

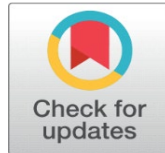
# REPRESENTATIONS OF TRANSGENDER CHARACTERS IN INDIAN AND AMERICAN LITERATURE AND MEDIA – STEREOTYPING VERSUS EMPOWERED PORTRAYALS

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the evolving representations of transgender individuals in Indian and American literature and media, focusing on the tension between stereotypical and empowered portrayals. Drawing upon queer theory, postcolonial perspectives, and media studies, the analysis contextualizes how cultural, historical, and legal factors have shaped these narratives. In India, colonial legacies and the socio-religious status of Hijra communities inform depictions that oscillate between mythic reverence and marginalization. In contrast, American media, influenced by individualistic frameworks and LGBTQ+ activism, grapples with issues of visibility and authenticity, often constrained by sensationalized stereotypes. Across both contexts, portrayals of transgender characters have historically leaned on tropes such as the “comic relief” or the “tragic victim,” perpetuating stigma and misinformation. Yet, a discernible shift is underway: contemporary works, including autobiographical literature, documentaries, and critically acclaimed films, increasingly grant transgender characters depth, agency, and complexity. These empowered narratives challenge harmful assumptions, promote empathy, and contribute to broader social acceptance and legal recognition. By comparing Indian and American contexts, this study highlights the transformative potential of inclusive storytelling and underscores the ongoing need for authentic transgender voices in authorship and production. The paper concludes that while progress has been made, continued advocacy and structural reforms in the media industries are essential for fostering more nuanced and affirming representations.

**Keywords:** Transgender Representation, Indian Literature, American Media, Stereotypes, Empowerment

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Transgender identities and expressions have long been a subject of fascination, marginalization, and debate across cultures. In both Indian and American contexts, transgender individuals have faced a complex interplay of social, cultural, and legal challenges. Literature and media serve as critical sites for shaping, reflecting, and contesting the narratives surrounding transgender experiences. Through novels, films, television shows, and other creative forms, representations of transgender people can either reinforce stereotypes or challenge them by offering more empowering portrayals. As society becomes increasingly aware of issues related to gender identity, it is imperative to analyse how these representations evolve and the impact they have on public perception, policy, and the lived realities of transgender individuals.

Historically, the term “transgender” emerged in the West to describe a spectrum of identities and experiences that transcend the conventional male-female binary (Stryker 32). In India, non-binary and third-gender identities have been acknowledged for centuries, as seen in the traditions of the Hijras and other gender-variant communities (Nanda 25).

Despite this long-standing acknowledgment, social stigmas and institutional discrimination have persisted, affecting how transgender individuals are depicted and perceived. From sacred texts like the Mahabharata, which includes figures such as Shikhandi, to contemporary Bollywood films, Indian media has woven transgender narratives into cultural discourse, though not always in ways that affirm their identities. Similarly, in American media, transgender characters were often relegated to comedic sidekicks or sensationalized roles until more nuanced portrayals began to emerge in the late twentieth century (GLAAD, “Where We Are on TV”).

Literature, as a reflection of social consciousness, has also played a vital role in shaping transgender narratives. In American literary contexts, authors such as Leslie Feinberg (in *Stone Butch Blues*) and Janet Mock (in *Redefining Realness*) have foregrounded transgender lives from an insider perspective, thereby counteracting long-standing misrepresentations (Mock 12). In India, writers like Living Smile Vidya, with her autobiographical work *I Am Vidya: A Transgender’s Journey*, have brought firsthand insight into the everyday realities of transgender communities (Vidya 3). Such works challenge stereotypes that paint transgender individuals as victims or deviants by showcasing resilience, agency, and dignity.

However, the emergence of these more empowered portrayals has not eradicated stereotypical depictions. The tension between stereotyping and empowerment is especially evident in visual media—television series, films, and digital platforms—where short screen time or shallow character development often reduces transgender roles to mere plot devices. In many cases, these representations have lacked nuance, perpetuating harmful tropes like the “deceptive trans woman,” the “tragic trans victim,” or the “comic relief.” While there has been a shift toward more inclusive and positive portrayals, these changes have been uneven, reflecting broader societal struggles around gender norms.

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to examine how transgender characters are represented in Indian and American literature and media, with a particular focus on the dichotomy between stereotypical and empowered portrayals. By drawing on a range of examples—from mainstream Bollywood to American television series like *Transparent*—this comparative analysis highlights cultural, historical, and legal factors that influence representation. Ultimately, the paper seeks to underscore how literature and media can serve as both a mirror and a catalyst for social change. An exploration of intersectionality, socio-political contexts, and emerging narratives will shed light on how representation can evolve from tokenism and stereotype to nuanced, affirming, and humanizing portrayals.

## 2. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

### 1) Indian Context

India has a longstanding history of recognizing non-binary and third-gender individuals, commonly referred to as Hijras. Religious and cultural texts, including the Mahabharata, depict characters who transition gender or exhibit fluid gender expressions. These mythological and historical narratives offered some measure of cultural legitimacy to transgender identities, even though modern social attitudes often remain restrictive (Nanda 54). The Hijra community, in particular, occupies a paradoxical position: traditionally invited to bless weddings and births, yet frequently ostracized in daily life (Dutta and Roy 325). This contradictory status is reflected in literature and media, where Hijra characters are sometimes revered as mystical or spiritual but are more often relegated to marginalized or villainous roles.

With the advent of colonial rule and the imposition of British legal frameworks, transgender communities in India faced intensified persecution. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, for instance, targeted Hijras, effectively criminalizing their existence (Basu et al. 4). Such historical legal discrimination left a lasting imprint on how society views transgender individuals. Only in recent years, particularly after the landmark *NALSA v. Union of India* judgment in 2014, has there been a legal acknowledgment of transgender persons as a “third gender” (Basu et al. 9). This ruling and subsequent legislative efforts have spurred a gradual shift in media portrayals, as filmmakers and authors began to explore transgender stories with greater depth and empathy.

### 2) American Context

In the United States, the term “transgender” gained prominence in the late twentieth century, but the existence of gender-variant individuals stretches back through Indigenous two-spirit traditions and beyond (Stryker 18). Despite these long histories, mainstream American culture largely rendered transgender identities invisible or pathologized them. Early Hollywood films often portrayed cross-dressing in comedic or criminal contexts, as seen in works like *Psycho* (1960) and *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), where characters coded as transgender or gender-variant were depicted as

psychologically unstable villains (GLAAD, “Where We Are on TV”). This legacy of sensationalized or negative portrayals set the stage for widespread misunderstanding and prejudice.

The rise of queer activism in the late 1960s and 1970s—exemplified by the Stonewall Riots—helped foreground the rights and visibility of transgender individuals within the broader LGBTQ+ movement. Subsequent decades saw gradual improvements in representation, influenced by political and social milestones such as the American Psychiatric Association’s declassification of homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1973 and, later, more nuanced discussions on gender identity (Butler 42). However, it was not until the 2010s that mainstream media truly began to feature transgender characters in more positive and complex roles, thanks in part to series like *Transparent* (2014–2019) and *Pose* (2018–2021). These shows highlighted the importance of authentic casting and storytelling, leading to more inclusive industry standards (GLAAD, “Where We Are on TV”).

### 3) Comparative Insights

Both Indian and American contexts illustrate a trajectory from invisibility and stigmatization to gradual, albeit inconsistent, acceptance. Yet, the underlying cultural frameworks differ. India’s colonial legacy and its interplay with ancient recognition of gender variance create a complex cultural tapestry. Meanwhile, the United States grapples with its own contradictions, often championing individual freedoms while perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Understanding these historical and cultural backdrops is crucial for analysing contemporary literary and media portrayals, as each context brings its own set of traditions, legal structures, and social attitudes that shape how transgender narratives are told and received.

## 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To analyse representations of transgender individuals in literature and media, this paper draws upon a blend of queer theory, postcolonial studies, and media studies. These frameworks offer critical lenses for deconstructing how identities are shaped, negotiated, and contested in cultural narratives.

### 1) Queer Theory

Queer theory, emerging from the works of scholars like Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, challenges essentialist notions of gender and sexuality (Butler 3). By questioning the binaries of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual, queer theory provides a conceptual space to examine how transgender characters disrupt normative gender constructs. Butler’s concept of performativity is particularly useful in understanding how repeated social and cultural acts solidify the gender binary, and how transgender identities subvert this through lived experiences (Butler 33). In both Indian and American media, the depiction of transgender individuals as “other” underscores the cultural mechanisms that reinforce cisnormative standards.

### 2) Postcolonial Studies

In the Indian context, postcolonial theory sheds light on how colonial legacies continue to shape societal norms and legal structures. Scholars like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha have argued that colonialism not only imposed foreign legal and administrative systems but also moral and social codes that stigmatized indigenous gender and sexual diversity. The imposition of British legal frameworks—like the Criminal Tribes Act—exemplifies this colonial influence (Dutta and Roy 326). Postcolonial studies help unravel how these historical forces manifest in contemporary media, where Hijras or other transgender identities may still be cast in marginal or fetishized roles.

### 3) Media Studies

Media studies offer tools to dissect how narratives are constructed, circulated, and consumed. Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model is useful for examining the power dynamics at play in media production and reception. In essence, creators “encode” certain meanings into texts, which audiences then “decode” based on their cultural and social contexts (Hall 58). This is relevant in analysing transgender portrayals because stereotypes and biases in production can lead to reductive or harmful representations, which audiences may either accept or resist. Media scholars also highlight the importance of authentic representation and the role of “symbolic annihilation”—the idea that underrepresentation or misrepresentation in media contributes to the marginalization of real-world communities (Tuchman 8).

By applying these theoretical perspectives, one can better understand how representations of transgender characters are influenced by cultural norms, historical legacies, and production processes. Moreover, these frameworks illuminate the ways in which transgender identities can challenge or reinforce dominant ideologies. While queer theory

critiques binary understandings of gender, postcolonial theory reveals the cultural and historical layers that inform these narratives, and media studies demonstrate how these narratives reach and influence public consciousness. Together, these theoretical lenses provide a comprehensive scaffold for analyzing the nuances of stereotyping and empowered portrayals in Indian and American contexts.

## 4. REPRESENTATIONS IN INDIAN LITERATURE AND MEDIA

### 1) Traditional and Mythological Narratives

India's literary heritage features numerous texts that allude to gender variance. The Mahabharata includes the character Shikhandi, who is born female but later transforms into a male warrior, illustrating an ancient acknowledgment of gender fluidity (Nanda 76). Such narratives have historically conferred a certain mythic acceptance of transgender identities. However, in many modern retellings or popular media adaptations, these figures are either sidelined or presented through a sensational lens that emphasizes their "difference" rather than their humanity.

### 2) Contemporary Indian Literature

In the realm of modern Indian literature, there has been a growing effort to foreground transgender voices. Living Smile Vidya's *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* (2007) is a groundbreaking autobiographical work that details Vidya's personal struggles and triumphs (Vidya 3). By narrating her experiences of ostracization, discrimination, and eventual self-affirmation, Vidya challenges the stereotype of transgender individuals as perpetual victims. Instead, she offers a narrative of agency, resilience, and self-discovery. Similarly, Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) introduces the character Anjum, a Hijra who navigates the socio-political upheavals of contemporary India. Roy's portrayal is complex, depicting Anjum as a central figure with emotional depth and moral clarity (Roy 45). While Roy's novel is not solely about transgender experiences, Anjum's story is woven into the broader tapestry of social and political commentary, reflecting a shift toward more inclusive and humanized portrayals.

### 3) Bollywood and Regional Cinema

Bollywood, as India's most prominent film industry, has traditionally lagged in offering nuanced transgender representation. Often, transgender characters—particularly Hijras—have been portrayed as comedic devices or background dancers in wedding scenes, reinforcing stereotypes of them as intrusive or exotic. Films like *Tamanna* (1997), directed by Mahesh Bhatt, offered an early attempt at more serious portrayal by featuring a transgender character raising a child. However, the film still skirted around deeper issues of identity and agency (Basu et al. 12). More recently, *Super Deluxe* (2019), directed by Thiagarajan Kumararaja, has been hailed for its sensitive portrayal of a transgender woman, Shilpa, played by actor Vijay Sethupathi (Kumararaja). The film depicts her personal journey, struggles with societal acceptance, and complex relationship with her family. Although some critics argue that casting a cisgender male actor might undermine authenticity, the role itself marked a significant leap in Indian cinema's portrayal of transgender identities.

Regional cinema in languages like Tamil, Malayalam, Bengali, and Marathi has also begun to explore transgender narratives. Films such as *Naanu Avanalla... Avalu* (2015) in Kannada, based on the life of Living Smile Vidya, delve into the protagonist's experiences with both sensitivity and depth. These regional works often have smaller budgets and limited reach compared to mainstream Bollywood productions but can offer more authentic and grassroots perspectives on transgender realities.

### 4) Television and Digital Media

Indian television has been slower to adapt, with most portrayals of Hijras or transgender characters confined to episodic storylines that hinge on sensational revelations or supernatural twists. However, digital platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime have started to fill this gap with web series that address LGBTQ+ themes, providing a space for more experimental and inclusive storytelling. Some independent YouTube channels and short films also highlight transgender voices and issues, albeit with limited audiences.

### 5) Shifting Stereotypes to Empowerment

Despite notable progress, stereotypical tropes remain entrenched in Indian media. Transgender characters are often shown as objects of ridicule or fear, and their narratives revolve around tragic backstories. Yet, the legal recognition of transgender persons, coupled with increased public discourse, has begun to pave the way for empowered representations. These newer portrayals emphasize transgender individuals' resilience, focusing on their aspirations,



relationships, and contributions to society rather than merely their struggles. The emergence of transgender public figures—such as activist Gauri Sawant—has also influenced the shift toward more affirming narratives (Dutta and Roy 333).

In summation, Indian literature and media offer a complex mosaic of transgender representations. Rooted in ancient acknowledgments of gender fluidity, modern portrayals oscillate between regressive stereotypes and groundbreaking narratives that humanize transgender lives. The evolving socio-legal landscape, exemplified by the NALSA judgment and subsequent policy changes, provides a critical backdrop for understanding these shifts. While there is still considerable work to be done, the increasing visibility of authentic transgender voices—through both autobiographical literature and progressive films—suggests a gradual move away from one-dimensional stereotypes toward more empowered, multifaceted portrayals.

## 5. REPRESENTATIONS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE AND MEDIA

### 1) Early Literary and Cinematic Depictions

In American literature and early cinema, transgender characters were often conflated with cross-dressing or drag, and narratives tended to sensationalize these characters as aberrations. Novels like *Confessions of a Mask* by Yukio Mishima (though Japanese in origin, widely read in the U.S.) and early Hollywood films like *Glen or Glenda* (1953) showcased rudimentary attempts to discuss gender variance, but they largely reinforced societal anxieties about non-normative identities (Stryker 51). The Hays Code era in Hollywood further restricted honest portrayals, leading filmmakers to resort to coded references or sensational plots involving murder and mental illness.

### 2) The Rise of Queer Literature and Memoirs

By the 1960s and 1970s, the LGBTQ+ rights movement began to influence literature, paving the way for more nuanced works. Writers like Leslie Feinberg, whose novel *Stone Butch Blues* (1993) explored the complexities of gender identity and expression, provided groundbreaking insight into transgender experiences (Feinberg 14). The 1990s and 2000s saw an explosion of memoirs by transgender authors, such as Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw* (1994) and Janet Mock's *Redefining Realness* (2014), which offered personal narratives that challenged stereotypes of transgender individuals as deceptive or deviant (Mock 23). These first-person accounts played a vital role in humanizing transgender identities and advocated for societal acceptance.

### 3) Television and Film Transformations

American television underwent a major shift in the 2010s with series like *Transparent* (2014–2019), created by Jill Soloway. The show focused on a transgender parent coming out later in life, delving into family dynamics, personal struggles, and the nuances of transitioning (Soloway). While *Transparent* was lauded for bringing transgender narratives to mainstream audiences, it also faced criticism for casting a cisgender male actor (Jeffrey Tambor) in the lead role. Nonetheless, the series sparked conversations about authenticity, representation, and the importance of hiring transgender actors and writers. Around the same time, shows like *Orange Is the New Black* featured Laverne Cox, one of the first openly transgender actresses to gain widespread recognition. Cox's portrayal of Sophia Burset, a transgender inmate, was a milestone in American television, showcasing the challenges of incarceration, family, and healthcare from a transgender perspective (GLAAD, "Where We Are on TV").

Films like *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) brought tragic real-life stories to the big screen, raising awareness about violence against transgender individuals. However, many of these portrayals continued to highlight suffering and victimization, which, while raising critical social issues, risked reinforcing the trope of the "tragic trans figure." More recent productions, such as *Pose* (2018–2021), reversed this trend by featuring predominantly transgender women of color in leading roles, set against the backdrop of the 1980s and 1990s ballroom scene. *Pose* not only showcased the resilience and creativity of transgender communities but also addressed intersectional issues like racism, classism, and the AIDS crisis (GLAAD, "Where We Are on TV").

### 4) Documentaries and Independent Media

Documentary films like *Paris Is Burning* (1990) and *Disclosure* (2020) have played a crucial role in unveiling the realities of transgender communities. *Paris Is Burning* delved into the lives of Black and Latinx drag and transgender performers in the New York ballroom scene, illuminating how these communities forged chosen families and cultures of resistance. *Disclosure*, featuring Laverne Cox as an executive producer, offered a comprehensive examination of

Hollywood's history of transgender representation, tracing the harmful stereotypes that have shaped public perception (Disclosure). These documentaries, alongside independent film festivals and streaming platforms, have contributed to a growing repertoire of nuanced transgender stories.

### 5) Toward Empowerment and Authenticity

While American media still grapples with misrepresentation, the push for authentic casting, transgender writers' rooms, and sensitivity consulting has begun to yield more empowering portrayals. GLAAD's annual "Where We Are on TV" reports document a rise in transgender characters and narratives that focus on aspirations, relationships, and day-to-day challenges rather than solely on trauma or transition (GLAAD, "Where We Are on TV"). This shift is significant because it expands the scope of transgender storytelling, moving beyond tragedy and sensationalism to depict well-rounded human experiences.

Overall, American literature and media have traversed a path from silence and stigma to partial visibility, and more recently, toward more robust and affirming narratives. Works by transgender authors, the emergence of critically acclaimed television series, and the role of documentaries have collectively challenged the status quo. However, systemic barriers—ranging from lack of funding for transgender-centered projects to ongoing social prejudices—continue to shape how, and to what extent, transgender stories are told. Nonetheless, the progress made in the last two decades signals a gradual but meaningful transformation, one that holds promise for increasingly empowered representations in the future.

## 6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: STEREOTYPING VERSUS EMPOWERED PORTRAYALS

### 1) Common Stereotypes

In both Indian and American media, certain stereotypes recur. One prominent trope is the portrayal of transgender women as "deceivers," wherein they are depicted as tricking cisgender men into relationships. This trope perpetuates harmful ideas that transgender identities are inherently fraudulent (Tuchman 12). Another common stereotype is the "comic relief" role, where transgender characters are used to elicit laughter from their perceived incongruity with societal gender norms. Additionally, the "tragic trans" trope appears frequently, focusing almost exclusively on suffering, violence, or death. While these narratives can bring attention to real-world challenges, their overuse risks reinforcing the idea that transgender lives are defined by pain and victimhood.

### 2) Cultural Nuances

Despite these shared stereotypes, cultural nuances play a vital role in how transgender identities are contextualized. In India, the Hijra community's historical and religious significance sometimes grants a quasi-spiritual aura in media portrayals, though often overshadowed by social stigmatization (Nanda 93). Indian narratives may also incorporate themes of family honor, arranged marriages, and caste dynamics, which shape the depiction of transgender characters' struggles and relationships (Basu et al. 15). In contrast, American portrayals are more likely to center on individual identity, personal freedom, and legal recognition, reflecting the country's broader emphasis on individual rights and liberties. Intersectionality—particularly regarding race and class—adds additional layers to American representations, as seen in shows like *Pose*, which foregrounds the experiences of Black and Latinx transgender women (GLAAD, "Where We Are on TV").

### 3) Empowered Portrayals

Empowerment emerges in narratives that grant transgender characters agency, complexity, and authenticity. In India, films like *Super Deluxe* and literary works like *I Am Vidya* highlight protagonists who navigate social barriers while maintaining dignity and individuality (Vidya 29; Kumararaja). These portrayals often emphasize community support and resilience, countering stereotypes that Hijras or transgender individuals are isolated or unproductive. In the United States, empowered narratives have increasingly appeared in mainstream media. Shows like *Pose* not only cast transgender actors in lead roles but also employed transgender writers and directors, ensuring that storytelling was rooted in lived experiences. Memoirs by transgender authors such as Janet Mock's *Redefining Realness* and Jennifer Finney Boylan's *She's Not There* provide intimate accounts of self-actualization, reframing transgender existence as a process of discovery rather than a burden (Mock 46).

### 4) Role of Authorship and Production

Authorship and production significantly influence the shift from stereotyping to empowerment. In many instances, cisgender writers and directors have portrayed transgender characters through a lens of external fascination, leading to objectification or sensationalism. However, when transgender creators or consultants are involved, representations tend to be more accurate, multidimensional, and respectful (Disclosure). In India, the inclusion of Hijra activists and organizations as cultural consultants on film sets can lead to more informed narratives. Similarly, in the U.S., GLAAD and other advocacy groups offer resources and guidance to ensure sensitivity and authenticity. This collaborative approach can mitigate harmful tropes and foster more inclusive storytelling.

### 5) Impact on Public Perception and Policy

Representations in literature and media have a tangible effect on societal attitudes and public policy. Positive portrayals can lead to increased empathy, influencing legal reforms and social acceptance. The visibility of transgender individuals in American media has coincided with growing support for anti-discrimination legislation, although backlash and political hurdles remain (Stryker 108). In India, the media coverage of the NALSA judgment and subsequent portrayals of transgender individuals in film and television have contributed to heightened awareness, albeit with varying degrees of social acceptance (Basu et al. 18). Thus, empowered portrayals do not merely reflect social progress; they can actively shape it by challenging viewers to reconsider ingrained biases.

### 6) Ongoing Challenges

Despite advancements, both Indian and American media industries continue to grapple with systemic barriers. Transgender narratives often struggle to secure funding, face censorship (particularly in India), and encounter limited distribution. The global digital landscape has opened new avenues for indie films, web series, and self-published works, but mainstream platforms still exert significant influence on public consciousness. Furthermore, the continued debate over casting cisgender actors in transgender roles underscores broader questions about representation, authenticity, and economic opportunities for transgender professionals.

In summary, while Indian and American media share certain stereotypes in their portrayal of transgender characters, the cultural frameworks and socio-legal contexts lead to distinct narrative emphases. Empowered portrayals, marked by authenticity, complexity, and agency, are on the rise in both contexts. These narratives challenge harmful tropes and have the potential to reshape public perception, policy, and societal norms. Yet, the evolution toward comprehensive representation remains an ongoing process, requiring sustained advocacy, structural change within the entertainment industry, and greater participation of transgender voices in storytelling.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Transgender representations in Indian and American literature and media have traversed a long and winding path—from mythic acknowledgments and early sensationalist portrayals to more recent strides toward nuanced, empowering narratives. Historical, cultural, and legal contexts have significantly influenced how transgender identities are depicted, with colonial legacies, religious traditions, and sociopolitical movements shaping each society's engagement with gender variance. While India's Hijra community is deeply rooted in cultural tradition yet marginalized by modern societal norms, American transgender representations grapple with issues of visibility, authenticity, and intersectionality in a media-saturated environment.

Stereotypical portrayals—whether as tragic victims, deceptive figures, or comic relief—remain pervasive, reflecting broader societal prejudices and systemic inequities. However, the emergence of literature, films, and television shows that center transgender perspectives has begun to counteract these stereotypes, offering stories of resilience, self-discovery, and community. Empowered portrayals underscore the importance of authorial authenticity, inclusive production practices, and critical frameworks such as queer theory and postcolonial studies to analyze and critique these narratives.

Ultimately, representation matters not merely as a mirror of existing social norms but as a catalyst for transformation. By showcasing transgender characters in all their complexity, creators can foster empathy, challenge ingrained biases, and pave the way for policy changes that acknowledge and protect transgender rights. As both Indian and American media continue to evolve, the hope is that future portrayals will be guided by the lived realities of transgender individuals, ensuring that the move from stereotyping to empowerment becomes an enduring and universal trend.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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Please note that MLA guidelines require double spacing and hanging indents in the final document. Below is a single-spaced list for brevity.

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