EITHER A QUEER OR AN INDIAN CITIZEN

Socialized through the neo-liberal media projections.

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ABSTRACT

The Indian State, in its journey traversing seven decades of its independence, has been keen in shaping the constitutional definition of citizenship, hence also marking the belonging of its diaspora, through various appendages and amendments, that owing to its majoritarian social base in practice has almost always promoted a heteronormative stance peeking against the individualistic pillars of its preamble; rendering the Queer to be 'unusual' hence discrediting their citizenship chalked through covert stances in most of its directives. This article shall highlight the play between the Indian R.S.A. and I.S.A. s that are jointly framed by the social, in order to socialize the population to be 'good-procreating-citizens' via the manifestation of the normative kin-relations in portrayals by the soaring neoliberal media industry.

This paper intends to present an analysis of the Indian series called 'Made in Heaven' in comparison to projections in countries like Korea and Japan to argue that the indication of choice and escape hinted through the media, delude the minority to believe in fading social constructs, which in actuality assert an invisible control.

Keywords: Queer, Citizenship, Representation, Kinship,

Social Constructs.

The state of India alike any other political territory has always been keen in delineating the tenets that bestows an individual with a tag of being an Indian Citizen.Hence,the Constitution holds the Citizenship Act since 1955[1] which went through repetitive amendments in certain intervals, structuring Indian Citizenship through- birth, descent, registration, naturalization- along with clarifications for all other corollary tails to the issue of citizenship. Yet, it is as maturity tellsone, the status of being a 'Legal Indian Citizen' doesn't naturally make one belong to the Indian society as a contingency. Traversing beyond the definitive tenets of citizenship, lies the idea of social citizenship and belonging, which shall include one within its rungs only when the person qualifies to manifest certain normative statuses that the society decides.

These include marriage/ 'a successful married life' as an inevitable standard, that ticks the criteria of being an individual who has legitimate contributions to make for the sustenance of the society.Therefore, enshrined within the social ideals, the rule at the centre codified in a recent affidavit, almost nullifying the stance kept by the Supreme Court in decriminalizing homosexuality in 2018, stated that the petitioners "cannot claim a fundamental right for same sex marriage being recognised under the laws of the country", marriage as an institution as recognized in India is a "bond between a biological man and a biological woman", ultimately declaring the legislature as the legal dictator of such validations.[2]

Thus, the dictates of the state rightly reflected the majoritarian heteronormative stance of the Social- the R.S.A.[3] (Repressive State Apparatus) leading the prevailing (ruling) I.S.A.[4](Ideological State Apparatus) from the rungs of its understanding in order to maintain its position, according to the Althusserian ideals.Louis Althusser maintained that every society operates through the interplay of Repressive and Ideological State Apparatus(es).Although his indication was at the portrayal of the fact that the R.S.A. manifests its ideals via the employment of the

I.S.A.s as nodes of diffusion of the 'ruling ideology', but that also translates to a reverse string of the absorption of the ideology of the rulers or the majority who possess the R.S.A. as their shields.(Althusser, 2006) In this article, I aim to show, how the Indian diaspora are socialized, through the combined endeavour of a set of I.S.A.s (focusing on Family and Mass-Media), to be 'good-procreating-citizens', via the manifestation of the normative kin-relations in portrayals by the soaring neoliberal media industry, to contendthat the lack of representation/often skewed-rehabilitating representations in Indian media projections have tended to deny the belonging of the Queers to this nation, making them resort to rear an alternate lens of absorbing the media portrayals that work in soothing their urge of availing toan escape and a validating representation in the society. Furthermore, this essay intends to argue, by presenting an analysis of the Indian series called *'Made in Heaven'*[5]in comparison to projections in countries like Korea and Japan, that the indication of choice and escape hinted through the media, delude the minority to believe in fading social constructs, which in actuality assert an invisible control.

An imagined Inclusion: The Queer Indian Diaspora

Contrasting to the other global media industries, the Indian media projections from the very start were aimed to gain an intrinsic market rather than treading out to other cultures. Such a global outlook was introduced only after 1991 as a step, in liberalisation.

The state- owned media that mainly aimed at training its citizens to bind them in nation-state ethos, gave way to the liberal market in the 1990s making it possible for the citizens to realise their individualistic orientations through mass media. (Dasgupta, 2018) But, the media has always been a space for the normative majority, to draw entertainment from. The 'Mass' in Media was meant to denote the normative ideals of the society, excluding the Queer minority. A denial of space in real, as well as in virtuality,

rendered media for the Queers (against the heteronormativity of the society) to be a ground of misreadings, that made them seek their identity, validating their existence.

It was in rare occasions that one could receive an overt representation of the queer, out there in media projections, whatever the minimum one could gather, had to be brought to the market dealing with several battles with the censor board and also with the open reception by the audience and the state(like, the release of *Fire*[6]).

Therefore, it had to be an alternate lens that the queer diaspora resorted to while interpreting the media projections meant to entertain the normative heterosexuals, where homosocial scenes, if not the whole heterosexual plot, was misread to portray a queer chemistry- Entertaining/ Validating. Such tings of realisation can be availed for instance, as Gayatri Gopinath showcases-

...[a] female cross-dressing scene in the immensely popular 1993 mainstream Hindi film Hum aapke hain koun. This sequence takes place during a woman-only celebration of an upcoming marriage, around which the film's entire plot revolves. Into this space of female homosociality enters a woman cross-dressed as the film's male hero, in an identical white suit, who proceeds to dance suggestively with the heroine (played by Madhuri Dixit) and with various other women in the room. What follows is an elaborate dance sequence where the cross-dressed woman and Dixit engage in a teasing, sexualized exchange that parodies the trappings of conventional middleclass Hindu family arrangements (that is marriage, heterosexuality, domesticity, and motherhood).(Gopinath, Fall 1997)

This scene when interpreted by a pair of Queer eyes shall follow the very alternate lens, rendering the location of homosociality to transform into a homoerotic space- seeking validation, working as a last resort, being

entertained in a heteronormative media reel. It is further pointed out by Gopinath-

Halfway through the song, however, order is apparently restored as the cross-dressed interloper is chased out of the room by the"real" hero (Salman Khan). The cross-dressed woman disappears from both the scene and indeed the entire film, and Salman Khan proceeds to claim his rightful place opposite Dixit. ...[In] Fire, the gendered erotic interplay of the two women can be seen as simply an articulation of their desire for each other in the absence of "real" men, while in Hum aapke the cross-dressed woman seems merely to hold the place of the "real" hero until he can make his entrance, that is, to hold in place the hierarchical gendered relations in the scene. (ibid.483)

Scenes like these,have also intentionally made the Queer audience realize their belonging to the society merely as a simulated reality where even if they are provided with leniency as in through escapes in a few reflections in some motions, it is always to be found being a 'seeming' choice (i.e., a pseudo-choice), surely to be snatched and modulated by the structural norm of the society.

Thus, with the liberal stances in 1990s invading the ways in media, and thereafter, whatever overt ways in which homosexuality has got a chance of portrayal in media scenes, has been either too hazy or too unreal to be realized amidst the off-screen reality as projected by the society.Hence, the inclusion has always been imaginary, making the Queer resort to the alternate lens, as a stance in self-inclusion.This shall lead us to the next section of the essay that deals with the issue of a deluding choice in a broader way in order to argue its transitory nature ensuing satisfaction to the Queers and the other deviants, through illusions.

Can all relations on land, be 'MADE IN HEAVEN'?

The Web projection- *Made in Heaven,* as unfolded by *Reema Kagti* and *Zoya Akhtar*, portrays the complications a wedding-planner-duo (*Tara and Karan*) faces in order to fulfill the bizarre demands of their clients; through this backdrop, the drama has succeeded in showcasing the map of progression of relations, individuals may develop throughout their lives, or as *SCOOPWHOOP* puts it, "it's a story that presents the insecurities, traumatic incidents, ambitions, and idiosyncrasies that shape an individual's life." (Magan, 2021) (Akhtar, Mehra, Nair, & Shrivastava, 2019) In my analysis of the play, highlighting a few scenes as it goes, in elucidating the complexities that arise in order to make the individuals fit into the 'normative' structure, I intend to draw parallels with Korean and Japanese plays, providing a broader perspective for contestation of the issues.

Although, recent motion illustrations have tried to focus on the existence of 'out of the stream of normativity' relations in all ideal social arenas, *Made in Heaven*, stands out as a clubbing of almost all such instances, when it comes to illuminating the Indian scenario. Dwelling upon the ideas of marrying someone solely adhering to benefits of inheritance of property; rejecting marriage proposals owing to superstitions, marking a person to be *'Mangalik'* i.e., someone who attracts bad luck; and every other such strands that structure Indian kinship, have been shown, to one's fascination, to be somewhat accepted as well as challenged, at every scene of the series.

Somersaulting to the other part of the drama, complexities arising from the ['non-existent'- 'non-normative', to the Indian society] queer attitude of *Karan* grows to a huge heap. *Karan's* landlord is shown to be sharing the same orientation as his, yet being forced to hide his identity and play the role of a 'husband' to a woman, engendering a child; 'awfully' aging to his fifties. Once he was able to confirm *Karan* to mirror his

orientation, a change in his behaviour towards himbecomes evident. Fighting his own socializations, he tries to draw validation by inspecting on Karan's homoerotic comings, although manifest behind the enclosure of his rented nook, surrendering to the surveilling gaze of the hidden camera installed by him. Adding to the merits of the play making it realistic to the audience, the private of a Queer had to soon fall in traps of the heteronormative public scrutiny and rectification. Befallen to which, the landlord had to regain his social consciousness, heading back to playing the role of a heterosexual male, aligning with his wife to jail *Karan*[before 2018[7]Azmi, S., Das, N., Chowdhry, R., Kharbanda, K., Mehta, D., Trial by Fire Films., & Zeitgeist Films. (1996).

Fire. Canada: Trial by

Fire Films.

This culminated to a dialogue between *Karan* and his parents, throwing light on the politics of suppression of identity and the outlook towards queerness as showcased in India- *Karan (addressing his mother): She has always known. She broke my hand. I couldn't play basketball, and she made me lie that I fell.*

Mother: What was I supposed to do? What did you want me to do?

[Father, staring at her wife with a look of dissatisfaction, and a feel of compassion for his son; as he was unaware of his son's queer orientation.] Karan: I can't keep acting like this, Ma. This is who I am.

To one's [with a heteronormative outlook] awe, the drama has beautifully succeeded in showing how, devoid of any aid from the laws, queerness has existed all the way from the very initial days of the society, without a nomenclature, somewhat invisible in pain, amidst all the heteronormative stares of the Indian culture. Thereby, [Made in Heaven]

marking its place along the rare, few, direct queer media projections, amidst all others being indirect and indicative. (Gopinath, Fall 1997)

Although, rare in India, such media escapes to the queer audiences are provided in abundance by the Korean and Japanese industry[8]. Starting from fan-sites portraying K-pop boy/girl-band groups to be gay, to on cam indication by the idols themselves, to elucidations in K-dramas& J-Dramas, or Anime, these media industriesare sure to never face the scarcity for imagined escape catering to its queer audiences.

Dramas like *Strong Girl Bong-soon*[9] often tend to include gay instances either in dream-sequences or in scenes that notify the audiences beforehand of the insensate position of the characters- *Bong-soon* fearing her crush being romanced by her gay boss imagines an affair between them, to be able to try her best in prevention of such a reality,$\hat{E}^3$[10] (in no way)! In a more unspecific stance of inclusion, through instances of bromance often alike J-Dramas as *Miman Keisatsu*[11]indicate a chance of implication of an alternate queer lens for the audience, where homosociality in shots of the-heteronormative-brother-like liaisons lay in bare homoerotic imaginations. Even though, contrasting to the Indian shows, scopes as such provided by the industries of Japan and Korea are much more in number,

adhering to their similarity in 'kinship conceptions' to that of India, these creaks, are[12]also then immediately rectified in the following scenes to bring the character to conform to the heteronormative lens, back to being conducted by the traditional ethos 'made in heaven'. Thus, ultimately denying the existence of any Queer belonging in a real heteronormative space, only being imagined in dreams to get a negative reflexive reaction, even if ever manifested in its absoluteness, to be rectified through controls- be it sanctions or imprisonment; indicating the persistence of the never dismantled structure of social constructs, amidst the imagined freedom of choices.

Choice- Visible/ Constructs- Invisible: A Conclusion

Beginning with a portrayal of Queer belonging in the Indian society, this essay untangled to highlight the escaping homosexual lens of altered imagination of straight characters in media projections (that deem to socialize the queer to adhere to majoritarian heteronormativity), as a major necessity in order to derive validation. It is also an evident takeaway from the unfolding of this essay-whatever may be the instances provided, in any sort of projection, to justify an escape for the individuals catering to the 'out of the stream of normalcy' bonds, it is almost always intentionally made to either only seem to be accepted, or to be 'visibly' curtailed by the already existing 'normalcy'.

Thus, it is to be understood that kin-relations, in a motion projection or in reality, whether directly made to follow the 'heavenly' social constructs or provided with liberal escapes of not terming any 'beyond normalcy' tie as 'deviant'; does only illude a scope of choice, whereby the constructs of the social are made to go numb in a similar fashion of illusion. Therefore, the dilemma rises from the choices being made 'visible', and the dictates going 'invisible'.

This making all, ultimately conform to the precedence of procreativity, the normative-natural and conservative values over that of-self-acceptance, desire and social ties; leading to a skewed perception of kinship, backing the majoritarian ethos.

Thus, denying the belonging of any minority within the rule of the major ideology, shielded by the R.S.A., that often mirages the notion of their belonging through provisions alike the decriminalization of homosexuality[13]; making them wake up to a harsher realization to a call of that sort of the affidavit denying them the right to form a family, and hence, rendering their social citizenship to be illegitimate.

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7.	In 2018, by the Supreme Court of India.

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