

**MEDIA CONTEXT AND CHANGES IN ATTITUDE TOWARDS  
LGBTQ COMMUNITY: A STUDY INTO THE NATURE OF  
CINEMA AND STREAMING TELEVISION CONTENT**

**DISSERTATION**

SUBMITTED TO  
BABASAHEB BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY  
(A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)  
LUCKNOW

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Submitted By :

*Pooja Arya*

Roll No: 188901

Under the Supervision of:

*Dr. Mahendra Kumar Padhy*

**DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION & JOURNALISM**

**BABASAHEB BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY**

(A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)

VIDYA VIHAR, RAEBARELI ROAD, LUCKNOW-226 025

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## Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**Media Context and Changes in Attitude Towards LGBTQ Community: A Study into the Nature of Cinema and Streaming Television Content**" submitted by **Pooja Arya** is an original research work and it has not been previously submitted in part or full for the award of any other degree or diploma to this or any other university.

The dissertation submitted to Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow satisfies all the requirements as stipulated in the Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) Regulations amended in 2017 incorporating the provisions of the University Grants Commission Regulations, 2016 and it is fit for submission and evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of the University.

Date: 3/9/2019

Supervisor

Head of Department

Head

Deptt. of Mass Communication & Journalism  
(School of Media and Communication)  
Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University  
Vidya Vihar, Rae Bareilly Road  
Lucknow-226025



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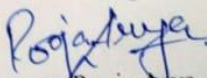
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Thanking You

  
Pooja Arya



### Declaration

I hereby, declare that the dissertation entitled "Media Context and Changes in Attitude Towards LGBT Community: A Study into the Nature of Cinema and Streaming Television Content" is my own work. The content of research is completely original. The content of research is free from plagiarism and for any plagiarism related issue in the future, I will be solely responsible for the consequences.

I further declare that to the best of my knowledge, the dissertation does not contain any part of work, which has been submitted for the award of any other degree either in this University or in any other University without proper citation.

  
Pooja Arya



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

“History owes an apology to the members of the LGBT community for the delay in insuring their rights.”

These were the words of Justice Indu Malhotra, part of five judges bench, who unanimously scrapped down section 377 of Indian Penal Code that decriminalized homosexuality. The landmark judgment of Supreme Court came on Sep06’2018 when a five judges bench, headed by Chief Justice of India, read down 157 years ban on same sex love. This colonial law was passed in the year 1861 and was largely modeled on the British sodomy law (the Buggery Act of 1533). The law was first challenged by an NGO, Naaz Foundation, and reached Delhi High Court in the year 2001.

### 1.1) Introduction to the Research Area

It was first in 2009 that Delhi high court described Section 377 as a violation of fundamental rights and scrapped it. But the decision was soon turned down by Supreme Court in 2013 stating that it is the duty of the parliament to decide on scrapping and forming of laws. In 2017, Supreme Court declared ‘right to privacy’ a fundamental right and it motivated many petitioners to come up and question the constitutionality of Section 377 (as sexuality is a completely private issue). After hearing petitions from different stakeholders for four days, the bench reserved its verdict on July 17’2018. The final judgment on the legality of the Section came on Sep 6, last year, which brought a wave of happiness for all the petitioners, supporters and members of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gays, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) community.

It has been a long journey for gay rights activists and they finally won the legal battle last year. But, the milestone achieved is not enough for them to live a dignified life. There’s a long way to go ahead and the road is filled with a lot of impediments. These impediments are the mental barriers that society has inherited in the name of culture. There is a need of a social change and the social change is possible only through education of the masses. Education of the masses is largely possible through media. And, media has played a very important role in bringing about a number of social changes.

Last 50 decades have seen a massive change in the attitude of people towards same sex love. A number of countries have decriminalized homosexuality and paved a way for them to establish and fulfill the desire of being in the basic institution – family. Talking about India, there is definitely a change in the way people think of homosexuals. And, talking about change, media has been considered as the most important vehicle of social change.

Sadly, there is just one data that shows that there has been an immense change in attitude of people towards homosexuality and LGBT community. The survey was conducted by World Value Survey (WVS). WVS attempts to demonstrate that beliefs of people play a key role in economic development of a country, gender equality and flourishing of strong democratic institutions. WVS conducted two surveys on people's view on LGBT community and same sex love. The first survey was conducted in the year 1990 and the second one in 2014. Though the sample size of the survey conducted in the year 2014 was quite small – 1500 people, but the survey claimed to be demographically representative.

According to WVS survey, between 1990 and 2014, the share of Indian respondents who believed “homosexuality is never justifiable” fell from 89% to 24%. 2014 was the year when homosexuality was still criminalized in the country. It clearly means the change in attitude of the people was completely independent of legal challenges.

In 1962, Evertt Rogers presented the theory of diffusion of innovation which tells why, how and at what rate new innovations and ideas penetrate in society. According to the theory, an innovation travels overtime within a social system. In Rogers words, diffusion refers to, “process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels overtime among the members of the social system. An innovation is an idea, object, project or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption. The diffusion of innovation involves both mass media and interpersonal communication channels.”

Here, the innovation is the ‘idea’ that homosexuality is a normal variant of human sexuality. It counters the long lived belief that homosexuality is a mental illness and need to be treated. It was in 1973 when the American Psychiatric Association concluded that homosexuality is as normal as heterosexuality. In 1992, World Health Organization accepted it as normal variant of human sexuality. The diffusion of this

innovation (idea) took time but soon led to the alteration of belief of people and also directed changes in laws in many nations. In this study, we have tried to trace the role of Indian media (streaming television and cinema) in propagating the 'innovation' in the field of human sexuality. Here the researcher discusses how streaming television and Bollywood cinema have portrayed LGBT community and how the relationship between the persons of same gender has been defined overtime.

### **Why Media Portrayal of LGBT Community Matters?**

Melvin DeFleur and Timothy Plax proposed Meaning Theory of Media Portrayal. The theory defines the way media shape messages and what that means for social conduct. Communication has worked as a tool to process meanings. Individuals interpret texts, signs and symbols and retain a sense of meaning. According to the theory, the meaning reside within people and people relate it with media content. The theory talks about four type of media influences: establishment (new words or meanings are added to the system), extension (media expands or adds to the current definition of something), substitution (the older meanings are substituted by the new ones) and stabilization (reinforcing conventions between words or symbols and their meaning).

When we talk about media portrayal of LGBTQ community, we talk about the efforts that media have (or not) put in to bring about a social change. We have to outline the new meanings or trends that media has 'established' for or against this ever marginalized section of society. Here we have to figure out what media has done to 'substitute' the old belief (homosexuality is a result of mental illness and against the nature) with new facts (it is just a natural variant of human sexuality and is as natural as heterosexuality).

Positive representation of LGBTQ on television and cinema is important in mainly two ways:

- i) Firstly, media portrayal of LGBTQ people can alter the way general population (especially straight) views them.

- ii) Secondly, media portrayal can have a positive effect on the LGBT community members, by helping them have a sense of belonging and not being alone.

The positive representation of minority and marginalized community can give the members a sense of belonging. It gives them potential role models of different background and identity. The feeling of not being the only 'weird one' among all can boost their confidence and help them live their life with dignity.

The importance of media representation of LGBT community can be measured through one small incident that grabbed media attention in the year 2016 in North America. Mary Swangin, who worked at a comic book store in Indiana (US), shared a series of tweets narrating an incident about a shaken up customer who was able to open up about her sexuality because of *Supergirl*. *Supergirl* is an American superhero TV series, based on DC Comics, which premiered on Oct 26, 2015. Alex Danver is one of the main characters in the series and in 2016, the character came out as lesbian.

On a regular Saturday, Mary (who is herself a queer) met a teenage girl, who somehow looked terrified and was looking for something in the bookstore. Mary approached her to help her and the little girl told her that she was looking for 'Supergirl'. She also added that she was a great fan of Alex in the TV series. Mary replied that she was a great fan of Danvers and all of a sudden, the little girl broke into tears.

Mary just freaked out for a while and didn't realize what was going on. The girl continued crying and in sometime, Mary realized that she was consoling a 'baby gay'. Mary consoled her and told her that she herself was queer and it was very hard, even for her, to come out. Then the little girl told her that she was having a very difficult time and she always wanted to kill herself. But, when she found out that the Alex, in *Supergirl*, was also a lesbian, she felt nice and realized that she was not the only one who felt that way.

The incident is just an example that how powerful can a positive media portrayal be. This happens mostly with teenagers because this is the time when they start discovering their sexuality. And, if they find out that they are not like 'others', they

feel lonely and proceed towards depression. Some combat it and win, while others take the roads that lead to death.

### **Global Changes in Attitude towards Homosexuality: Sharing Culture in Global Village**

In 1964, late Marshal McLuhan, a media and communication theorist, coined the term “global village”. He used the term to define the phenomenon of the shrinking and expanding, at the same time, of world’s culture that is happening due to pervasive advances in technology that has led to instantaneous sharing of culture.

The world has really shrunk and the diffusion of culture is easily visible. From our eating habits to celebrating occasions, there is a clear visibility of different adaptations that have taken place in our culture. The idea of global village and diffusion of culture has led to changes in attitudes towards religion, marriages, divorces, live-in relationships etc. The most surprising thing that has recently occurred is change in attitude towards homosexuality.

Physical distances are no more barriers in culture sharing and one culture, now, easily influences other. It has helped in changing the attitude of people towards LGBTQ community. The global village has caused a dominos effect of culture, attitudes and viewpoints. There is a global shift in attitude of people around the world towards same-sex love. Since the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, homosexuality is decriminalized and acceptance has been given to same-sex marriages in 27 countries, including India. In 2015, when same-sex marriages were legalized in United States, the wave of happiness and celebrations was also seen in India. People of India praised and celebrated US Supreme Court judgment largely on social media with different punch lines like – ‘now in America, when in India’.

Here is the list of the countries that have decriminalized homosexuality or/and given acceptance to same sex love and marriage:

1.) India (2018)	2.) Germany (2017)	3.) Malta (2017)
4.) Colombia (2016)	5.) Finland (2015)	6.) United States (2015)
7.) Greenland (2015)	8.) Luxembourg (2014)	9.) Scotland (2014)
10.) Brazil (2013)	11.) Uruguay (2013)	12.) England / Wales (2013)
13.) New Zealand (2013)	14.) France (2013)	15.) Iceland (2010)
16.) Argentina (2010)	17.) Denmark (2012)	18.) Portugal (2010)
19.) Norway (2008)	20.) Sweden (2009)	21.) South Africa (2006)
22.) Spain (2005)	23.) Canada (2005)	24.) The Netherlands (2000)
25.) Belgium (2003)	26.) Iceland (2010)	27.) Ireland (2015)

The shift from understanding homosexuality as a sin or crime to a normal variant of sexuality occurred in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was in 1973 when the American Psychiatric Association accepted that homosexuality is as normal as heterosexuality. In 1992, World Health Organization accepted it as normal variant of human sexuality which further influenced the belief of the people towards homosexuality. Since this attitudinal change of the biggest health organization in the world, many countries started decriminalizing homosexuality.

"The rise in support for same-sex marriage over the past decade is among the largest changes in opinion on any policy issue... [M]uch of the shift is attributable to the arrival of a large cohort of young adults who are far more open to gay rights than previous generations." – PEW, 2013.

First country to form a national same-sex union (SSU) policy was Denmark. SSU is basically an arrangement that is similar to marriage. It gives all the rights of marriage, except for the title 'marriage' In 1989 Denmark implemented SSU policy that recognizes gay and lesbian couples in law. At that time, no one had thought that the next 20 years are going to see more such decisions by different European countries. Europe played a vanguard role of LGBT rights as 23 European countries gave gay and

lesbian couples legal recognition within two decades (1990-2010).<sup>[Kollman, K., and Paternotte, D. (2013)].</sup>

## **Role of Communication in Social Change**

Communication for social change (CSC) refers to communication for sustainable social change and development.<sup>1</sup>CSC focuses on exploring different methods in which information, communication process and media can be leveraged to bring changes in attitude, behavior and knowledge in individual and communities. We usually refer communication for social change to the process where a variety of communication techniques are employed to bring changes in the area which is not that much technically advanced. But, it is not necessary that only technologically less advanced area requires social change. Where technologically well-off area requires social change, no other medium can be better than mass media.

Jan Sarvaes broadly sums up communication for social change under development communication. In his words –

“All those involved in the analysis and application of communication for development and social change—or what can broadly be termed ‘development communication’—would probably agree that in essence development communication is the sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching a consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs and capacities of all concerned.”<sup>2</sup>

When we discuss the role of communication for development and social change, there are different perspectives of different scholars and organizations. In Everett Rogers’ words, “Development Communication is the study of social change brought about by the application of communication research, theory, and technologies to bring about development.... Development is a widely participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement, including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities for the majority of people through their gaining greater control over their environment.”

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<sup>1</sup>Communication for Social Change (n.d.).Wikipedia.

<sup>2</sup> Sarvaes, J. (2003) Communication for development and social change. New Delhi. Sage Publication.

According to UN FAO (1984), “Communication for development is a social process, designed to seek a common understanding among all the participants of a development initiative, creating a basis for concerted action.”

Communication for social change and development means that we use communication in such a way that it promotes development of an idea, knowledge or community. Message conveyed through media reaches individuals/masses and make cognitive changes. It is aimed to remove radical beliefs and influence people to embrace new advancements. The process and product of media influence that act directly on targets (individuals and macro units of society and institutions) as well as indirectly on target through other units is known as Media Effects.

Media portrayal of a particular issue causes media effect of that issue. If there is a positive representation of something through media, then the media effect is also likely to be positive. When media wants to proceed towards social change, media portrayal plays a very important role. In order to bring changes in society in regard to some sensitive issues like LGBTQ, media has to be very careful about their portrayal. Here, it’s not just about changing the thinking and attitude of people, but also creating an environment that leads to the development of LGBTQ community. Social change here refers to development and empowerment of a community. So, the communication petitioners must develop strategies to communicate on behalf of that particular community.

Media plays a very important role in changing people’s perceptions on various societal issues. The advancements in technology have made the medium more efficient. In this study, we have measured how capably cinema and streaming television have made attitudinal changes regarding LGBTQ community possible.

## **1.2) Review of Literature**

This part of the chapter reviews the available literature on media representation of LGBT community. Review of literature is the most important part of any research as it identifies the significance and relevance of one’s study. This chapter focuses on the most relevant studies conducted in this research area. The researcher went through different books, articles and research works that specialize in this particular area and has summarized the content of those works.

The studies covered are classified below:

- 1.2.1) A content analyses of LGBT representation on broadcast and streaming television
- 1.2.2) Gender, Sexuality and (Be) longing: The Representation of Queer (LGBT) in Hindi Cinema
- 1.2.3) Indian Cinema and Its Portrayal of Emotional Complexities of LGBT Community
- 1.2.4) Love and marriage and local TV news: an analysis of news coverage of same-sex marriage during elections since legalization in Iowa
- 1.2.5) Getting the Message Out: Media Context and Global Changes in Attitudes toward Homosexuality.
- 1.2.6) Media Representation of Homosexuality: An Analysis of Print Media in Slovenia, 1970-2000
- 1.2.7) A Study on Media Representation of Homosexuality in Modern Culture in Kenya

### **1.2.1) A content analyses of LGBT representation on broadcast and streaming television**

This study was conducted at University of Tennessee in Chattanooga by a university scholar – Carton cook. The researcher carried out content analysis of nine United States’ television shows from 2016-2017 across broadcast and streaming platforms to understand the representation of LGBT community. The study was basically an update of study conducted in the year 2001 by Amber Raley and Jennifer Lucas – *Stereotype or Success? Prime-Time Television’s Portrayals of Gay Male, Lesbian, and Bisexual Characters*.

Cook’s study put emphasis on representation of LGBT community which included queer themed jokes and display of affection. The findings of the Cook’s study concluded that there was a definite rise in the positive representation of LGBT community on broadcast television. The researcher noted that since 2001, there was increase in presence of bisexual and transgender characters. There characters were nonexistent in 2001. There was definitely a shift in queer themed jokes and the display of affections (say between two gays or lesbians) increased. Though there was

significant increase in number of shows with LGBT characters, but the proportion of LGBT characters in shows did not increase from 2011 to 2016.

### **1.2.2) Getting the Message Out: Media Context and Global Changes in Attitudes toward Homosexuality.**

The research work undertaken by Dr. Philip M. Ayoub (Asst. Professor at Dept. of Politics, Drexel University) and Dr. Jeremiah Garretson (Asst. Professor at Dept. of Political Science, Stony Brook University) covers the global change in attitude towards homosexuality. The two authors in their study claim that there has been a significant increase in homosexuality due to various reasons. The prominent causes are – a rise in the portrayal of LGBT in news and media, increased contact with LGBT people, favourable shift toward homosexuals and the proliferation of the idea that homosexuality is a natural/biological phenomenon instead of a lifestyle choice.

There has been a diffusion of ideas and images across borders that have been among the main causes of attitudinal change across the globe. The two authors have emphasized the role of media in diffusion of ideas. In their words, “In this regard we see a strong role for the soft power that the media can play transnationally in shaping political attitudes towards sexuality and minorities in general, especially among more impressionable, younger individuals.”<sup>3</sup>

1990s saw an increase in representation of gay people (they referred homosexuals as gay people in their work) in television and movies. Ellen DeGeneres’s coming out on mainstream American television is the most prominent example. Shows like ‘*Will and Grace*’ and ‘*Modern Family*’ have also played an important role in attitudinal change. Along with entertainment media, news media have also covered gay rights issues due to more politicization of the topic. “Most recently, networks, from Russia Today to Al Jazeera, have extensively covered the gay rights debate surrounding the ‘anti-gay Sochi Olympics’.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ayoub, P. & Garretson, J. (2014) Getting the Message Out: Media Context and Global Changes in Attitudes toward Homosexuality. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/lenovo/Downloads/SSRN-id2454068.pdf

<sup>4</sup>Ayoub, P. & Garretson, J. (2014) Getting the Message Out: Media Context and Global Changes in Attitudes toward Homosexuality. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/lenovo/Downloads/SSRN-id2454068.pdf

hold cross-nationally, depending on the propensity for a nation's media to facilitate that contact.<sup>5</sup>

In their study, the authors present that women and youngsters have more liberal attitude towards homosexuality. Also, personal contacts with gay people, who are friends or co-worker, helps build a positive attitude towards them. There were two hypothesis taken up in this study:

H1: The higher the level of media pervasiveness in a country, the more likely that an individual will be more tolerant of homosexuality, especially in younger cohorts.

H2: The more free a society is in terms of speech and the press, the more likely that a country's citizens will be more tolerant of homosexuality, especially in younger cohorts.

In order to test their hypothesis, Ayoub and Garretson drew upon the combines cumulative World Values Survey (2014) and European Values Survey. More than seventy countries were survey and many countries were surveyed in four or five waves. Multi-level models method was applied to test media effects and both individual country and individual respondents were analyzed. Through their research Ayoub and Garretson were able to prove their both hypothesis and they concluded with a few findings:

- There is a direct relation between media density and more liberal attitudes towards homosexuality.
- The effect of media is more on younger generation and is quite insignificant on older generation.
- GDP and its interaction with year of birth also have direct connection with liberal attitudes. That is, higher the GDP of a country, more liberal will the thoughts of younger generation.
- There was a direct relation between the freedom of press and attitude if younger generation. The generation that is experience more freedom of press, has more liberal attitude.

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<sup>5</sup>Ayoub, P. & Garretson, J. (2014) Getting the Message Out: Media Context and Global Changes in Attitudes toward Homosexuality. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/lenovo/Downloads/SSRN-id2454068.pdf.

### **1.2.3) Love and marriage and local TV news: an analysis of news coverage of same-sex marriage during elections since legalization in Iowa**

The research study was conducted by Shawn Paul Harmsen at University of Iowa. It so happened in 2010 and 2012 that Iowa Court judicial retention vote became a top political story. The background of the story was 2009 unanimous decision by Iowa court that made it the third state in the country to legalize same sex marriage. This upset over fundamentalists and they launched a ‘never happened before’ campaign that convinced voters to vote to remove sitting Iowa Supreme Court Justice. The campaign got success in 2010, but couldn’t make it in 2012.

The study conducted analyzes how local television news coverage in Iowa framed the anti-retention efforts. It also examines what news framing suggested about the manner social and political powers were expressed. The research collected data through news packages and interviews. The researcher traced the way judicial retention votes became a top political story by going through relevant news packages, interviewing journalists, spokespersons and news directors.

The researcher’s initial study suggested that morality politics was the most prominent frame in most of the coverage. The main focus of the researcher was to examine the local news reports that highlighted a new election issue – legalized same-sex marriage. The main source of data collection was television news packages and interviews with news team members who were involved in gathering stories.

### **1.2.4) Media Representation of Homosexuality: An analysis of print media in Slovenia, 1970 – 2000**

The study conducted by Roman Kuhar, faculty at University of Ljubljana, involves media construction of homosexuality. The print media in Slovenia from time period 1970-2000 were studied and analyzed. The author used the media texts to relate to historical context and represented history an overview of the history of different gay and lesbian centric movements in Slovenia.

Author divided media representation of homosexuality into five categories – stereotyping, medicalization, sexualization, secrecy and normalization.

Stereotyping – Media constructed a stereotyped images of gays as effeminate and lesbians as masculine. This was shown not as socially constructed but rather as natural.

Medicalization – Affirming the long lasted belief that homosexuality is related to psychiatry. The implied question was – “what went wrong and led to homosexuality?”<sup>6</sup> Homosexuality was related to medical sphere and was considered as a disease or a disorder.

Sexualization – Then came the third component of media and the idea of homosexuality was reduced to solely to sexuality and sex.

Secrecy – It made homosexuality to appear something that is related to shame and regret.

Normalization – This occurred in late 1990s and the images of homosexuals as psychiatric patients and criminals were surpassed.

The author, while conducting the study, used the method ‘critical discourse analyses’ to scrutinize and evaluate media texts. The data collected by the author showed there was continuous rise in prominence given to homosexuality in newspapers from 1970-2000. The graph reached the peak in the year 1996 when there a significant amount of same-sex marriage news in the print media. However, in 1999, the graph dropped significantly and the conditioned was similar to that of a decade old.

### **1.2.5) A study on Media Representation of Homosexuality in Modern Culture in Kenya**

The study was conducted by Linet Deborah Nabwire, a student of University of Nairobi. The research work aimed at figuring out the portrayal of homosexuality by the Kenyan media. The objective of the study was to know how media representation of this particular marginalized community effects the religious and postmodern beliefs

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<sup>6</sup>Kuhar, R. (2003). Media Representation of Homosexuality: An analysis of print media in Slovenia, 1970 – 2000. Retrieved from:file:///D:/disertation/thesis%20for%20literature/media%20representation%20of%20homosexuality%20slovenia.pdf

and perceptions of the people. The data was conducted through questionnaire from gay community, religious pastor leaders and media staff.

The Pastor leaders were of the opinion that media portrayal of homosexuals affecter their preaching and is completely wrong and sinful. Also, most of the respondents from the church felt the same way. The media persons claimed that reporting on the issue of LGBT community was done in accordance with media ethics to inform the public about any new information and advancements around. They were also of the opinion that there has been a change in attitude of people towards LGBT community. The study also showed that 88.2% of gay community believed that media representation do change the way people view homosexuality.

The finding of the research suggested that there is a direct connection between media portrayal and attitude and beliefs of people. In other words, media plays a very important role in influencing the attitude of the people. It is media portrayal on which people build their beliefs and knowledge on a particular community or subject.

#### **1.2.6) Indian Cinema and Its Portrayal of Emotional Complexities of LGBT Community**

The study was conducted by J. Pooja and K.P. Rekha, students Department of Visual Media and Communication, Amrita School of Arts and Sciences, Kochi. The two researchers focus on representation of complexities of LGBT community by Indian Cinema. The researchers conducted both qualitative and quantitative study of four films: Fire (1996), My Brother Nikhil (2005), Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish (2012) and Margarita with a Straw (2014). The study was an attempt to figure out the amount space given to LGBT community by India Cinema and how it helped in creating a positive attitude towards LGBT community.

The main objective of the study was to analyze the portrayal of LGBT by these four movies and what impact the movies had on audience. They measured responses from 100 respondents and formed their data. Among those 100 respondents, 48.48%

believed that media portrayal is quite stereotypical in nature while 51.52% believed that portrayal is very much realistic. According to their findings, 62.63% of the population believe that such films have a positive influence while 37.5% believe that such movies largely act negatively.

Pooja and Rekha emphasize the role of magic bullet theory in the media portrayal and claimed that in this way, children and teenagers will be more receptive and vulnerable. They also claim that stereotyping of homosexuals is a bi-product of media.

### **1.2.7) Gender, Sexuality and (Be) longing: The Representation of Queer (LGBT) in Hindi Cinema**

The study was carried out by Pushpinder Kaur of Punjab University and was published in Amity Journal of Media and Communication Studies. Here, the researcher makes an attempt to figure out the role played by Hindi Cinema in the representation of Queers, that is LGBT community. The researcher uses content analysis method to finely scrutinize and evaluate content of Hindi cinema that represents LGBT community. On the basis of research, Pushpinder drew some common myths about members of LGBT people. Given below is the table (in researcher words) which the researcher formulated.

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Commonly Wrong Associations</b>
1.) Child sexual abuse	a) Gay people are paedophiles, sexual predators. b) Child sexual abuse of boys makes them 'homosexual'/ gay men are sexually abused in childhood.
2.) Homosexuality is situational	Whenever there is a shortage of women combined with an all-male setting, such as hostels, military barracks and shared dwellings like that of migrant labourers, men have sex with each other.
3.) Feminine, women-like characteristics	Gay men are feminine, women like.
4.) Men-like characteristics, dressing	Lesbian women are like men.

sense	
5.) Same-sex activity, anal sex	Is unnatural, against natural roles.
6.) Rights	LGBT people are demanding special rights.
7.) Hijra person being born as intersex	Hijras are born with congenital birth defect that is why they have both male and female genitals/ambiguous genitalia, hence are cast aside and shunned by the society.
8.) Growing trend, spread of homosexuality behaviour due to internet	Growing trend of LGBT people/gay people/this type of people.
9.) Gayism (gaygiri)	Certain people follow this 'ism'.
10.) Rape	Men/transgender people can never be raped.
11.) Prostitution	Gay men socialise and meet partners in public places, hence meeting partners and sexual acts are akin to prostitution.
12.) Pinning HIV/AIDS transmission on a particular group	Interpreting high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among gay men, Transgenders, Hijras as a result of their 'immoral' behaviour.
13.) Socio-economic class issue	Same sex behaviour is either an upper class or a lower class phenomenon. This does not happen in middle class and the educated class.
14.) Importance of psychiatrists' opinions (which could be negative)	Some psychiatrists see same-sex orientation as a mental disorder and may recommend counselling, and other therapies to change sexual orientation.

The researcher concludes the study with the findings that as we move ahead in time, the media representation of LGBT is improving. They are now able to find a place for them in the mainstream movies. Though few directors have tried to represent the issues of homosexuality, but there are a number of aspects that are still to be explored.

## **1.2) Statement of the Problem**

The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and Azim Premji University conducted a research survey from 2017-18 in eight states. The survey showed that 28% people somewhat agreed to homosexuality and they were of the opinion that it should be accepted by the society.

According to a data submitted to the Supreme Court in the year 2013 by then Central government of India, India had 25 lakh gay populations. 1.75 lakh of the gay population (7 per cent) were infected with HIV.

In 2017, Avert, UK based charity organization, released its data on homosexuality in India. According to the data, 2.7% of total population of gay/MSM (men who have sex with men) are HIV infected and 65% of them are aware of their status.

Due to the disapproval to the LGBT community by society and perceiving it as a taboo and against the nature will never let homosexuals to come forward and open up about their sexual identity. This further leaves them ignorant of the possible STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) danger, including HIV.

It becomes very important on the part of mass media to perform one of its basic functions of 'educating' people. There should be a strong endeavor by Indian media to discuss the issues of homosexuality and aware people.

## **1.3) Significance of the Study**

1.3.1.As mentioned above, it is very important to accept LGBTQ community as the way they are in order to reduce the risk of deadly STDs like Aids. This research will help in outlining the role played by media in bringing up issues of LGBT community and how it has been able to change the way people think of same-sex love and LGBT community.

1.3.2. The main aim of the study is to measure the degree with which media has/or not performed its function of educating people about same sex love and LGBT related issues and to outline if it has influenced progressive attitudinal changes in society.

1.3.3. The exploratory nature of the research helps in highlighting new insights into media representation of LGBT community and what people have learnt through media about them.

1.3.4. This nature of research can further help future studies to generate hypothesis and carry out research in a specific way. The study will also allow media persons to know where they are lacking in the upliftment of a community and what changes they can make to fix it.

#### **1.4) Aim of the Study**

The aim of the study is to recognize the contribution of media in portraying a positive image of LGBT community and how that portrayal has effectively developed positive and progressive thoughts among people. Which medium, television programmes or movies, has been used by people the most to derive more knowledge and which medium has helped shape their understandings of homosexuality.

#### **1.5) Objectives of the Study**

- 1.5.1. Tracing media portrayal of LGBT community through Bollywood and streaming television.
- 1.5.2 Knowing if media representation of homosexuality alters the notion that homosexuality is an illness and need to be treated and establishes the fact that it is a **personal issue** and a normal sexual orientation.
- 1.5.3 Determining if perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of people on homosexuality are influenced by the media.

## **1.6) Research Questions**

- 1.6.1 What has been the stand of media on LGBT community?
- 1.6.2 Has media been able to influence people and change their attitude towards members of LGBT community?
- 1.6.3 What is people's opinion of media when it comes to portrayal of LGBTQ community?

## **1.7) Research Design**

The term design actually means drawing or sketching. Research design is basically a blueprint on the basis of which an entire building is constructed. It involves the process of decision makings, i.e. before one starts pursuing a research project, research design gives one a clear picture of 'how to conduct a particular research'. William Zikmund has described research as "a master plan specifying the methods and procedures for collecting and analyzing the needed information". If go by Martin Bulmer – "Research design is specification of the problem, conceptual definitions, derivation of hypotheses to test, and defining of population to be studies".

Thyer (1993) A traditional research design is a blueprint or detailed plan for how a research study is to completed- operationalizing variables so they can be measured, selecting a sample of interest to study, collecting data to be used as a basis for testing hypotheses, and analyzing the results.

1.7.1) The research design is exploratory in nature and looks into new insights in the subject.

1.7.2) The research is both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

### **1.7.1) Research Methodology**

This paper aims at reviewing the nature of broadcast media (entertainment shows) and Bollywood cinema and the role played by it in formulating attitude of people towards homosexuality. To fulfill the objectives of the study, two methods have been used:

#### **1. Manifest Content Analysis**

## 2. Survey

- In survey method, **interview schedule** was used for data collection.
- Both quantitative and qualitative method of content analysis are used.

1.7.1.1. Unit of analysis for quantitative content analysis are –

- a) Holding Hands
- b) Hugs
- c) Kisses
- d) Intimate scenes

1.7.1.2. Tool Used for Qualitative Content Analysis: **GLAAD's Network Responsibility Index.**

Based on Vito Russo Test, Network Responsibility Index divides media content into four categories:

- a) Excellent
- b) Good
- c) Adequate
- d) Failing

1.7.1.3 Vito Russo Test has three parameters:

- i. The film contains a character that is identifiably lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer.
- ii. That character must not be solely or predominantly defined by their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- iii. That character must be tied into the plot in such a way that their removal would have a significant effect.

### 1.7.2) Universe of the Study

1.7.2.1) The researcher has taken University students from Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University and Lucknow University as universe of study.

1.7.2.2) Unit of Analysis: Individual student.

### 1.7.3) Sample Size

For the purpose of outlining attitudinal change among people, 100 students are surveyed. These 100 people are from age group 18-30 years. The age group is confined from 18-30 years so as to analyze the impact of streaming media and cinema on youth.

	Total number of Respondents (18-30 years)	Males	Females
BBAU	50	25	25
Lucknow University	50	25	25

For content Analysis, 5 Bollywood movies and 5 streaming television shows have been selected.

Name of the Movies	Name of the Streaming Television Shows
Fire	Maryada: Lekin Kab Tak
My Brother Nikhil	Shakti: Kahani Astitva ke Ehsas ki
Margarita with a Straw	Big F
Ekk Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga	Pyar ki ek Kahani

#### **1.7.4) Sample Techniques**

Following techniques have been used to select samples:

1.7.4.1) Non-Probabilty sampling

1.7.4.2) The researcher used Purposive and snowball sampling used for collecting the required number of data.

#### **1.7.5) Tools and Techniques of Data Collection**

The researcher used both primary and secondary data for the purpose of completing the research work with justifiable findings.

##### **Primary Data**

For the purpose of collecting primary data, a survey was conducted. The survey contained interviews schedule (consisting of both close-ended and open ended questions) with 100 people (18-30 years).

##### **Secondary Data**

Secondary data was gathered through different TV programmes, movies, books, previously done surveys and researches, case studies, different articles, news stories and online content.

#### **1.8) Limitations of the Study**

Due to time limitations, there were limitations to research study as well. The researcher was able to survey only 100 respondents. In order to understand the impact of media representation on youth, people above the age 30 were not included in the

research study. As the members of LGBT community were not able to come out as who they are, their take on media representation was not recognized.

### **1.9) Chapter Summary**

The conclusions drawn from the following chapter helps in mapping out the key issues related to the research. The concepts of LGBT and notions related to it have been differently shaped. Homosexuality is something that have been banned and condemned around for a very long time. Since mid of 20<sup>th</sup> century, different outlooks related to LGBT community started to agitate and many countries started decriminalizing homosexuality and started forming marriage unions (or unions that are equivalent to marriage) for LGBT members.

In India, there was a wave of happiness for LGBT community members when Supreme Court, in its landmark judgment, scrapped down Section 377 that criminalized homosexuality. This colonial law was in practice since 1860 and criminalized same sex love. The LGBT community has won the legal battle but the social battle continues to be on. There is an urgent need of attitudinal change towards LGBT. And, for the purpose of bringing social change, nothing can be better than media.

Media plays a very important role in social change. Educating the masses is the most important functions to be performed by media. It was first in 1973 when the American Psychiatric Association accepted the ‘normality’ of homosexuality. In 1992, it was also accepted by World Health Organization and since then a number of countries accepted homosexuality.

Talking about India, there are people who still think that homosexuality is unnatural and some kind of mental illness. It has been on media’s part to proliferate the idea that ‘homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality’.

The researcher here works with the objective of tracing the role played by media in taking up such a sensitive issue of LGBT community. There are different questions to be asked from media when it comes to portrayal of members of this community. The researcher here makes an attempt to track down media progress in media portrayal of LGBT members through finely analyzing the content of television shows and cinema. The researcher also attempted to measure the attitude of people by conducting a

survey. The study is conducted in Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh, with 100 respondents from two Universities – Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University and Lucknow University.

This chapter also reviewed different research carried out around the world related to media and LGBT community. Some of the literature is from India itself, while some are from abroad. In most of the literatures, the researchers have attempted to examine the role of media in portrayal of same sex love and attitudinal change. Going through the review of literature, it can be said that the power of media portrayal is not confined to a single place. Be it Slovenia or Kenya, media has played a significant role in creating a positive image of LGBT community.

## Chapter 2

### The Concept of LGBT

#### Introduction

To begin with the research work, it is very important to make the concept clear. The focus of the study is LGBT community and therefore, it is very important to understand the concept of LGBT community, what it stands for, different terminology used for LGBT community and history of LGBT community and related issues. This chapter includes all the important parameters that are required to finely understand the meaning and notion of LGBTQ. This chapter involves different terminology associated with LGBT, the idea of Rainbow flag, Queer Theory, history of homosexuality and significance of homophile movement around the world.

This chapter also discusses the Indian history of LGBT community and same-sex love, section 377 of Indian Penal Code and the chronology of events that made the scrapping of the section possible.

#### **2.1) Different Terms Associated with LGBT**

Homosexuality is not a new phenomenon. Being a natural variant of human sexuality, it has been there and recognized by all since ever. The concept of homosexuality is very old but the terms used to refer them are not that old. Today, we generally refer to them as LGBT, which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. Lesbians are the women who are sexually attracted towards women while gay refer to men being sexually attracted towards men. Bisexual are people who have sexual attraction towards both the genders. Transgender is used to define people whose gender identity is the opposite of their assigned sex. In some countries, like America, homosexuals are generally referred as 'gay'.

The term '**homosexual**' was coined in the year 1869 by Karl-Maria Kartbeny, Ausrtrian born Hungarian journalist and human rights campaigner. He also used the term **heterosexual** for the first time to define sexual attraction between people of opposite gender. Before the coining of the word, homosexuals were known as '**inverts**' (and were sometimes referred as third sex). The famous sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) gave the distinction between the two words – **inverts** and **homosexuals**. According to him, inverts are the people who are sexually attracted to the same sex naturally while homosexuals are the victim of '**accidental absence**' (sexual attraction due to absence of opposite sex). Kraft-Ebing added that

homosexuals comprised of ‘third sex’ which he called '**urnings**'. According to him, urning were the result of heredity.

Sometimes three more words are added to LGBT – QIA (LGBTQIA). Here, Q stands for Queer, I for Intersex and A for Asexual or Allied. Queer basically means weird or odd; which means something different from ‘normally accepted’. The term was first used in late 1980s by gay activists who were protesting against the government silence over the deaths caused by GRID (now AIDs). In early 1980s, a large number of gay men were found affected with a syndrome that was affecting their immunity and ability to fight disease. The syndrome was then known as gay cancer or ‘gay related immune disease’ (GRID). The disease was relabeled as AIDs only after some cases were found among prostitutes. As the disease was mostly related with gay men, US government wasn’t much bothered about combating the problem. Thus, the protest was held by gay activists and they used the term for their politics and identities.

At this time, many gay activists started using the term queer to describe their politics and identities; the term suggested an unwillingness to conform and a desire to oppose the norms that called for silence around gay and lesbian sexualities.<sup>7</sup>

The term intersexual is used to denote people who are born with both male and female sex organs. The condition is often referred to as in determined genitalia where the genitals are not clearly male or female. Many surgeries are often carried out to “fix” the sex of the child. The Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) demands to end such surgeries. The society argues that the entire process of ‘fixing’ the sex “is devoted to systemic change to end shame, secrecy and unwanted genital surgeries for people born with anatomy that someone decided is not standard for male or female.”

The next term is allied. Allied are people who are not actually homosexuals but have much to offer to queer community. It involves wide variety of fetishists and sadomasochists. Fetishist are the people who obtain sexual pleasure by fixating on nonliving objects or a particular non-genital body part. Sadomasochism is deriving sexual gratification by inflicting pain.

Carol Queen and Lawrence Schimel, used the term '**pomosexual**' to describe post-modern sexuality. According to them, this sexuality of post-modern era is free, exploratory and unwilling to restrict it to specific label.

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<sup>7</sup>Gibson, M. A., Alexander, J.F. & Meem, T.D. (2009), *Finding Out: An introduction to LGBT studies*. New Delhi. Sage Publication.

As time passed and we headed towards neo-modernism, different new terms were added to previously used terms for homosexuals and many phrases evolved to strengthen their identity. The most common and positive phrase used for LGBT community is ‘Gay Pride’ or ‘LGBT Pride’. The phrase is a positive expression used against the discrimination and violence toward LGBT people, to uphold the self-esteem, self-affirmation, equality rights and to increase their presence as a social group with sexual diversity and gender variance.

It was in 1970 when the word ‘Pride’ first came into existence. Brenda Howard is the woman behind the use of the word. She is known as the “Mother of Pride” for her remarkable contribution for LGBT rights activism. It was the first anniversary of ‘Stonewall riots’ when Howard organized a parade titled Christopher Street Liberation Day March. She, along with her fellow activists Stephen Donaldson and L. Craig, are credited with propagating the word “Pride” to describe festivities related to LGBT community.

### **2.1.1)The Rainbow Flag**

The LGBT celebrations and gay pride march are always marked by a multi-colored flag known as ‘The Rainbow Flag’. One will always notice the presence and dominance of the rainbow flag while witnessing a LGBT movement.



Pic Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/US/lgbt-pride-month-2018-history-events-parades/story?id=55414438>

One can easily recognize a flag and can relate it to LGBTQ. But, not all know the real significance of the flag. This six strip flag has a deep meaning within it and

symbolizes a lot more than just homosexuality. The flag is used to denote the diversity of LGBT community.

The gay pride flag (the original one) first appeared in the year 1978 on the occasion of Gay Freedom Day Parade, San Francisco. The flag was designed by Gilbert Baker, a gay right activist. Since it first made its debut, the flag has gone through some changes. The original flag consisted of eight strips: hot pink, red, orange, yellow, green, turquoise, indigo and violet colors.



(The Original flag strips designed by Gilbert Baker)

What the colors symbolize:

*Hot Pink – Sex*

*Red – Life*

*Orange – Healing*

*Yellow – Sunlight*

*Green – Nature*

*Turquoise – Magic/Art*

*Indigo – Serenity*

*Violet – Spirit*

The story behind the creation of the flag says that Baker's friend Harvey Milk, who himself was a gay leader, challenged Baker to come up with something to symbolize Gay Freedom Parade at San Francisco (June 25,1978). Baker accepted the challenge and came up with gay pride flag.

### **2.1.2) The Queer Theory**

The field of critical theory, queer theory emerged in the early 1990s out of queer studies and women's studies. The theory involves theorization of queerness and queer reading of texts itself and is built upon feminist challenges to the idea that gender is share of the essential 'self'. It also takes from the close examination of the socially constructed nature of sexual identities and acts of homosexuals' studies. When we talk about queer theory and other gays and lesbian studies, we come across a difference. The difference between the two is that – the lesbian/gays studies largely focus on explorations of natural and unnatural behavior in accordance to homosexual behavior, while the queer theory concentrate to comprise any kind of sexual identity or activity that come under deviant and normative categories. The theory is very much influenced by the works of Leo Bersani, Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Halberstam.

The theory emerged as lesbian and gay studies but was later became the academic wing of gay right movement. The social and activist movements that were carried out through 1960s and early 1970s were essentially the results of cultural and literary studies that considered sexuality as a key category. The US Stonewall Riots of 1969 lead to the emergence of gay liberation movement. There became many gay organizations like Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) and Gay Liberation Movement (GLM) who raised voice for rights of homosexuals and sought for their legal, medical and social freedom. These movements helped queer theory to evolve by adding critical and philosophical insights to the nature of sexuality and the question of sexual identity.

#### **Factors Influencing Queer Theory:**

Previously, the term queer was used as slang for homosexuals. But, today it's been used as an umbrella term for alternative sexuality. There are mainly two factors that have influenced queer theory:

- In the early 1970s, a number of authors introduced deconstructionist critical approaches on the issue of sexual identity. They countered the dominant construction of heteronormativity – the normalizing and giving privilege to heterosexuality as fundamental in society. The authors concentrated on non-heteronormative sexualities and sexual practices.
- Another factor to influence the theory was involvement of political agency, Anglo-American, in the HIV/AIDS activism and the contemporary feminism of early 1990s.

### **The Aims and Objective of Queer Theory:**

Queer theory has a different way of seeing the world through their spectacles. There are some important issues that queer theory aims at. These issues are:

- Popular and proper representation of LGBT community.
- Construction of sexuality in the field of law, medicine and religion.
- Public understanding of homosexuality of alternative sexuality.
- Construction of institutions (family, medicine, law, religion) structures that support same-sex love.
- Revealing the ‘hidden history’ of homosexual representation and texts.
- Building a link between sexuality-based oppression.
- Mentioning geography of sexuality in reference to ghettoization of homosexuals.

Queer theory and the activists supporting queer theory have marked certain objectives at micro level to fulfill in order to achieve the greater aim. These objectives are:

- Helping gays and lesbian coming out and supporting them to have a regular life.
- Countering the beliefs of homophobic identities.
- Resist the prominence of heterosexual cultures and promoting homosexuality through carnival, parody and transgression.
- Being co-sexual: gender equality.

- Demanding and fighting for sexual justice (as a part of social justice).
- ‘Self’ is above the established and socially approved gender.
- Combating AIDS driven homophobia.

## 2.2) History of Same-Sex Love

Different societies around the world have condemned or they still condemn homosexuality in the name of culture and history. Even in the countries where the same-sex love has been given legal status, it is very difficult for people to accept it. Almost all the culture and religion fundamentalists around the world have been up against same sex love. Even in countries where same-sex marriage is accepted by law, many religious outfits and leaders claim that homosexuality is completely unnatural and thus cannot be accepted. They claim that it is against the will of the God. Also, they claim that their culture does not approve to such an ‘immoral’ act. They even come up with different logics and manipulated facts to prove that how their culture has never given acceptance to such an unethical activity. But, what does culture actually mean?

*‘Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.’*

– Tyler (British anthropologist) 1870: 1; cited by Avruch 1998: 6

*‘... the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.’*

– Matsumoto 1996: 16

*‘Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour.’*

– Spencer-Oatey 2008: 3

If one goes by Matsumoto definition of culture then it can be said that culture is basically shared by a group but is different for each individual. It is something that is communicated from one generation to another. But, when something changes hands or passes from one generation to another, it is altered and go through many changes. If culture is different for every individual then is it okay to make things absolute?

The word ‘fuzzy’ in definition of Spencer-Oatey is clear enough to tell the grey nature of any culture. In a culture, people are often unlikely to share identical sets of beliefs and attitudes. Helen Spencer-Oatey, Faculty at The University of Warwick has given some characteristics of Culture. One of the characteristics of culture as given by her is – **Culture is subject to gradual change**. According to her, “Any anthropological account of the culture of any society is a type of snapshot view of one particular time. Should the ethnographer return several years after completing a cultural study, he or she would not find exactly the same situation, for there are no cultures that remain completely static year after year.”<sup>8</sup>

When culture is subject to gradual change then it is not apt to say that something is not the part of their culture. As time passes by, a number of changes occur with a number of things. And, to know the changes that have been made in any culture, one needs to go through history.

When one talks about tracing evidence from history, they must always remember Judith Halberstam’s notion of “**perverse presentism**”. She warns that while writing history, some of the contemporary desires can be imposed on past desires and identity can be imposed on past incidents, issues or even person. To counter such a condition, Judith came up with perverse presentism model of history analyses. She argues that *while writing about history, one must never try to portray the events in such a way that they are supposed to match the contemporary scenario*. It builds a trap of simply ‘projecting present-time understanding back in time’. Instead, history should be pure history, without having to manipulate it to complement the current scenario.

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<sup>8</sup> Spencer-Oatey, H. (2012) *What is culture? A Compilation of Quotations*. Retrieved from [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills/global\\_pad\\_-\\_what\\_is\\_culture.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills/global_pad_-_what_is_culture.pdf)

Talking about LGBT community, one cannot impose that it was never accepted by their ancestors and thus it is against their culture. Culture evolves with time and bring along a number of changes. It is very easy to say, “Our culture doesn’t approve to it”. But, in reality, if one looks back and turns the pages of history, examines the centuries old walls and explores the art and sculpture that belong to ancient period, they can find that their forefathers were not so much rigid about alternative sexualities.

### **2.2.1) Tracing the History of Homosexuality around the World**

Unfolding the sheets of history, it can be found that the concept of same-sex love is not a new one. There are a number of evidences to prove the existence of same-sex love and affection even before existence of the concept of culture. Here are some instances from back in time that bring along the evidence that speak of flexibility that folks around the world had regarding alternative sexualities.

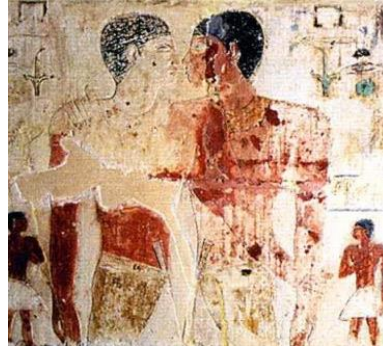
#### **2.2.1.1.) History of Same-Sex Partners in Africa**

Africa has a rich tribal history of same-sex love. They refer to same-sex couple as ‘*Yan Dauda*’. The practice of keeping a same-sex partner died out by the dawn of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Previously, it was very much common among many African tribes. The practice involved two adolescent boys engaging in sexual activity. They would leave their partners behind after getting married (with a girl). The people of such tribes did not even count the practice as sexual activity for it did not result in procreation.

In some parts of the continent, women also participated in ‘long term erotic relation’ which they referred to as *motsoalle*.

#### **Niankkhum and Khhumhotep from the hecropolis at Saqqara, Egypt**

The two royal servants, Niankkhum and Khhumhotep, shared the title of overseer of the Manicurists in the palace of King. The royal servants were buries together at Saqqara. It is to be noted here that the two royal servants buries together are considered to be the first recorded same-sex couple in human history. Thomas Dowson and Greg Reeder are among the scholars to believe this.



(Niankkhum and Khumhotep from the necropolis at Saqqara)

(Pic Source: <http://www.touregypt.net>)

### 2.2.1.2) Greek Pederastia

Greeks are often referred to as historical forerunners by homosexuals.<sup>9</sup> There are good supportive reasons for them to do this. Greek history shows a number of ways in which people recognized and honored same sex.



(Pederastic couples at a symposium, as depicted on a tomb fresco from the Greek colony of Paestum in Italy.)<sup>10</sup>

Homer's *Iliad* has offered to be the principal source of ancient Greek pederasty (love between a man and a boy). The epic composed in eighth or ninth century BCE, Homer's *Iliad* represents youthful lover of Greek hero Achilles – Patroclus. Fearing that Achilles is losing in the war, Patroclus enters the battlefield and gets killed. Achilles, spurred by the death of Patroclus, returns to the battlefield and defeats the Trojan Hector.

Greek pederastia includes a same-sex couple of an older man and a younger man. The older man was known as *Evastes* (young man with sprouted beard) and the younger man was known as *eromenos* (typically a post-adolescent between 12-18 years of

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<sup>9</sup>Gibson, M. A., Alexander, J.F. & Meem, T.D. (2009), *Finding Out: An introduction to LGBT studies*. New Delhi. Sage Publication.

<sup>10</sup>Pederasty in Ancient Greece. Wikipedia:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pederasty\\_in\\_ancient\\_Greece](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pederasty_in_ancient_Greece)

age). The interesting thing here was that the Greek did not support the same-sex love between the men of same age. However the same sex relationships did not affect or preclude heterosexual marriages.

Most of the literary production of Greece was accomplished by men. The only significant name of any woman was of poetess Sappho, who is also known as a symbol of love and desire between women. Sappho belonged to seventeenth century BCE and lived on the island of Lesbos. Therefore, the word lesbian has been derived from Lesbos.

#### **2.2.1.3.) The Middle East**

Explore the Middle East today, one does not only find limited or restricted rights for same sex lovers, but can also see a hostile attitude towards them. The region has 18 countries and among these 18 countries, 10 have banned homosexuality. In six countries, homosexuality is considered a sin and is punishable by death.

If we explore the history, we will find that homosexuality was not such a big taboo in Middle East. The practice of pederasty was known as *Liwad*. It involved a *luti* and an *amrad* or *murd mu'ajirin*. *Luti* was an older man and *amrad* was an unpaid beardless boy. *Murd mu'ajirin* was also a beardless man, but was paid. The practice dates back to 8-9 century.

The love tales of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni and slave Ayaz cannot be unseen in the history of Arab homosexuality. The two were devoted lovers and their love represented an ideal form of love.

#### **2.2.1.4.) History of Same-Sex Love in Japan and China**

To be found in written records – the Heian (Peace and Tranquility) period (794-1185) – same sex desire in Japan was referred to as *Wakashu-do*. It represented relationship between an adult and a young man.

In China a powerful male-male culture lasted throughout Qing Dynasty. Opera was very much popular among men at that time and the upper cast opera patrons found the adolescent men, playing female character, very attractive.

### **2.2.1.5.) Homosexuality in America**

History of same-sex relationship in America is quite long. The recent example can be traced from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was the time when people migrated to big cities in search of employment. The dislocation forced them to live away from their family and kind of family structure. Men started to live together due to absence of a proper family structure. Now, the men with some homosexual inclinations got attracted to each other and developed same-sex relationship.

Same-sex love and relationship in America is not limited to culture and social aspect only. It became a huge part of politics since mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Mattachine Society, founded in the year 1950 in Los Angeles, is the first known homosexual political organization in the country.

### **2.2.1.6.) Presence of Same-Sex Love in Europe**

History of same-sex love is not that dominant in Europe. Members of LGBT community became the target of medical, psychiatric, catholic and legal intervention in the year 1870. They also raised their voice and launched a fight against the sodomy law. The homosexual movement in Germany was very much influential and widespread until the Nazis destroyed Magnus Hirschfeld's homosexual archives and sent many same-sex lovers to die in Nazi concentration camps.

### **2.3) Homosexuality: From Mental Illness to a Normal Variant of Homosexuality**

The belief that homosexuality is just deviance was dominant in 19<sup>th</sup> century. There prevailed a very negative attitude towards the members of LGBT community in the 19<sup>th</sup> century medical community. During this era, homosexuality was viewed as vice as people were supposed to be committing sin by engaging in the act of same-sex love. Different professional were engaged in finding the main causes and cures for treating homosexual behavior. One such neurologist was Jean-Martin Charcot, who, in 1860s, suggested that homosexuality was entirely inherited and was not acquired from the environment. His opinion was based on his observation that homosexuality did not respond to hypnotic treatment. But many sexologists did not agree with his Charcot's opinion.

Homosexuality was considered a mental illness and a disease for a very long time. It's been since 1973 that homosexuality is medically proven to be a normal variant of homosexuality. But the question here is how same sex love was medically a psychological problem and how the notion changed overtime.

It was in 1869 when a German physician Karl Westphal mentioned in the Archive for Psychiatry and Nervous Disease about a newly born mental disorder which he referred to as "*contrary sexual feelings*". He described it as men having sexual feelings for men and women having sexual feelings for women. Describing the symptoms of this 'disorder', he claimed that in this disorder men show effeminate traits and women develop "mannish" behavior. Westphal and other sexologists called these men and women '*inverts*' because their sexual preferences were completely inverse to the widely accepted notion of sexuality.

There was a strong notion among the sexologists at that time that male inverts are more feminine than other men and the female inverts had very much masculine quality. The obsession with the notion was so strong that Iwon Bloch mentioned in *The Sexual Life of Our Times* (1907):

*"More specially after removing any beard or moustache that be present, we sometimes see much more clearly the feminine expression of face in a male homosexual, whilst where the here was removed they appeared quite man-like. Still more important for the determination of a feminine habitus, are direct physical characteristics. Among these there must be mentioned a consideration deposit of fat, by which the resemblance to the feminine type if produced, the contours of the body being more rounded than in case of the normal male. In correspondence with this the muscular system is less powerfully developed then it is in heterosexual men, the skin is delicate and soft, and the complexion is much clearer than is usual in men"*

This kind of opinion of homosexuals was dominant for a very long time and was even supported by scientific research. In 1886, another German psychiatrist Dr. Richard von Krafft-Ebing published *psychopathia sexualis* in which they discussed several sexual 'perversions'. According to him, homosexuals had feeling that presented '*abnormal congenital manifestation*'. And, the reason behind is the want of sexual sensibility for opposite sex. On the other hand, sexual inclination toward the same sex

is present. He was of the opinion that homosexuality is congenital. Also, according to him, homosexuality also results from other etiologies:

- Fear of infection during intercourse.
- Fear of pregnancy.
- Moral or mental weakness.

However the thoughts of Krafft-Ebing shifted later on. In final edition of *psychopathia sexualis*, he asserted that homosexuality was one man-infestation of sexual desire and not a mental disorder. Drescher notes that Krafft-Ebing viewed measured sexual behaviors through the lens of Darwinian Theory. Also, many other scientists felt that all kind of non-procreative sexual behaviors were to be considered as form of psychopathology, as they were not evolutionarily adaptive.

Karl Heinrich Ulrich, a law and theology student, claimed that homosexuals made up the 'third gender' and termed them as **Urnings**. Ulrich mentioned that urnings were the outcome of heredity.

LGBT community has always faced all kinds of intolerance since ever. They were labeled as abnormal, deviant, pathological, queer (previously used as slang), etc. Western world was obsessed with the idea that homosexuality was not only a sickness but also a sin and is completely against the nature and the will of the God. The beliefs and attitudes towards homosexuality were deeply rooted in Christian ideology. According to popular texts on Christianity, sex was intended for procreation only. Since same-sex love cannot result in procreation, the act of homosexuality was considered sinful.

These religious beliefs and attitudes were carried forward and were converted into law. By the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century same-sex love and marriage became an offence that was punishable by death. Similar laws later appeared in United States and other parts of the country.

Previously assumed causes of same-sex love (deviant sexuality) were domineering mothers and passive fathers. The intolerant attitude of people can be measured by the treatment which the homosexuals were put through. They had to go through:

- Electric Shocks

- Lobotomies
- Castration
- Hormone Therapy
- Aversion Therapy
- Forced Incarceration

### **2.3.2) The Homophile Movement**

When World War II came to an end, some members of LGBT community started to realize that they were oppressed minority and were made invisible by the dominating majority. In 1948 United Nation announced Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“A right to be free from discrimination of any kind.”

– Done Mitchell

The universal declaration of human rights instigated a feeling among homosexuals that why are they deprived of their rights. Now the members of LGBT community realized that they were no different from other people and they had their right to be protected under human rights. This new way of seeing homosexuality and voice from within challenged the long lived notion that homosexuality is a disease or a sickness. There was a resistance on homosexuals' part which led to a movement known as homophile movement.

The homophile movement was carried out in US from 1950s to 1960s. It demanded equal respect and dignity for people regardless of their identity or sexual orientation. The activism was mostly at local level and focused at providing safe social environment at workplace. It also concentrated on encouraging legal, medical and other professions to develop more sympathetic attitude towards members of LGBT community.

### **2.3.2) The Much Awaited Shift**

The shift in the attitude of people started to occur when sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), a British sexologist, saw same-sex love from different lens. Ellis was the first sexologist to come up with the idea that ‘homosexuality should be treated as a sexual variant’. He was of the opinion that same-sex love and affection is very much

common men of exceptional intellect. He classified same-sex love into two parts: inversion and homosexuality.

**Inversion:** Natural sexual attraction towards same sex.

**Homosexuality:** Sexual attraction due to absence of opposite sex.

Ellis argued that homosexuality should not be treated as deviance. In fact, homosexuality is just a natural sexual variant. He was also of the opinion that homosexuality is congenital in nature. He gave three reasons for the emergence of the feeling of same-sex love:

- a) Accidental Absence: A person gets sexually attracted towards same sex due to absence of opposite sex.
- b) Being disappointed by a failed romantic relationship with opposite sex.
- c) Seduction by a member of the same sex.

The idea of normality of same-sex love was later supported by a homosexual physician and sex researcher – Dr Magnus Hirschfeld. During early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hirschfeld led the German homosexual right movement.

Alfred Kinsey, considered as the father of sexology, had a take on homosexuality that was completely different from others his fellow sexologists. Kinsey was of the opinion that ‘homosexuality is a normally occurring sexual variant’. He found nothing wrong with same sex love and affection. It was in 1950s when Kinsey came up with ideas on same-sex love. Kinsey is also made responsible to have the sodomy law change in Illinois single-handedly.<sup>11</sup> On July 28, 1961, Illinois scrapped down state’s sodomy law and became the first state to do so.

Member of LGBT community had high hopes with these sexologists. But there hopes were soon dropped down when American Psychiatric Association (APA) labeled homosexuality as mental disorder. It was in 1950s when APA put homosexuality in

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<sup>11</sup>Bauer, H. (2012), Alfred Kinsey and homosexuality in the '50s: the recollections of Samuel Morris Steward as told to Len Evans. Retrieve from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6930175\\_Alfred\\_Kinsey\\_and\\_homosexuality\\_in\\_the\\_'50s\\_the\\_recollections\\_of\\_Samuel\\_Morris\\_Steward\\_as\\_told\\_to\\_Len\\_Evans](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6930175_Alfred_Kinsey_and_homosexuality_in_the_'50s_the_recollections_of_Samuel_Morris_Steward_as_told_to_Len_Evans)

the list of mental disorders. 1950s had just started seeing the fight by gay activists for being accepted by the mainstream society. The APA's decision was a heart breaking incident for the entire LGBT community.

Homosexuality lasted on the list of APA's metal disorder for two decades. It was only in 1973 when American Psychiatric Association came out in support of LGBT community and claimed that homosexuality is completely natural and is as natural as heterosexuality. It gave ideas to society and people started to look at LGBT members from new perspectives.

The wider acceptance from the world came when in 1992 World Health Organization accepted the claims of American Psychiatric Association and accepted homosexuality as being normal variant of homosexuality. Since then, a number of countries have decriminalized same-sex love and also paved way for same-sex marriage or same-sex unions.

It was the time when the idea of '**essentialism**' was born. The notion that homosexuality results from biological factors out of control of individuals is called essentialism.<sup>12</sup> The impact of essentialism was that it empowered the gay rights movements around the world.

The understanding of the subject of homosexuality occurred on the basis of studies that documented high level of prevalence of same-sex behavior and feeling in women and men and its pervasiveness among all non-human primate species and across cultures. Psychological tests were unable to differentiate homosexuals from heterosexuals. There were many researches conducted that claimed that homosexual orientation did not have any kind of psychological dysfunction. They were neither impaired in judgment making nor lacked vocational capabilities. Psychiatric, psychoanalytic, medical and mental health professionals now consider homosexuality as a normal variation of human sexuality (T. S. Sathyanarayana Rao and K. S. Jacob, 2012).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Gibson, M. A., Alexander, J.F. & Meem, T.D. (2009), *Finding Out: An introduction to LGBT studies*. New Delhi. Sage Publication.

<sup>13</sup>Rao, S.& Jacob, K. (2012), *Homosexuality and India*. Retrieve from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3339212/>

### 2.3.3) The Gay Genes

The genes influence on sexual orientation has sparked debate for at least four decades now. There have been studies and researches done on the issue of homosexuality to find exact reason behind.

It was somehow known for decades that sexual orientation, in men, is partly heritable. The confirmation was received when the studies were conducted of families which had both gays and straight men. In 1993, genetic variations in a region on the X chromosome in men were associated to determine whether they were homosexual or heterosexual. Also, a region on chromosome 8 was identified. Both of the above mentioned findings were confirmed in a study of straight and gay brothers in 2014. The strongest argument to the notion that gays are born gay was received when the genetic analysis of 409 pairs of gay brothers, that included sets of twins, was done. The study clearly determines that being gay is completely biological rather than a lifestyle choice.

Individual genes, that might influence the development of sexual orientation in males (both in the womb and during life), have now been identified. Alan Sanders at North Shore University, Illinois, and his team identified these genes by comparing DNA from 1077 gay and 1231 straight men. The gene which they found was the gene which sits on chromosome 13. It is active in a part of the brain known as diencephalon. This region of brain contains hypothalamus which in 1991 was identified as differing in size between gay and straight men. The discovery was made by Simon LeVay. According to other researches this gene is called SLITRK6 and is active in hypothalamus of male mice fetuses (a few days before they are born).

“This is thought to be a crucial time for sexual differentiation in this part of the brain,” says LeVay. “So this particular finding is a potential link between the neuroanatomy and molecular genetics of sexual orientation.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Coghlan, A. (2017). *What do the new 'gay genes' tell us about sexual orientation?* Retrieved from <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2155810-what-do-the-new-gay-genes-tell-us-about-sexual-orientation/>

When we talk about gays, some studies are there. But the biological understanding of lesbian is where the researches lag behind. Some studies still suggest that there is genetic element of homosexuality in women. But, most of the studies are conducted on men only.

#### **2.4) Indian History of Same Sex Love**

India is a country that is home to a number of cultures. One needs not go distance in order to see variance in culture. The variance is visible at a few miles only. Indian concept of sexuality and culture has evolved overtime and has been influenced by different religions and rulers. The Indian culture is now being influenced by the west due to globalization. There has been a change in people's attitude on various social issues and so is the case with issue of same-sex love. But, the question here is, is homosexuality really something that demands us to be influenced by foreign thoughts? Isn't it something that has always been there and was just covered due to foreign invaders? Before looking for the answers, one thing to be considered here is that India is the first country to write a text that treated homosexuality as a science.

Section 377 of Indian Penal Code that decriminalizes homosexuality was enacted by the British government in the year 1860. The law was modeled on British Buggery Law of 1853 that criminalizes sexual activity that is "against the order of nature". To understand the history of homosexuality in India, we will have to go back before the colonial era because, when the British arrived in India, they made changes in laws and enacted different laws that were not approved by our culture.

The history of homosexuality in India has been a subject of debate since ever. One section of people consider it alien to the culture while the other section believe that it has been embedded in our culture but got covered by colonial era law. Well, the debate is still on and different arguments are presented time to time by both the sides. Here in this part of chapter, we will try to track the evidences of same sex love in our history that state that we have always embraced everyone with all love and respect.

##### **2.4.1) Going Back in Time (References from Sacred Ancient Texts)**

Rigveda, a sacred text of Hinduism says *Vikriti Evam Prakriti*. It is a Sanskrit text that means that 'unnatural is also natural'. Some scholars are of the opinion that these texts actually refer to same sex love and touch the homosexual/transsexual

dimensions of human life. The Hindu American Foundation, notes that Hinduism does not deliver any fundamental spiritual religion to ostracize or reject LGBTQ individuals. The foundation also states, “Given their inherent spiritual equality, Hindus should not socially ostracize LGBT individuals, but should accept them as fellow sojourners on the path to moksha.”<sup>15</sup>

The most famous couple who was referred to as the ‘same-couple’ in Rig Veda was Varuna and Mitra. The couple is often portrayed as sitting side-by-side on a golden chariot or riding a crocodile or shark.

While talking about presence of homosexuality in ancient India, one cannot ignore Bhagirathi – the son of two queens. This son is no other than Bhagirathi, who is well known (in mythology) for bringing the Ganges down to earth from heaven. According to Krittivasi Ramayana, which was composed by Krittibas Ojha (a Bengali poet), King Sagara of Ayodhya lost most of his sons to Kapila sage’s wrath but was determined to maintain his bloodline.

His only son, Dilip, died without any heir. Dilip was supposed to give magic potions to his two queens, to make them pregnant, but he died before that. After the death of Dilip, his two widows drank the magic potion and made love to each other. One of them got pregnant and they conceived a child.

#### **2.4.2) Kamasutra**

Sex is considered a taboo in the country that has given the world the first guide on sexuality – Kama Sutra. It was composed by Vatsyana around 400 BCE and 200 CE. Kama Sutra is part of ancient India text ‘Kama Shastra’. It is not a sexual manual but a guide to ‘art-of-living’. It was written with an idea of finding a life partner, nature of love, maintaining one’s love life and other aspects pertaining to pleasure-oriented faculties of human life.<sup>16</sup>

Kama Sutra speaks a lot about homosexuality. The chapter ‘purushayita’ in Kama Sutra contains much for same-sex love. In the text, women-women lovers are referred

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<sup>15</sup>Stances of Faith on LGBT Issues: Hinduism. Retrieve from <https://www.hrc.org/resources/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-hinduism>

<sup>16</sup>*Kama Sutra*.(n.d.). In Wikipedia

to as 'swarinis' and men-men lovers are called 'Klibas'. The word 'Kami' has been used for the people who are attracted to both male and female. It is also mentioned in the book that *kami* are attracted naturally to both the genders and sometimes they do it for a reason as well. Those persons who frequently switch from being straight to homosexual are called 'paksha'.

### 2.4.3) Rekhti

A genre of Urdu feminist poetry, Rekhti was developed by male poets. It was formed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the part of State of Awadh – Lucknow (Now the capital of Uttar Pradesh). Saadat Yaar Khan Rangin is credited with the creation of this genre. The poetry uses voices of women to talk about themselves and largely includes topic related to romantic relations between women-men and women-women.

The term used in the poetry to refer to women-women lovers are *Dogana*, *Zonakhi*, and *Ilaichi*. Rekhi expresses women's love for women in details and also notes why women choose women over men. It also describes the fear in women about their same sex relationship. There is always a fear of discovery by hostile relatives and society and opposition by the family.



(A portrayal of women-women love as represented in Rekhti)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ahmad, S.S (2018). *The Language of Women Spoken by Men*. Retrieved from: <http://www.tarshi.net/inplainspeak/rekhti-urdu-poetry/>

In the poetry, women are shown as exchanging love letters, visiting each other in day time in palanquins and via ladders, at night, that ascend to rooftop. The women are also shown having fun in get-togethers where they invite other women couples. They eat together, visit gardens to enjoy the beauty of the nature and swing together and they sometime also engage in sex outdoor. The poetry also describes rituals that are used to establish long term relations between women.

#### **2.4.4) Stances of Homosexuality in Ancient India**

The walls of ancient India still depict that how sexually liberal our ancestors were. We all have surely heard about the erotic sculptures of Khajurao temple, but not all know that those sculptures also involve some erotic forms of same-sex love. Here we are going to discuss what the walls of ancient India speak for a liberal culture that we have left far behind.

##### **Konark Sun Temple**

Konark Sun Temple is of the oldest temples in India built in 13<sup>th</sup> century CE. The temple is located in Odisha and is attributed to King Narasingha deva I of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty. The temple is dedicated to Sun God Surya. A UNESCO world heritage site stands for the marvelous stone sculptures that make the main attraction of the temple.

The walls of the temples tell the tales of ‘once a sexually liberal India’. The stone carved sculptures in the walls have jewelry-quality miniature details. The temple has a number of sculptures that include sculptures of deities. The erotic sculptures can be found on the temple’s *sikhara*. The erotic sculptures take inspiration from ancient India Sanskrit text *Kamasutra*.

Along with widely accepted sculptures of heterosexuality, the sculptures have clear illustration of homosexuality. The sculptures involve the display of love between same-sex couples that clearly defines the acceptance of homosexuality. Also, it succeeds in convincing that there is nothing to be ashamed of.

##### **Khajurao Temple**

Located at Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh, Khajurao temples were built between 950 and 1050 by Chandela dynasty. The Khajuroa groups of temples are dedicated to two

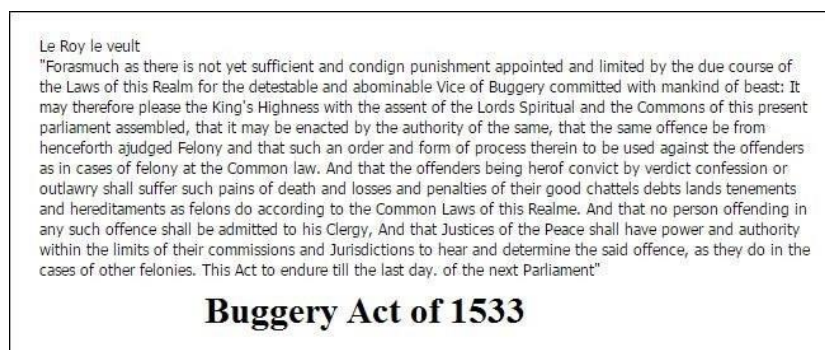
religions – Hinduism and Jainism, showing a tradition of respect for each other. There were around 85 temples by the end 12<sup>th</sup> century but only 25 have survived. It has been declared as world heritage site by UNESCO.

The temple is famous for its erotic sculptures that tell a lot of contemporary stories about sexuality and reflects the advancements and openness of thought process of people of ancient India. There are various sculptures shows the openness about the sexuality in the era. It is also well known for portrayal of homosexuality. The sculptures are seen on the exterior of Kandariya Mahadeva temple.

## 2.5) Section 377 and Supreme Court Verdict

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was introduced in the year 1864 by the British government. Previously, there was no such law by any of the rulers in India. The law was modeled on the British Buggery Act of 1533 that criminalized sexual activity ‘against the order of the nature’. The Buggery Act was enacted in the reign of King Henry VIII that involved unnatural intercourse against the will of the God.

The section was scrapped down on Sep6’2018 on the grounds of being unconstitutional. It doesn’t mean that section has been removed completely. Only that part of the section has been removed that said that unnatural sexual activity between two adults was a criminal offence and it was "irrational, indefensible and manifestly arbitrary". The law still remains in force to protect minors, bestiality and non-consensual sex.



(The Buggery Act of 1533, enacted under the reign of King Henry VIII)<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Pic Source: Chaitanya Kediya (2018), Tracing the History of Section 377 of IPC.  
<https://factly.in/tracing-the-history-of-ipc-section-377/>

## 2.5.1) The Chronology of Events that Lead to Scrapping Down of Section 377

### 1991

The first initiation against the constitutionality of the law was taken in the year 1991 by AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA). A revolution against the discrimination, both social and legal, was launched by ABVA when they published their incredible publication of *Less Than Gay: A Citizen's Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India*. The questions raised by ABVA were of greater significance. The main questions raised by ABVA in the report are<sup>19</sup>:

- What is homosexuality?
- Is it a distinct sexual experience confined to a small minority of the population?
- Is 'gay' a Western concept, an upper class obsession?
- How is homosexuality linked to heterosexuality to the institution of marriage and family?
- Why does it become a cause for ridicule?
- What do Indian culture, heritage, religion and literature say about it?
- How does the modern Indian state attempt to regulate homosexuality?
- What is the status in law and medical science? in the eyes of police?
- Can a right to privacy be read into the Indian Constitution and deployed to protect homosexual sexual acts?
- What are the human rights violations experienced by gay men and lesbians?
- What is gay life like for different strata of people in Indian Society?

It is important to notice here that ABVA raised the issue of right to privacy, which became the foundation for 2018 Supreme Court verdict.

### 2001

In 2001, The Naz Foundation (non-government organization working on HIV/AIDS) filed a PIL (Public Interest Litigation) in the Delhi High Court. The PIL was seeking legalization of consensual sex between adults (homosexuals).

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<sup>19</sup> Less Than Gay: A Citizen's Report on Status of Homosexuality in India (1991). Retrieved from: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.documentcloud.org/documents/1585664/less-than-gay-a-citizens-report-on-the-status-of.pdf>

## **2003**

Delhi High Court refused to take the PIL into account stating that there was no *locus standi* by the petitioners in the case. Naz foundation appealed in Supreme Court (SC) and SC stated that Naz Foundation did have a standing and sent the case back to Delhi High Court for re-consideration.

Also, there was a continuous support by '*Voice Against 377*', women and human rights activists, to read down Section 377 of Indian Penal Code. Naz Foundation's PIL got support from many other persons as well. People who supported the PIL are:

The famous gay couples Sunil Mehra and Navtej Singh Johar. Sunil Mehra is a notable journalist and Navtej Singh Johar is a much popular Bharatnatyam dancer.

Ritu Dalmia, Indian celebrity chef, also came forward.

Aman Nath, a well-known historian, writer and hotelier, made continuous efforts against the law. Aman Nath was in a relation for 23 years with Frances Wacziarg.

## **2008**

Case hearing in Delhi High Court.

There was a clash in opinion within the government itself.

Ministry of External Affairs was in direct contradiction with Ministry of Health. Ministry of External Affairs opposed the petition while the later supported it.

## **2009**

It proved to be a historic day for LGBT community. Section 377 was read down by Delhi Court. Chief Justice Ajit Prakash Shah and Justice S Muralidhar were of the opinion that the law was completely unconstitutional as it violated Article 14 of the Indian Constitution. Article 14 states that every citizen is equal before law.

## **2013**

2013 broke the heart of all the members of LGBT community and activists as two-judge bench of Supreme Court, in Suresh Kumar Koushal and another vs. Naz

foundation and others case, overturned the 2009 verdict of Delhi High Court and reinstated Section 377.

## **2015**

Shashi Tharoor introduced a '*private member's bill*' in Lok Sabha that was supposed to replace the section 377 and decriminalize consensual sex between adults. But he was shocked after the bill got rejected.

## **2016**

Tharoor again tried to introduce the bill and was voted down again.

Five people filed a writ petition in the court challenging the constitutionality of Section 377. The petitioners were:

- Navtej Singh Johar
- Sunil Mehra
- Ritu Dalmia
- Aman Nath and Keshav Suri
- Ayesha Kapur

The three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice of India T.S. Thakur, said the curative petition by the Naz Foundation and others will be reviewed by five-member bench.

## **2017**

2017 can said to be the most crucial year for LGBTQ activists. It was the year when Supreme Court held right to privacy a fundamental right under article 14 of Indian Constitution. Supreme Court made it clear in the statement that right to privacy cannot be denied '*even if a minuscule fraction of population is affected*'.

The judgment filled the activists and members of LGBT community with joy as sexual orientation is a completely personal and the decision was going to strengthen their fight against the Section 377. Activists demanded SC to take suo moto action in the recent cases where the right to privacy was hampered. After SC pronounced its

judgment over the issue of right to privacy, senior lawyer Karuna Nundy said, “The judgment has made it clear that LGBT citizens like anyone else enjoy not just the right to privacy, but right to equality, right to free expression and right to life. Today’s judgment will have a wide-ranging impact but one among them is Section 377 will have to be struck down.”<sup>20</sup>

## **2018**

The historic judgment of 2018 is known as *Navtej Singh Johar vs Union of India*. The union government did not take any stand on the issue and completely left it to the ‘wisdom of court’ to take a decision on the issue.

The five-judge constitution bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra consisted of four other justices Indu Malhotra, Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar, Dhananjaya Y. Chandrachud and Rohinton Fali Nariman reserved its verdict on July 17, 2018, after hearing the plea of the petitioners for four days. To challenge the constitutionality of Section 377, petitioners raised the issues of right to sexual privacy, freedom of speech and expression and right against discrimination.

On Sep 06, 2018, Supreme Court read down Section 377 stating that consensual sex between two adults cannot be crime and the previous law was “irrational, arbitrary and incomprehensible”. It can be said that legal war is now over but the social war is still on.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter is dedicated to the terms that have been associated with the LGBT community or the terms that were used to denote the members of LGBT community. We discussed the significance of multi-colored flag and how it became a symbol of gay pride. The importance of development of queer theory over time is also briefly discussed in the chapter. Queer theory is based on the feminism notion and promotes the idea of ‘self’.

The chapter also deals with the history of LGBT community around the world. One simply cannot deny ubiquitous nature of homosexuality. There are strong evidences of

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<sup>20</sup> LGBT Community Cheerful After Right to Privacy Ruling (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/lgbt-community-cheerful-after-right-to-privacy-ruling/article19555773.ece>

presence of same-sex love in different parts of the world. Most of the evidences also indicate that people were not so much intolerant with same-sex affection at that time. *Niankkhum and Khumhotep* and *Wakashu-doare* the perfect example of same-sex couple.

Same-sex love and rights of members of LGBT community are being suppressed in India in the name of culture. But while turning the pages of history, one found out that India has a very rich history of same-sex love and affection. The examples in *veda*, erotic sculptures at Khajurao and Konark Sun temple also depict the acceptance of same-sex love by ancient India. Also, the chapter discusses that how Hindi mythology speaks for same-sex affection. So, we can no more say that homosexuality has never been a part of our culture.

The chronology of events related to decriminalization of homosexuality and scrapping down of Section 377 of Indian Penal Code shows that there has been a long fight for LGBT rights in India. Declaration of right to privacy as a fundamental right by SC strengthen the foundations for LGBT rights and finally, the community won the legal battle a year later.

## Chapter 3

### Streaming Television, Cinema and LGBT Community: A study

#### Introduction

Melvin DeFleur and Timothy Flax gave ‘Meaning Theory of Media Portrayal’. The meaning theory of media portrayal states that media shape messages and what that means for social conduct.

According to the theory, communication is basically a tool that is often used to process meaning. Audiences create and retain a sense of meaning through the presented media content. The meaning is already in our head and we try to connect it to media content. The understanding of media content is based on how an individual constructs meanings of images, events or symbols they see. The construction of meanings happens only when the culture gives shared interpretations or approval to the media content. Our understanding of something is also based on participation in a variety of communication process. The media content has the power to shape and reshape the meaning.

From the theory, we can derive that media has a lot of power in its hands. This theory also states that deriving meaning from media content is also directly related to the dominant culture one resides in. When it comes to homosexuality in India, there is a conception that the culture doesn’t approve to this. Many religious leaders have always been up against homosexuality and they also keep demanding from their followers to stand against this ‘immoral act’. In such scenario, the media must stand tall and do all its efforts to bring the truth out. Now the media is expected to present content in such a strong and firm way that they are able to provide homosexuals a respectable place in society. In case of homosexuality and the entire LGBT community, media must make an attempt and try to ‘normalize’ things.

This chapter focuses on the media portrayal of LGBTQ community. It has complete description of how cinema and television have been assigning roles to LGBT community and how they have depicted them. Here the researcher has tried to highlight the movies and television shows that are famous for their LGBT characters.

The researcher has also reviewed five LGBT-centric movies and five television shows that she has chosen for analysis. Movies reviewed are Aligarh, Ekk Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga, Margarita with a Straw, Fire and Brother Nikhil. Television shows reviewed are – Pyar ki Ekk Kahani, Shakti: Kahani Astitva ke Ehsas ki, Maryada... Lekin Kab Tak, Big F and Satyamev Jayata.

### **3.1) Cinema portrayal of LGBT Community and Related Sensitive Issues**

The Indian film industries produce more than 1500 films every year, which is more than the double of Hollywood movies' numbers every year. Cinema has a huge role to play in society. The importance of popularity and wide reach of Indian cinema cannot be ignored when it comes at evaluating the attitude of people towards certain societal issues such as nationalism, religion, cultural identity and sexuality.

Cinema has been used intentionally and unintentionally to propagate various political, societal, cultural and even commercial issues. There have been movies like Border, Tiranga, Zameen, Lakshya, Rang De Basanti etc. that prompt the feeling of nationalism. Movies like Range De Basanti has played a significant role in instigating the feeling of nationalism among youth as the movie focuses on youth who are very indifferent towards nationalism until their friend dies in an aircraft crash.

Recently, there have been produced many movies by big stars like Akshay Kumar on significant, but always overlooked, social issues. Movies like *Padman* and *Toilet* are examples of that. Both the movies were great hit on box office and made a good collection. *Padman* is about difficulties faced by women in rural areas during their menstrual period while *Toilet* is about sanitation and lack of toilet facilities and absence of people's will to have proper toilet facilities in their homes.

Both the issues of menstrual cycle and sanitation are the ones that not only require efforts from government but also need an attitudinal change from people's side. For example, there are a number of taboos attached with menstrual period. It is still considered impure in rural areas. Even in cities, sanitary pads are always provided in paper bags or black bags. The black bags convey that sanitary napkins and menstrual problems are the things that are needed to be kept personal and hidden. This further leaves women ignorant of the menstrual hygiene and they suffer with related health problems.

Talking about toilets in villages, government surely provides many facilities, but people have a mindset that they themselves don't want to build toilets at their home. The difficulties are largely faced by women. They drop out of school due to absence of toilets in the school and often become victim of crimes for they sometimes have to travel some distance alone to defecate.

These movies were produced to bring an attitudinal change among people. Both movies aimed at giving another direction or another way of thinking for these issues. *Padman* can be called a really bold move as it openly discusses a taboo and tells people that it is really not a taboo. In the same way, Bollywood must come up the issue of same-sex love and try to highlight the problems the homosexuals go through in their life.

Bollywood has not completely ignored the issue of LGBTQ community. There are a few movies produced that promote the cause of same-sex love. But the sad part is that these movies have never been able to be in limelight. The only movie with same-sex love theme produced, that was promoted on a larger platform was Sonam Kapoor starrer '*Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga*'. In fact, most of the movies produced either show members of LGBT community in comic role or in roles that are always ridiculed. A very clear reason for such a misguided portrayal is that we have been treating them in the same way. Dissociation from the LGBT community has always got thumbs up from almost all the religion. Even today, when a person comes out as gay, he becomes subject of mockery by society and disappointment for parents and other family members.

We simply cannot ignore the contribution of Indian movies in making the lives of LGBT community members this pathetic. Going through a number of Bollywood mainstream movies, we will find different homosexuals characters that are mocked or are disregarded as 'subjects to be ridiculed'. Cinema does shape our way of thinking and influences our perceptions. This is somehow a reason that we have never been able to accept them either as society or as family.

When Supreme Court announced its verdict on the section 377, Bollywood was one of the loudest cheerers of the move. The social media was flooded with posts and tweets supporting the verdict of Supreme Court and showing their sympathetic attitude towards LGBTQ community. But these posts and tweets cannot hide the hypocrisy of

Bollywood in the portrayal of LGBTQ community. Bollywood has had a very frivolous attitude towards portrayal of LGBT community. Here are the movies that depicted homosexual characters as comic characters where they were just to add not so funny but deriding humor to the movie.

### ***Kal Ho Na Ho***

We can immediately recall the character of Kantaben when we talk about *Kal ho na ho*. She actually played humor track in the movie and the humor was created through her homophobic character. The film directed by Nikhil Advani focuses on Aman (played by Shah Rukh Khan), who suffers with heart ailment but aims to do good to everyone.

We can still figure out the reference every time we hear the sound track ‘Ooooo... Kantaben’. Everyone who has watched the movie can easily connect the reference of the track to some act of homosexuality.

The movie was a Shah Rukh Khan Starrer movie. It was great hit on box office. Not only in India, but the movie earned much overseas as well. Indian audiences still go to watch movies not for the sake of genre or story but for their favorite actors and actresses. Getting such a message from a movie starred by a superstar really impacts the audience. Depiction of homosexuality by two of the most loved actors in Bollywood really made audiences burst into laughter. And, therefore, such a depiction starts to build a stereotype related to a particular community.

### ***Student of the Year***

Who can forget the character of Rishi Kapoor in the movie student of the year? The irony of a homosexual man disguised under the drape of comic character is not something to be praised or mocked. The story remains the same again. There is a gay character in the movie who is supposed to bring humor and make audience laugh by his appearance and behavior as soon as he comes on screen.

The character of Rishi Kapoor did the job it had to do. He had a crush on another teacher (Ronit Roy) but the later ignores him completely. It simply gives an impression that the same sex love is something that can never be accomplished and the emotions and desires of a gay person are nothing to be taken seriously.

### ***Golmaal Returns***

This Rohit Shetty's comedy movie was hit of the year 2008 which made a good box office collection. The multi-starrer movie had enough number of actors and actresses to carry out the plot of the movie efficiently, but still the movie, for no actual reason, had to had a gay character who frequently made appearance on the screen to make audience laugh by being scorned by the 'masculine' characters of the movie.

Same was case with Salman Khan's movie *Jab Pyar Kiya to Darna Kya*. There was a single gay character scene in the movie that was shown as having characteristics that were different from both men and women. Also, as soon as the camera went on him, the background music turned a little funnier, symbolizing that the character has 'a lot to do with funny things'.

### ***Prem Agan***

Fardeen Khan's debut went on to another level where there is a gay character named Jay Mehra in the movie. It seems that the character in the movie is just there so that the heroine of the movie can crack one joke – '*tumhara naam Jay Mehra nahi Gay Mehra hona chahiye tha*' (Your name should not be Jay Mehra, but Gay Mehra). Such a blunt reply from the lead actress of the movie was of the impression that such people (people of LGBT community) should be misbehaved with as they do not act or behave the way they are.

### **LGBT Clown in Every Movie**

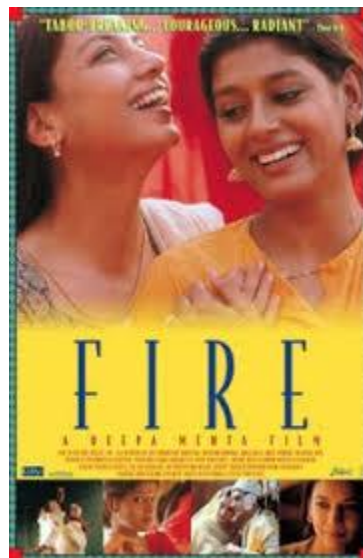
Discussed above are a few examples that show how differently these LGBT characters are shown in Bollywood movies. To be blunt and true, they are mostly show as clowns who make appearance in the movie just to make the audience laugh. Above mentioned are just a few movies, but if one goes back, and explore many movies, the dehumanizing of LGBT members is clearly evident. Only a handful of movies are there who seriously took the issue of same-sex love and the life of LGBT community members. Rests have just contributed in propagating a regressive attitude towards members of LGBT community.

## Cinema Making an Effort

It took time but Bollywood did start taking step towards building a positive and progressive attitude towards LGBT community and same sex love. Today we can witness a few movies that focus on the issue of LGBT community in a way or other. The sad part is that there is still a deficiency of any mainstream Bollywood movies that focus completely on the issues of LGBT community. Most of the movies based on the issues either goes unnoticed by the mass audience or get surrounded with controversies. Movies like *Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Ese Laga* and *Dostana* were successful in grabbing people's attention but most of the movies that purely focused LGBT related sensitive issues went unnoticed. The researcher here discusses five Bollywood movies that have completely focused on the issue of homosexuality.

### Fire (1996)

A part of Deepa Mehta's trilogy – Earth, Water and Fire, Fire was released in 1996 and was able to collect equal amount of praise and criticism. The movie based on the compassion of same sex love is the perfect example of second new wave. It was first of its kind to focus entirely on homosexuality and explain the complexity of same sex love. It is the perfect example of the replication of gender relationships in India.



Pic Source [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire\\_\(1996\\_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire_(1996_film))

The releasing of the movie in India was surrounded with controversy as the moral policemen of Indian Culture including Mahila Agadhi (women wing of Siva Sena)

and Bajrang Dal directed their rage towards the release of the film. The movie was released without any cuts from the censor board, still there was a lot of protest from religious outfits in different big cities including Mumbai, Delhi, Meerut and Surat. Not only were the screens vandalized, but also the audiences were attacked.

Due to violent protest against the movie by Hindu outfits, many lesbian groups and feminists came out in public sphere in support of the movie and to support the lesbianism. They were also of the view that lesbianism is not something that is not related to Indian culture and thus should not be treated as alien. On the other hand, the ferocious protests by Hindu outfits continue to grow and after three weeks of the screening, a number of owners of cinema halls stopped the screening.

The movie and the protest related is clear enough to show that how culture is continuously negotiated and remain in the middle of tug of war. Fire also challenges the dominant culture and rituals that are embedded with the dominant culture of heterosexual relationships. *Karvachauth* fast is observed by women for long and healthy life of their husbands. But in the movie, the fast is observed by both the women Sita and Radha for each other to strengthen the special between them. Here the movie stands against the dominant rituals of established heterosexual relationships.

Fire represents a slice of life of Delhi based middle-class family during 90s. The family is busy in day-to-day life until a new family member, Sita (Nandita Das) arrives. The movie tells the tale of a conservative family of a conservative society where everything is moving very 'naturally' until new challenges come up with the arrival of new bride. The story is about a middle class family who owns a restaurant. There basically six main characters in the movie – Ashok (Kulbhusan Kharbanda), his wife Radha (Shabana Azmi), his younger brother Jatin (Javed Jaffery), Jatin's wife Sita, mother Biji (Kushal Rani) and their servant Mundu (Ranjit Chowdhry). Ashok, Radha and Sita run a restaurant while Jatin is in business of selling CDs and DVDs.

Fire is about attraction between two women who are emotionally broken due to their shattered marriage. Ashok is deeply devoted towards a Guru and always try to control his desires to seek a path that leads to spiritual salvation. His fervent nature towards seeking salvation restricts him from fulfilling his responsibilities as a husband and he even seeks his wife as an 'object' that can help him attain spiritual salvation. On the

other hand, Jatin is in a relationship with Indian-Chinese girl and refuses to leave her even after his marriage. He marries Sita under family pressure but never accepts her as his wife.

Deepa Mehta has beautifully explained the same sex love between two women who try to find support in each other after failing to have a happy married life. Gradually, when being ignored and discarded by their husbands, the two sisters-in-law develop intimate and sexual relationship. Sita, new married bride of Jatin, is a cheerful, light-hearted and joyful woman who gets devastated after realizing that his husband is not only uninterested in her but also has an affair with a woman. On the other hand Radha, who is used as an object by her husband to control his sexual desires, is also heart broken and the spectator can see the look on her face that something keeps killing her. Both the women initially find support in each other but later, that support and affection is converted into sexual love.

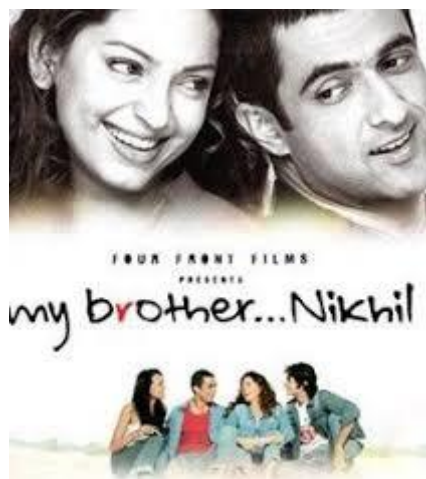
Though first of its kind in Bollywood, this piece of cross-over cinema gathered much praise from LGBTQ activists but was also criticized for showing same-sex love as an alternative due to absence of “natural” (heterosexual) relationships. The movie is actually a classic example of what sexologist Havelock Ellis once called ‘accidental absence’.

The significance of the title of the film ‘fire’ is understood and made obvious remarkably by Deepa Mehta at different instances. Firstly, there is fire between Radha and Sita and that fire keep empowering and strengthening their love. It is the fire of their love that empowers them to go against the well-established and time-honored norms of the society. This fire nourishes their love to build a strong will to stand tall against the long lived rules and find life and happiness in each other.

Mundu, the servant of the house figures out the type of relationship between Radha and Sita and informs Ashok. Ashok spies on his wife and catches the two women in the act. He becomes mad with anger and splashes his wrath upon his wife. Radha and Sita now decide to elope and start a new life with each other. Sita leaves first and Radha decides to leave the house after explaining things to Ashok. Explaining things to Ashok does not go right and they end up in a quarrel.

Meanwhile, Radha's saree catches fire and Ashok does not even dare touch his wife or even try saving her from fire. This is the most significant part of the movie and has a great symbolic assertion. Agni, in Hindu tradition, is considered as purifying goddess of the household on whom also falls the duty of bearing witness to the chastity of women and deciding their fates accordingly. In *Ramayana*, ancient Hindu epic, Sita (wife of Lord Rama) upon returning to Rama's Kingdom, after being abducted and kept captive by Ravana, is put to 'Agni-Pareeksha' (a test where the accused has to literally enter fire and come out unhurt to prove innocence) to test her chastity. Sita in *Ramayana* manages to emerge unhurt and thus proves her chastity. Likewise, in the movie 'Fire' when Radha's saree catches fire, she is also able to come out unhurt symbolizing that she has also proven her innocence and has done nothing wrong by choosing a woman over a relationship that has no love or hope.

### **My Brother Nikhil (2005)**



Pic Source: <https://www.famousfix.com/topic/my-brother-nikhil>

Directed by Onir (Anirban Dhar), 'My Brother Nikhil' is a perfect blend of facts and fiction. Based on the life of Goa based swimmer Dominic D'Souza, 'My Brother Nikhil' was able to manage and represent two of the most sensitive issues together – HIV and homosexuality. Onir is himself an openly gay film maker in India. Through his movie 'My Brother Nikhil', he proved that a gay love story can be beautifully presented through cinema without any controversies or stereotypical mocking gay caricatures. The film was not a blockbuster at box office but it helped Onir earn a lot of name and fame as a director. He even won 10 international awards for the movie. Due to lack of funds, the movie was produced under Four Front Production which is a

joint venture by Onir, Vicky Tejwani, Raj Kaushal and Sanjay Suri (who played Nikhil in the movie).

The film is based on the tragic life story of Dominic D'Souza who was a professional wildlife photographer. The story sets up around a family in Goa. Nikhil (Sanjay Suri) is the younger sibling and the only son of his parents. Navin Kapoor (Victor Banerjee) is Nikhil's father, who was formerly from North India but is currently settled down in Goa and owns antique furniture shop. He is married to Anita Rosario (Lillete Dubey) who has a Portuguese connection and is proud of that. The biggest support of Nikhil in the family is his sister Anamika (Juhi Chawla) who is a school teacher. Other important characters in the movie are Nigel de Costa (Purab Kohli), researcher at the Institute of Oceanography and Sam Fernandez (Gautam Kapoor).

Nikhil's father is a typical Indian father who has a lot of expectations from his son and wants him to be a swimming champion. Nikhil, like a good son, makes his father's dream his passion and goes on to win scholarship from Sports Ministry. On the basis of the scholarship, he is also offered a job in the bank. This earns fame to not only Nikhil but also makes his family highly respectable in society. Nikhil's father has a dominating personality and is very much proud of his son. It is even shown in the movie that he has so much affection with his son that he always ignored his daughter.

The movie has documentary style as the story runs in past and narrations are made in present time by different characters of the movie. Everything is going happily in their life. Nikhil is a well-known and happening swimmer and is very much popular among women.

Everything turns upside down when Nikhil is diagnosed with HIV. The news of an HIV patient spreads like fire in the city and his friends and colleagues abandon him. His parents come to know about their son's illness by other people at a restaurant when they are asked to leave the place as others were scared that they might also be 'contaminated'. His parents are very much disheartened and outraged by the news and his father, who was once very much proud of his son, throws him out of his. His parents take up his disease as shame and disgrace to the family and even decide to leave Goa and get settled in Bombay.

The only people to stand by him were his sister, her boyfriend Sam and Nikhil's boyfriend Nigel. Nikhil moves to Nigel's and start to live with him but then what happens shows the mental illness of society that arises due to ignorance of knowledge, education and zeal to know. Nikhil is treated inhumanly at every stage in society after being diagnosed with HIV.

The movie was not promoted as being focused on homosexual relationship. In fact, the name of the movie 'My Brother Nikhil' gives no clue of what it could be all about. 'Fire' was promoted as having 'same-sex love' as central theme. Such was not the case with 'My Brother Nikhil'. In an interview, Onir commented on why his film was not promoted as being 'gay-theme'. He said that:

*"One of the central themes of the film is a gay theme but I knew if this was perceived as a gay film people wouldn't come and see the film. Therefore for me it was very very important that the people in India see the film. And that was one reason why the film was called My Brother...Nikhil and not My Lover...Nikhil, you know...because it was telling a story of a brother from the point of view of a sister, which is again a very special relationship in India... and how the audience start loving this character till they discover that he is gay... and by then.. they already, you know... are liking the character so they don't easily reject it... so it is a very careful positioning because I wanted it to be released in mainstream theatres where people get to see the film."*

The movie has presented the same-sex relationship in a very wonderful manner. When it comes to lesbians, women are shown as women. But when it comes to being gay, men develop feminine characters. Such case was not there with 'My Brother Nikhil'. Also, the gay-relationship was not emphasized again and again. Neither Nigel, nor Nikhil was shown having feminine characteristics. Though Nigel was shown quite emotional in one or two scenes, he was still not able to fit in the stereotyped images of gays created by Bollywood. Over emphasizing of things might make them look unnatural and superficial. But the way the relationship was presented made it look complete normal and nothing to be creating chaos type.

In fact, the story of Nikhil is not depicted as revolving around his male love. Instead, the story of the movie lies in the realm of family relations. It focuses more on the role of family in understanding the mental complexities of a person who falls for the same gender. The film starts with the brother and sister playing at the beach side, showing a

strong bond between the two siblings. And, soon after the scene, the film starts with the narratives by Juhi Chawla.

The film is documentary styled and the story is largely based on the narrations by the characters of the movie. It uses the template of docudrama that helps narrate the emotions of anguish, love, fear and struggle by people related with Nikhil. No matter if the disclaimer says that the characters in the movie are fictitious, but when they talk by looking at the camera, they develop a bond with the audience. There are basically three narrative levels in the film. First one is hetero-diegetic narrator who is actually the director, controlling narrative from first frame to the last one. The second one is the homo-diegetic narrator (it involves narrations by main actors). The third level is the multiplicity of the narrators. These narrators, who have the small significance in the movie, make the story bolder by giving the minor details. All these three levels of narrative styles increase level of audience involvement in the film and they start to develop a ‘touch’ or connection with the story.

### **Margarita with a Straw**



Pic Source:[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margarita\\_with\\_a\\_Straw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margarita_with_a_Straw)

It will be wrong to call ‘*Margarita with a Straw*’ a movie with a single theme. It embraces different themes like life of people with disabilities (especially in India), liveliness of a cancer patient and yes of course – homosexuality. Directed by Shonali Bose, Margarita with a straw makes a commendable move to explain the romantic and sexual adventures of Laila (Kalki Koechlin) with cerebral palsy. Shonali is not only the director, but has also co-written the screenplay with Nilesh Maniyar. She wanted

to make sure that the character of Laila is full of life and joy in spite of her inability to move or speak clearly.

Laila is in college and loves to write songs. She has crush on a dashing singer of the college, Nima (Tenzing Dalha) and also has boyfriend named Dhruv (Hussain Dalal) who also uses wheelchair. Based in Delhi, Laila is blessed with a caring and loving family and has special bond with her mother named Shubhagini (Revathi). The movie revolves around Laila's exploration of her sexual orientation. In the beginning of the movie, she is shown watching online porn and also seeks a vibrator. Also, she makes out with her boyfriend Dhruv.

Laila's exploration of her sexual identity hots up when she moves to New York and becomes friends with a fellow classmate Jared (William Moseley), who is assigned as writer to her. One day she sees Jared kissing a girl and gets heart broken. Her life changes completely when she is able to explore the other side of her sexuality after meeting a Khanum (Sayani Gupta), who is a visually challenged activist. After meeting Khanum, she realizes that she is bisexual. Laila then develops sexual relationships with both Khanum and Jared.

Here start the emotional complexity of Laila's sexual relationship with both the gender. When Khanum figures out about Laila's relationship with Jared, she gets really upset over Laila and showers her wrath on her. Shonali here manages to portray the complexities related with bisexual person. The sexual desires of a bisexual person are very much different from a heterosexual or a homosexual. They are attracted towards both the genders and their relationship becomes more complex. Laila love Khanum, but she fails to explain her why she developed intimate relationship with Jared. Khanum also fails to understand the other side of Laila's sexuality.

The whole movie is related to the life adventure of a wheelchair ridden girl who keeps on exploring new adventures in her life. And, even upon finding out that she is bisexual; she doesn't leave the path of exploring herself and keep moving ahead towards self-realization. At the end of the movie, she goes on a date all alone. Her quest for self-realization doesn't stop with discovering her sexual preferences.

In simple words, ‘Margarita with a Straw’ can be defined as a lovely tale of sexual awakening. Though the movie went through little cuts by Censor Board, but still, Shonali Bose managed to highlight the complications of a bisexual person.

### **Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga**



Pic Source: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8108164/>

*Ek ladki ko Dekho to Esa Laga* is the first movie that has mainstream Bollywood actress in lead role. Directed by Shelly Chopra Dhar, *Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga*, makes an outstanding attempt to explain the emotional complexities that a person goes through at the time of puberty and how a society takes up the issue of same-sex love.

Sonam Kapoor plays the role of typical small town girl named Sweety Chaudhary, belonging to upper class, who is shy and loved by all. She's a daddy's princess and is quite reserved. Role of Sweety Chaudhary's father (Balbir Chaudhary) is played by Anil Kapoor who owns a garment factory in his city Moga, Punjab. Just like *My Brother Nikhil*, *Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga* was not promoted as a movie based on homosexual theme. Also, the theme of the movie is not revealed until the half part (interval) of the movie. The film looks like a normal love story between Sahil Mirza (Raj Kumar Rao) and Sweety until Sweety confesses to Sahil that she is in love with a girl.

The movie starts with a wedding ceremony in Delhi where Balbir Chaudhary and his family has taken part. Balbir Chaudhary has a normal discussion with a relative where he discusses about Sweety and tells that she received 82% marks in graduation. The

immediate reaction of the relative is that he suggests Balbir to find a 'good man' for Sweety and get them married. The total mindset of the society is defined in a few lines of the conversation between the two. There is a well-defined establishment in the society and everyone must work according to that. When a girl reaches her age, no matter if she wants to study or have a career, marriage is the first thing that should be considered for her. And, that too a marriage that has been a certified institution (that starts with a man and a woman) by a society for a long time.

The hero of the movie is Sahil who is a play writer. Sweety meets Sahil at the theatre where the rehearsal of a play written by Sahil is going on. The play is a love story set up around the current trends. Sweety, who is escaping from her brother Duhan (Abhishek), enters theater to hide and meets Sahil there. Upon understanding the typical love story of the play, Sweety says, "The person who has written this play has never fallen in love." According to her, the thing that was missing in the story was romance and affection between the actors. Their conversation is interrupted by Sweety's brother and they had to run away from there.

Till the first half of the movie, the movie continues to move like a typical love story. Hero falls in love with the heroine and he moves to her town to get her. Likewise, Sahil moves to Moga to find Sweety and write a true love story with the help of Sweety. Meanwhile, Duhan tells to his father that Sweety is in love with a Muslim man and goes to Delhi to meet him. Sweety's father and Biji (Madhumalti Kapoor) get very upset over Sweety.

The story continues to move as Sahil attempts to meet Sweety and contact her again and again. Balbir organizes a party at his house and there, Sahil (being drunk) manages to meet Sweety alone in her room. There he tells her that he knew that the Muslim man, whom she is in love with, is Sahil himself. Angered by Sahil confession, Sweety says, "Why do you all have to think in a single direction. Is it necessary to fall in love only with a man... I am in love with a woman." It is here that the plot of the movie is revealed.

Sahil is deeply hurt when he finds out that Sweety is a homosexual and he decides to leave Moga. Sweety requests her to meet her once before leaving and upon meeting him, she tells him about her lover Kuhu (Regina Cassandra) and how her brother knows everything about her and does not want them to get together. While telling her story to Sahil, the character of Sweety explains the emotional complexities that a homosexual person goes through upon discovering his/her own sexual identity.

Sweety lived in an abyss of loneliness since she found out about her sexuality. During her school days, she has a crush on a girl and decides to propose to her. When she goes to her friend to propose to her, she finds out that her friend is developing another kind of relationship with a boy of school. Sweety is disheartened and somehow realizes that she is different. Sweety has lesser friends in school and therefore she draws and writes down her emotions in her diary. One day, she accidentally drops her diary in school and everybody sees it. In the diary, she had drawn a wedding photo where a bride is getting married to another bride. There is no groom. When her friends see her diary, they mock her and now Sweety is left with no friends. She stays in the school alone; plays alone and even eats her lunch alone.

She becomes friend with a boy, who is also a gay, and enjoys his company. One day, she sees her brother and his friends molesting her friend. By this time, her brother has no idea about her sexuality. At this point, the story becomes very much heart-wrenching and depicts the reality of what a lesbian and gay go through at the time of puberty or at the time of figuring out their sexuality. A girl is left alone and discarded by her friends while the boy is molested by other boys.

Upon noticing that his sister is noticing the act, her brother stops and asks his friends to stop and let the boy go. He then explains to Sweety that such boys are pathetic and are needed to be cured and he, with his friends, was trying to cure him. Sweety then realizes that it's very important for her to hide her identity from the world and she also came under the impression that there was something wrong with her and she needed to be cured because people like her are pathetic. She soon starts praying to God to cure her.

Since then, Sweety starts living alone in a well of loneliness where she can find no one and she had to live in that well forever. But she wished to find someone but she believed that she is never going to find someone and therefore has to live alone forever. She lived in mental isolation for years until she found a girl at a wedding – Kuhu. She was the first one Sweety met who was just like her and it was the first time that there was a ray of hope in her life that she might not end alone. But, when her brother comes to know about her relationship with Kuhu, he tells her that this is a disease and needed to be cured. Here, Sweety's brother represents the mentality of average population of India.

After listening to the story of Sweety, Sahil decided to help her organizing a play in Moga with a theme of 'same-sex love'. He casts Sweety and Kuhu as the two heroines

of the play and convinces Balbir Singh to play the role of Sweety's father in the play. But, when Balbir Singh finds out that the story is about her daughter life, he steps out of the play. But Sahil stays firm to organize the play. When the play takes place, the audience at the theatre is angered as they were not ready to accept the concept. Many people even left the theater in disgust. But the play didn't stop and the many people stayed back in the theatre and watched the entire play.

The entire scenario explains a very true thing that homosexuality is something that is not accepted by our society easily. It is considered a taboo, against the nature and against the will of the God. But, a few (like the audience which stayed back) try to understand the nature of same-sex love and try to understand the complexities related to them.

Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga, is a commendable move made by Shelly Chopra Dhar and the crew. The life of a homosexual, the loneliness and an abyss of darkness that they grow through has not been defined so finely in any other movie. Leave aside the movie that portray them as comic characters, the films based entirely on homosexuality have not defined the emotional complexities of a homosexual person when they pass the age of puberty.

## **Aligarh**



Pic Source: <http://www.impawards.com/intl/india/2016/aligarh.html>

Aligarh, a film directed by Harshal Mehta is a biopic based on the life of Professor Ramchandra Siras. Professor Siras was Marathi Professor at Aligarh Muslim University who was taped having consensual sex with another man by two local newspaper journalists. The news spread like fire and reached every local and national

newspaper. Prof Siras was sacked from his office and was also asked vacate the university quarter available to him within seven days.

The incident took place in the year 2010 and Prof Siras managed to win the case as Delhi High Court had declared the unconstitutionality of the section 377. But, a day before the letter from Allahabad High Court, which revoked the suspension of Prof Siras, reached the university; he was found the dead in his apartment. Police registered a case of murder as the traces of poison were found in his blood in the autopsy report. The case was closed soon due to unavailability of sufficient evidence.

The film 'Aligarh' is not just a representation of the case but it explains the degree of humiliation and trauma the Prof went through because of his 'queer' sexual identity. Professor Ramcharan Siras is played by Manoj Bajpai in the movie.

After the incident happened, he faces severe flashbacks of the incident that changed his life drastically. When journalist Deepu Sebastian (Raj Kumar Rao) asks him about the incident, he recalls the event in such a way or it can be said that the portrayal of his recall is so realistic that the audience is able to see the scenario through his eyes. He doesn't only recall that event, but he lives it again and the fear and anguish is clearly visible in his eyes.

There are a number of instances in the films that are clear enough to state that it is not just a biopic. It plays a very important role in amplification of the emotional state of a homosexual person, especially when he comes out as a homosexual (willingly or unwillingly) in a society of homophobes. The fear of being a homo or coming out as one among the 'perfectly normal people' is clearly evident when Prof Siras is in his house and uses all three latches so that no one can break in again (like those local journalists did).

Before the incident, he is a very respectable person. He even tells Deepu in the interview that he commanded great respect in the university. When he tells Deepu that there are many Marathi teachers in Maharashtra but just one in Aligarh, the feeling of pride and self-respect is seen in his eyes. But, when everybody comes to know that he is gay, his life becomes pathetic. Even the doctor ignores him at the clinic and leaves the clinic before treating him. Professor Siras was having high BP problem. He was made to sit there for 1 and a half hours but the doctor left before treating him.

Prof Siras is so much devastated, for he lost all his respect, which he commanded for decades, that he even tells Deepu over phone that he would love to move to America because people like him (homosexuals) can live with respect and dignity over there. While expressing his wish to move to America, there are emotions of pain and grief in his eyes. His restlessness at the point is not just his emotion, in fact, it expresses the emotional state of every homosexual who comes out as one in the society.

The film also gives a very beautiful message that love is just love. One cannot confine it or divide it with any kind of parameters. In an interview with Deepu, Professor Siras talks about the conspiracy against him. He tells him that how he was threatened by a university professor, just before a week of the incident, that he would not let Siras hold the position of chairman of linguistic department for very long (when the incident took place, he was immediately suspended by the university and sacked from his position as chairman). At this, Deepu asks him, “Is this because you’re gay?” To this question, Siras has a very beautiful answer.

He says, *“I don’t understand the meaning of this word. How can a person label my feelings in three alphabets? It’s like poetry – sentimental, a strong desire which is out of your control – an uncontrollable desire (sic)... Poetry is not in words, it is in silences and pauses and the people then derive the meaning according to their age, maturity etc.”*

There is a very small scene in the movie when Prof Siras says, “Isn’t he a gay”. He is not answered to the question but the assistance of the lawyer (professor was referring to) corrects him and says, “It is not ‘a gay’, it is just ‘gay’”. There is a big difference between ‘gay’ and ‘a gay’. ‘Gay’ signifies just normality while ‘a gay’ signifies something having distinct attribute or characteristics.

The next issue that is discussed wonderfully in the movie is the issue of ‘morality’. How the word morality has been distinctly and relatively used by people who want to defend something that stands near no logic. The opposition lawyer keeps bringing up the issue of morality and moral conduct on the part of Professor Siras. She repeatedly talks about the kind of relationship the professor had with his friend (Irfan) and how that relationship is a disgrace to both university and society. Defending lawyer then retaliate saying that morality has no criteria or parameter. It is a relative term and people derive the meaning of morality according to them. And, if courts start

punishing people on the basis of morality then everyone has to be punished as all people cannot fulfill the parameters of morality drawn by others.

### **3.2 Nature of Streaming Television Content**

Streaming television plays a very important role in setting trends in India. Be it Parvati's bindi or sindur of Komolika or may be defining the 'absolute' characteristics of a good housewife, television had been successful in changing the minds of a larger population of television audiences. Television can do wonders if it takes up any issue.

Clark's theory of representation gives a clear picture of the importance of television representation. Clark gave three stages of television representation and explained how and in what degree television media represents or takes up any issue. His research was based on the representation of racial minorities. Four stages of representation by him are: non-recognition, ridicule or regulation.

First stage is the one where a group is not represented by media at all. The second stage is when the group is represented as the context of joke. According to him, the second stage has two significance – the first is that the represented group feels that it is better to be represented in some way rather than being ignored completely and the second one is that the members of dominant culture feels a kind of self-esteem. When the group ridiculed, retaliates to their representation, their representation passes through regulation. The regulated representation is the third stage of Clark's stages of representation.

Indian television has somehow been through all the stages of representation. Homosexuals were once completely ignored by television. Then they started getting minor roles where they are introduced as comic characters and are just there to be ridiculed. Finally, they have somehow reached at a good position and have got significant roles.

Maddy, in *Jassi Jesi Koi Nahi*, is the most popular Indian television gay character that is well known for its funnier side. The show was based on fashion designing and as the stereotype and the general perception of the people say, fashion designers are mostly gay and therefore it was necessary to have a gay character in the story. And, if there is gay character, he must have feminine traits. Having some feminine traits in a

man clearly means that he is the ‘odd one out’ and needs to be on the screen for the purpose of making people laugh.

Indian television, which is well known for daily soaps and saas-bahu drama, has always ignored the issue of LGBTQ. The first soap opera telecasted was Hum Log and since then, a number of soap operas have been produced and telecasted. Be it on government’s part (Doordarshan) or in private sectors’ hand, members of LGBT community were never able to find place for themselves. Still, there are a few that were somehow able to find some place in Indian television. This part of the work focuses on those few television shows.

### **Maryada: Akhir Kab Tak**

*Maryada: Akhir Kab Tak* is remembered as the first Indian television which dared to carry a gay storyline. The serial was initially based on women issues and focused on the empowerment of women (especially house wives). The two characters in the show, Gaurav and Karan, are in love with each other. Both are from well-off, but rival, families. Gaurav and Karan are business partners as well but Gaurav’s father and Karan’s mother are rivals and do not like each other at all.

The story of the serial *Maryada: Akhir Kab Tak* is based in the state of Haryana and both Gaurav and Karan are from typical conservative Haryana family. The best part about the story is that neither Gaurav nor Karan is shown having typical ‘gay traits’. None of the two are shown having any feminine characteristics. Both of them are just like the other male characters shown in the serial. Both the men love each other and hide their relationship from the world.

The storyline does not only show the relationship or love between two men, but it also portrays the pitiable life of a woman whose life simply gets spoiled due to the well-established and well defined institution of marriage (the ‘sacred bond’ between man and woman). Vidya is the wife of Gaurav who knows very well that her husband is gay and has a relationship with Karan. Though she is very much heart-broken with the truth but still remains supportive of them. An Indian woman is expected to be very loyal and dedicated towards her husband. Just like a good wife, she is dedicated towards her husband, in spite of knowing the fact that her husband can never be attracted towards her and she can never have a ‘happily married life’.

The irony and helplessness of Vidya plays a very influential role. It gives audiences an impact that the compulsion for every person to get married can affect lives. The constant demand of the society to be 'normal' can create havoc in many lives. Vidya is so much devoted towards her husband that when Gaurav's father finds out that he is gay, he gets furious and tries to shoot him. But, Vidya gets in between and gets the bullet instead (though she is saved later).

The show was the first of its kind on Indian television and due to the popularity of the show, it was able to attract mass audience. Whether it had any effect on the audiences or not but such portrayal from beloved television soap gives an impression that such things are no alien and this is something that can happen to their known ones as well. It starts to bring about 'a normality' with the concept which further helps in generating a positive and sensitive attitude of people towards the members of LGBTQ community.

### ***Shakti – Astitva ke Ehsaas ki***

Rubina Dilaik starrer *Shakti – Astitva ke Ehsaas ki*, featured on Colors is the first Indian television show that has an intersex as the lead character. The serial is based on the life of an intersex who lives a normal life as a normal girl until she discovers her identity. This was the first time ever that any daily soap, streaming on prime time, focused entirely on a member of LGBTQ (also referred as LGBTQ-IA) community. The show focused on the complexities of the life of an intersex person where being 'naturally different' is considered some kind of sin or crime.

*Shakti – Astitva ke Ehsaas ki* depicts how a society reacts to persons if they can't fall under the category of 'man' or 'woman'. Saumya, who is an intersex, is the lead character of the show. The story starts with lives of two sisters – Saumya and Surabhi. The degree of discrimination can be seen at their house only. Surabhi is loved and adored by her father and grandmother while Saumya is closer to her mother.

There arise circumstances that Saumya gets married to Harman (Vivian Dsena), the hero of the show. Upon knowing about Saumya's identity, he first rejects her but later falls in love with her. A great havoc is created in Harman's house when everyone comes to know about Saumya's identity. Harman's mother even sends Saumya to the

transgender society. Saumya do live with them for some time but is later brought back in the house by Harman.

This daily soap has been able to project the difficult life of an intersex on camera. It very nicely portrays that how difficult can it be for an intersex to live a normal life away from the certified jobs assigned to them. The show also tried to explain that there is nothing wrong in being an intersex and an intersex can also have a normal married life.

*Shakti – Astitva ke Ehsaas ki* has also been successful in explaining the physical harm that the society may pose to them if they try to enter the ‘normal life’ of ‘normal people’. At an incident, Harman’s maternal grandmother tries to burn Saumya alive after knowing her identity. And, in a scene, when she is publicly revealed as intersex, people even pelt stones at her.

The story was very much liked and appreciated by people and gave a tough competition to the dominant saas-bahu serials. The emotional struggle of Saumya did it best for people to understand the emotional struggle of all the members of LGBT community. Though there might be some loopholes in the story but Rashmi Sharma (producer of the show) must be applauded for taking up such an issue.

### **The Big F**

MTV has always been a very popular channel among youth. It is well known for producing programmes that have some funky and modern theme. With a view to do something different again, MTV came up with a new show – the Big F. Hosted by Gaurav Gulati, the show was launched in the year 2015 and was aired every Sunday. The one hour long episodes of the show always came up with different themes, which were largely based on youth.

One Sunday, the Big F broadcasted a show that explored lesbian relationship. It was a love story, but in spite of a hero, there was a heroine. It means there were two heroines. It was the first time ever that a lesbian relationship was portrayed on broadcast television. The episode was titled as ‘I kissed a girl’. It was about the story of a fashion designing student and the sudden realization of her sexuality makes her fall for a colleague. Such a show to be broadcasted on one of the most popular channel among youth is a really commendable job.

## **Pyar Ki Ekk Kahani**

Directed by Ekta Kapur, this Indian supernatural show got the attention of the people due to a 'Twilight' styled love story of a vampire and a girl. There is a character in the movie named Shaurya Chauhan (Gautam Gulati), who is initially shown as an industrialized who is starting to have connection with Misha (Priya Wal). Misha is in love with Shaurya, not knowing the fact that he is Gay. There is basically a love triangle – Misha is in love with Shaurya and Shaurya is in love with Shankar (Yash Gera), who is in love with Misha.

The show was aired in the year 2010 and the gay story line came out as a surprise for the audience. The best part about the gay story line was that Shaurya was shown as a charming handsome young man who was a successful industrialist and was passionate about his work. Though he fantasized for another man, but he was not shown as going after him badly and trying to impress him with some feminine traits.

## ***Satyamev Jayate: Accepting Alternative Sexualities***

*Satyamev Jayate* was an Indian talk show hosted by Amir Khan. The first season of the show was aired in the year 2012 and the second and the third were aired in 2014. Every episode of the show had a different social theme and was aired on various channels of Star network and on DD National. The show focused on the sensitive issues of Indian society like dowry system, caste system, rape, honor killing, female foeticide etc.

The third episode of season 3 came up with a unique theme that was completely unexpected and was so much talked about. It was based on homosexuality. The show titled: *Satyamev Jayate: Accepting Alternative Sexualities*, was first talk show that discussed homosexuality on national television. The topic was very sincerely taken up by the show and it was presented in a very interesting way. It was not like a sermon or a lecture but in fact, neither the show had doctors or psychologist who focused on explaining the naturalness of the phenomenon. In fact, the show had different members of LGBT community and their success stories were able to bind audience to the screen.

The show starts with Amir Khan explaining the sensitivity of the issue and asks parents to send their children to another room or elsewhere, as they might like their

children to watch such an issue. He even expresses that he would like if children from age 10-12 watch the show. The show starts with the story of Gazal Dhaliwal. Gazal is an engineer, working as a writer in Bollywood, who also worked at Infosys for a few years. Gazal start her with saying, “I was born into the wrong body. I was born into the body of a boy”. The camera immediately moves to a woman sitting in the audience who is literally shocked with what Gazal said.

Gazal was born as boy but she never felt belonging to the right body. She always felt that there is something wrong with her and the body she was adjusted in was not her. She loved playing with mother’s duppatta and saree when she was young (and a boy). Once it was noticed by an aunt of her and she her. As she (when was a boy) grew up, the things started to get clear that what was not right with her.

Gazal was able to go for a sex change surgery as she was very much supported by her parents and friends. Even her neighbors stood by her when she decided to go for the sex change operation. All the support from her friends and society was the only reason that she was able to have a normal life and a successful career.

The show also showed the story of Deepak Kashyap, a middle class boy from Ajmer who had a really difficult time when he came to realize about his sexuality. He even tried to commit suicide when he came to know that he was not like others. Being asked about his decision to commit suicide, Deepak said, “You are supposed to play a particular role given to you. Being a man or woman holds a meaning in society. Another aspect of this is that if you are a man, you have to fall for women only. So, as I grew up, I was a feminine child. When I was 5 or 6 year old, people would ask me to ‘sit properly and be a man’.” All his life, he could hear was that you are wrong. He was told by different people that the way he was is not actually the way one has to be.

He realized about himself when he reached the age of puberty and he could see other girls and boys flirting with each other. Soon he realized that he was different others and later he came to know he was gay. He had a hard time dealing with that as he was unable to find someone like him. He went through a lot of mental struggle but was later able to find a person for him. The love and support from her mother and from his love ones saved his life from getting converted into hell.

The show had similar story of Divya, a woman, who never felt uncomfortable in her marriage and didn't know what was wrong with. Upon realizing that she was a lesbian, she discussed it with her husband. Her husband took it very positively and divorced her so that she could find the right partner for her. Also, even after the divorce, her husband supports and even makes efforts from his side to make others understand her sexual preferences.

The most inspiring story was of Simran, a transgender, who was born as a boy but never felt belonging to that gender. As a boy, he always took interest in girls' clother, make up, dressing style etc. He was never accepted by her family and was always ridiculed and mocked by everyone. He was always taunted by all her family members that made her leave the house at 14. He spent three days at Bombay Central station and from there, he was taken away by a 'Hijra' (transgender). With the community, he learnt different things and got converted into Simran. He even begged at station for money. She even worked as sex worker but she was never comfortable with that and that's why she drew back. Later she got a job of bar dancer at a bar. And, reaching the age of 17, she realized the value of study and got admission in a completely illegal way. Now, she is managing a national level programme at India HIV Aids Alliance.

The most interesting personality on the show was Dadi (grandmother), who was fighter for gay rights in India. Her grandson was also gay but she said that she was fighting for gay rights because all the people have equal rights in society.

The show also had Dr Anjali, a psychiatric, who explains that homosexuality is not a disease one must take it has something that can be talked out or counseled. According to her, homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality. Just as a heterosexual person cannot find the same gender sexually attractive; similarly, a homosexual can also not find the other gender sexually attractive.

*Satyamev Jayate: Accepting Alternative Sexualities* was a very brave move that represented the emotional and societal struggle of members of LGBT community. It not only talked about the difficulties that they go through but also told how we can help them by accepting them the way they are.

## Chapter Summary

Indian media do not seem to do a justice with LGBT community. There have been a number of movies and television shows produced but only a few are somehow related to LGBT and same sex love. Around 250 Bollywood movies are produced every year and it's really hard to find a remarkable film that tremendously takes up the sensitive issue of homosexuality. The case worsens with television programmes. No regular daily soap or any other television programme has taken the issue seriously. The daily soaps are busy with *Saas-Bahudrama* and no one bothers to turn to other important subjects like LGBTQ.

'*Shakti*' on colors channels is somehow a courageous step taken. The show attempts to normalize the life of intersex and transgenders and depicts that why they deserve not to be excluded from the society. But, a move towards normalizing same-sex love is yet to be seen. *Maryada*, though had a small part, but was able to depict the harmful effects of normalizing heterosexual relationship when same-sex love prospers disguised in the society.

Movies like *Aligarh*, *Fire*, *Ek Ladki ko Dekha tha to Esa Laga* and *My Brother Nikhil* are the outstanding movies produced that illustrate the emotional complexities of homosexuals. But, only *Ek Ladki ko Dekha tha to Esa Lagawas* able to grab the attention of all and make it place among other main stream movies. The main reason could be that the movie had a star – Anil Kapoor and his daughter Sonam Kapoor. While the other movies didn't have such big names associated with it and thus they were unable to attract so much audiences towards them.

It can be said that bollywood and Indian television has a long way to go when it comes at changing the concept of love. Bollywood has ever since established a specific definition of bold, passionate, emotional, courageous, true and ideal love. In a love story, there is always a hero and a heroine who are deeply in love with each other and there is nothing beyond that. This, being nothing beyond that is something that is needed to be fixed and replaced as soon as possible.

## Chapter 4

### Analysis and Interpretation of Data

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter, the movies and television shows concerning LGBT issues were reviewed. It was to give some idea and gist of the theme and stories of the shows and movies. In this chapter, the researcher has analyzed both movies and television shows. The researcher has used both the quantitative and qualitative method of content analysis. For the purpose of qualitative content analyses, GLAAD's Network Responsibility Index has been used and for the purpose of quantitative research, unit of analysis used are hugs, kisses, holding hands and intimate scenes.

The chapter also contains the summary of survey and interpretation of survey data researcher conducted in Lucknow. The survey was conducted in two universities – Lucknow University and Babasahed Bhimrao Ambedkar University. The unit of analysis was students, 50 from each university.

#### **4.1) Content Analysis of Movies and Streaming Television Shows**

The five movies reviewed in the previous chapter are the ones that have truly made an effort towards presenting the emotional and societal complexities related to the life of a homosexual person. Fire presents the 'incidental' love story between two women who are looking for a way out from their shattered marriages. Aligarh movie tells the social complexities and social disgrace a person goes through when he comes out as homosexual. My Brother Nikhil manages to handle two sensitive issues – homosexuality and HIV, very successfully. Margarita with a Straw is a commendable effort that attempts to explain the emotional dilemma and complications of a bisexual person. And, Ekk Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga must definitely be praised for representing emotional and societal complications a homosexual goes through when they enter the age of puberty and start to learn about their sexual preferences.

Talking about the Indian television shows, homosexuality is very rare to find. There are a few shows that made an attempt but just one show is entirely based on the life story of a LGBT person – Shakti: Kahani Astitva ke Ehsas ki. The show can be defined as a bold move on Indian television as it is premiered during prime time and

gives a tough competition to well established 'saas-bahu' dramas. Maryada: Akhir Kab Tak had a small, but influential, gay storyline. Satyamev Jayata, a show by Amir Khan, proved to be a very education one as it tried to explain the audiences that homosexuality is no sin or disease or something to be ashamed of. Pyar ki ek Kahani had a very small gay storyline and it even didn't turn into same sex love story, but still it was an appreciable move. And, the MTV Big F had just one story on lesbian love, but it was bold enough to show the first lesbian kiss on television

The acceptance of same-sex love can come from the society only when it is shown as something very normal and something that is not out of the box. Along with explaining and portraying that there is nothing to be feared about homosexuality, Cinema and entertainment television must also promote it by normalizing the same sex relations. The same-sex relations can be normalized only if such love stories are portrayed in the same way as the heterosexual love stories are portrayed.

To analyze the content of the movies, the researcher has taken four units of analysis –

- (a) Holding Hands and Touching
- (b) Hugs
- (c) Kisses (kissing on lips, cheeks, neck, hand and forehead)
- (d) Intimate Scenes (Love making in bed scenes)

Holding hands and Touching – It involves all kinds of casual and intimate touching that portray some heat between the characters.

Hugs – Hugs involved are not just the simple hugs, like greeting or wishing someone, but the ones that show intimacy between the characters.

Kisses – All types of kisses are included.

Intimate scenes – Here it involves all kind of 'bed scenes'.

The researcher has taken the specific four units of analysis as these units make the most of heterosexual love stories in the cinema and television. Though kissing was not so common on Indian television entertainment shows, but it has now started to make its place. The four units of analysis are must to be there if the normalization of same sex love is to be done as one would often see these four units in any 'straight love story'.

#### 4.1.1) Analysis of Cinema Content

Name of the Movie	Holding hands and touching		Hugs		Kisses		Intimate scenes	
	Frequency	Timing	Frequency	Timing	Frequency	Timing	Frequency	Timing
Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga	2	1.)3sec 2.) 3 sec	2	1.) 1sec 2.) 7sec	0		0	
My Brother Nikhil	0		0		0		0	
Aligarh	0		0		0		0	
Margarita with a Straw	1	27 sec	0		3	1.) 14 sec 2.) 1 sec 3.) 1 sec	1	1 minute, 8 sec
Fire	0		2	1.) 12 2.) 4 sec	3	1.) 1 sec 2.) 3 sec 3.) 4 sec	2	1.) 1 min 30 sec 2.) 20 sec

**Table 1**

### ***Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga***

*Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga* is the only movie that made its place among the movies that were much talked about. It was not promoted as being a same-sex love story but as a normal love story between a man and a woman. The twist in the movie was hidden at the time of promotion as well. The story of the movie should be applauded for the emotional and mental tension that a queer goes through while he or she is growing up. Still, the story manages to depict the love and affection between the two ladies.

The two lovers held hands twice in the movie for 3 seconds each. They hugged twice, the first hug was for just one second and the second one was for 7 seconds.

### ***My Brother Nikhil***

*My Brother Nikhil* largely focused on the life of a homosexual person who was infected with HIV and how he was discarded by the society due to his disease. The gay love story angle was not focused too much but it was still able to be influential in leaving an impact.

### ***Aligarh***

Like *My Brother Nikhil*, *Aligarh* was inspired by a true story of Professor Siras, whose sexuality was used as a weapon against him in University politics. The story largely highlighted the complexities and disapproval from a society and therefore it had no affectionate scenes.

### ***Margarita with a Straw***

*Margarita with a Straw* showed the life of a bisexual girl who goes through an emotional dilemma when she finds out about her sexuality. The movie has one scene from each category mentioned by the researcher. The important thing to be noticed here is that there were two instances of love making scene – one between the two lesbian lovers and one between the heterosexual couple and the movie managed to give equal weightage to both of them. As the focus of the study is same-sex love, only one homosexual love scenes has been mentioned in the graph.

## ***Fire***

*Fire* can be said to be the boldest of all to have 3 kissing scenes, with one kissing scene lasting for 4 minutes and 2 intimate scenes (bed scenes). There were three instances where the two women held each other's hands that displayed a sense of care and support. As the two women had hopeless marriages, they hugged twice in the movie to show their care and love.

### **4.1.2) Analysis of Television Content**

There has been an increase in the level of portrayal of intimate scenes on television shows, but still kissing, hugging and love making scenes are not so common in television shows. Therefore, we see the lesser instances of such scenes on television. Only Big F was bold enough to have a kissing scene and Shakti had some romantic scenes. Saumya, the lead character in serial Shakti: Kahani Astitva ke Ehsas Ki is a transgender and is married. And, this is why, there are some romantic scenes between the two.

Name of the Television show	Holding hands		Hugs		Kisses		Intimate scenes	
	Frequency	Time	Frequency	Time	Frequency	Time	Frequency	Time
Mryada: Akhir Kab Tak			1	1.) 14 sec				
Pyar ki Ek Kahani	0		0		0		0	
Shakti: Kahani Astitva ke Ehsas Ki	0		0		0		0	
Big F	0		0		2	1.) 1 sec 2.) 2 sec	0	
Satyamev Jayata	0		0		0		0	

**Table 2**

### ***Maryada: Akhir Kab Tak***

5 episodes of season 5 (from 9-13) of the daily soap were analyzed by the research as these were the episodes when Gaurav's came out in as gay in front of his wife. Vidya, Gaurav's wife, is devastated upon finding that her husband is gay. Gaurav and Karan are very much worried about Vidya's reaction and they hug to support each other. Vidya sees them hugging and is left distressed by the act.

### ***Pyar Ki Ek Kahani***

The show had a gay storyline just to add twist to a normal going love story and therefore it did not have any intimate scene. The researcher analyzed five episodes of the serial but there was no such scene in the serial.

### ***Shakti: Kahani Astitva ke Ehsas ki***

The unique love story of an intersex and her husband still manages to find its place among the other most liked television shows. Five episodes from the month of January were analyzed and there were no romantic or love scenes from the show.

### ***Big F***

Big F presented different new stories in every episode of Big F which broadcasted on MTV. It was quite a shock when they came up with a lesbian story line and dared to show a lesbian kissing scene on the television. There were two kissing scenes in the episode – one last for just one second and the other one for 4 seconds.

### ***Satyamev Jayate***

The Amir Khan hosted show always every Sunday came up with a social issue which was widely prevalent and highly overlooked. One Sunday, the show came up with issue of sexual identity. The show lasted for 1 hour and 10 minutes and it discussed the lives of people who faced a number of difficulties in their life due to their sexual identity but they were able to overcome everything due to the family support they had. The show was largely an educational show produced to aware people and it did not have any romantic scene.

### 4.1.3) Qualitative Analysis of the Movies

The researcher has used GLAAD's Network Responsibility Index for analyzing the content of the movies and the television. The Index has four criteria:

- i. Excellent
- ii. Good
- iii. Adequate
- iv. Failing

The Vito Russo criteria has been used by the researcher to mark the label excellent, good, adequate and failing. The Vito Russo criteria has the following label:

- i. The film contains a character that is identifiably lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer.
- ii. That character must not be solely or predominantly defined by their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- iii. That character must be tied into the plot in such a way that their removal would have a significant effect.

There labeling of the cinema and streaming television content is done on the following basis:

**Excellent:** If the media content fulfills all the labels mentioned under Vito Russo Criteria.

**Good:** If it contains just two labels.

**Adequate:** If the content has just one label.

**Failing:** If it does not have any of the quality mentioned above.

Qualitative Analysis of Bollywood movies

Name of the Movies	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Failing
Fire	✓			
Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga	✓			
My Brother Nikhil	✓			
Aligarh	✓			
Margarita with a Straw	✓			

**Table 3**

All the movies that the researcher has chosen for analysis fulfill Vito Russo criteria. All of them have a central figure that is from LGBTQ community and is not largely identified by their sexuality. Also, as the member is the central figure of the movies, the entire storyline revolves around them. The best thing about these movies is that they are based on LGBT community but all of them have entirely different themes. *Fire* depicts the love and affection between two women who are emotionally devastated due to their failed marriages. *Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Lagais* about the emotional and mental complexities that a person goes through, especially at puberty age when they start to find about their sexuality. *My Brother Nikhil* is about an HIV patient who is a gay and suffers a mental torture from the society for being gay and HIV infected. Last but not least, *Margarita with a Straw* is about a bisexual person who faces emotional dilemma due to her sexuality.

#### **4.1.4) Qualitative Analysis of Streaming Television Content**

Name of the Movies	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Failing
Maryada: Akhir Kab Tak			✓	
Pyar ki Ek Kahani			✓	
Shakti: Kahani Astitva ke Ehsas ki	✓			
Big F	✓			
Satyamev Jayate	✓			

**Table 4**

Shakti: Kahani Astitva ke Ehsas ki, Big F and Satyamev Jayata completely fulfill the all the Russo Vito criteria. While Marya and Pyar ki ek kahani fail to do so as the gay story line is just a minor part of their larger story.

#### 4.2) Analysis of Survey Data

For the purpose of understanding the role of media in bringing attitudinal change among people a research survey was conducted. With Lucknow as universe and youth (from 18-30 years) as population, a sample of total 100 respondents was selected that included 50 males and 50 females. Lucknow was divided into five zones – East, West, South, North and Central. A sample of 20 respondents from each zone was selected that contributed to the data of the study.

Sample Identification

<b>Southern Lucknow</b>	20	10	10
<b>Northern Lucknow</b>	20	10	10
<b>Central Lucknow</b>	20	10	10

**Table 4**

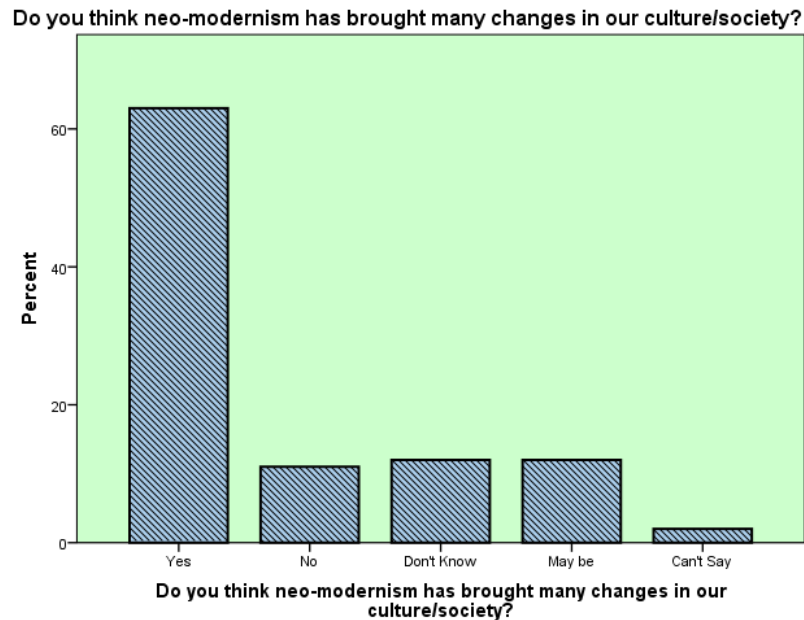
Interview schedule method of data collection was used that had 24 questions. Out of 24, 12 leading questions have been selected to summarize the survey. These 12 questions successfully bring out the role of media in bringing attitudinal change among people towards LGBTQ community.

4.1.1) Do you think neo-modernism has brought many changes in our culture/society?

The first question of the questionnaire asked about the relationship between the neo-modernism and society. 63% of the total respondents were of the view that there is a direct relationship between neo-modernism and culture and it has brought many changes in the society. 11% of the respondents didn't agree with it. 12% did not know about this while 10% were not sure.

<b>Responses in %</b>	Yes	No	Don't Know	May be	Can't say
Female	72	8	12	8	0
Male	54	14	12	16	4
Total Responses	63	11	12	12	2

**Table 5**



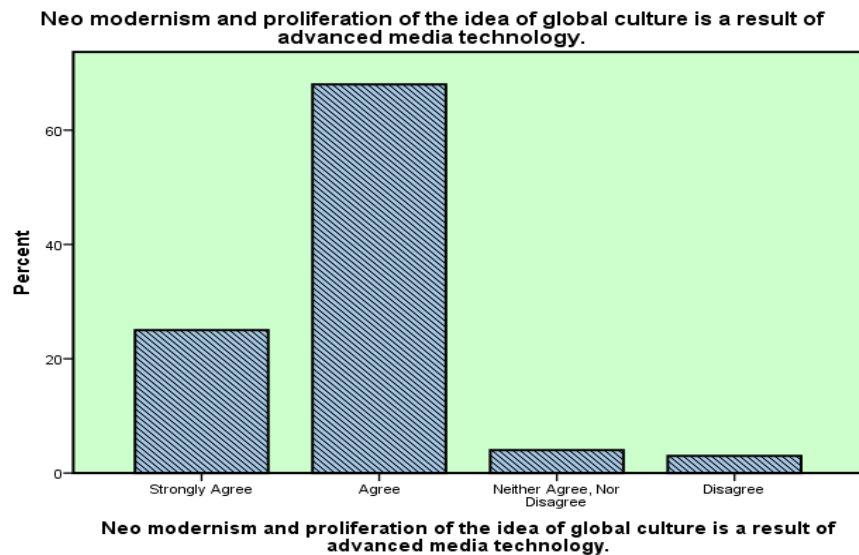
**Graph 1**

4.1.2.) Neo modernism and proliferation of the idea of global culture is a result of advanced media technology.

It will not be false to say that the attitudinal changes towards same sex love that have come among people is due to the proliferation of the idea of global culture. The respondents were here asked if global culture is the result of advance media technology then 68% agreed with it while 25% strongly agreed with it. 4% of the respondents had a neutral reaction to it while 3% disagreed. More women agreed with the statement.

<b>Responses in %</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree, Nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Female	20	74	4	2	0
Male	30	62	4	4	0
Total Response	25	68	4	3	0

**Table 6**



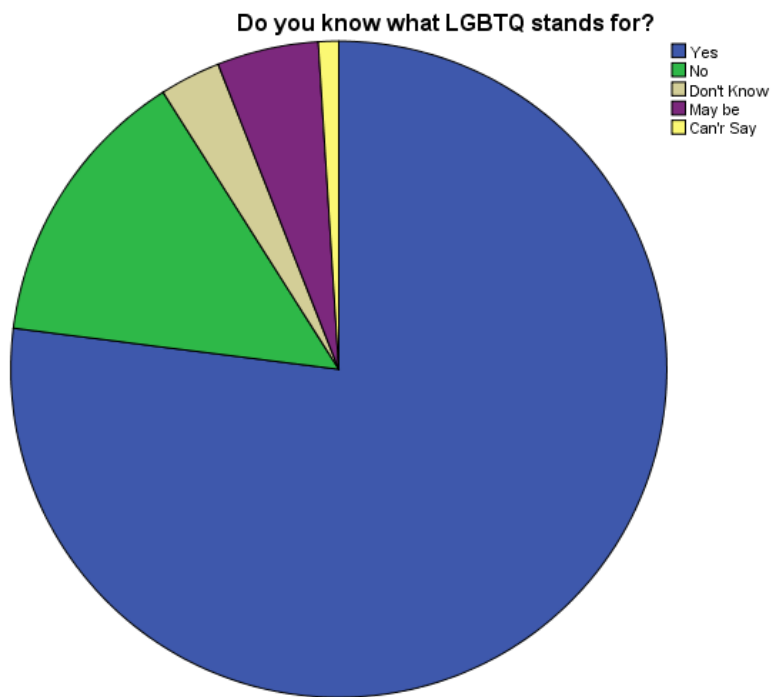
**Graph 2**

4.2.3.) Do you know what LGBTQ stands for?

Understanding the concept of LGBTQ is very much imported in order to accept it or reject it. This is why the respondents were asked if they knew about the words used for this ‘queer’ population. On the question of knowing about the full form of LGBTQ, or what this abbreviation stands for, 77% of the respondents knew about it, while other 23% did not know about it.

<b>Responses in %</b>	Yes	No	Don't Know	May be	Can't say
Female	72	16	4	8	0
Male	82	12	2	2	2
Total Responses	77	14	3	5	1

**Table 7**



**Graph 3**

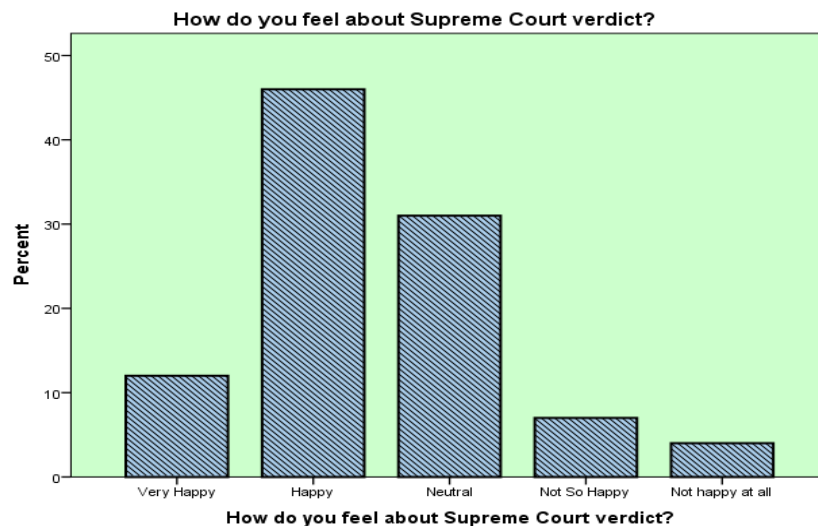
#### 4.2.4) How do you feel about SC verdict?

This question was one of the most important ones of all as it asked respondents about their feelings for this ever marginalized community. The good thing is that more than half of the respondents, around 58% had a positive attitude towards the move. Either they were happy or very happy towards the verdict. 31% of the population was neutral that is also somehow positive. 11% of the population had a negative attitude towards the verdict. 7% were not so happy while 4% were not happy at all.

The interesting thing here is that women have a more liberal mindset towards LGBTQ community. Where only 50% of men were happy with the verdict, 66% of women showed a positive response to it.

<b>Responses in %</b>	Very Happy	Happy	Neutral	Not So Happy	Not Happy at all
Female	16	50	26	4	4
Male	8	42	36	10	4
Total Responses	12	46	31	7	4

**Table 8**



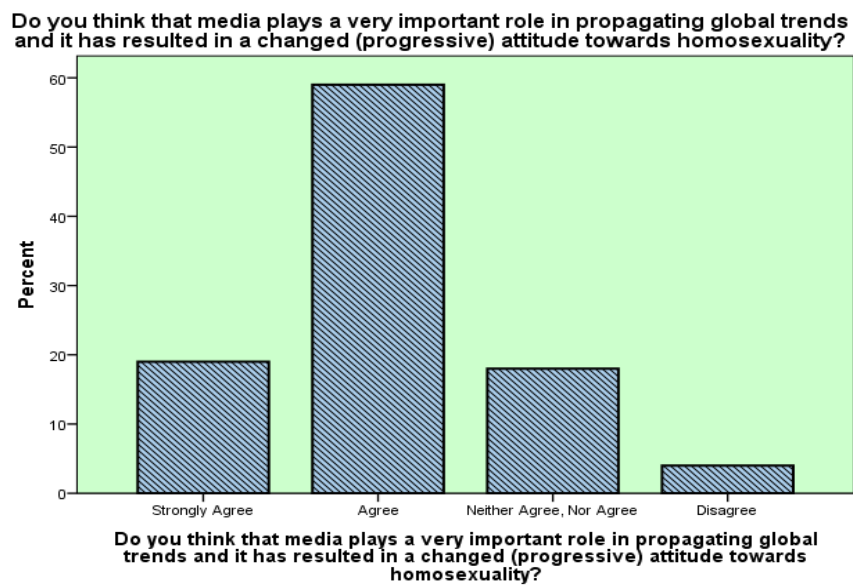
**Graph 4**

4.2.5.) Do you think that media plays a very important role in propagating global trends and it has resulted in a changed (progressive) attitude towards homosexuality?

The respondents were asked to express their opinion on the question of media's role in the propagation of changed attitude towards homosexuality. Interestingly, only 4% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. 78% of the respondents agreed and while 18% of the respondents were neutral.

<b>Responses in %</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree, Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Female	24	56	18	4	0
Male	14	62	18	6	0
Total Response	19	59	18	4	0

**Graph 9**



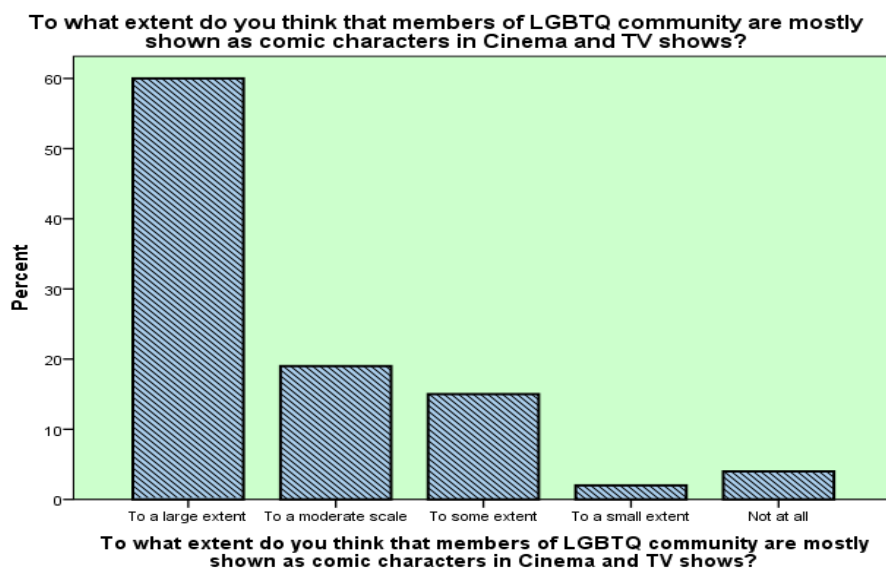
**Graph 5**

4.2.6.) To what extent has media content influenced your views on LGBTQ community?

On the question of media influence on oneself, 60% of the respondents said that their views on LGBTQ were influenced by media to a large extent. 19% of the respondents said that they were influenced to a moderate scale while 15% said that they were to some extent. Only 2% said that they were to a small scale and just 4% of the opinion that the media couldn't influence them in any way. According the data collected, women are more influenced why media and their views are shaped accordingly.

<b>Responses in %</b>	To a Large Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To Some Extent	To a Small Extent	Not at All
Female	68	10	14	2	6
Male	52	28	16	2	2
Total Response	60	19	15	2	4

**Table 10**



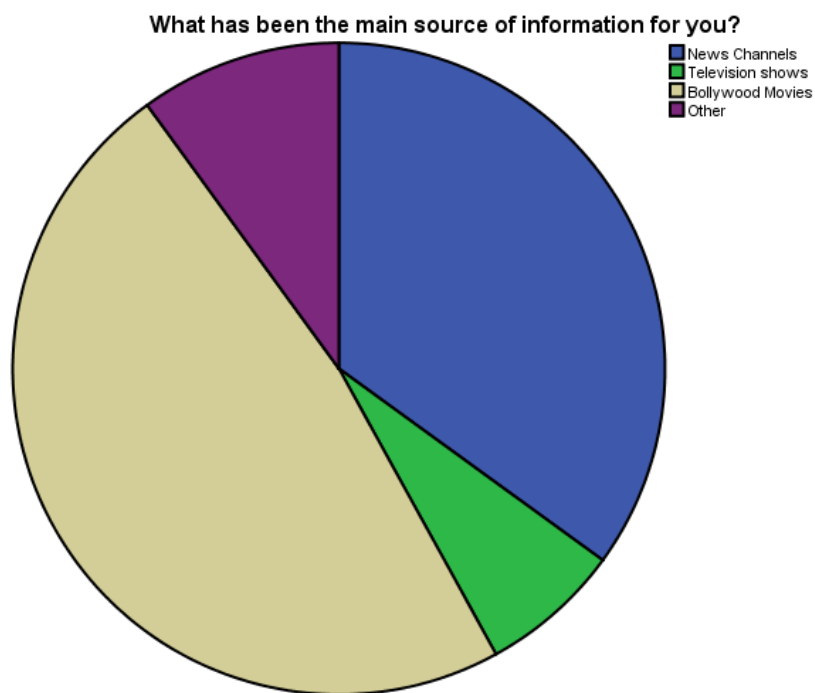
**Graph 6**

4.2.7.) What has been the main source of information for you?

Upon being asked about the main source of information, largest portion of the respondents (48%) said that they were influenced by movies. The second largest numbers (35%) were influenced by news channel content, 10% were influenced by some other media source (largely online) and a small number of respondents (7%) said that they were influenced by television shows.

Responses in %	News Channels	Television Shows	Movies	Other
Female	22	12	54	12
Male	48	2	42	8
Total Response	35	7	48	10

**Table 11**

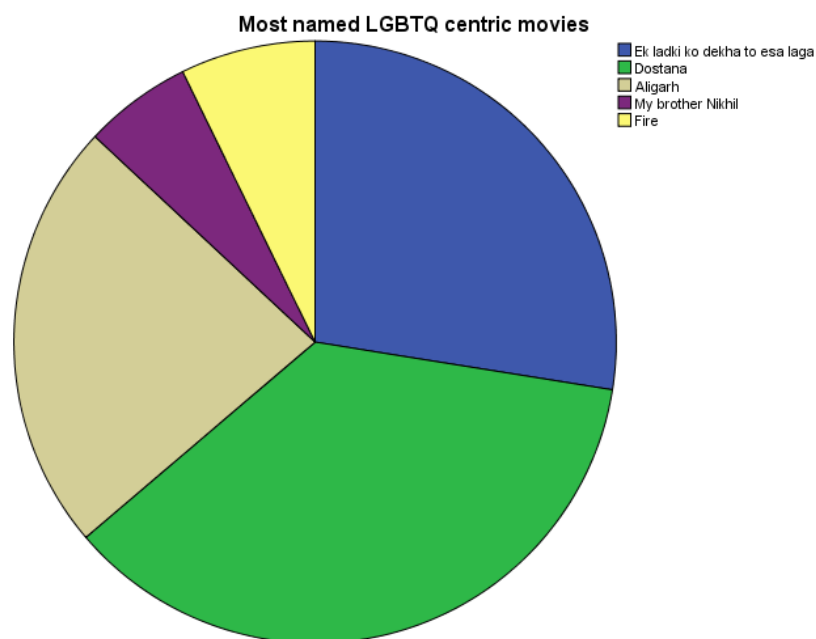


**Graph 7**

48% of respondents said that they got to learn about LGBTQ through movies. There were basically five movies that were repeatedly named by the respondents. The most named movie was *Dostana*. The movie was a comedy and did not take up the issue in the serious tone. The second most named movie was *Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga*. And the third most named movie was *Aligarh*. The two remarkable movies on the issue – *Fire* and *My Brother Nikhil* got ranked 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> respectively.

Name of the Movies	Frequency	Percentage
Ek ladki ko dekha to esa laga	19	27.5
Dostana	25	36.2
Aligarh	16	23.2
My brother Nikhil	4	5.8
Fire	5	7.2

**Table 12**



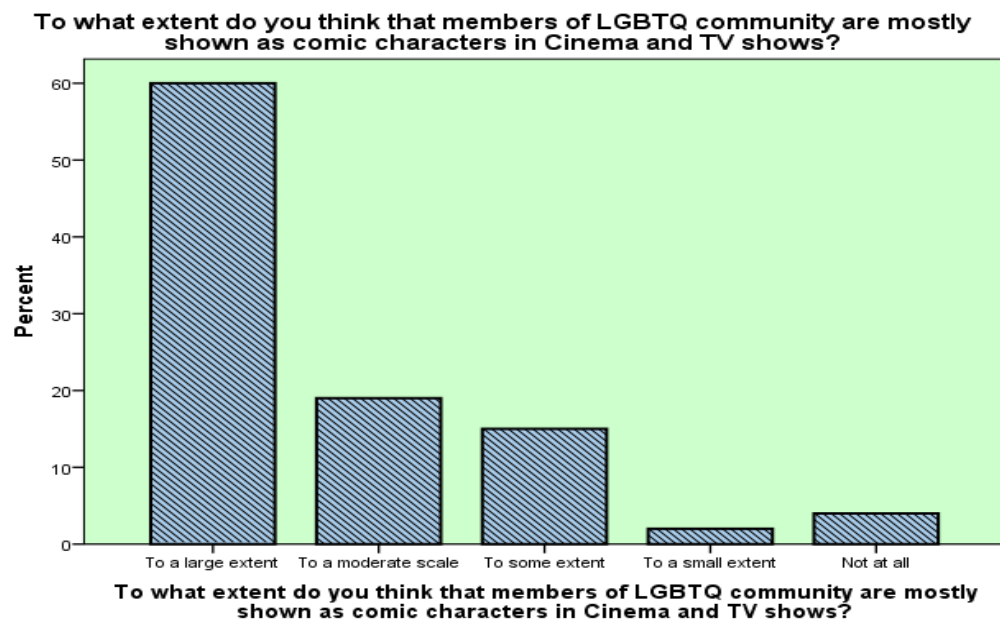
**Graph 8**

4.2.8.) To what extent do you think that members of LGBTQ community are mostly shown as comic characters in Cinema and TV shows?

This is a matter of concern as this question has been raised over and over again over the issue of kind of LGBTQ community portrayal in media. 60% of the respondents are of the opinion that the LGBTQ community members are shown as comic characters to a large scale, 19% agree with moderate scale, 15% say to some extent and 2% go with small extent. Only 4% are of the opinion that they are not shown as comic characters.

<b>Responses in %</b>	To a Large Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To Some Extent	To a Small Extent	Not at All
Female	68	10	14	2	6
Male	52	28	16	2	2
Total Response	60	19	15	2	4

**Table 14**



**Graph 9**

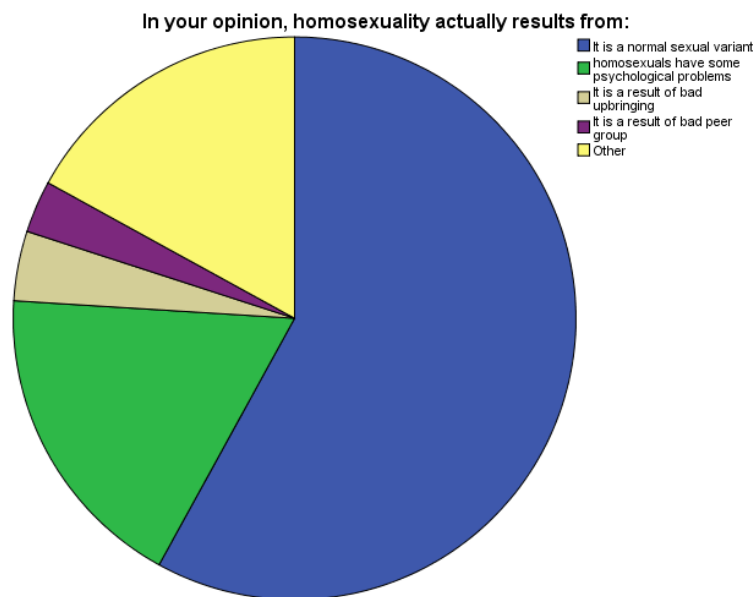
4.2.9.) In your opinion, homosexuality actually results from.

This is another important question as it establishes that what people still think of homosexuality and how they might react accordingly towards them. The interesting thing here is that equal percent of men and women (58%) agree with the fact that homosexuality is a normal sexual variant. Just 18% are of the opinion that homosexuals have some psychological problems. Again, the data shows that women have a more liberal mindset and they are also well learned.

4% of the respondents said that it is the result of bad upbringing and 3% said that it is a result of bad peer group. 17% of the respondents said that there might be some other reason to homosexuality.

<b>Responses in %</b>	It is a Normal Sexual Variant	Homosexuals have some Psychological Problems	It is the result of bad upbringing	It is a result of bad peer group	Other
Female	58	16	4	2	20
Male	58	20	4	4	14
Total Response	58	18	4	3	17

**Table 15**



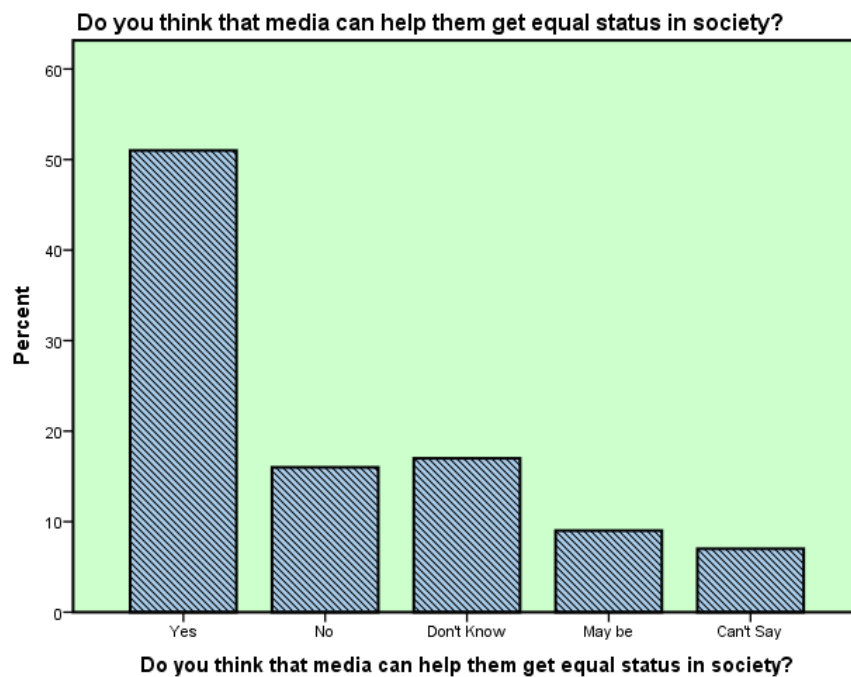
**Graph 10**

4.2.10.) Do you think that media can help them get equal status in society?

Here, around half of the respondents (51%) agreed that media can help LGBT community members get equal status in the society. Just 16% refused the role of media in helping LGBTQ members get equal status in the society, while other 33% were unclear.

<b>Responses in %</b>	Yes	No	Don't Know	May be	Can't say
Female	62	16	12	4	6
Male	40	16	22	14	8
Total Responses	51	16	17	9	7

**Table 16**



**Graph 11**

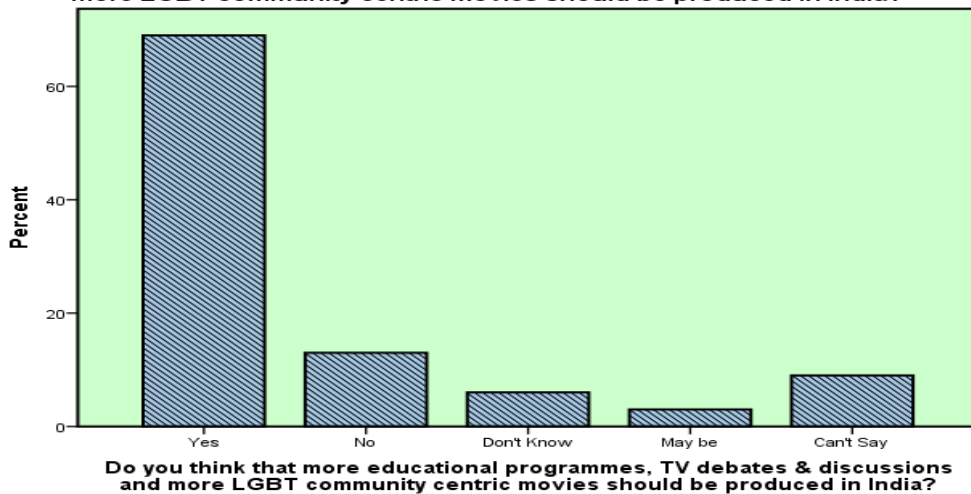
4.2.11.) Do you think that more educational programmes, TV debates & discussions and more LGBT community centric movies should be produced in India?

Women again showed their liberal mindset towards homosexuals in society. 72% of women were of the opinion that yes, more educational programmes, TV debates and discussions and more LGBT community centric movies should be produced in India. Total 69% of the respondents showed their agreement towards more production of such movies and television shows. Only 13% responded negatively to the question, while other 18% had a grey response.

<b>Responses in %</b>	Yes	No	Don't Know	May be	Can't say
Female	72	16	4	2	6
Male	66	10	8	4	12
Total Responses	69	13	6	3	9

**Table 17**

**Do you think that more educational programmes, TV debates & discussions and more LGBT community centric movies should be produced in India?**



**Graph 12**

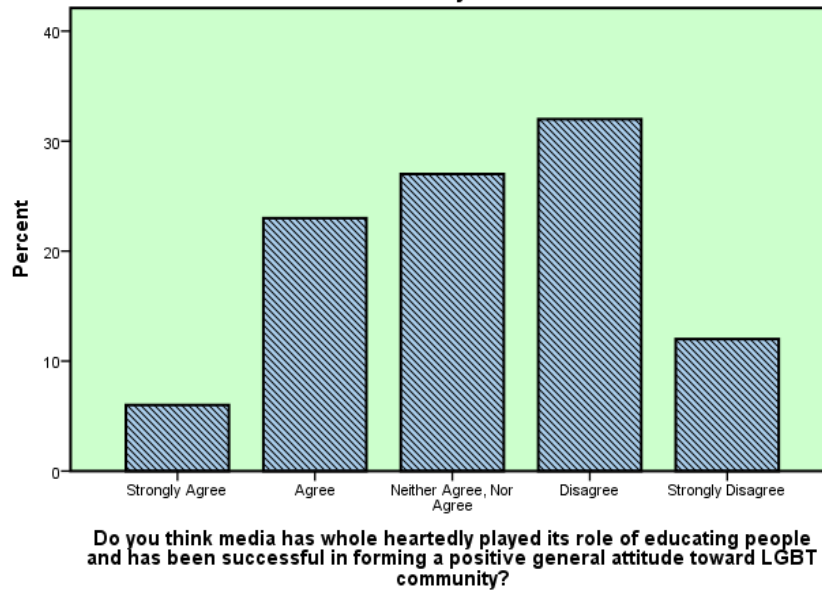
4.2.12.) Media has whole heartedly played its role of educating people and has been successful in forming a positive general attitude toward LGBT community.

Here, data collected doesn't favor the success of media in playing its role whole heartedly. Maximum number of 44% of the respondents says that media failed to its role whole heartedly in forming a positive general attitude towards homosexuality. 27% of the respondents remained neutral to the question while 29% agreed with it.

<b>Responses in %</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree, Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Female	6	22	24	36	12
Male	6	24	30	28	12
Total Response	6	23	27	32	12

**Table 18**

Do you think media has whole heartedly played its role of educating people and has been successful in forming a positive general attitude toward LGBT community?



**Graph 13**

### 4.3) Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher analyzed the content of Bollywood movies and streaming television shows. Here the researcher used both the quantitative and qualitative method of content analyses and represented the data through tabulation. Upon analyzing the content of different movies, it can be said that *Fire and Margarita with a Straw* were bold enough to have three kissing scenes each. The other three movies were not bold and did not have kissing or intimate scenes, but they did not fail to deliver the much needed message as all the movies analyzed rank ‘Excellent’ GLAAD’s Network Responsibility Index.

On the other hand, there was just one television show that was bold enough to have one lesbian kissing scene in the movie. Also, just the three shows managed to reach ‘Excellent’ level – *Big F*, *Satyamev Jayate* and *Shakti: Kahani Astitva ke Ehsas ki. Maryada...Aakhir Kab Tak* and *Pyar ki Ekk Kahani* were able to reach ‘Adequate’ level.

The chapter also analyzed the survey data through tabulation and graphs. It reviewed people’s opinion on both media and LGBT community. The results and findings of survey data will be discussed in the second chapter.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Findings, Conclusion and Suggestions**

#### Introduction

The study helped researcher to closely examine the content of Indian Cinema and broadcast television. The researcher analyzed five Indian television shows and five Bollywood movies that are based on LGBTQ community. Through the content analysis of television shows and movies, the researcher was able to determine the nature of Indian cinema and television content.

The survey conducted in the capital city of Uttar Pradesh helped the researcher to find out not only media's role in bringing attitudinal change among people towards homosexuality, but it also helped to know how people perceive media and its role towards upliftment of LGBT community.

Last chapter was about analysis and interpretation of data, this chapter contains all the findings and conclusion that the researcher was able to draw from the study. On the basis of the findings from the study, the researcher has also made some suggestions that might benefit media and LGBTQ community together. Along with the suggestions, the researcher has also mentioned the most important part of the study – the scope for future study. The researcher has discussed that how this particular study can influence and help initiate future studies.

#### **5.1) Findings of the Survey Data**

The survey that was conducted in Lucknow was able to uncover the role played by media in normalizing the same-sex relationships. The researcher used the interview schedule of data collection so that the respondents can also be observed while collecting the data. The questionnaire for schedule included 24 questions that tried to understand the thinking and views of people on homosexuality. The questions focused on the role of media and its influence on youth.

The research largely focused on the role of streaming television media and Indian Cinema. It concentrated on the role played by streaming television and Indian cinema in bringing attitudinal changes in people towards same-sex love. The findings of the research can be summed up under the following categories:

### **Youth have a progressive attitude towards same sex love**

When the respondents were asked about their views on Supreme Court verdict, 58% of them responded being either very happy or happy with the decision. 31% of the respondents were neutral with the verdict. It means that if they are not happy with the decision they are also not against it. Neutral is also a kind of positive gesture. Only 11% of the respondents were unhappy with the verdict.

### **Youth are of an opinion that media play a very important role in bringing a progressive change in attitude towards homosexuality while they also opine that media has not been able to play its role whole heartedly.**

78% of respondents were of the opinion that media has a major role to play in bringing a progressive change in attitude towards homosexuality. Just 4% of the respondents disagreed while 18% remained neutral. On the other hand, majority of 44% said that media has not played its role whole heartedly for LGBT community. Also, 29% said that media has played its role whole heartedly while rest remained neutral towards it.

### **96% of the respondents accept to be influenced by media in some way.**

60% of the respondents said their views on homosexuality got influenced by media to a large extent. 19% said they are influenced to a moderate scale, 15% said they are influenced to a small scale while 2% accepted to be influenced to a small scale. It can be said that media has proven to be successful in influencing the views of people on homosexuality to a greater extent.

### **Mainstream Bollywood movies with big stars are more popular and influential.**

People find mainstream Bollywood movies with big stars more influential. When the respondents were asked about the ‘movies’ they were mostly influenced by, people named different movies, but these five movies had the highest frequency – *Dostana*, *Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga*, *Aligarh*, *Fire* and *My Brother Nikhil*.

Going by the content of the movie, *Fire*, *My Brother Nikhil* and *Aligarh* are more touching movies with a serious tone. But as *Dostana* and *Ek Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga* have big name associated with them, they both got a lot of popularity. On the

other hand, movies like Fire and My Brother Nikhil, which have a very strong and emotional appeal, failed to grab the attention of the people.

**LGBTQ community is mostly portrayed as comic figures.**

Maximum of the respondents maintained that LGBT community is mostly shown as comic characters. 60% of the respondents are of the opinion that the LGBTQ community members are shown as comic characters to a large scale, 19% agree with moderate scale, 15% say to some extent and 2% go with small extent. Only 4% are of the opinion that they are not shown as comic characters.

**More than half of the respondents believe that homosexuality is a normal sexual variant.**

58% of the respondents believed that homosexuality is basically a normal sexual variant and there is nothing wrong with it. 18% of the respondents believed that homosexuals have some psychological problems and almost equal number of respondents (17%) believed that there are some other reasons for homosexuality. Very small per cent of respondents think that homosexuality is a result of bad upbringing or is a result of bad peer group – 4% and 3% respectively.

**Half of the respondents think that media can help LGBT community get equal status in the society.**

51% of the respondents said that media has the capacity to help LGBT community get equal status in the society. Just 16% say that media cannot help them in any way and others are not clear about it. Most of the respondents who responded positively to the question stated (in open ended questions) that media can help LGBT community by producing more LGBT-centric shows and movies.

69% of the respondents also believed that more LGBTQ centric educational TV programmes should be produced.

**Women showing a more liberal attitude.**

The survey uncovered at many stances that women have had a very positive and progressive attitude towards homosexuality. On the question of SC verdict, 66% of the women gave a positive response, while just 50% of men had a positive view.

### **3.2 Findings from the Content Analysis of Bollywood Movies and Streaming Television Content**

The researcher analyzed five television shows and five Bollywood movies that were based on LGBTQ theme. Five television shows – *Shakti – Astatitva ke Ehsaas ki, Maryada: Akhir Kab Tak, Pyar Ki Ekk Kahani, The Big F* and *Satyamev Jayate: Accepting Alternative Sexualities*. Five movies analyzed were – *Fire, My Brother Nikhil, Aligarh, Margarita with a Straw* and *Ekk Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga*. Here are the findings of analysis of Bollywood movies and broadcast television shows:

#### **Mainstream Bollywood misses it.**

It can be said that mainstream Bollywood movies are far away from a social theme like LGBT community. There are just two mainstream movies that concentrated on LGBT theme – *Dostana* and *Ekk Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga*. In the movie, both the actors show themselves as gay, in fact they are not. The movie is a comedy that takes up the issue in a light way. Still, the movie was much appreciated by the LGBT activists as it was the first time that such an effort was made. The second movie was *Ekk Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga*. *Ekk Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga* was light comedy but made a great effort in portraying the mental and emotional complexities that an LGBT member goes through their teenage.

#### **Bollywood moving towards another ‘normal’ love story**

Deepa Mehta’s *Fire*(1996) was first of its kind that showed a same sex love story. The movie faced a lot of protest from a various religious outfits in India but was still released and that too without any cuts at first. It was the beginning of something. After that, homosexuality as a theme was then picked up by many other directors and movies like *Margareta with a straw, My brother Nikhil, Girlfriend, Dostana, Angry Indian Goddesses, Aligarh* and *Ekk Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga* came in line. These movies discuss the emotional complexities of the same sex couples. Now, there is wait for the day when the homosexuality theme will become completely normal.

**Television too misses it! No television show is entirely based on a homosexual love story.**

The Indian television shows are so much busy with their Saas-Bahu drama that they miss such an important issue. There are just a few shows that bothered to include it but just as a small part of it. There is no television show that is completely based on the theme. Almost the television soaps have love stories and all the love stories are entirely 'normal' (heterosexual) in nature. There is just one daily soap, '*Shakti – Astitva ke Ehsaas ki*', that is entirely based on the story of an intersex person. Otherwise there is no such show where the side actors or supportive actors are of LGBT community.

### **Just one educational programme on same sex love and LGBT community.**

It can also be said that there is just one educational show broadcasted that made an honest effort to aware and educate the audience about a completely natural phenomenon – homosexuality. Amir Khan's *Satyamev Jayate: Accepting Alternative Sexualities* truly made a remarkable show that highlighted the complex life stories of LGBT community member who were able to live life happily only due to the support of their loved ones. The show also tried to convince the parents not to act in a complete arrogant or fuming way if they find out that their child is homosexual.

## **5.2 Answers of the Research Questions**

After Surveying hundred students and analyzing the content of movies and streaming television shows, the research was able to find out the answers to the research questions she proposed. These research questions are:

- 2 What has been the stand of media on LGBT community?
- 3 Has media been able to influence people and change their attitude towards members of LGBT community?
- 4 What is people's opinion of media when it comes to media portrayal of LGBTQ community?

### **5.2.1) What has been the stand of media on LGBT community?**

The researcher analyzed the content of streaming television and movies following both quantitative and qualitative method of content analysis. After finely analyzing the content of movies and television shows, the researcher was able to get the answer

to the very first research question. Here is what researcher found out about Indian media (Bollywood movies and streaming television content):

**5.2.1.1.**Bollywood movies has started taken the issue seriously and the movies produced would rank excellent on GLAAD's Network Responsibility Index.

**5.2.1.2.**Streaming television is also moving ahead towards a better world for LGBT community. Though they are lagging far behind Indian cinema, they are making efforts to highlight the issues of LGBT community. Out of five shows reviewed, three would ranked excellent on GLAAD's index.

**5.2.1.3.**The quantitative analysis was done to count the number of hand holding, kissing, hugging and intimate scenes. These four labels were chosen as they are very much common in any heterosexual love story. Out of five movies reviewed, two of the movies did not have any such scenes which means that cinema is making an effort by they are still away from normalizing things. Same is the case with streaming television shows. Only Big F was bold enough to have a lesbian kissing scene.

5.2.2) Has media been able to influence people and change their attitude towards members of LGBT community?

**5.2.2.2.**Yes, it will not be wrong to say that media has been able to influence people and change their attitude towards members of LGBT community.

**5.2.2.3.**60% of the respondents said that their views on LGBTQ were influenced by media to a large extent. 19% of the respondents said that they were influenced to a moderate scale while 15% said that they were to some extent. Only 2% said that they were to a small scale and just 4% of the opinion that the media couldn't influence them in any way.

**5.2.2.4.**Maximum number of the respondents (48%) said that they were influenced by movies. It can be said that cinema influences people more than other medium.

5.2.3) What is people's opinion of media when it comes to media portrayal of LGBTQ community?

**5.2.3.1** 78% of the respondents agreed with the statement that media plays a very important role in propagating global trends and it has resulted in a changed

(progressive) attitude towards homosexuality. They believe that media are wheels of change and brought about attitudinal changes in society.

**5.2.3.2.**78% of the respondents say that media has done a lot in bringing progressive attitudinal change in society. On the same hand, 60% of the respondents say that the LGBT community is mostly shown as comic characters in the movies. It means they are in the movie just to create humor.

**5.2.3.3.**Half of the respondents say that media can help LGBT community get equal status in society. 51% of the students said that media can help LGBT community get equal status in society while just 16% responded negatively. Rests were not sure about it.

**5.2.3.4.**69% of the total respondents said that more educational programs should be produced as such programs can help uplift the society.

**5.2.3.5.**The sad part of media is that people believe that media has not whole heartedly played its role of educating people and it has not been successful in forming a positive general attitude towards LGBT community. 44 % of the respondents believe that media has been unsuccessful in playing its role towards this socially marginalized community.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

After going through and analyzing Bollywood movies and television shows, it can be said that both the streams are somewhere lagging behind in the depiction of LGBT community. **60% of the respondents think that LGBT community is mostly shown as comic characters in the movies.**

Bollywood is moving ahead by producing more LGBTQ-centric movies. Recently released movie – Ekk Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga is a prove that the mainstream Bollywood is also coming forward and contributing awareness towards the community.**All the movies analyzed by the researcher rank ‘Excellent’ on GLAAD’s Network Responsibility Index.** The movie produced till now can be appreciated for their tremendous efforts for trying to depict the both emotional and social challenges the community goes through.

Fire makes commendable portrayal of same-sex love between two women who badly want to come out of their failed marriages and find love in each other. My Brother Nikhil discusses how a homosexual infected with HIV person goes through social

shame and elimination from his own parents. Aligarh tells that how a homosexual professor is socially and mentally punished for his relationship with a boy. The movie also depicts that how his sexuality is used as a weapon against him in the University politics. Margarita with a Straw successfully defines the emotional dilemma a bisexual goes through and how being loyal becomes a big issue for her. And the recently produced *Ekk Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga* beautifully and successfully explains the life of a homosexual from childhood to adulthood. The emotional scars she goes through at the age of her puberty and the social challenges she faces due to her love relationship with another girl.

Talking about the Indian television, the case is not as similar as movies. There is a lot of work to be done and efforts to be taken. There is just one television show that stands out among all – *Shakti – Astitva ke Ehsaas ki*. **Three of the five shows analyzed rank ‘Excellent’ on GLAAD’s scale while two just rank ‘Adequate’.** Or else, even if a few stories have same sex love stories, they are just a minor part of something big and that is why, television has a long way to go.

The survey conducted revealed a lot about the people’s attitude towards homosexuality and media’s effect on them. Majority of the population believe that media leave a good impact on them. **More than 90% of the respondents believed that media influenced their views in some way. And, around half of the respondents said that movies have been the main source of information for them.** People have now started to know and believe that homosexuality is a natural sexual variant and media can help them get equal status in society. **Half of the population says that media can help them get equal status in the society and 70% of the respondents say that more educational programs should be produced on homosexuality.**

#### **5.4) Suggestions**

After analyzing the content of the media and the result of the survey data, researcher has reached to some conclusions and wants to make suggestions. These suggestions are as follows:

- 5.4.1. Homosexuality should be openly discussed and more educational television shows must be produced.

- 5.4.2. More movies should be produced with homosexuality as main theme. This would help add normality to the same sex love stories. When more of such movies are produced, homosexuality will no longer be an alien to the society.
- 5.4.3. Indian cinema should stop stereotyping the community as humorous and funny. In fact, they should be portrayed as heroes. It will not only motivate the community but will also create a respectful place for them among heterosexuals.
- 5.4.4. *Ek Ladki ko Dekho* to *Esa Laga* and *Dostana* were the most watched movies. Both the movies were the big banner movies and both have big names attached to them. Therefore, the superstars of the Bollywood must come forward and be part of more of such movies.
- 5.4.5. In case if more LGBTQ centric movies cannot be produced then at least one LGBTQ character should be there in the movie who has a vital role to play in the story and is far away from stereotypes.
- 5.4.6. More educational shows like *Satyamev Jayate* (hosted by a star) must be produced as it will help in the proliferation of the idea that homosexuality is just a natural variant of human sexuality.
- 5.4.7. Educational programs, TV debates & discussions, and more LGBT-centric movies are the need of the hour and so think 69% of the respondents.
- 5.4.8. Movies produce on LGBT community mostly focus on same-sex love. There should be movies based on transgender and intersex which should try to pull them out of their stereotyped image.
- 5.4.9. Prime time slot should be given to television shows based on LGBT community.
- 5.4.10. LGBT-centric movies and shows should be promoted on a larger scale. Movies like *Ekk Ladki ko Dekha to Esa Laga* and *My Brother Nikhil* were not promoted as having homosexual theme. Promoting a movie or show for having a same-sex love story may also help normalize things.

### **5.5.) Scope for Future Studies**

Not much work has been done on the particular issue in India and that is why there can be done much on the topic. More similar studies can be conducted across the country to draw overall attitudinal change in the country. This study leaves some

suggestions and scope for future studies. This study has future scope in following ways:

5.5.1. This research work was exploratory in nature and therefore concluded with various findings. This study can be used as hypothesis for future studies. There are several new findings that can be further used as hypothesis.

5.5.2. Due to limitation of time, only youth (students) could be the unit of analysis in survey method. The future studies can focus on other professions and age group as well. For example, more focus can be given to housewife or people who are not well educated or may be professionals who do not spend much time watching movies and television shows due to their busy schedule.

5.5.3. Due to time constraints and unwillingness of people to come out as homosexuals, this research misses take of LGBT community on media. The future research can concentrate on just LGBT community.

5.5.4. Researchers aspiring to consider content analysis of media may concentrate on the comparative study between heterosexual and homosexual love stories.

## **5.6) Chapter Summary**

The content analysis of the movies and television shows prove that media has been improving in the portrayal of LGBT community. The movies reviewed have different aspects of same sex love that have been covered through different lenses in each movie. Talking about the television shows analyzed, all of them have different themes. The research was able to find answers to all the three research questions. Talking about the stand of media on LGBT, the qualitative analysis prove that movies are doing great as all the movies analyzed rank 'excellent' on GLAAD's index while television shows have some scope for improvement as two shows just rank 'adequate' on the scale.

On the question of media influence on people, the findings are positive as 60% respondents accepted that they are influenced by media on the issue of homosexuality. People's opinion of media shows an interesting finding. 78% of the respondents feel that media plays a very important role in bringing progressive attitudinal changes.

While on the other hand, 44% of the respondents say that media has not played its role whole heartedly towards the community.

The researcher has also made some suggestions in the chapter that may help media persons to make improvement in their portrayal of LGBT community and how they can increase the reach of their efforts. Under the heading 'scope for future studies', the researcher discusses the possibilities and conducts for future studies.

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## Appendix

### Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University

#### Department of Mass Communication & Journalism

#### Questionnaire (Instrument)

My name is Pooja Arya and I am an MPhil scholar at Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow. As part of my academic research, I need your valuable output on the subject of LGBTQ. The information provided by you will remain confidential and will only be used for pure academic purpose.

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Name:

Gender:

Age:

Profession:

Education:

Marital Status:

Address:

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1.) Do you think neo-modernism has brought many changes in our culture/society?

(a) Yes      (b) No      (c) Don't Know      (d) May be      (e)  
Can't Say

2.) There is a connection between neo-modernism and reflecting trends towards same-sex love.

(a) Strongly agree    (b) Agree    (c) Neither Agree, nor Disagree    (d) Disagree    (e)  
Strongly Disagree

3.) Neo modernism and proliferation of the idea of global culture is a result of advanced media technology.

(a) Strongly agree    (b) Agree    (c) Neither Agree, nor Disagree    (d) Disagree    (e)  
Strongly Disagree

4.) Global change in attitude towards same sex love and marriage is effecting Indians' view on same-sex love.

(a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Neither Agree, nor Disagree (d) Disagree (e) Strongly Disagree

5.) Do you know what LGBTQ stands for?

(a) Yes (b) No (c) Don't Know (d) May be (e) Can't Say

6.) Do you know anything about SC verdict on Section 377?

(a) Yes (b) No (c) Don't Know (d) May be (e) Can't Say

7.) How do you feel about Supreme Court verdict?

(a) Very happy (b) Happy (c) Neutral (d) Not so happy (e) Not happy at all

8.) How many hours do you spent on watching entertainment and news shows a day?

(a) Entertainment Programme

(i) 0-2 hours (ii) 2-3 hours (iii) 3-4 hours (iv) More than 4 hours

(b) News Programme

(i) 0-2 hours (ii) 2-3 hours (iii) 3-4 hours (iv) More than 4 hours

9.) How frequently do you watch Bollywood Movies?

(a) Once a week (b) Once a month (c) Occasionally (d) Rarely (e) Never

10.) Do you think that media plays a very important role in propagating global trends and it has resulted in a changed (progressive) attitude towards homosexuality?

- (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Neither Agree, nor Disagree (d) Disagree  
(e) Strongly Disagree

11.) To what extent has media content influenced your views on LGBTQ community?

- (a) To a large extent  
(b) To a moderate scale  
(c) To some extent  
(d) To a small extent  
(e) Not at all

12.) What has been the main source of information for you?

(a) News Channels (Mention name)

(b) Other entertainment programmes on television (Name them)

(c) Bollywood movies or any documentary (Name them)

(d) Other (Please mention the source)

13.) Can you recall any television show or Bollywood movie that is based on same sex love or members of LGBT community?

14.) Can you recall any popular LGBT community character shown on television or Indian cinema that left a greater impact?

15.) How frequently do you notice any news content on LGBT community?

- (a) Always (b) Very Frequently (c) Occasionally (d) Very Rarely  
(e) Never

16.) To what extent do you think that members of LGBTQ community are mostly shown as comic characters in Cinema and TV shows?

- (a) To a large extent
- (b) To a moderate scale
- (c) To some extent
- (d) To a small extent
- (e) Not at all

17.) To what extent you can agree with same sex love and marriage?

- (a) To a large extent
- (b) To a moderate scale
- (c) To some extent
- (d) To a small extent
- (e) Don't agree at all

18.) In your opinion, homosexuality actually results from:

- (a) It is a normal sexual variant
- (b) Homosexuals have some psychological problems
- (c) It is a result of bad upbringing
- (d) It a result of bad peer group
- (e) Other

19.) What will you do in a situation if you come to know that your new neighbors are a same-sex couple?

- (a) Have friendly relations with them.
- (b) Have same relations with them as you have with other neighbors.
- (c) Restrict yourself and will ignore them completely.
- (d) Will try to convince other neighbors to make a collective move to make them go away from your society.

20.) Do you think that members of LGBT community have to struggle more than others to get equal status in society?

- (a) Strongly agree
- (b) Agree
- (c) Neither Agree, nor Disagree
- (d) Disagree
- (e) Strongly Disagree

21.) Do you think that media can help them get equal status in society?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) Don't Know
- (d) May be
- (e) Can't Say

22.) If yes, how can it be possible?

23.) Do you think that more educational programmes, TV debates & discussions and more LGBT community centric movies should be produced in India?

(a) Yes      (b) No      (c) Don't Know      (d) May be      (e)  
Can't Say

24.) Do you think media has whole heartedly played its role of educating people and has been successful in forming a positive general attitude toward LGBT community?

(a) Strongly agree   (b) Agree      (c) Neither Agree, nor Disagree      (d) Disagree  
(e) Strongly Disagree