UNDERSTANDING THE INDIAN WEB SERIES AN ANALYSIS OF SACRED GAMES

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Abstract: Sacred Games is Netflix's first Indian original series and it is a revolution in the face of Indian shows and television programs. It is important to understand this series because it has opened a market for Indian television series on Netflix in India. In this show, the narration of the city's representation becomes the focal point to understand the relationship between cop-gangster-city which is a common concept but the way it is depicted is in the form of seasons and episodes. It deals with the aspect of the portrayals of gendered politics, women, patriarchy, communal violence, gangsters, politicians, mafia, businessmen and the Mumbai Police. It also targets subjects of controversy like the relationship between lawmakers and breakers, religious violence, fake encounters, and corruption in the entertainment industry. Sacred Games stands out as a series from the rest because, of its narrative style and its unique portrayals of city, characters, themes and plot lines. To understand Sacred Games as a web series, an in-depth content analysis method for each episode is used. This research paper is an analysis to understand what makes this Indian Tv series Sacred Games different in terms of the plot structure and narrative style and representation of characters and city.

Keywords- Sacred games, web series, narrative style, Indian Web series, representation

I. INTRODUCTION

Sacred Games is a popular Indian web series that became the pioneer of web series culture in India and it gained immense popularity among the audience. A newspaper article says, *"2 out of 3 people who watched Sacred Games were outside of India"* (HindustanTImes, 2018). It is an adaptation of the novel written by Vikram Chandra and it is directed by Anurag Kashyap and Vikramaditya Motwane. The market for online content is changing, as more people are drawn to online content. (McNayr, 2010) To understand in simple words, a web series is an episodic fictional narrative in video format, broadcast on the Internet or for mobile devices, which is part of the emerging medium known as web television (Whedon).

For instance, Game of Thrones is one of the most popular shows of the west as it had a worldwide viewership of 12.1 million solely for the season finale of season 7 (Rodriguez, 2017). This suggests that people are actually interested in watching web series because it is more liberal in terms of its content. As for Sacred Games, it is a Netflix Original series and to watch it, people have moved to Netflix and other platforms, to not be in control of what they want to watch, and when they want to, without a third-party calling them out. These were decisions the viewers took consciously for their entertainment purposes (Jhaveri, 2019). The web series follows the format of seasons and episodes which helps in developing the script. The plot of Sacred games is narrated using flashbacks to link the past to the present and its relationship to Mumbai. The show draws attention to the representation of politics of gender roles, communal violence, gangsters, politicians, mafia, businessmen and the Mumbai Police. It also targets subjects of controversy like religious violence, fake encounters, and prevailing sexual harassment in the entertainment industry. It depicts the metamorphosis of the city as a character and its relationship with the don.

Another observation is the way in which the city of Bombay is represented in the series. Mumbai is a cosmopolitan city which consists of diverse social classes, religion, castes and the vibe of the city itself is different. However, it attracts everyone differently. On one hand, Mumbai is known as the city of dreams and on the other, it is portrayed as a sin city. Sacred Games is a classic example of a gangster narrative as it depicts the rise of slumlords, garbage-lords and drug lords.

The city has been central to popular narratives in the Indian cinema since the 1950s (Florian, (2017)). However, Bombay as a city in Indian cinema is an articulation of the Indian modernity quotient. The city's structure is divided between people from both the rich and poor strata both of which strive to fulfil their dreams.The series uses the narrative style of flashbacks to generate a basis to form an understanding and the relevance of events that are occurring in the present. For example- Ganesh talks to Sartaj on call in episode 1 and takes him down the memory lane by narrating his life story which shows who he is and how did he become what he is today- International Gangster. This paper is an analysis of how the characters undergo exploitation and encounter various forms of urban violence in their everyday life and how it becomes a primary agent in determining Bombay's urban landscape.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Understanding the plot construction for the online television series
2. Representation of Mumbai city as a character in Web series

3. The significance of flashback and voice-overs in Sacred games Narrative

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To understand the emerging trends in Indian web series

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Web series is popular in new media as people are moving towards online content. To name a few-Game of Thrones, Friends, Narcos and they had a very high viewership. Friends finale attracted more than 52.5 million viewers, making it the one of the biggest audiences ever for the end of a series (Carter, 2004). Game of Thrones had a worldwide viewership of 12.1 million solely for the season finale of season 7 (Rodriguez, 2017). The season 3 of Narcos had a whooping 27.2 million viewership (Chichizola, 2017). There are many existing studies done on these shows and this suggests that it is popular and therefore succeeds in generating a curiosity to research on. For instance- Breaking the Stereotypes and Rewriting the Identities in Game of Thrones by Shraddha Mhasawade to understand the transformation of characters by the shift of power structures that happen with the development of the plot (Mhasawade, 2012). A content analysis was done on Friends to understand how it invented the Hangout comedy (Picone, 2014).

Now, it becomes essential to understand Sacred Games as an Indian web series. It incorporates the seasonal and episodic style of narration. In the article- *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History* by Turin, she has chosen to tackle her subject through a chronological tracing of the development of the flashback from the earliest silents to the contemporary avant-garde, employing these theoretical approaches a dab at a time depending upon which is most suited to the film being under observation. The most important functions of these flashbacks to create suspense and create character motivation. These films render historical thought as the subjective experience of individuals by creating both the present and the past which inserts itself in the present as a series of highly personal experiences (Turim, Summer 1991).

Use of Flashback and Foreshadowing for Surprise Arousal in Narrative Using a Plan-Based Approach, a study by Young, Byung-Chull Bae & R. Michael to understand the role of flashback in a narrative. According to the narrative theories, (Young, 2008) authors can let the readers know about some facts in advance or hide some information until a certain point for a dramatic effect. The narrative theorist Gerald Genette explains this temporal disparity using the terms analepsis and prolepsis. The former tells (or shows) what has happened in the past with respect to the present and the latter presents what will happen in the future with respect to "now" in the story.

It takes into consideration the past present and the future thereby intertwining all of them into a form of personal experience as a memory. Flashback describes some past events related to the present; foreshadowing gives allusion (possibly implicit) to some future events. Typically, in film media, flashback often functions to provide backstory in support of the main storyline, is presented either as a continuous sequence or as a series of scenes showing only the crux of the backstory.

Flashback can also be used to refer to an entire main story. For example, a narrator can tell the main story as a form of a flashback in retrospect, often with the first-person perspective. This is typically what Ganesh Gaitonde does throughout the season in order to alert Sartaj to save the city from the impending doom in 25 days.

To understand the series, it is essential to understand the portrayal of Mumbai in gangsters' narratives in films. Mumbai is a cosmopolitan city which consists of diverse social classes, religion, castes. This article helps in understanding the way in which the city of Bombay is represented in cinema particularly in underworld movies through an understanding of political representation and references of historical events and their effects on Bombay. Three main events such as the Emergency 1975, Babri Masjid demolition, and attacks in Bombay (Stadtler, (2017)).Through this, Sacred Games becomes a classic example of a gangster narrative as it depicts the rise of slumlords, garbage-lords and drug lords.

The article *'Hijras in Bollywood Cinema'* by G.K, Bhugra talks about the representation of Transgender community in the popular Bollywood cinema.

Transgenders also known as Hijras have been a part of the Indian community for a long time. The community is heterogeneous and are famous for their key roles in the Hindu culture like celebration be it childbirth or marriage. They are associated with good omen as they keep the bad ones at bay. Unfortunately, they are looked down by society and they are subjected to physical violence, verbal abuse, have been ridiculed in real life. Their lives are misrepresented in the reel world and the authentic essence gets wiped out because of this (G.K, 2015). As a result, it could offend and hurt sentiments of the community. Therefore, it is important to understand the social and cultural context to portray the sexualities. This is an important article for the researcher because the focus point of the researcher is Sacred Games. It contains a character who is a transgender and the way the story revolves around her life.

The narrative also uses the concept of Male Gaze and its explicit depiction in web series. In his essay- *The Pornographic Image and the Practice of Film Theory*, Prince Stephen studies about 'The Centrality of Male Sexuality and the Male Gaze'. Most of the sexual content is consumed by male strata of the society and it is heavily dominated by their fantasies and desires. The scenes being typically erotic has a catch to it. It talks about how women are submissive to men when it comes to sexual intimacy.

If you observe keenly, most pornographic material is generated according to male desires. The article gives an understanding of why men can never carry the burden of sexual objectification. (Stephen, (Winter, 1988)) Psychoanalysis proves that it is impossible for 'Male to be Viewed as a Sexual Object'. It is in extreme relevance to Sacred Games and it is depicted through the lives of certain characters.

There are many interesting women characters in Sacred Games. With evolving times, women have come outside of the kitchen space and household and related responsibilities (Agrawal, 2014). Previously, women in films and tv shows were portrayed as typical housewives with no major role to play. But with changing mentality and demands of the audience, women are playing more active roles. Sacred games is one such TV show that shows this wonderful transition of women as powerful forces in the reel world too. Through this, the researcher will be able to draw depict the different women and their roles in the tv show using the timeline and its relevance in today's era.

The journal article Bombay Films: The Cinema as Metaphor for Indian Society and Politics talks says that the minorities and marginalized communities in India appear to be tied to the larger Hindu strata of the society. With heightened insecurity and communal feelings, minorities appear vulnerable to the world, therefore, causing endemic riots in widespread areas of India. Muslims in India have a different positioning in Indian cinema and their role and image are portrayed usually on the negative side. All races and religions lived in Mumbai in relative harmony, until politics came into the picture. Although India is diverse, certain political agendas tend to divide people giving rise to classism and casteism (Ahmed, No. 2 (May, 1992)).

This article will help the researcher to understand how politics is subtly incorporated in movies and tv shows. The way Sacred games has highlighted the communal riots, Bofors scam, the time during emergency, genocide etc… has been portrayed brilliantly. So, through this, the researcher will be able to give a better and a clear understanding of how politics works in the society and most importantly how the video content has portrayed it.

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Representation Theory

Representation refers to the construction of the aspects of 'reality' such as people, objects, places, events, cultural identities and time in mass media. They may be used and depicted in the form of writing, motion pictures or even still photographs. This theory deals with the way a certain group of people are represented in the media and how it can lead to a social impact. To understand the concept of representation, one needs to understand that watching a TV show is not the same as watching something happen in real life. These media products provide the audience with just one version of the reality and not the reality itself (Shekhar, 2009). So, considering Sacred Games, this theory will aid in understanding the portrayal of elements such as the characters and the city in the narrative. Filmmakers use many techniques to establish and develop characters through the process of representation. The choice of lighting, camera techniques, sound, acting, editing all contribute to the representation of a character. This theory deals with not only how identities are represented and constructed within the text but also how they are constructed in the process of production and reception by the audience whose identities are marked in relation to demographic factors. Through this concept, we can gain an insight on the concept of 'male gaze' which is an important factor in understanding Sacred Games.

2. Narrative Theory

Narratology is the study of stories and its structure and the ways these create an effect on our perception, cognition and emotion. It is an art of telling a story and it's a phenomenon that we experience on a regular basis. It is an essential part of our lives especially when we consume media in the form of film, television, or even reading books. (Cutting, 2016) The narrative begins with the opening of a film or drama on television. As an audience, we derive meanings by interpreting what is being depicted through the construction of the plot and the story. However, the meaning of plot and story are different things. The plot is defined as what is present audible and visible in the film and it is in order. Whereas, story comprises all the things that happen in a narrative. It can also include things that we can assume are happening or the things that are not shown because it would be unnecessary as a part of the plot. It could also include things we find out about only later as the story unfurls. So, Sacred Games is a thriller and thus it represents the past and the present. Thus, it includes the narrative style of in the form of analepsis and prolepsis which lays the foundation of the story.

VI. METHODOLOGY

My research paper focuses on the qualitative analysis of the web series- Sacred Games. The content of the show will be analyzed through a method under the qualitative analysis- Content Analysis. The parameters are taken to understand the various themes portrayed, analyzing the narrative styles of flashbacks and portrayal of Bombay city in Sacred Games.

Content Analysis based on Parameters
* Indian Mythology in Sacred Games

*Representation of women in Sacred Games

*Portrayal of the city of Mumbai: Caste, Politics, Religion, Violence

1. Indian Mythology in Sacred Games

Mythology has dominated the Indian culture since time immemorial. These mythologies consist of 5000-year-old rich literature which is intertwined with moral values and religious beliefs. From cave paintings to architecture to soap-operas to cinema and now web series it has created an obsession among the creators and consumers of media. One of the most prominent aspects of the show is that it is woven around the aspect of Hindu mythology.

It deciphers the parallels drawn between the title of each episode and its plot. The names of all the eight episodes titled as- Ashwathama, Halahala, Atapi Vatapi, Brahmahatya, Sarama, Pretakalpa, Rudra, Yayati have a major connection with the Hindu epic mythology Mahabharat. Each of these titles holds a story within themselves and the symbols of each of the episodes are more than just aesthetic components. Each emblem represents a contemporary allusion of stories from Hindu scriptures. (Sadhwani, 2018)

1.*Aswatthama*

The first episode is named after a very powerful character from The Mahabharata who fought against the Pandavas. He was cursed with immortality for over 3000 for that. The episode begins with Ganesh Gaitonde narrating the story of his life as a gangster. His character is equivalent to Ashwatthama because, when he commits suicide, he still continues the narrate his story, thus establishing his immortality. He says*, "I told you, I am Ashwatthama. I am not going anywhere until the game is over."* (Episode 01- 46:59) (Motwane, 2018)

2. *Halahala*

The second episode is named after one of the most dangerous poisons known to mankind. Halahala quite literally translates to 'time puzzle' or 'black mass' (Sadhwani, 2018). When the Gods and demons were churning the ocean of milk, many bountiful things were obtained like the *Amrut- the nectar of immortality along with Halahala* which is poisonous enough to destroy and dissolve all creation. This poison was consumed by Lord Shiva to Prevent the Gods from dying because the fumes of the poison itself were enough to kill off the Gods.

In the show, Sartaj's cognizance comes into action as he focuses on the warning given to him by Ganesh Gaitonde, therefore, kickstarting an investigation which leads him to unravel international espionage. Here, the espionage is the equivalent of the poison as it has the ultimate power to destroy the life out of Mumbai.

3. *Atapi and Vatapi*

In the third episode, as explained by Pankaj Tripathi, gives reference to two demon brothers- Atapi and Vatapi from the Hindu Mythology. The Legend has it- these demon brothers would invite saints for dinner and kill them in the strangest way. The older brother would kill the younger brother and cook his flesh and serve him to the saints. After the Saints left and reached a distance, he would call out for his younger brother and who would then tear open the saint's stomachs and return to Atapi. They would then feed on the dead and preserve the excessive remains for later. (Motwane, 2018) Atapi and Vatapi become a metaphor for Hinduism and Islam Religions in India as they similarly welcome people and then control and feed over their souls. It could also be the symbolic representation of the Badriya brothers- Chota and Bada. However, Bunty comes into the picture as the symbolism of communalism divide, and that demon which goes into Gaitonde's stomach and bursts out.

4. *Brahmahatya*

The fourth episode places direct emphasis on the death of Brahmin. A brahmin is an individual who belongs to the social class in Hinduism. Killing a Brahmin meant committing the most heinous crime as said in ancient literature. Mythologically speaking, in a fit of rage, Lord Indra committed murder of a Brahmin named Visvarupa. He could never accept the guilt of killing a Brahmin, so the guilt was shared by 3 female forms- Earth, Woman and the Forest to acquit him of all the guilt. This could be precisely why the earth suffers excavation, females suffer menstruation, and trees suffer deforestation. (Sadhwani, 2018)

This enlightens the character and life of Ganesh Gaitonde when he becomes an integral part of religion-driven communal killings because he is a brahmin himself. He has very strong Brahmin roots as it is shown in the first episode itself- his father was a Saint and a typical brahmin from Godawari- Maharashtra. He commits crimes such as murdering his own mother and her lover for having an affair outside her marriage, consuming non-vegetarian food (chicken), agreeing to poach the Muslims for conniving politician Bhosale. All of these things are strictly against Brahminism. Thus, it is a representation of the death of Gaitonde's Brahmin-self. However, when Ganesh consumes meat, he also breaks the contemporary myth of a Brahmin eating non-veg food (Ajaz, 2015)

4. *Sarama*

The great Indian Mythology consists of a character called Sarama who is considered as the mother of dogs. According to Vijesh Rajan, the writer of the show, the episode has focused on a lot to do with dogs. The opening scene of the show portrays a dog being thrown off the roof and it evokes a lot of questions already. However, later in the show, it is known that the dog belonged to Zoya and in this episode, she avenges the death of her dog. Another allusion of this can be drawn when Sartaj's mother tells him the tale

of how Dilbagh Singh (his father) spent almost 3 days looking for the Parsi man's lost dog. That's when he realizes the importance of the role of police in the country- so he betrays Anjali Mathur (Sadhwani, 2018).

On the flip side, however, on a very philosophical level, towards the end of the episode, it is understood that everybody is on the same page as that of a dog on a leash. Sartaj ends up lying in the Bengali Bura case although he knew the truth and felt strongly about it, he had to choose between keeping his job and doing the right thing. It is equivalent to being a pet in the hands of a master or a higher authority.

6. Pretakalpa

It is an excerpt from the Garuda Purana, which is one of the 18 Mahapurana texts of Hinduism. It deals with the concept of the cycle of life in the form of life, death and beyond. It is usually read out when the last rites of a deceased Hindu individual are being performed. In this episode, it is observed that Katekar dies and Sartaj kills the person who killed him. Katekar is cremated and this marks the metaphor for Sartaj killing his old self (honest police officer) and sees himself transition into someone new. (Sadhwani, 2018)

7. Rudra

Rudra is a deity associated with storm and hunt and a strong warrior. It can be directly translated to 'the roarer'. In this episode, it is the personification of terror. (Sadhwani, 2018) This episode is about an enraged Gaitonde's because of his wife Subhadra's death he goes on a Muslim killing spree, there is unrest among the Hindu and Muslim communities as they are at loggerheads due to Babri Masjid demolition. He is captured and thrown into jail where he is flogged by Parulkar. The city of Bombay is also represented as an enraged entity because of the blasts (1993). This is where Gaitonde gets personified as Rudra as there's a storm brewing inside of him.

8. Yayati

Yayati was the ancestor of Pandavas who had been cursed with premature old age for infidelity. So, he asked his son Puru to swap his ages with him. He went on to conquer the whole world and was renowned as *Chakravartin Samrat* (Sadhwani, 2018). In the last episode, Guru ji gets Ganesh Gaitonde to join his cause, thus establishing a father-son relationship. Ganesh admits that Guru Ji was his third and only father who brings him death. One taught him devotion, the other taught him to be daring and the third taught him destruction. On closer observation, this is also the representation of the three faces of Lord Brahma- Creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer.

2.Representation of Women in Sacred Games

Men in most societies were seen as breadwinners while role of women was restricted to being a good homemaker and a good mother (Agrawal, 2014).This applies to women in a highly patriarchal society of India. As societies entered the world of modernization, the role of women changed dramatically. Media played an important role in the modernization of societies and greatly affected the image of women in today's modern world. In this section, I have chosen 4 women and their portrayal in the series. They are chosen on the basis of role prominence and the screen time given to them throughout the series.

- Kanta bai

- Subhadra

- Kukoo

- Anjali Mathur

Beginning with **Kanta bai**, she appears in all 8 episodes of the series. She is the epitome of a typical Maharashtrian kaaki. She is shown as a single lady who could be a widow or she never got married. She owns a liquor 'adda' where all the gangsters, seasoned killers and other violence mongers meet. Kanta bai is one such powerful figure who outshines the other modern female counterparts due to her broad sense of establishing power and the ability to overthrow men with guns and even the most dangerous gangsters, just with her loud spiteful words and gritting teeth. Although she is not Gaitonde's birth mother, she goes on to become a motherly figure for him. It is so because each time he is about to murder somebody, he touches her feet and only then does the deed. She is put on a high pedestal in Gaitonde's life that he takes her advice and she is one of the key decision maker. She represents a progressive woman as she runs a liquor adda and is financially independent and lives her life on her own terms. She boldly talks to Bunty about getting his sister married to Chota Badriya a Muslim because they're in love. If Mumbai had a spirit animal, it would be a dragon and she would be the Khaleesi. Kanta bai is an unshakable woman who doesn't step back from providing an honest opinion and tough when situation calls for. What makes her unique and admirable is the way her utilizes her influence and power to protect women around her from male inflicted violence.

The representation of **Kukoo's** character in Sacred Games as a transgender is essential as she was one of the most important women in Ganesh Gaitonde's life. Her overt characterization was sensational and jazzy. She appeared in 5 episodes out of 8 and that makes her an important character in the show. She is depicted as a glamorous individual who adds a zest in anybody's life that she becomes a part of. If. Just the way Parveen Babi was to Amitabh Bachchan, the same way Kukoo was to Ganesh Gaitonde. However, covertly, she is a transgender woman (G.K, 2015) who is exploited by gangsters for easing their frustrations through sex to eliminating their viciousness. Occasionally, it is observed, a female being the protagonist of a cinema than merely being objects of sexual desire. The gender imbalance is evident not only on-screen but behind it also (Shalini, 2017)**.** Although Gaitonde was smitten by 'Kukkoo ka jaadu' he still did not forget his dream to conquer Bombay through her. Gaitonde fell in love with her and Isa's red car and desperately wanted to snatch both these 'things' away from him. Even Gaitonde uses her to conquer the city of Mumbai and to trigger Isa and warn him that there's a new elephant in the room. The phrase "Jiski Kukkoo, uska Bambai" (Motwane, 2018) has great emphasis as it hints at the way she is used by men/ gangsters as a ladder to rule over Bombay. Here, Kukko becomes a pawn who is used by various men to conquer Bombay. It also portrays the relationship between the exploiter and the exploited.

Critically speaking, Kukoo's character was represented as a transgender and was also subjected to the male gaze. Most sexual content is made for the male strata of society as it is dominated by their fantasies and desires only. The factor of nudity and explicitness in the show is portrayed only by women through the depiction of their bodies, mainly highlighting their body parts in a very sexual way. Through Kukoo's character, it is understood that women are submissive to men when it comes to sexual intimacy. On further observation, it can be understood why men can never carry the burden of sexual objectification**.** (Stephen, (Winter, 1988)) Psychoanalysis proves that it is impossible for 'Male to be Viewed as a Sexual Object'. So, women especially Kukoo are seen as objects of sex because she is a transgender.

Subhadra's character revived Ganesh back to his masculinity as seen through her presence in 6 episodes in which she appears. She is one of those only women who is able to dominate Gaitonde's sexuality, after Kukko. After Kukko's death, his sexuality faces a sudden death and it is only Subhadra who resurrects the man inside him by dominating him in bed. Subhadra's character is equally ambitious, so what if she is not like her modern counterparts, she strives to fulfill her dream of having a *'Sukhi ghar sansaar.'* She successfully breaks 'Kukko ka Jaadu", as she casts a spell of love over Ganesh glazed with manipulation. In her final moments, she ignites the fire of vengeance in Gaitonde through metaphors from The Ramayana. She represents the modern day Sita and Gaitonde as Ram, goes on to kill 80 Muslims and talks about killing 800 more to avenge Subhadra's death. Her character evolves through time- from being a simpleton and shy Marathi bai, she becomes the deity who takes control and dominates Gaitonde. She is more like a woman in the shadows who is one of the main reasons for the rise of Gaitonde as a ruthless murderer

Anjali Mathur's character is a strong and motivated one. She is that woman who doesn't care much about the male infestation around her, especially when it comes to dealing with her own office. She works for RAW as their agent and it is a heavily male-dominated arena. In fact, she is very good at her work and is fearless even if it could lead to potential death. She is determined and assertive when situation calls. However, her character is a classic example that displays hubris and hamartia, which are two prominent literary devices used in the great tragedies. Her curiosity and zeal to unravel the international espionage led her to her own downfall. She barely cared about the consequences of her actions and that's how her hubris lead her to death. She is self-absorbed and cares less about the others on her side. For instance, Nayanika's death could have been averted if she had followed the car as told by Sartaj. Not just that, she also treats others as mere pawns of a bigger game. An analogy of this can be drawn from the way she pushes Sartaj to investigate Gaitonde's case despite him being suspended. She is highly manipulative as she is shown as a figure who can exhibit power over Sartaj for 2 reasons- he works in the Mumbai Police Department and he is desperate to prove himself.

The representation of women is very bold in terms of the explicitness, expression of emotions and that is why women in Sacred Games have a significant role in the series. Although there is an attempt to break free of patriarchy through such bold portrayals, it fails to do so because most women characters are killed off for the story to go on and for the male protagonists to finish what they had started.

When we watch a film, whether we are male or female, we are given the opportunity to take pleasure, since what we see (or the 'gaze') is constructed in such a way that is entirely patriarchal. On the one hand, 'the male hero acts', while 'women are seen and showed at the same time' as passive, or inferior: 'their appearance is so much coded for a strong visual and erotic impact that it can be argued that they connote the true essence of being seen (Collins, 2017). Indian cinema is in itself a diverse strand of expression incorporating mainstream cinema which holds popular appeal that engages with contemporary issues related to women. In a very explicit way, cinema has shaped the cultural, social and political values of people of this country (Shendurnikar, 2012).

3.Representation of Mumbai city in Sacred Games

Mumbai is a city which consists of diverse social classes, religion and castes. The filmmakers, however, have not forgotten to highlight the certain important parts of the city and the contrast between that past and present to showcase the growth of the city. The portrayal of Mumbai in gangsters' narratives in films is very complex. The way in which Bombay is represented in Sacred Games is a good example of a gangster narrative style as it depicts the rise of slumlords, garbage-lords, drug lords and sinister of all kinds dwelling in the streets of Bombay. Some recent Hindi films engaging with Bombay's underworld have shifted towards a mise en-

scène of the city with an air of nostalgia, by moving back in time focusing on aesthetics of retro-chic, while at the same time attempting to make sense of Bombay's changing structures and structures in the present (Florian, (2017)).

Bombay is represented as the central character throughout the narrative. The metamorphosis of Bombay to Mumbai is depicted through the years of infrastructural developments. In "Sacred Games," the city, dominated by criminals and corrupt cops, has put on much resplendent and rotting flesh. But then Bombay itself has transformed rapidly in the past decade and a half—a period during which the city's official name was changed to Mumbai—as India's religious and political conflicts have finally caught up with the city's traditionally business-minded and cosmopolitan communities. Though Bombay has prospered greatly from the liberalization of India's state-controlled economy in the nineteen-nineties, it has also become home to feral forms of capitalism. In recent years, a series of scandals and scams have exposed an intricate network of greed, envy, and lust which binds politicians, tycoons, and civil servants to Mafia dons, Bollywood stars, and slumlords. The type of language used in Sacred Games delights in the profanity of Bombay street talk. The series however, is determined to show how characters, particularly Gaitonde, define and savor their identities through speech (Pankaj, 2007).

The flamboyance and filth that co-exist side-by-side kept the city afloat. Such grey area-ridden identities are very much ingrained in the fabric of a metropolis containing the 'white' skyscrapers and 'black' slums. Movies have also delved into Mumbai gangland folklore lost in the depths of inner South Bombay. in Chandra's magnum opus, Mumbai is the epicentre of the intricate web that connects Bollywood figures with the dubious underworld (Majid, 2016).

As Sacred games is a production of the contemporary era, this cinematic recuperation is in some recent releases tempered by a revaluation of Bombay city life predating the communal riots and bomb blasts in 1992/93 in the wake of the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya by Hindu nationalists, the consequences of which were felt most markedly in the city and were a watershed for the way in which communal life was organized and structured. The director, Vikramaditya Motwane reveals that in the early stages of scripting, they took a call to set the series in the present, unlike the book, which is set at the dawn of the new millennium. The filmmaker says that their decision adds a layer of urgency to their narrative. "Because it's almost a similar sort of government [today] and the vibes are the same, so the threat felt a lot more present," he reflects. (Rosario, 2018)

Sacred Games portrays a very raw nature of the way politics and power work in the country. It has given emphasis on violence by foregrounding the attacks of 9/11 and some truly apocalyptic violence in the Indian subcontinent: Partition, The Babri Masjid violence which gave rise to a communal divide within India. The style of diction used in Sacred Games is a culmination of the Local language 'Marathi' and 'Hindi' which typically, gives the whole narrative a sense of the Bambaiya effect. All races and religions lived in Mumbai in relative harmony, until politics came into the picture. Although India is diverse, certain political agendas tend to divide people giving rise to classism and casteism.

Muslims in India have a different positioning in Indian cinema and their role and image are portrayed usually on the negative side as opposite to that of Hindus (Ahmed, No. 2 (May, 1992)) Hindus and Muslims work in the form of binary opposites and Sacred games captures this particular element through the portrayal of the relationship between Hindus and Muslims. Gaitonde's gang in Gopalmath is a classic example of how a co-habitual community fell apart in the name of religion. For instance, even though Bunty and Badriya brothers worked in the same gang, they were always divided by the force of religion.

It is the only Indian city that stays awake all night, as if something runs in its blood that doesn't anywhere else in a country of more than one billion people. Bombay is portrayed as a city who is like a damsel in distress stuck in a beautiful chaos and Sartaj is the knight in shining armor to save her from the impending doom. Both Gaitonde and Sartaj share a special bond with this city because they love it for different reasons.

4.Analysis of Narrative style of Sacred Games

Sacred Games uses a very distinct style of narration as shuffles between two timelines namely the past and the present. According to the narrative theories, authors can let the readers know about some facts in advance or hide some information until a certain point for a dramatic effect. The narrative theorists explain this temporal disparity using the terms analepsis and prolepsis. The former depicts what has happened in the past with respect to the present and the latter presents what will happen in the future with respect to "now" in the story (Young, 2008).

For instance, the first episode begins in the present-day scenario where Gaitonde is alive and trying to talk to Sartaj to save Mumbai. To make this happen, Gaitonde took him back in time to begin his story from scratch. Using the analeptic style of narration, establishment of events of the past are portrayed. Gaitonde uses his memories and goes back in time and tells Sartaj in a chronological sequence about his life and how he became an International Gangster. His memory acts as a back story which forms the basis for the reason of why events are happening the way they are happening in the current day scenario. It takes into consideration the past present and the future thereby intertwining all of them into a form of personal experience as a memory. Flashback describes some past events related to the present; foreshadowing gives allusion to some future events which in this case can be understood as- nuclear attack in Mumbai. Typically, in film media, flashback often functions to provide backstory in support of the main storyline, is presented either as a continuous sequence or as a series of scenes showing only the crux of the backstory.

In the case of Sacred Games, the flashbacks work in a chain which are looped to one another therefore making a web of personal experiences which forms the whole plot of the series.

Flashback can also be used to refer to an entire main story. For example, a narrator can tell the main story as a form of a flashback in retrospect, often with the first-person perspective. This is typically what Ganesh Gaitonde does throughout the series in order to alert Sartaj to save the city from the impending doom coming in 25 days.

Another observation with respect to narrative style is the implementation of voice-over narrative. The type of narrative that is used throughout Sacred Games is 'homodiegetic style of Voice-over.' It refers to the style of narrative in which the narrator of a dramatic work who is also the protagonist in the series, here Sacred Games. Other than the construct of the cinematic narrator and the nebulous heterodiegetic voice-over narrator, the homodiegetic or first-person voiceover narrator can be given both a voice and a body (Ferenz, 2005). In the case of Sacred Games, Ganesh Gaitonde is the homodiegetic narrator who narrates his story by linking the present with the past using flashbacks. The most important functions of these flashbacks to create suspense and create character motivation. (Turim, Summer 1991) "These films render historical thought as the subjective experience of individuals by creating both the present and the past which inserts itself in the present as a series of highly personal experiences.

VII. CONCLUSION

Sacred Games was premiered on Netflix on 6 July 2018 and it was released across 191 countries with subtitles over 20 languages. The story of cop-gangster and city is narrated through the seasonal and episodic narration which is relatively new in the context of Indian web series. The show was also critically acclaimed for its metaphorical commentary on the Indian politics, religion and how they manipulate people.

Not just that, it also gives a commentary on prostitution scandals through the inclusion of subplots that involve an agent who also works as a pimp for victimized Bollywood actresses. The show displays patriarchy covertly through the character representations of women be it mother, wife or even a transgender. It is also constructed from the Mythological perspective which highlights the Indianness as a web series and makes it relatable for the Indian audience. Through this study, the representation of Bombay in a gangster narrative as a central character was also understood. To understand the Indian web series Sacred Games, it is very important to understand the representation of the city of Mumbai as a central character. The narrative style implemented is one that continuously switches between past and the present. The use of flashbacks plays out in a mock-heroic style with a hint of magic realism (leopard emerging from the forest at an apt moment and the gang leader smashing his enemies as a form of revenge and vengeance. The elements of flashbacks bring out a great visual experience by enhancing the element of suspense and thrill.

VIII. SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY

Sacred games is the first Indian Netflix Original series and the research on this subject can be further extended to comparative studies between western series and Indian series as well as online shows against the traditional concept of television shows worldwide.

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