

## **Rudra's Quest for Identity in 'Chitrangada': Technical Woman or Natural Man**

Mandeep, Dr. Anshu Raina

*(Research Scholar, Department of English, Lovely Professional University, Jalandhar, Punjab, India)*

*(Assistant Professor, Department of English, Lovely Professional University, Jalandhar, Punjab, India)*

---

**Abstract:** *The LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) group has remained largely an unexplored area until recent attempts have been made to explore the real side of it by the alternative cinema. Considering the Indian context, this group has remained under the blanket of the various restrictions imposed by the surrounding dominant factors, snubbing the voice of this marginalized group. This paper attempts at exploring those factors that come as hurdles specifically to the transgender. Certain filmmakers have acted as pioneers and have made serious attempts to uncover the blanket shrouding this issue so that the voice of this class can be heard. The paper further portrays what conflicts rise in the life of a transgender and the disastrous repercussions that are inevitable to happen. An in-depth exploration of the movie in hand further justifies the case. The vacillation between various conflicts can sometimes turn the life inside-out. Can a transgender have their wishes concretized in the Indian scenario? The answer to this and many related questions have been answered to the farthest extent.*

**Keywords:** *Transgender, Homophobia, Heteronormativity, Cinematic representations, Gender Reassignment*

---

### **I. Introduction**

The cinematic representations of the queer, or most specifically, the transgender, have put them in the category of being comically portrayed. Their true suffering and pain is more or less relegated to the background. Much of the Mainstream cinema has focused on the comic aspect of their representation. The **Alternative cinema**, on the other hand, is much closer to reality. Rituparno Ghosh's *Chitrangada* as an instance from the Alternative Cinema, is worth quoting. It is a movie based on the realistic portrayal of a transgender and the heap of troubles that he/she has to face and overcome. In the paper entitled *Portrayal of Sexual Minorities in Hindi Films*, Sanjeev Kumar and Ritika Sen explain what Alternative cinema is:

Alternative Cinema... is confined to film festivals and a handful selected group of viewers portrays sexual minorities in more realistic manner and is successful in raising, expressing and suggesting possible solutions to their problems in more effective manner as compared to the mainstream Cinema. (1)

The transgender depiction in Indian cinema is represented as a more problematic and complex issue than its western counterparts, where there is a liberal usage of this theme. In the latter, the aspect of suffering is hidden and is dominated by the comical and superficial representations. This feature thus, marks a departure from the serious depictions of this group. The Indian Alternative Cinema, on the contrary, focuses on that very aspect skipped by the western movie makers. This issue is still a taboo especially in the context of Indian society. There are only a few daring movie-makers who have come up with that enormity of courage required for the task of the portrayal of reality.

A bold step had been taken by the Bengali Actor Director Rituparno Ghosh, in his much autobiographical film, *Chitrangada*. It is an adaptation of the play under the same name by Rabindranath Tagore. The following lines from the introduction of the movie, reflect the correspondence between the movie and the play: "Tagore's *Chitrangada* is an Amazon warrior on a quest to discover her gender identity." (00:18). *Chitrangada* was the daughter of a King of Manipur, the King being blessed by Lord Shiva that he will have a son. But the birth of *Chitrangada* was an opposite case. So, the king decided to raise the daughter as a son. She continued to be that way until she was enchanted by the love of Arjun (from Mahabharata). Falling in love made her to revert back to her feminine original self. Thus, the conflict arose which eventually became a clash of the wishes- the wishes of the father and that of his daughter. This theme lies as the undercurrent of the movie in discussion.

Same is what happened to Rudra, the protagonist of the movie. He was born a boy, but has feminine traits and ultimately decides to change himself into a woman, thus, establishing himself as a transwoman. Rudra's case appears to be complex one as he also shows traits of a gay, having had multiple male partners during different phases of his life, but after a particular instance in his life he decides to change his "sex" (Nicholas, 4) The other dominant factor that acted as a stimulus to take such a decision is the love that Rudra feels for Partho. Thus, Partho can be compared to Arjun of Mahabharata in the sense that as Arjun

became the strong reason for Chitrangada's transformation, so did Partho for Rudra. It is because of Partho that Rudra decides to change from a "male-to-female-transperson" (Nicholas,10). Rudra is more or less Chitrangada in that case. Chitrangada was exiled for one year by her father when she got transformed. Rudra has to lead an isolated life for about this much period as well, when he decides to change from "MTF" (Nicholas,10). This is where the beginning of the unending trail of conflicts that Rudra has to face in the times to come, can be marked. The one major conflict that acted as a root cause of the other conflicts is described by the narrator at the beginning of the movie. It raises the question whether the choice of an identity by the child is self-willed or imposed by society:

It had to be an heir, that's all the father knew, to carry on the name and the family pride. And so, the training began. But the child, to be a girl or a boy, did anyone ask or even want to know? Children have dreams beyond their parents' expectations and they wish on stars and fallen eyelashes. Sometimes wishes come true unexpectedly to crown our life and turn the everyday, inside out. (02:14-03:14)

The major conflict that arises in a transgender resides in the realm of desires and wishes, their fulfillment as well as unfulfillment. These desires have their seeds implanted in the childhood itself. Over the years, all that a child wishes for is nothing but the fulfillment of those penetrated desires. Those desires are the ones that crown his/her life, the fulfillment of which can be advantageous or hazardous as well. Thus, uncertainty in this case brings conflicts. Rudra's case is no different. His trouble started in his childhood. He has never been able to assert his effeminacy openly in the society. Even at school and later on in his life, all that he has always faced were insults and rebukes. Rudra wished for his acceptance, both from parents as well as society. It is from bitter experience of his budding years that Rudra realizes that he is "a perennial embarrassment" and also a "weird creature that landed" (01:58:50) at his parents' door. This self realization shatters a human being from within and Rudra also could not be saved from this feeling.

"Gender is a construction that is ingrained in us from day one of life literally" (Nicholas,10) and at the same time transition from one stage of life to the other is inevitable. A child has to grow up into an adult. No matter how time passes on, some wishes will always remain. When he/she turns into an adult, the ways to concretize his/her wishes that have crowned life since forever becomes more plausible as per the sources and power available in hand at that stage. Also in addition are the sour experiences of life. Rudra followed his desire to cross the threshold and turn himself into a woman just for the love that he felt for Partho. But life works in its own mysterious ways. It may happen that when even the most awaited dream is about to come true, it is no longer needed and it is wished that it never comes true. The nearer something is, the blurred it gets. The closer Rudra was to become a woman, the farther he went away from Partho and his dreams to a happy life with him. Chitrangada is one such story that represents that conflict. Rudra explains to Kasturi, the gravity of the situation, in a way that strikes the right cords of better understanding of the theme for the viewer:

Now the moot point is, it is a story of wish, her father's wishes versus her own. Chitrangada is a story of desire, that you can choose your gender. Chitrangada, the Crowning Wish. (10:19- 10:36)

A transgender has to choose his/her gender based on the various factors that surround him. In fact, all these factors will also lead to a life full of complexes, conflicts, contradictions and a vacillation between two feelings, things or situations. These factors can be the culture, ideology, laws, parents, inner self and all the possible external forces working upon an individual. This influences the very identity and acceptability of a human being in the society.

Culture and Ideology are the bricks that make up the huge structure called society. These are the areas where the transgender or queer faces the conflict manifested to the greatest extent. It is here that the conflicts arise as well as grow. Culture lies in close connection with the ideologies and its construction. An ideology produces the norms and laws that are established and unquestionable and thus determines the regulation of life. It is the dominant ideology that plays a deep role in determining how the transgender is viewed. It constructs the identity of the being as a 'fixed entity' in the entire cultural and social construct. Certain theories have also been created under the cultural construct and the ideological influence. Since time immemorial, culture is seen to have greater implications in an individual's life. Nothing can be more emphatic than the fact that there exists a prevalence of two separate cultures, one for the 'normal and straight' group of people and the other for the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) group. These prevalent ideologies have always castrated the transgender beings from the cultural and the social construct. To quote from Diane Raymond's essay *Popular Culture and Queer Representations*:

Queer theory, for example, tends to be interested less in whether homosexuality is a result of nature or nurture and more in what function the causation serves in the culture and ideology. (98)

In the Indian culture, there are set norms that are forced upon the individual. The culture encompasses certain codes and conducts specific for the two genders, that is, Male and Female; in the process, excluding the formation of codes and conducts applicable for the third gender. That is what puts the transgenders in jeopardy. He/she does not understand what the culture expects out of them. Rudra is a male. So, as per the Bengali culture dictates, he has to wear the dress apt for a male, never put make up or even choose classical dance as a

profession. But his appearance is not at all culture-specific. So, he is rendered a social outcaste because being a male, he is dressed up like a female, puts make-up, dances with the grace of a woman, wears ornaments and has the sophistic of a woman. The culture that he is a part of is contrary to what his soul is.

There are ideologies that are also culture-specific. Rudra is “conditioned to be a man” (08:00-08:15). It is conditioned because the ideologies say so. Alan Sinfield, in his essay, *Cultural materialism, Othello, and the Politics of Plausibility*, says:

Ideology produces, makes plausible, concepts and systems to explain how we are, who the others are, how the world works. The strength of ideology derives from the way it gets to be common sense; it “goes without saying”. (32)

The phrase “goes without saying”(32) thus used by Alan Sinfield, holds two-fold implications. For the culture and society, it is made to “go without saying” that if he is a man, he must act like one. Whereas in Rudra’s case it ‘goes without saying’(32) for himself that he has a feminine soul and conscience.

Law is one such ideological construct, a governing element of one’s life. It establishes norms and rules that one needs to follow in order to attain a secure membership of the society. Laws are external manifestations. A mention of Elton John and the laws of his country are made. This reference is made when Rudra realizes the importance of a child in Partho’s life and feels distressed that the law of India does not allow two male friends to adopt a child whereas in Elton John’s country the case is not so. At another place in the movie, a day before the last operation is scheduled to happen; the father wants Rudra to change his name to something that sounds more feminine:

Father: You’ve changed your identity, it must be legally registered. My will won’t be valid otherwise.... It says, ‘my only son and heir’ (01:54:53-01:55:06)

Rudra never wants to change his name and this is again the interference of a power structure that is law, the enforcement of which is necessary, irrespective of what Rudra feels or wants. To change one’s name that one has carried as his identity for more than thirty years, might be necessary from a legal aspect, but it will surely have deep psychological impacts associated with it.

Thus, Ideology, if a dominant one, is hard to alter. Heteronormativity is a social construct, theoretical and ideological phenomena. The Oxford Dictionary defines this term as “Denoting or relating to a world view that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation”.(1) This means that heteronormativity becomes the lens through which the transgender is perceived, judged and treated. In simpler words it means, ‘compulsory heterosexuality’. In a country like India, this case is more prevalent. It is the first country where the concept of the ‘Third Gender’ exists. This seems to be a concept providing them with a space of their own. Deeply pondered, this is a technique of marginalizing them. They are pushed away from the center, more and more outside a periphery. This heteronormativity can be thought of as a charge against the “transition”( Nicholas,11) people in the form of homonormativity. The term homonormativity is a metropolitan concept that puts the transgender in the derogatory position. Wikipedia describes homonormativity as the assimilation of heteronormative ideals and constructs into the LGBTQ culture and individual identity. This compulsory heteronormativity is forced upon a person in order to be accepted in the society as a separate being with an identity of his/her own. The term ‘compulsory heteronormativity’, in the words of Raymond is explained as:

Compulsory heterosexuality (or what some have called “heteronormativity”) functions to underline the fact that heterosexuality is an institution, a practice, with its own set of expectations, norms and principles of conduct. (104)

These set of principles are made for heterosexuals and thus the transgenders are easily eliminated from the scene. A human being has to live under certain societal patterns that are also a part of heteronormativity. These patterns are the patterns of marriage and creation of a progeny. A transgender is again marginalized for not being able to follow these set patterns. Rudra’s mother feels disturbed at his decision of living separate, getting his gender changed and speaks harsh words to him, echoing ‘compulsory heteronormativity’: “You are not married with a family. How could you possibly know how parents feel?” (01:11:59-01:12:04). Neither is he married, nor he will ever be. It simple means that a person not reflecting the traits of heteronormativity is bound to be a personality mitigated.

One such instance is the perception of sexuality in the case of LGBTQ group. This also seems to refute the expected norms and principles of conduct of heteronormativity as quoted above. A transgender will find it queer to maintain sexual ties with a bi-sexual. Rudra never lets Partho make sexual advancements. It is his inner conscious that does not let him do that. All this is more applicable in the Indian context. This gives rise to frustrations for both the partners. It does affect the representations of the queer group as well. Diane Raymond’s essay *Popular Culture and Queer Representations* states that:

In a culture grounded in what Adrienne Rich (1980), has termed “compulsory heterosexuality,” popular culture will tend to portray heterosexuality as if it were natural and inevitable and to position alternative forms of sexuality as “other”. (104)

Sexuality is an important aspect of crisis for the transgender who cannot, even if willed, comply with this aspect. It is a matter of one's own sexuality as well the act of sex with a partner. Some take advantage of their transgender phenomena, while others battle throughout their life, with the body that they possess. The body is said to be a sacred place where the soul rests. For a "transman" (Nicholas, 10) like Rudra, it is this body that has become a battleground. The countenance is of a female, the inner soul is of a female, but the biological aspect is that of a man. The difference is that Partho takes drugs for numbness and Rudra has to fight with his emotions.

If such is the case with oneself, it can easily be inferred how the viewer will perceive the sexual scenes in cinematic depictions. It is not just a conflict for the transgender anymore but is passed on to the viewer whose mind is not programmed to watch such depictions of physical relations between members of the LGBTQ group. The conflict of the viewer is resolved as he comes to recognize himself as a complete being and attains a level of satisfaction. This, according to Raymond, "...enables viewers to distance themselves from the queer and thereby to return to their comfortable positions as part of the dominant culture." (100). This is simply because a 'straight' cannot empathize with 'a transgender'. For the former, the latter's reality lies out of the realms of the real. Brandon Arroyo, in his paper called *Sexualizing the Transgendered Body in Hedwig and the Angry Inch and Boys Don't Cry*, says:

Transgendered bodies are still relegated to the role of sexless comic foil (*Midnight in the Garden*), Sexless catalyst for Family Crisis (*Transamerica*), and as sexually troubled symbols representative of larger social ills. (1)

In cinematic representations particular to the Indian context, such scenes are considered taboos, as subjects that must be excluded, whose mention means that the general norms are being flouted. Raymond quotes the lines from the feminist theorist Jacqueline Rose that "The relationship between the viewer and the scene is always one of fracture, partial identification, pleasure and distrust." (100). The very mention of such a thing brings to the mind, vague images that the mind cannot readily digest. If the very mention of this theme has such drastic implications then the actual act of sex falls far outside the periphery of acceptance. The act of sex between the homosexuals is considered a taboo. This can be for two main reasons. Firstly, the Indian audience cannot wholly accept that idea as it is considered to be a shameful act. Secondly, when a transgender is in him/herself confused with his/her own identity, the act of sex needs a lot of mental preparation and courage. Many initial attempts will fail. This conflict results in disillusionment of the transgender and the partner. Rudra stops the sexual advancements of Partho when they are in the hotel room. Partho leaves irritated. Later, when Partho comes back to the hotel and is on a high, Rudra finds himself responsible and lacking in providing that pleasure to his partner. Not just Rudra, even a viewer cannot readily accept it. Arroyo says that "Outside of the porn genre, transgendered characters are not allowed sexual pleasures." (1). When no space will be available to them, except for the "Surreal diegetic spaces", a term quoted from Arroyo's paper, that is where they can be made to present the sexual contact, they are bound to be castrated from the mainstream. The spaces allotted to them, even in the picture representations are surreal and not real at all. If this is the case in movies, where it is just an enacted representation under created situations, how can one expect the opposite to happen in the real life scenario?

Hence, every individual needs a personal space. When only 'created' and 'surreal' space will be allotted to a transgender, there is but one repercussion that this scenario forces upon the transgender, a case identical to that faced by the migrants/diasporas or the colonized. Same way, even the Queer group is marginalized and even dominated, rendered to be the 'subalterns'. There is alienation and isolation, a quest for identity, a total loss of roots with no definite identity bestowed upon them. Raymond further says:

The search for identity always occurs on contested terrain and the struggle to find a voice takes place in a dynamic relationship with the dominant culture where signs and signifiers can be appropriated and reappropriated in an endless chain of interpretations. Thus, meaning is rarely predictable and never fixed. (100)

The transgender has to take up the journey of quest to find his long awaited and definite identity, which until now, has been fractured. Born and brought up like a boy, Rudra's life is governed by the wishes of his father as well as the society at large. He studied as his father wished and tried to please him for a major part of his life. Rudra has achieved an engineering degree much against his wishes. This was not what his true self had chosen. There is a constant vacillation of the father for his son to make sense with his choices. His vacillation keeps affecting the choice of the son. He has become an engineer for the father to be proud, as is the most prevalent case in the Indian society. The father just needs a social standing of himself as well as for his son. Later in the movie, Rudra discusses what the King must have felt when he saw "new, refined identity" (01:23:04) of Chitrangada, standing in the open court. This open court is largely the society and King can be compared to the father being in the same situation. That does not happen anyway. The son deviates from the choice of his father. Rudra has acquired an engineering degree only to lock it away. The father has never let the son assert his true identity in the society. To quote from the movie:

Father: Why study engineering then?

Rudra: You forced me to.

Father: So why keep your certificates carefully locked up instead of burning them? (21:09-21:21)

The issues are not related just with the career choices and Father's influence, but his love life also does not let him assert his identity fully. Partho gives him a new name and that is "Rudy" (25:30). His previous boyfriend also called him by the same name. They further tried to bind him with that name, with themselves. The ex-boyfriend gifts him a ring and Partho ties the anklet round his feet. This way, Rudra had always been alone on a quest to search his identity. Rudra is compelled to say these words to Shubho:

Rudra: "I don't know Chitrangada well enough. But then did I know Partho well enough.

Shubho: But look at the flip side. You got to know yourself. (01:43:40-01:44:10)

Rudra also finds the 'soul of Chitrangada' missing from the play that he had directed. Chitrangada, as discussed earlier, gives resonances of Rudra himself. Also the counselor asks if Rudra has "problem accepting himself" (01:52:56) after the half done operations, to which Rudra replies in affirmation. Such is the identity crisis that immediately before the last surgery when the father wants Rudra to legally register himself as a woman so that he inherits the property, Rudra says: "Which 'me' needs it? Am I not the person to whom you willed your property?" (01:55:08-01:55:13)

There has to be a place where Rudra becomes free to assert his true identity and live on his own terms and conditions. Only a place, not surreal, can do the task. He tries to do that in his mannerisms. His lifestyle is largely governed by himself, except for those unalterable facts that are inviolable. Rudra dresses the way he wants to. He is a self-sufficient and independent man. But it also stands true that whatever he does, he will always be characterized as a transgender. The element of effeminacy is manifested in the various depictions, situations and things. All this can be grouped under the identifiable mannerisms that one can possess in order to assert one's gender. Rudra is, all the time, adorned with jewelry. The gestures speak for themselves. Even the counselor remarks that Rudra has the ability to speak with hands. Assertion of feminine traits is more emphasized in the relationship of Rudra with his mother. They share a deep bond and understanding and look forward for each other's support. It is a kind of woman to woman understanding. The mother sees Rudra and Partho kissing each other, but does not react. Also Rudra, at that very moment, fixed the bindi for her. Another aspect that can be emphasized is that in the society females as well as the male-to-female transgenders are marginalized. They can be found to exist on the periphery. Center is always occupied by the patriarchy and the dominant ideology. The 'center' and the 'periphery' are ever in conflict. The transgender does not know where to make place. This further ostracizes him and he cannot find his true identity in that aspect as well.

Next, he follows the inclination of his mind and chooses a profession of a creative dancer and a director of plays. The dance form, that is, classical dance form, is also worthy of notice. The grace and elegance that characterizes the protagonists' dance, and all the feminine elements like make-up, dressing up and the whole countenance, is in itself, the mute reinforcement of being applicable to a fixed gender called a 'female'. And that is what Rudra is not. He is a female soul wrongly placed in a male body. The classical dance form brings to the fore, many interpretations. The foremost is a deeper emphasis that Rudra does have effeminate characteristics. Even the dance form is considered to suit a being according to the gender. Rudra, naturally a male, opts for being a dancer and that too classical. This dance form is specifically characterized by its grace, gestures and delicate moves. The society cannot readily grasp the fact that a male is dancing on the rhythm of classical music. For Rudra, it's not just the society but also the father who opposes him in this case. He even mentions: "He doesn't like me dancing on stage." (21:03). The father discourages his son to dance and suggests him to focus on his direction instead. The father is never interested to watch his shows. This has always hurt Rudra but in the course of life, he has realized what his father dislikes in him and even confesses: "Infact I have stopped missing you baba(father)." (23:17). It is because of the society that even the father cannot accept that. In spite of all the opposition, he dares to retaliate and is firm at his decision to dance because it is not just the dance, it is a partial solution for Rudra's quest for identity. Partho tells Rudra that once he gets the sex change operations done, his dance will be affected, to which Rudra replies:

Partho: What about your dance?.. Your body is the instrument, tamper with it...

Rudra: Shut up. I don't dance with my body Partho. It comes from within.

Fortunately, my art form is not gender bound. My dance is not limited to my gender Partho. And neither is my identity. (01:0:39- 01:07:18)

All this is a result of a struggle against nature. The loss of identity is a result of a constant conflict between 'what actually is' and 'what should be'. The corresponding term can be picked from RigVeda, one of the four canonical texts of Hinduism, that is Vikruti Evam Prakriti (what seems unnatural is also natural). This term justifies Rudra's state by providing justifications from the religion. Rudra is born a boy, possesses feminine characteristics. If seen from a literal level, what nature has commanded biologically to Rudra is the characteristics of a boy. On the contrary, it is nature itself that has made the feminine aspect more dominant in him. Which way is the right direction of perception? This, neither the transgender nor the perceiver knows. There arises a never-ending conflict. Such a state of being is more fragile. What all this gives birth to is homophobia and heterosexism. Stating what Raymond has to say in the same article, "Heterosexism and Homophobia organize the structures in which we are immersed, structures so pervasive as to become almost invisible." (104) Homophobia is the fear, dislike or hatred for the Queer group. Heterosexism is the discrimination against that same group.

Heterosexuality always stands as a staunch rival of homosexuality and practices homophobia. In a social context, Heterosexuality can be personified as the society at large. Homosexuality can be personified as a person who falls in a minor group called the LGBTQ. In the words of Raymond:

Heterosexuality is a parasitic notion, dependent on that-what- is-not, namely, homosexuality. Each is haunted by the other, and the homosexual comes to represent the terrifying other of the heterosexual. (104-5)

In the context of the movie and to be rather specific, Heterosexuality is depicted by Partho and Homosexuality by Rudra. The case is that of a love affair between a bi-sexual and a transgender respectively. Both belong to the same group but when in a relation, proved disastrous for each other. This is where the conflict between, generally speaking, homosexuality and heterosexuality comes into play.

Partho is Rudra's partner-in-love. The fact that makes Partho what Rudra is not is that Partho is a lesser gay, a bi-sexual. This very fact marks the first conflict of varying personalities for both, at the end, proving more disruptive for Rudra. They cannot be together for too long and finally their relation comes to a halt. This happens because they have diverse desires and cannot fulfill each other's wishes. It is Rudra who has to make most of the refusals to Partho. One such instance is when Partho wishes to buy a house at the sea-side. Rudra replies: "okay, in some other life. First let me find a cupid who can transform me." (39:32-39:40). Partho wants a child and Rudra cannot produce one. In the relationship, Rudra plays the role of a girlfriend with Partho as a boyfriend but whatever way they have positioned themselves in the relation, Rudra will remain a biological male. When Rudra decides to change his sexual orientation for fulfilling Partho's wish of having a baby, Partho does not desire that transformation and insists on the adoption of a baby instead. Even in an attempt to provide for the other partner, things do not work well for them at all. There are always mental pressures as they walk on the troubled road of their relationship. Rudra tells Shubho that he has tried to break up with Partho several times but what stops him to do so is the "Inertia" (55:27) and continues, "There were rough patches. I had a few knots, but gradually things worked out." (55:39). 'Conflicts', dissatisfaction, and disturbances have always been there, in the end leaving Rudra devastated.

Rudra and Partho had had an affinity between themselves from their very first meeting. One did become the object of desire for the other. Partho, in his drug influence, picks up the fallen bracelet of Rudra and walks away. This screenplay of the movie is that of traffic jam. In a crowded area, it is only Partho whom Rudra seems to remember. This is ironical that in this whole world and the relationships that Rudra had had, he was never willing to change himself. It is only Partho who gave him that force and energy. The 'Sun-God' that Partho stole to present to Rudra is symbolic here. It symbolizes 'power and strength', 'life-force' and 'Vitality'. That gift symbolized the power that Partho could infuse in Rudra that he could go to any extent for this love relationship. It is also the inner instinct that makes something for both of them click. The other reason that Rudra himself gives is the fact that both are 'ostracized', Rudra for his homosexual instinct and Partho for being an addict. This factor makes Rudra give him a chance and help him to improve. In the hospital, in his hallucinatory conversation with the counselor, Rudra says:

Rudra: Actually, I'd suffered ostracism myself, for being effeminate. People made fun of me. I thought if I could help a bit, he might get better. (15:55- 16:50)

Partho might be a reason for the challenges that Rudra dared for. But Partho never wanted Rudra to change his sexual orientation. The relationship seemed to work well between them as it was. The transformation process of Rudra into Rudy changed their life forever. Partho gives the idea of child adoption as something that could prove the best for both of them. He never thought of moving away from Rudra just because he cannot give him a blood baby. It is Rudra who is responsible of the birth of such a conflict in Partho's mind. This conflict of Rudra acted as a virus that corrupted their relationship forever. Discouraging Rudra's decision, Partho asserts: "I love you the way you are." (01:09:00). They are positioned back to back at this point of time in the movie, to reflect the contradictory views. At last, Rudra starts with her operations. The more she gets closer to becoming a woman, the farther Partho moves away. The love between them diminishes, especially for Partho. All this is picturized while Rudra is shown dancing around a stand in a hospital. The two scenes are juxtaposed. One is the

scene where the conception of the idea took place and it keeps getting juxtaposed with that of Rudra in the hospital with rigorous music in the background. This plainly states that at the conception stage the energy was brimming, as if unaware of the consequences. Later it did fade away. So to become a woman from a man, to tamper with nature, was nowhere an easy task. The two situations and the two places thus, juxtaposed bring to the fore the internal conflict depicted through the external one. Partho does not even look at the 'breast implanted body' of Rudra. This fading interest is a result of another conflict that dominated Partho's mind and affected Rudra too.

Partho's conflict arose when there was a disturbance in the set patterns of life. Partho, being a bi-sexual has a different bent to mind than Rudra. The fact remains that nothing can ever stand as a challenge to the natural objects and things. Man is also a product of nature, born and destined to be what nature has decided for him/her. This is primarily because of biology and the secondary reason is the other influences working upon him. What Rudra does is to tamper with his real self and get himself transformed into a woman. This way, it will be a transition from the 'Natural' to 'Technical'. This is precisely what Partho can never accept as his love for Rudra is also not gender-bound. It does not matter whether he is a man or a woman, but just natural. But Rudra goes too far with his decision, losing Partho somewhere on the way. He feels that the solution to the arising conflicts of making a family with Partho rests in his "gender affirming surgery"(Nicholas,52). This way he feels that he can please the law regarding the process of adopting a baby, Partho and to a larger extent even himself. Is this plausible enough? Rudra visits the surgeon and makes the following announcement:

Rudra: To me, it's a technical necessity. All I need from you is a certificate that I'm a woman. No other changes. I am not going wear a sari. So to me, it's more of a cosmetic surgery. (01:10:03- 1:10:22)

The very first conflict rests in the transformation that Rudra seeks as a solution and that solution is the "Gender Reassignment Surgery" (01:14:24). This term, as easy as it sounds, needs a lot of preparation. "Transitioning socially is often the most difficult part of the journey" (Nicholas,45). It results in the human being's loss of everything, body, name, emotions, identity, and a lot more. It comes as a shock, not just for Partho but also to the parents. It is the first instance when, for a while, even the mother withdraws her support from him, let alone Partho. "Every parent has a dream for what his or her child will become and how that will unfold and coming out a trans can do serious damage to—even kill—that dream" (Nicholas,33). The only words that the father has to utter are: "We have to face society, not you." (01:16:06). In the whirlpool of conflicts, there is no chance of being saved. It is the transgender who has to face the society more than the other people associated with him/her. The change of gender means to bring about a change in what nature has bestowed. To tamper with nature will never bear fruitful results. The option left for a transgender is the change of sex, that means he/she has not accepted his/her own body. Partho wants Rudra to admit:

Partho: You are unhappy with your natural self, you just want to become a woman.

Rudra: Most of us are unhappy with what nature gives us. Or guys would not want a six pack to become a man. Girls wouldn't wax and primp to become a woman. (01:07:40- 01:08-09)

But the argument does not influence Partho at all. He is ready to live as they are and not artificially. Consequently, Partho moves on a different track with Kasturi, a natural girl and says:

Partho: say if I have to have a child, then I would have my own child, my own blood..... Ask yourself Rudy. I never wanted you to change. The man I loved was not this ha..ha..half thing. If I have to have a woman, I'd rather have a real woman. Not the synthetic one. I'm Sorry. (01:36:40-01:38:05)

Rudra is left just half. He is at a stage where he is half male and half female as the operations are not yet complete. A consequential conflict will be the handling of two bodies at one time. At the time of the surgeries, Rudra's body is vacillating between that of a 'Natural Man' and a 'Technical Woman'. The only result is disillusionment and disenchantment from every factor of life. What the natural body was perfect at, the technical body hinders that. The communication between Rudra and Shubho throws light on the fact:

Rudra: I might die on the operation table tomorrow.

Shubho: 'May'? You surely will. You can't live two lives at once. You

have to give up one. Now you have to decide how you wish to be remembered? (02:03:56-02:04:15)

The factor thus mentioned is nothing but a struggle involving wider connotations, which is 'Permanence' and 'Transience'. These are shown in a constant battle against each other in the movie. Their battle has ill-effects for Rudra. The rising tide of conflicting issues in the life of Rudra is a result of that battle itself. Ticking of the clock which serves as a sound effect in many scenes in the hospital reflects that time is not static and it stops for nothing. Even 'Rudra' got transformed into 'Rudy' for sometime. Relationships are not permanent. Rudra says, "What's permanent Ma? Tell me what's permanent? This body? Is it permanent?" (01:13:30-01:13:38). The body is not permanent, decisions are not permanent, even the troubles are not permanent. Towards the end and before the final operation, Rudra again tells his mother that permanence is deceptive. To quote from the movie:

Rudra: Now see that our bodies which we regarded as the most permanent truth is the least permanent. Relationships are mortal too. They can change too. (01:56:16-01:15:36)

When there is a reference to a message related to why a building is called a building even after it is complete. The interesting answer that Shubho gives is, "...because no transition is ever complete. It's an ongoing process." (02:06:19). Transience characterizes life. Permanence is never permanent. Nothing remains stagnant in life and it did not remain stagnant either. Rudra's relationship changes with his parents, his lover and even with his own body. Even the hallucinatory relation that Rudra has with the counselor is going to vanish soon. He says to Shubho: "I won't see you again." (01:53:55). Nothing remained unaffected in the course of the movie. It is not only for Rudra but life changed for Partho, the parents and this led to changes, with long lasting effects for everything bound in a loop of relations.

Shubho is one relation where transience can be marked. He existed only in the subconscious plane of Rudra's mind. The counselor, Shubho, no doubt, has a key role to play. The counselor in the form of a hallucination, is the conflict personified. This conflict is the one that existed between Rudra and Partho at deeper levels. Some of them Rudra could talk about and share with Partho, others he could never communicate through. The relationship of Rudra with Partho later takes a very abrupt bend. There had been good times, but when things between Rudra and Partho turned sour, Rudra starts visualizing the counselor. The counselor is not just a personification of a perfect relation that Rudra always wanted to have but also a vent to hidden emotions. The counselor for him, was all what Partho could never be. So, Rudra finds in him, the fulfillment of a perfect relation where there is someone to calm him down, someone to be with him. Partho did not stay at the hospital with Rudra, especially when he needed him the most. Shubho, the counselor filled that gap. Thus, he becomes a kind of a resolution that Rudra finds, for the rising conflicts at the time of maximum emotional tension and pressure. One example can be of the abstinence of the act of sex. Rudra never lets Partho come near to him. In the scene immediately next to that, he hallucinated about Shubho knocking at the bathroom door uttering the words: "Unless you want to come out naked." (46:30). Hearing this at the hallucinatory level, justifies the argument. It is Shubho who also plays a crucial role in the correction of Rudra's personality and that is why Rudra can safely reach to the conclusion that he needs to go back. Hence, the counselor remains a projection of Partho throughout the movie. It is only when Rudra decides to get all implants reversed that Shubho vanishes.

The trail of troubles and conflicts leads Rudra to learn new lessons in life. Advancement in life is there, but in a different direction. After fighting hard in the battles of life, Rudra decides not to go forward with the third and the last operation. He requests the doctor to remove all the implants. When the doctor agrees, he has a sigh of relief. Rudra asks the surgeon, "There will be a scar on my chest (after the removal of the breast implants)?... Never mind. Its just a scar." (02:09:04-02:09:12). The memory will always remain as a scar, a sign of his battle against conflicting issues from all sides. He will leave everything behind and start afresh with his parents. Rudra says, "My parents have done up my room. Mother has put new curtains. I'm going back home." (02:03:40-02:03:50). New life is waiting for Rudra. The only assertion he needs is from Partho at the subconscious level. On being able to recall a number "9831556004" (02:15:10) which is undoubtedly Partho's, Rudra imagines the doctor utter these words: "He (Partho) said just be what you wish to be. its your wish." (02:15:15).

His return is highly awaited by the parents who have struggled along with him throughout Rudra's journey of life till date. The transience can also be reflected in the relation of the parents with the son. The son, who was just an embarrassment, is not so anymore. Society and its shackles have taken a back seat in the parents' mind. Rudra has become their top priority. Not just Rudra, but the parents are in jeopardy all through their life. The father, who always thought of Rudra as a trouble that he could bring forth "no new troubles" (01:11:22) failed in his role as a father. The mother, on the other hand, has tried to cope with the son's wishes.



Mother's dialogue with the father finally resolves the issue that they held against Rudra for all their life. The powerful lines are as follows:

Mother: It's easy to blame him. I mean.... We're.... we're to blame too.  
We've always known. But wouldn't accept it. He was born a boy  
and we insisted he act like one.  
Father: Why shouldn't we? Boys should be boys. It's only natural.  
Mother: Nature dictates what is natural. It has its own desires. If we had  
been able to accept what was natural for him... He wouldn't be  
lying under the surgeon's knife." (01:19:03-01:20:46)

New realizations are ushered upon the father and he admits that he will bring him back home after the operation. He confesses, "I hadn't seen him so close-up for a long time. I thought I'd go close still." (01:21:05).

The fact that he has taken the decision to get back to his home is also reflected in his encounter with the photographer in the dream sequence by the end of the movie. Further light can be thrown on this character's role as well. There is a very minor character of a photographer who is portrayed as an ex-boyfriend of Rudra. He appears for a very short time, thrice in the movie. The role that he plays is to set a kind of comparison between what he was for Rudra and what Partho is for him. So, the photographer and Partho are put into a comparison that happens at the level of the subconscious. The relation with the photographer was good but not better than what it is with Partho. Rudra never relegated himself to a secondary position for his earlier affairs. Partho was a case, exceptional. That shows the conflicting relations that he has had in his prior life. In the last scene, which is a dream sequence, Rudra visualizes that photographer again but with all the photographs of himself and Partho. Ultimately, he leaves everything and walks back to his original life with his parents. A piece of conversation from the movie justifies the case:

Photographer: He also calls you Rudy?  
Rudra: Yes, he does. But I am not as rude as I used to be. (51:19-51:50)

It's a new dawn, "Usha, the Goddess of Dawn" (02:00:58) as Rudra calls it. Shubho asks, "If Cupid appeared to grant you a wish, what would you ask for?". This is a very remarkable question, the answer to which reflects the solution that a transgender would always wish for. Rudra replies, "I'd want to go back." And not just go back but be accepted too. He wants to go back as Partho had defined him to be, that is "as the Vivacious, energetic, eccentric, creative artist" (02:04:58) and not as "the beautiful, transformed Chitrangada." (02:05:01).

A new life awaits Rudra. There is a pleasant turn of events that were harsh when they existed. Life seems to have fallen into place for everybody. At the end, Partho's train is seen to have entered a tunnel and the telephone connection is lost. Rudra closes his eyes for the operation to be reversed. Time leaves scars that no one can heal. Looking at the positive aspect, they are just scars. And time, no doubt, is a greatest healer. The movie ends on a positive note, proving victorious over the struggle against conflicts and the same is reflected in the final song of the drama enactment:

Give me new life, my beloved  
This blessed morning  
Banish all ills in this new celebration  
Clear debris of night in this new dawn.

### References

- [1]. Arroyo, Brandon. "Sexualizing the Transgendered Body in Hedwig and the Angry Inch and Boys Don't Cry." *Textual Overtures*. 2.1 (2014): 84-99. Web. 5 Dec. 2014. <http://textualovertures.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/article-6.pdf>
- [2]. Chitrangada, *The Crowning Wish* [Chitrangada, *The Crowning Wish*] Dir. Rituparno Ghosh. Perf. Rituparno Ghosh, Jisshu Sengupta, Anjan Dutt. Shree Venkatesh Films. 2012. Film.
- [3]. "Heteronormative". *Oxford Dictionaries*. [oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/heteronormative). Web. 8 Dec. 2014. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/heteronormative>.
- [4]. Pattnik, Sonali. *Outside the Frame: The Representation of Hijra in Bollywood Cinema*. *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and Pacific*. 22. (2009): N.p. Web. 5 Dec. 2014. <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue22/pattnaik.htm>.
- [5]. Raymond, Diane. *Popular Culture and Queer Representation- A Critical Perspective*. *sagepub.com*. n.d. Web. 6 Dec. 2014. [http://www.sagepub.com/dines3estudy/articles/02\\_Raymond\\_Pg98.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/dines3estudy/articles/02_Raymond_Pg98.pdf).
- [6]. Sabharwal, Sanjeev Kumar and Reetika Sen. (2012). *Portrayal of Sexual Minorities in Hindi Films: Global Media Journal*. 3.1 (2012): 1-13. Web. 6 Dec. 2014. <http://www.caluniv.ac.in/global-mdia-journal/Article/A5%20S%20SEN.pdf>.
- [7]. Teich, Nicholas M. (2012). *Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2012. Print.