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Caste, colour and sexuality- an analysis of mainstream Bollywood cinema

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores representational strategies and ideas around caste, colourism and sexuality in mainstream Bollywood cinema. This is done so through the textual analysis of my case studies *Dostana* (Tarun Mansukhani,2008), *Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aida Laga* (Shelly Chopra Dhar,2019) and *Kala Shah Kala* (Amarjit Singh,2019). India has had a complex past with effects of colonialism that still continues today. These effects and influences brought on by colonial power, societal ideals and cultural norms have shaped the manner in which characters are constructed and represented in mainstream Bollywood cinema. Many of these characters are formed based on stereotypes and have thus established a norm as to how these marginalised groups have been represented. As India tackles colonial laws, it enables a shift in the manner in which these groups are represented. Through the textual analysis of my case studies the effects of colonial ideals around sexuality, caste and colourism can be drawn, and with the abolishment of laws such as section 377, character constructions and narratives are becoming more inclusive. In response to this, I will be making use of my practice as a filmmaker to explore in a short experimental film form these particular ideas. The film explores my personal identity, as a South African Indian and the blurred lines between masculinity and femininity in Hindu practices and Indian culture.