

A STUDY ON THIRD GENDER IN INDIAN FILMS

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ABSTRACT: Things formerly thought of as stable and static are no longer so in the postmodern age, as concepts like "nothing is constant" or "fixed." Postcolonial theorists, feminists, and poststructuralists have sought to look at and evaluate numerous topics from various perspectives using this concept as a compass. Identity, subjectivity, representation, and actual voices have shed fresh light on them. Body or sex, like culture, is a point of contention for an individual's identity. Third gender people, who are historically underrepresented in the mainstream of society and culture, deserve to have their voices heard. They have been sidelined for far too long. The 'People of In-between,' also known as 'Third gender,' are individuals who do not fit neatly into the male or female gender binary. They've been like "subordinates" for a long time now. The 'third gender' figure has long been a staple of Bollywood movies. These films are plainly prejudiced, sensitive, and stereotypical in depicting women. It is not only sexual aggression but also a form of denial of one's identity and voice in the culture-oriented on sex and the body. As far as sexual activity is concerned, they are scrutinised and analysed. As a result, they are given gender roles and identities at odds with established gender roles and identities. Third-gender persons have a strong, quiet aversion to claiming their identity and voice. They have been given a voice and representation in several recently released Bollywood films that have failed to remove the taboo and myth regarding this third sex altogether. A "contrapuntal" analysis of their image in Bollywood films exposes important questions, such as the people's attitudes, stereotyping and subjective identity. Somehow, their portrayal is not devoid of the popular ideologies and discourses that have shaped and regulated the construction of their identity.

Consequently, this 'third gender' is finally brought into the third category. Their suffering has become quantifiable because of their absence from mainstream social, political, economic, and cultural life. An examination of certain recent Bollywood films and a call for a more equitable handling of these topics are the main goals of this study, which is also an attempt to break the misconception that sexuality is solely responsible for determining an individual's position and identity.

Indian film Chitrangda will be examined in this study, emphasising the portrayal of the third gender in Indian cinema. It delves into Chitrangada's depiction of difficulties relating to the third gender. It aims to comprehend how the topic has found its way into Indian films with knowledge of the progressive portrayal of the third gender in international cinema.

KEYWORDS: Bollywood Film, Cultural Studies, Discourse, Gender, Identity, Transsexual, Third Gender, Chitrangada.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sanam XI, Pakistan's first-ever eunuch cricket team, recently beat the Men XI team and received unprecedented media attention. It's also interesting to note that different newspapers have placed it in a non-sports section instead of putting it in the sports section. Several critical concerns are raised in this article. For example, how did The Hindu or other media outlets like television stations or websites publish a report on it? What is the reporter's

motivation? What rules govern his motivation? Using Foucault's theory of 'discourse' and the idea that discursive structures dictate an individual's actions, the news can be seen as part of the prevailing discourse and ideology that shapes the reporter's mental acumen, as well as the mental acumen of others who are involved, so the reporter sees the cricket match as being out of the ordinary. Even though the eunuch's purpose may not be bad, his being a product of a discourse deliberately or unknowingly caused him to deliver a different coverage. Another way to look at it is that the reporter takes a risk by bringing attention to an ostensibly exceptional situation. His actions might be seen as a slap in the face of gender roles that have been historically assigned and approved. He may have been interested in this victory because he is a member of a culture that sees two genders as the primary determinants of identity and power. The defeat by the man team seems to be a blow to this cultural construction of the eunuch's identity and role, because the dominant discourse, in this case, male-oriented discourse, has viewed them incapable of performing certain specific roles. Stereotyping has been a regular part of the third gender's identity and role for a long time. Gender-specific stereotypic fixity appears to be in flux, therefore the heterosexual community's hold on the excluded population has become more durable. As the third gender "resists," we may be seeing the danger of the "flesh," which Foucault describes as a "ground of struggle" for the inscribing or "enacting" of power (Foucault 1980a:80).

Biblical sexual orientation has shaped our view of the world from its inception, and it condemns all other forms of sexuality as immoral. Homosexuals, lesbians, intersex individuals, transgender people, and other people with sexual orientations other than heterosexuality are not given an appropriate cultural representation and position in diverse civilizations. Gender roles define people's sexuality, and this "exclusion" has given them alternative gender roles depending on their perceived odd sexual identity. Foucault's *The Order of Discourse* (1981) describes this politics of "exclusion" well:

To understand discourse, we need to look at it not as a collection of assertions but rather as a complicated system that tries to maintain them in circulation and keep other claims from being circulated in the same way they are kept in circulation. In Mills (2005), p. 54

People who identify as transgender or third-sex are present in nearly every culture. The term "mistakes of nature" is used to describe them, not as a species, but rather as a "unlucky event" (pokot in Kenya) (US). In many societies, such as the United States, the intersexual is viewed as a genetic error that must be remedied by medical intervention. It is monopolistic and arbitrary for a society to hold heterosexuals as the exclusive authority to determine gender roles and to build the sexuality of other genders. Because heterosexuality is built at the expense of homosexuality, lesbianism and other forms of sexuality (intersex), individual subjectivity is also built based on sexuality. There is no "structural support" for Third Gender in the same way heterosexuals have.

Speech in any community is regulated, selected, organised and redistributed by a limited number of processes that serve to ward off its powers and perils, acquire command over its accidental happenings and avoid its 'ponderous, daunting materiality.' According to Foucault (1981: 52).

People who identify as transgender are concerned with finding out where their sexuality comes from, but for feminists, gender roles are the focus of most of the argument. When it comes to transgender persons, they're fighting against the whole cultural structure that accommodates the attitude of men and women toward the third sex. They feel that they're

being subjugated not just by men, but by every member of society, which makes their wretched predicament even worse. Because they don't have a centralised location from which to project their "voice," they are perpetually stigmatised or reduced to the status of stereotypical objects. These individuals are at the bottom of the pecking order of gender roles. Even if there has been progress in the cultural construction of identity, such as accepting homosexual and lesbian identities, third-sex individuals continue to be denied any "place" or "voice" in mainstream society. Designed to stay outside the margin, stereotypical images have a significant impact on their social and economic well-being. In terms of representation, the different media outlets (oral, written, and visual) reinforce the dominant discourse through stereotypic projections of these individuals in the various media outlets.

Diverse topics are forming the basis of W filmmaking, although compared to major Hollywood productions, the problem of third gender has received very little attention in Indian cinema. A specific focus of the article is on Indian film Chitrangada, which depicts the representation of third gender issues in cinema. Third-gender characters have appeared frequently in popular Indian films such as Chhakke and Hijra, but the films have not dealt much with the third-gender topic, which indicates the lack of acceptance of the third gender in mainstream Indian cinema. In this perspective, the Bengali film Chitrangada might be considered one of its kind that deals with homosexuality, presenting various epistemological problems about homosexuality.

II. THIRD GENDER AND ITS SOCIAL POSITION

The term "third gender" refers to those who don't fit neatly into the feminine or masculine categories. Morphology and hormonal or genital traits are common in many individuals, as are some physical characteristics. People of the opposite sex orientation are also included in this group, as is the case before. Listed below are the many classifications of the third gender:

- Eunuch: is an archaic phrase used to describe men who have undergone castration in order to fulfil specific societal roles.
- Intersexual: heterosexuality is a phrase used to describe persons who are born with a mix of male and female traits (historically referred to as hermaphrodite)
- Hijra: It is a South Indian word for a person born male or intersex but who utilises the female pronoun and dresses in women's clothes.
- Transsexuals: a word used to describe a surgical or hormonal surgery to alter their sex.
- Transgendered: terminology to describe someone with different gender identity than the one generally attributed to their sex classification (people are born into sex categories of male and female, many but not all then become gendered masculine or feminine and into men and women). As a result, a transgender individual who is both female and male might identify as a guy. Depending on the circumstances, surgery may or may not be required.
- Drag: homosexual slang for temporarily adopting a gender other than that often associated with one's sexual orientation (through dress gestures and so on). Often, there is a sense of irony and over-the-top campiness.
- Transvestite/Crossdresser: These phrases have meaning and history, typically used disparagingly. Although many crossdressers are straight guys who just love dressing up as ladies, this is not always the case.

A large percentage of humanity is made up of persons who identify as third-sex however, these people face a wide range of experiences of societal marginalisation. According to UCLA, 3.8 percent of Americans identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Bisexuals make up 1.8% of the population, as do gays and lesbians at 1.7%, while transgender people make up 0.35 percent of the total. There are 1.55 million LGBT people in the United

Kingdom. Approximately 726,000 people. The number of transgender people in India is estimated to be 1:400. The world's largest homosexual population resides in India. About 7.5 percent of the 2.5 million gays in the country are HIV-infected. Archived from the original on March 14, 2012.

Despite accounting for a sizable fraction of the population, those who identify as third gender face discrimination and marginalisation. In schools, universities, and the workplace, LGBT persons are frequently harassed. The conventional genders, i.e., men and women, despise them. People of the third sex experienced various challenges for a long time. In addition to not having sex with their spouse, they cannot adopt a kid. They are not permitted to wed. Employment and housing discrimination against the third gender group is also prevalent. Numerous nations have recognised homosexuality, although it is still not universally accepted in all society. Same-sex marriage is legal in 13 countries, while anti-LGBT job discrimination laws are common in many other nations. However, in many nations, the lack of representation for the third gender is still evident in many ways. An Indian Supreme Court decision against same-sex recognition highlights how India's third-gender population is still waiting for legal and social acknowledgment in the country with more third-gender persons than any other country in the world.

III. THIRD GENDER IN WORLD CINEMA

Third-gendered characters in global cinema have gone through the same stages of development as the issue of third-gendered people itself in gaining acceptance in society. According to research, straight art films have been hostile to gay films since the very beginning of the depiction of homosexuality in cinema. Even though homosexuality has been featured in several films, the 1970s and the decade that followed saw the most consistent representation of homosexuality on screen. Although William Dickson's Motion Picture in 1895 showed two men dancing, 'Different from the Others,' which was released in 1919, can be regarded the first gay rights picture. In nations where the LGBT rights movement reached its zenith in the 1970s and 1980s and beyond, there has been a steady stream of films dealing with homosexual themes. One of the most important techniques of the homosexual rights movement is the growth of film and showing films in different nations. The BFI London LGBT film festival, San Francisco International Film Festival, New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival, and its counterpart New York Lesbian and Gay Film Festival were all organised by various groups. Gay films and the movements that support them have found a receptive home at these festivals.

British, Canadian, and American movies have included many homosexual characters and stories. A few examples of homosexual films from this century: British films such as *The Leather Boys* (1961) or *Sunday Bloody Sunday* (1971), French films such as *Orphee* (1950) or *Une robe d'été* (1996), and American films such as *Damnation If You Don't* (1987) or *Boys Don't Cry* (1998)..(2010).

When it first started, the position of gays was not given much attention, and they were often shown as part of a gender role reversal, flamboyant, etc. During the 1920s, when moviegoers were dwindling due to the Great Depression, the LGBT problem became a common motif in numerous films. As a result, several films focused on contentious issues to elicit more gasps from viewers.

In the beginning, experimental films and homosexual films were used interchangeably. Nonetheless, in the 1990s, several film festivals were held, and the films began to gain momentum. In the 2000s, the subject of homosexuality became more prominent in movies.

Notably, two million people attended the Madrid-hosted Europride in 2007 instead of 5,000 in 1995. In April of that year, India hosted its first major Gay Film Festival.

There have been many different types of homosexual films in recent years.

IMDbiv lists 94 popular gay films in 2012 and 76 popular gay films in 2013. This illustrates how, throughout time, the concept of the "third gender" has gained traction around the world. Even Disney has taken notice of the gay rights problem, and as a result, the studio is producing an animated feature film on homosexuality. As a result, the increasing popularity of homosexual films in terms of creation, showing, and watching demonstrates society's growing tolerance for the third gender issue.

IV. THIRD GENDER IN INDIAN FILMS

India began its chronicle of the LGBT rights movement in the late '80s of the twentieth century, but the first films on the subject were made a century earlier. In the 2000s, when many homosexual films were created, the country demonstrated a level of LGBT visibility comparable to other nations. Bombay, a 12-minute video about gay sex, is the first one that has come to light. To avoid a Censor Board rejection, the filmmakers opted to keep the film out of India. It was the first Malayalam film to highlight the love between two schoolgirls who eloped to avenge their teacher, who used to abuse the girls. The film's depiction of same-sex orientation is praised for its beauty. Most films dealing with the third gender may be traced back to 1996. It is the year in which *Fire* was made, although it was released in India in 1998, which sparked a controversy about homosexuality and sparked a wave of demonstrations. Deepa Mehta's film is the first mainstream film in which lesbians were clearly and comprehensively depicted. The twentieth century saw a small number of gay films, such as *Fire* (1996), *Tamanna* (1997), *Darmiyaan* (1997), *Daayraa* (1996), *Dostana* (1998), *Bombay Boys* (1998), etc.. Still, the twenty-first century saw an increase in the number of films and representation in terms of both dimension and content. There has been an upsurge in the number of films based on the third gender since 2009.

Several gay-themed films were released in 2010. Both the Hindi film *My Son is Gay* and the Malayali film *Ritu* were released this year. An orthodox mother and her homosexual son struggle to embrace their son's gay status in the film *While My Son Is Gay*. However, 2009 and 2010 are significant for India's third gender since the Delhi High Court ruled in favour of gay marriage in 2009 and the first International Gay Film Festival was held in India in 2010. A total of five films dealing with the problem of homosexuality were released in the year 2010 alone, including *I Am* (in Hindi), *ArektiPremerGolpo* (in Bengali), *Donno Y Na Jane Kyou* (in Hindi), and *Goa* (in Tamil) (Hindi). On the other hand, *I Am* is a collection of four short films in which the LGBT topic is the primary focus. This is the first film on homosexuality to be made in India since legalising homosexuality in 2009.

V. THIRD GENDER AND BOLLYWOOD CINEMA

In India, Bollywood has served as a cultural repository for Indian society both at home and beyond the world. Since its inception, it has captured the diverse ideologies and sensitivities of Indians living in India and NRI Indians living abroad. Even though Bollywood has evolved and adapted to the shifting cultural landscape of India, many issues remain unaddressed and forbidden in terms of depiction. Eunuch (hijra) depiction in Indian culture has remained mostly unchanged despite the country's cultural shifts. While portraying a hijra, Bollywood uses stereotypical characteristics to feed Indian masses' mental constructions.

A taboo issue in a morally constrained society like India prevented filmmakers from experimenting with new forms of storytelling, such as depicting same-sex couples. Archival

evidence shows that film has played a significant part in breaking taboos and promoting tolerance toward transsexuals and other sexual minorities during the last 100 years, but it has also been accused of reinforcing the worst stereotypes of sexual minorities for cheap laughs. (Chatterjee February 27, 2013: IBN Live)

Because sexual discourse, like any other discourse, depends on acceptance, permission, and regulatory agency, the stereotyped representation aims to garner consensus from both those who are developing the discourse and those who are being brought under that discourse. When we talk about things, we have to think of them as being subject to some kind of force, and this force is the basis for the regularity of the events of discourse (Foucault 1981: 67).

This power has been exercised for a long time and given cultural actuality by depicting heterosexual and non-heterosexual people in a traditional colonial style, thereby establishing a power imbalance between the two groups. Non-heterosexuals are seen as outsiders and unnatural in society, whereas heterosexuals are seen as natural and attractive. Such a sexy-cultural myth provides a platform for sexual supremacy in the context of sex education. As a result, persons of non-heterosexual orientation are treated as the heterosexuals' property and lose control of their own bodies, identities, and subjectivities. People of the third sex fall subject to the marginalised and step-motherly treatment of cinema directors because their bodies are written and re-written by the dominant discourse.

The established identity of the third sex is being undermined by Bollywood's portrayal of it in a negative light. Post-modern and post-structuralist ideas have had a significant impact on Bollywood films. He points out that "discourse" is both a source of oppression and a way of resistance against Marxists' idea of "ideology" as "negative and restrictive" (Mills 2005:55). Because of this, Bollywood has produced films since the 1990s that directly challenge the prevalent sexual discourse. Because of this, the filmmaker is more likely to craft a storey in which members of the third sex are given room and a platform to express the pain they've endured as a result of the dominant discourse. There is a clear correlation between this shift in the representation of the third sex and the heterosexual community regarding social, cultural, and economic factors. Films like this one powerfully support the unspoken desire for recognition in the cultural system of society or a nation. Their emotions and sentiments are the same in this complicated web of human relationships, and they should not be neglected only because of their biological sex difference.

These changes have also illustrated how power discourse dismantles and obliterates a third-sex identity, as seen in Bollywood. Because it threatens to break up the power monopoly or fixity, the rise of the third sex and its integration into the mainstream cultural system was seen as a danger. The heterosexuals have risen to power at the expense of the non-heterosexuals because power, as Foucault has shown, functions from the bottom up. Some Bollywood films have dealt with the power-inclination holder's to crush and restore the third sex to its original place. There are three distinct tendencies in Hindi cinema: films that portray the negative image of the third sex, films that show the deconstructive version of sexual discourse, and films that depict the confrontation between the mainstream sexual discourse and the deconstructive discourse.

VI. CHITRANGADA AND THE QUESTION OF THIRD GENDER

Rituparno Ghosh directed and performed in the 2012 film Chitrangada. The video examines a wide range of issues related to being transgender. When a dancer wishes to convey the topic of the film, Chitrangda, as a want for one individual to alter its sex identity, the film's

choreographer focuses on the desire to be different. Chitrangada, the film's name, has numerous meanings, which is why it was chosen. Her father wanted her to enact a sex role reversal, so the heroine had to do just that. After years of wishing for a boy, the patriarchal society finally gets its dream, and the monarch has a daughter instead of a boy.

Consequently, he wants her to portray a guy. As a result, the princess will continue to develop into a boy. She fell in love with Arjun when he came to her kingdom in the northeastern area of present-day India. As a result, she is unable to maintain her masculinity and resolves to reveal her true femininity to Arjun.

Rabindra Nath Tagore's Chitrangada, based on the Mahabharata, is the inspiration for Chitrangada. The film explores the various ways in which the third gender is socially excluded. A wide range of third-gender-related concerns are explored in this book.

The acceptance of third gender identification inside the family structure is the first issue to be addressed. When a third-sex person reveals their identity, family members are said to respond unusually. As depicted in television productions, the third gender's real-life experiences are comparable. According to this film, both parents struggle to accept that their children are no longer their own.

Additionally, the video depicts the challenges of those who identify as non-binary or transgender in establishing a family unit. Upon learning of Partho's wish to become a parent, Rudie decided to undergo sex reassignment surgery to facilitate the adoption of a child. Considering that society and the law forbid two guys from adopting a kid, Rudie decided to go ahead and do it. As a result, he decided to transition from male to female.

When Rudie's boyfriend Partho left him to marry a real lady, the pain of the third gender was proven to have another dimension. To put it another way, Partho explained that he does not want to marry an artificial lady like Rudie, who will be after the procedure.

The picture also has a philosophical underpinning. It raises several philosophical issues related to the essence of the body, its structure and development, and its ultimate permanence. According to the film, homosexuality is a reality that goes beyond the boundaries of male and female genders. When Rudie's father inquired about the sex reassignment surgery and the potential of a name change, Rudie brought up all of these issues. Rudie's attempts to inherit his parents' assets may be hampered by technical difficulties caused by his sex and name changes. We could see the truth of sexuality in the discourse itself. As a physical process, becoming sex is also reflected in this. It will never come to an end; rather, it will be a continuous process. An individual may be male or female, but sexuality does not exist in a two-dimensional world. There are many ways of looking at sex, and one of those ways is to look at it from the perspective of both men and women.

VII. CONCLUSION

People's mindsets in India are changing as the country's society evolves. Nevertheless, these three separate depictions of third sex continue to persist. This subject has only been tackled in a few of films, and there are still many unanswered questions about the third sex. Their hardship is brought to light in these films, but the lack of box office success raises an important question: Has the public's stance toward homosexuality changed? That is to say, the issue of whether or not the sexual discourse has made room for them is unanswered. The hunt for a singular or holistic picture of the third sex is still what these three films provide us.

Third-gender films are a good example of how film reflects society because of their creation and showing. Movement for acknowledgment of a Third Gender in society was accompanied by creation of a film about Third Gender. This is often noticed worldwide, e.g. in Spain following the legal recognition of the third gender category in 2003, showing the prominence of LGBT people in cinema production and viewership. Other third-gender films in other countries also exhibit a similar tendency in India. In India, too, we saw a similar trend. Homosexuality's legalisation in India has been a key factor in developing and exhibiting third-gender films. The problem was as prevalent in the movies as in real life.

Rituparno Ghosh directed and performed in *Chitrangada* (2012), a film that explores the concept of the "third gender" in great depth. It examines the many facets of the challenge faced by the third gender population. Everything from the acceptance or rejection of the topic by various family members to the technical challenge of a child's adaptation and the marriage of two homosexual men without a legitimate mainstream sex code is portrayed with a full examination. As depicted in this video, the problems experienced by the third gender are also shown to be confused in recognition.

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