portray vividly the LGBT characters and the issues and problems of LGBT people in Hindi cinema are always a side story and are used for comic relief to entertain audience.

3. Hindi movies on LGBT themes fail to break the taboo and promote myths.

Research Methodology

The research methodology adopted for the research study is 'Content Analysis'. Content Analysis of the Hindi movies featuring LGBT characters is done. Before selecting the films for the research study, a small pilot study was done and all the Hindi films made on LGBT themes between (1990 and 2016) were observed and studied. As 1990s was the time period when the Hindi cinema started having LGBT representation in the films due to the culmination of the gay rights movement in the Indian society. Before this too, LGBT characters had representation in the Hindi cinema but it was majorly in the form of Transvestite/Cross dressing. Also, the various myths associated with the representation of queer in Hindi cinema were studied and listed.

Concept of LGBT[7]

LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. It intends to signify a diversity of sexuality and gender identity and also used to refer to anyone who is non-heterosexual or non cisgender. To recognize this inclusion, letter Q has been added for those who identify as queer or are questioning their sexual identity as LGBTQ, recorded since 1996. Before the sexual revolution of the 1960s, there was no common non-derogatory vocabulary for non heterosexuality; the closest such term, "third gender", traces back to the 1860s but never gained wide acceptance in the United States. The first widely used term, homosexual, was thought to carry negative connotations and tended to be replaced by homophile in the 1950s and 1960s, and subsequently gay in the 1970s. As lesbians forged more public identities, the phrase "gay and lesbian" became more common.

The murder of the LGBT activists Xulhaz Mannan and Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy in Bangladesh marks the turning point for LGBT activism in the Indian sub-continent as we stare the later half of 2016. So to put it simple, everyone is afraid to death of stirring up the hetero-normative pot that's anyway boiling over. The courts are full of failed marriages; the cities are brimming with abandoned children even as teenage pregnancies surge and dowry deaths reach a crescendo. But LGBT rights seem to threaten the very fabric of society. And the irony is that another Supreme Court judgment has given transgendered persons a sense of dignity, but affirmative action doesn't seem to see the light of day on the ground level.

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code has a strange history that reveals its fundamental instability. The British Raj instituted the current status in 1860 to criminalize all sex acts between consenting adults that are not heteronormative. The law criminalizes any sexual act "against the order of nature," but often promotes corruption by authorities who harass, blackmail and extort from sexual minorities and sex workers in India. In addition to confusion about the law, its dubious dependence on what constitutes "natural", and its gross mockery of equality, there are three powerful undercurrents to this law that have not yet been written about. These three major areas are: 1) the need for education amongst the young voters (since India has the world's largest population of youth); 2) the need to recognize Section 377 as a law that economically hinders India's efficient development into a world super power; and 3) the troubling hatred of women enshrined in Indian law at a time when the country's global reputation is marred by high profile rape cases.

We must view Section 377 as a law with global reach. Many western countries, including the U.S. most recently, have legalized marriage equality. Not only does the U.K. no longer have such a law, but the new constitution of Nepal, India's northern neighbor, explicitly outlines "protection, empowerment or advancement of gender-based and sexually oriented minorities." Section 377 is an obstacle to economic development of the world's largest democracy. Section 377 perpetuates and institutes a new class of citizens deemed untouchable by virtue of their gender and sexuality.

We must recognize the dire threat to development and democracy that legally-supported sexism allows. Section 377 tacitly enshrines hated towards women by perpetrating violence against all things "female". The ongoing

institutionalization of the draconian law also contradicts the April 2014 recognition of the Third Sex. This is India's "Tryst with Destiny": the British-instituted Section 377 must be repealed for once and for all to establish a strong democratic society, transformative education, gender equality, economic prosperity, and human decency.

Queer Theory: An Insight

Queer theory[3] emerged as gay and lesbian studies, which in turn was the academic wing of the gay rights movement. Literary and cultural studies that focused on sexuality as a key category was an offshoot of a wide ranging social and activist movement through the 1960s and early 1970s. The Stonewall Riots of 1969-provoked when police raided New York's Stonewall Tavern, a popular meeting place for gays-maybe called as the origin of the gay liberation movement. Organizations like Gay Liberation Movement (GLM), Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) sought legal, medical, social freedom and rights for gays and lesbians. Queer theory drew upon the experiences of these movements while adding philosophical and critical insights into the nature of the body, the geography of sexuality and the question of sexual identity.

Queer theory, is relatively recent (1990s and after). The turn to 'queer' serves particular purposes. 'Queering' is the process of reversing heterosexuality-as-norm. 'Queer' now refers to not only gay/lesbian issues but also includes other practices, identities and communities-all of which have been marginalized in history-such as bisexuality, sado-masochism, the transgendered and the transsexual. Transgendering, transvestitism, drag and camp, and other sexual identities present the multiple nature of identities that cannot be reduced to one category.

Queer theory looks at:

- The general construction of sexuality in discourses of medicine, law or religion
- Popular representation of the gay or the lesbian
- The public understanding of alternate sexualities
- The 'hidden history' of homosexual writing and representation
- The institutional (religion, family, medicine, law) structures that undergird popular representations of homosexuality
- The link between sexuality-based oppression and other discriminatory forms such as patriarchy and racism
- The geography of sexuality, with specific reference to ghettoization of gays and homosexuals

Queer theory seeks to:

- Support people in their expressions of homosexual desires and in building gay and lesbian lifestyles
- Counteract homophobic identities
- Promote the emancipation of homosexuality
- Destabilize essentializing identities
- Resist heterosexual cultures through the carnival, transgression and parody
- Be co-sexual: men and women are on equal footing. The term queer is now used to mean both gays and lesbians
- Promote the demand and fight for sexual justice as part of social justice
- Use the AIDS crisis to reflect on practices of homosexuality and battle AIDS-driven homophobia

Past Texts and Future Politics

Gay and lesbian writing[3] now constitutes a substantial body of work. Extensive critical writings on the area and institutional presence have made queer studies a massive multi-disciplinary field, aligned with and drawing from sociology, literary studies, cultural studies, psychology and history. Central to the project of queer theory is the retrieval

of gay and lesbian pasts in the form of histories, autobiographies and memoirs and fiction. Queer theorists argue that mainstream literary cultures have effectively erased gay-lesbian presence from the canon. K.J.Dover's 1978 work *Greek Homosexuality* traced homosexuality to the ancient period. Martin Duberman et al.'s *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (1989) is another example of such a retrieval-history project. One of the achievements of these kinds of histories is the evidence they draw of sexual dissidence and social oppressive practices that ensured that homosexuality was always 'closeted'. The disappearance of the homosexual, for these historians, can be located in social discourses practices, and part of their project is to see how exactly the discourses of exclusion worked.

Retrieving gay-lesbian texts is central to Queer Studies because it provides a history to not only queer pasts but also to the modes of exclusion that have ensured the marginalization of the queer. The retrieval of the past, for queer theorists, is an occasion to rethink our present. Arlene Stein and Ken Plummer (1996) offer three possible areas wherein queer theory may be assimilated into cultural and literary studies and sociology:

(a) *Reconsidering the Issues:* To analyse social stratification paying particular attention to ideologies of heterosexism and homophobia, and erotic hierarchies. They also argue that we need to see sexuality as linked to other factors such as age, race, mobility and class. Queering cultural and literary studies requires re-situation of sexuality within these other domains.

(b) *Rereading the Classics*: What is needed is a revision of traditional sociological texts (Popper, Giddens, Habermas) to address queer concerns. This is queering of theory itself.

(c) *Rethinking Pedagogy*: A queer pedagogy is necessary to break the hold of heterosexist thinking.

Queer Subcultures

Along with the political reading of queer texts or queer readings of apparently heterosexist texts, a key element in queer studies today is an exploration of queer subcultures. Cultural histories of Europe from the early modern period have pointed out that dominant classes often took control of the spaces of 'high culture', such as, the opera houses, museums and galleries. These were thus closed to the general public and the events within were tightly regulated. Standards of taste were set up and 'low' or mass culture excluded from these spaces. However, the marginalised groups were never completely erased-they survived as subcultures on the fringes, occasionally intruding in.

Queer theory suggests that gay-lesbian culture can be seen as subcultures to the heterosexual mainstream one. Camp, drag, transvestitism and cross-dressing are modes of subcultures. Cross-dressing deglamourizes the ultra-feminine stars and masquerade draws attention to the role playing and constructed masculinity of the body. Such subcultures appropriate the icons, signs, and 'aura' of the mainstream culture to:

(a) Show their constructedness,

(b) Subvert them as icons of carnival,

(c) Highlight the gay or lesbian angle to masquerade.

Hindi Cinema and Queer (LGBT) Identity-Analysis

Hindi films have tried in their own way to reconcile to the gay theme. But unfortunately the characterisations, even after all these years remained a spoof of a serious subject matter. Bollywood celebrities are known to deflect questions about their sexual orientation. The Hindi film Industry, is one of the few forces with the power to bring Indians together and foster a new public opinion. Yet, the world's largest film industry is often seen lacking a sense of responsibility towards LGBTQ issues. Despite its power to impact millions of people all at once, Hindi cinema has chosen to fulfil its entertainment responsibility by ridiculing gay culture. Getting the film based on LGBT issue passed by the certification board is the first impediment since the contents of the film are legally opposed to what the country accepts. The problems of getting the finances needed for the release, and the likelihood that the audience will shy away from the movie or worse picket it, are the greatest limitations. Also, social and family stigma, Section 377 and fear that

one's work will only be seen as something relating to LGBT restricts many actors from coming out of the closet. For actors, it can be the anxiety of being typecast only into LGBT roles and the irritation that is brought on when one's sexual orientation takes over all other identities of a person.

LGBT characters in Queer Hindi cinema bear the burden of crude jokes and are generally shown as objects of ridicule. During the so-called 'Golden Era' of Hindi Cinema, i.e. the period from mid 50s to mid 60s, LGBT characters were generally shown as companions to heroines or hero. Some of the actors, would cross dress deliberately in an attempt to evoke laughter. Commercial Hindi Cinema has a long tradition of having comic sequences or songs featuring cross-dressing male stars. '*Mere Angane mein*' number from the 1981 super hit *Lawaaris*, where Amitabh Bachchan crossdressed as woman to be mistaken as a eunuch; Rishi Kapoor crossdressed in 1975's *Rafoo Chakkar*. It was the late comedian Mehmood who, for the first time, represented eunuchs in a respectable manner in his blockbuster *Kunwara Baap*.

The 1990s was an important period for the Hindi film industry as it began to witness a transition from timeless and repetitive stories on love, friendship to contemporary and darker films. The restlessness, discomfort and anxieties created by films were expressed in debates. Certain kinds of images were accused of being erotic and vulgar and censured for degrading Indian culture and tradition. Despite public anxieties, representations of sex and sexuality continued to find space in different forms of media, which went against conventional family values and at times hetero-normativity. Queer images rarely found significant space in commercial ventures but whenever they did, it was in the form of comic relief which could be found in large number of Hindi films. Gay representations have been made in different ways in Hindi films. The first in the form of *hijra*, the second is in the form of *humour,* the third is in the form of *mental sickness* and lastly, is in the way in which it shows the *complexities of the lives gay people lead.*

Third gender played a significant role in Hindi cinema. Films like *'Tamanna', 'Shabnam Mausi', 'Daayra', 'Darmiyaan','Welcome to Sajjanpur'* attempted to take a serious take on third gender. For the first time in the history of Hindi cinema, filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt casted actor Sadashiv Amrapurkar as 'Maharani', a eunuch who was the lead villain of the movie *Sadak.* The actor's performance fetched him a Filmfare award but the role did little to improve the image of eunuchs in the society. The movie depicted her as an evil brothel owner who tortures and traffics young women. In a film where the trans character got so much screentime, there was a constant reiteration of the harmful myths associated with the trans community, ultimately creating a stereotype in Indian mainstream culture.

After Sadak, Mahesh Bhatt again showed courage and made *Tamanna*, based on the actual life of a eunuch, 'Tiku'. The film had a complex portrayal of a transwoman, who finds an abandoned girl child and raises her as her own. The movie made an attempt to tackle both transgender issues (such as discrimination, violence, misgendering) as well as female infanticide. The role was brilliantly performed by the versatile actor Paresh Rawal. *Daayra* is another film which dealt with gender-fluidity in an interesting manner. It depicted a transsexual character who formed a close relationship with a young girl who took on a male identity. Movies like *Shabnam Mausi* and *Welcome to Sajjanpur* were landmark films which showed eunuchs as clean politicians by showcasing real life incidents of eunuchs winning elections. *Queens! Destiny of Dance*, is a movie that portrayed various shades of the hijra community without resorting to cheap gimmickry which is generally portrayed in mainstream hindi films. Unfortunately, these films barely got any mainstream attention. Barring few examples, the scenario has not changed much, be it Govinda in Aunty No 1 or Ajay Devgan, Tushar Kapoor etc in Golmaal Returns.

Mostly trans characters are given horrific treatment. They are often seen to be preying on the hero sexually (almost always, without their consent) or turned into exaggerated 'effeminate' caricatures who are there to elicit laughs. Films like *'Kya Kool Hain Hum', 'Partner', 'Style'*, and many more featured such horrific stereotypes of trans women as sexually predatory. The film *'Masti'* (2004) probably had the worst kind of portrayal. Hindi cinema must be guilty of

portraying LGBT characters in a highly demeaning manner. Movies like such may be entertaining to watch but are they giving fair screen representation to the LGBT community, remains a daunting question. The year 2016 got to see some positive LGBT representation in Hindi cinema, through films like *'Aligarh'* and *'Kapoor and Sons'*.

Common Myths about LGBT people across Hindi Cinema

Topics	Commonly wrong associations
Child sexual abuse	a) Gay people are paedophiles, sexual predators. b) Child sexual abuse of boys makes them 'homosexual'/ gay men are sexually abused in childhood.
Homosexuality is situational	Whenever there is a shortage of women combined with an all-male setting, such as hostels, military barracks and shared dwellings like that of migrant labourers, men have sex with each other.
Feminine, women-like characteristics	Gay men are feminine, women like.
Men-like characteristics, dressing sense	Lesbian women are like men.
Same-sex activity, anal sex	Is unnatural, against natural roles.
Rights	LGBT people are demanding special rights.
Hijra person being born as intersex	Hijras are born with congenital birth defect that is why they have both male and female genitals/ambiguous genitalia, hence are cast aside and shunned by the society.
Growing trend, spread of homosexuality behaviour due to internet	Growing trend of LGBT people/gay people/this type of people.
Gayism (gaygiri)	Certain people follow this 'ism'.
Rape	Men/transgender people can never be raped.
Prostitution	Gay men socialise and meet partners in public places, hence meeting partners and sexual acts are akin to prostitution.
Pinning HIV/AIDS transmission on a particular group	Interpreting high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among gay men, Transgenders, Hijras as a result of their 'immoral' behaviour.
Socio-economic class issue	Same sex behaviour is either an upper class or a lower class phenomenon. This does not happen in middle class and the educated class.
Importance of psychiatrists' opinions (which could be negative)	Some psychiatrists see same-sex orientation as a mental disorder and may recommend counselling, and other therapies to change sexual orientation.

The question here arises as to why; there are a handful of explicitly gay-themed films which have visible LGBT characters. In almost every Hindi film, either the trans person is portrayed as a horrifying villain or in a comic way with offensive transphobic humour directed at them. There is other extreme where the trans person is seen as outside the bounds of 'normal'-as a sexual predator, a child molester, or someone who is out to prey on (cis) hero or heroine. 1991's *Mast Kalander* is a landmark movie. It was the Bollywood's first movie to have openly featured first gay character Pinku. The lesbian-themed films like *Fire* (1998) where two sisters-in-law neglected by their respective husbands find comfort in each other arms and *Girlfriend* (2004) where an obsessive lesbian ready to do anything to win her girlfriend back from a man created lot of controversy at the time of release of the movie. Shifting to non-commercial Riyad

Wadia's BOMgay (1996) is acknowledged as India's first gay film while Gulabi Aaina (2003) has the distinction of being India's First Kothi film. However, these films have only been screened privately or at film festivals (they were either denied a censor certificate or did not bother applying) thus limiting their audience reach, despite the favourable publicity they received.

There is a shift and change that has taken place in more recent Hindi films in which queer and themes and representations are becoming slightly more visible and fluid. The conversation that takes place between Aman (Rahul Bose) and Chameli (Kareena Kapoor) in the film *Chameli*, directed by Sudhir Mishra, 2004 while they are sheltering from the heavy rain under the same archway in Mumbai and begin to get to know each other. When Aman realises that one of Chameli's friends, Raja, is a gay and is in love with a male cross-dresser, Hasina, he initially appears surprised. During their conversation, Chameli asks Aman whether he feels that there is something wrong with two men in a relationship together. Aman hesitantly responds 'no' and qualifies his response saying he has male friends who are gay. Chameli goes on to declare that there is nothing 'abnormal' about gay relationships as long as there is love in them- *'bus pyaar hona chayen'*. Reasons for such noticeable queer representations in contemporary Hindi cinema owe much to the rise of queer politics in India. However, what needs to be investigated further is whether or not there are genuine queer possibilities opening up here, or they are simple being subsumed within the dominant heteronormative workings of Hindi cinema.

Unfortunately, mainstream Hindi cinema couldn't do much justice to the queer identities. Madhur Bhandarkar's 'Page 3'. Anurag Basu's 'Life in a ….Metro', Reema Kagti's 'Honeymoon Travels', Karan Razdan's 'Girlfriend', 'Hum Hain Rahi Pyaar Ke', 'Raja Hindustani', 'Taal', 'Kal Ho Na Ho', propagated same gay stereotypes which should have been avoided. There are host of alternate Hindi films that made an effort to understand the queer movement. Few amongst those are 'My Brother…Nikhil', 'IAM', 'Yours Emotionally', 'Water', 'I Can't Think straight', 'Luck by Chance', '68 Pages', 'The Pink Mirror', and so on. The contributions of gay rights activists and filmmakers like Sridhar Rangayan, Onir and Rituparno Ghosh to this genre have been remarkable.

Conclusion

Times are changing and with that sexual minorities are slowly finding a place in Hindi cinema. Representation of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, hijras and others who identified as 'queer' in films in a positive manner has acted as a balm for the community. The Indian society is changing and with it the mindset of the people. Few directors have tried their hands on making movies on LGBT people and their issues but there still remain so many things unexplored. The commercial failure of LGBT films also raises a big question-whether the attitude of the people towards the LGBT community is changed or changing or has changed or yet to change? The question here arises whether the gender discourse has accommodated them or not remains a daunting question. It is what the holistic representation in the films that the community is waiting for. It is important to recognize and highlight these new challenges that our society has to encounter. Many people in India are afraid of talking openly about their gender identity and sexual orientation because of the fear of discrimination by the mainstream society. A lot more representation is needed in terms of cinema which can provide the much-needed platform for interaction between people who are still in the closet.

This research paper made an effort to bring to the forefront the plight of LGBT community in India which has long been deprived of their true identity and representation in the social and cultural sphere of society and an active role which Hindi Cinema can play in bringing them into the mainstream discourse through their realistic and authentic screen representation. Invisibility of statutory laws makes the LGBT community victims of gender violence and other human rights abuses. The social acceptance of the community will only happen when the LGBT characters in films are given fair treatment. The future is exciting as much as it is daunting. It's exciting because LGBT rights are the frontier of the struggle for equity and justice for all peoples on this planet while it is daunting because we are being started down by the

upsurge of irrational forces of all the religions. As the famous Indian hagiographer of homosexuality, Ruth Vanita, consistently warns mainstream India; "The British did not bring homosexuality into India, what they imported into our civilisation was homophobia".

The engagement of the LGBT community –be it with the political class, be it art or films- needs to be proactive. Unless they go out and demand it of the political parties to support them, they will not be able to achieve equal rights. Why is there this silence when we talk about sexuality? Why do one have to hide his/her sexual orientation? One doesn't have to hide if one is a heterosexual, they why does one have to hide if one is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. This is something which is primary to human existence, to leading one's life with dignity. This silence is not going to help the community and has to end. Being out matters!

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