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The Limping Body As a Narrative Engine: Ableism, Power, And Betrayal Embodied In Langda Tyagi's Omkara

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Abstract

This research interrogates the representation of disability in Vishal Bhardwaj's Omkara (2006), where cinematic aesthetics, cultural politics, and disability studies intersect one another. The paper theorises Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's "extraordinary body," Mitchell and Snyder's concept of "narrative prosthesis," and Michel Foucault's discourse on power and normativity as the locus of analysing disability in constructing "otherness" in Hindi cinema. The study also examines how Omkara adapts Shakespeare's Othello into a specifically Indian socio-political landscape marked by caste, patriarchy, and violence.

The Research Methods employ qualitative content analysis, and decodes both textual and cinematic signifiers—dialogues, visual framings, silences, and song lyrics—that articulate disability not merely as physical impairment but as a cultural metaphor inscribed with notions of vulnerability, and deviance. Quotations in Hindi (presented with English interpretation) illuminate how colloquial idioms around "kamzori" (weakness) and "nakaami" (inadequacy) naturalize stigma, while cinematic devices—such as muted lighting, abrupt silences, and obsessive close-ups—translate disability into affective atmospheres of suspicion, emasculation, and social fracture.

The analysis demonstrates that Bhardwaj does not simply impose Shakesporean narrative but re-structures it through the Indian idiom of disability and masculinity: Omkara's anxieties over legitimacy and authority are framed not as an abstract tragic flaw but as culturally intelligible "deficiency" that resonate within caste-based hierarchies and patriarchal codes of honor. The research argues that disability here functions as a cultural signifier that exposes the fissures in hegemonic masculinity and the fragile scaffolding of political power.

The study contributes to a decolonial re-mapping of disability studies by placing an Indian cinematic text in dialogue with Western theories of embodiment and difference, showing how disability becomes a site where local cultural vocabularies intersect with global discourses of abnormality, gender, and the body. In doing so, it complicates the binary of impairment versus metaphor, demonstrating how Langda Tyagi renders disability simultaneously as literal, symbolic, and political.

Keywords: #ExtraordinaryBody #NarrativeProsthesis #LangdaTyagi #CulturalRepresentation
#Masculinity #IndianCinema #DisabilityStudies

1.0 Introduction

Indian cinema has always been a harbinger of cultural synthesis. The golden age of Hindi cinema particularly has given us masterpieces like *Do Bigha Zameen*, *Mother India*, *Mera Naam Joker*, all of which have focussed on social values, stigma and exclusion. Later cinemas have also reproduced disabilities, as a form of social exclusion, (thus making him the evil one) and later to other characters rendering them 'not normal' and hence pushing them to the boundaries. One of the most striking figures in Vishal Bhardwaj's *Omkara* (2006)—a Hindi adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello*—is Langda Tyagi, a character who embodies the interlinked dimensions of disability, masculinity, and marginalization. Langda's limp, which earns him the derogatory epithet "Langda" (literally "the crippled one"), becomes both the marker of his embodied otherness and the ground of his resentment, manipulation, and eventual violence.

Vishal Bhardwaj's *Omkara* (2006), an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello*, is more than a simple transposition of an Elizabethan tragedy into the cultural textures of North India. It reworks the politics of jealousy, power, and betrayal through caste, patriarchy, and violence while also foregrounding the embodied differences of its characters. Among these, Langda Tyagi emerges as the most compelling figure of embodied "otherness." A loyal lieutenant of Omkara Shukla, Langda Tyagi is consistently sidelined in favor of Kesu Firangi. This professional slight catalyzes his resentment, but it is his physical disability—marked and emphasized through his nickname "Langda," literally "the limping one"—that defines both his social perception and his cinematic presence.

Langda Tyagi's disability is not incidental. It structures his subjectivity, the gaze directed at him, and the power dynamics within which he maneuvers. In many ways, his limp functions as a metonym for his exclusion from normative masculinity, caste prestige, and political ascendancy. The character thus offers fertile ground to explore how disability is represented in Indian cinema, and how the ableist gaze configures "otherness" as both deficiency and dangerous potential.

A Hindi line from the film captures this violence of naming: "*Langda ho ya loola, aadmi ki aukaat uske kaam se hoti hai.*" ("Whether a man limps or stumbles, his worth is determined by his work.")

While uttered as a recognition of Tyagi's loyalty, the statement is steeped in ableist framing: his body is first marked as defective before his contribution is acknowledged. The audience is primed to view him through this lens of deficiency.

The figure of Langda Tyagi draws our attention to the ableist gaze and the politics of power in social structures. Unlike Shakespeare's Iago, who is motivated by jealousy, Bhardwaj's Langda is doubly excluded: first, by being denied succession within Omkara's (Ajay Devgn's) gang leadership, and second,

by the ableist stigma attached to his body. Disability studies as a field argues that disability is not simply a medical or bodily condition but a socially constructed identity shaped by exclusionary practices, language, and representation (Davis, 2013; Garland-Thomson, 2009). In this sense, Langda Tyagi's cinematic construction functions as a site where disability, power, and cultural stereotypes intersect.

The derogatory naming of the character—"Langda"—signals linguistic violence. In one memorable exchange, a character calls out: "Arre Langda, tu to zindagi bhar langda hi rahega" (Hey, Langda, you will remain crippled for life). The English interpretation clarifies the embedded stigma: the name itself becomes destiny, reducing an entire person to a bodily impairment. This reflects what Lennard Davis (1995) terms the "tyranny of the normal," where individuals are judged against an imagined able-bodied standard.

Despite the growing scholarship in disability studies worldwide, Indian cinema has often underexplored disability beyond tropes of pity, inspiration, or villainy (Ghai, 2003). Characters with disabilities are frequently portrayed as either tragic victims or dangerous outsiders. In *Omkara*, Langda Tyagi epitomizes the latter: his disability becomes narratively linked with treachery, cunning, and resentment. Such representation perpetuates what Mitchell and Snyder (2000) call the "narrative prosthesis," where disability functions as a crutch for plot development rather than as a complex lived reality.

The ableist gaze is central to this process. As Garland-Thomson (2009) explains, the gaze directed at disabled bodies positions them as spectacles of abnormality, simultaneously fascinating and repulsive. In *Omkara*, Langda is repeatedly framed by the camera in ways that highlight his limp—close-ups of his uneven gait, scenes where he struggles physically, or moments where other characters mock him. This cinematic gaze mirrors the societal gaze, reinforcing stereotypes and hierarchies of bodily normalcy.

The stigmatizing gaze operates at multiple levels. On screen, Langda's limp is shot through tracking shots and close-ups, visually coding his difference. Off screen, audiences internalize these portrayals as cultural truths. Ravinder Kaur (2015) argues that Indian cinema functions as a cultural pedagogy, teaching viewers how to look at disabled bodies. The gaze does not merely represent; it disciplines.

Furthermore, disability in Indian films is often framed through karmic logic. According to Meenu Anand (2011), Bollywood frequently embeds disability within narratives of fate or divine punishment. Though *Omkara* does not explicitly invoke karma, Langda's disability implicitly positions him as "destined" for exclusion and moral corruption, aligning with cultural myths that link bodily difference to spiritual deficiency.

Another dimension is the intersection of caste and disability. Scholars such as Aniket Jaaware (2001) suggest that disability in Indian cinema often functions analogously to caste markers: both signal social

exclusion, both are inscribed on the body, and both are subject to stigma. Langda, though not explicitly coded as lower caste, embodies marginality. His exclusion from leadership in favor of Kesu—a more urbane, English-educated, and bodily “complete” man—reflects how ableism and caste-like hierarchies intertwine in Indian social imagination.

Finally, gender complicates this picture. Disability is often constructed as emasculation, threatening the ideal of hypermasculinity central to Hindi cinema (Nayar, 2015). Langda is repeatedly mocked as less manly, less complete, and less deserving of Omkara's trust. His aggressive, violent masculinity—marked by profanity, manipulation, and eventual betrayal—can be read as a compensatory performance, echoing Butler's (1993) theory of performativity and McRuer's (2006) “compulsory able-bodiedness.”

1.1 The Research Question

This research paper investigates how Langda Tyagi embodies “otherness” through the intersection of disability, power, and the ableist gaze in Vishal Bhardwaj's Omkara. Specifically, it asks:

1. How is disability constructed in Omkara through language, imagery, and narrative?
2. How does Omkara represent Langda Tyagi's disability, both linguistically and cinematically?
3. In what ways does the ableist gaze configure Langda as the embodiment of “otherness”?
4. How does the interplay of disability, caste, and masculinity structure Langda's exclusion and revenge?
5. To what extent does Omkara reproduce or resist dominant cinematic tropes of disability and villainy?

1.2 Methodology and Scope

The research adopts a qualitative content analysis of Omkara, focusing on narrative, dialogue, and cinematic form. Drawing from Disability Studies, Critical Theory, and Film Studies, it deploys a multi-layered lens:

Content Analysis: Close reading of dialogues, with particular attention to how disability is named, invoked, and narrated.

Cinematic Analysis: Examination of visual framing, camera movement, and mise-en-scène that accentuate Langda's embodiment.

Theoretical Lens: Application of Garland-Thomson's (2009) work on the “stare,” Davis's (1995) conceptualization of the “normal,” and Foucault's (1977) ideas on disciplinary power.

Cultural Contextualization: Situating Langda's disability within Indian socio-cultural constructs of masculinity, caste, and morality.

The dialogues quoted from Omkara are presented in Romanized Hindi, followed by English interpretation to make them accessible to readers.

2.0 Content Analysis of Omkara with reference to Langda Tyagi's Disability Character Construction, Naming, and Linguistic Violence

Vishal Bhardwaj's Omkara (2006), an adaptation of Shakespeare's Othello, relocates the tragic drama of jealousy and betrayal into the rustic, politically charged landscapes of Uttar Pradesh. Within this milieu, Langda Tyagi emerges as one of the most complex and unsettling figures, embodying the entanglement of disability, marginalization, and desire for recognition. Unlike Iago in Shakespeare's original text, Langda is marked by a pronounced limp, signifying a visible bodily difference that pervades his identity and his social interactions. His very name — "Langda," meaning "the lame one" — epitomizes the violence of nomenclature in a society where the disabled body is often reduced to its impairment.

The Violence of Naming

Langda Tyagi's identity is linguistically shaped by a pejorative marker. In the Hindi heartland, to be called "langda" is to be reduced to a lack, to an absence of bodily wholeness. In the film, we hear repeatedly: "*Arre Langda, chal idhar aa*" (*Hey, Langda, come here*).

This utterance, though casual in tone, reflects an ableist gaze that collapses the subject into his impairment. The body becomes the signifier; the name becomes a wound. As Davis (1995) has argued in *Enforcing Normalcy*, disability in modernity is not merely a biological fact but a social construction, one that is discursively reinforced through labels and categories. By naming him "Langda," the community denies Tyagi a neutral identity such as "Raghunath Tyagi" (his given name) and instead inscribes the impairment as his essential quality.

This naming is not innocent. It operates as a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991), naturalizing the social hierarchy that situates Langda as "less than" his able-bodied peers. In many ways, the constant invocation of "Langda" performs what Butler (1997) terms "injurious speech": language that constitutes the subject in the very act of addressing him, binding him to a subordinated identity.

Disability and Masculinity

The culture of Omkara's gang and political circle is profoundly masculine, grounded in physical strength, agility, and a capacity for violence. In this context, Langda's limp signifies a departure from the ideal of virile, able-bodied masculinity. His gait is slower, less assured; he cannot project the same aura of physical dominance as his counterparts. Yet it is precisely in this gap that his resentment brews. One telling moment is when Langda is overlooked for promotion to Omkara's second-in-command in favor of Kesu Firangi. His wife, Indu, poignantly remarks: *"Tumhaare langde paanv ke chalte woh kabhi tumhe mukhiyapan nahin dega."* (Because of your lame leg, he will never give you leadership.)

This line underscores the ableist logic within the narrative world. Langda's disability is not simply a physical condition; it becomes the rationale for his exclusion from political succession. The remark reflects what Garland-Thomson (2009) terms the "normate" ideal — the imagined figure of the fully functional, whole body against which all other bodies are measured. Langda, by virtue of his limp, fails to embody the normate ideal of masculine leadership. The exclusion is doubly painful: it is not just institutional but intimate, spoken by his wife, echoing the internalized ableism within familial structures. Langda's rage, then, is not abstract jealousy but deeply rooted in a lifetime of being reduced, overlooked, and mocked because of his physical impairment.

The Ableist Gaze and Cinematic Framing

Bhardwaj's cinematic framing accentuates Langda's otherness. The camera often lingers on his limp, capturing his uneven gait as he walks across the dusty landscapes. In group scenes, Langda's bodily difference is made visible through contrast: he appears slightly slower, slightly off-rhythm compared to the other men. These visual strategies enact what Garland-Thomson (2009) describes as the "stare" — the moment when the disabled body is visually fixed as spectacle, drawing attention to its deviation from the norm. At the same time, Langda's limp is not presented as pitiful but as uncanny — a bodily mark that signifies cunning and duplicity. In this sense, Omkara participates in a long cinematic trope wherein physical deformity is conflated with moral corruption. Shakespeare's Richard III, with his hunchback, or Bollywood villains such as Mogambo's henchmen, embody this tradition where disability signifies villainy. By assigning the limp to Iago's Indian counterpart, Bhardwaj taps into this cultural archive, while also localizing it in a milieu where able-bodied masculinity is synonymous with political authority.

Linguistic Violence and Social Exclusion

Language in Omkara is sharp, earthy, and often brutal. In this texture, Langda's name becomes a recurring reminder of his bodily otherness. Unlike Omkara (whose name evokes grandeur) or Kesu Firangi (whose nickname signals cosmopolitan charm), Langda is forever tethered to an insult. The film naturalizes this insult as everyday banter, but beneath it lies a structure of social exclusion.

Consider the moment when Omkara casually calls out: "*Arre Langda, sambhaal ke chal.*" (*Hey, Langda, walk carefully.*). The remark is ostensibly lighthearted, but it reinforces a hierarchy where Langda is infantilized, watched, and disciplined through his body. This moment resonates with Foucault's (1977) notion of disciplinary power, where institutions monitor and regulate bodies to maintain social order. Here, it is not a formal institution but the gang hierarchy itself that polices Langda's bodily comportment.

2.1 Cinematic Construction of the "Limping Villain"

While Omkara (2006) is acclaimed for its rootedness in the political and cultural realities of Uttar Pradesh, its representation of disability through Langda Tyagi's character is deeply embedded in cinematic codes of villainy. Langda's limp, which earns him the derogatory nickname "Langda" (literally "the limping one"), is not an incidental detail but a central visual and narrative device. Vishal Bhardwaj employs both camera work and dialogic emphasis to foreground Langda's disability as a marker of otherness, thereby feeding into what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2009) terms the ableist gaze—a visual regime that transforms bodily difference into spectacle, stigma, and narrative justification for exclusion.

From the opening scenes, Langda's disability is framed not simply as a physical impairment but as an inscription of powerlessness. The camera lingers on his uneven gait, often showing him walking slightly behind Omkara (Ajay Devgn) and Kesu (Vivek Oberoi). This framing visually establishes hierarchy: Omkara and Kesu stride forward as the legitimate heirs to political and masculine authority, while Langda trails, visually diminished. Garland-Thomson's (2002) idea of staring—the culturally charged act of "fixating the gaze upon a body that is marked as different"—is enacted cinematically by the camera itself, turning Langda into the object of the audience's stare.

Visual Framing and the Politics of Exclusion

In multiple scenes, Bhardwaj uses low-angle group shots where Langda is positioned either at the margins or partially in shadow. This spatial marginalization reinforces his narrative marginalization. The visual technique reflects Foucault's (1977) concept of the disciplinary gaze, which both isolates and normalizes;

Langda is constantly seen but never granted centrality, his impairment visually coded as both “visible” and “disqualifying.”

The next scene is after Omkara appoints Kesu as his successor. The camera pans across the crowd of henchmen, pausing briefly on Langda's face as he forces a smile that fails to mask resentment. His limp is subtly emphasized as he shifts weight uncomfortably, the background score underlining a sense of suppressed rage. The cinematic gaze here is diagnostic, treating his body as both explanation and foreshadowing: his disability becomes shorthand for why he was overlooked and why he will resort to manipulation. Langda himself verbalizes this exclusion in a bitter aside to his wife, Indu (Konkona Sen Sharma): “*Mujhe kyon nahin banaya Omkara ne? Sirf is liye ki main langda hoon?*” (*Why didn't Omkara make me [the successor]? Just because I limp?*)

This line crystallizes the film's ableist logic. The body is foregrounded as a barrier to leadership, a disqualifier for political succession. In disability theory terms, this reflects the medical model of disability, where impairment is equated with incapacity, rather than the social model, which sees societal structures as disabling (Oliver, 1990). The tragedy is that Langda himself internalizes the ableist gaze, interpreting his exclusion as biologically inevitable rather than politically contingent.

Sound, Silence, and the “Marked Body”

Beyond the camera, Bhardwaj deploys sound design to emphasize Langda's physical difference. His footsteps are often more audible than others', a diegetic exaggeration of his uneven gait. In contrast, moments of silence before his dialogue heighten tension, as though his words emerge from a place of embodied lack. For instance, when Langda manipulates Raju into planting seeds of doubt about Kesu's fidelity, the soundtrack momentarily drops ambient noise, amplifying Langda's voice. His husky delivery, coupled with the memory of his limp, positions him as a schemer—his verbal power compensating for physical impairment. Mitchell and Snyder (2000) would call this a narrative prosthesis: disability is not only a plot device but also a symbolic crutch on which the entire story's arc of jealousy and betrayal rests.

Key Scene: The Manipulation of Omkara

In the pivotal scene where Langda convinces Omkara of Dolly's (Desdemona's) supposed infidelity, his limp is once again foregrounded. The camera tracks him as he paces unevenly, circling Omkara like a predator. His disability, instead of diminishing his menace, amplifies it—his bodily difference re-coded as

sinister cunning. Langda says with calculated venom: “*Jiska pair hi theek na ho, uska mann kab seedha hoga?*” (*One whose leg itself is crooked, how can his mind ever be straight?*)

Here, Langda uses ableist logic against himself, ironically reinforcing the ideology that excludes him. The line dramatizes internalized oppression: disability is equated with moral deviation, a metaphorical crookedness. Bhardwaj crafts this as self-fulfilling prophecy, aligning with Mitchell and Snyder's (2000) thesis that disability in narrative often “provides a stock of metaphors to shore up cultural anxieties.”

Mise-en-Scène: Costume, Lighting, Body Language

Langda's costume—often darker, rougher fabrics—contrasts with Kesu's youthful, colorful attire. This aesthetic coding marks him as older, rougher, “tainted.” His body language, exaggerated by the limp, is captured in tight close-ups during moments of manipulation, while wide shots isolate him when he is excluded from Omkara's circle. Lighting, too, plays a role: Langda is frequently half-lit, his figure straddling shadow and light, metaphorically positioned between legitimacy and exclusion. Butler's (1990) theory of performativity is instructive here. Langda's body is not simply impaired; it is made to perform impairment within a social script of villainy. His limp becomes a performative act, exaggerated by cinematic choices, compelling audiences to read him through the lens of “the disabled villain.”

The Gaze of Indu: Disrupting Ableism

Interestingly, Indu is the only character who does not interpret Langda's limp as deficiency. Her gaze is intimate, normalizing, even affectionate. When she tells him: “*Tere langdane se tere pyaar mein kya farq padta hai?*” (*What difference does your limp make to your love?*). Indu momentarily disrupts the ableist gaze, offering a relational perspective where disability is not determinant of worth. Yet, this alternative is crushed by the dominant narrative, as Langda's jealousy overpowers any redemptive reading. Her voice serves as a fleeting echo of the social model of disability, but is narratively silenced by his tragic arc.

2.2 Power, Marginalization, and the Politics of Exclusion in Omkara

The politics of disability in Omkara becomes most visible not merely in Langda Tyagi's physical impairment but in the ways that this impairment intersects with power, succession, and the politics of loyalty. Langda's disability is not only a condition of the body but also a condition of political exclusion, marked, narrated, and reinforced by his peers and superiors. Through this exclusion, Vishal Bhardwaj demonstrates how ableism functions not only as a cultural gaze but also as a structure of power.

Disability and Dispossession from Succession

One of the most powerful sequences occurs early in the film when Omkara must choose his successor. Instead of appointing Langda Tyagi, his long-serving lieutenant, he names Kesu Firangi, the younger and more urbane companion. This moment of succession is central to the unfolding tragedy and reveals how Langda's disability intersects with social perceptions of competence. Langda's suppressed rage comes through in his bitter mutterings after the decision: "*Mujhe chhod ke us firangi ko bana diya baahubali...*" (*He left me aside and made that foreign-bred one the chief...*). The dialogue underscores not only caste but also bodily discrimination: the assumption that Langda, marked by his limp, cannot embody the aspirational masculinity that power requires. Kesu, educated and smooth, represents mobility—literal and social—while Langda is immobilized, confined by both his body and by others' perception of it.

As Michel Foucault (1977) argues, power is exercised not only through coercion but through normalization, through the marking of bodies as capable or incapable. Langda's limp signifies incapacity in the eyes of his peers, and this symbolic marking effectively disqualifies him from succession.

Loyalty and the Ableist Condition

Langda's service to Omkara is constructed as loyal but conditional. His loyalty is never allowed to translate into leadership because his body functions as a site of mistrust. His wife Indu recognizes this injustice when she tries to calm him: "*Tere bina toh Omkara adhoora hai.*" (*Without you, Omkara is incomplete.*). This intimate acknowledgement complicates the ableist gaze: within the private sphere, Langda is validated, his role acknowledged as indispensable. Yet in the public, political sphere, the same man is diminished, his limp foregrounded as evidence of deficiency.

The oscillation between indispensability and disposability echoes Judith Butler's (1993) notion of performativity: the disabled body must constantly perform loyalty and competence, yet the very condition of disability ensures that this performance will be questioned or interrupted. Langda's tragedy lies in this endless loop of recognition and disqualification.

Humiliation and the Language of Disability

Disability in Omkara is not silent; it is named, ridiculed, and weaponized in language. Langda's moniker itself—"Langda"—functions as a perpetual reminder of his bodily difference. The nickname is not merely descriptive but derogatory, collapsing his entire identity into his limp.

During moments of mockery, other characters reinforce this linguistic violence: “*Arre Langda, chal toh sahi se nahi sakta, chal banega neta.*” (*Langda, you can't even walk properly, and you want to be a leader.*) This ridicule exemplifies what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2009) terms the stare—a social act that renders disabled bodies hypervisible while erasing their complexity. By reducing Langda to his limp, the community transforms impairment into destiny: he is not a man with a limp but a “limping man,” defined entirely by bodily lack. This linguistic violence parallels what Lennard Davis (2013) calls the “hegemony of normalcy,” where deviation from the norm is not merely difference but deficiency. For Langda, the limp is both a physical mark and a political verdict.

Manipulation as Counter-Power

Langda's response to exclusion is not resignation but manipulation. He wields narrative rather than the sword, rumor rather than physical force. His manipulations of Omkara against Kesu and Dolly represent what Garland-Thomson (1997) calls misfitting: the strategic negotiation of an environment that does not accommodate disabled bodies. When he plants seeds of doubt in Omkara's mind about Dolly, his rhetoric is sharp, intimate, and poisonous: “*Jo aadmi apne yaar ka saathi nahi ban saka, woh tere saath kya nibhaayega?*” (*The man who couldn't stay loyal to his friend—how will he stay loyal to you?*). Here, Langda transforms his lack into skill. Where others rely on physical mobility, he uses verbal cunning, performing power in ways denied to him otherwise. Yet even this counter-power is shaped by exclusion: it emerges as compensation for what the ableist gaze denies him.

In Mitchell and Snyder's (2000) terms, this is “narrative prosthesis”—disability functioning as a plot device. Langda's limp is not only a physical condition but also the engine of the story, driving him to revenge, shaping his manipulations, and ultimately determining the tragic trajectory of the film.

The Tragic Resolution of Exclusion

Langda's downfall is inevitable because his counter-power never dismantles the structure of exclusion; it only reconfigures it. By the climax, when his schemes are exposed, Omkara turns his violence upon him. Langda's death is not portrayed as liberation but as punishment: the disabled man who dared to challenge ableist hierarchy must be eliminated. As he dies, Langda admits: “*Main hi dushman tha, aur main hi dost tha.*” (*I was both the enemy and the friend.*). This confession crystallizes his paradoxical position:

indispensable yet excluded, loyal yet distrusted, capable yet diminished. The narrative closes not by rehabilitating disability but by reaffirming ableist order through his erasure.

2.3 The Climax: Exposure of Langda's Treachery

The climax of Omkara hinges upon the unraveling of Langda Tyagi's manipulative schemes. Having orchestrated the downfall of Dolly (Desdemona) and Omkara (Othello) through lies and deceit, Langda's strategy appears successful until the truth surfaces through Kesu Firangi (Cassio) and Indu (Emilia). The cinematic exposure of Langda is telling: rather than depicting him as a tragic figure undone by ambition, Bhardwaj frames him through an ableist visual lens, emphasizing his limp as he staggers away from Omkara's wrath. In one of the key moments, Indu, enraged by the death of Dolly, strikes Langda with the words: "*Tu ne sab barbād kar diya, Langda. Tere jhooth, teri chhalkapat ne sab kuch mitā diya.*" (*You destroyed everything, Langda. Your lies, your deceit wiped everything away.*) The repetition of Langda's name here is crucial. It does not simply mark him as an individual but as a type, reducing his identity to his disability. The revelation of his treachery is thus inseparable from the ableist naming that has trailed him throughout the film.

Death as Narrative Cleansing

Langda's eventual killing by Indu serves as a form of narrative cleansing. The disabled body, which has destabilized the social and political order, must be removed so that order can be restored. In the Shakespearean source text, Iago is captured but not killed, left alive to face punishment. Bhardwaj, however, intensifies the resolution by ensuring Langda's death—thus eliminating the disruptive disabled figure altogether. This alteration is significant. By transforming Iago's ambiguous survival into Langda's definitive death, the film enacts what Lennard J. Davis (1995) calls the "tyranny of the normal." The social order cannot tolerate the persistence of disability aligned with evil; it must excise it to return to a state of equilibrium. The abject body (Kristeva, 1982) is expelled, ensuring the re-establishment of normative stability. Indu's words as she delivers the fatal blow reinforce this: "*Ab tu aur zinda nahi rahega, Langda. Teri saazish yahin khatam hoti hai.*" (*You will not live any longer, Langda. Your conspiracy ends here.*)

Her articulation merges moral resolution with physical elimination, collapsing the categories of evil and disability into one body that must be annihilated.

Cinematic Tropes: Disability as Villainy

The resolution of Omkara reiterates a long-standing cinematic trope: the disabled villain whose bodily impairment is shorthand for moral corruption. As Norden (1994) observes in *The Cinema of Isolation*, disability in mainstream cinema often signifies deviance, eliciting both fear and fascination. Bhardwaj's representation of Langda participates in this trope even as it grounds the story in a gritty Indian rural context.

Close readings of the final scenes demonstrate how sound and framing contribute to this construction. Langda's limping footsteps echo more loudly in moments of confrontation, a sonic reminder of his physical difference. The camera often lingers on his uneven movement, almost fetishizing the impairment as a marker of his villainy. The result is a cinematic language where disability is inseparable from danger, deceit, and downfall.

3.0 Conclusion: The Punishment of Otherness

Langda Tyagi's death in Omkara encapsulates the intersection of disability, power, and the ableist gaze in popular cinema. While the film grants him narrative centrality, it denies him narrative survival, positioning his impairment as inseparable from moral corruption and thus unfit for social integration. His violent end reaffirms the cultural script that equates bodily difference with danger, ensuring that disability is both the cause of conflict and its ultimate casualty. By mobilizing the theoretical frameworks of Garland-Thomson, Davis, Mitchell and Snyder, Butler, and Foucault, we can see how Omkara enacts a broader cultural logic: disability serves as a narrative prosthesis—indispensable for drama, yet intolerable in resolution. Langda's erasure is not simply a character's death but a cultural act of expelling the disabled body, reaffirming the tyranny of the normal in both cinematic and social imagination.

Ethical and Representational Implications

The ethical implications are stark. When audiences repeatedly encounter disability as a sign of deviance, it shapes cultural perceptions beyond the cinema hall. Viewers may unconsciously absorb the association between impairment and untrustworthiness, reinforcing stigma in everyday life. The question, then, is how filmmakers can represent disability without succumbing to the narrative prosthesis model. Is it possible to imagine a Langda Tyagi whose limp is incidental rather than determinative? A character whose disability is part of his being but not the moral engine of the plot?

This chapter has traced how Omkara embodies and reproduces the ableist gaze through its representation of Langda Tyagi. By mobilizing the limp as narrative prosthesis, by amplifying it through the normate gaze, and by ultimately expelling it through abjection, the film demonstrates how deeply entrenched ableist logics are in cinematic storytelling. Yet, by engaging with theoretical insights from Davis, Garland-Thomson, Mitchell & Snyder, Foucault, Butler, and Kristeva, we can also open space for critique—and perhaps, for reimagining. The task for scholars, filmmakers, and audiences alike is to demand and create representations of disability that move beyond prosthesis, beyond abjection, toward complexity and humanity.

3.0 Conclusion

This study has sought to interrogate the ways in which Vishal Bhardwaj's Omkara (2006) embodies, circulates, and reaffirms the ableist gaze through its representation of Langda Tyagi, a character whose disability is narratively inseparable from his villainy, envy, and eventual annihilation. Across preceding chapters, I have examined how the film both reproduces and critiques discourses of power, masculinity, caste, and physical “normalcy,” positioning disability as a signifier of deviance and exclusion within the cultural imagination of Hindi cinema. In this concluding chapter, I synthesize those findings, foreground their theoretical significance, and gesture toward wider cultural and ethical implications.

Disability and the Narrative Prosthesis

At the heart of this inquiry has been the concept of narrative prosthesis, as developed by Mitchell and Snyder (2000). They argue that literature and cinema frequently deploy disability as a device to propel narrative action: the disabled figure becomes the “prosthetic” upon which stories hang their weight, an element that generates conflict, pathos, or resolution. Langda Tyagi epitomizes this device. His limp and physical impairment are not incidental features of his character but rather the fulcrum around which jealousy, betrayal, and destruction revolve. Langda's sense of exclusion from Omkara's trust is intensified by his embodiment of otherness. His disability serves as the symbolic marker of lack—both physical and social—that renders him “unfit” in the eyes of a society obsessed with virility, dominance, and masculine normalcy. The script carefully codes his limp as a constant reminder of his “deficiency,” while his manipulative genius is explained as compensatory cunning. This alignment of disability with deceit is a textbook instantiation of narrative prosthesis, wherein the disabled figure is narratively indispensable yet ontologically disposable.

The Ableist Gaze

Building on Garland-Thomson's (2009) theorization of the normate gaze, Omkara constructs Langda as the perpetual object of visual scrutiny. The camera lingers on his gait, his uneven movements, the physical markers that set him apart from the "whole" bodies of Omkara or Kesu. Through these cinematic strategies, audiences are invited to participate in the act of staring, affirming their own embodied normalcy by contrasting themselves against Langda's deviant form.

Garland-Thomson reminds us that staring is a social relation, one that produces difference as much as it records it. In Omkara, the ableist gaze does not merely observe disability; it transforms it into the narrative explanation for moral corruption. Langda's envy and treachery are never allowed to stand alone as human flaws; they are constantly traced back to his impaired body. This conflation of physical otherness with psychological darkness sustains the ableist imaginary in which disabled bodies are either pitied or feared, but rarely granted full complexity.

The Tyranny of the Normal

Lennard Davis (1995) describes modernity as marked by the tyranny of the normal—the statistical, medical, and cultural obsession with identifying and maintaining a "normal" body and mind. Within the world of Omkara, the standard of normalcy is embodied in Omkara himself: virile, feared, respected, and fully able-bodied. Langda's limp represents a rupture in this standard, a reminder that the social order depends on the exclusion of those who cannot measure up to its physical and moral codes. Langda's exclusion from leadership positions despite his loyalty to Omkara demonstrates the quiet violence of ableist structures. His disability is never openly articulated as the reason for his marginalization, but it silently underscores every decision to bypass him. His frustration—"Omi bhai, main kabhi vishwas ke layak nahin hunge kya?" (Omi brother, will I never be worthy of trust?)—is both a personal lament and a cultural diagnosis. It reveals the cruel logic of ableism: that disability, regardless of loyalty or skill, becomes grounds for perpetual suspicion.

Abjection and the Fear of the Disabled Body

Julia Kristeva's (1982) notion of abjection—the casting out of that which threatens identity or social order—illuminates the film's treatment of Langda's final downfall. His disabled body, once tolerated as a useful subordinate, becomes intolerable once its treachery is exposed. The abject must be expelled for the restoration of order, and Langda is eliminated in a burst of violence that symbolically purges the

community of his deviance. His body is left without dignity, a carcass of betrayal rather than a human life lost. This cinematic punishment is not unique to Omkara: the trope of the disabled villain's inevitable downfall is a recurring theme in global cinema, from Shakespeare's Richard III to Bollywood's stock villains. In each case, the elimination of the disabled antagonist affirms the stability of the "normal" order, ensuring that audiences leave the theater reassured rather than unsettled.

Intersections: Disability, Caste, and Masculinity

An important dimension of Omkara's narrative is the intersection of disability with caste and masculinity in the Indian sociocultural context. Omkara himself, as a half-caste ("Omkara Shukla"), is marked as liminal, yet his physical prowess allows him to overcome social prejudice. Kesu, as the upper-caste, English-speaking, able-bodied modern youth, represents aspirational normalcy. Langda, by contrast, is doubly marginalized: physically disabled and lacking the cultural capital of education or caste privilege. The film suggests that in a milieu where masculinity is measured by dominance, virility, and strength, disability functions as a profound emasculation. Langda's schemes, while intellectually brilliant, can never compensate for his inability to embody the ideal masculine body. Thus, his violence becomes both a rebellion against and a confirmation of this exclusion. He simultaneously exposes the fragility of the masculine norm and reinforces it by fulfilling the stereotype of the bitter, treacherous cripple.

If Omkara highlights the persistence of ableist narratives, it also points to the urgent need for alternative imaginaries. Disability studies scholars have called for representations that move beyond the binary of the disabled villain or pitiable victim. Instead, cinema can envision disabled characters as complex, flawed, and fully human—capable of love, ambition, humor, and contradiction without being reduced to their impairments. Recent trends in Indian independent cinema and streaming platforms show tentative steps toward such portrayals, though mainstream Bollywood remains wedded to older tropes. The challenge, as Garland-Thomson suggests, is to create visual and narrative spaces where the disabled body can be seen without being consumed as spectacle.

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