

Cinematic Transgression and Sexuality: A Study of Rituparno Ghosh's 'Queer Trilogy'

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Abstract : Films as a cultural, social practice remains a dominant space for creation and destruction of ideologies and practices which make the sociological viewing, analysis, and interpretation of the same a complex affair. It remains the doorway between the interpretations and understanding of the writer/director and the reader/viewer. India, being a multi-linguistic culture, the media plays a much intriguing role than that of newspaper, books, stories, novels or any other medium of expression. Known to be the largest democracy, the State seem to guarantee and safeguard people's choices and life of dignity through its Fundamental Rights and Directives. However, the laws contradict themselves when it comes to IPC 377 criminalizing anything except penovaginal sexual intercourse restricting alternative sexual preferences and practices questioning its sense of 'democracy.' In this context, the issue of homosexuality came up in bits and pieces through various representations in 'popular' cinema mostly with sudden references of mockery and laughter where the explicit narratives of 'queer' seemed missing. Rituparno Ghosh, an eminent film maker of Bengal, came up as the 'queer' face in Kolkata specifically through his 'queer' trilogy (Memories in March, 2010; Arekti Premer Golpo, 2010; Chitrangada: A Crowning Wish, 2012) coming out of his own closet and speaking about his own sexual choices not only through the explicit narratives in films but also in person which made these films an important point of departure in Bengali film history. A sociological reading of these films through a discourse analysis is being done with the critical questions of 'choice,' 'freedom,' 'love and marriage' and most importantly the 'change.' This study not only focuses on the films and its analysis of content but also to engage with its audience, queer and not in order to extend beyond the art form into the actual vulnerabilities of life and experiences through informal interviews, focused group discussions and engaging with the real life narratives. A research of this kind is always looked upon as a medium of change hoping for a better world wiping away the discrimination and 'shame' the 'queer' faces in their everyday life, but a social science research is limited but its 'time' and academic boundary where the hope of change might be initiated but not fulfilled. The experiences and reflections of the 'queer' not only redefined the narratives of the films but also me as a researcher. The perspectives of the 'hetero-normative' informants gave a broader picture of the study and the socio-cultural complications that are intrigued with the ideas of resistance and change. The issues on subjectivity, power, and position couldn't be wiped out in a study of this kind as both politics and aesthetics become integrated with each other in the creation of any art form be it films or a study of research.

Keywords : cinema, alternative sexualities, narratives, sexual choices, state and society

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