

HISTORY OF TRANSGENDER PORTRAYAL IN INDIAN CINEMA

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ABSTRACT

Indian cinema has come aged in terms of its perceptions, interpretations and representations of the transgender identity. Some films, within the documentary and thus the feature format, national and regional, reveal social, cultural and emotional maturity in terms of acceptance of the transgender almost integrated into the mainstream in real world . There are attempts, where the transgender identity has been portrayed not only sympathetically and understanding but also with the person???'s desperate longing to belong, to be accepted for what the person is. Despite the very fact that there are numerous sorts of entertainment cropping up almost every other day as a results of technological advancements, film as a medium continues to enjoy a serious fan following of its own. Movies still influence minds to quite large extent, as a results of which, representations and portrayals - be it of people or sections of society, become crucial. When it involves the third gender, tons of Indian movies are called call at the past for insensitive and/or inaccurate portrayals of their lives. Slice of life representations of these from the transgender community are generally hard to return by, which results in the continuation of unabashed stereotypes. Using case studies and literature reviews, this paper will plan to objectively study the portrayal of the third gender in Indian cinema, and why representation of such gender/sexual minorities is vital within the context of a society, especially within the current day and age.

KEYWORDS: Perceptions, Interpretations, representations, insensitive, transgender identity, transgender community, documentary, gender/sexual minorities. .

INTRODUCTION:

Humans are innately social beings who sleep in groups and consider interactions an integral part of their everyday lives. They hear the thoughts, opinions and ideals of others around them which , more often than not, shapes the way they think also aside from fellow citizenry , another element which does influence their thinking is media whether that's broadcast media, medium or various sorts of new media that keep emerging. Cinema may be a powerful medium to catalyze social change. Like other art forms cinema is both a neighborhood of social reality and also a medium of portraying it. Films have subtle influence on societys way of thinking. Cinema has undoubtedly contributed tons to the queer movement in India. Sexual minority consists of all those people that fall into the categories of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgenders. Projection of gender stereotypes in films forms societys perception of gender roles. The over-saturation of gender stereotypes within the films leads to the misrepresentation of gender roles which gets embedded within the human mind and is passed on from generation to generation as a suitable view. Homosexuality remains considered a taboo in India. Section 377 of the Indian legal code which criminalizes homosexuality was introduced by British in colonial India in 1861 and it still stands within the countrys books. The community which has long been marginalized and bereft of their true identity and representation within the social and cultural gestalt of society deserves critical attention. The Transgender community in India faces tons of struggle in lifestyle from lack of acceptance in society to discrimination. The struggle is to seek out an area in society where gender nonconformity isn't being condemned as abnormal. they're never portrayed as an accepted member of the society. they're majorly portrayed as outlandish characters who are only there within the movie even as comic quotient. Doubted, ostracized, stigmatized and criminalized for hundreds of years , the sexual minorities are now stepping out from the shadow of invisibility. during a country like India where cinema has the potential to shape the perception of majority of the population, realistic films about the Transgender community will certainly have a huge positive impact on the mindsets of the people. Over the years the representation of Transgender community in Indian cinema has found itself under the scanner. Indian cinema has witnessed a gentle display of Transgender characters some for the comic effect and a few , however, stayed faithful reality and made an attempt to treat the topic during a very sensitive and realistic light but unfortunately to a bigger extent these films couldn't challenged the normal myths and have did not break the taboo. it's been observed that these people are often judged in terms of sexual behaviour. The violence on the problems of sex and body isn't only sexual violence but it's also a sort of denial of identity and voice within the society. consistent with Indias census5 of 2011, that counted transgender population for the first time, India has an estimated 4.9 lakh Transgenders who identified themselves as third gender. Definitions: The term eunuch - hijra -we commonly use to mean a sexless???' person has been defined within the

dictionary as a castrated man. A hermaphrodite may be a creature possessing both the male and feminine organs. A transvestite may be a one that chooses a sex aside from the one he/she is born as. Facts tell us that neutralized neutral-sex persons are a rarity. The hijra population in India features a well-defined group structure and regional affiliations with a gaggle head. Though Balucharaji is their Goddess and that they revere Ambe Mata, there are religious demarcations. Most of them identify with the feminine sex. Within the eunuch community, incest is absent. Most of them have worked as prostitutes at just one occasion or another. Serena Nanda's research shows that some persons labelled hijra in India are both prostitutes and celebrants of rites of passage.

Hindu epics, Puranas and mythology are replete with the courageous feats of true hermaphrodites who, within these scriptures, have always been mentioned because the 'third sex.' "But after the Arab attack within the eighth century, castration of males so as to place them on specific jobs began on an outsized scale," writes S. N. Ranade Centuries ago, guards to king's harems were castrated to make sure that no co-habitation between royal wives and guards happened. This led to the creation of the 'third sex' – the castrated eunuchs. But it had been not the top of the story. These sexless wonders realized that perversions did exist in society. Many males found them distractingly attractive. and therefore the potential 'femme fatale' was born. Hijras have a recorded history of quite 4,000 years. Ancient myths bestow them with special powers to bring luck and fertility. Despite this supposedly sanctioned place in Indian culture, hijras face severe harassment and discrimination from mainstream people in society, aren't allowed to possess any organized source of income, and are harassed by the police that arrests them for begging, one among the few sources they need of eking out a livelihood.

The term hijra is usually translated as 'eunuch'. The archetypal hijra is raised as a person and undergoes ritual removal of the genitals to become a hijra. However, anthropologist Serena Nanda explains that tons of hijras come from other sexually ambiguous backgrounds: they'll turn intersexed, turn male or female and fail to develop fully at puberty, or be males who prefer to live as hijras without undergoing castration. The cultural category "hijra" appears to be a magnet for a selection of sexual and gender conditions: ambiguous sexual anatomy, impotence, infertility, homosexuality, et al., which can not have an analogue in Western cultures. Nanda writes that the crude surgery is completed by dais (country nurses) whose 'training' is predicated solely on experience. The eunuchs call this 'operation' nirbaan meaning 'mukti' because the act suggests a 'transition' of the person from one 'life' to a different. Indian legal statutes don't permit such forced castration of males and thus, there's absolute secrecy around the act of 'nirbaan.' The operation is conducted between three and 4 before the crack of dawn, while it's still dark. nobody but the dai-maa and her assistant is present for this 'ceremonial' ritual. The act is given the color of a spiritual ritual just like the acceptance of Deeksha for a far better life within the next birth purely so as to veil the essential barbarity and brutality of the custom and make it both acceptable and 'natural.'

Analyses of a couple of Movies and their Portrayal of the Transgender Community:

Indian cinematic representations of the transgender identity earlier came within the sort of brief cameo characters like in song-dance numbers performed during a chorus or, within the character of an effeminate prisoner in Ramesh Sippy's Sholay. the primary empathetic treatment of a transgender emerged in Mahesh Bhatt's Tamanna reportedly supported the real-life story of a eunuch who rescues a female infant left to die by her rich and powerful father and brings her up as his own. There are not any innuendoes around this person's sex life who barely manages to form a living by singing and dancing at marriage functions or when a baby is born.

Mani Ratnam's Bombay (1995) places the hijra during a completely different time-space matrix during a manner of celebrating the humane a part of their lives and underscoring through one scene, the secular character of the hijra who saves one among the twins of Shekhar and Shakila who stray within the Mumbai communal riots. it's such a quick, blink-and-you-miss-it shot that it's incredible how Mani Ratnam could pack such a lot of emotional tension and suspense into it so well and in so memorable a fashion. The hijra here is portrayed both as workplace – helping the child find his way back to his world of sanity and safety, and as a topic – expressing his character through this apparently simple act. The hijra could easily have turned the opposite way and targeting his safety like everyone else not involved within the riots was doing. But within the dangerous situation where life may be a breath faraway from death, he does it though he doesn't know the kid and has never seen him before.

Movies with characters like that of Vaiyapuri's in ThulladhaManamumThullum(1999) directed by Ezhil ridicule of a male showing signs of being effeminate and is mocked even by their own friends. tons of such subtleties aren't given enough importance while drafting the screenplay or during the characterization of the roles in movies. Sarath Kumar essayed the role of a transgender called Kanchana in Muni 2: Kanchana (2011) which was an important role within the horror film. Directed by Raghava Lawrence, the role was that of a transgender who gets ousted by her

biological family but gets accepted by somebody else for who she was and later gets killed by a villain. It brought out the difficulties faced by tons of individuals within the trans community but ended on a positive note, portraying Sarath Kumar during a good role. The roles, also as Sarath Kumar's portrayal, were widely appreciated. Many consider Kamal Haasan's role in Vishwaroopam(2013) to be that of a trans person. However, he merely played a person who had effeminate characteristics which doesn't necessarily make one a transgender. within the film, Haasan is rejected by his wife early within the movie for his effeminate nature but once she finds out about his macho activities, falls for him. This hypocrisy was noted and criticized by some people.

Portrayal of Trans People in Cinema:

Their representations and portrayals become crucial especially when it involves creative texts. Be it books, plays or movies, any creative fictional piece gives the author of the text the freedom to portray an individual, a community or maybe a rustic during a certain way, claiming artistic freedom. Such representations gain more importance when handling marginalized, oppressed or largely stereotyped communities. One such community is that the transgender community. Despite tons more people choosing to openly discuss identity, gender expression, gender non-conformity and other related issues like non-binary identities and sexual orientation lately, the transgender community continues to stay a marginalized section of the society during a lot of nations. Thus, the way the transgender population is represented in films (a mass media vehicle still loved and supported by many people worldwide) becomes crucial.

A lot of flicks are made with transgender characters in them, globally. Movies like Transparent, Boy Meets Girl and New Girls on the Block have had trans people portray trans characters within the movies, thereby lending authenticity to their roles. Such movies received good reviews for the portrayal of the trans community through those characters. However, on the opposite hand, movies like Ace Ventura: Pet Detective, Dallas Buyers Club came under attack from transgender activists for his or her portrayals and for allowing cisgender (non-transgender) people portray the role of a trans person. the very fact that not many cis people interact or converse with people from the trans community, the way they're represented or portrayed in Indian films becomes crucial. Tamil cinema, or Kollywood, is one among the most important revenue making industries within the country. People through theatres and film stars achieve cult status, inspiring heightened levels of fandom. In such a scenario, needless to mention, Tamil movies and the way they portray trans people becomes important. In majority of the films, transgender characters are given minor, pivotal roles with none substance and therefore the characters don't really add value to the plot of the films. they're used for comic relief and therefore the characterizations are written in such how on fit the relief theory of humor⁸. Sometimes, male characters during a movie dress up as and pretend to be a lady. this is often again problematic because it doesn't actually represent a transgender and will actually merely be a case of transvestism. Cross dressers are those that wear clothing that's usually related to the other gender. this will be seen in quite few movies starring Vadivelu, Vivekh's character in Guru En Aalu (directed by Selva) also because the recently released Remo (directed by BakkiyarajKannan) during which the male lead merely dons the apparel of a lady nurse so as to determine an in depth bond with the feminine lead.

CONCLUSION

Times are changing and thereupon sexual minorities are slowly finding an area in Indian cinema. As trans people, their lives are extremely hard, there's tons of stigma within the society about them. In India, despite being legally recognized because the third gender currently, the community largely remains ostracized and is on the receiving end of hate and discrimination more often than not. it's interesting to notice that there are sometimes contradictory reactions to the present community also – on the one hand, they're ostracized and shunned, while on the opposite, they're believed to be spiritually/religiously superior which leads people to believe that the blessings of the community will help them. Neither of those contradictory beliefs help in normalizing the community or helping the society check out them the way they might at the cis community. Most of the ostracization, backlash and hate the trans community receives is essentially thanks to a couple of factors – ignorance about non-binary gender identities, ignorance of the concept of gender expression, and therefore the incontrovertible fact that tons of the cis population believes that trans people take up either begging or prostitution as their means of livelihood. There are many beautiful people within the trans community, so beautiful actually that they appear like heroines straight out of flicks. If you ever hung out with a transgender person, you'll realize that they're kind, beautiful and soft natured. altogether the trans people, there has never been an instance of fighting, deicet or cheating, they sleep in harmony. it's important to acknowledge and highlight these new challenges that our society has got to encounter. many of us in India are scared of talking openly about their

identity and sexual orientation due to the fear of discrimination by the mainstream society. tons more representation is required in terms of cinema which may provide the much-needed platform for interaction between people that are still within the closet.