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Abhishikta Bhattacharjee, Ayanita Banerjee
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izvorni znanstveni članakUDK 81'367.625rukopis primljen: 29. lipnja 2025; prihvaćen za tisak: 15. prosinca 2025

Psychosocial Isolation of Marginalised Sexes on Screen: A Critical Study of Selected Hindi Films

Abhishikta Bhattacharjee¹

PhD Research Scholar¹, English Literature, University of Engineering & Management, Kolkata, in acknowledging the Centre of Excellence in Literature Language and Communication Skills CELLCS-IEM New Town Sector I

abhishiktab.1991@gmail.com¹

Dr. Ayanita Banerjee²

Professor², Department of Basic Science and Humanities, University of Engineering & Management, Kolkata

abayanita8@gmail.com²

Abstract: The cinematic representation of marginalised sexes in India has always conformed to the social stereotypes. Queer characters in Indian cinema were often depicted using stereotypes and caricatures, focusing on comic relief or portraying them as villains or the social 'Others'. These portrayals reinforced negative stereotypes and failed to present the nuanced realities of LGBTQIA+ individuals. However, there have been some films where the intersection of the social and psychological marginalisation of Queer individuals has been manifested with utmost sincerity. Works like Darmiyaan: In Between (1997), Aligarh (2015) and Geeli Pucchi (2021) realistically uphold the social ostracisation the LGBTQIA+ community faces and how it makes the individuals psychologically and socially alienated. The methodology of this research work runs behind the choices of films across different decades. It will help in tracing the progress and shifts that Indian Cinema has imbibed in recent years and will be fostering in the near future in terms of the representation of queer selves. The detailed study of these three films encompassing protagonists from different class, caste and social strata will open a window of discussion regarding the change in the perspective of queer storytelling and characterisation in Indian Cinema.

Keywords: Queer; Cinematic representation; Marginalisation; Psychosocial Isolation; Homosexuality

Introduction

Psychosocial isolation refers to the experience of being socially or psychologically disconnected from others, often leading to feelings of loneliness, alienation, and lack of support. Unfortunately, queer people in India have historically faced significant psychosocial isolation due to societal attitudes, cultural norms, and legal frameworks. Despite changing attitudes and increased visibility, many queer people still face non-acceptance within their families, communities, and workplaces. The scenario in India is pathetic when it comes to the social acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ people. The marginalised sexes never get a chance to actively participate in the common runs of the society. This lack of acceptance also results in social isolation, as individuals may feel compelled to hide their identities or avoid disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity. As per a review research from 2009 to 2019 on the mental health of LGBTQIA+ people of India, it has been found that,

Interviews and focus group discussions with LGBTQIA+ individuals across the country have revealed that LGBTQIA+ individuals experience actual, felt, and internalized stigma. They experience family enacted violence and lack of family acceptance, pressure to marry, violence from peers and partners, institutional violence and discrimination at schools and workplaces, and experiences of discrimination in employment, housing, and health care services.

(Wandrekar et al. 28)

The legal environment of our country also does not acknowledge their individual choices and needs. Until September 2018, homosexuality was criminalised in India under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. The existence of such laws contributed to the marginalisation of queer individuals and perpetuated social stigma, leading to increased isolation and limited support systems. Queer individuals who belong to marginalised communities, such as those who are also from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, religious minorities, or caste oppressed, may face additional layers of discrimination and isolation due to the intersection of multiple identities. Efforts are being made to address these challenges. The decriminalisation of homosexuality in 2018 was a significant step forward. However, it's important to note that experiences can vary widely depending on factors such as geographical location, socioeconomic status, and individual circumstances. While progress is being made, there is still work to be done to combat psychosocial isolation and ensure the well-being and inclusion of queer people in India. The research work tries to deal with the representation of queer people in select Indian films where the agony, suffering, alienation of the marginalised sexes have been portrayed with utmost authenticity. The objective of this chapter is to dissect the intersectionality of race, caste, gender and sexuality and how social marginalisation often leads to psychological trauma and isolation of the queer self. The chapter is framed with three films which are chosen methodically as the representation of the queer self is varied in these works; the films are panned throughout different decades and time zones in order to trace whether the infliction of pain and stigma associated

with LGBTQIA+ people have evolved over time. This mapping of representation of queer characters on screen in the late 20th Century and in recent times, works as the primary methodology of the research. It tries to trace the ways through which a queer character on screen could or could not cope up with the dilemma of identity formation in the 1997 film *Darmiyaan: In Between*; how a university professor never allows himself to come out of the closet and accept his sexuality openly but the oppressive society creates a facade of his personal choices. It also explores the double marginalisation of a dalit woman who is queer; how her opportunities at the workplace have been snatched and handed over to upper-caste ineligible employees. The research delves deep into modes of resistance and resilience through which these marginalised sexes fight back to grab their foothold in mainstream society; it investigates whether the on screen characters come out as victorious or their resilience turn out to be futile before the hostility of age-old oppression and deprivation.

***Darmiyaan: In Between*: The ‘troubled’ Gender and the Dilemma of Identity Formation**

The representation of queer sensibility in Indian cinema has been limited in the past, there has been a gradual shift towards more inclusive narratives and characters in recent times. Filmmakers are now exploring themes related to the LGBTQIA+ community, capturing their struggles, triumphs, and unique experiences. These portrayals reinforced negative stereotypes and failed to present the nuanced realities of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Characters were usually assigned exaggerated mannerisms, and their narratives were dominated by comic relief or villainous roles. They were often the “other,” the outcast, or the immoral, seen through a narrow, heteronormative lens. (Ramani , 4)

However, from the late 20th Century, efforts have been made to present the queer experiences in a more nuanced and empathetic manner. In 1997, a film was released named *Darmiyaan: In Between*(1997) which holds a unique place in cinematic history as it dared to delve into the complexities of trans identity at a time when the subject was seldom discussed openly. *Darmiyaan: In Between* raises important questions about what it means to be ‘normal’ and the longing for acceptance and belonging experienced by individuals whose gender identity is troubled since childhood. Here, in the film, we see the protagonist Immi grappling with the issue of determining his sexual identity. The film is unique in its realistic portrayal of the *hijra* life without any element of over-dramatisation of their struggles and agonies. It touches on all the aspects of a transgender’s life which was very rare in the 1990s. As Madhu Jain writes,

Fortunately, it is not a distant zoom focused on the third sex which would have reduced them to strange oddities - folkloric creatures inhabiting a twilight demi-monde. Nor does this bold film pussyfoot round the more grey areas of sexuality. There's no airbrushing of reality, no matter how sordid or unaesthetic. (Jain, 1997)

Immi, the protagonist of the film is born as a transgender in a household of a famous actress Zeenat. The overwhelming popularity of Zeenat did not allow her to acknowledge a *hijra* as her offspring. Zeenat is Immi's elder sister to the society. The societal pressure and the urge to remain under the limelight of showbiz restrained her to reveal Immi's true identity. Immi has been raised as a boy, but he always nurtured an inclination towards Zeenat and adored her feminine traits. We see a little Immi noticing his elder sister from a distance while Zeenat was getting ready, he imitates Zeenat's mannerisms and paints his lips with lipstick in the absence of his sister. This provides an insight into the psyche of the little boy Immi who is confused and perplexed regarding his sexual identity, he dwindle in between the socially imposed identity and the quest for the hidden identity. For a better understanding of the child's psychology, we can delve deep into Jacques Lacan's concept of the 'mirror stage'. The *mirror stage* is a crucial developmental phase that occurs in early childhood, around 6 to 18 months of age, where the child begins to develop a sense of self and establishes a relation to their own image. Lacan comments in his essay that,

The *Mirror Stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation-and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic- and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development. (Lacan 4)

As the child observe their reflection on the mirror, they experience a sense of unity and wholeness, perceiving their image as a coherent and complete entity. This identification with the mirror image is significant because it marks the formation of the ego or the 'I'. As Lacan rightly points out in his essay "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function",

It suffices to understand the mirror stage in this context *as as identification*, in the full sense analysis gives to the term; namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image (Lacan 2006, 76)

Here, in the film, we see Immi shuffling between two identities and he is unable to form this ego or 'I'. His family claims before the society that Immi is a boy but the local *hijra* community visits their house time and again claiming Immi to be one of them. As per Lacan's psycho-analysis, a child's initial identification is an illusion, as the child's self-perception is constructed through the gaze of the 'Others'. The 'Other' refers to the external world, particularly the caregiver or the primary caretaker. The child's self-image is not based on their physical reality but rather on an idealised and imaginary image that the 'Other' reflects back to them. Immi's identity is also formed by the gaze of the 'Other', his family members, who are always in a denial mode and shaped Immi's gendered identity as per the social norm.

There is a scene where Immi was playing with his friends and one of the boys pointed out that Immi does not have a penis, all the boys started ridiculing Immi. A disheartened Immi comes running to his *Ammi* and Zeenat asking them to look for his penis. This instance shows the effect of the socially constructed sexual and gendered identity on Immi, an identity formed by the gaze of his family members which is validated by the presence of a penis, it's not a naturalised sense of 'I', where Immi is as special as a human being or a transgender person without having a penis. The acceptance of Immi's true self might relegate the family honour to the margin, the society can ostracise them and Zeenat might lose the towering position as a leading actress. Thus the identity of Immi formed by the social gaze has been instrumental in Immi's social and personal alienation. With the growth of Immi from being a boy to someone he himself is not sure of creates a sense of lack or incompleteness because there has always been a discrepancy between his physical body and the idealised image of himself found in the mirror in his childhood.

Immi's trouble in realising his truth and coming to terms with his gendered identity can also be explained in the light of the concept of 'performativity' propounded by Judith Butler. Judith Butler in her seminal work *Gender Trouble* deconstructs the binary understanding of gender, positing that gender is not an inherent trait but rather a social construct that is continually performed and reenacted as she states,

performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalisation in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration. (Butler 1990, 15)

Immi also tries to perform the socially and culturally accepted norms and traits attributed to a boy since childhood. In the urge of proving Immi a man to the society, a frustrated Zeenat even hires a prostitute and sends her to Immi but Immi fails to perform the sexual act which traumatises him to the core. When Zeenat's career faces a downfall, the family faces a financial crisis, a vulnerable Immi joins Champa and the *hijra* community in order to sustain the household. Immi 'undoes' the gendered identity of being a man and transforms into Sitara. But when Immi becomes Sitara, his appearance changes drastically "A decent appearance is overtaken by an extravagant one" as remarked by Toyeba Mushtaq and Dr. Aaliya Ahmed (Mushtaq et al. 187). His life takes an unprecedented turn, he still lives in the 'in between' state. He feels a lack of belonging to the *hijra* community as the normativity of his past life has contributed a lot in the formation of the concept of 'I', undoing the gendered identity which has been nurtured for a long time creates a turmoil and vacuum in the individual's mind as Judith Butler states in her book *Undoing Gender* that,

...the “I” becomes, to a certain extent unknowable, threatened with unviability, becoming undone altogether, when it no longer incorporates the norm in such a way that makes this “I” fully recognizable. (Butler 2004, 3)

The constant oscillation between his body and identity tears Immi apart leading to a complete sense of uprootedness. The life long dilemma of belonging to a particular sexual identity and gendered identity tear Immi apart as he could neither lead his life as a male or as a transgender. Devadrita Talapatra and Laurel A. Snider rightly points out this stressful existence of marginalised sexes in their article ‘Identity Formation’,

For those that have identities that fall within underrepresented and oppressed groups, there are additional stressors that shape interactions with others and the world. Groups that are marginalized in society share distinctive features of identity development shaped by cultural markers such as racism, heterosexism, ableism, and other forms of oppression. (Talapatra et al. 4)

As Immi’s physical form significantly influenced how he perceived his identity as a ‘male’. The body is often seen as a vessel through which identity is expressed, through appearance, behavior, or societal roles. Here Immi’s body is also seen as a vessel which is socially formed and his sexual orientation has been denied so that his family pride does not get maligned. For Immi, his physical traits did not affirm his identity rather challenged his sense of identity. Cultural and social norms and expectations imposed ideals of beauty, gender expression, and body standards on Immi impacting how he truly feels about his identity. As the film progresses, we see how Immi struggles to get out of the closet which was built around him since childhood. He was never allowed to call his own mother ‘ammi’. rather his mother introduced him to everyone as her brother. This rejection from his mother under social subjugation took a great toll on his psychological well-being. His bodily identity could never be asserted and he always bore a fragmented identity, Later on Immi tries to adapt to his sexual identity by donning the role of a *hijra* named Sitara. However, he soon realises that although he was born a transgender but was never brought up like one. He was given the upbringing of how to become a ‘man’. Therefore, his performative identity overshadowed his sexual identity.

Exploring *Aligarh* and the Truth behind the Closet

The film *Aligarh* centres around the real-life story of Professor Srinivas Ramchandra Siras, sensitively portrayed by actor Manoj Bajpayee. The story unfolds as Siras is filmed in a compromising situation without his consent, which subsequently leads to him being suspended from his position. The story of Siras upholds the fact that while living in a society, the concept of privacy does not apply to someone who disagrees to adhere to the accepted modalities of the world. Throughout the story, we find out that Prof. Siras himself was not comfortable coming to terms with his sexual identity which

always remained coveted. He was always in the closet, grappling with his innate desires which are socially unacceptable. Mustafa Rajkotwala writes in his article titled 'Redefining Notions of Queerness in an Orwellian State'

The film reflects on the society's stereotypical and bigoted outlook toward individuals of varied sexual orientations, which are placed on a higher pedestal against basic virtues of mutual dignity, individual privacy, and cultural empathy. (Rajkotwala, 3)

The idea of a closet related to people who are unsure about their sexual orientation can be best explained by the theory of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a prominent queer theorist, introduced the concept of the 'closet' in her influential work *Epistemology of the Closet*. According to Sedgwick, the closet is not just a physical space but also a metaphorical construct that represents the experience of concealing one's non-heteronormative sexual orientation or gender identity. Sedgwick's analysis of the closet highlights the psychological, social, and cultural effects of this concealment.

The film poignantly depicts how old Siras' consistently denies the notion that he is gay when being asked by his only companion, Journalist Deepu. He never wanted to name or categorise his feelings with the tag of homosexuality since he always kept his sexual desires a secret inside the closet he built for himself. One of Sedgwick's observations regarding gay people in her book *Epistemology of the Closet* is very pertinent over here as she states,

The gay closet is not a feature only of the lives of gay people. But for many gay people it is still the fundamental feature of social life; and there can be few gay people, however courageous and forthright by habit. (Sedgwick, 68)

Siras chooses to explore his uniqueness and respect his quirks by having the guts to resist fitting into any one category and having the fortitude to remain outside the binary of sexual orientation classifications set by the heteronormative society. But because he wants to stay in the closet, when his privacy is flagrantly breached, he sees it as an attack maligning his moral character and self-respect.

The privacy of the closet is often counter posed with the public declaration of coming out. The bedroom becomes the extension of the closet, hence state interference in the bedroom is regarded as a privacy violation. (Singh 5)

As per Sedgwick, The experience of being in the closet is often accompanied by fear and anxiety due to the potential consequences of being discovered. Throughout the film, Siras is seen mostly silent; he never voices and articulates his desires socially. His silence symbolises the silencing of his society which never allows the queer souls to find freedom of expression. As Sedgewick writes,

Closetedness itself is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence—not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularly by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it. (Sedgwick 112)

Siras is also conscious of being revealed, the deep-rooted patriarchy and homophobia present in our society compels the queer individuals to worry about social rejection, discrimination, loss of relationships, or even physical harm and this constant fear can have a detrimental impact on their mental and emotional well-being and Siras has been no exception. As Ashwini Dabadge writes in her article '*Aligarh*, the Film: On Privacy, Homosexuality and Isolation',

Throughout the film, we see shots of Dr. Siras peeking from behind closed curtains and dark windows- the perfect metaphor for someone who lives life cowering in fear, and who can never come out of the closet. (Dabadge, 2016: 2)

Sedgwick also discussed how being in the closet requires individuals to engage in performative acts to uphold the illusion of heterosexuality. This can involve adopting gender norms, conforming to societal expectations, and hiding or suppressing aspects of their true selves. The pressure to maintain this performance can be exhausting and lead to a lack of authenticity and self-acceptance. The same happens with Siras as well. Under the pressure of conforming to the heteronormative rules of the society, Siras gets married to a woman. But when Deepu asks him why did the marriage not work out? Was it because Siras was a gay? Siras ignores this issue of himself being a gay. He states vague reasons like being too much into poetry and music bored his wife and she left him. Through this explanation, we understand Siras's strong objection to being labelled as a gay as he is yet to come to terms with the fact that he is a gay. When Deepu enquires whether the Rickshaw puller is his 'lover', Siras retorts to it, for him the word 'lover' sounds dirty. This also portrays Siras's internalised homophobia. Sedgwick also explores this concept whereby queer individuals may internalise negative societal attitudes towards homosexuality and develop negative self-perceptions. This negative attitude, often termed internalized homophobia, arises from pervasive cultural stigmatization and the pressure to conform to heteronormative ideals. Sedgwick analyzes how this phenomenon affects identity formation and the politics of disclosure (coming out of the closet). She emphasizes that such attitudes are not just personal but are shaped by systemic structures of power, discourse, and the regulation of sexuality.

The Intersectionality of Caste, Culture and Sexuality:

‘Intersectionality’ is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw. It acknowledges that different forms of social oppression, as she herself gives the definition in her article ‘Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color’

...to denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences. (Crenshaw 1991, 1244)

The Netflix released short film *Geeli Pucchi*(2021) is a critically acclaimed Indian film directed by Neeraj Ghaywan, which explores the complex interplay between caste,culture and sexuality in contemporary Indian society. Here we find a doubly marginalised queer and Dalit character who strives hard to climb the ladder of career but fails to do so in a patriarchal society. *Geeli Pucchi* exemplifies Crenshaw’s notion of ‘intersectionality’ by portraying the character of Bharti who faces marginalisation and discrimination on multiple fronts due to her caste and sexual identities. The protagonist, Bharti Mandal, belongs to the Dalit community and works as a factory worker. She faces constant dehumanisation and exclusion, which reflects the broader societal marginalisation experienced by Dalits. The film emphasises how caste prejudices limit opportunities, perpetuate inequality, and contribute to the social stigmatisation of marginalised individuals.

Unlike Immi from *Darimiyaan* and Prof. Siras from *Aligarh*, Bharti is not hesitant about her sexual identity as a lesbian, she has overcome the social and internalised stigma and fear of being isolated as a queer since she has faced isolation for being a Dalit first. Bharti has come out of her closet; she has come to terms with her sexual orientation. Throughout the short film, we encounter a lonely Bharti, there has been no trace of her family, she lives isolated in a lonely apartment. In this film, it is shown that in spite of having necessary qualifications, Bharti’s hardest obstacle for getting her desired desk job is her caste identity. However, a newcomer named Priya who lacks the required skill set gets the job of the data operator as she is the daughter-in-law of a Brahmin. This throws light on the age-old conservative caste system prevalent in India which not only affects the social order but deprives true talent in workplaces as well. Bharti’s dalit co-worker Dasrath also explains to her that since she does not have a ‘Sharma’ or ‘Banerjee’ as her last name, the dalits will be allowed to eat at a table but not be allowed to work at one.

The film portrays a brewing companionship between Bharti and Priya. Priya questioned Bharti's surname at their first meeting, the latter replied ‘Bharti Banarjee’ rather than Mandol. Here Bharti takes up a mask to hide her true identity for escaping from the anxiety and burden of being a Dalit and its subsequent rejection from all quarters. Bharti gradually realises that she could never have the job in spite of having all the required skill sets due to her caste standing, whereas Priya was hired based solely on her palm reading ability. She couldn't stop herself from crying. She was conscious, however, of not entirely giving in to her fragility in front of Priya. The below mentioned quote by Sudipta Das taken

from his article 'Geeli Pucchi: Exploring the Messiness Of Caste And Sexuality' may justify Bharti's concealment of emotions,

Cribbing (read vulnerability) doesn't get you anything. Vulnerability is established as bleak. This is also the politics of upper caste people of getting rid of accountability (Das 2021, 4)

Bharti and Priya establish a bond that goes beyond sexuality as Priya terms it their small corner away from the world of men outside. However, Priya's mind is conditioned by heteronormative and patriarchal notions of the world and her upper caste identity. She asks for Bharti's surname before initiating a friendship with her. Being confirmed by the fact that Bharti is a Bengali Brahmin, immediately Priya compliments Bharti that her eyes are beautiful. It shows that the friendship from Priya's end was never unconditional but situational. Bharti also becomes a little vulnerable and compassionate towards Priya as Priya romantically advances towards Bharti. Bharti also starts thinking that her days of seclusion have ended, now she is also wanted and included in the common milieu. But everything gets shattered when Bharti emotionally confesses her identity of being a Dalit to Priya when the latter admits that she wants Bharti more than her childhood sweetheart Kavita and Priya is unable to love her husband for the fact that she feels for Bharti. In a moment of exhilarated emotion, Bharti develops the misconception that Priya's strong desire for Bharti might help the former overcome her casteist outlook. But Priya immediately withdraws herself. When Priya gets a call from her office that she has made a terrible mistake, she seeks Bharti's help but when she sees that her superiors are celebrating her birthday in their cabin, she stops Bharti from entering the cabin as it is a place inhabited only by upper caste people. Bharti is called in to the place, not to celebrate Priya's birthday but to be a waitress who would serve everyone the pieces of cake and collect the used tissues of the upper caste people. This revelation throws light on the fact that Priya is more troubled with the fact that Bharti is a Dalit than Bharti being a queer. When the queer selves of Bharti and Priya bind them together, their caste difference creates an unbridgeable distance between them as Sudipta Das rightly pens,

Often queer spaces aren't completely accepting of Dalit identities and often Dalit spaces aren't completely accepting of queer identities. (Das 2021, 5)

Resistance, Retaliation and Emancipation

The three protagonists, Immi, Dr. Siras and Bharti resist the set ideologies and idiosyncrasies of the conformist society in their own different way. Immi is a transgender who took a lot of time to identify his own gender, till his youth he was not sure of his own sexual identity. But when he faced utter poverty due to his mother's inability to bag films, he joined the local *hijra* community in order to make both ends meet. But he was unable to adjust to the gruesome reality of *hijra*'s lives who are social

outcasts. After being gang raped, a distressed Immi leaves the dark allies of the hijra world. He rescues an abandoned child, named him *Muraad*(a wish). Through *Muraad*, Immi envisions a future where he would bring up the child and the child will fill all his incompleteness. But soon enough he realises that he is not potent enough to raise a child alone and provide a secured life to him. A desperate Immi begs Chitra, his mother's rival, to adopt the child and give him a dignified life. Here we find a desolated Immi embracing death over life as his path of salvation and redemption.

Dr. Siras on the other hand comes out of his closet when his privacy was breached by some journalists and his colleagues. Dr. Siras gets banished from AMU for showing 'immoral conduct'. The empathetic journalist Deepu Sebastian instills a sense of resistance and retaliation in Siras's mind. Here Deepu becomes the path of Siras's emancipation. As Rajkotwala remarks about the character of Deepu, Deepu represents the social authentication and intersectional allyship that marginalised individuals require in order to feel comfortable with their identity and existence.(Rajkotwala 2021, 4)

Siras also discloses the kind of cultural marginalisation and discrimination he faces in the AMU campus as he is someone who teaches Marathi in the city of Urdu and how everyone is jealous of his position as the Chairman of Linguistic Department at Aligarh Muslim University(AMU). The entire fiasco of invading his personal space might be a planned move from the end of his colleagues. In search of getting justice for his unlawful dismissal from the post of Chairmanship at AMU, Siras files a case through Allahabad High Court. He gets a very renowned lawyer Anand Gover by his side who fought for the Naz Foundation Case against Section 377 of Indian Penal Code which criminalised homosexuality. Anand puts forward the case with all its strengths and questions the court regarding the definition of morality as it is very subjective and culture specific. He also harps on a person's constitutional rights to freedom of choosing his sexual identity, engage in consensual sex and right to privacy. After a long battle, the court orders AMU to restore Siras to his post. But just one day before his rejoining, Siras is found dead in his solitary apartment. The police tried to cover up the case by claiming that the door of his apartment was locked from inside and there is no trace of foul play. Although Siras was dead, he could not restore his lost position, but his death paved the way for many people who are facing similar kinds of injustice in their lives, as Manash Firaq Bhattacharjee writes in his article 'Section 377, Aligarh and the Curious Case of Dr. Siras',

Siras symbolised a collective cause – of gay rights and a respectful place for sexual minorities in Indian society. The question of justice in Siras's case encompassed a larger justice which is awaited in favour of the gay cause in India. (Bhattacharjee, 3)

While Immi and Siras's resistance was not completely successful, Bharti Mondal, strategizes in order to resist the social injustice. After being emotionally discarded by Priya, Bharati's silent wrath returns, and she starts to concentrate and pursue her dream position of a data operator. But this time she does not beg the position from her superiors, rather she depends on strategies and merit-based appeals to the dominant caste. She makes Priya think of getting pregnant so that she falls in love with her husband, she lures Priya with the vague concept of being settled with children and family the same way Kavita is settled. Bharti no longer aspires and craves for validation from the upper caste and the mainstream society and nor even desires inclusion. At the very end of the film, Bharti finds out that Priya has disclosed her caste identity to her in-laws. This disloyalty and revelation do not hurt Bharti, rather she grows even more courageous in her journey towards emancipation. The way she manipulated Priya for rearing a child, the same way she manipulates Priya's in-laws so that Priya leaves her job and Bharti gets what she truly deserves. The film's ultimate mastery lies in its closing scene when discrimination against Bharti takes up the most brutal form. Priya's mother in-law brings four cups of tea, three of them are quite sophisticated, meant for the upper caste milieu and the fourth one is a plain looking cup symbolising the marginalisation of dalit people. But Bharti has already won her battle, she has finally snatched her rightful place, as she sips the tea from the cup, we witness a quiet Bharti rejoicing and celebrating her victory through her deprivation. Here we find a truly liberated and emancipated queer soul who is neither a victim nor a champion, but Ghawan has crafted the most humane queer character who knows how to navigate through the manifold layers of marginalisation and discrimination. Finally, we have a character who does not remain in the closet or buries her desires under the tremendous social pressure to conform and surrender.

Conclusion

The three films have been meticulously chosen from three different decades in order to trace the progress of cinematic representation of queer people. *Darimiyaan: In Between* was set in the time of late 90s(1997), where transgender people were considered to be social evil. People used to see them as demons, but *Darimiyaan* as a film was way ahead of its time since for the first time it showed a transgender character in its humane form. In 2015, we find the cinematic representation of a true story of Prof. Srinivas Ramchandra Siras through the brilliant film *Aligarh*. The film was remarkable as it makes us wonder that this is an incident which can happen to anyone, it also raises questions of a person's privacy in the face of social invasion. Right after the decriminalisation of Article 377, Prof. Siras was expelled from the authority of AMU. But even after he wins the case, he never gets back the life he deserved, the oppressive society does not let him live, he dies in seclusion. But slowly with the advent of various queer discourses, Hindi Cinema started portraying queer characters who are no longer restricted within the periphery of the social gaze, rather they are assertive of their sexual orientation and aware of their social and political rights. Here in 2021, we finally find a lesbian Dalit woman named

Bharti who turns the table or compels her fortune to favour her. She ends the interplay of psychosocial discrimination, not by waging a war against it, but through merit and utmost intelligence. The research work tries to uphold a positive progress towards representation of LGBTQIA+ community through the digital lens by portraying their success stories and their fight against social injustice.

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