

## **Tryst With Destiny: Sexual Discourse and Third Gender in Select Indian Bollywood Films**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The postmodern era has observed a shift from what has so long been considered as fixed and static to nothing is constant or fixed like concepts. Taking such notion as the parameter postcolonial theorists, feminists, poststructuralists have tried to see and analyze various issues from different angles. Issues like identity, subjectivity, representation, authentic voices have got new perspectives. Like culture, body or sex is a site of conflict where individual's identity is being contested endlessly. The 'third gender', which has long been marginalized or deprived of their identity, representation, true and authentic voice in the main stream of social and cultural milieu deserves the critical attention. 'Third gender' or the 'People of In-between' are considered not belonging to the general binary division of gender - male and female. Since long their plight is more like the 'subaltern'. The Bollywood cinema has long been portraying the character of 'third gender' in various films. These films clearly reveal that their representation is biased, sensitive and stereotyping. The violation and violence, centered on issues of sex and body, is not only sexual violence in nature but it is a kind of denial of identity and voice in the society. They are judged and studied in terms of sexual behavior. Hence, they are assigned gender role and identity quite contrary to the established role and identity of men and women. There is a strong silent resistance on the part of the 'third gender' people to claim their much suppressed identity and voice. Some of the recently released Bollywood films have tried to give them a voice and representation but the directors of these films have failed to break the taboo and the notion about this third sex fully. However, 'contrapuntal' study of their representation in the Bollywood films raises some key issues like the attitude of the people, stereotyping, subjectivity, identity, and true representation of this category of people. Somehow their representation is not free from the prevalent ideology and discourse that has constructed their identity and has been regulating it. Thus, they ultimately bring this 'third gender' in the third category. Their exclusion from the mainstream of social, political, economical and cultural life has become the cause of their measurable plight. This paper aims at exploring all these issues in some of the recent Bollywood films and at the same time it aims at establishing the fact that there is a need to give them fair treatment or bring them into the 'margin' and deconstruct the myth that sees sex as the only decider of individual role and identity.*

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

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Recently, Sanam XI, a eunuch cricket team in Pakistan, won against the Men XI team and the media coverage that it gained was something new in the history of cricket. But what is most intriguing or for that matter most interesting is the fact that instead of giving it in the sport page the various newspapers have given the report in the page other than sports. This raises some important questions like what is motive of the reporter, which regulates his motive, why he wants to communicate the events to others, what possible reaction does he expect that the news will evoke among the readers, how *The Hindu* or the other newspapers or news channels or websites as an institution went to publish a report on it. If individual is a product of 'discourse' as Foucault pens down in his *Power and Knowledge* (1980a:80) and his or her action is controlled by discursive structures, then the news can be related to the prevailing discourse and ideology that construct and shape the mental acumen of the reporter and others who are directly or indirectly involved in this and therefore, the reporter finds the cricket match to be something unusual according to the established norms with which he has grown up as a member of the society. The representation although does not bear any negative projection of the eunuch and his motive may not be negative but his being a product of a discourse consciously or unconsciously led him to give a different coverage. In another way, the reporter may be daring to bring such so called unusual incident into broad day light. His action might be taken as a blow to the traditionally conferred and endorsed role of different genders. At another level, the victory of the eunuch might have drawn his attention on the ground of his being a member of such culture that sees basically two genders as the main decider of identity and power and in this regard the defeat of man team seems to be a blow to the cultural construction of identity and role of the eunuch because the dominant discourse in this case male oriented discourse has viewed them incapable of performing certain specific roles. The so called fixity of identity and roles of the third gender has been achieved through a perennial process of stereotyping. The gender specific stereotypic fixity seems to be in a state of flux and therefore, the

control over the marginalized people turned to be resilient for the heterosexual. Here may be the danger that the 'body' which has long been made, in Foucault's words a 'site of conflict' for inscribing or 'enacting power' (Foucault 1980a:80) now seems to be threatening the very basis of power as it is 'resisted' by the third gender.

Since the beginning of the universe the world is perceived from the biblical sexual orientation which only recognizes the sex of man and woman and rejects any other form of sexuality. The people having sexual orientation other than heterosexuality like homosexuals, lesbian, intersexed, transgender etc are not given a proper representation and place in the cultural set up of different societies. This 'exclusion' has given them different gender roles based on their perceived unusual sexual identity and their sexuality is constructed on the basis of gender roles. This politics of 'exclusion' has well described by Foucault in his *The Order of Discourse* (1981):

Rather than seeing discourse as simply a set of statements which have some coherence, we should, rather, think of a discourse as existing because of a complex set of practices which try to keep them in circulation and other practices which try to fence them off from others and keep those other statements out of circulation. (Mills 2005:54)

Transgender or the third sex people are found in almost every culture. But they are recognized not as a natural creature but as a stigma or an 'unfortunate occurrence' (pokot in Kenya), 'mistakes of nature' (US). Since they are regarded as the mistakes of nature many cultures as in US devise medical therapy to transform the intersexual and fit them into the bipolar sexual identity. But the very culture that regards heterosexuality as the only norm of sexuality is monopolistic and arbitrary as it gives heterosexual to decide gender roles and to construct the sexuality of other sexes. In other words, heterosexuality is constructed at the cost of homosexuality, lesbianism, intersexed etc. and consequently individual subjectivity is also constructed based on sex. Third Gender lacks the 'structural support' which heterosexual possesses.

in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality' (Foucault 1981: 52).

While for the feminists much of the debate is centered on the politics of gender roles, for the people of transgender the major concern remains as to find out the exact centre which constructs or controls their sexuality. The battle of the transgender people is a battle against the entire cultural system that accommodates the attitude of male, female, gay and lesbian towards the third sex. They feel to be subjugated not only by male but by every member of the society and this aggravates their miserable plight and diminishes the possibility of an identity in the society. Due to the lack of a fixed centre to which they can make their 'voice' audible they are leading a life with perennial stigma or as a stereotyped object. Even in the hierarchy of gender role these people are placed at the bottom. Though a change is visible in the cultural construction of identity in the form of recognition of sexual identity of the gay and lesbian people, the third sex people are still denied any 'space' and 'voice' in the mainstream culture. They are made to remain outside the margin. Their socio-economic life is largely affected by the stereotyped images. In matter of 'representation' the various agencies oral (day to day statements), printed (media) and visual (electronic media, film and Television serials) also reiterate the dominant discourse through stereotypic projection of these people.

## **II. THIRD GENDER AND BOLLYWOD CINEMA**

Bollywood in India has been functioning as the cultural repoterie of Indian society within home and abroad. From its birth it has been capturing different ethos and sensibilities of the Indians at home and NRI Indians in various foreign countries. Though Bollywood has changed and moulded itself with the changing cultural scenario of India, in matter of representation certain things remain as stock subject matter and a taboo. The representation of the eunuch (hijra) has hardly undergone any change with changing mind set of Indian people. Bollywood when projecting a character of hijra endorses him with stereotypic traits in order to feed the psychic construction of Indian masses.

While filmmakers were trying to step outside the beaten track of traditional Indian themes, there was no allowance for portrayal of same sex, a subject that was still a taboo in a country where the discourse on sex itself is bound by moral restriction. There's much archival evidence on the role of cinema played in the last 100 years to break taboos and create tolerance towards the transsexuals, transgenders, homosexuals, though it has itself been victim of guilty of perpetuating the worst stereotypes of sexual minorities for cheap laughs (Chatterjee Feb 27, 2013: IBN Live)

The stereotypical portrayal is aimed at gaining consensus of people that includes both those who are forming the discourse and those who are being brought under that discourse because sexual discourse like any other discourse depends on acceptance, consent and regulatory agency.

we must conceive of discourse as a violence which we do to things, or in any case as a practice which we impose on them; and it is in this practice that the events of discourse find the principle of their regularity' (Foucault 1981: 67).

Therefore, the control of heterosexual over non heterosexual has been practiced since long and this power has been given cultural reality through the representation of the heterosexual and non heterosexual in a typical colonial way. The heterosexual are associated with everything natural and desirable in the society while the non heterosexual are given the status of an outcaste and unnatural. In fact, such sexo-cultural myth becomes a ground for sexual dominance. The non heterosexuals are seen as the property of the heterosexuals and in the process of exploitation people of third sex loose their control over their body, identity, subjectivity. Their body is written and re-written from time to time by dominant discourse and people of third sex falls prey to the marginalized and step-motherly treatment in the hands of film directors.

However, if Bollywood is constructing as well as representing the third sex in a negative manner it also is deconstructing the established identity of third sex. The philosophical thought like post-modernism and post-structuralism have largely influenced the Bollywood cinemas. While contracting Marxists' notion of 'ideology' as 'negative and constraining' Foucault points out that "discourse' is both the means of oppressing and the means of resistance"(Mills 2005:55). Consequently, since nineties Bollywood has come up with films which directly question the dominant sexual discourse. This tendency takes the director to create a plot in which the people of third sex are given space and voice to speak out their agony that has been inflicted by the existing discourse. This change in the portrayal of third sex shows a strong possibility of social, cultural, economic relationship with the heterosexuals. These films strongly uphold the silent demand of getting proper place in the cultural system of a society or country. In this complex web of human relationship, their emotions and feelings are same and just because of biological sex difference they are not to be marginalized indefinitely.

Amidst all these developments, Bollywood has also shown how power discourse dismantles and destroys the possibility of an identity and individuality of the third sex. The emergence of the third sex and their inclusion in the mainstream cultural system appeared to be a threat to the age old usurper of power as it tends to destroy the power monopoly or fixity. The heterosexuals have gained the upper position at the cost of powerlessness of the non heterosexual people because power as Foucault has said operates from the below. The tendency of power-holder to crush and take back the third sex to their original position has been a subject matter for some of the Bollywood films. Broadly speaking there are three different trends in Hindi films i.e. films that project the negative image of the third sex, films that present the deconstructive version of sexual discourse, and films that represent the conflict between the dominant sexual discourse and the deconstructive sexual discourse and debate over issues or deconstruction verses reconstruction.

### **III. SADAK (1991) AND VILLAIN IN HETROSEXUAL DISCOURSE**

Mahesh Bhatt's directed *Sadak* (1991) emerged as a most successful film of that year. The film is a kind of technical experiment in the matter of projecting or portraying various characters. Though the projection of the heroine as a prostitute is not something new in Bollywood film, the portrayal of the villain as a eunuch adds new dimension in Bollywood history of villain. Mahesh Bhatt deviates from the ongoing trend of Hindi cinema. He turns the usually macho villain of Hindi cinema into a dreaded eunuch (hijra). The success of the film is largely due to this unusual and sensational projection of the villain. The film focuses on the themes of love and friendship but at the same time it deals with issues like prostitution, poverty, corruption in law and order. However, the film as a literary text shows the various kinds of representation of the characters. Hence, the politics of representation occupies the central position in this film. The character of the villain as a eunuch is associated with everything negative. The crisis in the central plot - the love between Ravi and Pooja - and in the sub plot - love between Gotya and Chanda - arises because of Maharani, a eunuch villain, who runs a brothel. Both the heroines are forced into prostitution in her brothel and every effort of Ravi and Gotya to save them from the clutches of the Maharani goes in vain. The film asserts violence as the last option to set oneself free from the injustices. However, at deeper level the film captures the dominant ideology of the director in particular and of the common people in general. The character of the villain reveals dual politics and bears a strong irony. Sexual discourse has constructed the third sex as incapable of doing anything. She (Maharani) accepts such popular assumption when she says to Pooja:

Dar mat mere jaan, dar mat,  
Main kuch nahi karoongi,  
Main kuch karhi nahi sakti,  
Janti ho kyun, kyunki main adha mard aur adhi aurat.

*Translated as:*

Don't fear my love, don't fear.  
I will not be doing any harm to you.  
I can't do anything.  
Do you know why? Because I am half man and half woman.

The irony comes out when Maharani with the help of her mind poses a threat to overpower the heterosexual dominance over the third sex. Such representation at one point seems to be deconstructing the very sexual discourse but the contrapuntal analysis of the film generates a complex politics of 'agency'. The representation of the eunuch villain as ruthless and anti heterosexual is a way of justifying the age-old negative representation of the third sex. The identity of Maharani as a eunuch and role of the villain together evoke a deep rooted hatred and anger towards the third sex. Heterosexuals are shown as the victims of the third sex and this projection serves as a justification of the discourse. The murder of Gotya, Chanda and Salim by Maharni provides ample grounds for dethroning Maharani along with her Brothel. Ravi sets her brothel into fire just like Hanuman, the mythological character of Ramayana, who set Lanka on fire in order to save Sita. Similarly, by killing Maharani, Ravi saves the heterosexuals from the demonic influence of the Maharani or the third sex. The murder of Maharani satisfies the collective conscience of all other characters. Hence, the film in a way circulates the sexual discourse through visual stereotyping of the sexually minority community or the Hijra.

#### **IV. TAMANNA (1997) AND GENDER IDENTITY REDEFINED**

Tamanna (1997), directed by Mahesh Bhatt, once again brings out the popular assumption and notion about the hijra through visual representation. The story is antagonistic to the prevailing romantic trends of the period and goes to deal with plight of the eunuch and the problem of female infanticide. The sexist ideology is questioned by two central victims – Tiku and Tamanna. The story of the film, based on a real incident in the life of a hijra in Mumbai, projects Tiku (role played by Bollywood actor Paresh Rawal), the protagonist of the film, as the father of an adopted girl child Tamanna (role played by Pooja Bhatt) when he found her lying on the street. His decision to bring her up brought strong resentment from his fellow friends and people in the locality. It is not that these people found anything wrong in his intention but the very cultural system does not have any place of such relationship. They fear that this will destroy two lives – the life of Tiku and of Tamanna. However, the strong paternal feeling of Tiku lead him to discard the various restrictions imposed by the society and the child grows under his care. But as time passes by, an inward fear crowded Tiku thinking how the disclosure of his real identity will affect Tamanna. 'Culture is inseparable from location and environment' (Rayan 2010:28) and therefore, Tamanna gradually becomes a part of larger social structure and relation in her locality. What is interesting to note is the process of intrusion of discourse that poses a challenge to Tiku-Tamanna relationship. The first blow came when Tamanna came running to her father to clear her doubt whether he is her father or not. Tiku becomes outrageous and went on beating the person who have said that to her. But his friend Salim (role played by Manoj Bajpai) made him realize that it is not a question of an individual but it is the age old discourse that has made an expose through that man. The discourse has constructed that a hijra is biologically incapable of producing a child and this impossibility has also substantiated the very possibility of rearing any child.

Kitno ko marega tu?  
Ussne to sahi kaha hai.  
Bhaiya! Hijro ki to aulad hoti nahi hai.  
Tu sach se bhag sakta hai, chhup nahi sakta hai.  
Aaj nahi to kal Tamanna ko to pata chalega hee.

*Translated as:*

How many people you will beat?  
What that man has said is right.  
Brother! There can not be any child of a Hijra.  
You can escape from truth, but you can not hide.  
Today or tomorrow Tamanna will come to know.

The tension is multiplied when his fellow hijras made him conscious of the ill intention of the local villain. The attitude of the villain reasserts the fact that women body is an object of desire in a patriarchal dominated society. Tiku, in order to save Tamanna from being an object of desire, decides to send her to boarding school. With the little bit of earning as a hair dresser of the heroines he tries to manage 'education' and 'space' for her. But he fails to keep pace with the fast moving society due to lack of education and any other alternate means of livelihood. He loses his job and continues to live in penury. Tiku's changing role points out the impact of westernization on the traditional mode of earning livelihood. For people like him, the society holds

no prospect. Joblessness forced him to sell all his mother's belongings. While his identity becomes a cause of his multiple exclusions, his daughter does not know his real identity. Together he and his friends hide this truth from her. How much he is conscious of his identity gets revealed when he asked Sajid, Tamanna's childhood friend, to arrange a suit to hide his natural body on the occasion of his appointment with the principle of Tamanna's school. Though not a biological father, he plays the various role of a father and when the marriage offer came from Sajid he started planning for a social marriage ceremony. Centered on the marriage episode of Tamanna, the film shades light on the economic condition of people like Tiku. Though a legal member of a family, people like him are deprived of their share in the parental property. When Tiku went to his cousin brother Anjum Mian for some money he realized that his brother's attitude is just like other people. In fact, the short meeting of Tiku with his brother and his son brings out multiple humiliations for Tiku. He is denied entry into the house, his own brother recognizes him as a hijra instead of as his cousin brother. Tiku returned, though not with any money, but with a new wound which people like Anjum Mian has been inflicting since long back. Salim is sympathetic towards him and gave him all that he has saved for a long time. He is critical of the attitude of people towards the hijra. There is no one in the society to support the hijra, to hold their hands and show them the light of civilized life, to love them and to treat them as human being. He weeps for Tiku but for Tiku those tears are signs of compassion and love for him. He has never seen anyone to weep for him. He says:

Aap ki aankhon mein ashu dekh kar mujhe bohot sukoon mila.  
Aaj pehli baar mere liye koi ro raha hai.

*Translated as:*

Seeing tears in your eyes I am feeling peace!  
Today for the first time some one has wept for me!

Tiku having lost his job and left with no other alternate means of earning money now decides to celebrate his sexuality to earn money. He says "Ab aap dekhiye, iss hijre ke haddiyon main kitna dam hai (you just see, what this hijra can do). He plays the traditional jobs like dancing in the marriage party, dancing on the occasion of new born baby or blessing the people. This was a profession which he has long back abhorred but now it appeared to be the only way to earn money. Having decided to play the role of hijra he dresses up himself with kajal, powder and lipstick, ill-fitting blouses and colourful saris. It was during this phase that crisis befall upon their relationship. Tamanna discovers her father in that attire and she could not accept her father in that dress. While for Tiku it was a moment of death on being discovered by her. Tamanna questions Salim uncle:

Kon hai yeh? Kon hai yeh admi, Salim Chacha?  
Yeh mere abbu nahi ho sakte.  
Yeh mere abbu kaise ho sakte hai?  
Mai tumhari bachchi nahi ho sakti.  
Salim chacha, mujhse jhoot bol rahe hain.  
Yeh mere abbu nahi ho sakte hai, Salim Chacha!  
Mujhe yeh soch kar ghin aati hai ki iss admine mujhe kabhi chua bhi hoga.  
Inn haton se mujhe khilaya bhi hoga.  
Salim chacha, mere abbu aise nahi ho sakte, salim chacha mere abbu aise nahi ho sakte  
Yeh admi... Yeh admi ek... Salim Chacha yeh admi ek... ek... yeh admi ek ....ek...yeh admi ek hijra hai.

*Translated as:*

Who is he? Who is this man, Salim uncle?  
He can not be my father.  
How can he be my father?  
I am not your daughter.  
Salim uncle, he is telling me lie.  
He can not be my father, Salim uncle.  
I feel disgusted to think that this man has ever touched me  
Has also fed me by those hands.  
Salim uncle, my father can't be like him. Salim uncle, my father can't be like him.  
This man...This man...Salim uncle this man is a...This man is a...This man is a hijra.

In fact, what Mahesh Bhatt has shown in the film is the evolution of a child from mere child hood to an adult and how in this process of evolution the girl becomes a part of the various discourses which operate in the society. The girl who keeps on thinking Tiku as her real father feels ashamed when she discovers that her father is a hijra. As a part of the society she has learnt that a hijra cannot have a child. Consequently, she denies accepting Tiku as her father. She questions about her real father and accuses Tiku of denying her the love and

affection of her real parents. Salim uncle unfolds the true story of her in spite of much resistance on the part of Tiku. Salim uncle's speech captures the very complexities of sexual discourse. Tiku tried to go against that discourse by adopting that child and now the same child as a part of the same discourse bounces back on Tiku and denies him the right of a father. He has done everything for her but those things prove to be meaningless because of his identity. Salim has observed the course of history and now he blames Tiku for his present condition. He blames him for the humiliation because they together have warned him of such consequences.

Ham sabne us waqt kaha tha ki dede kissi yateem khahne main,  
Diye kisi police ko, case ban jaye ga  
Lekin nahi, raat raat bhar seene se chipkake jagta raha, taki tu so sake.  
Nangge pair chala, bhukha raha, taki tujhe khila sake  
(To Tiku) A kiske liye nachta raha tu, bata isko,  
Bata na kiske liye nachta raha,  
iske jewar ke liye?  
Iske school ke fees ke liye?  
Bata isko kiske liye nachta raha tu taki tu isko angrezi school bhej sake? Bata?  
Aur agar yeh hijra hai, toh laanat hai hum duniya bhar ke mardo pe.

*Translated as:*

We all told at that time to send her to orphanage,  
To handover to the police, a case will be lodged.  
But refused. Spent nights after nights hold her to his bosom so that you can sleep.  
Walked barefoot, remained hungry so that he can feed you.  
Tell her! for whom you dance? Tell her.  
Tell her for whom you kept on dancing?  
Was it not for her jewelery, for her school fees, for sending her to a good English school?  
If he is a hijra, then let curse befall upon men.

Traditionally the hijras are considered as useless and incapable of doing anything. But here, Salim uncle deconstructs the very myth by pointing out the various role played by Tiku. The meeting or relationship between a heterosexual and a third sex is seen as a mirage. There can be a possibility only when the sexual discourse also recognizes the third sex as human being instead of nature's curse. Tamanna is caught in the whirlwind of sexual discourse. The girl is left with two different types of relationship – her relationship with the real parents and her relationship with Tiku. Tiku tells her that he is not guilty. He has been made by God in that way and there is nothing that he can do to change it. He says:

Main tujhse jhoot bola tha tu mera beti hai.  
Main kaise kehta ki main ek hijra hoon.  
Ab Salim Bhai, mujhe uppar walo ne aisa banaya usme mera kya dos hai  
Mere paida hone pe mere bas thode he thi, woh to Allah ki marzi the  
Mera kya dosh hai beti?

*Translated as:*

I told you lie that you are my daughter.  
How could I say that I am a hijra.  
Salim Bhai! If God has made me this, it is no fault of mine.  
I wasn't in control of my birth; it was the wish of Allah.  
Where is my fault then?

His statement predominantly directs to the notion that although the biological sex cannot be changed, there remains a possibility of reconstitution and transformation in the gender roles and attitude of the heterosexual. For some time, she could not accept Tiku as her father and continued to search for her real parents. When she discovered her real parents she tried to persuade them to recognize her as their legal daughter but in return she received defiance and denunciation. She poses a question to the patriarchal mind set that mull over girl child as encumber and blight in the family. What is emerging as the most important thing here is the role of education. Her liberated self confronts with the patriarchal domination by virtue of her education whereas Tiku emerges as progressive and modern father who tried to cope with the changing socio cultural reality. He sees education, which the society has denied him, as the only instrument for an orphan to find a place in the society. The life regulating educational force manifests in the difference between Tamanna's mother who continues to be the victim of male domination and her own self which discards the discrimination, social taboo and malign. But

sexual discourse is so deeply rooted into the social structure that all her efforts are turned into ashes when her father refuses to accept her. She realized that the plight of a girl child in a patriarchal dominated society is as measurable as the outcastes. There is no place for a girl child in the family. She has been denied the identity of her father, deprived of love and affection of her mother, of her share in the parental property. She sees the futility of her effort to become a part of her real family. This pain of dejection takes her back to Tiku. Both Tiku and Tamanna are rebuffed and looked down upon on the basis of their biological sex – one for being a sexless individual and the other for being a girl.

In a nut shell, the film through the character of Tamanna deconstructs sexist ideology of the Indian society. Her final decision to live with Tiku instead of with her real mother is a blow to the sexual discourse. She quashes the gender roles and points out that hijras are capable of fulfilling various duties and obligations just like other human being. At the same time she deconstructs the attitude of the patriarchy towards the female sex. As an educated liberated girl she manages to unveil boldly before her biological father that the sex of a child depends on father not on mother, that girl child is not a curse but a boon, that there is no difference between a girl and a boy.

## V. WELCOME TO SAJJANPUR (2008) AND REDEFINING IDENTITY THROUGH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Moving from *Tamanna* to Shyam Benegal directed film *Welcome to Sajjanpur* (2008) we get new insight into the issue of hijra in Indian society. The film, set in a village in Maharashtra, portrays the life of the people of Sajjanpur and encompasses issues like loneliness, gender politics, casteism, superstitions, horrific consequences of a general lack of law and order, and archaic traditions and customs etc. However, the film to a greater extent reflects the plight of the hijra vis-a-vis the dominant sexual as well as power discourse. Sexual discourse, as has been pointed out earlier, formulates the identity of people of different sexual orientation and it is seen that on the basis of biological sex gender roles are given to the hijra. The power discourse on the other hand differentiates and excludes the hijra from the mechanism of power operating in the society. The film debates over the question of identity formation of the hijra in a bi-sexual society. Benegal presents a democratic environment on the one hand and gender politics of the larger sexual discourse on the other and tries to come out with the possibility of a true recognition of identity of the hijra in the society. There are five scenes that deal with the issue of hijra i.e. first a short meeting with Mahadev (the hero of the film) then a election campaigning scene, at Mahadev's house after the threat to her life by her opponent, at the time of election result and the final scene of murder by Ram Singh and his men.

Long subjugated and marginalized section of society decides to take part in the main stream of policy making body through democratic means. Munni Bai, a eunuch, comes to file her nomination to fight the village election because she and her fellow hijras believe that only by entering into the power politics they can change the age old gender roles - the roles that has limited them to certain jobs like dancing in the party, begging, stealing and even prostitution. Mahadev being the center of the village is associated with a scheming politician kin (Yashpal Sharma), a dreamy eyed compounder (Ravi Kishan) crazily in love with a widow (Rajeshwari Sachdeva), a superstitious mother (Ila Arun) desperate to get her *manglik* daughter (Divya Dutta) married, and a eunuch venturing into politics (Ravi Jhankal). As Mahadev is an educated man and the only letter writer in the village Munni Bai comes to ask him to write a song as her election manifesto. The conversation between Mahadev and Munni Bai creates a ground to debate on the issue of gender politics. That she is going to fight the election surprises him. He asks:

Tujhe support kis jatee ka milega?  
Matlab Brahmman? Patel? Dalit? Musalman?  
Kaun? Kaun? Hai kaun tere saath?

*Translated as:*

Which community will support you?  
I mean, Brahmman? Patel? Dalit? Moosalman?  
Who? Who? Who are with you?

In a typical Indian society where politics is fought on the basis of muscle power, religion, caste and region, she is hopeful to gain the confidence and support of all the sections of society. Their sex being the ultimate stage of discrimination, the sense of denunciation has been a stock experience for them. She clearly voices out that “sab mere hai, aur sabhi support karenge” (everyone is mine, and everyone will support me). She is very much stubborn to defeat her strong opponent Jamna Bai, a criminal. That she will get the votes of all the section of the society comes out clearly when Mahadev himself asks her mother to vote Munni Bai instead of Jamna Bi. Being an educated man, he knows that if people like Jamna Bai come to power then the democratic ethos and values will die down and there will be dictatorship in the village. The despotic nature of Jamna Bai's

group comes on the surface when Ram Singh asks Mahadev to write a letter warning the District Collector to debar Munni Bai from fighting election.

Hamko hijra sarpanch nahi chahiye.  
Aur nahi chahiye to matlab nahi chahiye.  
Yeh gaon ki maan mariyada ka sawal hai  
Isilye Munni Mukhanne ki ummeedvari turant radd kiya jaye  
Uss sasura agar sarpanch ban gaya to khud bhi nachega, gaon walo ki bhi nachayega,  
Are bhaiya Collector sab aap ko bhi ake dance karna padega.

*Translated as:*

We don't need a hijra Village Head.  
It means we don't want means we don't want.  
It is question of prestige of the village.  
Hence, cancel the nomination of Munni Mukhanne at once.  
If she becomes the Village Head then she herself will dance,  
Will make the villagers dance,  
And brother! Collector Sab, you will also have to come and dance.

When the response of the Collector did not bear any fruit Ram Singh indulges in violence. They ransacked the house of Munni Bai and threaten her of dire consequences. Munni Bai feeling helpless comes to Mahadev's house at late night. Their conversation unravels the throbbing experiences of the hijra in general – biological negation amounting to social, political and economical exclusion. She is pointing out the changing status of hijra. Though religious scriptures records the contribution of hijra and history records their dignified place they are sent to the periphery in recent times. Ram Singh speaks out the discourse “tu janam jat hijra hai, hijra/Tumroko chunab main khade hone kono haq nahi” (you are a hijra by birth/ you don't have any right to fight the election). She morbidly questions such cultural construction of identity:

Phir kahe huzoor, ka hamara dil nahi dharakta?  
Ka humko dhukh taklif nahi hoti?  
Ka mere ankhon se aashu nahi girte huzoor  
Phir kahe sab hame itni nafrat karate.  
Are! ham bhi to ek hi paramatma ki den hai jinke sab hai.

*Translated as:*

Why such treatment, my lord? Don't we have a heart?  
Don't we feel the same pain as you people feel?  
Don't the tears drop from our eyes?  
Then, why everybody hates us?  
You know! We are also of the same Creator who has created everyone.

What she is urging for is a proper recognition of their identity and a fair treatment of people of her sex in the socio-cultural set up. To some extent her victory in the election reflects the changing attitude of people. But the institution of power remains unchanged. She is murdered by Ram Singh and his men. The murder of Munni Bi once again imprints psychological fear of dominant discourse among the hijras.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The Indian society is changing and with it the mind set of the people. Yet there remains the existence of these three different representations of third sex. Only a handful of films have tried to approach the third sex from different angles and there remains so many things unexplored. Their plight is brought out before the public but the commercial failure of such films raises a big question - whether the attitude of the people towards the third sex is changed or changing or has changed or yet to change? In other words, whether the sexual discourse has accommodated them or not remains a haunting question. These three films offer us three different insights and the search for a single or holistic representation is still what the third sex is waiting for.



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### Films

- [6]. Sadak (1991), Language Hindi, Directed by Mahesh Bhatt, Written by Robin Bhatt, Casting - Sanjay Dutt as Ravi, Pooja Bhatt as Pooja, Deepak Tijori as Gotya, Sadashiv Amrapurkar as Maharani (eunuch), Neelima Azeem as Chanda, Avtar Gill as Salim Bhai, Pankaj Dheer as Police Inspector Irani, Gavin Packard as Maharani's henchman, Mushtaq Khan as Pimp, Javed Khan as Hotel Waiter, Soni Razdan as Ravi's sister.
- [7]. Tamanna (1997). Language Hindi, Directed by Mahesh Bhatt, Written by Tanuja Chandra, Produced by Pooja Bhatt, Casting - Paresh Rawal as Tiku, Pooja Bhatt as Tamanna, Manoj Bajpai as Salim Khan, Sharad Kapoor as Sajid Khan, Kamal Chopra as Ranveer Chopra (Tamanna's biological father), Abha Ranjan as Geeta Chopra (Tamanna's biological mother), Asutosh Rana as a Contract Killer, Akshay Anand as Jugal Chopra (Tamanna's brother), Nadira as Nazneen Begum (Tiku's mother), Zohra Sehgal as Ranveer Chopra's mother, Sulabha Deshpande as Kosholya (Servant at Chopra's house), Anupam Shyam as Anjum (Tikku's step-brother), Reeta Bhaduri as Mother Superior, Kunika as an Actress (Tikku's Client), Baby Gazala as young Tamanna, Kunal Khemu as young Sajid.
- [8]. Welcome to Sajjanpur (2008). Language Hindi, Directed by Shayam Benegal, Written by Shayam Benegal and Ashok Mishra, Produced by Ronnie Screwala and Chetan Mitiwalla, Casting - Shreyas Talpade as Mahadev Kushwaha, Amrita Rao as Kamla Kumharan, Ravi Kishan as Ram Kumar, Ravi Jhanal as Munibai Mukhanni, Rajeshwari Sachdev as Shobha Rani, Divya Dutta as Vindhya, Ila Arun as Ramsakhi Pannawali, Lalit Mohan Tiwari as Subedar Singh, Rajit Kapur as Collector, Vineeta Malik as Kamla's mother-in-law, Daya Shankar Pandey as Chidamiram Naga Sapera, Sri Vallabh Vyas as Ramavtar Tyagi (Masterji).