

THE OVERLAPPING OF SPATIAL DYNAMICS, GAME OF CRICKET AND NECROPOLITICS IN *BOL*

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Before delving into any detailed discussion on Transgender Cinema, it is imperative to understand the context in which we aim to locate the prefix 'trans'. Drawing upon the noted transgender cinema critic, Wibke Straube, here in this article the trans is used not as a noun but as a verb which means transing. To quote his words: "Using trans as a verb also introduces Donna Haraway's critique of fixed, bounded categories...through her investment in 'getting at the world as a verb which throws us into worlds in the making' (Haraway 2004: 330). Transing is a worlding, it makes new meaning, opens up the reading to multiple meanings (Dyer 2013: 2) and ultimately generates possibilities to imagine alternate worlds. Following Haraway's intervention on 'worlding', transing as a reading strategy for Trans Cinema becomes a term that allows processuality, the constant becoming and changing in the practices of embodiment" (41).

Since the primary focus of this article is on the consumption of the trans-cinema by the non-static spectator (who in term participates and reorients the meaning of the trans-identity), therefore the mobile and fluid meaning of the term 'trans' needs to be understood in that light as well. Secondly, since transgender studies largely draw upon queer theories, cultural studies, sexuality and gender studies and also to some extent trans-feminism, therefore to catalogue trans not as a monolithic and linear term but as a circular and proteus in nature is all the more imperative. Though *hijras* at one level due to the very distant cultural codes are quite different from the global trans identities yet there are multiple overlaps and because of the ever dynamic and multi-layered interpretation of transgender existence, they definitely have lot of common intersecting zones and shared concerns with transgenders. Indeed, there is a risk that *hijras* can be subsumed by the Eurocentric transgender entities if their issues are addressed synonymously with transgenders. But

despite the differences, there is also a lot of overlapping between trans lives and *hijras* and that cannot be ignored. Talking about this sort of risk, Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura state: “It concerns, and it would acknowledge, that the relationship between highly mobile medicalized categories such as ‘transsexual’ and culturally specific terms that tend to travel shorter distances, is not a monolithic one in which the purity of an ethnic practice is polluted and diminished by the introduction of a standardized modern import; culture makes their own uses of those things that find their way to them. We also think it must concern itself with how various local phenomena imagine their own relationship to those things that ‘transgender’ accomplishes locally and globally—whether ‘transgender’ is experienced as a form of colonization, as an avenue for alliance building or resource development, as a way of resisting local pressures, as an empowering new frame of reference, as an erasure of cultural specificity, as a counter modernity, as an alternative to tradition, or as a mode of survival and translation for traditional cultural forms that are unintelligible within the conceptual double binary of man/woman and homo/hetero associated with the modern west” (9-10). Thus, an ingenious method of mixing of trans lives and *hijra* entities is required to create that third space where the unique cultural dispositions of *hijras* are not compromised and yet useful linkages are built between *hijras* and transgenders. That is why I have used the cross reference of *The Crying Game*, a cult trans movie, while cataloguing cricket as a metaphor to negotiate gender and sexual deviancy.

In the West, the trans movies have wide range of variety in terms of having elements of melodrama, romantic comedy and tragicomedy. There are also instances of Western trans movies falling into the realm of road movies, martial art, coming-of-age movies, thrillers and musicals but most of the *hijra* movies borders on the melodrama genre. Surprisingly *Tammaana*, *Daayraa* and *Bol* are about male *hijra* protagonists which is a remarkable variety considering the fact that in the West where Trans Cinema was revamped as early as in 1990s, we have just a few examples of male transgenders, like *Boys Don't Cry* (1991), *Romeos* (2011), *Orlando* (1992), *Hook or by Crook* (2001), *Open* (2010) and *52 Tuesdays* (2013). Apropos of this, Straube states that “even though trans masculinity has been more present in cinematic representations during the last 20 years, it remains small as compared to the larger range of trans feminine representations... The comparably smaller number of films featuring trans male characters is also accompanied by different forms of plot

construction and narrative tension in these films. In films in which the trans male character is grown up, the character(s) are most often exposed to sexualised violence enacted by cis male characters and contextualised through the passing and the failing to pass of this character (*Romeos, Boys Don't Cry, Tomboy*), featuring a child character, closely links its character to a continuous fear of being discovered as passing and for the “knowing entrants” this directly links to the fear that the character will become a victim of (sexualised) violence” (38).

Yet another significant aspect of the Trans Cinema is that it works on the framework of fear and impending dangers. In fact, Jonathan Williams, in his interview-based study *Trans Cinema, Trans Viewers* (2012), has emphatically talked about the impending feeling of risk and danger that surrounds the absorption of Trans Cinema by the spectators. He talks about as how it gives impetus to the “collective risk management strategies” (115). Quoting Williams, Wibke Straube states that “in this context, the respondents’ risk management strategies include the altering of behaviour, the avoidance of particular spaces and areas, attempting to pass as cis, trying to become unnoticeable, and avoiding flirting with strangers. In addition to this, the queer film scholar Julianne Pidduck argues on violence in trans films, particularly in relation to *Boys Don't Cry*, that “[a]ctual attacks, threats and near misses, a familiarity with the continuum of hatred and violence, can intensify the disturbing recognition (‘that could have been me’) of watching such an event” (45). And it refers to both sexualized and non-sexualized violence. Little wonder that the *hijra* movies, *Bol*, *Darmiyaan* and *Shabnam Mousi* are saturated with these sexualized and non-sexualized violence and the consequent risk management strategies which include a specific strategy of being a male *hijra* instead of a female one. The *hijra* protagonists like Tikku, Immi, and Saffi are primarily shown as males and the scenes in which they are dressed as females, they are subjected to violence and consequently they go back to the male attire. The *hijra* movies of India in this context are specific as unlike their western counterpart, these cinematic spaces are saturated with trans-masculinities. This lack of trans masculinities have been succinctly charted out by both Jan Wickman and Wibke Straube. They also talk about the complete absence of the trans embodiments that are neither male nor female. Wibke states: “Interestingly, trans embodiments that are explicitly neither female nor male-identified (stated through dialogue or direct positioning) are fully absent in feature-length fiction films. This area of trans male/female/gender disidentifying representation in

cinema, the imbalance of representational frequency and the forms of representation of these differently gendered positions have so far not been addressed within queer and trans studies” (39). In this light the cinematic representation of *hijras* is quite progressive and fills this gap beautifully. *Hijras*, by dint of their very identity position, are neither men nor women and bridge this fissure of trans person who is neither man nor woman, and solve the issue of gender disidentifying representations in cinema as raised by the noted western critics like Jan Wickman and Wibke Straube.

Spatial Dynamics and Trans-identity

Before delving into a detailed discussion on *Bol*, let me briefly sketch the outline of the plot of this movie. The story of *Bol* revolves around a male patriarch who in his desire of having a male child makes his wife pregnant again even after having 14 daughters and this time a *hijra* is born. The father wants to kill him/her but the mother rejects the idea vehemently and then a *hijra* known in a Muslim community as *khusro* comes and wants that child. On being spurned for being a *hijra*, he uses the tool of inversion and asserts that s/he will come with five hundred naked *khusros* in front of the patriarch's home and then they will curse him which can be really ominous. Thus, by using the same naked body that is a means of subjugation, they are able to revert power and justify what Foucault states that power elicits its own origin. The father beats his wife and compels her to keep on producing children and confines the women of the home inside the four walls. No education has been given to them. Due to the large family they suffer from penury and finally they are forced to send Saffi (the trans-boy) to work where he gets raped. In order to find work, Saffi tries to get associated with *hijras* that enraged his/her father so much that he kills the trans boy. Though the father goes to a prostitute and produces a daughter from her but kills the poor *hijra* child in the name of honour killing. Finally, the eldest daughter annihilates patriarchy by killing the father and is sent to jail. She narrates her plight just before she is about to be hanged. This scene is indicative of the deep-rooted patriarchy of the society. In this scene, a woman who has been convicted of a murder narrates her side of the story inside the confines of a jail. It is symbolic of the fact that any kind of narration against the patriarchy is possible only within the bounds of the spatial confinement. However the film ends on a happy note as she gets acquitted and opens a restaurant and the family lives in a much empowered state without the patriarch though the poor trans-boy has been sacrificed in the process.

The seclusion of Saffi (the hijra boy) starts early on. When it comes to the naming of the child, the father states that “he is not going to be educated in a school, so why to give him any name”? It, thus, points towards the emergence of a nameless trans-identity who is neither recognized by the family nor by the state. Saffi used to stay at a secluded room on the roof. In older cities, roof specially presents a very interesting intersection of private and public space because roof is a part of the home yet it is outside the home and in old *mohallas* the roofs are inter-connected. In this movie also, the roof of Saffi’s home is connected with the roofs of the other homes too and thus presents an interesting liminal space between the public and the private. And non-normative desires, entities and things that cannot find space in normative household are generally discarded at roof as like roof they are part of the home and yet not part of it. Generally as Griselda Pollock contends that the heterosexualized public spaces are encoded as masculine while the domestic domains are conceptualized as feminine. Thus, in this sense also the roof becomes an ideal space for the exploration of the liminal identity of Saffi and it throws an interesting light on the gendered organization of the urban spaces. However, it does not pose any challenge to the stereotypical spatial relations.

Safi’s initial oppression comes in the form of sexual subjugation inside the home by the very trusted teacher who is supposed to evolve him. This whole metaphor of fear and consequently the safety issues are negotiated through keeping gender minorities in the safe confines of the private spaces, specially at a particular time. Saffi’s sexual exploitation takes place within the safe confines of the home and he even gets severe thrashing by his own father because of it, despite being a victim of sexual violence. This bursts the myth that private spaces are safe and one gets victimized only by an outsider. Moreover, there is sufficient data available to indicate otherwise. This ‘constraining scene’ is immediately followed by ‘exit scapes’ (term used by Wibke Straube in *Trans Cinema and its Exit Scapes: A Transfeminist Reading of Utopian Sensibility and Gender Dissidence in Contemporary Film*) in the form of song and dance sequence which once again shows Saffi’s mobility in the courtyard and *aangan* only. Courtyard is once again an interesting intersection between the public and the private sphere as it is inside the home where a lot of collective activities like washing, at times cooking, grinding spices and even playing and chatting among the family members of the household take place but it can be viewed by the people of the other households as well because it is an uncovered open space.

The liberal neighbours of these girls are shown asking them: “*chat*

per jaakar mauj mela kar (go and have fun at roof)". Throughout the movie, there are scenes where the female bonding takes place at roof especially through the exchange of food. But roof has not been shown as a gender excluded space only, as evolved and non-patriarchal men also occupy it. In one of the scenes, another man from the next household shouts: "*ye mauz mela khatam kar do police aa rahi hai*" (stop this enjoyment as the police is about to come) as soon as the patriarch of the household enters the home. All the non-normative relations like the two love-birds singing together also take place on the roof only. The negotiation of non-normative sexual leanings on *chat* or roof is indicative of the homoerotic spaces hidden within the heterosexual matrix. It also postulates the idea that there is a possibility of a third space where homo and hetero desires can co-exist without any antagonism. There is a scene where Murataza, Saffi's sister (who is Murataza's love interest), and Saffi are there on the roof. The romantic rendezvous between Murataza and Saffi's sister takes place and Saffi looks at Murataza with the passionate intensity of a lover and this whole scene gets unfolded within the confines of the roof.

This movie is also remarkable for its delineation of the poignant situation of gender minorities and how significant linkages can be built between feminism and trans identities, and I am documenting few scenes in this regard. In the scene where the eldest daughter deliberately takes mother to get operated so that no more children should be there in an already poor household, the father's treatment of wife as a children-producing machine is conspicuous. The daughter remarks: "I wish, I become God and ask every man to give birth to at least one child so that they know what it takes". Thus, the myth of the glorified notion of motherhood (which at times results in the consequent valorization of motherhood without taking into account the burden and the hazardous effects of it on health) bursts here. When the father tries to strangle the daughter, she finds a solace in brother Saffi's arms on roof (again the spatial dynamism of roof is quite conspicuous here) and this scene beautifully illustrates the idea of coalition politics between *hijra* Saffi and his sister against the oppression of a patriarch father.

Art as a means of liberation also finds manifestation on the roof. In this connection the song that is being sung by the two lovers on a roof and Saffi's painting that has been drawn once again on roof further establish it as a site of liberation. *Bol* bears a close semblance with global trans cinema like *Ma vie en Rose*. Also the dance scene bears a close parallel with the scene where Ludo and his grandmother

dance together in *Ma vie en Rose*. Saffi, along with his sisters and neighbours, claps, watches them, moves rhythmically and forms a flow through shared looks, clap and rhythmic movements. This provides 'exit scape' and evokes a sense of liberation in otherwise gloomy Saffi.

However the use of the roof as a site to transgress the heteronorm is not new and one can find the inter-textual references in many literary texts that depict same-sex love ceaselessly such as in the works of the writers like Mridula Khosy ("Such a Big Girl"), Geetanjali Shree (*Tirohit*) and Suroopa Mukherjee (*Across the Mystic Shore*) and a detailed discussion of it can be found in my book, *LGBTQ Identities in Modern Indian Literature*.

In this way, the spatial dynamics of roof in reimagining and reinvesting the gender and sexual identities has been effectively used by the creators of the movie *Bol*. Little wonder that in *Bol* all affirmative transgressive actions and desires, be it singing, playing cricket, love glances of Saffi, food exchange between the neighbours, discussion of secret marriage between the two lovers, murder of a patriarch and the escape of women, take place on the roof only. Saffi's non-acceptance at a public place is visible from the fact that the moment he steps out of his home for work, he has been mutilated at that space and the only safe refuge for him remains (that is too only temporarily as he has been ultimately killed there) the liminal space of the roof. In this connection, Anne Enke asserts that "social spaces that depend on identity categories—as most do—are constituted through the constant surveillance and policing of those within. The presence of 'difference' from the operative identity category is simultaneously invoked and erased: social spaces suggest that all people within them *pass as really being* members of the social category that the space thereby helps to produce. Thus, normative social spaces are structured around the presumed absence of the disabled, queer, trans, and other marginalized subjects, which is to say that such spaces inscribe exclusion" (243).

Cricket as a Metaphor to Blur the Gender and Sexual Boundaries

In an interesting scene, the grown up Saffi is shown playing cricket with sisters though in the bounded confines of the roof. Cricket is considered a highly masculine game and bears a metaphor of various significances. In the cultural psyche, it has been crystalised as a panacea for lot of problems. Quoting Robert Foster, Boria Majumdar,

in “Opiate of the Masses or One in a Billion: Trying to Unravel the Indian Sporting Mystery”, highlights the metonymic significance of cricket as a vehicle for transcending identity crisis. He talks about it primarily in terms of diasporic global Indian who wishes to have a sense of rooted identity but it can be true of other identitarian crisis as well. To quote his words: “Cricket in India is no longer a vehicle for merely imagining the nation, but has become one by which to transcend the nation—to escape the troubled country, even through a form of ‘imagined cosmopolitan’. Foster says that such imagining conjures a utopian vision for the future, one where... an Indian, can engage with the world on a level playing field. In India, however, cricket provides far more than an opportunity for imagination. The sport allows post-colonial India to assert itself on the world stage. For a short while, India’s craze for cricket succeeded in hiding the grim realities confronting many of the region’s countries, particularly with regards to poverty” (246). Thus, the scene where the camera focuses on a caged bird and then shifts to Saffi playing with his sisters is of great significance as cricket is not only used as fantasy laden tool to transcend the miseries related to identities but also as a sign of highly masculine world. Apropos of this quoting Deborah L. Brake and Connell, Radhika Gupta states, “Sports plays a key role in creating and maintaining conceptions of hegemonic masculinity. Boys and men have long used sports as a way to achieve a hetero masculine identity. An important aspect of hegemonic masculinity is defining masculinity as ‘not feminine’” (105). Thus, this highly masculine game played by the two gender minorities, women and *hijra* Saffi, works as a subversive tool against patriarchy. Similarly, later the narrator tells as how most of the women of the household seem to be interested in cricket. When the patriarch of the house was listening to a radio commentary, in the middle of the conversation, the two girls accused each other of having a crush on Tendulkar and Afridi respectively, the father yelled “*in ladikoyn ne cricket mein bhi bahayai dhoond li*”. It confirms the transcending nature of cricket in the sub-continent. This scene is immediately followed by the elder sister’s bitter reaction that in a home like this, where even breathing is regulated by the father, the only way to escape is to pray that his favourite team wins. When his team loses, hell breaks loose at home and he states that since these wicked women had not prayed properly, his team had lost the game. This is followed by an argument on the team’s performance, which further escalates the crisis finally resulting into cricketing discussion being a means to counter masculine subjugation. In the Asian subcontinent, the game of cricket is hugely associated with a gendered nationalism, and patriotism is primarily

considered a man's domain. This collective masculine kind of sports patriotism as reflected through cricket is deeply entrenched in both Indian and Pakistani citizens. The sports writers like Sharda Ugra has constantly talked about cricket being a barometer of national pride and self-worth to the extent that it assumes the role of fantasy laden means to mitigate and divert attention from other pressing concerns like dismal economy. Prashant Kidambi in *Hero, Celebrity and Icon: Sachin Tendulkar and Indian Public Culture* talks about the fact that cricket is seen as a symbol of nation itself to the extent that a victory in a cricket match is seen as a national triumph and defeat as a national calamity.

Thus, the overlapping of masculine patriotism with cricket evokes the issue of legitimate citizenship rights too, though in a symbolic fashion. This provides a legitimate kind of citizenship rights to men primarily through sports patriotism. Thus, it is not a monolithic unidimensional issue of simple marginalization of women and trans identities in sports but has a more sinister agenda of forging a profound claim on nation through masculine sports patriotism. Hence, relegating the role of women and trans identities to mere spectators, cheer-leaders and presenters just to add the glamour quotient is just tokens. It further assigns the role of mere 'helpers' to every gender other than the male one. This kind of inclusion is indubitably counter-productive, especially in the wake of the fact that cricket is indeed seen as one of the sites where nationalism is shaped. Another important factor is that the miniscule roles women play in cricket are also policed whether they are presenters, spectators or cheer-leaders. Quoting Mudgal, Shamik Bag, Kanishk Tharoor and Rohini Iyer, Radhika Gupta argues (though written in the context of Indian women but it is equally true of Pakistani women too) that:

While many women in cricket retain agency, female only cheerleading objectifies women, detracts from women players, and reinforces gender stereotypes. Further hiring predominantly white and foreign women reinforces Indian perceptions both of the sanctity of Indian womanhood and promiscuousness of foreign women. At the same time, the largest opposition to cheer-leading has been based on its foreignness to cricketing culture being vulgar and indecent and contrary to the Indian culture. These objections ...reflect a denial of women's agency by not taking into account views of either cheer-leaders or women spectators (102).

The above-mentioned scene of *Bol*, where the two sisters talk about their crushes on the male cricketers, the father objects to it vehemently and yells that they have found a means to be shameless even in cricket. It is indicative of the policing of the female spectator

by a patriarch. Using cricket as space of cultural imperialism and patriarchal subjugation is quite evident here. Thus, even the spectatorship is not gender blind forget about the playing. Not only the active participation in terms of playing but also the passive participation in terms of spectatorship and ways of consuming it will be negotiated via a male spectator and a player as it is considered to be a male only domain primarily. Mariah Burton Nelson effectively postulates in this connection that “[s]ports is a women’s issue because female participation empowers women thereby inexorably changing everything” (9). In this light, *hijra* Saffi’s playing of cricket along with his sisters where the hero is a male spectator clearly reverses the paradigm.

The game of cricket as a tool to negotiate the convoluted trans-identities has been effectively portrayed in yet another movie entitled *The Crying Game* and just like *Bol*, it also uses cricket as a metaphor to destabilize the binaries of class, race and gender. In fact the symbiotic relationship between the game of cricket and identity has been catalogued in the editorial of *The Guardian*. The constructed notions of masculinity (hence a kind of a gender construct), identity and nationalism all brought together through the metonymic signifier of the cricket have been described effectively in the editorial of *The Guardian* through these words:

Imperial cricket metaphors have a long history, even before Henry Newbolt cemented the association with his call to play up and play the game whether on the school cricket field or in the sands of the desert sodden red. But the connection has endured. ‘They played the game,’ says the inscription at the Oval below the names of the Surrey players who fell in the first world war, while in 1942, General Montgomery urged his soldiers in North America to ‘hit Rammel to six’. Politics, like war, sometimes reaches for a handy cricket metaphor. Sir Geoffrey Howe’s resignation speech in 1990 complained that Margret Thatcher’s anti Europe views left ministers feeling ‘their bats have been broken before the game.

(<http://www.theguardian.com/commensfree/2013/jun/28/unthinkable-cricket-metaphors-editorial>).

The gender and sexual politics also bear the oppression caused by the imperial metaphor of cricket as till very late it has come to signify a game by the powerful and for the powerful. In this connection, another trans movie, *The Crying Game*, also lays bare the intricate web of gender, nationalism and cricket. This movie is about an IRA (Irish Revolutionary Army) fighter Fergus who believes in the cause of Ireland’s fight for freedom from England and captures a

black soldier, Jody who has played for his native country as a bowler but ever since he has joined the British army, he can no longer be associated with the national team of his country. Since in an oblique fashion national games and patriotism have a potent overlap and the game of cricket has been seen as a universal marker of Englishness, therefore it works as a powerful signifier for postcolonial and colonial undecidability as has been effectively used by various film-makers and writers. In this regard, it is pertinent to quote Eila Rantonen's words:

National sports have traditionally been powerful symbols of patriotic sentiments and national identity. They can even be seen as 'tamed' versions of national struggles. Fergus and Jody also talk in the IRA's hideout about the British and Irish national sports, cricket and hurling... Cricket is an international marker of Englishness. On the other hand, hurling is a traditional marker of Irishness. For instance, British or Protestant players have not been accepted in hurling teams in Northern Ireland. In *The Crying Game* cricket becomes a central symbol in the film when we are shown montages of Jody bowling a ball on a cricket pitch in his white clothing. In fact, the status of cricket reflects postcolonial irony. Today cricket can also be described, as Jody does, 'as the black man's game', since cricket is very popular in the Commonwealth. England, for instance has often beaten by the West Indies team.

(<https://www15.uta.fi/kirjasto/nelli/verkkoaineistot/yht/rantonen.pdf>).

The choice of games by these two characters works as an emblem of national identity in a very interesting way, especially when it intersects with the gender fluidity of Dil and Saffi. Sports is a world saturated with masculine bonding and no wonder the two arch enemies, Jody and Fergus, bond over their national games and create fissures in their racial identities that further escalate into creating ruptures into the queer identity of Dil. Aspasia Kotsopoulos and Josephine Mills in "The Crying Game: Gender, Genre and 'Postfeminism'" contend that "the choice of these games is significant because each is representative of a national identity and reinforces other differences between the two men that distracts from their differences in race. Jody's black masculinity would be too threatening if that were all that attracted Fergus. Cricket, as a sign works like Dil's ambiguous gender to provide distractions from blackness and still allow race to function as a 'spice'." (<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC39folder/CryingGameK-M.html>).

However, *Bol*, the *hijra* movie, makes a radical shift when the game of cricket is used to negotiate the trans identity. In *Bol*, Saffi is shown actively playing cricket and dismantling the exclusive

masculine identity associated with this game. However, in *The Crying Game*, the transsexual Dil is not shown actively playing the game and appropriating the masculine territory by redefining the game through playing and measuring it up to her trans identity. In fact, she has been just used as a tool to ward off attention from the latent homoerotic desire that seems to grow between the two men bonded over the game of cricket. Dil is shown in loose-fitted cricket attire only as a reminder of Jody. Every time when Fergus makes love to Dil, Jody is being shown in the background wearing white cricketing gear and throwing a ball of cricket. Thus, the trans-identity and the masculine game of cricket do have a connection but primarily it is being treated as a symbol for the homoerotic bonding between the two male protagonists Fergus and Jody. Contrary to this in *Bol*, the appropriation of the game of cricket through trans identity takes place without any male intervention. It is significant to quote Kotsopoulos and Josephine Mills:

Dil plays the woman's role in this boyhood world of games. She is not one of the active men, one of the guys on team. For added emphasis, her unnaturalness in Jody's cricket clothes proves this because they are too big and obviously do not suit her. Instead, she is one of the girls who facilitate male bonding. As in traditional war movies, Jody shows his new buddy Fergus a photo of his one true gal waiting back home. Dil serves as the buffer between male homoerotic desire: Jody and Fergus can talk about sex and love without having to talk about themselves, and Fergus can sublimate his impossible desire for Jody by pursuing Dil (<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinesays/JC39folder/CryingGameK-M.html>).

Moreover, it is also linked with gender undecidability as catalogued in the movies, *Bol* and *The Crying Game*. This is evident from the two scenes; first, *hijra* Saffi's playing of the masculine game of cricket with his *burka* wearing Muslim sisters and secondly in *The Crying Game* every time Fergus makes love to Jody's transgender girlfriend, Dil, he has been hallucinating of Jody throwing a ball at him in white gears. In fact, when Fergus accidentally falls madly in love with Dil and wants to hide her from IRA soldiers, he dresses her in a cricket dress. Thus, cricket as a layered and convoluted symbol which is capable of creating fissures in the stringent boundaries of race and gender has been used conclusively in these cinematic texts.

Trans-Citizenship and Necropolitics

The sexual violence and the issues of safety of a trans person outside and within the household find manifestation in a quite concrete

fashion in this movie. Saffi's efforts to find work outside home result in his horrible rape which ultimately ends in his murder by his father in the name of family honour. Also, this scene is specially important from the perspective of the trans body's contribution to the domestic economy and nation-building by being a viable economic subject and productive body. Hence, the projection of gender variants as 'working body' is imperative. According to Dan Irving:

Constructions of transsexuals as viable social subjects by medical experts, transsexual individuals, researchers and allies were, and continue to be, shaped significantly by discourses of productivity emerging from and reinforcing regimes of capitalist accumulation. To move towards achieving social recognition, the transsexual body must constitute a productive working body, that is, it must be capable of participating in capitalist production process. This legacy impacts the trajectories of political organizing to achieve social justice for trans communities (16-17).

This entire scene is saturated with Saffi's efforts to do his work with utmost sincerity amid constant sexual harassment by his co-workers but ultimately he ends up being raped and not being paid for his artistic endeavours. This scene clearly builds linkages among the idea of legitimate productive body, transphobia, issues pertaining to citizenship and discourses veering around the economic welfare of the nation. Quoting Jo Hirschmann, Dan Irving argues:

...the binary system of sex/gender naturalized the devaluation of women, as well as of non-normative masculinities (i.e. effeminate gay men or FTM transsexuals who do not pass as men). This sex/gender based degradation, which resulted in systematic oppression was not practiced only by governmental and institutional bureaucracies. It was also appropriated within spheres of capitalist production, and it is within sites of commodity production where we can witness the amalgamation of exploitation with relations of domination. Oppressed sex/gender and sexual minorities such as women, trans people, gays and lesbians have always been overrepresented within low-wage, part time, nonunionized, and precarious sectors of the labor market (20-21).

Little wonder that at the end of the day Saffi is shown not being paid but raped and brutally mutilated. All the efforts to establish Saffi as a legitimate citizen by making him enter into the category of well-catalogued labouring body get thwarted here. Regarding asserting the rights on nation as a trans citizen by being so-called productive bodies (and it is used in an inverted sense here) Aren Aizura writes: "Citizenship here means fading into the population ...But also the imperative to be 'proper' in the eyes of the state: to reproduce, to

find proper employment; to reorient one's 'different' body into the flow of the nationalized aspiration for possessions, property, [and] wealth" (295). From this point of view Saffi's failed efforts at work cannot be understood from the unidimensional point of view of sexual subjugation of gender variants only, but have a deeper significance of holding back a trans body from asserting citizenship rights on the nation. Thus, the claims to rights and equality get subsumed within the hyper-exploitative aspects of economically productive bodies. Dan Irving talks about as how the notion of deserving citizen has gone through a sea change under neoliberalism because there is a major shift from the idea of 'social citizenship'. Social citizenship caters to the idea of state providing economic reliefs to its citizens in the times of economic hardships but the neoliberal ideas of citizenship do not cater to the same expectations; rather the idea of 'deserving citizens' gains momentum, and it defines the legitimate citizens as those who can incessantly contribute to their nation's progress in terms of global political economy. Irving argues:

"...media, state, and community institutions continuously construct socioeconomic and political discourses that represent segments of middle and working class populations as innocent victims and upstanding citizens while simultaneously (re)constructing others as enemies, threats, and drains on the system. It is through the predominance of these discourses among the majority of middle-and working-class society that transsexuality is rendered suspect. Therefore many commentators and LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) organizations deliberately emphasize the transsexual individual as a contributing member of society when appealing for recognition of trans subjects and for access to employment. The understanding of transsexual body as productive provides the subtexts for differing representations of transsexuality (25-26).

Further in this particular scene Saffi's efforts to work and earn money like other fellow painters are being thwarted and his integration as a productive trans-body who has legitimate claims of a citizen as a nation-building entity (specially in the context of neoliberal economies) gets negated. Later after his rape he has been rescued by a *hijra* and there is a suggestive indication that now the means of earning will be through dancing which is seen as an extremely humiliating modes of earning by his father. However, ironically enough it tends to locate Saffi as a so-called parasitic entity (to quote Dan Irving who has used it in a sarcastic sense claiming that no work is unproductive and should not be viewed from the lens of middle-class respectability) who drains the system by unproductive

works like dancing, begging or may be even prostitution and thus he needs to be annihilated.

The issue of interrelatedness of biopower and necropolitics (a term used by Achille Mbembe) comes to fore through the death scene of Saffi, whose unruly body must meet death in the service of sanitization of the state. Mbembe invented this term to evoke the political potential of the death of the marginalized communities. Apropos of this Snorton and Haritaworn state in *Trans Necropolitics: A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death, and the Trans of Color Afterlife* that “necropolitics enables us to understand how biopower—the craving out of subjects and populations (Foucault 1978)—can profess itself at the service of life and yet generate death, in both quotidian and spectacular forms” (66). Saffi’s failure to contribute effectively must end in his death in the era of neo-liberalism where the death of the ‘other’ is imperative for the so-called healthy maintenance of the privileged productive citizens. According to Snorton and Haritaworn, Henry Giroux calls it “‘biopolitics of disposability’, a new kind of politics in which entire population is now considered disposable, an unnecessary burden on state coffers, and cosigned to fend for themselves’. Thus neoliberal ideologies provide biopower with new ammunition in the creation of life-enhancing and death-making worlds, and offer an insidious addendum to rationales for population control. The consequences of this logic effaces the way power and life are maintained and reproduced through the deaths of certain others” (69).

Thus, from the perspective of creating significant slippages, by exploring the issues of spatial identities of *hijras*, necropolitics and employment of cricket as a metaphor to negotiate trans identity, *Bol* is indeed a significant specimen of trans cinema. Its affirmative and progressive stance can be seen from the fact that as opposed to the sparse representations of FTMs (female to male trans-persons) in the Western cinema, we have a full grown male transgender in this movie. Gayatri Gopinath, Shohini Ghosh and Ruth Vanita suggested that the representation of the gender and sexual variants as *hijras* in mainstream Hindi cinema has always provided that elusive space for the negotiations of not only gender minorities but also for sexual deviants. So in one way, *hijras* were the flag bearers for queers in more than many ways and bore the negative and comic representations for queers at their own expense. Also because the gender segregated spaces are rampant in the Indian society, the invasion of the homosocial places are possible only through cross dressing and in that sense the numerous such scenes in the Hindi cinema work as, to quote Chris Straayer’s term, “temporary transvestite film” which

“offers spectators a momentary vicarious trespassing of society’s accepted boundaries for gender and sexual behavior” (Strayer 44). Thus, in these respects *Bol* is indeed a highly progressive movie as it helps in changing the contours of the popular imagination vis-a-vis both the sexual and gender minorities and this article is an humble attempt to excavate those progressive leakages.

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