

Investigate The Change in Perceptions of Young Adults Towards the LGBTQIA Community by The Illustrations of LGBTQIA Characters In Bollywood Industry

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Abstract- The aim of the study is to dive deeper into the ever changing perceptions of LGBTQIA individuals in Bollywood movies and also to understand all the nuances of this influence on the attitude formation towards LGBTQIA individuals, especially focusing towards young adults. The paper looks into multiple aspects like societal expectations and legal reforms, specifically the decriminalisation of Section 377, that has mostly influenced the recent representations of LGBTQIA+ identities. It does shed light on the movement from stereotypical or humorous representations to more understanding, complex characterizations in the case of Kapoor & Sons and some other recent pieces of art. These visuals aid in the formation of the audience's views, more so among the youth who are very much influenced by the media and thus, the narratives. Despite the fact that Bollywood's cultural reach is not limited to India and, therefore, the potential ability to influence globally is wider, the study also points out major limitations. It mentions the need for cross-industry comparisons based on regions and more focus on authenticity, intersectionality, and representation to be the key issues in future research. In a way, the paper points out that media has the power to confront established prejudices and contribute to the process of social acceptance; however, it also requires that the portrayals of the LGBTQIA communities be accurate and inclusive.

Keywords: LGBTQIA+ Representation; Bollywood Cinema; Young Individuals; Media Influence; Attitude Formulation

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the course of history, news coverage has been one of the most pervasive forms of influence, and it has also been one of the biggest. Nonetheless, cinema has come out as a very strong medium that not only influences the public's opinion but also reflects the dynamic nature of social reality (Jain, 2022). In the realms of culture, learning, pleasure, and advertising, it has evolved into a potent medium for carrying out communication. Film, as a visual and narrative form,

is very powerful in making the public accept or reject and influence their views on the social issues (Tushir, 2023). In addition to having an impact on how people think and how they depict themselves, the film industry has also been a significant contributor to the liberation struggle. Films have been crucial in normalizing and campaigning for accepting people of a wide range of sexual orientations, which is a noteworthy example. Films like Call Me by Your Name not only represent the LGBTQ+ community with their stories but also do so by opposing social standards, stereotypes, and biases. Such movies have raised important questions about identity, love, and tolerance as well as helped the global movement for LGBTQ+ rights. Considering cinema's psychological effect, the viewers—especially the young ones—tend to adopt the gender and sexuality norms that are shown in movies. Creating a cinematic patchwork that both embodies and develops social ideas is the result of a variety of feelings, tales, and cultural subtleties coming together in the dynamic arena of Bollywood. Lately, the Hindi film industry has experienced a major change and has moved from the traditional frameworks to more modern and even uncharted narratives. These images not only indicate the existing public attitudes but also play an active role in forming public perception—especially that of the youth, who make up a significant part of the Indian audience and are the main consumers of content both from Bollywood and new OTT platforms. Since the Indian movie industry makes close to a thousand films a year (Bali, 2020), its role in shaping the individual's identity, attitude towards gender diversity, and acceptance of the wider sociocultural norms can hardly be overstated.

The cinematic environment of the Hindi film industry, with its spectacular plots and compelling personalities, has remained an icon of culture for masses of people for a very long time. In many cases,

Bollywood has not only provided entertainment but also influenced the ways people live, their belief systems, and the people's imagination in the society as a whole. The greater focus on the LGBTQIA+ representation has come about as the industry is gradually changing their stories to be more tolerant and open-minded to the newer social norms. It has turned into a focal point, indicating a larger cultural conversation on embracing oneself, inclusion and the recognition of LGBTQIA people in general, that the representation of such individuals in commercial Indian cinema has established a focal point. Because of the preconceived thoughts and opinions, for a long time, many representations have been relying on negative stereotypes or funny renditions (Phogat, 2022). People who identify as homosexual are members of a minority community, and thus it is necessary to give them a proper representation so that their voice can be heard regarding the difficulties and discrimination they encounter. However, the heteronormative belief still prevails and that is the notion that men and women have to marry and produce nuclear families. These kinds of viewpoints fail to acknowledge the fluidity of gender and the right of different types of love and emotional relationships. Regarding the Indian authorities as well as overall Indian community as a whole, homosexuality is something that might be called a taboo subject (Kaur, 2017). The rejection and isolation of the LGBT community are prevalent, indicating the predominance of homophobia that is so deeply rooted that it cuts across all social classes—even among the wealthy (Kumar Sabharwal & Sen, 2012). The situation makes the mirroring of the LGBTQIA+ community in a truthful, respectful manner by movies not only a matter of culture but also of a pressing social need.

Complex and ongoing are the legal and political struggles that have been underway in India surrounding the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals. One of the most significant achievements took place in 2018 when the Supreme Court of India abolished Section 377, thus no longer treating consensual same-sex relationships as illegal and recognizing the constitutional rights, respect, and humanity of LGBTQIA+ individuals. This historic ruling was a pivotal moment not only in the battle for LGBTQIA+ rights but also in the entire human rights struggle that the Indian society has been facing. Unfortunately, members of the LGBTQIA+ community still very much endure discrimination and social rejection and

are often treated as second-class citizens. In fact, the law does not provide adequate protection in this regard anyway, especially in the field of family rights. For instance, same-sex couples are still not allowed to get their partnerships officially recognized and, therefore, they do not have the right to inherit from each other or seek family-law protection. The decision of legalising marriages was put forward but it was rejected recently in October 2023, so there are still a lot of obstacles that come in the way of LGBTQIA individuals getting equal rights. Thus, the legislative reform and the societal change remain to be challenges that are deeply intertwined in the ongoing struggle for LGBTQIA+ rights.

It is imperative to conduct a through analysis of the past events in which the direction is played with respect to acquiring a thorough knowledge of the depiction of LGBTQIA characters in Bollywood. Indian cinema has remained reticent to grapple with LGBTQIA+ narratives for the most part, reflecting the conservative nature of the country's social and cultural roots. The very nature of India's cinema has been such that not only has it shunned the issue, but it has also been reinforcing it in a subtle way through the continued prevalence of stereotyped portrayals—usually no more than comic relief or caricature—that seriously undervalue any LGBT identity and hence thwart any sincere representation of the latter on screen. The Indian film industry has in some instances interacted with the LGBTQIA+ world but has mainly done so in a superficial manner by focusing on the divisions in society and not on the inner psychological, emotional, and structural struggles queer people go through (Chowdhury, 2021). The modern-day society, including film narratives, is still very much dependent on the traditional gender dichotomy—“man” and “woman”—and this leaves nearly no room for those who do not fit into this classification to be seen or heard. Transgender lives have been portrayed gradually in Bollywood, but there are still many gaps. As an example, in the series *Taali*, Sushmita Sen plays a role of a transgender woman, and the story enlightens about the struggles of identity affirmation, family rejection, stigma, and the overall struggle to obtain legal rights and acceptance as a third gender. Although these depictions represent a positive shift, they also highlight the persistent issues relating to authenticity since cisgender actors often star in transgender parts, which begs the question of

representation, accuracy and inclusivity within mainstream filmmaking.

Certainly, there has been a rapid change that can be observed with regard to the Indian film industry and the way in which they are portrayed in Bollywood. The previous representations were usually unclear, uneven, and emotionally stretched such as too often depending on tragic storylines or making LGBTQIA+ characters conflicted, deviant, or lonely. These views not only made it more difficult to depict the situation, but they also served to reinforce the unfavourable preconceptions that have an effect on the judgments. Nevertheless, an incremental change occurred with commercial movies like *Dostana* (2008) and *Fashion* (2008) in which mainstream stars played the LGBTQIA+ characters in a more subtle and empathic manner. In the later period, movies like *Kapoor & Sons* (2016) and *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* (2020) have come a bit closer to showing emotionally oriented, relatable and realistic representations of the LGBTQIA+ life (V & G, 2024). These films focus on real life situations that the audience has been through, which not only makes them more compassionate but also challenges their preconceived beliefs.

There is the possibility for the portrayal of LGBTQIA protagonists in popular films to raise awareness about stereotypes and make a contribution to the larger conversation about compassion. It is especially young adults, constituting a significant portion of the media consumers in India, who are easily impressed, and responsible representation is important. In addition to the stories themselves, the power of such representations lies in the authenticity according to which they are written, performed, and put into context. When LGBTQIA+ characters are portrayed as complete and whole people, with goals, complexities, aspirations and agency. The LGBTQIA group is humanized when characters who identify as LGBTQIA are depicted as fully developed persons who have individual goals, desires, and successes.

Adulthood is the right age when a particular individual finds themselves and their personal thought patterns which takes over the inner self. The period of young adulthood is a very critical developmental stage where group members establish identity, experiment with beliefs, and establish consistent patterns of thought and perception to the world. This is the period of time when young adults

are particularly susceptible to the outside pressure of media, cultural discourse, and world tendencies. Therefore, the LGBTQ+ characters in Bollywood movies can introduce the frame of reference with the help of which young audiences perceive gender and sexuality, as well as diversity. True, subtle, and positive portrayals can help break down stereotypes, decrease prejudice, and naturalize LGBTQIA+. As queer characters are portrayed in films as complicated individuals who can achieve their objectives, create meaningful relationships with others, and flourish in diverse surroundings, young viewers have a higher chance of internalizing the perception of acceptance and recognizing LGBTQIA+ identities as something valid and dimensional. Therefore, the positive depictions in the films can be regarded as both the reflections of the social alteration and the stimulus of the reworking of the discriminatory mindset.

This is an interplay that moves towards moulding the perspectives of the community, and the repercussions of the illustration of the LGBTQIA in Bollywood movies as being main leads surpasses the individuals viewership. The impact of LGBTQIA+ representation is not just on an individual viewer but also penetrates into the common knowledge. Since there is an increasing awareness of queer topics in the mass, the ideas of cinema can creep into social discourse and condition the perception of diversity and social inclusion. Bollywood has the power to reach every part of the corner of home and not just having a country wide reach. In this context, the international consequences of LGBTQIA+ images should also be mentioned. Movies illustrations works as an advocate as it displays the aspects of diversification and also having an inclusive mindset, it also pushes the audience to think about these topics and thereby changing the attitudes and their understanding all across the globe. Through this, the cinema can be said to be a transnational force in that it influences attitudes, creates empathy, and a more inclusive worldview.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The depictions of LGBTQIA protagonists in Bollywood movies specifically has made numerous amount of transformations since traditional times. The huge amount of community shifts and social change is the reason for it. The depiction of LGBTQIA+ characters in Bollywood has pretty

much changed a lot over the years and it has been a direct reflection of the changing Indian society's social and cultural norms. The very same changes have greatly affected the young viewers' perception of gender and sexuality, thus even their emotions and attitudes toward the LGBTQIA+ community. An essential part of this was underlined by the verdict that was given out by the Indian Supreme Court in 2018 to repeal the Article 377 which previously used to criminalise any homosexual act. It was a historical move. The verdict not only ensured constitutional recognition but also constituted a society-legal environment that naturally led media to more open and encouraging portrayals. It showed the court's contribution to the development of a public sphere which is inclusive—this sphere might even have impacts on the types of cinematic narratives that are aligned with equality and dignity. In the earlier days, television and film treated queer characters very superficially, relying completely on stereotypes and caricatured representations as a mirror of the limitations imposed by the conservative media environment (Bhardwaj, 2003). However, with the growing use of internet and the availability of various arguments which can differ from one to another, it points towards the growing chance of the audience unveiling the gay themes that are concealed by the Bollywood movies by rewatching or revisiting them. Digital media and online platforms have granted the audience the power to critically look back at the past content, to find the hidden gay themes, and to dispute narrow representations, henceforth an important change that Queer Theory's stress on re-interpretation and resistance can explain. The study highlights that LGBTQIA+ persons in India still encounter a number of social and structural difficulties, most of which had been aggravated through legal measures such as Section 377 (Bhardwaj, 2023). The legal inconsistencies regarding the rights of LGBTQIA people have helped to keep the stigma in India alive, even though the country has undergone major cultural changes since the onset of democracy. The situation is such that the ongoing social stigma is perpetuated by the lack of family rights, marriage equality, and anti-discrimination protections even after decriminalization. However, the Supreme Court's 2018 landmark ruling ushered in a new era in which the LGBTQIA community would not only be recognized but also protected under the law (Banerjee, 2019; Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, 2018). Bollywood has slowly moved on from

the stereotypical to the more humanizing mainly due to the intersection of the new legal scenario with the changing cinematic portrayal. Bollywood's growing portrayal of LGBTQIA+ actors is instrumental in breaking down stereotypes and gradually gaining acceptance among adolescents and young adults. Media studies give emphasis to Cultivation Theory and Social Cognitive Theory in claiming that exposure to multiple representations repeatedly can change the beliefs of the viewers, normalize the identities of the marginalized groups, and even affect the youth's attitudes. Legal changes have laid down the foundation for justice, but the representation of LGBTQIA people in Bollywood has also transitioned during the same period. In this way, legal reform and media representation are interconnected: the courts grant legitimacy to the gay community while the film industry makes that community's life story audible, discernible, and emotionally approachable to the young viewers.

Cinema, being a powerful medium, can shake the very foundation of the prevailing societal perceptions and create new ones. From a cultural perspective, cinema has a role not only as a source of entertainment but as a venue where the normative structures are contested, empowered or even toppled. The struggle for rights of the LGBTQIA community unearthed the theoretical framework called Queer Theory, which advocates for the deconstructing of heteronormativity by bringing in identities that are marginalized (Chakma & Chirom, 2023). Queer Theory advocates that academics and the public should question the rigid binaries, the dominant social scripts and reinterpret the narratives through a viewpoint that highlights fluidity and resistance. Followers of the queer theory argue for the classic literature to be re-evaluated in the context of queer theory and the infusion of queer perspectives into the various academic disciplines. In film studies, this paradigm encourages a thorough and critical inquiry into the role of representation—or the lack of it—in the perpetuation of the societal exclusion and also into the ways in which cinema can be a disruptive force by offering alternative, inclusive narratives.

Worldwide, the presence of LGBTQIA+—especially in Hollywood—has been more than doubled with the release of films that tell the stories of queer characters, explore the complexities of identities, and are recognized in both mainstream and independent movie circuits. This is a global trend that has come up

along with the progression of the LGBTQIA community. The accompanying changes showcase the changing sociopolitical systems, stronger advocacy, and changing the audience expectations with respect to authenticity and diversity. On the other hand, Indian cinema, particularly Bollywood, is very slow to portray LGBTQIA issues and, when it does, often provides only minimal and stereotypical representations. Historically, Bollywood has been slow to catch up with the global trends and has often used mere comic or tokenistic representations that do not touch upon the socio-cultural realities of LGBTQIA+ people at all. The whole film industry in India has been very sluggish in tackling the matter. This situation provides a dissonance that not only highlights but also reflects the existence of the so-called "queer zone" which, according to Queer Theory, has become a characteristic of the deep-rooted heteronormativity and the commercial risk-averse attitude prevailing in the industry. There have been steps taken in Bengali cinema to portray LGBTQIA people more realistically. Films like "Chitrangada" & "Nagarkirtan" dealt with issues of gender and sex change and their fluidity in their storylines. Bengali cinema, a regional industry, despite being smaller has shown more narrative courage than Bollywood by diving into the exploration of queer identities with depth and sensitivity. These movies showcase the difficulties that people identifying as LGBTQIA within Indian society have to face, such as being cut off by their families and shunned by the rest of society (Chakma & Chirom, 2023). They also point out intersectional vulnerabilities, such as that of class, regional stigma and gender nonconformity, thus uncovering the gaps that mainstream Bollywood has not yet filled. Not only do the movies in question highlight the issue of authenticity, especially in the case of cisgender actors playing transgender roles, but they also open up a discussion about accuracy of representation in Indian cinema.

The comparison of Bollywood and Hollywood reveals very different paths of LGBTQIA+ representation, with Hollywood showing much quicker progress in both narrative treatment and public acceptance. The current battle for equal rights in India is according to Bullough (2019) a consequence of the discrepancy between the colonial era condemnation of sexuality and the earlier acceptance of sensuality in India. The works of Hollywood such as *Call Me By Your Name* and *Love*,

Simon represent queer lives through rich emotions, very much character-driven, while the early attempts of Bollywood—*Dostana* and *Margarita with a Straw*—show uneven development, ranging from comic subtext to more sensitive, though, in a way, even less explicit, explorations of disability, sexuality, and intersectional identity. Just like OTT platforms, which include *Orange Is the New Black* and *India's Made in Heaven*, are more mainstream and less direct, that is, with regard to the representation of LGBTQIA+ that focuses on the intersectional identities of the queer community, particularly caste, class and gender diversity; they have a more direct approach than the mainstream film. In both sectors, the issue of authenticity keeps on troubling the matter, since cisgender actors quite often take up queer roles the whole process has been under scrutiny regarding the accuracy, lived experience, and representational ethics. It is rather the social consciousness and public reaction that differ between the two places. Indian films have been critically acclaimed but at the same time, they have had difficulties in being profitable. On the one hand, Indian queer-themed movies often get in the way of commercial success because of societal taboos even if they are highly regarded by critics, while on the other hand, the U.S. population show a relatively higher acceptance, which leads to greater financial viability for LGBTQIA+ narratives (Ajay et al., 2020). Furthermore, the gendered dynamics within the queer love relationships—as in the case of “masculine” or “feminine” roles—indicate the persistence of patriarchal norms even in the so-called progressive portrayals.

Bollywood is now starting to confront topics of homosexuality, but with reinforced stereotypes (Modi, 2022). This is despite the fact that there are social taboos around sex relationships and alternative sexual orientations. Queer characters in the past were often cast in secondary roles and presented as caricatures with exaggerated traits, or they were simply ridiculed, thereby further cementing the social taboo surrounding non-heteronormative identities. During what was known as the "Golden Era" about the Hindi film industry, LGBTQIA protagonists served as either associates to leads or targets of humorous relief (Modi, 2022). The cycle does continue throughout the whole period. The film industry still continues to prioritize the entertainment value of movies or films over the possibility of social commentary, and as a result, it often ignores the

opportunity to go deeper into discussions about the discrimination, mental health issues, legal disputes, and family rejection that LGBTQIA+ individual experience. In spite of the fact that arthouse movies and gay film festivals have helped bring LGBTQIA protagonists to the forefront of public consciousness, their influence on society as a whole is still rather restricted.

The portrayal of LGBTQIA+ characters in films like *Aligarh* and *Kapoor & Sons* has definitely been an essential step forward, yet still the majority of Bollywood movies struggle to create representations that are fair and authentic, and at the same time not relying on caricature. The stereotypes that depict queers as humorous, using effeminacy, over-the-top mannerism, or even as villains, are still visible in mainstream Bollywood and in the society that has a hard time accepting the difference in gender and sexual orientation. Stereotypes continue to exist. The lack of full portrayal in mainstream film is a reflection of those views that are prevalent in society as a whole as well as the difficulties that the LGBTQIA community faces. Despite the fact that there has been considerable progress made in tackling LGBTQIA problems in the Hindi film industry, there is an urgent need for storylines that are more diverse and depictions that are more uplifting (Modi, 2022). The times have gone that only *Fire* and *Mango Soufflé* could challenge dominant sexual morality and were the only ones to put queer narratives on the public agenda and to start talking about issues that were once silenced in the Indian society. In focusing on emotional areas such as identity conflicts, family rejection, and social stigma, the above portrayals humanize LGBTQIA+ individuals, thus counteracting reductive stereotypes and resonating with Queer Theory's claim of destabilizing the heteronormative (Agarwal, 2015). The shifts in cinematography and representation indicate a change in the cultural picture: the process of society becoming more open-minded regarding sexual identity is slow but steady, and hence the narratives of Bollywood films are also slowly but surely changing in a way that reflects Cultivation Theory's claim that media and social change occur in a cycle with a mutually reinforcing relationship. Although these portrayals are still limited, they reflect the beginning of a transition towards more inclusive and socially conscious filmmaking.

On the flip side, artists, activists, filmmakers, and producers' constant hard work has slowly but surely changed Bollywood's view of the world and the misconceptions surrounding queer life. *Fire* and *Mango Soufflé* have been very important movies for their honesty in showing the story of prejudice, discrimination, and hypocrisy in society, utilizing complex but friendly narratives that make a strong impression on the audience. This notion thus adds to the existing debate on the topics of LGBTQIA that is still ongoing with respect to creative expression. Film makers in India are slowly widening the public's horizon of acceptance towards gender and sexual diversity thereby leading to gradual change in the society's understanding of these concepts. Most definitely their effect has not just affected the portrayal of the topic, but has started dialogues about equality within the society that gets more conservative by every passing day. Writers and filmmakers have been creating more inclusive stories such as *My Brother Nikhil* and *Kamasutra* that portray LGBTQIA+ characters' point of view and oppose heteronormative expectations over time (Agarwal, 2015). With Bollywood's increasing grip on national and international audience, the chances for acceptance and a more delicate depiction get higher.

In short, the available research has revealed a range of LGBT characters in Bollywood influenced by the interplay of legal, cinematic, and sociocultural factors. While discrimination, social stigma, and scarcity of genuine representation still characterize the prevailing cinema world, inopportunately, the same literature also touches on a ray of hope. Bollywood, over time, has built up its narrative potential which can, by way of richer and more complex portrayals of LGBTQIA+ lives, assist in providing the necessary groundwork for the development of tolerance and even rights through the good and bad stories of such people's lives.

III. DISCUSSION

This research investigates the changing portrayals of LGBTQIA+ people in Indian films and their impact on society, primarily focusing on the young adults who are considered the most influential audience from the psychological and social perspective. It talks about the reluctance of opening up of the Indian film industry with respect to understanding the LGBTQIA individuals due to the constitutional aid which

includes Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which got removed in 2018 by the Supreme Court of India. The 2018 decriminalization was a landmark event that not only gave the gay community more legal visibility in India but also made Indian films more open to participating in the global dialogues of the day regarding queer representation (Maji et al., 2023).

Many years have passed along, and there have been numerous changes in the illustration of the characters that represent the LGBTQIA community in movies. These alternatives depict that the cultural norms and tendencies are getting broader and have led to the evolved way of public speaking and communication about the issues faced by LGBTQIA community. Despite, the traditional movie illustrations of LGBTQIA people who were portrayed under the notion of reinforcing prejudices, modern day movie like "Kapoor & Sons" shows the character through a complex image. The portrayals of LGBTQIA+ characters, among others, serve as a means of normalization and contact with the symbols. Thus, the young audience is able to identify and empathize with the queer people. The application of Social Cognitive and Cultivation theories explains that the frequent showing of sympathetic characters leads to the changing of young people's interpretative frameworks, and consequently, acceptance, lowering prejudice, and more respectful social engagement are the results.

From the point of enjoyment to reconstructing the community and societal viewpoints and opinions and also advertising a stage for inclusivity and acceptance, Bollywood's illustrations of LGBTQIA protagonists cross every traditional borders. By showcasing LGBTQIA+ people as complex characters with dreams, problems, and emotions, the film industry is leading to the diminishing of social distance and the humanization of LGBTQIA+ communities. The characters and their stories make it easier for the audience to be sympathetic and at the same time challenge the heteronormative view by legitimizing and showing as meaningful alternative relationships and families. These narratives of Bollywood, through its worldwide market, are not just for the Indian audience or Indian social changes but are also a part of the global debates on LGBTQIA+ rights influencing the diaspora and international views of the progress India has made in the social aspect.

The study evaluates the constitutional accomplishment that was adopted in India in reference to the spread of the rights of LGBTQIA, mainly the turning point verdict that was passed by the Supreme Court of India to dissolve Section 377. This big step has pushed and motivated the filmmakers to talk and portray LGBTQIA characters with more care, equality and authenticity (Maji et al., 2023). This big shift has made Bollywood industry a place where all the problems and issues faced by LGBTQIA community can be put across. Even though after the verdict was passed, it is crucial to understand that these constitutional reforms on their own can't remove all the negative connotations or stigmas. Cultural representation—especially in mainstream movies—has a significant influence in that it opens up acceptance, standardizes diversity, and changes slowly through the powers of the emotional ties formed and the repeated exposure of the previously to be unapproachable issues.

The impact of visual media in determining the attitude of society—which once was especially noticeable among the young people consuming films and OTT platforms—has become considerable and, at the same time, hard to avoid (Tiwari & Sharma, 2023). The introduction of OTT streaming services has undoubtedly revolutionized the entertainment world, especially in terms of discussing and portraying LGBTQIA matters. As Jethava (2023) points out, the aforementioned contradictory powers are inherent in OTT's capability to create awareness while at the same time running the risk of misinterpreting the situation when commercial interests gain priority over truthful portrayal. A few major differences can be observed when comparing the effects of Bollywood movies and Bollywood OTT entertainment on the attitudes towards homosexuality.

To start with, Bollywood movies have always been facing difficulties to represent the LGBTQIA community in a way that is both detailed and based on real life scenario. The likes of Aligarh and Kapoor & Sons cannot be singled out for the way they have engaged with the issue, nonetheless, most mainstream films still resort to the tactics of making jokes, portraying characters in an exaggerated way, or pushing them to the edges of the screen (Pradhan, 2021). Even though it is the intention of this method to amuse, it often results in the molding of the negative stigmas and stereotypes and is not able to do

justice to the great complexity of LGBTQIA lives. From the point of view of Social Cognitive and Cultivation Theory, the repeated showing of simplistically reducing portrayals will rather strengthen the prejudice while subtle narratives on OTT will bring about the opposite of normalizing, increasing the empathy, and carrying the positive change in attitudes for a longer period of time.

On the other end, Indian OTT platforms have made it accessible and easy to carry out deep analysis into topics that fall under LGBTQIA. On the other hand, feature films are limited by their short duration while, on the other hand, OTT series have long narrative arcs throughout many episodes and seasons, dimension which allows the audience to witness the evolution of the characters over time. A subtle examination of queer identities across micro-level relationships (family, friendships) and macro-level structures (society, institutions) is made possible by this format, which presents LGBTQIA+ lives as complex and real rather than comical or exaggerated (Arya, 2023).

Let's take an example of the show like "Four More Shots Please!", this show talks about 4 friends and one of them is a lesbian and this show shows all the emotions, feelings, support system, complications in the family of that character and also the societal obligation of not being their true self or they will receive the backlash, long-term communications like this one help the watchers to make connections similar to friendships with queer characters, which in turn increasing their understanding and emotional involvement—this is an element that is often lacking in mainstream Bollywood films (Dey, 2024). Through presenting the daily difficulties faced by LGBTQIA+ and the emotional truths, the OTT storylines make the LGBTQIA+ community's life more relatable and thus, they create sympathy, they make the view portrayed by the society more inclined to acceptance and even change the young adult viewer's attitude towards the LGBTQIA+ community. The result is in agreement with the Parasocial Interaction and Cultivation theories which point out that frequent interaction with relatable characters can profoundly alter one's convictions, lessen the discrimination directed at the minorities, and accept the social attitudes along the line of the minorities.

The growing increase of viewers that watch OTT platforms especially among the young population like young adults shows the true capacity of these shows to change the viewpoints towards many topics like Homosexuality (Dhingra, n.d). OTT platforms, with their low cost and easy access, grab a mixed audience with more in-depth, more socially grounded, and less-forthcoming content and at the same time earn that audience the power to mold and remold belief systems. OTT platforms are more feasible and accessible and easy to use so it has become a preferred option for numerous amount of audience. OTT pushed them to think critically and also pushed them to a whole new world of realise experiences. The assertive and illustrative storylines not only raise and address the issues but also create a space where the LGBTQIA+ people can be themselves. The larger the population of viewers, the more the OTT platforms perform the role of cultural places that spread and make the change in attitudes of the young ones towards the queer identities that are the same as their own (Bhujanga Rao, 2024).

It is imperative to keep in mind that if something has pros then it has some cons as well and just like this even OTT platform materials that are being illustrated needs to be controlled and regulated. As the viewers are getting more in number by each day with having people from different age groups especially the younger generation. Theoretical researchers point out the necessity for mechanisms of controlling the media to keep proper age portrayal, moral storytelling, and proper handling of sensitive topics (Arya, 2023). In comparison to the traditional media formats OTT platforms give more space to creativity and have more flexibility in dealing with sensitive matters, however, there is still the need for strict regulation to avoid incidents of misinformation, exploitation, or dramatization especially in the case of portraying the already marginalized communities. Hence, the confinement of ethical scrutiny to one side along with the other side being the area of creative freedom is necessary to make sure that representation is always an empowering force and never a harmful one.

There are numerous amounts of limitations of this study, keeping aside the ways in which it helps to change the picture of the individuals who identify as LGBTQIA with the help of Bollywood movies. The current investigation has a major focus on Bollywood and consequently, it overlooks the regional film

industries' contribution, which often deals with the LGBTQIA+ topics in a more sophisticated and culturally specific manner. The study has considered various cultural and sociological aspects while representing LGBTQIA+, however, it still does not provide the full picture of those factors' complicated and layered interconnections. This gets magnified and true when we taken into consideration class, caste or religion. Moreover, the points of view from the industry specialists, the people who create content, and the LGBTQIA+ activists were not taken into account at all, thus the imposition of the limitation on insight concerning the decision-making level of production and advocacy-driven representation. Other area where this study lacks is that it doesn't take into regard other media like television shows, newspaper or article which also does contribute in bringing a positive or a negative change in the thought process of an individual around the spectrum of topics of LGBTQIA. To sum up, there exists a very limited number of empirical studies which have investigated the impact of Bollywood representations on the attitudes of young adults towards LGBTQIA+ identities, thus, calling for future research which would employ mixed methods, audience-based analyses, and longitudinal designs.

IV. CONCLUSION

This research presents a significant review of the transformations in the depiction of LGBTQIA+ characters in Bollywood and their active participation in modifying social views instead of passing them as the mere reflections. The study delineates the youth as the primary target group mainly supported by the role of films in the development of empathy, normalization and formation of attitudes during a critical period of growth. The historical background of Bollywood's hesitance towards LGBTQIA+ stories was mainly due to the society's conservativeness and the legal implications such as Section 377, which barred homosexual acts. The ruling of the Supreme Court in 2018 that non-violence in same-sex relations under the law was a significant watershed moment that made it possible to portray queer characters in a more direct and subtle manner within the legal framework of main street cinema.

The findings overall clearly indicate that there has been a transition from stereotypical and stigmatizing portrayals to more understanding and complicated

ones. It is not merely that the changes are signs of a society becoming more liberal that they contribute to public discourse by making the conversation more open and lessening the stigma and thus facilitating dialogue on sexual and gender diversity. Among these depictions, the most important ones are the ones that show characters as multi-faceted human beings rather than mere symbols or icons, hence the role of such portrayals in promoting acceptance is significant. The span of Bollywood's audience around the globe is a factor that only increases the reach and effect of the mentioned representations and puts the Indian film industry into the mix of global discussions on LGBTQIA+ rights and acceptance. Moreover, a new narrative of the OTT platforms as powerful and influential spaces emerges from this, having not only provided but continuously offering the audience a variety of narratives that are sustained, intersectional, and realistic, thus drawing the viewers more into the story and generating empathy through patience rendered exposure.

The research talks about many limitations as well, first of all the fact that this paper focuses around Bollywood and doesn't take into regard the effect that regional films play on the perceptions of the community and there is an immediate need to have more in depth analysis done and to know more about the ways in which colour, caste and religion have there effect on LGBTQIA illustrations in the public media. This paper highlights the ongoing battle to fight the taboos and stigmas and promoting inclusivity all together and pushing for a platform where everyone from the LGBTQIA community is welcomed and accepted. Might say that cinema, particularly the ones that are mainstream and OTT, is a significant cultural power that can influence the beliefs of young adults, create compassion, and even take normalization of queer identities. The future studies could also consider to critically analyze the authenticity when it comes to the casting, and thereby the predominance of cisgender actors in the queer roles, and then the impact on the representation ethics. It would be very helpful in the future to conduct comparative global analyses and audience-based empirical research which would include longitudinal and qualitative methods to further explore how exposure to media can translate into sustained attitude change. At the end of the day, the research backs the fact that responsible, intersectional, and authentic cinematic representation

helps to a large degree in creating a more just, inclusive, and socially-aware society.

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