



# Critiquing the Motion (Cinema) through Queer Lens

Ashish Aggarwal

Department of English, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Dharamshala, India  
Email- [ashishaggarwal18sep@gmail.com](mailto:ashishaggarwal18sep@gmail.com)

Received: 18 Aug 2022; Received in revised form: 09 Sep 2022; Accepted: 14 Sep 2022; Available online: 19 Sep 2022  
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**Abstract**— *Films are one of the most powerful tools and medium in the present times to convey certain set of ideology by keeping people intact and hooked to the screens. People can easily empathize and sympathize seeing movies as, one can relate well by understanding the inherent grammar or language of the film by connecting it to the reality. The paper here will try to form a bridge between the Queer Studies and Film Theory. The term Queer in itself stands for something weird and abhorred. It stands for the people of the alternative sexualities who do not fall into the bracket of binaries. Thus, queer in this way becomes an umbrella term to unite all these identities and is a creation of a new form or a new language to bring the wind of change in the lives of people who are marginalized since ages. In this way queer here also becomes a symbol of hope and stands for multiplicity of desires and identities. The movies taken here for research purpose **Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui (2021)** and **Badhai Do (2022)** both are recent films which talk about the queering of cinema and toppling down the accepted normal gender roles in the films. Both the movies try to create an alternative structure and vision for the public, broadening the horizon of expectations.*

**Keywords**— *Queer, alternative sexualities, marginalization, tabular rasa, binaries.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Restrictions and boundaries can be drawn

Certain limitations can also be created or imposed

But there can be no control over desires

Because, soul has no gender nor does it understands the language of gender.

Whatever soul demands, desires or craves can never be controlled or halted.

Humans are one of the benign blessings of the creation or the almighty. We as human beings all different in various aspects and have individual differences may it be, in the form of ideologies, our opinions, our upbringing and the list is endless. Every individual is unique and has a unique personality. As, soon as a child is born, in the very initial stage of life, he is unaware of the things around and, mind of that child is generally like a 'blank slate' which is also called as 'tabular rasa' by (John Locke) one of the enlightenment thinkers. Whatever is scribbled by the

society or by the people around forms a permanent deep entrenched mark. The child when grows up comes in contact with several people around who already in one way or the other help to seep down or percolate the preconceived notions in the mind of the child regarding the two possible political categories present in the society that is male and females.

Our understanding regarding Sex and Gender is quite hazy in nature. Usually people are of the notion that both the terms have similar meanings but the case is not the same. Sex is something which is natural and with which we are born- may it be, physical traits, gene pool etc whereas gender is an artificial social construct. It is society which lays various rules and regulations and parameters for us and the one who falls out of the bracket of binaries is viewed with an eye of suspicion and hatred. Life usually for people with alternative sexualities like gay, lesbians, bisexuals, eunuchs etc; is not easy at all. At various levels they have to give the test of times, patience and prove their stance. But with the passage of time there has been a very

minute shift which though has not created a huge difference but has sown the seeds of freedom and liberty in the present times.

With the coming up of verdicts and various alterations in laws and articles like Article 377 which no more criminalizes the things or activities related to the alternative sexualities, is like a rainbow growing up in their lives and is acting like a cloud with a silver lining full of hope, once again lighting up their lives. Life for such people in spite of so many reforms and changes is still placed in hot soups. Sense of freedom prevails in their lives but is quite pseudo and restricted in nature.

Queer is one such term which has turned out to be the new hallmark or currency of representation of people with alternative sexualities. As a word, in present times it is being used as an umbrella term to unite all the possible alternative categories present around. Queer as a term is beautifully defined in a book called *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* as-“the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made to signify monolithically”(263).

This definition in itself opens up wide range or corpus or rather horizon of permutations and combinations of possibilities around and opens up the discourse of sexuality widely. Queer thus becomes a term of pride and celebration, which relies on firm footing of difference affirmed and affirmative difference. Queering, thus has become “the act of transgressing normal expectations and destabilizing traditional paradigms of sexuality” (1089) as is stated in the book *Literary and Cultural Theory*. It has become an act of firmly standing and facing the tests of time with bravery. This Queerness or the ability to place all the alternative sexualities on the same plane is described aptly in Devdutt Pattanaik’s *Shikhandi* as-

“To appreciate this fluidity of nature

And the shifting rigidities of culture

Is to appreciate queerness (4)”.

This means that even in his book Pattanaik is trying to expand the horizon of sexuality and talks about the fluidity and flexibility of the term gender. Even Hindu mythology is full of queer examples may it be *Shikhandi*, Ardhanarishwara and the gift of blessings given to eunuchs by Lord Rama in the great epic *Ramayana*. These all examples are in itself a kind of solid proof that queerness existed in our lives since ages but it is only humans or society who constantly have denied the voice and privilege to the people belonging to marginalized sects of society. This very thing can be beautifully explained through a

quote in Pattnaik’s *Shikhandi*- “the best judgement is ultimately a function of human prejudice. In nature, there are no courts”(36) . This means all are equal for nature without any distinction or hierarchy.

When it comes to the depiction of the discrimination or distinction it becomes quite difficult to depict such things through fiction and other genres and movies have an edge in this case. This thing can be better explained with the help of quotation from one of the essays in the book *Literary and Cultural Theory* which has an essay titled as “Film Genre” explaining the very term as-“Film genres are mental structures that integrate sensations, emotions and actions, activating the viewer’s body and mind” (1064). Thus, from the quotation stated it can be easily understood what role exactly do films play and how films as genres help to sensitize things, helps to aggravate emotions and activates the mind and body both by affecting the viewer .Films have that sway to pass or percolate certain ideology in a very swift fashion. For this very reason even one of the leading film theorists of 1920’s named Rudolph Arnheim says that- films are a unique and novel experiment in the visual arts which adds to something being appealing and effective in nature.

Movies taken here usually challenge the traditional pattern of movies as the ideal image of hero and heroine is toppled and now the narration of the plot line and focus of the story or plot is in the hands of the people belonging to alternative sexualities. The centre or the focus has been shifted to the alternative sexualities where they can raise their voice and stand on a pedestal with a head held high, speaking for themselves. Now the nib of destiny lies in their hands. Here, through this paper I have taken two recent movies that is; **Badhai Do** and **Chandigarh kare Aashiqui** which topples all the notions of the traditional film pattern.

**Chandigarh kare Aashiqui** (2021) is one of the recent films which is directed by Abhishek Kapoor which simply talks about a love story between a gym owner here Manu (which is played by Aayushman Khurana). He is striving hard to win the G.O.A.T. competition (Gabru of all the time). He runs his gym and his family has almost invested everything in his gym and expects a financial stability which in real, lacks. Then meanwhile all this Maanvi comes (which is played by Vaani Kapoor). She comes and joins the gym like a normal girl and things remain quite normal for some time and she becomes the centre of attraction for all the gym guys including Manu. Also on the other hand Manu’s family like other families is behind his marriage and even they keep on bothering him on daily basis. When they come across Maanvi they are impressed by her and are behind Manu’s life to get

married. Then with the passage of time things start cooking between them and they come close and get intimate with each other. Suddenly one day when Manu was at her flat she confesses everything to him and from here the twist and turn comes. She tells him that she was a trans girl who was born as a boy but never felt as one. She through surgery had altered her sex to that of female and says –“I am a trans girl”. And after hearing this Manu is infuriated. He shouts and creates a scene, hurling shower of abuses at her. He says and interrogates “Mei Munde naal sex kita hai?” Even his friends tease him saying – “Tune khud ki leli”. They also call Maanvi “bloody eunuch”. He again meets her telling her to leave the city and says-“Tu ye apni admi wali shakal leke nikal yaha se”. With the passage of time he starts to realize his mistakes when family is behind his marriage and he also watches so many Trans videos of people worldwide belonging to the same community going through same pang and sufferings in life. Amidst all this it is only her father who accepts her as it is, and says-“tu mera beta beti dono hai”. One day Manu was caught in traffic and comes across a eunuch whom he requests to talk with and she showers words of wisdom by quoting Shakespeare and says-“A rose by any other name would smell as sweet”. She says that what is in name? **Love is love!** Amongst all this his sisters follow him to hospital where he goes to talk to Trans doctors and they also saw Maanvi going to the doctor and they come across her reality. They humiliate Manu back at home and also Maanvi in gym publically and sack her out. They humiliate her by saying-“Munjhal niwas mei ek kinnar ayega bahu bankar”. Such kind of poisoned arrows really pierce Maanvi’s heart. When she is about to leave the city she gets a call from her cousin that her father had a heart attack and was admitted in hospital. There too her mother insults her and blames her for her father’s condition and still she doesn’t leave. Manu too follows her and stays with her and asks forgiveness from her. And finally then comes the G.O.A.T. match where he has to fight for the ultimate title he had been striving for. He goes there and in the very last round she too joins him which boosts his morale and he wins the match adding the ultimate feather to his cap. And it is at the end where publically he accepts and proposes her in front of everyone. Thus, in nutshell the movie tries to create a space for such people who are marginalized and tells us that they are also humans.

Another movie taken here for the research purpose is **Badhai Do (2022)** which is directed by Harshavardhan Kulkarni. Like all Indian typical households expect and talk about the marriage at the right age and which is the ultimate thing according to Indian households, similarly here the lead actor’s families that is family of Shardul played by (Rajkumar Rao ) who is a

police inspector and Suman played by (Bhumi Pednekar) who is a P.T. teacher in school talk about their marriages in respective households. Shardul’s family try their level best to look for an apt girl but every time he makes an excuse. Same was the case with Suman in case of finding the right match. One day on a dating app she instead of finding a girl for herself being a lesbian finds a boy who is behind her life. Then she complaints to the police going to Shardul. After that Shardul tries to meet her and requests her to marry him and tells her by saying-“Hum aap hi hai”, which means that he was gay too. He says further-“agar aap or hum apas mei shadi karle to hamare parivaro ki chik chik band hojyegi”. Thus, their marriage becomes a kind of a compromise and they get married being gay and lesbian. Then they go for honeymoon after marriage and they book two different rooms where Shardul is expecting his boy friend Kabir to join. Sumi goes all alone to roam about the place all by herself. Then when they are back from honeymoon they start living separately in Dehradun in police quarters away from families. One day Suman goes to a laboratory where she is infatuated to a girl called Rimjhim who was a lesbian. Rimjhim shifts along with them at their place. Suman and Rimjhim had lot many of private moments and Suman tells about her past relation with Komal and how she got married and how she was attached to her kid and she too wanted a kid as she loved kids but for all this she will have to go abroad as in India gays and lesbians cannot adopt a child. Then Diwali comes and they plan to visit home for the first Diwali after marriage and their too the family members have only one topic to discuss that is about kids. They say different things like-“saal bhar hone ko hai, hogya enjoy”. Also they take Suman to hospital for check up without her knowing. When reports come normal and they plan to leave back, in order to keep check her mother in law accompanies them and then one day she saw Suman getting physical with Rimjhim and she calls her parents and her father takes her and on the other hand Shardul meets another guy after breakup, Gaurav who was a lawyer. Meanwhile both the families question them and they had to face so many things like Suman’s brother said her-“Dosto ko kia bolunga, meri behen lesbian hai, ghatiya saali”. Even Shardul’s brother in law being doctor says- “Homeopathy mei bhi dawai ni hai is bimari ki”. When all this happens after this Shardul also accepts in front of everyone that he is a gay too. And he further adds-“Bimari ni hai ye koi, natural hota hai. Andar se aati hai feeling, bhagwan ne bnaya hai aisa, kia kre”. He takes a stand for Suman. After all this they resume their lives normal and Shardul on duty saw a **Pride March of Queers** once on road, which he also joins. At last Suman and Shardul meet for discussing their divorce case and meanwhile their request to adopt a child is accepted and

they cancel their divorce after this and adopt the child and the movie ends on a note where a Pooja is kept and all four of them are in one frame acting as parents for the kid. Thus, in nutshell the movie topples all the pre conceived notions of a movie and believes in one mantra that is **live and let live** should be the philosophy of life. Also life can be really beautiful when you accept the things as they are.

## II. CONCLUSION

In nutshell, through this paper of mine I have tried to highlight the pangs and sufferings of the Queers. My first movie that is Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui talks about how our society does not easily accept trans people when once things are revealed to them, and on the other hand when things are kept confidential the very same person seems normal to everyone. Thus, this question of acceptance and normality underlines the theme and hidden meaning of this movie here. The second movie taken here tries to create an alternative vision or alternative narrative of life by depicting how if gay and lesbian are married as a couple, how this can also be possible if society does not intervene and act as a spoiler. Also it is highlighted how societal expectations of kids by families and of marriage, if not fulfilled can topple down the so called normal lives of the so called abnormal or marginalized people of the society. Thus, the role of society and family is highlighted at large in this movie. In totality the objective of this paper was to talk about the marginalized communities and to create an alternative structure and vision for them. In totality it is very important for us as individuals of society to treat everyone as human first because humanity is the biggest and the strongest pillar which can safeguard our coming generations from getting shipwrecked in the ocean of oblivion.

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