

Critique

Narendra Bandabe

**Breaking Stereotypes: Shahrukh Khan Chavada's  
*Kayo Kayo Color* Challenges Muslim Framing in Indian Cinema**



Shahrukh Khan Chavada's debut film, "*Kayo Kayo Colour?*" (Which Colour?) is a unique film that aims to change the portrayal of Muslim characters in Indian cinema. Instead of using them as stereotypes or for political debates, the film presents them as real people, challenging the audience's perception of these characters. Recently, the film was screened at the Rotterdam International Film Festival in 2023.

"*Kayo Kayo Colour?*" depicts the daily life of a Muslim family, shedding light on the social norms and expectations prevalent in their neighbourhood. The girls engage in play within the house while the boys chase after chickens in the streets. The film's protagonist, Razzak, feels discontented due to his unemployment but still aspires to fulfil the traditional role of the breadwinner. His daughter, Ruba, is assigned household chores so that her younger

brother, Faiz, can focus on his studies. Faiz faces teasing from his friends for playing with the girls. Meanwhile, Razzak's mother resists living with her married daughter's family, who have moved away from the slum.

Director Shahrukh Khan Chavada shared his thoughts on the film: "I conceived a simple plot centered around a curious girl who desires to taste a beverage priced at Rs. 100, an amount beyond her financial reach. To add depth and authenticity, we extensively explored an area called Saudagiri ki Pole, located in Kalupur near Ahmedabad City. We dedicated almost a year to studying the local community and their surroundings. Throughout this process, I contemplated the broader socio-political influences on this location. Instead of following a traditional screenplay, my approach involved an

Excel sheet with various topics, scenes, notes, and specific dialogues tailored for the cast."

Shahrukh chose to work with untrained actors he had encountered while scouting the filming location. He explained, "Recognizing the importance of authentic dialogue, we understood that the actors needed the freedom to develop their conversations naturally. I provided each actor with a detailed background story for their characters, including their personality traits, and encouraged them to improvise during our filming sessions using our smartphones. Afterwards, I meticulously reviewed the recorded footage, selecting the most suitable segments to incorporate into the scenes and making necessary adjustments. We then screened the edited footage for the actors, guiding the flow of their conversations. This process was carried out methodically and with careful control. As the actors watched themselves in the test shots, their confidence grew, and they gradually became more comfortable and fully committed to our film."

In the story "Kayo Kayo Colour," director Chavada delves into the core aspects of human values and relationships. The main character faces unpredictable ups and downs while striving to survive, bravely asserting their presence in a world that constantly tries to erase their existence.

Chavada skilfully employs beautiful still images to capture the essence of the family home. The house, belonging to the lower middle class, is depicted as messy with buckets filled with water, showcasing the irregular water supply. Unused children's furniture and a broken sewing machine can be seen, while a swivel chair is placed in a hard-to-reach spot next to the refrigerator. This contrasts with Razzak's sister's fancy flat, which is sparsely furnished. The upscale flat features bare walls and modern decorations that create a sense of spaciousness. Chavada cleverly utilises mirror shots to enhance the perception of space further. The film's physical environment subtly reflects the characters' diverse life situations.

Shahrukh Khan embarked on capturing three distinct houses using a range of framing techniques carefully chosen to suit the demands of each scene. For Razzak's home, static shots were employed,



devoid of camera movements. Different angles of the same space within the house were meticulously captured, effectively highlighting its various dimensions.

When filming at Razzak's sister's house, Shahrukh Khan opted for static shots on a tripod, allowing the camera to pan across the space in each room. This technique showcased different areas of the spacious house, creating a fluid visual experience for the viewers.

On the other hand, scenes at Razzak's parents' house were captured using a handheld approach. Filming was skilfully done from the same corner of the confined space, utilising this framing choice to emphasise the temperaments and economic situations of the characters within that setting.

Furthermore, a candid approach was employed for capturing shots of the children playing. Shahrukh Khan chose to use a handheld camera, effectively conveying the carefree and free-spirited nature of the young characters.

Through carefully selecting and implementing these diverse framing techniques, Shahrukh Khan aimed to visually emphasise the unique qualities of each location and its inhabitants, providing a deeper understanding of their lives and circumstances.

Shahrukh explains the reasoning behind changing the aspect ratio during the shooting of the scenes. He says, "So, in the first scene where Ruba goes to the shop, we shot it in a 4:3 ratio with those black bars on the sides of the frames, you know what I mean? But in the last scene, we switched to a wider 16:9 aspect ratio, with the black bars opening up and being replaced by the physical structures of buildings. But here's the thing, even with the aspect ratio change, the boundary that Ruba walks in and out of



remains stuck in that 4:3 frame if you catch my drift. Through these visual cues, I wanted to depict the disturbing structural violence that surrounds us in society.

Now, the change in aspect ratio is my way of illustrating how people think; if we simply go along

with the decisions of our political leaders without questioning, they claim our lives will improve, right? But the truth is, when we're all compliant like that, we ignore the real issues in our society. I'm talking about patriarchy, blind faith, toxic masculinity, etc. These problems run deep, man; they won't just disappear overnight. That's the message I wanted to convey: sometimes, we need to step back and see the bigger picture beyond what's right in front of us. Because only then can we truly address the underlying problems and bring about real change."

The film adeptly weaves in references to significant events such as the 2002 Gujrat riots and demonetisation. Shahrukh employs a subtle approach, avoiding pointing fingers at any specific political party. Nevertheless, he effectively conveys his political views through the art of cinematography.

**Mr. Narendra Bandabe is a Member of FIPRESCI-India.**