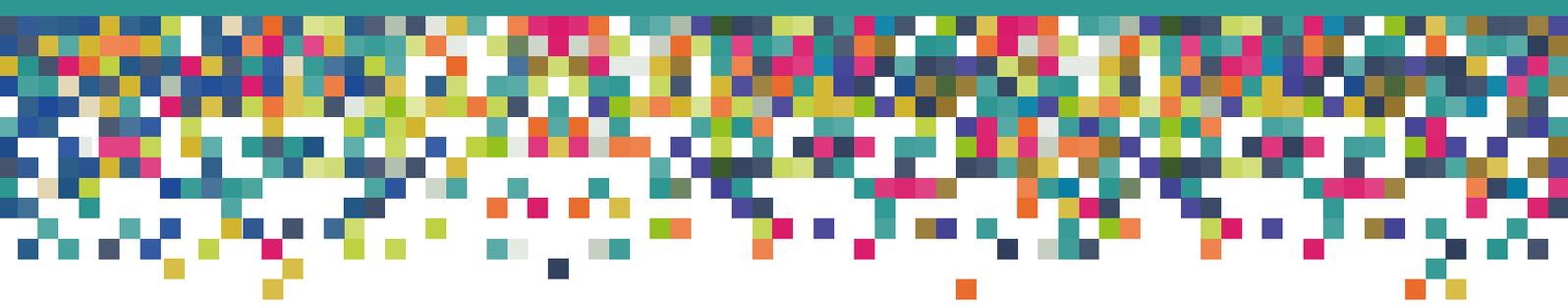




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What is the Norm?

A study of heteronormative representations in Bollywood

SAACHI BHATIA



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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to examine the way homophobia is discursively constructed in Bollywood films. By conducting a multimodal discourse analysis, the objective is to uncover semiotic and discourse practices which construct heterosexuality as a hegemonic ideology. Similarly, using the theory of symbolic power, this study investigates the meaning making capacity of cinematic representations, and how cultural identities are produced and maintained through its indiscernible influence. In other words, the purpose of this research is to ask: how does commercial Hindi cinema manage to sell a constant image of compulsory heterosexuality to the Indian audiences?

The findings of this paper indicate that even though Bollywood films depict homoerotic relationships, these pictures are constrained by an overarching patriarchal stronghold. Similarly, the observed multimodal signifiers in the film depict a specific cognitive pattern and mental model of heteronormativity. Besides, such a glorification of heterosexuality causes the so-called deviant sexualities to struggle for a voice and an equal representation. In such a case, all the analytical categories including national, social and cultural representations are studied to uncover how hetero-sexism is a constant and yet an unnoticed element in commercial Hindi films. Furthermore, the results of the study provide an image to the issues which prohibit sexual freedom as a fundamental right in the cultural landscape of India.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the history of Indian cinema Deepa Mehta's *'Fire'* (1996) is considered as a cultural landmark for its bold portrayal of lesbian desire. The film emerged when religious fundamentalism was rampant in Indian politics as the Bhartiya Janata Party, the Hindu nationalist party was assuming power. Similarly, Mehta's depiction of "female sexual desire" was objected for "disrupting the comfort levels of the so-called regular, family lives" (Bose, 2007: 250). Although, descriptions of sodomy in Kama Sutra¹ or references of lesbianism in Mahabharata² hint at an acceptance of 'transgressive sexualities' in ancient Indian philosophy, the postcolonial rhetoric focuses on narratives of citizenship based on a monolithic Hindu religious identity, communalism and patriarchal family values (Chase, 2012). In the same manner, it is unsurprising that Mehta's *'Fire'* faced vociferous criticism for employing names of reverent Hindu goddesses, 'Radha' and 'Sita' to depict a homoerotic relationship. Indeed, the traces of homosexual relationships found in Sanskrit texts are now perceived as ancient philosophy, and sexual freedom as an obstruction to the 'normal' discourse of heterosexuality.

Cinema plays a pivotal role in forming and maintaining 'cultural identities and representations' (Hall, 1997). In the case of India, Hindi cinema colloquially known as 'Bollywood' is the world's largest producer of films which reaches a massive audience not only in the country but also among the Indian diaspora (Jha, 2005). In the recent decades, critical studies of gender representations in Hindi movies have taken a forefront in academic research. This can be explained as contemporary feminists are interested in uncovering the frequently, taken-for-granted gender assumptions produced by the moving songs, appealing costumes and enticing plots of Hindi films. Besides, it is commonly acknowledged that gender identities in Bollywood are "formed and maintained within the simple binary of masculine and feminine sex roles" (Banaji, 2014:494). Likewise, other sexual identities are either marginalised or portrayed as deviant. Accordingly, representations for Hall (1997:28) are a "production of meaning through language". Here, language refers to a combination of semiotic signs which carry an ideological significance. Correspondingly, for feminists, such language signs are implicated in patriarchal principles and systems of oppression (Cameron, 1998). Therefore, a close analysis of Bollywood films is important to uncover how representations of 'hegemonic heterosexuality' (Rich, 1980) are discursively produced and maintained in India.

In Hindi cinema queer communities are 'hyper visible' (Narrain, 2004). This can be explained as representations of homosexuality in Bollywood fail to demarcate the lines which separate between-lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer, questioning, inter-gender, and asexual identities (LGBTQ+). In addition, there are two particular reasons for such a constricted portrayal: 1) there are less or no

¹ Kamasutra is an ancient Hindu book written by Vatsyayana Mallanaga (300–600 C.E.). It provides practical advice on human sexual behaviour and way of living.

² In the local version of the Hindu epic Mahabharata, such as Jamini Bharatam written in Kannada, a 'land of women' has been mentioned which is considered to be a reference to lesbian relationships.

references in the Hindi language to define the entire spectrum of homosexual identities (Gopinath, 1996), and 2) in India, hijra is the common name given to people of different sexual orientations (Reddy, 2007). To put it in perspective, hijra is an umbrella term employed for eunuchs, intersex and transgenders in India. Besides, they are considered to be auspicious in the Hindu religion, and are popular for their traditional role of conferring fertility to newly married couples (Kalra and Bhugra, 2015). Consequently, since movies are primarily a depiction of reality (Bateman and Schmidt, 2012), hijras usually feature in song and dance sequences due to their prescribed role of blessing celebrations (Bakshi, 2004). Additionally, it is not to say that mainstream cinema's representations of hijra identities cannot be stereotypical, but a formal designation through language allows their portrayals to pertain a certain socio-political significance.

Meanwhile, gay and lesbian representations are much more complex. This can be explained by certain key reasons. Firstly, gender is constantly reinforced due to the performance of conventional sex roles (Butler, 1988). Subsequently, sexuality develops as the cultural appropriation of what is naturally assumed to be a 'male' or a 'female' body, thus making any 'non-natural' sexual representations difficult. Secondly, same sex relationships contest the entire "matrix of heterosexuality" which includes not just "two bodies of the opposite sex" but a set of desires tied together through "rituals and socio-spatial practices" (Bell, 2009:115). In this sense, gay or lesbian portrayals are complicated because they challenge social institutions like marriage or family. Thirdly, the divides between heterosexuality and homosexuality are formed due to the established personal/national and traditional/modern constraints, which confounds sexual representations even further (Bose and Bhattacharya, 2007). In accordance to this end, my argument is that representations of homosexuality are regulated by the dominant discourse of heteronormativity. In queer studies, heteronormativity is assumed as an over empowering set of assumptions which considers heterosexuality as the only accepted form of sexuality (Bell, 2009:115). Furthermore, considering the reach of cinema, I aim to discuss that it is the 'symbolic power' of Bollywood which reinforces the normativity of the concept of heteronormativity.

Thereafter, by analysing Bollywood movies produced in the 2000's, this research aims at investigating how queer films employ heteronormativity to problematise or sustain heterosexuality, alternatively initiating a constricted idea about the lives and choices of lesbians or gays in the country. Besides, as Gopinath (1996) explains portrayals of homosexuality in Hindi movies are a product of constructed cultural, religious and national identities. In this sense, heteronormativity is a theoretically viable way to empirically study how homophobic images are maintained. Likewise, these representations are shaped by "cultural codes" of language, and regulated by the "field" of cinema which functions as an "illocutionary force" to maintain or subvert the social order (Hall, 1997; Bourdieu, 1991:170). In summation, this study aims at unpacking key theoretical concepts and conducting a multimodal

discourse analysis (Kress, 2011) to understand the preponderance of heterosexuality in Hindi films. Although, the purpose of this research is not to reveal any absolute truth about the overall character of Bollywood, it plans on merely offering an analytical possibility of preferential heterosexuality being a constant in Hindi movies. Nevertheless, if further research is dedicated on the topic, the researcher believes that it would be possible to more thoroughly investigate orthodox imaginaries associated with all sexual identities which are inherent in the concept of heteronormativity.

2 CONTEXT

Before delving into the theoretical concepts that underpin the study, this section provides a brief overview of the current socio-political status of homosexuality in India, which contextualises the proceeding discussions.

2.1 Sexual politics in India: the present face of the anti-sodomy law

India's struggle for sexual rights reached its peak with a widespread public outrage to repel Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, commonly referred to as the 'anti-sodomy' clause, and the granting of citizenship rights to people of all sexual orientations. Being a Victorian tenant of the colonial era, Section 377 criminalises sodomy or unnatural sex practices. But even after the Independence, Indian conservative groups consider it to be a part of the country's heritage, thus referring to "gay sex to be against the order of nature" (Wieringa, 2015:44).

Efforts to repel the 'anti-sodomy' law began in 2001 when the Naz Foundation, which focused on gay men's health problems, challenged the constitutional validity of Section 377. This move mobilised various sections of the population living "non-normative lives" including 'hijras' (transgender), 'kothis' (cross-dressers), lesbians and gays (Wieringa, 2012). Even though Naz foundation's campaign clearly had a male leadership, previous controversies surrounding the film *'Fire'* brought vulnerable lesbian groups to equally participate in the movement (Sharma, 2008). After a tedious legal battle, on 2 July 2009, the Delhi High Court ruled that consensual sex between adults was legal. Similarly, on the basis of 'inclusiveness' being an underlying theme of the Indian Constitution the 'anti-sodomy' law was repealed. But the struggle soon came to a standstill as on 11 December 2013, India's Supreme Court reversed Delhi High Court's decision. Consequently, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 377 cannot be classified as a violation of human rights and can only be repealed or amended by the Indian parliament. In conclusion, it can be said that criminalisation of homosexuality in India is a product of 'postcolonial amnesia', which is still practiced due to the continuing legitimacy of the "patriarchal, post-independence political elite" (Wieringa, 2015: 45).

3 THEORETICAL CHAPTER

In order to adequately assess heteronormative representations in Hindi cinema, this study is grouped in the scholarship on cultural representation and identity, symbolic power, heteronormativity and passionate aesthetics. Together, these concepts comprise the study's key analytical categories. Similarly, an attempt is made to explain these concepts from the avenue of cinema, particularly Bollywood, in order to ensure a holistic empirical research. Moreover, it is important to point out that most of these theories are of Western origin, thus references or examples are given from Indian academic research to situate them for this dissertation.

3.1 Cultural representation and identity

In sociology, culture is "shared values of a group or society" where meanings are produced through language (Hall, 1997:2). Simultaneously, representation is referred to how these meanings are exchanged between people of a common culture (Hall, 1997:15). Besides, the process of representation allows us to denote the connections between the 'real-world' and an 'imaginary' world of objects (Harman, 2016). This can be explained as meanings are constructed in language through two "systems of representation" (Hall et al., 1997). Firstly, representation shapes 'mental pictures' or 'signifying codes' which allow us to conceptualise the meanings of our thoughts and words, and helps us make sense of our everyday lives. Secondly, representations include different ways of organising and arranging concepts. In this sense, abstract concepts including love and war are given substance through representation. In the context of our study, theory of representation is particularly interesting. This can be explained as cultural representations are nothing but the "best that has been thought and said in the society" (Hall, 1997:2). Moreover, as Mackay (1997) postulated, all forms of art including films are a part of a 'mass culture' which create a 'mental image', and allows us to comprehend existing connections between things, people and objects.

According to Hall (1989:36) there are two ways of thinking about cultural identity. On one hand, it can be seen as what people with a common history and ancestry hold close to themselves. In this sense, identities are formed out of shared experiences which builds the society as "one people". On the other hand, identities can be seen as a "process of becoming". Such as the discontinuities in history are acknowledged and 'identity' is referred to as the "positions people assume within narratives of the past". Likewise, when explaining about the Third World cinema and particularly in regard to Caribbean movies, Hall (1989:71) points at some negative and positive implications of cinematic representations of cultural identities. In the positive sense, cinematic portrayals of identities employ a "vector of similarity and continuity", which perpetuates a common compassion for colonial history, hence evoking a sense of belonging to one's culture (Turner, 2004). Whereas, in the negative sense,

cultural hegemony developed due to these regimes of knowledge formation: only causing the dominant discourse to be represented (Detel, 1996).

Conversely, an application of Stuart Hall's views on cinematic representations and cultural identity can be seen when analysing Bollywood representations. In the case of India, there are two main eras of filmmaking: post 1947 after the country attained Independence and post 1991 which was the period of economic liberalisation (Ayob and Keuris, 2017). After the independence, Hindi cinema constructed narratives based on myth and history to evoke a common 'national identity', and the West was depicted as the 'other' (Gooptu, 2011). Also, the masses enjoyed a formulaic representation in films which were fashioned on certain stereotypes (Hemphill, 1998:177). In other words, most of the movies comprised of the following: "a romantic storyline, a comedy track, an average of six songs, and a conclusion in which the hero restores the moral or social order" (Prasad, 1998:31). Besides, with an underlining theme to construct a "nationalist imaginary", specific ideas about the "family, patriarchal regimes, notions of an 'ideal' woman and loyalty to ancient traditions" were portrayed (Virdi, 2003:7). Alternatively, after the economic liberalisation and the subsequent growth of the Indian diaspora, even though Bollywood filmmakers were no longer compelled to defend the nationalist project, films continued to depict "distinct national identities" by employing innovative storylines (Desai, 2004). Likewise, it is not surprising that in *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* or DDLJ (Chopra, 1995), being one of the largest earners in the Indian film history, Indianness was highlighted as a superior trait (Ayob and Keuris, 2017). Furthermore, it can be said that even though contemporary Bollywood films may sometimes deviate from the set dichotomies of "tradition/modernity, Indian/western, and spiritual/material", they mostly construct an "imaginative nationalism" to ensure a sense of familiarity with ones' cultural identity (Hall, 1989; Ganti, 2004:3).

3.2 Symbolic power

Power can manifest itself in multiple ways, both explicit and implicit (Hutchings, 2008). Even though the explicit forms of power such as the bureaucratic conditions imposed by the state, and the material capacity of businesses and industry (Fanon, 1952) can enable us to understand how Bollywood films are made, for this research project, the implicit forms of power, like the 'symbolic power' are more empirically interesting. This can be explained as symbolic power is the form of "power which is misrecognisable or taken for granted" (Bourdieu, 1991:170). In this sense, the roots of symbolic power lie in other forms of power. It has the potential to "impede in the course of events, and influence actions of others by means of production and transmission of symbolic forms" (Thompson, 1995:17). Subsequently, for Silverstone (2006) media output is a primary attribute of these "symbolic forms", and Couldry (2003:4) supports this argument by giving a "stronger" definition to the theory of symbolic power. In this sense, the concentration of symbolic forms by the different media, such as television, radio or press, is so enormous that they dominate the cultural landscape, and naturalise or

normalise the represented cultural forms. In contrast, a missing link in Couldry's argument was a discussion on cinema's symbolic capacity. However, following Masrani's (2016:19) assertion that cinematic representations are "intrinsically bound to produce power", the theory of symbolic power is vital for this research to build on how Hindi movies promote or denounce heteronormativity.

According to Acuto (2010:273), if symbolic power is understood as a "pervasive force which manages to dictate and guide the ways in which the social world is constructed, it is the 'symbols' of language, image and built space that form the core of human interaction". Likewise, according to the Gramscian (Morton, 1971) notion of hegemony, these 'symbols' are grounded in real social conditions which make it difficult for us to understand the dialectic relationship between ideology and reality. Additionally, Mulhern (2017:433) suggests that cinematic representations help us make sense of these dispersed 'symbols', and by employing technical and literal narration tools, induce a sense of wonder and deeper our beliefs in already set ideologies. Similarly, Bollywood can be said to pertain symbolic power because of two concrete reasons. On one hand, Hindi films are "escapist fantasies" and in accordance with Appadurai's (1996) argument, they form "communities of sentiment", namely "groups that share the same feelings and imaginings" (Takhar et al., 2012:267). Also, due to Bollywood's common trend of "reaffirming pride in Indian heritage and evoking a sense of romance and longing", fiction in Hindi cinema manages to quietly and continuously seep into everyday realities (Takhar et al., 2012: 268). On the other hand, Hindi films can be said to possess a symbolic power because of its 'bourgeois' character (Dwyer, 2007). For instance, by following Bourdieu's (1985) concept of 'taste', Dwyer (2007:227-229) suggests that India's "national bourgeoisie has created one hegemonic version of the Indian culture". In this sense, the bourgeois aesthetic is recognised as the legitimate culture and since the middle classes strive to attain social recognition or status, the taste of the dominant class is the preferred cultural taste. It is not to say that the Hindi films are not made to entertain the middle classes but most of these films propagate notions of "social mobility, fantasies of wealth or ideas of consumerism linked with romance". Simultaneously, it is not surprising that the biggest movie of 2006, *Lage Raho Munnabhai*, managed to connect with all classes and ages because it portrayed Gandhian values in an urban setting (Hirani, 2006). Thus, it was a "crossover" film which addressed "middle class values" while managing to fulfil the necessary box office requirements (Dwyer, 2007:228). To conclude, in the words of Nandy (1998:12), post-Independence commercial Hindi cinema has established its cultural hegemony by its "unique stylisation, conventions and mannerisms" which the lower classes aspire, and the upper middle classes have constructed.

3.3 Heteronormativity and passionate aesthetics

Since the focus of this project is to understand representations of homosexuality in Hindi cinema, this section attempts to explain the concept of heteronormativity and establish its relevance in the context of this dissertation. Besides, the term passionate aesthetics is employed to explain the value judgments attached to heteronormativity, and comment on why heterosexuality is considered to have a universal value. Additionally, this section concludes by giving a brief account of current representations of homosexuality in Hindi cinema, and how an analysis of heteronormativity in Bollywood would improve our understanding about Indian homosexual identity representations.

As defined in the introductory section, heteronormativity is an ideology which considers heterosexuality as the only accepted human behaviour. But in much nuanced terms, heteronormativity is a tool to analyse how assumptions regarding general gender structures are constituted in the everyday conventions of the society (Johansson and Herz, 2015). Besides, such a phenomenon of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Rich, 1980) questions the regularity of daily lives, including the laws and regulations which make up categories of a 'man' or a 'woman' (Chevrette, 2013). Indeed, since sexuality is considered a personal (private) rather than a political (public) affair, heteronormativity challenges the position of family and marriage as traditional sovereign institutions to control sexuality (Foucault, 1976; Chloë, 2012). Additionally, it questions why non-normative lifestyles including same sex marriages, sex work or widow remarriages are not readily accepted (Wieringa, 2015). In particular, heteronormativity does not consider power in static terms but observes how its cultural character is constantly influenced by factors of ethnicity, race or class (Johansson and Herz, 2015). Likewise, heteronormativity aims at critiquing what Butler (2005) calls the 'lived life'. In this sense, as Fangen (2010) explains, rather than considering heterosexuality as a utopia, it targets the body of discursive practices which ensures its hegemonic power.

Through the aforementioned explanations, it is clear that heterosexuality is shaped by intersecting social variables which differ according to location (Wieringa, 2012). Besides, in order to understand the impact of heteronormativity in Asia, Saskia Wieringa (2015) conducted an extensive ethnographic research in Indonesia and India. Accordingly, the term 'passionate aesthetics' was coined to elaborate the effects of hegemonic heterosexuality in South Asia. To put it in perspective, here the word 'aesthetics' is employed to refer to a set of moralities which come to be understood as common sense (Kant, 1997; Foucault, 1986). Similarly, the word 'passionate' is used to stress at a system of erotic desires and sexualities. Hence, overall the phrase 'passionate aesthetics' signifies the salient power of all the institutions, dynamics and motivations which promotes an ideological dominance of heterosexuality (Wieringa, 2015). In the case of India, the concept of passionate aesthetics is important to understand heterosexuality. Besides, it enables to comprehend 'how' and 'why' non-normative lifestyles face violence both in the physical and symbolic sense. Also, Wieringa's (2012 and 2015)

research is seminal to apprehend how the passionate aesthetics of heteronormativity can be subverted. In this sense, since heterosexuality is an overpowering ideology, it can only be subverted through certain symbolic acts: 1) claiming a sexual voice, 2) achieving economic independence, or 3) finding sexual partners (Wieringa, 2012: 527). Moreover, passionate aesthetics of heteronormativity can be referred to as a constant process of expulsion and subjugation; they expel those who do not conform to its processes, and silences those within its core group into subjectivity (Wieringa, 2015: 34). Thus, it is only through symbolic subversion that an internal cohesion of heteronormativity can be deconstructed.

Before operationalising this research, it is important to understand the current representations of homosexuality in Bollywood, and in what ways an analysis of heteronormativity could contribute to the prevailing discourse. In particular, for Gopinath (2000:285) homosexuality in Bollywood is represented through three analytical categories: "*Sexing the Sisterhood*, *Budd(y)ing the Boyfriend*, and "*Hijras and Homos*". Firstly, by "*Sexing the Sisterhood*", Gopinath (2000:285) refers to the portrayal of "female homosociality and female homoeroticism". This can be explained as even though love or affection amongst women is a common depiction in Hindi movies, it is often confined to women specific places such as brothels, women's prisons or middle-class households. Similarly, many a times this 'love' is projected as friendship or shown as a product of conjugal neglect. For instance, in the movie '*Fire*' (Mehta, 1992) an attraction triggered between the two sister in-laws because they were unhappy with their husbands (Chase, 2012:145). Secondly, "*Budd(y)ing the Boyfriend*", refers to representations of male homosociality and homoeroticism. In contrast to the portrayal of female bonding, images of male bonding projects some form of 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 2005). Such as in the movie '*Dostana*' (Mansukhani, 2008), which is considered to be the first romantic comedy with direct homosexual references in commercial Hindi cinema, two friends were 'pretending' to be gay to win the same woman's attention (Rizwan, 2014). Subsequently, gay relationships are reduced to comic innuendoes, or shown as a way to cement 'masculine' friendships (Gopinath, 2009). Lastly, "*Hijras and Homos*", refers to the depiction of "perverse sexualities on screen" (Gopinath, 2000:294). Since hijras are the recognised 'third gender', representations of hijras are often confused with other sexual orientations. Similarly, non-heteronormative desires often end up being depicted in the absence of 'gays' or 'lesbians'. For the purpose of our study, these descriptions operate as a starting point to analyse heterosexuality in Hindi cinema. Consequently, through a thorough analysis of heteronormativity in Bollywood, semiotic and discursive meanings of these representations can be deciphered. Furthermore, a comprehensive analysis of queer movies would allow us to understand the relevance of the social and institutional aesthetics of heteronormativity, and how these representations obstruct sexual freedom in the country.

4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

In summary, the aim of the theoretical chapter was to give a scholastic background on the symbolic power of Bollywood which produces stereotypical, heteronormative representations. After having contextualised the gay rights movement in India throughout the literature, a three-fold agenda was realised.

Firstly, the aim was to explain the key theories relevant to this study. This includes the concept of representation which is the primary medium through which meanings are exchanged in language (Hall, 1979). Also, the notion of cultural identity framed how identities keep on shifting, thus formed and transformed based on ways in which the society gets represented (Hall, 1987). Besides, Bourdieu's (1998) idea of symbolic power highlighted how the structure of the media field maintains or disrupts the social order. Additionally, the concept of heteronormativity was introduced to frame the current positioning of homosexuality in India; how it is represented and the structural barriers of family, patriarchy and religion which controls its freedom.

Secondly, the agenda was to contextualise all the aforementioned theories from the preview of film studies, especially Hindi commercial cinema. This brought out certain constraints of the literature as most of it is of Western origin. But various Indian academics and their research on Hindi movies was cited to understand why critical studies in gender representations is necessary. Such as due to Bollywood's massive reach it produces "distinct national identities" (Desai, 2004) but because 'Indianness' is associated with masculinity, the discourse of hegemonic heterosexuality is assumed to be the superior one. Besides, the symbolic power of popular Hindi cinema is apparent because movies are considered as "escapist fantasies" (Takhar et al., 2012) and therefore they end up selling misguided ideas of gay and lesbian 'friendships' and confusing them with 'hijra' sexual identities. As such, there are virtually no studies which investigate the overarching perception of heteronormativity, which controls the cinematic representations of gay and lesbian sexual identities in India.

Lastly, this dissertation aims to fill the gaps and contribute to the literature. This is done by not looking at heteronormativity as a blanket concept but by uncovering its nuances in the context of South Asia. Such as by looking at gay and lesbian representations in Hindi films, its goal is to establish the difference between sexual and gender identities and how films perpetuate such misunderstandings. Likewise, by employing a combination of queer and cinematic theories, an interdisciplinary research is initiated to discover the impact of society's sovereign institutions and how they manage to control sexual freedom in the country. Also, the larger objective is to connote the implicit and explicit meanings of Hindi cinematic representations which are an imagery of real

conditions of homosexuality, and thus end up shaping a deeper understanding of sexual rights in the country.

On the basis of the above, the objective of this paper is to explore:

How does the symbolic power of Bollywood produce and maintain heteronormative representations?

5 METHODOLOGY

In order to properly choose the method of analysis, I have carefully deconstructed the research question above:

5.1 What is the context of the research question?

The research question has been formulated after a literature review dedicated to the context of this dissertation: heteronormative representations in Bollywood. As previously explained, lesbian and gay sexual identities in India are the repository of cultural, religious and national identities (Chase, 2012). In other words, sexuality is constrained and regulated in the country. Also, considering the popularity of Bollywood, cinematic representations are sites of unrecognisable power (Bourdieu, 1991) which produce heteronormative meanings, and thus discernibly promote a hetero-patriarchal discourse.

5.2 Which methods will shape the analysis?

Depending on the key theories in the conceptual framework, the following section explains the research methodologies to be applied for this study. Moreover, following the methodology of Rizwan (2014) in "Multimodal signs in (non)- heteronormative discourse of transnational Hindi cinema: the case study of Hindi film *Dostana*", the focus will be on discursive representations such as the spoken and written material, thereby encouraging this study to employ a multimodal discourse analysis (MMDA).

Theoretically, discourse analysis evaluates the language of mass media for producing knowledge and subjectivity (Fairclough, 1995). But in MMDA, language is looked at three-dimensionally being an amalgamation of multiple features including gestures, speech, writing or music (Kress, 2011:38). Similarly, since the focus of this study is on cinematic representations, according to Bateman and Schmidt (2012), MMDA is an ideal methodology. This can be explained as movies are a combination

of 'multimodal signifiers' (Rizwan, 2014). In this sense, films involve two key metafunctions: 1) ideational metafunctions which are responsible for constructing the composition of the movie, and 2) intertextual metafunctions which causes one semiotic feature to depend on another (Rose, 2001:136). In other words, symbolic power of cinematic representations is expressed in varied ways. Likewise, analysing the spoken word alone is not sufficient to interpret social interactions, thus necessitating a study which looks at films like a "multimodal semiotic entity" and integrates categories of discourse and visual analysis (Kress, 2011:37).

As explained, MMDA in films aims to interpret cultural meanings and its associated semiotic expressions (Jewitt, 2009). However, there is no set coding frame for conducting a multimodal study. But an explicit requirement to look at text three-dimensionally and investigate the expression of power and knowledge in and through its expressed language (Kress, 2011). With this regard, for this study a combination of historical discourse analysis (Wodak, 2001) and visual semiotic analysis (Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001) will be employed. To explain coherently, such an historical approach to discourse analysis is multi-methodical in nature. Such as it analyses information by integrating the available knowledge about historical sources, and the socio-political context in which discursive meanings were produced (Wodak, 2001:65). Subsequently, a Barthian semiotic approach to visual analysis is "concerned with a play of meanings based on a scientific analysis of language's rules and regulations" (Hall, 1997:43). Therefore, such a multimodal approach would treat cinematic text as one connected cultural resource, and give a comprehensive account of its symbolic power (Kress, 2011).

Conversely, since the objective of this research is to interpret heteronormative representations in cinema, a discourse analysis which allows to understand how a homophobic language is considered to be natural or consensual is an ideal methodology (Fairclough, 1995). However, within discourse analysis, an historical approach is adopted because in this research we are investigating complex "multimodal film signifiers which are employed within discursive struggle of heteronormativity in the Indian historic-socio-cultural environment where homosexual discourses are slowly developing" (Rizwan, 2014:180). To put it simply, since the focus of investigation are discourses of mythology and the LGBTQ struggle in India, it is vital to embed the cinematic representations in a wider frame of socio-historical processes and circumstances to decode their meanings (Wodak, 2001: 65). Besides, in film studies visual methodologies are important to connote the narrative and composition of moving images, and interpret their cultural significance (Hall, 1997:43). In summation, in order to interpret the discourse of 'hegemonic heterosexuality' (Rich, 1980), it is necessary to investigate the production and configuration of heteronormativity which is depicted to be natural in Hindi cinema.

5.3 Why not other methods?

There are a variety of reasons why other methodologies were not adopted. Firstly, within discourse analysis, a critical discourse analysis (CDA), could have been conducted considering that it is “attentive to silences” and helps to engage with what is “not” said in text (Gill, 1996:146). But it was rejected because it is a context specific approach and cannot be used to understand the relevance of universal processes (Gill, 1996). Comparatively, an historical approach to discourse analysis is multilayered and considers the “dialectical relationship between different fields of actions including historical institutional frames and social structures” (Wodak, 2001:66). Secondly, on a pragmatic level, interviews were avoided because due to the prevalence of the anti-sodomy law, people in India are usually reluctant to talk about their sexual orientations. Thirdly, although content analysis could have enabled a systematic examination of broader trends in Bollywood films, it was rejected because within its scope it would have been difficult to analyse the representational discourse, as it “eventually views texts as artifacts rather than social constructs” (Thomas, 1994: 684). Lastly, other qualitative methodologies such as on-site ethnographic research which ensures first-hand observations could have been useful. But in the light of financial constraints, this was refuted as reaching out to Bollywood filmmakers or homosexual audiences both would have been difficult. Thus, since the focus of this research is to uncover how homosexuality is framed in India, it was neither possible, nor deemed necessary to conduct an ethnographic research.

Despite the various advantages listed above, the two methods within MMDA do have certain shortfalls. On one hand, an historical approach to discourse analysis is interested in finding the real reasons behind social issues (Wodak, 1997). To put it in perspective, according to Wodak (2001: 66), when any macro topic is investigated such as “unemployment”, an historical approach will be interested in uncovering its sub-topics such as “market, trade unions or social welfare”. In the same manner, investigating all the relevant socio-historical guiding principles in the language, problematises existing contradictions in the internal structure of the text, and thus makes analysis a cumbersome process. Also, it is complicated to find or discuss all the sub-topics of a phenomenon when conducting an historical discourse analysis. On the other hand, in terms of visual semiotics, there is no right way of “looking” at the text (Lister and Wells, 2001:64). In this sense, the analysis is conducted by the researcher’s interpretation of the semiotic meanings they discover when studying an image, thus influenced by their subject positioning.

Nonetheless, at an earlier stage of this research, a social semiotic approach to visual analysis and CDA was attempted. Independently, according to the research question, these methods failed to address questions of “form, production, reception and meanings while taking account of historical institutions, and ideological discourses” (Lister and Wells, 2001:90). Furthermore, in order to overcome the drawbacks of this pilot, an MMDA approach was adopted because it ensures a greater

room for interpretative analysis. Thereafter, with the help of a multimodal method, the researcher had the freedom to employ both historical theories and semiotic tools to investigate a sensitive issue of homosexuality in the context of an Indian socio-political environment.

5.4 Reflexivity

According to Malterud (2001) reflexivity is to acknowledge the presence of the researcher and how their background affects findings. Being an Indian researcher, I have had experience interacting with homosexual men and women in the country. Besides, as a former Political Sciences student of an acclaimed feminist college in Delhi, I was exposed to dialogue on Section 377 and understood the ordeals of gay students being unable to express their sexual freedom. Similarly, at the University I met gay students who were Bollywood enthusiasts but were disappointed by the stereotypical representations. Correspondingly, my background can result in two simultaneous effects. On one hand, it could promote a researcher bias; and on the other hand, my inherent awareness of the context could ensure a way to bridge scholarly gaps (Boyatzis, 1998). Nevertheless, in order to address possible biases, this research has adopted multiple semiotic tools and historical theories to ensure that objectivity is maintained in the interpretation of results.

6 RESEARCH DESIGN

6.1 Selection of data

Bollywood is a vast field of study so depending on the research question, selection of data was done according to a selected number of factors.

Firstly, as mentioned in the introduction, all the films were chosen which were produced in or after the 2000's as the struggle to repeal the anti-sodomy began in 2001 and came to a standstill in 2013. Similarly, following the LGBTQ movement, heated conversations about sexual freedom were initiated in the country. Moreover, since the objective is to study 'how heteronormative representations are *produced* and *maintained* in Hindi films,' the data mainly comprised of films which stirred the most public response with regards to the queer movement.

Secondly, it is important to point, that even though Bollywood is largely a Hindi speaking medium; a lot of scenes selected for analysis were bi-lingual, including phrases in English and Hindi. Coincidence and necessity explains this phenomenon. It is true that most of the mainstream Indian films are coincidentally in English because Bollywood caters to a nationwide population of people speaking different languages and dialects and as a cultural legacy of colonisation, English remained one of the official languages in the country. English is in-fact spoken more widely, in some areas, than Hindi (Rao, 2010). Whereas, using a bi-lingual sample of analysis was necessary, considering the

scope of this research, as it is submitted to an international, predominantly English-speaking institute. Even though the researcher has given translations wherever necessary, it is important to point that cultural meanings are often lost in translations (Fenna et al.,2010), thus making it important for the analysis rather than the translations to be read at face value.

Lastly, as explained in the previous sections, the sample is concentrated to films depicting lesbian and gay sexual identities. Since queer films are a recent phenomenon in the country, hijras being a complex yet a traditionally constructed identity is occasionally the center of attention in songs (Chakravorty, 2007). However, in order to analyse all the multimodal features of Hindi movies, focus was kept on specific sexual identities. Also, previously there has been extensive research done on hijra identities (Kalra and Bhugra, 2015), and in an effort to introduce something new to the field, representation of gays and lesbians were discussed.

While collecting data for this research, over twenty films were viewed and considering the aforementioned points, the following scenes were decided for analysis:

In order to analyse how lesbianism is portrayed, the film 'Margarita with a Straw' was chosen (Maniyar and Bose, 2014). Similarly, the two scenes from the movie (53:17-55:13 and 1:00:29-2:02:53) are representative of how sexuality is controlled by the family (Foucault, 1971). In particular, this movie was analysed because it an unconventional transnational Hindi film (Felperin, 2014). In this sense, it is a Sundance-funded film about an Indian woman with cerebral palsy who falls in love with a blind girl. Moreover, in the case of this study, this film functions as an interesting data because it depicts not just a taboo topic of women's sexuality, but a less covered issue of disabled sexuality.

Next, to understand the common confusion between sexual and gender identities, two scenes (2:50-3:10; 20:43-21:71) from the film 'Bombay Talkies' (Johar, 2013) were studied. Besides, this film was an important component of the sample because it is directed by Karan Johar, India's first gay director (Ghosh, 2017). Thus, apart from being a seminal film produced to celebrate hundred years of Bollywood, it gave a first-hand representation of how a gay filmmaker views the queer struggle in India.

In addition, two scenes (1:14:51-1:21:18 and 1:22:27-1:26:29) from the movie 'Aligarh' (Mehta, 2016) were examined. Likewise, this movie was observed because it is based on the real-life story of Professor Shrinivas Ramchandra Siras of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), who was illegally suspended for being gay. Consequently, this is an important movie because it depicted not just the fundamental issues associated with criminalisation of homosexuality but the everyday discrimination faced by a gay man.

Therefore, the sample is collected in such a manner that all prevalent discourses of heteronormativity are covered: 1) *personal* related to problems of coming out of the closet, 2) *gender* related to it often being tangled with sexuality, and 3) *national* related to issues associated with Section 377 or the illegality of homosexuality.

6.2 Design of research tools

In order to apply the proposed combination of discourse historical approach and visual semiotics within MMDA, work of Kress (2011) and Rizwan (2014) was consulted. Drawing upon the work of these two academic's I have developed my own guide to conduct a multimodal analysis on movies.

To operationalise the methodology, an all-inclusive framework was devised based on Wodak's (2001) three-dimensional model. Besides, the visual semiotic approach, which supports this study, does not consist of a defined template for analysing moving images (Kress and Leeuwen, 2001). But for the purpose of this research, visual tools help in an "open and closed viewing" (Collier, 2001:39-40). In this sense, visual analysis enables the researcher to observe all the "signs" in the collected data, and recognise the corresponding discourse perpetuation. Thus, for a comprehensive analysis, key elements of visual methodologies were incorporated in the results, as well as in Table 1.

Before analysing the data, initial observations were annotated based on the categories developed according to the MMDA table (appendix A). Similarly, after transcribing the scenes, and considering them in conjunction with the theoretical chapter, three common representations were identified, whose interpretation and analysis will be subsequently discussed:

1. Family as the sovereign power
2. Convergence of sexuality and gender
3. Symbolic violence of coming out of the closet

Table 1: Methodological Framework

Multimodal Critique	Framework/Assumptions	Operationalization of semiotic and discourse features
Immanent	<p>“It looks at the inherit, immediate and internal meaning-making potential of an utterance or a discreet linguistic item” (Rizwan, 2014:188).</p> <p>“It looks at the inconsistencies, paradoxes and dilemmas in the internal structure of the text” (Wodak, 2001:65).</p> <p>“In films, visual signs comprising of gestures, body language, facial expressions of the characters and music which add certain connotations and implications to the verbal signs are observed” (Rizwan, 2014: 191).</p>	<p>“Identify presuppositions, connotations, implications in the text” (Rizwan, 2014:188).</p> <p>“Recognise representational semiotic features such as vectors (an imaginary diagonal line which shows contact between characters); active and passive agents; and the salient features of colour and music” (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001).</p>
Socio-diagnostic		<p>“Identify rhetorical devices and figurative language such as irony,</p>

	<p>“It looks at the intertextual and discursive relationship between utterances” (Wodak, 2001:67)</p> <p>“It considers the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts, within which the discursive practices are embedded” (Wodak, 2001:67)</p> <p>“In films, vocalization of the discourse and in what manner undertones and overtones of the text, and modes of significations are observed” (Rizwan, 2014:191).</p>	<p>metaphors, tropes, rhetorical questions and repetition” (Charteris-Black, 2014: 41-41).</p> <p>“Analyse the overall composition of the scene; observe the setting and the ‘information value’ or the placement of elements in the scene” (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001).</p>
<p>Prognostic</p>	<p>“It provides scope for the transformation and overall improvement of communication” (Wodak, 2001:65)</p> <p>“It functions as guidelines for avoiding sexist language use” (Kagel et al., 1997 in Wodak, 2001:65).</p> <p>“In films, the overall framing of the scene, whether it portrays a negative or a positive outlook is observed” (Rizwan, 2014:198).</p>	<p>“Analyse the overall framing of the scene; recognise the discontinuities, disconnections or contrasts which can be easily visible” (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001:150)</p> <p>“Observe whether it is a negative or a positive frame, and the ‘modality’ or the ‘reality value’ of the picture” (Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001: 151).</p>

7 RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

7.1 Family as the sovereign power

In the literature review, it was established that family is one of the passionate aesthetics of heteronormativity (Wieringa, 2012). Besides, according to Foucault, family is conferred with sovereign power because it is a “solid and a static” institution (Chloë, 2012:80). Similarly, it is common for Bollywood films to depict conservative stories about patriarchal family structures (Gopinath, 2000). In this research, ‘family as the sovereign power’ was a constant theme noticed throughout all the data collected. However, it was most poignant in the two scenes from ‘Margarita with a Straw’ (Bose and Maniyar, 2014): 1) where the protagonist, Laila, was caught watching lesbian porn by her mother, and 2) where Laila was talking to her partner, Khanum, about coming out to their parents. Furthermore, given below is an analysis of both the scenes from the lens of family being one of the passionate aesthetics of heteronormativity.

7.2 Scene I: Laila is caught watching porn (53:17-55:13)

This scene opens by setting a confrontational tone. Such as the mother is found glaring at an immobile Laila. Besides, close head shots are taken to single out each of the characters, thus avoiding presenting them in a united frame (Jewitt and Leeuwen, 2001). Similarly, the protagonist is placed at a frontal angle which is a direct reference of her vulnerability, and there is no music to highlight the monotony of the scene (Kress and Leeuwen, 2011). Additionally, these semiotic components can be explained in conjunction with their respective discourse critique. In this sense, an immanent critique (Wodak, 2001) would be that it explicitly associates a woman’s morality with her sexual freedom (Grosz, 2011). To put it in perspective, through the dialogue, “*What has happened to you? Studies? Surfing porn sites is studying!*”, a personal matter of sexuality is depicted as a political matter by the mother, who is the representative of the family in this instance. This can be explained as the sovereign power of the family is instituted by birth, and its disciplinary regimes are perceived to be the ideal code of conduct (Foucault, 1979). Consequently, since the family acts as one unit, privacy of individual members often gets compromised, and matters end up becoming of political or public interest (Chloë, 2012). For instance, when Laila challenged her mother, “*How dare you!? This is my privacy!*”, the matriarch’s stronghold was established by threatening violence: “*Privacy! You want privacy from me. I will slap you if you talk to me like that*”. In contrast, this scene has a much stronger socio-diagnostic critique (Wodak, 2001). This is clear as an undertone of the picture is the mother’s clear ignorance about Laila watching ‘lesbian porn’. Simultaneously, sex is assumed to be heterosexual, and the mother does not delve deeper into the topic. Also, such an implicit assumption about heterosexuality is disguised through an overtone of fear of a woman’s sexual awareness which is represented as an issue to be immediately suppressed. Furthermore, the scene’s prognostic critique can be said to be negative (Wodak, 2001).

This can be explained as the dark tones of the shot create an overall gloomy picture and the scene ends abruptly, thus hinting at the fact that conversations regarding sexuality are contentious in nature.

7.3 Scene II: Leila and Khanum talk about coming out to their parents (1:00:29-2:02:53)

In this scene representation of the family's sovereign power is depicted as an invisible or symbolic power (Foucault, 1979). In particular, this scene is important because even though both Laila and her partner are not living with their parents, they are apprehensive of their families finding out about their sexual orientations. Similarly, this scene opens with the picture of a park where both the characters are conversing about their experience of coming out of the closet. Besides, Khanum has already confronted her parents and Laila is seeking advice to do the same. In terms of the semiotic features (Kress and Leeuwen, 2001), a close-up shot is taken of both the heroines individually, when they are relating their stories, to make sure that it resonates well with the viewers. Likewise, the composition of the scene corresponds well with the blissful tone of the scene. In this sense, both Khanum and Laila are wearing bright colours, and even though the scene is not shot in a single frame, there is an 'imaginary contact' between the two people. This can be explained as there is a presence of a 'strong vector' which gives an impression that they are gazing in each other's direction (Jewitt and Leeuwen, 2001). Additionally, these semiotic features can help to deduce the discourse critiques of the scene:

Firstly, the immanent critique (Wodak, 2001) of this scene is apparent from Khanum's dialogue: *"Lie every day and die under guilt for hours. It just wasn't my thing. So, I told them"*. In the sense, the information foregrounded by the second lead is that staying inside the closet was suffocating. Whereas, the backgrounded information was that her parents were not cooperative, sent her for counselling and deemed her unfit. Besides, here comic references were employed to downplay the seriousness of the conversation, thus establishing the family's heteronormative views. Besides, the statement: *"For me, I just like to be who I am all the time"*, is a direct reference how hetero-patriarchal norms can be symbolically subverted. In this sense, claiming a sexual voice corresponds to attaining independence (Wieringa, 2012). Moreover, in contrast to the protagonist, Khanum is wearing red lipstick which is a salient visual feature (Jewitt and Leeuwen, 2001), and signifies her bold stand on expressing her sexuality.

Secondly, the socio-diagnostic critique of the scene can be understood through its undertones and overtones (Wodak, 2001). In this sense, the overtone of the scene is apparent from Laila's dialogue: *"My parents would have a heart attack"*. Here, her parents anticipated dramatic reaction signifies the importance of heterosexuality, and how any non-normative sexual relationship can disrupt harmony

in a family. On the contrary, the undertones of the scene are much more complex. This can be explained as towards the end of the scene, Laila is portrayed reading books on how to come out of the closet, thus signifying a discourse of lack of awareness about sexual expression, and how difficult it is to challenge the family's dominant position.

Lastly, the overall prognostic critique (Wodak, 2001) of this scene can be examined to be positive. This can be explained as the scene closes with Laila's dialogue: *"This is scary for me. It is wonderful, but so scary"*. To put it in perspective, the protagonist's statement signifies her current state of mind; she is happy with her partner but scared to come out gay. Likewise, such a narrative has a high 'naturalistic modality' (Jewitt and Leeuwen, 2001). This can be explained as the scene is represented to be believable through its natural setting and soft music of the birds chirping in the background. Moreover, it manages to humanise homosexuality and depicts the family as a 'leviathan' (Foucault, 1979) which is controlling the couple's sexual rights.

7.4 Overall analysis

In the above analysis, certain common trends were noticed which enabled to comprehend how the symbolic power of Bollywood constructs family's representation as one of the passionate aesthetics of heteronormativity:

To begin with, despite being a transnational Bollywood film which was showcased in multiple international film festivals, 'Margarita with a Straw' (Bose and Maniyar, 2014) was successful in constructing a 'nationalist imaginary' (Virdi, 2003). This can be explained as even though the movie was not set in India, it depicted a patriarchal, disciplinary family. In particular, a clear binary between the East and the West was represented as all sexual innuendos were in English. Likewise, since a comfortable lesbian relationship was portrayed in a foreign country, there was a clear representation of non-normative relationships being only permissible outside the 'homeland'. Moreover, the couple pretended to be 'friends' when they were with their family, thus implicitly associating homosexuality with immorality and a clear representation that 'alternative sexualities' are not allowed in the sanctity of a Hindi household.

Consequently, the physical disability of the protagonist was highlighted to justify the sovereign power of the family (Shakespeare, 2000). To put it in perspective, in the cultural landscape of India, disability is often associated with supernatural punishment or 'karma' (Lena, 2015). In this movie, even though Laila's family loved and cared about her, there was an implicit assumption that she would always be dependent on them. In particular, her mother's assertion that Laila cannot keep any secrets from her highlighted problems of a disabled individual expressing their sexuality, especially within the confines of an Indian household. Furthermore, through such a cinematic representation Hall's (1997:258) views on stereotyping can be seen. In this sense, because of Laila's disability her

dependence on her family was seen natural, and her efforts to attain sexual freedom an essential yet a stigmatised depiction.

7.5 Convergence of sexuality and gender

Throughout this study, it was made apparent that gay and lesbian sexual identities are often confused with hijra identities. In the data collected, such convergences between sexuality and gender came out strong. There is a clear distinction between sex, being a biological facticity, and gender as the cultural appropriation of that facticity (Butler, 1988). Besides, heteronormativity considers heterosexuality also a socially performed category. In order to investigate these theoretical foundations better, given below is an analysis of two scenes (2:50-3:10 and 20:43-21:71) from the movie 'Bombay Talkies' (Johar, 2014). Likewise, these scenes depict the ordeals of a gay man, Avinash, who's sexual identity is constantly misunderstood as a hijra identity. Moreover, here the protagonist is depicted to be at a low point in his life as he feels helpless being unable to convince his family and lover of his sexual orientation.

7.6 Scene I: Avinash confronts his parents about his sexual identity (2:50-3:10)

Being the first scene of the film, it captures attention and sets the stage for what is to follow. In this sense, it opens with Avinash fighting with his father for considering him to be a hijra. In terms of the visual semiotic features, the first frame displays a lot of movement, and a close head shot is taken of the protagonist to signify his outrage. Besides, there is a 'symbolic contact' (Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001) between the main character and the camera as he looks directly into it to display his vengeance to the viewers. Additionally, this scene is a monologue delivered by the protagonist and its discourse critique can be understood through its textual and audio-visual components. In particular, the immanent critique (Wodak, 2001) of the scene can be inferred from Avinash's dialogue: "*I am not a eunuch, I am homosexual.... its neither wrong to be a eunuch nor a homosexual*". Such as a direct implication of this statement is to justify the main character's sexual identity and explicitly differentiate between a gay and a hijra. Conversely, the semiotic features of this scene highlight its negative tone. In this sense, the scene is a long shot which ensures an impersonal setting. Additionally, the father is represented as an active agent being directly involved in the confrontation with his son. Whereas, the mother is a passive agent who is placed in the background, and is attempting to play the role of a pacifist. Hence, only the active agent or the father has agency, and the mother's position is symbolic of a matriarch's side-lined role in the household. Correspondingly, this scene has a multi-layered socio-diagnostic critique (Wodak, 2001). This can be explained as the overtone of the text is that violence is the projected means of attaining sexual freedom. Similarly, forms of symbolic subversion may not always work, thus requiring an outright rebellion to challenge the set rules of heteronormativity. Likewise, an undertone of the scene is the effect of dominant discursive

representations. In this sense, since hijras are the popularly understood 'third gender', other sexual identities are either represented to be deviant or misunderstood. Also, this follows Hall's (1997) concept of representation as cultural meanings are produced depending on what is considered to be 'normal' by the society. Moreover, even though this scene had a violent beginning, its prognostic critique (Wodak, 2001) can be said to be positive. This can be explained as the scene concludes on an optimistic note; with Avinash leaving his parent's home and starting his new life. Consequently, in this last shot the protagonist smiles directly at the camera with the frame projecting a 'low naturalistic modality' (Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001), thus making the picture look surreal, and signifying the character's internal peace.

7.7 Scene II: Avinash has a flashback about the fight (20:43-21:71)

This scene is towards the end of the film, and depicts Avinash reminiscing about the fight with his father (scene I). An analysis of this scene is pivotal to our results because it allows us to get a deeper picture of the first scene. Thus, through an overall analysis of this episode a nuanced judgement about representations of convergence of sexuality and gender can be made.

Before conducting the analysis, it is important to point that this a complicated scene for drawing results. This can be explained as this scene does not contain any 'vectors' because only the protagonist is visible. Similarly, since the other characters are only 'symbolically' pictured, it is difficult to investigate the active and passive voices and comment on these 'imaginary' representations (Kress, 2011). However, through an investigation of the scene's salient semiotic features its discourse critique can be understood. In this sense, the scene begins with a close head shot of Avinash who is depicted to be anguished because his partner refuses to accept their relationship in public. Besides, his partner is trapped in a forced marriage and he is scared to be referred to as a 'hijra' in the society. In the process of going through this, Avinash recalls the fight he had with his father. Likewise, an immanent critique (Wodak, 2001) of this scene would be that it articulates a discourse of subjectivity and how the passionate aesthetics of heteronormativity, especially the value attached to marriage, constraints non-normative relationships. Simultaneously, this articulation is brought out as throughout the scene the protagonist looks at the camera directly, hence constructing a 'demand picture' to seek the sympathy of the viewers (Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001). Moving on, the socio-diagnostic critique of this scene can be understood through its dialogues. Such as the protagonist's father's dialogue: "*I am a man! I can never give birth to a eunuch like you!*", shows a preponderance of 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 2005). This can be explained as the father explicitly associates giving birth to a eunuch as an offence against his manliness. Also, if the overtone of this text is the importance attached to patriarchy, an undertone is being scared about what the 'neighbours would think' (Chloë, 2012). Thus, since heterosexuality is a construction of commonly adopted cultural codes there is always a

fear of being excluded (Wierienga, 2015). Furthermore, this scene has a negative prognostic critique which can be examined through this background song:

"It's a strange land,

Where does it begin,

Where does it end?

Where do these destinations lie?

Neither could he understand, nor I"

(Johar, 2014)

The above song represents the protagonist's current state of mind. Such as by projecting a 'low naturalistic modality', this song speaks about the current conditions of the Indian society. In this sense, it speaks about how the lead character is unsure about his future and does not where to go, especially as he has been shunned by his partner and family.

7.8 Overall analysis

Through these two scenes, two primary results came into the forefront to signify how sexuality and gender identities are commonly converged in cinema.

On one hand, an analysis of these scenes helped to understand how cinematic representations bridge the social and personal conventions (Kennedy, 2014). This can be explained as since hijras are historically known as the 'third gender', they valorize what Butler (1993) refers to as the 'constitutive outside'. In this sense, hijras challenge heteronormative practices by renouncing family ties and forming distinct communities (Hall, 2013). Besides, since there are no 'gay communities' it is understandable that the protagonist's father assumed that he should "*join his people*". Thus, since there are no specific social spaces for gays and lesbians, it is apparent that films often show a confusion between sexual and gender representations.

On the other hand, such an analysis explained that queer linguistics is an underdeveloped category (Hall, 2013). In this sense, queer Hindi movies mainly employ visual semiotic features to depict emotions. Besides, such powerful visuals are used because of two particular reasons: 1) films are a form of 'public pedagogy' (Kennedy, 2014) and a display of sentiments connects with the viewers at

a much deeper level, and 2) homosexual erotica can potentially infuriate Hindu conservatives in the country (Chase, 2012). Thus, since the word 'gay' or 'lesbian' has no Hindi connotation only stereotypical phrases and semantics are employed to represent homosexuality. Therefore, such language barriers can make the portrayal of homosexual identities difficult.

7.9 Symbolic violence faced while coming out of the closet

Heteronormativity functions as a symbolic field (Bourdieu, 1991). In this sense, the disposition of individuals within this "force fields" makes them subjective to physical or symbolic violence (Wieringa, 2012). However, physical violence can be monitored by formal institutions, laws and regulations. But symbolic violence is invisible, and especially a practice such as homophobia is crafted into people's psyches (Bourdieu, 1998). Similarly, the two chosen scenes from the movie *Aligarh* (Mehta, 2016) depict the life story of Professor, Shrinivas Siras, who was illegally suspended for being gay. Consequently, the first scene is about the protagonist narrating his ordeals to a journalist, and the second scene is a depiction of the legal battle which the main character fought to win his basic fundamental rights.

7.10 Scene I: Professor Siras recounts his tale to a journalist (1:22:27-1:26:29)

For this study, this is an important scene because of its overall message about the harassment which the LGBTQ community faces due to criminalisation of homosexuality. Similarly, this scene depicts Professor Siras talking to a journalist about the problems he encountered on coming out of the closet. Besides, he was suspended for being caught with his partner in the vicinity of the conservative Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), and charged with violating the anti-sodomy law or Section 377. Consequently, this scene opens to show a very calm and serene background, as the protagonist and the journalist are enjoying a boat ride. Indeed, the immanent critique of this scene would be that its visual depiction and the discourse it propagates are in contrast with each other. In the same manner, Professor Siras is found staring dreamily at the river, and despite the fact that he is facing criminal charges he looks oddly relaxed. Also, a close-up shot is taken of the protagonist to highlight this inner calm. Additionally, an 'imaginary contact' is constructed between the journalist and the protagonist which gives an impression that, throughout the scene, they are gazing in each other's direction (Kress and Leeuwen, 2001). In particular, the composition of the scene resembles the protagonist's current state of mind. Such as to balance a background of blue water both the characters are wearing different shades of blue, hence signifying an inner peace (Manus, 1983). Likewise, the scene's socio-diagnostic critique can be deduced from its dialogues. In this sense, an overtone of this scene is an overarching power of social institutions, especially marriage. This can be explained as when the journalist inquired about the Professor's past life, he claimed that he was married due to continuous family pressures. On the contrary, an undertone of this scene can be a projection of cultural ignorance. To

put it in perspective, the protagonist revealed that since he belonged to a small town in India, being gay was not an option. Hence, he submitted to the societal conventions, got married and continued to 'perform' his masculine duties (Butler, 1993). Furthermore, when the journalist asked Professor Siras about his partner, he replied: *"Why are you so obsessed with the word lover?... but at least try to understand what actually love is? Love is a beautiful word. You are making it sound like a dirty word. I have a problem with this!"*. This means that the protagonist, with regards to his old age, is unhappy when the word 'love' is degraded to just sex. In his eyes, love is about companionship and because of the so-called moral codes of the society, he is unable to spend time with his partner without judgments. Furthermore, this scene's prognostic critique can be analysed from the fact that it ends with the main character reminiscing about his partner, and the words of his self-written poem fill the backdrop:

"O beloved moon, fear not,

The dawn that separate us,

For we will meet again, when the world goes to sleep,

In the light of the day, I am unseen,

It is in your light, my heart awakens,

We will dance as shadows dance, to the songs of nightingales,

We will touch as shadows touch...

becoming one in the midnight sun"

(Mehta, 2016)

Consequently, this poem signifies the protagonist's pain and longing to meet his partner. He is referring to the impending struggle or the criminalisation of homosexuality as a "dawn" which separates him from his 'companion'. In the same way, it is difficult to justify the overall prognostic critique of the frame, as even though it starts positively, it ends on a gloomy note. Thus, this scene

has various multimodal signifiers which constructs a discourse of subjugation perpetuated by the 'misrecognised' power of heteronormativity.

7.11 Scene II: Professor Siras against the Aligarh Muslim University (1:14:51-1:21:18)

This is a lengthy scene, but important for our analysis due to its political and social relevance. The scene begins with a close up shot of Professor Siras. He is in the court being questioned for accusing his colleagues of the Aligarh Muslim University for entering the private space of his home, capturing intimate photographs of him with his partner, and publishing them in local newspapers. Besides, the visual semiotic features of this scene stress the seriousness of the matter. In this sense, throughout the scene, the focus is on the Professor, and interrogations hurled at him fill the background. In the same manner, the protagonist's expressions speak louder than his words, and he appears to be tired and defenceless. Also, there are no discontinuities in the frame (Kress and Leeuwen, 2001). To explain simply, the colour scheme of this scene paints a monochromic picture, and brings out features of the protagonist including his greying hair, and stress lines to highlight his old age. Likewise, an immanent critique of this scene can be that there is an implicit presumption about the Professor's anticipated loss in the case, which is explicitly brought out through his facial expressions. Consequently, the socio-diagnostic critique can be derived from the dialogues of the film. Such as when Professor Siras reiterated his story in the court, "*They pounced on us and one of them... started beating us with a stick.... I kept requesting them to stop...and that's when four of my University colleagues came into the room*", the overtone was of seclusion because his peers refused to help him in the hour of need. Whereas, the undertone was a display of 'symbolic subversion' (Wieringa, 2012), as the Professor 'publicly' challenged his colleagues for invading his personal space, and questioned the cultural codes of heteronormativity which impede his sexual freedom. Additionally, during the court proceedings, a conversation of sexuality was converged with issues of class and religion. This can be explained as Professor Siras's relationship with his partner, who is from a lower-class Muslim family, was challenged for being against the 'normal' societal ethics. Hence, a discourse of 'othering' (Dijk, 2000) was projected as Muslims are seen as a marginalised category, and further acquisitions were made that the protagonist was paying his partner for sex. Correspondingly, the overall prognostic critique of this scene can be justified to be negative. This is explained by the fact that the scene ends abruptly, with the camera slowing zooming out of the protagonist's face. Likewise, Professor Siras is unable to coherently clarify his innocence to the court, and looks ashamed of his sexual orientation. Furthermore, the protagonist's colleagues look satisfied, thus hinting at the main character's future loss and dismay.

7.12 Overall analysis

After analysing these two scenes, three observations were made about cinematic representations of symbolic violence faced on coming out of the closet.

Firstly, through the results of this analysis it was made apparent that the people who contest a 'heteronormative orthodoxy' (Wieringa, 2015) require enormous strength and willpower. In terms of cinematic representations, Hindi cinema cannot openly show the struggles of the LGBTQ community. Thus, rhetorical devices such as the protagonist's poem is a means for questioning the socio-historical mechanisms which regulate sexuality.

Secondly, in this movie representation of coming out of the closet was converged with religious implications. Besides, by depicting the importance of religious institutions, heteronormativity was alternatively established as the dominant discourse. To put it simply, since heteronormativity aims at ensuring a utopian society, scenes where the protagonist was portrayed following conventional Hindu practices such as not sharing food with a non-Hindu, or referring to his Muslim partner as his 'friend' established the symbolic violence which is perpetrated in the name of religion. Therefore, religious moralities control not just sexual but individual expression.

Lastly, the concluding message of this movie can be that heteronormativity and its passionate aesthetics are difficult to contest. In this sense, the central character committed suicide because he was unable to fight the law and its subsequent societal alienation. Moreover, it was established that heteronormativity is a double-edged sword (Wieringa, 2015). It marginalised the hero when he did not follow its norms, and monitored him constantly when he struggled to conform to its regulations.

8 CONCLUSION

This paper set out to study the discourse of heteronormativity produced and maintained by the symbolic power of Bollywood. For this research, six scenes from three seminal Hindi movies were investigated. Throughout the analysis certain common features were noticed of cinematic representations which showed implications of a compulsory heterosexuality: 1) Hindi movies were committed to a nationalist project and depicted patriarchal values as a superior practice, 2) social institutions especially family and marriage were a constant regulating factor, 3) lines between different sexual identities were converging and misleading, and 4) prevalence of discourses of race, class and ethnicity routinely strengthened the position of heterosexuality. Besides, due to the global reach of Hindi movies they functioned as an 'escapist dimension', and managed to continuously emanate such stereotypical, heterosexual images. Therefore, the findings of this research revealed the capacity of Bollywood's 'invisible or symbolic power' which through its meaning making processes constructs the hegemony of heterosexuality.

Since cinema is a discursive site of power, its sexual representations were worthy of critical examination. This can be explained as films construct an imagery of collective history and culture, which has profound implications for a country such as India which is struggling to make LGBTQ rights constitutional. Likewise, an equal representation of non-normative relationships is required to ensure a validation for sexual rights. Conversely, the results of this study outlined a possibility for a much comprehensive research on heteronormativity which has the potential to provide additional insights about the cinema's symbolic power.

As previously explained, other qualitative methodologies, such as interviews and on-site ethnographic research would have much critically evaluated the various analytical categories of heteronormative representations. In particular, a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures would have allowed to investigate the degree of negative or positive heterosexual references in queer films, and thereby broadened the scope of future research conducted on this topic. Moreover, a comparative analysis of heteronormative representations in Hollywood and Bollywood films would have been beneficial in analysing a distinction between western and non-western homophobic discursive practices. Similarly, this would have enabled to comprehend how different symbolic cinematic techniques, in a different national context, approaches heterosexuality. After all, as Escobar said (1992:22) "it is only through comprehensive critical evaluation of discourse and practice that one can lay the foundation for a more radical collective imagining of alternative futures".

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH EXAMPLE

Theme: Symbolic violence faced while coming out of the closet

Scene: Professor Siras against the Aligarh Muslim University (1:14:51-1:21:18)

Transcription of the scene

Professor Siras: I did not realise that two people had already entered my flat. They claimed to be from News 100 channel

They pounced on us and one of them... started beating us with a stick. Especially... Irfhan!

They didn't let me wear my clothes either. I asked why they're doing it, they said: we have received a complaint.

The people who entered said: "How dare you behave so obscenely in a family society?". And then they made us stand in a corner, and took our pictures in embarrassing positions.

I kept requesting them to stop...and that's when four of my University colleagues came into the room.

I was surprised to see my colleagues. Because I neither called or asked anyone for help.

Protagonist's Lawyer: Siras, you didn't call them?

Professor Siras: No, I didn't. They stood there and kept staring at me. And they did not even let me wear my clothes....

They took the reporters to the adjoining room, where they had a conversation. Later, the reporters left.

After that Shadab Qureshi (one of the colleagues) entered my room...and I pleaded with him that he keeps this under wraps. And he assured me that he has the tape, and he will make sure that it is not leaked.

But the next day the story was published in every local newspaper, along with my photograph, and then I was suspended.

Defense Lawyer: Mr. Siras, what was your relationship with the middle-class Muslim rickshaw puller?

Professor Siras: He was a friend!

Defense Lawyer: Will you tell the court your exact relationship with him?

Protagonist's lawyer: I object my lordship but this is not an appropriate question.

Defense Lawyer: Fine, I will change my question. You are such a senior Professor, Mr. Siras... and you mingle with a lower-class Muslim from the slums? What kind of friendship is this?

Professor Siras: We would listen to music together. He was just a friend.

Defense Lawyer: Listen to music? What else? And you would pay him to have sex with you!?

Protagonist's lawyer: The focus should not be on sex but sexual rights which my client has been denied.

Defense Lawyer: Fine, okay...I'll change my question. What's your age Professor Siras?.63 or 64. You are 64 years old, right? Even at this age you have the strength to have sex?

Protagonist's lawyer: It is wrong to ask such personal, evasive questions!

Professor Siras: I don't feel comfortable answering these questions.

Defense Lawyer: You have pressed charges against such an esteemed University. You will have to answer some questions! But still I will change my question. Just tell me, who was the 'man' in bed when you were having sex? You or your friend!?

you!?

Protagonist's lawyer: The focus should not be on sex but sexual rights which my client has been denied.

Defense Lawyer: Fine, okay...I'll change my question. What's your age Professor Siras?.63 or 64. You are 64 years old, right? Even at this age you have the strength to have sex?

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Defense Lawyer: You have pressed charges against such an esteemed University. You will have to answer some questions! But still I will change my question. Just tell me, who was the 'man' in bed when you were having sex? You or your friend!?

The scene ends with Professor Siras crying

<p>Multimodal Critique</p>	<p>Operationalisation of semiotic and discourse features</p>
<p>Immanent</p>	<p>Representational features: The scene begins with a close up shot of Professor Siras. He is wearing faded brown clothes which brings out his vulnerability. The protagonist is placed on the right side of the frame, which means that it is not a 'given picture' (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001). He has been perpetually placed there to catch the attention of the viewer and to articulate his weakness. There is no movement in the frame as the protagonist is placed standing in the courtroom. Since he has no agency, an appearance of subjectivity is therefore articulated.</p> <p>Expressional and compositional features: The protagonist appears to be tired and alone. This sentiment is evoked through certain 'demand' shots as he looks into the camera directly to make his vulnerability visible. The colour scheme of this scene paints a monochromatic picture, and brings out features of the protagonist including his greying hair, and stress lines to highlight his old age.</p> <p>Active/ Passive agents- Here, the protagonist and the lawyers are the active agents because the text explicitly focuses on them. However, the professor's colleagues are the passive agents as they are implicitly referenced throughout the conversation. Besides, there is an 'imaginary contact' formed between the active and the passive agents (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001). This can be explained as even when they are not displayed in the same frame, the shot gives an impression that they are actively participating in the conversation.</p> <p>Presuppositions, connotations, implications in the text- This scene presupposes the anticipated loss of Professor Siras. Through the visual semiotic signs, it is apparent that he has given up on attaining equal sexual rights. A direct connotation of the text is that homosexuality is a forbidden practice. Especially, in the case of the protagonist it is not considered to be viable to him to crave for sexual intimacy at his age. Thus, it is apparent that the society regulates not just the norms of sexuality but also companionship.</p>

<p>Socio-diagnostic</p>	<p>Use of rhetorical devices: Most of the rhetorical devices were employed by the lawyers in the scene. In this sense, when the defense lawyer asked the protagonist, <i>“Who was the ‘man’ in bed when you were having sex? You or your friend!?”</i>, a direct remark was made on the protagonist’s masculinity, thus articulating a discourse of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell, 2005).</p> <p>Use of repetitions: In the scene, repeatedly a discourse of heterosexuality was converged with issues of class. This can be explained as the protagonist was questioned for having any forms of relationship with a man from a lower-class Muslim family. Besides, since he a senior Hindu professor it was considered against his religious practices to interact with Muslims. Thus, a discourse of ‘othering’ (Dijk, 2000) was articulated.</p> <p>Information Value: The placement of the characters gives more information about the discourse articulated. In this sense, perpetually the Professor’s colleagues are placed in the background to signify their role of a spectator. Besides, even when the professor was actually being harassed, his colleagues never came forward to help him. Instead, they gained publicity for revealing his ‘dirty deeds’.</p>
<p>Prognostic</p>	<p>The overall prognostic critique of this scene can be justified to be negative. This is explained by the fact that the scene ends abruptly, with the camera slowing zooming out of the protagonist’s face. Likewise, Professor Sirus is unable to coherently clarify his innocence to the court, and looks ashamed of his sexual orientation. Also, there is no music or any movement in the scene, and it closes with Professor Siras crying. Furthermore, the protagonist’s colleagues look satisfied, thus hinting at the main character’s future loss and dismay.</p>

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