

## Media Portrayal of Same-Sex Love: A Comparative Analysis between Cinema and OTT Platforms

**Pooja Arya**

PhD Scholar

Department of Mass Communication and Journalism

Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University

Rae Bareli Road, Lucknow

Orcid ID: **0009-0001-1727-9461**

### Abstract

Advent of internet has turned the entertainment world upside-down. From standing in long queues for cinema tickets and waiting in front of television sets for watching favorite series to downloading movies and shows with a click while watching comfortably on mobile phones, many things regarding viewing habits have changed. OTT is bombarded with contents and many of them are the successful ones. OTT offers fresh and innovative themes and thus, the traditional cinema is also exploring non-conventional themes to match the pace and growing popularity of OTT platforms. Homosexuality or same-sex love is among the new themes that OTT platforms have taken up and traditional cinemas is also heading towards it. In this research paper, the researcher has tried to find the similarities and differences in the content of OTT shows and traditional cinema by conducting a comparative analysis between LGBTQ-centric shows on OTT platform and LGBTQ-centric films. Two films from traditional cinema and two shows from OTT platforms have been taken up to find out how the portrayal of same-sex lovers or same-sex love stories varies from OTT to traditional cinema. The researcher has employed thematic analysis to compare the content of two different platforms.

**Keywords:** *Same-sex love stories, LGBTQ, Homosexuality, OTT, Films*



© This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 (CC BY-NC 4.0) International License. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

### 1.) Introduction

Indian cinema has been entertaining its audience since 1913. Dadasaheb Phalke set the foundation stone with the film *Raja Harishchandra*, and since then, Indian cinema has come a long way. The Indian cinema started its journey with most of the films produced with religion as the main theme. Many movies based on the mythology were produced which attracted a good number of audiences. It was only in the early 1940s that movies with different themes like nationalism took over mythology. The golden age of Bollywood (1940s) aroused and it gave Indian cinema a lot of golden things like the evergreen songs of Bollywood, angry young man, modernization and romantic genre.

Many social themes like corruption, poverty, widow remarriage, child marriage and more came to light. The genre of love story started with the movie *Boby*. The same sex love stories still had a long way to go. In 1971, a movie titled *Badnam Basti* was released. It had a tiny part related to the homosexual relation. The biggest milestone for the same-sex love stories was created by Deepa Mehta with her film *Fire*. The movie is a classic and everything in the movie is next to perfect. Then a few more movies with homosexual theme, like *Girlfriend*, were produced which could not get much attention. The next movie to make it big in the mainstream Bollywood was released in the year 2019 – *Ekk Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga*. Then in 2020 was released *Shubh Mangal Zyada Savdhan* which was a hit on the box office. Then in 2022 came *Badhai Do* which also managed to attract decent amount of audience.

During 2020-2022 a lot of things have changed due to lockdown. All the cinema halls were closed and people took it to OTT for entertainment. OTT shows became more popular and people started to spend more time online. OTT is flooded with various kinds of programs and it also keeps on coming up with something new. It took the topic of homosexuality seriously and many same-sex love stories have been produced in a very short span of time. These shows are: *The Other Love Story*, *The Married Woman*, *Dev DD*, *Romil and Jugal*, *Maya 2* and *Forbidden Love*.

Right now, in the field of entertainment, there is a race between Indian Cinema and OTT shows. Both have different kinds of contents, different kinds of production and distribution techniques. This research paper focuses on making a comparative analysis between the content of Bollywood films and OTT shows related to LGBTQ or same-sex love stories. Thematic analysis has been

employed by the researcher where she formed certain themes based on different codes hidden in the films and shows.

## 2.) Review of Literature

*'New Media as a change agent of Indian Television and Cinema: A Study of Over the Top Platform'* is a research paper written by **Paramveer Singh**, where the author explores the changes brought in Indian television and cinema due to advent of new media and OTT platforms. The research is based on watching trends among youth. A survey was conducted to know about the watching habits of youth in the world of new media. The study reveals that youths have mostly switched to online platforms and Hotstar, Netflix and Jio are the major players in the game.

In the paper titled *'Analysis of Censorship on OTT Platform and its Analysis with International Laws and Brief Study of the India's Cinema law'*, **Ashwani Biradar and Arundhati Bhale** analyses the international laws related to the censorship on OTT platforms and censorship laws related to the cinema in India. The researchers come to the conclusion that Censor Board of Film Certification doesn't treat every film equally; when it comes to cinema, people are actually the best judges; censorship actually spoils a movie; and the censoring system is outdated and it requires changes.

**Gajendra Awasya and Manoj Kumar Patel** examine the change in viewership pattern created due to OTT platforms and which has created a fear of downfall of cinema. In their paper titled *'OTT Viewership and Pandemic: A Study on News Trends of Online Video Content and Cinema Hall Footfalls'*, the authors claim that increased viewership of OTT platforms in lockdown created an impact on viewership of cinema negatively.

*'A Study on OTT Content Versus Theatrical Released Cinema Preferences Among the Urban Population of Guwahati'* is a research paper written by **Anindita Dey and Rahul Chandra**, where the writers study the viewing preferences of the population of Guwahati in the context of OTT and cinema content. They conducted a survey among the urban population of Guwahati and came to the conclusion that OTT platforms are gaining popularity among the urban population. They prefer downloading movies rather than going to cinema halls. Their respondents go to cinema hall only when they find the trailer interesting.

In the article titled '*Beyond Television and Cinema: Audience Evolution in the Streaming Age*' **Manisha Pandit** states that OTT is having its business expansion and is gaining popularity in India. She presents the 2019 data by TRAI which states that the total number of users had reached 511.90 million in November 2018. She also presents FICCI and E&Y data for the year 2018, where it is seen that the time spent on video by Indian audience has increased by 85%.

In his paper titled '*Scope and Impact of Cinema Advertising in the Era of VoD and Online Streaming*', **Sadaf Karim** examines if online streaming or OTT is hurting Bollywood and Hollywood financially through advertisement policies. He analysis the content of secondary data and comes to the conclusion that though online streaming is increasing at faster pace, there is still a great scope of cinema advertising and it is not dying at all.

In the research paper titled '*The Portrayal of LGBTQ Community in Indian Web Series: Thematic Analysis of Married Women & Four More Shots*' **Pallavi Mishra and Kritika Sharma** analyses the content of two LGBTQ-centric shows on OTT with the objective to trace the portrayal of LGBTQ community.

'*The Effects of Covid-19 Pandemic on Audience Practices in Cinema, Television and OTT Platforms*' is a research paper by **MS Okumus**. This research was carried out with the objective to find out if cinema industry lost its values during Covid-19 pandemic period, 2019-2021. The study also examines the condition and position of movie theatres and the revenue generated against the television broadcast.

In the research titled '*Globalization Propelled Technology Often Ends Up in Microlocalization: Cinema Viewing in the Time of OTT*', **Mrinal Chatterjee and Sambhi Pal**, probe the change in the viewing habit of generation of new millennium and how this generation has switched to OTT for watching movies on mobile devices than watching them on the big screens. Survey and in-depth interview was conducted by the authors to fulfill the objectives of the study.

'*Portrayal of Sexual Minorities in Hindi Cinema*' is a research paper by **Sanjeev Kumar Sabarwal and Ritika Sen**, where the writers explore the portrayal of sexual minority in Hindi cinema. Both mainstream cinema and the alternative cinema is the target of the researcher. They took two movies from mainstream cinema and two movies from alternative cinema to trace the portrayal.

### 3.) Research Objectives

- To find out the similarity in the portrayal of content related to LGBTQ in OTT and cinema.
- To trace the difference in the portrayal of content related to LGBTQ in cinema and OTT.
- To find out which medium, cinema or OTT, portrays homosexuals in more realistic manner.
- To examine if OTT has an edge over cinema in the context of portrayal of same-sex love.

### 4.) Research Questions

- What is the similarity between portrayal of same-sex love in cinema and OTT platforms.
- What are the differences in the portrayal of same-sex love in cinema and OTT platforms?
- Which medium, cinema or OTT, portrays homosexuals in more realistic manner?
- Does OTT have an edge over cinema in the portrayal of same-sex love?

### 5.) Research Design

#### 5.1) Research Methodology

To analyze the content of OTT and cinema, researcher has conducted a comparative analysis, by employing **deductive thematic analysis**.

Themes Employed are:

| <u>Themes</u>            | <u>Codes</u>   |
|--------------------------|--|
| Cliché Representation    | Characters portraying queers have stereotypical qualities<br>They are shown mostly in pink colors.<br>Women are tom boy and men have feminine characteristics. |
| Realistic Representation | They do not have stereotypical qualities.<br>One cannot tell by looking at the character if they are homosexuals or not.                                       |
| Boldness                 | Having intimate and romantic scenes.<br>Kissing scenes.  |
| Strict Laws              | Governed under rules and regulation of Censor  |

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
|                | Board of India.  |
| Lenient Laws   | Not governed by rules and regulations of Censor Board of India.  |
| Humorous Plot  | If the genre of the movie/show is mostly comedy.<br>Film takes the support of humor.<br>If any of the main characters is kind of funny or hilarious.   |
| Serious Plot   | If the plot of the movie/show is largely serious.<br>None of the leads is presented as a source of comic relief.<br>Situation surrounding the LGBTQ community or their relationships does not take support from humor. |
| Social Angle   | If the movie largely portrays the fight between the same-sex couple, or the single character, with the family or the society.<br>If more focus is given to the awareness among the people or society.                  |
| Personal Angle | If the fight of the person is with the self.<br>If it is about feeling alone or the feeling of being different from everybody else.<br>If the fight is between being right or wrong for their sexuality.               |

### 5.2) Universe of the Study

All LGBTQ-centric movies and shows on big screen (mainstream Bollywood) and OTT platforms, respectively, is the universe for the research.

### 5.3) Sample Size

- Researcher has gone for **two LGBTQ movies and two OTT shows.**

- The movies selected are *Shubh Mangal Zyada Savdhan* and *Badhai Do*.
- OTT shows chosen for analysis are *Married Women* and *The Other Love Story*.

#### 5.4) Sample Technique

- Simple random sampling has been used by the researcher.

#### 6.) A Short Note on the Themes Employed

In this research work, the researcher has decided upon certain themes to analyze the content of the selected films and shows. Deductive thematic analysis has been used here. Researcher went through the sample thoroughly and came up with certain themes that, according to her, would be close to perfect to comprehend the content comprehensively. Here are the themes and arguments for using those themes.

**Cliché Representation:** When it comes to the representation or portrayal of LGBTQ community, Bollywood has mostly used them for comic relief. Even if some significant role is given to them, they are often shown in negative roles. Mostly, they have been in the films just for comic relief and that too cheap at times. This kind of portrayal has generated certain stereotypes for them. These stereotypes are:

- Gays are shown dressing up like feminine.
- Their way of walking and way of talking is often too feminine. Even women don't walk or talk in that way.
- They are often shown as sex offenders who always roam around heterosexual men like sex predators.
- Their feelings are often portrayed as being just sexual ones. Love doesn't matter to them.
- Lesbians are shown in tom-boyish look or in goth make-up.

All these portrayals have an image in the mind of the people. Gays condition is more pathetic in media portrayal than lesbians. They are mocked, ridiculed and even insulted for their sexuality and that is supposed to be taken in a light and comic way by the audience. And, often it is taken on light note.

**Realistic Representation:** Mentioned above are the stereotypes that are formed due the portrayal of LGBTQ community in non-LGBTQ centric movies. It is here to be seen if the LGBTQ-centric movies and shows go with the same phenomenon or they opt for something that

is close to reality. Here, the emphasis will be placed on whether the representation in the movie is free from all these stereotypes or not.

**Boldness:** Boldness is crucial in same-sex love stories. If the kissing scenes or compassionate scenes are shown on the screen then it generates normality of the issue. Same-sex relationships are not considered just taboo but it is something which is counted as completely out of box or next to impossible. Indian society is bound by the compulsion of getting married and having children. Indians are also known for their extravagant weddings. In this case, if someone's child tell him/her that they are homosexual, this would be seen as completely intolerable. Boldness on the screen can make it less out of box thing and more about love.

**Strict Laws:** Censor Board of Film Certification is a government agency which provides certificates to the films. It is established under The Cinematography Act of 1962. The movies shown on big screen or television sets have to go through rigorous scrutiny. That is why Indian cinema has to consider a lot of things while producing a film. At times, even if the story demands, they cannot explicitly show certain things. Films produced in India thus have to set certain boundaries during production and at the time of release of the movie.

**Lenient Laws:** If the show or any movie broadcasted in India does not fall within the campus of CBFC then it is supposed to be free from strict laws.

**Humorous Plot:** *Fire* is the biggest milestone when it comes to the movies related to same-sex love. It faced a lot of backlash from the fanatic and conservative outfits. This was because of the reason that homosexuality is not only something which is frowned upon, but it is also something that people do not want to talk about even as a joke. Making the plot humorous helps LGBTQ-centric movies to attract audience. Most of the people who go to watch movies just want to entertain themselves and have some fun. If they find out that the movie they are going to watch has a comic angle or the movie is a comedy movie then they would definitely be attracted or show interest in watching the movies.

**Serious Plot:** Some movies or shows still choose to go for a serious plot. There is nothing wrong or right or bad or good, about opting for a serious plot or humorous plot. The researcher has taken these two types of plots because during the explorations of the study's universe, she noticed that these types of plots are the most common ones. This is why the researcher has



focused on what type of plot is often opted by films and what type of plot is often opted by OTT programs.

**Social Angle:** As discussed above, it is very difficult for society and families to accept homosexuality. A homosexual person or homosexual couples have to go through a lot due to the fear of societal ostracism. There have been instances of same-sex lovers committing suicide after expressing their love for each other openly. It is to be seen here whether the films produced related to same-sex love shows these kinds of struggle or they go for personal angle.

**Personal Angle:** Before engaging in the fight with the family or society, homosexual individuals have to go through a personal struggle. The feeling of being different from others irritates homosexual people a lot. As discussed above, Indian society focuses on getting married and having children. It requires a heterosexual relationship. In this case, if a person is homosexual and learns about their sexuality (most often in teens), they go through a lot of mental and emotional struggle. Some individuals even resort to the tragic path of death in an attempt to escape the feeling of not fitting in the shoe. It is to be traced here whether the films or shows adopt a personal angle or social angle or both.

## **7.) Analysis and Discussion**

### **7.1.) Analysis of Bollywood Films**

#### *7.1.1.) Shubh Mangal Zyada Savdhan*

Ayushman Khurana is known for being part of movies that have out of the box themes. He always comes with topics that are either new to Bollywood or are often shown in just alternative cinema. Similarly, the other lead of the movie Jitendra Kumar is an OTT fame, popular for being attached with TVF productions. TVF production is also famous for taking up realistic and odd issues and presenting them in the best way possible. Both the actors have done fantastic roles in the movie. The acting is superb from almost all the actors and with some touch of comedy, the movie has a lot to offer to its audience.

This film not only talks about the social aspect of homosexuality, but it also discusses the medical truth behind the feeling of love. During one scene, Aman (Jitendra Kumar), tries to explain to his father that his love for Kartik (Ayushman Khurana) is similar to any other heterosexual lovers. It is just a hormone which generates the feeling of love. And, this hormone

is same in both homosexuals and heterosexuals. The feeling of love cannot be defined being separate from other or being right or wrong.

### **Thematic Analysis**

**Realistic Representation:** In the beginning of the movie, no one can tell that both the actors are homosexual lovers. They are seen as just friends and they do not show any explicit trait of being lovers. As the stereotype created by the Bollywood movies, both the actors do not roam around like sex-predators or dress or walk or speak in a super feminine way. Both are just like any other male actor represented in any other movie. Kartik does wear a nose ring and is very much open about his love for Aman, but he doesn't do anything more than that.

**Boldness:** Boldness in LGBTQ-centric movies is very important and it has been proved right by this movie. There are two kissing scenes in the movie. At one time, Aman and Kartik are caught making out by Aman's father. Aman's father starts vomiting immediately and faints on the ground inside the train. When he wakes up, the train stops at a station, where he tries to wash Aman with water as if he were contaminated with some virus.

Also, when Aman kisses Kartik in front of everyone at the wedding venue of Goggle, the groom's side breaks off the marriage immediately. Though the bride does not have any connection with them being homosexuals, she still has to suffer. Showing such bold scenes in the movies might help people to adjust with this reality. And, if any other Aman's father finds out about his son's sexuality, in real world, he might not vomit.

**Strict Laws:** As it is a Bollywood movie, it is governed by the strict censor laws. Anything more revealing, bolder or even not related to the conventions would have cost the movie.

**Humorous Plot:** The story has taken the support of humor and comedy to represent all the scenarios related to the relationship of Aman and Kartik. It doesn't imply that their emotions or the reactions from the family are being mocked or ridiculed. It simply means that to make the story more interesting and to eliminate the monotonous part from the movie, humor has been inculcated.

**Social Angle:** Both Aman and Kartik are madly in love with each other. Kartik never shy away from his sexual identity. He is bold enough to show it explicitly. Aman is a bit resistant because he knows how his family will react but still he kisses Kartik in front of all the people during a

wedding event. It means that the struggle with self is over and they are fully aware and comfortable with their sexual orientation.

It is the family of Aman, who in spite of knowing about his sexual orientation, keeps pushing him to get into a heterosexual marriage. They do not approve of their relationship and try every kind of persuasive technique to separate the lovers. Their struggle here is with the family and the society.

### **7.1.2.) *Badhai Do***

Released in the month of January 2022, *Badhai Do*, is one of the most amazing films based on same-sex love. Raj Kumar Rao (Shardul) and Bhumi Padneker (Sumi) starrer has a lot of entertainment to cater to its audience. It has both drama and comedy which help audience to stick to the screen till the end. The entire movie focuses on the lives of a lesbian woman and gay man who meet each other by fate and decide to marry each other in order to evade the pressure from their respective families to get into a heterosexual marriage. The comedy arises in the situations when they have to take measures to hide the reality of their marriage and their sexual identities from their families.

#### **Thematic Analysis**

**Realistic Representation:** Sumi is a school teacher and Shardul is a police inspector. As stereotyped in other movies, Sumi is not shown as a tom boy. She doesn't prefer wearing Indian attires but she doesn't portray herself as a tom boy as well. She is a physical education teacher and thus is often shown in track suit. On the other hand, Shardul, in contrast to the common perception or stereotypes created by the Bollywood, is very masculine. He has a keen interest in body-building. He always has a moustache which is the symbol of muscularity in India. As stereotyped by Bollywood, he doesn't wear pink, walk in an overtly feminine manner and also doesn't have a super feminine voice.

**Social Angle:** The plot is based on the societal value. Both the individuals are adults and are in their early 30s. They are sure about themselves and their sexual orientations. Both are well aware of the fact that if people around them, family, friend or society, come to know about their sexual identities, they will definitely be ostracized. They are running away to hide their sexualities from

the families and society. When their sexual orientations are revealed in front of their families, they struggle to convince them.

**Boldness:** There is a little boldness in the movie. Both Shardul and Sumi are shown in romantic scenes with their respective partners.

**Strict Laws:** The movie is ruled by strict censor laws. It is a Bollywood movie and therefore is governed by the rules of censor board of India. Any more adult content would have made it go through strict censor rules.

**Humorous Plot:** The entire movie is based on comedy. It has a humorous plot. The story is amusing and the situations created when the two lead actors get in a fake relationship is simply fun to watch.

## **7.2.) Analysis of OTT Shows**

### *7.2.1.) The Married Woman*

An online series by Zee5, *The Married Woman* is a story about a married woman named Astha (Ridhi Dogra), who is mother to a girl and lives her life like any other middle class working woman. She plays the role of a perfect wife and a perfect daughter-in-law who looks after her family responsibly. She works as a teacher at a college and writes play for the students. During the rehearsal for the play, she meets Aijaz who is also a teacher and director of the play and starts to develop feelings for him. She confesses her love to him without knowing the fact that he is married and when Aijaz reveals about her wife Peeplika, Astha feels embarrassed for proposing someone else's husband. Unfortunately, Aijaz dies in a communal riot.

The story revolves around Astha who is unhappy in her married life. She finds her married life to be unromantic and sexually less active. Upon finding out that her husband often cheats on her, she falls out of love completely.

The story is about how Astha, a normal married woman, finds about her other side of sexuality and starts to love that side even more. She meets Peeplika, Aijaz's widow and both the women develop feelings for each other.

### **Thematic Analysis**

**Realistic Representation:** The representation of the two lesbian women is completely realistic. By their looks and behavior, no one can make out that they show any 'lesbian-ish' trait. Peeplika is a free woman who is heart-broken after the death of her husband. She parties, drinks and often

makes sexual relationships with other men but nothing fills the void which has been created due to the death of her husband. She finds silver lining in Astha and after coming in a relationship with her, she starts admiring her life and actually finds something good to live for.

Astha is just like any other household woman. She comes to know about her dual sexual preferences only after meeting Peeplika. She doesn't show any stereotypical traits of a lesbian woman. She dresses like a middle class married woman and fulfill all the responsibility of a housewife.

**Boldness:** There are intimate scenes between the two women as their intimacy to console each other for Aijaz's death make them closure.

**Lenient Laws:** As this is an OTT series launched on Zee5, it does not fall under the rules and regulations of Censor Board of India. Therefore, it can elucidate and portray many things that traditional Indian cinema cannot.

**Serious Plot:** The entire show is based on the serious plot. There is both tragedy and agony in the show. When Aijaz dies, both the women are left heart-broken. Peeplika is completely broken and Astha has to live her life as earlier as she has a family to look after.

**Personal Angle:** The show emphasizes the personal struggle and the constant emotional and mental struggle that a person goes through while finding about their dual sexuality. Both the women learn about the other part of their sexuality only after meeting each other. Both develop intimate relations with each other. Astha goes through an emotional struggle to look for evidences, reasons and arguments which could justify her relationship with Peeplika. She struggles with herself as she has no idea that why she has sexual feelings for a woman.

### **7.2.2.) *The 'Other' Love Story***

*The Other Love Story* is a love story of two college going girls, Aadya and Aanchal, who are in their late teens. Story starts with a monologue which is actually Aadya's write up in her diary. In her diary, she talks about how hollow she feels within and to her, there is some void in her life which has no way to be filled. It appears that she feels different from others, which greatly irritates her.

Aadya and Aanchal become friends and start spending too much time with each other. When Aanchal's family finds out about the relationships of two girls, they no longer allow Aanchal to step outside the house. The story shows the struggle and plight of two young same-sex lovers

who have just found out about their sexual orientations and are enjoying their newly formed intimate relationship with each other.

### Thematic Analysis

**Realistic Portrayal:** Aadya has a slight tom-boyish demeanor, while Aanchal is completely girlish. Both are in their late teens and are on verge of learning about their actual sexual inclination. They are portrayed as similar to any other teenage girls going to college. Though Aadya does not dress in an entirely girlish manner, still she doesn't appear to be completely tom-boyish either. She even gets a proposal by her male friend.

**Boldness:** There are kissing scenes between the two women. Aadya is shown quite bolder than Aanchal and she never hesitates in expressing her love for Aanchal.

**Lenient Laws:** It doesn't fall under CBFC and that is why it does not have any strict censor laws.

**Serious Plot:** The plot is more serious and it doesn't involve any humorous angle. There is love, romance and drifting apart of two women caused by the families.

**Both Personal and Social Angle:** In the beginning of the show, Aadya's conversations with her diary reveal a struggle with something that makes her feel different from the rest of the people. That is the personal angle in the show which shows the mental struggle of a queer person in the world dominated by heterosexual people.

The social angle is elucidated in the show when Aanchal's family is completely against the relationship. They find it extremely unconventional that their daughter is having a same-sex relationship.

### 8.) A Comparative Analysis of the Movies and the Shows

|                          | <i>Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan</i> | <i>Badhai Do</i> | <i>The Married Women</i> | <i>The Other Love Story</i> |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Realistic Representation | ✓                                  | ✓                | ✓                        | ✓                           |
| Cliché Representation    | ✗                                  | ✗                | ✗                        | ✗                           |
| Boldness                 | ✓                                  | ✓                | ✓                        | ✓                           |

|                |   |   |   |   |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|
| Strict Laws    | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ |
| Lenient Laws   | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Serious Plot   | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Humorous Plot  | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ |
| Social Angle   | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |
| Personal Angle | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ |

The table mentioned above indicates that there aren't many clear cut differences in the portrayal of LGBTQ-centric movies in Bollywood cinema and LGBTQ-centric shows on OTT platforms. Both movies and OTT shows are presenting members of LGBTQ community in a realistic manner. The representation is not at all linked to any kind of stereotypes. Not a single character of the movies or shows can be said to be showing any kind of stereotypical trait related to homosexuals. There is no cliché representation of homosexuals in any of the programs or movies.

As discussed earlier, boldness in the homosexual movies is a much required thing. The kissing scenes in the films and other shows portray a sense of normality in terms of love and romance. This is why, it is very important for films and shows to have boldness. OTT shows have presented boldness in the love stories between two women in two different shows. And, Bollywood films have also shown kissing scenes between two men and two women.

When it comes to the laws governing the content of the films and shows, censor board of India is very strict about the adult content in the movie. It is very unpredictable to say that what might happen to the film if censor board does not like or does not agree with the content of the movie. For example, when *Fire* was released, it was forced to change the name of Shabana Azmi from Sita to Radha. That is why, it is necessary for Bollywood movies to draw certain limits while producing a film. OTT shows are free from these restrictions.

When it comes to the plot of the movie, it can be said the Bollywood films largely take the support of humor and satire to depict the plight of homosexuals in the movie. Movies like *Shubh Mangal Zyada Savdhan* and *Badhai Do* use light comedy to portray all the scenarios and

happenings that take place in the movie. While on the other hand, OTT shows are more serious in nature. Humor is almost missing from the shows discussed above.

The difference between the films and shows was also seen when it came to the angle in the movie. The researcher decided upon choosing two angles – personal and social. Bollywood films are more concerned with the social angle. Both the movies discussed above show a clash between the lovers and society. The continuous repudiation from the family makes the lovers go through pain and agony. In the movie *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan*, Aman's father even hits Kartik with a bamboo stick. And, that entire situation is also shown in a light comic way.

On the other hand, in OTT shows, the struggle is largely related to the personal angle. In both the shows discussed, emphasis has been given to the plight and mental dilemma that a person goes through after finding about their sexuality. In the show *The Other Love Story*, social angle has also been shown as Aanchal's family is desperate to send her away to other country so that she can be at a distance from her lover Aadya.

### **10.) Findings**

From the analysis and discussions made above, the researcher has come to certain findings. Thematic analysis really helped going deep into the topic and reveal the hidden insight in the content of the films and OTT shows. Further in this part, findings from the analysis will be discussed.

#### **10.1) Similarities Between the Films and the OTT Shows**

In the analysis made above, it has been found that there are certain similarities between the content of Bollywood films and OTT shows. The first and the foremost similarity is the realistic representation. It has been noticed here that neither LGBTQ-centric Bollywood films nor the OTT shows went for the stereotypical portrayal of the homosexuals. As discussed above, Bollywood, especially the non-LGBTQ centric films created a typical image for the LGBTQ community and according to that image, a person can be recognized as a homosexual just by looking at their dressing style, the way they talk and more pathetic and unrealistic traits. While on the other hand, the portrayal in the films and shows mentioned above tells a different tale. None of the characters mentioned above can be explicitly recognized as homosexual.

Aman and Kartik are just like other men. Their way of talking and their personality has nothing to do with them being gay. Shardul and Sumi can easily deceive anyone into thinking that they



are heterosexual couples. Similarly, Aadya and Aanchal do look like any other college going teenagers and Astha and Peeplika doesn't show any trait of stereotypical homosexual women.

Another similarity is the portrayal of boldness. In *Shubh Mangal Zyada Savdhan*, there are two kissing scenes between Aman and Kartik and both the kissing scenes were the demand of the script. The reaction of Aman's father was a much needed one as any middle class father might react in the same way if they catch their son kissing another man.

Similarly, there are intimate scenes in *Badhai Ho* as well that were required to fulfill the demand of the script. Both the OTT shows *The Married Woman* and *The Other Love Story* also have similar scenes.

#### 10.2) Differences Between the Bollywood Films and OTT Shows

There are some differences between the Bollywood films and OTT shows. The first one is about the plot. Bollywood films have humorous plot while OTT shows have serious plot. OTT shows do not have to face a lot of backlash from the society. But, Bollywood movies are quick at attracting the boycott and censors. Humorous plot has been adopted by the Bollywood movies as to attract the audience to watch the movie for entertainment. Films discussed above neither have a very serious note nor the movies are turned entirely into comedy ones. They take the help of humor only to keep audience engage.

On the other hand, OTT shows have opted for a serious tone. Both the shows discussed above do not have comic content in their shows. They have taken the issue as it is and tried to convince the audience by the emotional appeal.

Another difference between the two is the angle depicted in the movie. Bollywood films are largely based on the social angle. The fight between the homosexual couple and the family or society is focused on. In both the Bollywood movies discussed above, emphasis has been put on the social aspect. In contrast to this, in both the OTT shows, the emotional and personal struggle of homosexuals, upon finding out about their sexuality, is shown. Astha is dubious about her relation with Peeplika and Aadya feels different from others. In *The Other Love Story*, social angle has also been taken up but the movie start with the emotional struggle of the main character.

#### 10.3) OTT Has an Edge Over Bollywood Cinema

When it comes to the portrayal of homosexuals and homosexuality, OTT definitely has an edge over cinema. Bollywood cinema is governed by the strict laws of censor board of India. While, OTT shows have nothing to do with the censor board of India. They have their own rules and regulations and they must abide by those rules. They do not have to worry about any scene being cut out or dialogue muted during the release of the shows.

10.5) To sum up the findings of the research, it can be said that:

- The similarity between the Bollywood films and OTT shows can be seen in the portrayal of homosexual characters and boldness depicted.
- The difference between the two is clear with the plot. Bollywood films go for humorous plot while OTT shows go for serious shows.
- When it comes to the realistic portrayal of homosexuals, both the films and shows land on the same scale.
- As the OTT shows are not governed by strict censor laws, they have edge over Bollywood films in the portrayal of the homosexual relationship.

### **11.) Conclusion**

This research paper explores through thematic analysis the hidden themes and codes in the Bollywood films and OTT shows and conducts a comparative analysis between the two different entertainment platforms. OTT platforms come up with different themes were untouched by Indian cinema for a very long period of time. Now, to match up the pace of OTT, cinema is also coming up with different vibrant themes and homosexuality is one of them.

In the comparative analysis conducted by the researcher, it was found that the Bollywood films and OTT shows share similarities on topics like realistic representation of homosexuals and boldness shown in the shows and films. It was also found in the research that LGBTQ is no longer attached to the previously created stereotypes by Bollywood and the members of LGBTQ community are now being shown in more realistic and natural way. The level of boldness has definitely increased in Bollywood while OTT shows have always been bold about same-sex love. Differences were also seen in the portrayal of same-sex love in movies and shows. Bollywood films are based on social angle, that is, the struggle between same-sex lovers and family or society. On the other hand OTT shows mostly focus on the personal and emotional struggle of homosexuals upon finding about their sexuality.

There is one more difference between the Bollywood films and OTT shows. Bollywood films fall under Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) which makes them go through many rules and regulations. While on the other hand, OTT shows do not have to go through such strict rules and regulations as they are not controlled or governed by CBFC.

### Works Cited

- Agrawal, Alok, and Ravi Shankar. "No Objections: Constitutional Analysis of Censorship & Film Certification on OTT Platforms." Available at SSRN 3768466, 2020.
- Bhugra, Dinesh, Gurvinder Kalra, and Antonio Ventriglio. "Portrayal of gay characters in Bollywood cinema." *International Review of Psychiatry*, vol. 27, no.5, 2015, pp. 455-459.
- Campbell, Robert. "Small Form Films: The (Non-) Cinema of Mike Ott." *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 58, 2018.
- Chatterjee, Mrinal, and Sambit Pal. "Globalization propelled technology often ends up in its microlocalization: Cinema viewing in the time of OTT." *Global Media Journal: Indian Edition*, vol. 12, no.1, 2020.
- Chawla, Gaurav, and Manjula Srinivas. "TO UNDERSTAND THE CHANGING MEDIUM PREFERENCES FOR CINEMA VIEWING IN YOUNG ADULTS SINCE THE PANDEMIC." *GAP PARAMPARA-A GLOBAL JOURNAL OF ART, AESTHETICS AND CULTURE*, vol.1, no. 2, 2021, pp. 1-7.
- Dasgupta, Satarupa. "The New Edge of Indian Cinema: An Analysis of the Treatments of Gender, Sexuality, and Matrimony in the New Indian Cinema in English." *Asian Cinema*, vol. 17, no.1, 2006, pp.138-154.
- Dey, Anindita, and Rahul Chanda. "A Study on OTT Content Versus Theatrical Released Cinema Preferences Among the Urban Population of Guwahati."
- Gaustad, Terje. "How streaming services make cinema more important." *Nordic journal of media studies*, vol. 1, no.1, 2019, pp. 67-84.
- Giori, Mauro. *Homosexuality and Italian Cinema: From the Fall of Fascism to the Years of Lead*. Springer, 2017.
- Gopinath, G. Queering Bollywood: Alternative sexualities in popular Indian cinema. *Journal of Homosexuality* 39, vol.3, no. 4, 2000, pp. 283-297.
- Hall, Jonathan M. "Japan's progressive sex: male homosexuality, national competition, and the cinema." *Journal of Homosexuality* 39, vol.3, no. 4 (2000): 31-82.
- Patel, Manoj Kumar, R. Khadia, and Gajendra Awasya. "A Study: OTT Viewership in "Lockdown" and Viewer's Dynamic Watching Experience." *International Journal on Transformations of Media, Journalism & Mass Communication*, vol. 5, no.2, 2020, pp. 10-22.
- Sontakke, Kshamali Sanjay. "Trends in OTT Platforms Usage During COVID-19 Lockdown in India." *Journal of Scientific Research*, vol. 65, no.8, 2021.
- Khawale, Saurabh Dinkarrao, and Vijaypal Singh. "Effects on Filmmaking process and Film Artist, Crew Members, Backstage Artist while OTT Platform."
- Sheikh, Danish. "Homosexuality and homophobia in Indian popular culture: Reflections of the law." *NALSAR Stud. L. Rev.* 4, 2008, pp. 33.
- Renninger, B. J. *Motherhood and the political project of queer Indian cinema*. 2007.
- Raveendran, Kiran, and Dhishna Pannikot. "Exploring Third Gender Politics in Indian Cinema: A Comparative Study of Chitragada and Naanu Avanalla... Avalu."
- Jain, Manya. "The LGBTQ+ Community and its Representation in Bollywood: A Summary."
- Kumar, Parveen. "Hero loves Hero: Understanding the Changing Rendition of Sexuality through the Movie Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan." *RESEARCH HUB International Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 9.1 (2022): 10-13.
- Desai, Jigna. "Bombay boys and girls: The gender and sexual politics of transnationality in the new Indian cinema in English." *South Asian Popular Culture* 1.1, 2003, PP. 45-61.
- Okumus, M. Sami. "The effects of Covid-19 pandemic on audience practices in cinema, television, and OTT platforms." *Istanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, vol.21, no. 43, 2022, pp. 133-147.
- Palekar, Shalmalee. "The Nachya in Natrang: queer (ing) bodies in representations of Tamasha in Marathi cinema." *Continuum* 26.6 (2012): 859-870.