Bhang ya Bong? Representation of Cannabis in Selected Hindi Film Songs

Sahil Rathod

Abstract: The lack of discourse on different uses of cannabis in visual media has resulted in a unidimensional understanding of different forms and methods in which cannabis is consumed. To understand how visual representation often dictates and reinforces hegemonic notions of culturally ambiguous objects such as cannabis, this paper looks at selected film songs from across different eras of Hindi Cinema, and probes the manner in which politics and discourse operate in constructing meaning at the level of production of such texts. It uses theories connecting representation and discourse, adopting the lens of 'symbolic frameworks' as suggested by Paul Manning to make a textual and discourse analysis of the selected texts. The paper argues that songs depicting consumption of *bhang* attach images of festivity and religiosity to normalise its consumption in certain contexts, while songs where consumption happens in the form of smoking marijuana and/or *charas* images of dysfunction and social alienation are invoked. This paper concerns itself primarily with semiotics and does not look at the caste and gender dimensions of visual representation surrounding cannabis in the selected texts. Those approaches can become a full-length study in themselves and bring a much sharper focus to the politics of representation affecting a more balanced discourse on cannabis.

Cannabis as a 'social reality' in India is unique in the way in which it weaves religion, medicine (both traditional and modern), and cultural discourses together, creating the perfect fabric for a socio-political dialectic. Historically, the consumption of cannabis has been traditional in many parts of the country. Being a part of the socio-religious ethos in some regions, the cultivation and consumption of cannabis had remained non-criminalised for a long time even after Independence, until 1985 when India succumbed to the pressure of the Nixion 'War on Drugs' that finally caught up with the Rajiv Gandhi administration (Wikipedia Contributors). The changed legal framework, however, remained lenient towards the consumption of *bhang*; a

drinkable preparation of cannabis popularly consumed during the Hindu festivals of *Holi* and *Mahashivratri*, allowing states to cultivate and sell cannabis through Government regulated shops.

Popular culture like cinema and soap operas have constantly reflected the shifts in cultural practices in their narratives. Films are popularly considered to be reflections of the social, political, and ideological realities of the society. However, recent theories in semiotics and ideology have argued that instead of being a mere passive reflection of the society, texts (movies) actively construct meaning based on political and ideological inclinations, and thus have the power to influence the realities of the society. In the context of Hindi cinema, songs are an important tool for the narrative advancement of the plot and create a unique space for representation of culture (Morcom 1). The consumption of cannabis in its various forms and cultural contexts have been represented in several songs over the years. While narcotics such as opium, cocaine, and other psychotropic drugs have been depicted as objects of criminal enterprises (in accordance with the law and societal values), the representation of cannabis consumption, however, is largely influenced by the manner in which it is consumed; as edibles or being smoked.

Representation in media helps to both create and inform discourses on various 'objects' that are embedded in a given socio-cultural space. The discourse generated by such representation, in turn, informs future ideas on the objects in visual media. The representation of cannabis in visual media constructs a very particular worldview which largely ignores the dynamic nature of the cannabis culture in India. At once, it conveniently ignores the traditional use of cannabis for its recreational and medicinal value. The medical discourse on cannabis available in the society is sacrificed to the hegemonic representation of different forms of cannabis that reflect certain popular notions about them, which are also constructions of ideologically charged representations (Höijer 5). The lack of other realities on cannabis produces a delimiting effect in understanding the cannabis culture in India. The growing demand for the legalisation of medical cannabis and the subsequent resistance to such demand by some sections of the society reflects the lack of media discourse available on other patterns of cannabis usage. Visual media representations have a strong impact in creating ways of perceiving the social realities. Indulging only in selective or negative representations of cannabis is very problematic as it hinders its discourse in the society and caters only to a single ideological belief about its cultural relevance, intoxicating properties, and other reasons of consumption.

This paper aims to explore the manner in which cannabis is represented in its various forms of consumption in selected Hindi film songs and look at the ways in which such representations work in providing a dominant worldview that limits the scope of deriving further meaning of the 'objects' represented. Songs in Indian Cinema are unique in how they are simultaneously a part of the narrative, and yet create ruptures in the universe in which they are

set. This ambiguity opens up an interesting space for representing cultural practices such as festivals and weddings, apart from being dominated by romance and heartbreaks. Over the years, cannabis has also found a space in these songs, where in some contexts it has worked as a continuation of the narrative, and in some as an eventful rupture. How do these representations then construct meaning to either accommodate or reject certain values associated with cannabis? What are the images invoked to effect the selective discourse? How do the ideas of omission and negative representation work in sanctioning certain meanings associated with certain images and identities located within the context of cannabis consumption ? The paper aims to look into these questions through the representation of cannabis in a few selected Hindi film songs. Most representations of cannabis in its various forms have occurred in film songs as they provide both acceptance and space for representations of cultural practices and values (Anna Morcom 1). The songs chosen for the study: "Zara Si Aur Pila Do Bhang" (*Kaajal*, 1964), "Dum Maro Dum" (*Hare Rama Hare Krishna*, 1971), "Ye Dhua" (*Charas: A Joint Operation*, 2004), and "Balam Pichkari" (*Ye Jawaani Hai Deewani*, 2012) will lend an understanding in the ways in which cannabis has been represented before and after the landmark act on narcotics passed in the year 1984. The paper will explore the effects of politics in representation in these songs by focusing on the symbolic construction of meanings.

II

Jason Toynbee in his article "The Politics of Representation" gives a detailed understanding of media texts and the manner in which meaning is constructed through them. The concept of representations and the ideology and politics behind them are explored in this article (Toynbee 162). The articles "Production and Consumption of Media Culture" by Tony Purvis and "Media Texts" by Graeme Burton establishes the importance of looking at every representation as an ideological representation of a selective world view. Purvis looks at the construction of meaning and semiotics at the level of production of media texts, which is crucial to the research as it primarily looks at the construction of representations, whereas Burton looks at the ideas of negative credentials and omissions as an important tool in representations in media texts (Purvis 90-98, Burton 45-66). Paul Manning in his book Drug and Popular Culture in the Age of New Media provides arguments towards the construction of cultures through 'symbolic' frameworks' and the meaning embedded in them (Manning 1-60). David Hesmondhalgh reflects on the manner in which the U.K linguist Norman Fairclough subsumes different ideas on discourse and ideology to look at representations, identities and relations (Hesmondhalgh 37). *Drugs and Popular Culture* provides a range of work done in the field of drugs and their position in media and contemporary society. Birgitta Höijer looks at the idea of hegemonic representation in representation which may help in looking at the concept of representation in a different light (Höijer 5). Although the Literature review is contextualised for Western media and cultures, the commonality of the dominant narrative against certain aspects

of cannabis, and the modern history of its criminalisation allows for some cross-application to the Indian context as well.

The research will use the theoretical framework of politics and ideology of representation as used in media research by focusing on the construction of semiotics at the level of production of the songs. The use of 'discourse analysis' and ' textual analysis' will serve as the methods through which the analysis of the texts will be effected. The textual analysis will look at the texts through the lens of 'symbolic frameworks' such as locations, behaviours and identities, substance images, and cause and consequence to understand the symbolic representation and the cultural practices associated with them (Paul Manning 30). The concept of hegemonic representation, a part of social representation theory, will provide a different understanding of the ways in which representations work. This, however, will only be used to make a passing inference of the texts and will not be a part of the theoretical framework. The research does not look into the construction of meaning at the level of consumption by the audience and does not take into account the manner in which texts are consumed in relation to the manners in which they are produced. This can become a subject for study in itself which engages with the ideas on production and consumption of media and culture (Purvis 90)

Anna Morcom in her book, *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema* looks at the musical format and its integration in Hindi films (Morcom 1-2). One of the major criticisms against the manner in which songs are used in Hindi cinema is that they are extra-terrestrial and occur outside the ambit of the progress of the narrative. In This notion is debunked by K. Ravi Srinivas in his article "Popular Culture and Pop Sociology" where Srinivas argues:

> Film songs have been creatively used in films in a variety of ways. The same song has been used in the same film to portray different moods/emotions like pleasure and anguish. A song is used to underscore an idea, to reinforce a view to explore the predicament of a character and to express feelings which cannot otherwise be conveyed easily in ordinary conversation (Srinivas 1763-1764).

The wide acceptance and mass consumption of songs in Hindi cinema also makes it indispensable in the space that it provides for the cultural transmission of social values and ideas. Being a part of the popular culture, they also represent popular culture. Songs become a site for talking, writing and singing about cultural practices (Manning 4). The celebrations of festivals, social practices, and coming of age of emotions; all find a representational space. Important social issues such as drugs, intoxication, gender roles, and sexuality have been touched upon to a certain extent. This meshing of popular songs and culture provides an avenue to look at the manner in which such representations of cultural phenomena and identities take place. These representations are either 'celebratory' or 'disciplinary' (Manning 42.)

<div align="center">III</div>

Traditional consumption of cannabis for spiritual, medical, and recreational purposes dates back to 2000 B.C and still continues in some parts of the country with significant volumes of licit and illicit cultivation (Tandon 1). In fact, cannabis was legally sold and consumed in India till 1985. The subsequent law banning the cultivation, consumption and sale of cannabis and other narcotics was largely a result of the pressure mounted by the U.S.A through the agency of U.N convention on narcotics in 1961. Despite the law on Cannabis, certain patterns of intoxication through cannabis continue to be celebrated in the society in certain contexts. The consumption of *bhang* (made from the leaves of the cannabis plant) during Hindu festivals like Holi and Mahashivratri continues unabated in most parts of the country. The law, surprisingly, does not categorize the leaves and seeds of the Cannabis plant as narcotic substances and leaves a huge hole in its grip over psychotropic substances. The practice of *bhang* consumption has been covertly defended (in both religious and legal discourses) against the onslaught of the American understanding of cannabis while its other forms such as marijuana and *charas* have been left to the mercy of representations which reflect only the dominant discourse on the 'object'.

Early ideas on representation considered popular media like films and songs to be reflective of the social reality in their portrayal of characters, emotions, cultures and rituals (Manning 7). This notion was later challenged by many critics and theorists who argued that visual media was not a site for representation alone but a place where reality itself was actively constructed (Burton). Songs (and other visual media) do not merely represent the societal reality of cannabis intoxication but also participate in ascribing certain visuals to certain identities which generates a specific way of making meaning. There is often a competition over the correct way of presenting objects and events in the midst of a vast number of possibilities. This politically charged representation of objects happens through discourse which attempts to establish a hierarchy, in which one mode of representation of the world (its objects, events, people etc.) gains primacy over others (Mehan 56).

<div align="center">IV</div>

The primary texts chosen for this research paper show that while the consumption of and intoxication from bhang has been normalised by its association with innocence, religion, festivity, and as a culturally sanctioned effective remedy for inhibitions and suppressed desires, the consumption of Marijuana and charas have been constructed as anti-social activities by attaching images of debauchery, cultural subversion, and societal alienation.

The visual representations of Bhang and its consumption patterns have been contextualized in a jubilant and celebratory atmosphere. These songs majorly engage the involvement of the society in its representations which works towards establishing this particular form of intoxication as a normal cultural activity during festivities. In the song "Zara Si Aur Pila Do Bhang" from the movie *Kaajal*, the male protagonist played by Mehmood drinks a pot full of Bhang in an innocent reaction to witnessing something unpleasant. The rendition of this emotion occurs in tandem with the festive atmosphere accompanied with dance and up-beat music. The invocation of such images presents the consumption of bhang as a catalyst to cultural merry making instead of looking at it as with the same lens used for representation of alcohol consumption. The word catalyst in this context is used to highlight the manner in which bhang is understood to add more colours to the spirit of festivity. There is hardly a song which represents the consumption of bhang as a lonesome and stress relieving activity. Even in the song "Balam Pichkari" from the movie *Ye Jawani Hai Deewani*, the context in which intoxication from Bhang happens is the colourful and euphoric festival of Holi. The catalytic function of bhang is clear in the opening lines of the song where the female protagonist played by Deepika Padukone attributes the reason for the sudden spike in fun to intoxication from bhang:

> "*Itna maza, kyun aa raga hain*
> *Tune hawa mein bhang milaya"*
>
> So much fun! why do I feel it?
> You have laced the air with Bhang.
> (Balam Pichkari, *Ye Jawaani Hai Deewani*)

The substance images drawn to reflect the fun inducing quality of bhang works in providing a safe position for the representation in terms of negotiating with the larger understanding of the intoxicant. (Manning 157). This 'social accommodation' provided by the discourse and representation of bhang enables a strong base for its ideological appropriation:

> In that the meanings of discourse are about dominant beliefs and values, it follows that discourse are, as it were, ideology in communicative action (Burton 53).

The cause and consequence of intoxication from bhang tends to project it as an outlet for suppressed desires which do not transgress the socially acceptable ways of expression. The character of Naina Talwaar played by Deepika Padukone in *Ye Jawani Hai Deewani* is shy and introverted. She is unable to express her feelings for the male protagonist she meets in the course of a trip. This inhibition, however, dissolves when she consumes bhang during the song sequence on Holi celebration. The immediate effect is visible where she is shown to be carefree and uninhibited in her expression of enjoyment. There is a second consequence that is represented as well. After the episode of intoxication the protagonist assumes a new set of characteristics which

makes her self-confident and free from the shackles of introversion. This culturally sanctioned remedy to express hidden desires is equally prevalent in the consequences that follow intoxication in the song "Zara Si Aur Pila Do Bhang" where he claims to have renounced his meditative state only to be enamored by the beauty of the female lead in the song played by Mumtaz. The intoxication enables the male protagonist to come to terms with his baser emotions:

> *"Tere roop ka jhataka khake*
> *Meri soyi jawaaani jagi"*

> The hit from your beauty
> Has resurfaced my latent desires.
> (Zara Si Aur Pila Do Bhang, *Kaajal*)

The character has been enabled to do things he could not do in sobriety. This intoxication has helped him overcome his shy and inhibited self. The context of the song, its tone, and rhythm all come together to influence the construction of bhang culture and the representation of its substance images at the level of production of the song (Purvis 96).

This section explored the association of bhang culture with religion and innocence. The characterisation of Mehmood in the song is to be focused here. The saffron Dhoti, the Rudraksh around his neck, and the Tilaka on his forehead are all denotative of the popular representation of Hindu religious symbolism. Bhang has a rich history in its association with lord Shiva. The use of the word 'bhola' repetitively through the song serves the dual purpose of associating bhang culture with lord Shiva and innocence at the same time:

> *"Zara si aur pila do bhang*
> *Main aaya dekh ke aisa rang*
> *Ke dil mera dola*
> *O jai bam-bhola"*

> Let me drink a little more bhang
> For I have seen such colours
> That make my heart tremble,
> O! praise the innocent lord Shiva.
> (Zara Si Aur Pila Do Bhang, *Kaajal*)

The invocation of Lord Shiva tries to establish a historical and traditional acceptance of bhang intoxication in the society.

> The word 'Bhola'(Hindi) means –naïve and simple minded. Lord Shiva is called 'Bholenath' because he believes the words of his devotees immediately and grants their wishes without any second thought (Wikipedia contributors).

Another manner in which the association of religion and bhang culture come together is by tracing the practice of drinking bhang in the Hindu festival of Holi. This ideological representation of bhang provides persuasive formulations of preconceived ways of thinking about its social relevance and acceptance.(Macdonald 41). Thus, the normalisation of bhang as a culturally acceptable practice of intoxication occurs at various levels. In the book *Drugs and Popular Culture*, Paul Manning writes an introduction to the debate on drug normalisation through representation in media. He argues : If 'normalisation' is occurring, this is happening within and through popular cultures (Manning 54). According to him, this normalisation occurs through a range of discourse made available by different forms of popular culture which attach a specific set of images to provide that acceptability in culture. (Manning 49). The context in which Manning made those comments was the larger debate on the use of cannabis as a recreational drug in the Britain and American societies. In India, however, in the context of bhang, this happens to avoid the clubbing of bhang with other derivatives of cannabis such as marijuana and charas. There is no song which depicts both drinking and smoking of cannabis in the same frame. The religious history of bhang and the ideology working behind its preservation as a cultural practice attempts to construct a non-negative, acceptable, and normalised image of bhang. The word 'non-negative' is important as the representations do not overtly claim the glory of intoxication from bhang. This happens at the level of the symbolic framework that is invoked in the representation of bhang and its patterns of consumption in the society (Manning 30). The careful segregation of bhang from the other forms of cannabis, which have been made illegal by the law, helps in misrepresenting the origin of the intoxicating substance used in the preparation of bhang.

V

The representation of marijuana and charas in Hindi film songs in their various contexts is distinctly separate and more conscious of the legal and social framework surrounding them. Intoxication as a result of smoking marijuana or *charas* is interpolated in the narrative of deviance and immorality. The movie *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* is probably one of the first Hindi films to use the narrative of drug consumption and social alienation as an integral part of its story line. Although there are many instances of drug consumption throughout the movie, its representation in the song "Dum Maro Dum" is essential as it provides a more open space to explore popular ideas associated with marijuana and the consequences of its consumption. The notion that marijuana induces a need to disassociate from the society is reflected in the song in several ways. The Character of "Jasbir Jaiswal", played by Zeenat Aman, is found by her long separated brother in the company of hipsters drinking alcohol and consuming narcotics. The

context of hippy culture and seclusion from the rest of the world pervade the construction of the song. The lyrics of the song reflect attitudes of disassociation from the world:

> *"Duniyaa ne hum ko diyaa kyaa?*
> *Sab ne humaaraa kiya kya?*
> *Hum sab ki parwah kare kyu?*
> *Duniyaa se hum ne liyaa kyaa?"*
>
> What has the world given us?
> What have we taken from the world?
> Why should we worry about anyone?
> What has anyone done for us?
> (Dum Maro Dum, *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*).

The rhetoric challenges the conventional forms of social integration. Simon Cross in one of her works probes the media discourse about drug takers in Britain and identifies a pattern which constructs the drug takers as the deviant class not belonging to the society. (Cross 137). A similar pattern emerges in the movie *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*, exemplified in the song, where the character of Jasbir Jaiswal rejects society for its inability to accept their identity and practices into the cultural mainstream. Although there is rejection on both sides, the representation vilifies the drug culture by attributing the suicide of the character as a result of the moving away from her family and social values. Paul Manning presents his understanding of the construction of this social alienation in its cultural context:

> In employing the concept of subculture, Cloward and Ohlin imply that drug consumption may be embedded within shared cultural practices that are in some ways set apart from the values and practices of mainstream society (Manning 15).

Sub-cultural contexts have been constructed in the representation of marijuana and charas. The phrase 'sub-culture' does not necessarily have a negative connotation. However, in the songs "Ye Dhua" from the movie *Charas: A Joint Mission* and "Dum Maro Dum", from the movie *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*, the sub-cultural context and the images associated with them evokes a negative understanding of the cultures along with their practices. Both song sequences appear to occur in environments secluded from the society where a large group of people, mostly youth, are indulging in the consumption of charas and marijuana which are presented along with images of physical intimacy and raving. The picturisation of the song "Ye Dhua" provides a peak into the enormous reach of the 'illegal' drug culture. An association is also made with the illegal drug deals and the constant pursuit of law to convict the peddlers and junkies. It is important to look at the construction of the 'criminal subcultures' as an important tool of representation of drug consumption in media (Manning 14). In such a representation the drug cultures become the cause

for moral degradation and the subsequent legal crackdown. There is an attempt to label the drug consumer in the public through arrest, exposure and association with deviance (Manning 17).

The presence of the 'foreigner' in both the films at the level of narrative and representation in songs is particularly charged with the ideological distancing of the drug culture form the mainstream culture of the society. The presence of foreigners in the representation attempts to thrust the responsibility of the subcultures (both hipster and criminal) on them. The lyrics from the song: *Dum maaro* dum *mit jaaye gham* (Take another hit, all your worries will disappear) / Bolo *subah shaam hare krishna hare raam* (From morning until night chant, "Hare Krishna Hare Ram) reflect the blend of two popular movements started in the west: The International Hare Krishna movement that emerged in the 1970's, garnered a huge support base amongst several western (predominantly white) population, and the hipster culture that emerged as a reaction to the horrors of the second World War (Wikipedia contributors). The location of the song "Dum Maro Dum" and the most part of the movie occurs in Katmandu, Nepal. This is a clear case of pushing the history of cannabis in India to the northernmost fringes. Even the song "Ye Dhua" uses the stereotypical representation of the 'Italians' as the instigators of the illegal flourish of the anti-social drug culture. The song is constructed as a means to continue the larger narrative of the film which represents the production of drugs at the local level and their transit to the 'Italian mafia' through a well established network of middlemen. Both the songs have a heavy presence of foreigners as background artists which works to reinforce the association of drug culture and its criminalisation to the foreigner, who is the 'other'. According to Graeme Burton: Representations are negative when they emphasize the given group is composed of 'others'. They are not like 'us' (Burton 140). He argues,

> ...in terms of social groups and images of people, its significance is not simply about appearance. It's about the substance of ideas invoked about that group (Burton 62).

The characters in the movie *Charas: A Joint Operation* also serve only to either facilitate the illegal business run by the Italian mafia or become the crusaders who bring the guilty to the book. Thus, the importance of linking the representation of the foreigner with the alien nature of the drug culture is very much valid in the context of the chosen texts.

Images of smoke, haze, disorientation and confusion are attached to marijuana and charas to reflect the mental degeneration caused by their consumption. The image of smoke and haze appear not merely at the level of representation of substance images but also at the level of semiotics. The repetitive use of the word *dhua* in the beginning of the song "Ye Dhua" imposes a heavy presence of smoke in the environment. The rest of the song describes the effects of the consumption of this '*dhua*' (charas) and its manifestation in the immediate atmosphere. The far reaching effects of the intoxicating smoke are represented in the lyrics:

> *"Husn bhi ishq bhi sab hain bahke yaha*
> *Har taraf har jagah cha raha hain dhua"*

> Beauty and love are both in daze
> In this all pervading haze
> (Ye Dhua, *Charas: A joint Operation).*

The intoxicated smoker is not only alienated from the society but is also removed from the reality of his own surroundings. The high induced in this state of consciousness is experienced more at an individual level despite being in the presence of a group. The disorientation is represented in the smokers inability to make sense of his surroundings:

> *"Na yaha roshni hain na andhera*
> *Na ab shyam hogi na sawera"*

> There is now neither light nor darkness
> Nor will there be dusk or dawn.
> (Ye Dhua, *Charas: A Joint Operation)*

The smoke from the consumption of marijuana and charas is projected onto the symbolic representation of the effects of cannabis smoking. (Cross 142-143) The association of the semiotics with the images of smoke, haze, and confusion together construct the individual's inability to function normally:

> This is counter to conventional common sense: illegal drug use is usually associated with dysfunctions, manifested in family or communal breakdown and the impairment of the individual's ability to fulfill social expectations (Manning 12).

The cause and consequence of this supposedly 'anti-social' practice in the song constructs a negative representation of marijuana and charas. The constant threat of legal crackdown and the ideas of dysfunction are glaringly obvious in the song "Ye Dhua". The suicide of Jasbir Jaiswal in the movie *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* extends the larger discourse on the fatal consequences of marijuana culture.

In the representations of *bhang*, marijuana, and *charas* in the songs and the narrative of the films, an important aspect is under work. The representation of *bhang* as a culturally acceptable mode of cannabis intoxication and the representations of charas and marijuana as agents of dysfunction and alienation occurs at the cost of omitting several other contexts and

consequences of the consumption of the drugs. The discourse on the medical benefits of cannabis, or as a substance for recreation has hardly been represented in songs. The songs "Balam Pichkari" and "Zara Si Aur Pila Do Bhang" add to the already prevalent discourse on bhang while also reinforcing them. This has a normalising effect on the consumption of bhang in the society under certain contexts. On the other hand, the songs " Dum Maro Dum" and "Ye Dhua" in their attempt to reflect the legal and social reality of marijuana and charas only constructs images, identities, and context which represent the stereotypical understanding of cannabis culture, which in turn is used by legal agencies to justify their crackdown on those who use the substance (Burton 133). Cannabis has had a rich history of medical and recreational use in India which is deliberately ignored in the guise of reflecting the reality of the society. Representation is not merely the reflection of reality but also an active ideological construction of a particular way of looking at the society and its cultural practices. Jason Toynbee in one of his articles on representations titled "Politics of Representation" argues that representations are politically and ideologically charged misrepresentations. Thus, it becomes important to look at each media representation not as a reflection of reality but as an ideologically charged construction of socio-cultural 'objects' (Jason Toynbee 178). Representation acts as an agent which gives substance to ideology and the ideas of omission, negative credentials, and misrepresentations. This is what Graeme Burton famously referred to as 'meaning by omission' (Burton 64). The close relation of *bhang* culture and the Hindu rituals and practices provides a framework for the possible ways in which bhang can be represented. The discourse created on bhang limits the understanding of its different patterns of consumption and purposes. The same ideology works behind the representation of marijuana and charas, most of which are stereotypical. As Burton argues in the context of representation for women in television:

> Representations also reveal the negative ideological credentials...and how they are shown.... The contradiction between the world on screen and the world as we experience it reveal ideology at work, display a partial view of social reactions and disposition of power (Burton 63).

VI

This paper hopes to provide some understanding in the ways in which discourse operates in media, especially songs, and ways in which meaning is constructed at a semiotic level. It will also provide a base for further inquiry into different contexts in which such discourses are presented. This paper does not overtly focus on the legality of cannabis in India. The implications on the legal framework on the representations of cannabis in the selected songs has not been looked into. The context of regional, national, and international laws on cannabis and its representation in visual media can become a study in itself. Further, the paper does not approach the politics of caste and gender operating at the level of representation around the discourse of cannabis consumption. An undertaking with caste and gender as the primary focus have the

potential to bring a more nuanced understanding of the intertwining of the social, the political, and the religious in understanding the politics in representation, especially that of the *bhang* culture in India. A look into the cultural evolution of different practices of cannabis usage and consumption may provide explanations for the accommodation of *bhang* in certain cultural contexts, but such an inquiry will necessarily have to take into consideration the influences of caste and privilege.

Filmography

Charas: A Joint Operation. Dir, Tigmanshu Dhulia. Anjum Rizvi. 2004. Film.

Hare Rama Hare Krishna. Dir, Dev Anand. Navketan Films. 1971.

Ye Jawaani Hai Deewani. Dir, Ayan Mukerji. Dharma Producation. 2013. Film

Kaajal. Dir, Ram Maheshwari. Famous Cine Studious. 1965. Film.

References

Burton, Graeme. *More Than Meets the Eye.* London : Arnold Publishers. 2002. Print.

Burton, Graeme. "Media Texts". *Media and Society : Critical Perspectives.*" New Delhi : Rawat

Publications, 2009 : 45-65. Print.

Drugs and Popular Culture :Drugs, media and identity in contemporary society. Ed. Paul

Manning. Devon : willan Publishing, 2007 . Print.

Höijer, Birgitta. "Social Representations Theory : A New Theory for Media Research".

Nordicom Review. 32 (2011) : 3-16. web. 1 July 2015.

Macdonald, Myra. *Exploring Media Discourse.* London : MPG Books Ltd. 2003. Print.

Manning, Paul. *Drugs and Popular Culture in the Age of New Media.* New York : Routledge,

2014. web. 24 July 2015.

Mehan, Hugh. "Beneath the Skin and Between the Ears : A Case Study in the Politics Of

Representation." *Schooling the Symbolic Animal : Social and Cultural Dimensions of Education*.

Ed. Kathryn Borman, Margaret Eisenhart, Michele Foster, and Amy E. Fox, Bradley A.U. Levinson. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000. Print.

Purvis, Tony. "Production and Consumption of Media Culture". *Media and Culture Studies.* Edinburg : Edinburg University Press, 2006 : 90-98. Print.

Srinivas, K. Ravi. "Popular Culture and Pop Sociology". *Economics and Political Weekly*. 27.33 (Aug. 15, 1992). 1763-1764. JSTOR. web. 2 June 2015.

Toynbee, Jason. "The Politics of Representation". *Analysing Media Texts* Ed. Gillespie, Marie and Toynbee. New Delhi : Tata Mc Graw-Hill, 2010 : 157-185. Print.

Wikipedia contributors. "Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (India)." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 9 Aug. 2015. Web. 25 Jul. 2015.

Wikipedia contributors. "Bholenath." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 21 May. 2015. Web. 26 Jul. 2015.