

# Bending the Genders: Portrayal of the Third Gender in Popular Bengali Cinema.

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- **Abstract:** While scientists are investing unimaginable time in the pursuit of aliens: the supra intelligent beings, in the remote galaxies, on this very planet a sizeable section of fellow humans continues to be alienated from mainstream life. This group of extremely marginalised homo sapiens are treated as social outcasts because they do not belong to the binary society that accepts only the XY and the XX chromosome category. Hijra, Chhakka, Chhibri are some of the names that society has christened them with, and these names are often uttered with utmost disrespect. But like the cisgenders, the transgenders too are entitled to a respectable co-existence. The third gender has been shrouded by a nimbus of scorn and controversy since 1861, following the criminalization of sexual acts, considered unnatural or perverse, by the British Raj (Chua & Gilbert, 2016). Despite phenomenal advancement in all spheres of life, modern society is still sceptical of accepting the third gender as the transgender pattern of behaviour, mannerisms and lifestyle do not fit into the so called normal social frame. Astonishingly, despite the controversy, social rejection, and denigration, the third gender has survived, irrespective of class, race, and culture since human genesis. Thankfully films, a popular art form, in the recent times, have made considerable contribution to bring to the populace, the realistic saga of transgender life-its predicaments, concerns and aspirations, and in the process have attempted to create a platform of social acceptance of these 'children of a lesser god.' Bengal has been fortunate to breed creative geni who like Late Rituporno Ghosh, Kaushik Ganguly, Partha Chakraborty, Amitava Bhattacharya, Barshali Chatterjee et al who have taken extremely undaunted steps to bend and break the gender stereotype within their films. This paper attempts to showcase the portrayal of the third gender in a binary society, projected through the lenses of some iconoclastic Bengali film makers.
- **Keywords:** galaxies, social outcasts, christened, British Raj, third gender, undaunted steps,