

Indian Cinema and Society: Portrayal of the Feminist Issues Concerning Women in Rural India in Bollywood

A Dissertation for

Course code and course title: ENG- 651 Dissertation

Credits: 16

Submitted in partial fulfillment of Master of Arts Degree

(M.A. in English)

By

BEVERLEY NATALE FERNANDES

Seat no.: 22P0110009

ABC ID.: 605733804879

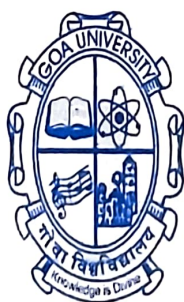
PRN.: 201907457

Under the supervision of

Ms. Nafisa Oliveira

ShenoiGoembab School of Languages and Literature

Discipline of English



GOA UNIVERSITY

Date April 2024

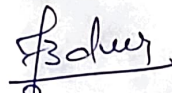
Examined by:

Seal of the school

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that the data presented in this Dissertation report entitled, "Indian Cinema and Society: Portrayal of Feminist Issues Concerning Women in Rural India in Bollywood" is based on the results of investigations carried out by me in the Discipline of English at the Shenoigoembab school of Languages and Literature, Goa University under the Supervision of MsNafisa Oliveira and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree or diploma by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities will be not be responsible for the correctness of observations / experimental or other findings given the dissertation.

I hereby authorize the University authorities to upload this dissertation on the dissertation repository or anywhere else as the UGC regulations demand and make it available to any one as needed.


BEVERLEY NATALE FERNANDES
Signature and Name of Student

Seat no:22P0110009

Date:16/04/2024

Place: Goa University

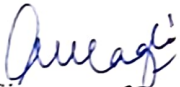
COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation report "Indian Cinema and Society: Portrayal of Feminist Issues Concerning Women in Rural India in Bollywood" is a bonafide work carried out by Ms Beverley Natale Fernandes under my supervision in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in the Discipline of English at the Shenoigoembab school of Languages and Literature, Goa University



Signature and Name of Supervising Teacher

Date: 16/04/2024



Signature of Dean of the School School Stamp

Date: 16/04/2024

Place: Goa University

Indian Cinema and Society: Portrayal of the Feminist Issues Concerning Women in Rural India in Bollywood

A Dissertation for

Course code and course title: ENG- 651 Dissertation

Credits: 16

Submitted in partial fulfillment of Master of Arts Degree

(M.A. in English)

By

BEVERLEY NATALE FERNANDES

Seat no.: 22P0110009

ABC ID.: 605733804879

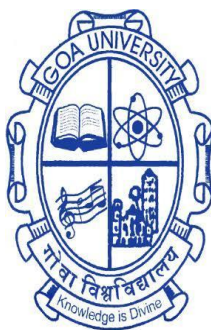
PRN.: 201907457

Under the supervision of

Ms. Nafisa Oliveira

Shenoi Goembab School of Languages and Literature

Discipline of English



GOA UNIVERSITY

Date April 2024

Examined by:

Seal of the school

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that the data presented in this Dissertation report entitled, “Indian Cinema and Society: Portrayal of Feminist Issues Concerning Women in Rural India in Bollywood” is based on the results of investigations carried out by me in the Discipline of English at the Shenoai Goembab school of Languages and Literature , Goa University under the Supervision of Ms Nafisa Oliveira and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree or diploma by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities will be not be responsible for the correctness of observations / experimental or other findings given the dissertation.

I hereby authorize the University authorities to upload this dissertation on the dissertation repository or anywhere else as the UGC regulations demand and make it available to any one as needed.

Signature and Name of Student

Seat no:22P0110009

Date:16/04/2024

Place: Goa University

COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation report “Indian Cinema and Society: Portrayal of Feminist Issues Concerning Women in Rural India in Bollywood” is a bonafide work carried out by Ms Beverley Natale Fernandes under my supervision in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in the Discipline of English at the Shenoï Goembab school of Languages and Literature , Goa University

Signature and Name of Supervising Teacher

Date: 16/04/2024

Signature of Dean of the School

School Stamp

Date: 16/04/2024

Place: Goa University

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my guide, Ms. Nafisa Oliveira for her guidance. I would also like to thank my parents for their love and support. I am thankful for the staff of Goa University, my friends and students of the English department for their support and encouragement.

TABLE C IV TENT

1. Abstract	
2. Chapter 1 Introduction	Pg. no. 01
1.2 History of Indian Cinema	Pg. no. 01
1.3 Feminism in Indian Cinema	Pg. no. 02
1.4 Scope and Limitation	Pg. no. 07
1.5 Research Problem	Pg. no. 08
1.6 Relevance and Necessity of Proposed Research	Pg. no. 08
1.7 Objective of the Proposed Research	Pg. no. 09
1.8 Literatures Review	Pg. no. 09
1.9 Hypotheses	Pg. no. 14
1.10 Research Methodology for the proposed research	Pg. no. 14
1.11 Research Design	Pg. no. 15
3. Chapter 2 depiction of patriarchy and male dominance in Indian Cinema	
2.1 Feminist theories on Patriarchy.	Pg. no. 19
2.2 Male Dominance	Pg. no. 20
2.3 Male Identification	Pg. no. 20
2.4 Male Centeredness	Pg. no. 21
2.5 Obsession with control	Pg. no. 21
2.6 Synopsis of the movies	Pg. no. 21
2.7 Women's issues raised in the films depicting patriarchy and male dominance	Pg. no. 25
4. Chapter 3 Critical analysis of the feminist film theory and male gaze theory	

3.1 Feminist Film Theory and male gaze theory in context with Indian cinema	Pg. no. 36
5. Chapter 4 An overview of how women break from the toxic Masculinity	Pg. no. 42
4.1 Toxic masculinity and its portrayal in the Indian cinema	Pg. no. 42
4.2 Toxic masculinity In Indian Cinema	Pg. no. 44
4.3 Women liberating themselves from toxic masculinity	Pg. no. 45
6. Chapter 5 Conclusion	Pg. no. 59
7. Chapter 6 Bibliography.	Pg. no. 66

ABSTRACT

Cinema industry is a popular form of mass media believed to entertain. This experience helps the audience to view the world that is ascetically different from the real world, the land which allows them to escape from the daily drudge of life. Cinema is a popular form of art medium which plays a vital role in reinforcing dominant cultural values, constructing images and molding opinion.

This research article deals with the “Portrayal of the Feminist issues concerning Women in Rural India in Bollywood” . It is important to examine this issue as women are the large part of country’s population and therefore their representation on screen is essential for determining the existing stereotypes in society.

This study will investigate about how mainstream Hindi cinema is restricted with limited defined sketches of womanhood. It will also examine about whether the mainstream Hindi Cinema has been successful in representing women’s different shades through celluloid screen in a society with patriarchal values. This study will explore the issues faced by women in rural areas such as dowry, marital rapes, child marriages, sexual harassment, and domestic violence.

It will also analyze the effect of patriarchy male dominance as portrayed in the films selected for the study. This research will also highlight upon the toxic masculinity and its portrayal in the Indian society and cinema, it will also critically evaluate the feminist film theory and the male gaze theory and its application to the selected films for the study.

Keyword: Patriarchy, male dominance, male gaze, toxic masculinity,

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

The entertainment quotient in India comes mainly from the cinema. People in India love to indulge themselves in entertaining movies to escape from the hectic work life and spend some leisure time enjoying themselves and getting lost into the reel world for some time. Cinema is one form of media that entertains as well as imparts knowledge on certain crucial topics. It helps in shaping our thoughts, revisiting our cultural ethos and forming opinions.

1.2 History of Indian Cinema.

In the year 1896 Lumiere Brothers introduced cinema in India. Dhundiraj Govind Phalke who is popularly known as Dada Saheb Phalke is considered as the father of Indian Cinema. Dada Saheb Phalke produced the film called Raja Harishchandra in the year 1913. It is said that this film was the first indigenous film to be produced and this movie however marked the beginning of the Indian film industry in India.

Hindi Cinema is popularly known as Bollywood. And in this film there were no female characters, it was a movie consisting only male actors. And women performing in the movies was seen as a disgrace. But in the same year the women were introduced in Indian film cinema with the entry of Kamlabai Gokhale as a lead in Dadasaheb Phalke's *Mohini Bhasmasur*. The films produced during the 1950's were either mythological tales or were based on the nationalist propaganda so women in these films were shown as regressive and passive characters.

The Golden Age of Bollywood is often considered from 1950's to 1970's which probably gave us some of the 'timeless' characters. The portrayal of these women in the golden era were mostly a loving wife, a sacrificing mother who always needed a man in her life to support her emotionally and financially. These 'timeless' women characters often emphasized on the family values and had high regard for the traditional and cultural ethos without the knowledge of the underlying forms of oppression against them.

John Berger in his essay on art criticism, 'Ways of seeing' he said "Men act, women appear. Men watch, women watch themselves being watched". Here he brings out the concept of 'male gaze' while analyzing the representation of women across media. So this can be applied in Bollywood as well where unrealistic ideals are displayed in the films and there is no proper representation of women in the Indian film cinema and therefore Bollywood is often looked as a male dominated industry.

Bollywood comes under popular art and it tries to depict the Indian culture and its influences. Cinema is created to shed light on the various Indian ideology. Mainstream cinema however plays a very crucial role in shaping and influencing people's opinions and thought processes. It can be rightly said that society does not get influenced by the cinema but the cinema acts as a reflective mirror of the society. Bollywood movies tries to portray the social realities and give an insight on how gender and sexuality is generally perceived by the Indian society.

1.3 Feminism in Indian Cinema

Women all over the world has excelled in various fields and have reached to great heights. But however in India it seems a very difficult task for a woman to get equal status as men in the society. As we live in a patriarchal setup Indian cinema has somehow tried to showcase women and their problems in the most realistic manner. Cinema is a very influential medium of communication it is a better initiative to spread awareness and to give out a clear cut message to the mass audience.

People have high expectations from the women in Bollywood. Audiences always want to see women in a very docile role submitting to the needs of their husband and her in-laws. This portrays that patriarchy have a very strong hold on the minds of the viewers. When Bollywood portrays a woman who is unmarried, who makes her own rules and does not adhere to the norms set by the society and lives a care free life such women characters are labeled as “vamps”, and their main motive is to attract the opposite sex. This is mainly done in the Hindi cinema to shed a positive light on the protagonist.

Sexual objectification of women is very common in Bollywood movies. Over the years it has become a trend to add an “item number” in the films. Mostly this so called ‘item number’ has no connection to the plot of the movie but it is added to lure the male audience to the theaters. In the Indian society women are restrained from developing their own personalities and they cannot openly express their feelings and thoughts but they are rather expected to adjust to the unjust suppression of the patriarchal mindset.

In most of the contemporary movies the portrayal of the women in the villages is quite different. These women are shown as they are deeply rooted in their religious and traditional belief system and are mostly belonging to the backward caste which puts the women from the villages into negative limelight. By now Bollywood has gone under drastic changes and has evolved over the years. Now the women who follow the traditional norms are considered as the ideal women whereas women who defy these rules are characterized as immoral.

Bollywood however witnessed the rise of the women centric films where issues faced by women are highlighted. They showcase strong female protagonist who stood up for themselves and fought against injustice. These movies were not only created for the purpose of entertainment but also served a medium of discussion on topics like gender equality and women's rights. In the recent years Bollywood has however tried to embrace a more nuanced way of portraying women on the big screen.

Filmmakers have also started to explore the diverse themes, into the complexities of female characters and their lived experiences. The portrayals of the unapologetically flawed and multilayered characters have pushed the audiences to resonate with the characters and to dismantle the stereotype which was already built in their minds from a very early age. Bollywood also played a significant role in challenging the societal norms and traditions by creating films on the social taboos and more important topics such as menstrual health and sexual consent. This change in the Indian Cinema on portrayal of women came with a lot of support as well as criticisms. The film industry however tried to grapple the issues like

gender pay gaps, underrepresentation of women belonging to rural areas, objectification of women in various forms.

Feminism is a powerful tool to challenge and change the status quo and advocates of gender equality. To apply the same theory in the context of Indian cinema we must try to grasp the essence of feminism itself. Feminist theory emphasizes on the struggles of women to get equal rights and opportunities. There are three types of feminist approaches Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism and Intersectional feminism.

Liberal feminist give more importance to equal opportunities for women in the society. They try to break the barriers that hinder the progress of women in terms of education, employment and leadership. Liberal feminist also strive to achieve gender equality by eradicating the discriminatory laws against women.

Radical feminist try to take more radical approach by highlighting the root cause for the suffering and oppression of women that is patriarchy. They believe that gender equality is only possible when the patriarchal system is uprooted completely, which will in turn challenge the existing traditional gender roles and norms.

Intersectional feminist argue that gender discrimination intersects with other forms of oppression such as racism, classism, and sexuality. Intersectional feminist also acknowledge the fact that women's experiences are shaped by different intersecting identities. They also try to address the issues faced by the women belonging to the marginalized communities.

Feminist activists try to eliminate gender based discrimination; they challenge the societal norms that promote inequality and also fight against domestic violence and harassment. In Indian cinema feminism makes its way in various forms. Films often portray strong female characters who challenge the societal norms and have a strong influence on the coming generation.

Depiction of such kind of women characters inspire other women to question traditional roles and to encourage societal transformations. Indian filmmakers use Bollywood movies as a medium to raise the issues on child marriages, marital rapes, dowry, domestic violence and sexual harassment. They try to empower women and help the public as well to shape their thoughts and opinions.

The films chosen for this study are *Lajja*, *Dor*, *Mirch Masala*, *Bandit Queen*, *Chandni bar*, *Lipstick Under My Burkha*, and *Parched*. These films are women centric films which highlight the issues faced by the women in the patriarchal society. These movies knitted the stories of some brave hearts, who stood tall against oppression. These women protagonist embark a journey of self-discovery, embracing their individuality and breaking the shackles of conformity.

The filmmakers tried their level best to highlight the transformation of women and how they blossomed beyond the societal expectations. Their unwritten destiny unfolds against the backdrop of liberation which becomes an inspiration for countless other women who are held captive. These films celebrate invincible spirit of women, who have the ability to bring in changes and to influence narratives that shape the course of society. The woman portrayed on the screen however becomes a kind of catalyst that inspires the generations to come.

In this artistic field women are no longer pawns on the chessboard but players of the same. They craft their own destinies. They show the power and strength to rewrite the rules that confine them. Indian cinema has transformed into powerful medium that magnify the issues faced by women and voice out their opinions, urging them to break from the shackles of societal expectations. The films chosen for the study serve as a testament to bring out the potential which lies in each woman. Each woman has an extraordinary power to reshape the existing narratives, which will lead the society towards brighter future for the coming generation of women.

1.4 Scope and Limitations

Scope

Hindi cinema has always been a male dominated industry. Women used to play their parts behind the scenes. However with the changing times women are also given lead roles to play on screen. So this paper will discuss how feminist issues are portrayed in Bollywood movies concerning the women in rural areas. Issues such as dowry, child marriages, marital rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, female infanticide and hypocrisy and double standards of the patriarchal society. This paper will also discuss how filmmakers objectify and sexualize a woman's body for the sake of views and making money. So in the name of entertainment the filmmakers commodify women's body. This study will also bring out the minor aspects in the movies such as gender biases, caste system, male superiority and female inferiority. This study will shed a light on the struggles faced by the women in rural areas. And along with that it will also help us in understanding different cultures and traditions.

Limitations

The limitations of this study will be that no many female centric films are available. The female centric films which already exist were however overshadowed by the male dominated society.

1.5 Research problem

There is no in depth study of the issues faced by women in the rural areas. The traumatic experiences of the women are neglected and the struggles of the women in the rural areas are sidelined.

1.6 Relevance and Necessity of the proposed research

This research is relevant in literature as it will make use of feminist literary theory to analyze the movies. It will also focus on the themes such as gender inequalities, sexual objectification of women, patriarchy and male dominance.

This research work is also important for the society as it will open up the window to the oppressed women out there. And the society can re-evaluate their perspectives on certain films and changing scenarios. Along with all this the study also ensures that the issues of the women living in rural areas are high lightened and that people become more sensitive towards the victims of social evils.

1.7 Objectives of the proposed research

1. To study about the social evils against women in rural areas as portrayed in Bollywood movies. Social evils such as child marriages, dowry system, marital rape, sexual exploitation of women
2. To analyze sexual objectification of women for the sake of views.
3. To study why marital rape is not considered as a crime against women.
4. To analyze the hypocritical nature of the patriarchal society.
5. To study how victims perspective are varied from the societal perspective.
6. To look into the other minor aspects in the Bollywood movies such as gender biases and caste system
7. To study how women themselves put down other women due to patriarchal mindset.

1.8 Literature review

Television and cinema has become an integral part of our daily lives. It shapes our mind on how we perceive things as we see on the TV. Most of the time our behavior and attitude depends on what we see in the movies. So the kinds of films we watch have a major impact on our social life. In this study we will explore the themes such as sexual harassment portrayed as fun, social evils such as dowry and child marriages, life of women living in a rural setting and objectification and sexualizing women's body.

In a study "Seeing like a Feminist: Representations of Societal Realities in Women-centric Bollywood Films". Chaudhuri researched on how some Bollywood movies are women centric while others are gender sensitive. She based her study on the films such as 'Tarpan', 'Matrubhoomi' and 'The Dirty Picture'. In her study she focused on the hardships faced by women in the patriarchal society. She talks about how women are denied representation in the patriarchal society. She emphasizes on the point that audiences should support the new age cinema that still follow the mainstream Bollywood films but break from the stereotypical representation of women and focus on more individualistic representation of women in the society.

A study carried out by Nandakumar on "The Stereotypical Portrayal of Women in Commercial Indian Cinema" she studied on how women are portrayed in Indian Cinema and how their bodies are used for the sake of commercial marketing strategies. She based her study on the movie 'Sholay' where the image of Helen is used to portray a gypsy woman who does the work of luring the male audiences. So she found out that these kind of item number songs were purposely put to make more money and in these process they commercialize and objectify women.

In a research titled “Impact of Hindi films on society: A study on portrayal of crimes against women” Majumder did a study on how crimes are portrayed on big screen against women and how Bollywood leaves an imprint on human minds. She argues that films are a big influence on the young minds and the portrayal of crimes on the big screens alter the behavior of the youngsters.

She pointed out that the films produced now show a varied representation of women where more focus is on their dressing styles, looks, attitudes and thoughts. These changes not only affect women but also men. Overall this leads to the increase in crime rates in the society and nobody can be blamed because this is happening because of the mere impact of the films on the audience.

In a research titled “Kahaani, Gulaab Gang and Queen: Remaking the queens of Bollywood” Gupta studied how female characters are shown regressive in nature. She also focused on some films like ‘Kahaani’, ‘Queen’ and ‘Gulaab Gang’ had no male protagonist but women were given more screen space and this change was positively accepted by the audiences because the focus was on the women and development of their character. The paper argues that these movies offer nuanced understanding of the Indian women.

Halder in her study named “Portrayal of Gender Inequality in Bollywood” analysed how there is gender inequality in the Indian cinema exists. But nobody is talking about it. She says that women are always given second hand treatment in Bollywood and the issues regarding the gender is never vocalised by anybody. In her study she argues that Indian cinema portrays women as a weaker sex and always wants their male counter parts to be their knight in the shining armor. She also acknowledges the fact that there are at least some

movies which portray women as a superpower who can handle both the household work as well as the corporate work.

In the study titled “Representation of Women in Realistic Cinema” by Sonowal in ADR Journals she studied how the Indian cinema represents women in realistic cinema. She focused on how women are represented and misrepresented by the filmmakers for their own ulterior motives.

She also points out that with the changing of times there are Women-Centric films which are gaining more popularity amongst the youngsters and they are able to make a choice of their own of what they want and what they should fight for. She based her study on feminist film theoretician, Claire Johnston, and her further analysis is developed on the idea of how feminist theories like counter cinema can be related to realistic films.

In a study conducted by Mannan on “Abusing the Marginalized: Misrepresentation of Women in Media”. She says that most of the time women are objectified and are shown as passive, submissive and dull. The filmmakers’ subtlety tries to insult women by representing them as dumb. This is a very serious concern as it affects the youngsters.

The boys think that it is ok to tease girls and insult them as they are weak and dumb and it also gives an idea to girls that it is ok to take insults from boys and not retaliate back. And this misrepresentation of sluggish and stagnant women in the media injures the whole clan of women that are subjugated by the society. This paper not only talks about the ill-effects of misrepresentation of women in media but also ponders on the pre-defined objective of facilitating the process of women empowerment.

A study was conducted in the University of Lucknow titled “Women in Hindi Cinema and Their Impact on College Students With Reference to Eight Women Oriented Films in 2014”. This study was jointly conducted by Kausar and Singh. They both did a study on how women are portrayed in Bollywood and what effect did it have on the college going girls. They wanted to see the keenness of college going girls towards women oriented films. So they showed the films that are women centric in nature. They studied that the women centric films had a major positive effect on the college girls. They said that the films were not only entertaining but they gave the message of being brave, independent, earning their own money.

In a research titled “The Effect of Toxic Masculinity in Indian Films on Society” the study talks about how toxic masculinity is portrayed in Indian films. The article states that patriarchy is glorified in the Indian cinema and it is fine with everybody and they accept what is shown on the screen. But on the other hand no one is talking about the objectifying a women’s body and commodifying it for the sake of making money. The paper also talks about how the stereotypical nature of the films and their role in shaping the thoughts of the society. It also deals with how patriarchy has a heavy influence on the Indian cinema and that is the reason people search for an ideal image of a woman.

In a thesis titled as “An Analysis of Women-Centric Films in India”. Sarkar focused on how women revolted against the injustice they faced. She also speaks on the stereotypical portrayal of women. The main implication of this thesis is that to see how the films encourage social changes in the society.

In a research conducted by Mittal on “Representation of Women in Indian cinema: From self-effacement to self-assertion” the study analyses the journey of Indian Cinema of

how the films were made earlier which put down the women. But as time changed the movies became more self-assertive in nature.

The paper discussed the relationship between the reel and the real life. So the emphasis is on the symbiotic relationship between real world and the cinematic world. The paper deals with the progress of the Indian Cinema where in the beginning there were no female actors but as time passed they started showing women as submissive and docile in nature who has to adhere to all the rules laid down to her by the society, only then she becomes an ideal wife and mother.

In a study conducted by Agarwal on “Changing Roles of Women in Indian cinema”. The article explores the influence of the mainstream Bollywood movies on the patriarchal society. The aim of this study was to link the changing characters of the women onscreen and how it relates to the status of women in Indian society. The paper talks about the significant changes in the Indian cinema and its transformation in terms of the portrayal of women in movies.

However in all this research works there are some research gaps. There is heavy research done on the mainstream Bollywood films. But there is very less research done on the realistic cinema. And along with that there is no in depth study on rural women, how women face mental challenges after being traumatized by the social evils, how women are regarded as rule breakers for standing up for themselves. So this study will help to fill the gaps as the research will be done extensively on these aspects of Bollywood movies.

1.9 Hypothesis

The struggles and issues faced by the underprivileged women from the rural areas are not given adequate representation in Bollywood movies.

1.10 Research Methodology for proposed research.

To achieve the research objective of this study the use of qualitative research method is used. Which includes analysis of the films and content analysis. These have been used to examine the selected films of different eras of Indian cinema. In addition to this various scholarly articles, and online resources have been used to collect the relevant information and for the purpose of critical insights. This research incorporates primary as well as secondary sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues faced by the women in rural areas. The research strives to provide a critical insight into the subject matter.

1.11 Research design

Chaptarization

1. Chapter One-Introduction

In the first chapter the title of the proposed research work is introduced for the reader to get a trough understanding of what the research is about. Than it will talk about the background and the historical context of the Indian film Cinema and how it progressed over time. The introduction will also give an insight on feminism in Indian Cinema. It will also introduce the reader with the list of films chosen for this study. Along with this the introduction will also highlight the scope and limitations of the proposed research. This chapter will also introduce the readers to the aims and objective of the proposed research. The chapter will also talk about the hypothesis and the research methodology. It will also deal with literature reviews of the previously conducted research in this field.

2. Chapter Two- Depiction of Patriarchy and Male dominance in Indian Cinema

This chapter will discuss what is meant by patriarchy and male dominance. It will also highlight the take of feminist writers on Patriarchy and male oppression. The chapter will give the synopsis of the films chosen for the study for a better understanding of the reseach work. It will also deal with the issues faced by women in rural areas and how these issues are portrayed in Bollywood movies. It will also delve on how patriarchy and male dominance have a major impact on the lives of women, how the freedom of women is curtailed by the society. The chapter will explore the issues such as child marriages, dowry system, sexual harassment, domestic violence, rape and marital rape. It will also shed light on the hypocrisy and double standards of the society.

3. Chapter Three-Critical analysis of the films using the feminist film theories

This chapter will give an insight on what is feminist film theory. It will also look into the theory given by Laura Mulvey that is the Male Gaze theory. The chapter will focus on how feminist film theory can be applied to selected films for this study. Additionally this chapter also provides examples of how the male gaze theory is applied to the selected films. This chapter will also analyze how filmmakers sexualize women's body for the sake of views and money. It will also talk about the sexual objectification of women and gender inequalities.

4. Chapter Four-Analyzing how women fought for their rights and came out of the toxic masculinity

This chapter will brief on what is toxic masculinity and how women deal with it every day. It will also analyze how women in the selected Bollywood films had a strong comeback from this toxic masculinity and how they took an individual decision for themselves without fearing the society. Additionally this chapter will also talk about how these women centric films are an eye opener to the society.

5. Chapter Five-Conclusion

This chapter will conclude the study by giving the summary of the entire research work. It will deal with the findings about the study and relevance of the research conducted. In this chapter we will also see if the stated hypothesis is proved or not. Additionally this chapter will also give an idea if the selected women centric films were accepted by the society or rejected.

6. Bibliography

CHAPTER TWO - DEPICTION OF PATRIARCHY AND MALE DOMINANCE IN THE SELECTED FILMS

As women in today's society are becoming more financially independent and are contributing towards the betterment of the society by holding powerful positions in the governmental organizations as well as in the educational systems and due to this it gives an impression to the society that the condition of the lives of the women is far more better. They believe that patriarchal system is depleting slowly. But this is far from the reality. The reality is that times have changed but the situations of the women living in the rural areas are still the same. No doubt that the women in the urban areas are far more progressive in nature since they get educated, work outside their homes and are accepted as well as supported by their families. Whereas we see that women from the rural areas still fight for their basic rights such as right to live. The struggles of the women in rural areas are quite different from the struggles of the women in urban areas.

This happens because of the social system of patriarchy. Patriarchy simply means that "the rule of the father". In the history the term patriarchy was used to refer to the autocratic rule by the male in the family. But however in that late 20th century it is used to refer to a social system in which the dominant power is held by the men. Feminist writers such as Kate Millet used the term patriarchy in the second wave of feminism. The feminist writers were keen on understanding this social system in order to liberate the women from the clutches of the male dominated society. In a patriarchal setup men consider themselves as the highest authority to take the major decision regarding the family matters. Women do not have any say in the decision

making or taking process. Women cannot question the decision taken by men since men are the breadwinners in the family.(Walby 22) defines patriarchy as “ a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”.

2.1. Feminist theories on Patriarchy

Many feminist theorists have written about patriarchy because they feel that patriarchal social system is the main cause of women's oppression. Shulamith Firestone, a radical-libertarian feminist, in her book *The Dialect of Sex: The case for Feminist Revolution* defines patriarchy as a system of oppression against women. And she believes that the main cause of patriarchy is due to the biological inequalities between men and women. For example she says that women bear children and men don't and this should be the reason for women to take control of their own bodies and their reproduction rights so that they could free themselves from the oppression from patriarchal society. She believes that 'sexual class system' runs deeper than any form of oppression against women. The goal of the feminist revolution is "not just the elimination of male privilege but of the sex distinction itself"(Firestone, p11.).

Other feminist writers like Gerda Lerner writes about patriarchy in her book titles *The Creation of Patriarchy* writes that the fundamental cause for the rise in patriarchy is due to the male control over women's reproductive functions and sexuality. Interactive system theorist like Iris Marion Young and Heidi Hartmann believe that capitalism and patriarchy interact together and oppress women. They make use of the term called as 'patriarchal capitalism or capitalist patriarchy' and describe the interrelationship between capitalism and patriarchy being the main factors behind the oppression of women.

Jordan Gray in her article on patriarchy and its system gives four main characteristics of the patriarchal system and they are as follows;

1. Male dominance
2. Male identification
3. Male centeredness
4. Obsession with control

2.2 Male dominance

In the system of patriarchy a very important aspect is the male dominance. As men see themselves as stronger better more powerful and smarter individuals than women. They see women as machines who are only there to satisfy the male pleasures and produce children. The men consider themselves as superior individuals and feel that women are not really capable of contributing to the betterment of the society.

2.3 Male identification

Male identification in a patriarchal society refers to the fact that men want themselves to be identified with qualities such as strength, control and competitiveness. These men try to be rational and forceful at the same time. They have high self-esteem about themselves and strong work ethics. Male identification is another major factor which contributes to the oppression of women and portrayal of true personalities of men.

2.4 Male centeredness

In a patriarchal setup men feel that they are the center of all the activities and progression of the society. And it's a burden on their shoulder to move the society forward. The society gives men the power to be the developers of the main events and inventions, making them the heroes in all situations. They take the powerful positions in their hands and become the center of all social engagement and entertainment.

2.5 Obsession with control

Men in the patriarchal society think that they should have a control over everything at all times. They have a strong desire to control all the spheres of their lives. They have a strong control over the finances and education of the children.

The term oppression means to restrict or to push down women. Women are not allowed to rise up to the leadership levels or to take any major decisions. Women are also not allowed to suggest changes in any social order.

2.6 Synopsis of the film

1. Lajja

Lajja is a hindi crime drama film released on 31st august in the year 2001. The film was written by Ranjit Kapoor and Rajkumar Santoshi. The producer and director of the film is Rajkumar Santoshi. This film is based on the plight of the women and how they are restricted in the male dominated society. The film gives a realistic portrayal of the condition of women from a mainstream society to backward society. There are four women in the film whose lives are inter-twined. The names of the four women are Maithili, Janki, Ramdulhari and Vaidehi. And all are version of sita. It is quite ironic that these women are named as Sita but are treated as dirt. As the movie progresses we see how each of this woman face different difficulties which come their way and the struggles they go through. It is not an easy life for any of them. They are subjugated in the male dominated society. And in the end we see how these women try to end the evil in the society.

2. Dor

Dor is a Hindi language film released in the year 2006. It is written and directed by Nagesh Kukunoor, featuring Ayesha Takia, Gul Panag and Shreyas Talpade in the lead roles. This film is a remake of a Malayalam film, Perumazhakkalam(2004). This story is about two women who hail from different cultural backgrounds and however fate brings them together. Meera played by Ayesha Takia is a young woman who becomes a widow shortly after her marriage as her husband dies when he goes to work in Saudi Arabia.

After the death of her husband she is tied down with burden of tradition and culture. Zeenat who is played by Gul Panag faces a seemingly difficult task of saving her husband's

life, who is in the prison in the charge of killing Meera's husband Shankar. A bahuroopya played by Shreyas Talpade helps zeenat to find her way to Meera. Meera is the only sting of hope in Zeenat's life. However the friendship between both the ladies helps Meera to get away from the toxic male dominated society.

3. *Mirch masala*

Mirch masala was released in the year 1987. This film was directed by Ketan Mehta. Smita Patel and Naseeruddin Shah. This movie shows how the government officials try to exploit women sexually and harass them mentally. Just because the subedar holds power in his hands he tries to do whatever he wants to do. He has his lusty eyes on a woman named Sonbai and wants to have sexual relationship with her. But she refuses his demands and insults him by slapping him in public. She tries to run away and hide in the chilly factory she works in. She is supported by the doorkeeper who helps her. There is mixed reaction from the women who were working in the factory, but later on they all come together to help Sonbai to fight against the Subedar.

4. *Bandit Queen*

Bandit queen was released in the year 1994. It is a Hindi language biographical action-adventure film based on the true life of Phoolan devi. This film was based on the book India's Bandit Queen: The True Story of Phoolan Devi by the Indian author Mala Sen. This story shows the life of Phoolan Devi and how she faces troubles as she belongs to the lower caste. She faces sexual abuse by her husband. She faces a lot of discrimination from the society. She eventually runs away from her marriage and becomes a gang leader.

5. *Chandni Bar*

Chandni Bar is released in the year 2001. This film was directed by Madhur Bhandarkar. It portrays the gritty life of the prostitutes and bar dancers. The leads in the films are Tabu and Atul Kulkarni. This story is about a girl named Mumtaz whose parents die due to communal riots. And due to this her uncle takes her to Mumbai to make a living. She is forced to take up a job in a dance bar. She is sexually exploited by her own uncle who raped her. To safeguard her own life she gets married to a local goon. This movie portrays the struggles of the bar dancers and how they are forced into prostitution by their own husband for the sake of money. In the movie mumtaz tries her level best to give a better life for her kids but eventually her kids also turn up like her only. She wanted to see a better future in them but she could only see the reflection of her own past.

6. *Lipstick under my Burkha*

Lipstick under my burkha is a 2016 released film which comes under the genre of dark comedy. The film was written and directed by Alankrita Shrivastava and produced by Prakash Jha. The movie brings out the life of four women who have their own secret desires and want to have freedom in their lives. In spite of having difficulties and obstacles in their ways they still try to manage to satisfy their desires by taking small courageous steps towards fulfilling their dreams.

7. *Parched*

The movie *Parched* was released in the year 2016. This film was written and directed by Leena Yadav under the production house of Ajay Devgn FFilms .

This story revolves around four women in a desert village of Gujarat. The film deals with many women issues such as child marriages, dowry, physical and mental abuse, marital rapes and other forms of social evils. Finally the women try to liberate themselves from the dominance of men and go far off to a new place in the hope a new life.

2.7 Women's issues raised in the films depicting the patriarchal mindset.

In the selected Indian movies we see that there are common issues faced by all the women in general. The states are different, the regions are different, but the struggles of the women are same. And the main factor for all this is the patriarchal society at large. So we will see how patriarchy is responsible for the oppression of women and how the women's issues such as child marriages, dowry system, female infanticide, sexual exploitation of women, physical and mental abuse, marital rapes are enforced on the women by the patriarchal society.

Child Marriages

Child marriages are violation of the rights of children. People in the rural areas get their children married off at a very young age. This is illegal in India because this process exploits the lives of innocent children who are not able to take sound decision for themselves. When the parents get their girl child married they give them to much older men than their age and due to this the girls are subjected to social evils, such as dowry deaths, sexual exploitation, marital rapes, and domestic violence. They even become widows at a very young age.

In India people follow something called as ‘bride-price’ that the groom has to pay to the bride’s father if he wants to get married to her. In this way the girl’s father were becoming more and greedier to get the money. So this paved the way for much older men to get married to much younger girls.

In the movie *Bandit Queen* we see that the main protagonist of the movie Phoolan is married to a man much older to her. Her father got her married because she was dark and ugly and if he rejected this offer later nobody will get married to her. He came under societal pressure and got her married off. So Phoolan was exposed to sexual and exploitative abuses from her husband and her in-laws. She was also subjected to caste system. So Phoolan eventually runs away to escape from that abusive household.

We see the similar thing happening in the movie *Parched* as well. Women were married off at a very young age and they did not have much freedom. At a very

young age they started to take care of the families and get used to the domestic violence against them without raising their voice. So their inner feelings and emotions die down with time and they become very rude and aggressive from outside.

Child marriages also make way for the dowry deaths. Often the parents of the girl child feel that the girl is a burden on their shoulder because they have to give her a heavy dowry during her marriage to be accepted by the groom's family. We see two types of dowry system in the movies. One is the bride price wherein the groom pays a heavy sum to get married to the bride. And the other one is that the bride's father has to give whatever the groom's family demands. In '*Bandit Queen*' and in '*Parched*' we see that the system of bride price is followed where as in the movie '*Lajja*' the bride's family had to give whatever was asked by the groom's family. Dowry system is one of the main reason that female infanticide is increasing in the rural areas.

Marital rape

Marital rape refers to when the husband is having a sexual intercourse with his wife without her prior consent. It is an offence and violation against women. But however this is not criminalized in India because the patriarchal society believes that once a woman is married she has given all the rights to her husband over her body.

Marital rape can lead to various health issues in women along with psychological trauma, anxiety and depression along with other mental issues. Marital rape shows the power dynamics between men and women. And it reflects the gender inequality. Men feel that after marriage the woman is their property and they can do whatever they feel like doing.

Feminists try to analyze the situation from their perspective. They feel that women should have a control on their own bodies. This will decrease the chances of sexual violence within a marriage and this will also cater to the power imbalance in the society.

For example in the movie *Lipstick under my Burkha* and in the movie *Parched* we see that marital rape is constantly taking place but the women do not voice out their opinions. In the movie *Lipstick under my Burkha* Shareen has to go through this every night. Her husband had sex with her without her consent and he was very aggressive during this time. Eventually we see that she gets uterus infection due to this forceful unprotected sex. And she was not at fault because her husband was having extra-marital affairs outside his marriage. And even after knowing the truth we see that Shareen does not open her mouth. This is because women are built that way

from childhood. It is put in their minds to give a blind eye to any injustice against them.

Secondly in the movie *Parched* similar things are occurring Rani, Lajjo and Jhanki were married off at a very early age. Rani was fourteen when she got married and her husband used to beat her up and have forceful sex with her. This traumatic experience made her bitter towards life. Gulaab was Rani's only son and he too started following the footsteps of his father. He was very abusive with Jhanki his wife and raped her every night. And as Jhanki was just a child she just shut her mouth and kept quiet.

Marital rape comes with a lot of problems for women such as vaginal infections, unwanted pregnancies and all this takes a toll on their mental health. So be it in any culture or any part of the state women go through similar kind of pain and suffering and every women has to deal with it in their own way.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a form of abuse that takes place within the domestic setting. Domestic violence against women can take place in many forms such as physical abuse, verbal abuse, financial abuse, or even sexual abuse. Domestic murders can include dowry death, acid attacks, honor killings, bride burning and so on.

Domestic violence takes place because the abuser has a high social standing. And the victims do not voice out during such situations because of fear and shame of the patriarchal society. But due to prolonged subjection of domestic violence against women can lead to severe psychological illness, physical disabilities, chronic health problems, and also post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Domestic violence is showcased in every movie. We see that men take control over the women. In the movie *Parched* we see that throughout the film all women face domestic violence in their household. Lajjo, Rani and Jhanki were the constant target of their husbands. Lajjo was brutally beaten up by her husband because she was not able to conceive a child. But the real problem of infertility was in her husband. Rani was beaten up by her husband because he was an alcoholic and according to him she was not able to satisfy his sexual pleasures. Jhanki was a child who was married against her will and her husband Gulaab never wanted her. So she was subjected to beatings on the daily basis.

In *Bandit Queen* we see that due to domestic violence Phoolan runs away from her house. In the movie *Lipstick under my Burkha* Shareen faces domestic as well as sexual violence on the daily basis only because her husband is not able to find a job so he vents out his anger on her. In the movie *Mirch Masala* we see that men hold the power to control the

women through domestic violence. So children in the society learn from the elders and they resort to domestic violence as a tool of venting out their anger.

Sexual harassment

Women are sexually exploited by the men for their own sexual pleasures. We see that in the movie *Lajja*, *Dor*, *Chandni Bar*, *Bandit Queen*, *Parched* and *Mirch Masala* how men crave for women's body. Women go through sexual exploitation in the absence of their husband. If the husband is working outside the city the other male members in the family try to take advantage of the women.

And the women cannot complain on such abuses because their husband never supports them. In the movie *Chandni Bar* mumtaz was raped by her own uncle. Also in the movie *Mirch Masala* the subedar has lustful eyes on Sonbai and tries to get physical with her. A governmental body who is supposed to give justice is the one involved in all the unjust activities.

Hypocrisy and double standards of the society.

When we talk about patriarchy we cannot miss out on the hypocritical nature and the double standards of the patriarchal society. In the movie *Lajja* all the women were given different names of Sita. On the one hand they worship Sita as their Goddess and on the other hand they kill a girl child. All the four women undergo different kind of social oppression in the patriarchal society.

In the movie *Dor* we see that once a woman becomes a widow of her husband all her colorful clothes are taken away and she is locked inside a dingy room. She is only allowed to go to the temple for praying. But when a man becomes a widow the same society gives him all the rights to get married again and to settle down in life.

In the movies such as *Mirch Masala*, *Lajja*, *Chandani Bar*, *Lipstick under my Burkha* and *Parched* it is completely fine for a man to have mistresses and have extra-marital affairs. But if the same thing is done by a woman she is slut shamed in public. In the movie *Parched* Bijli is a prostitute and she is a very good friend of Lajjo and Rani, however Rani does not want her to attend her son's wedding because she does not want to associate herself with a prostitute. But when Bijli enters the wedding venue there was slight discomfort among the people. But when these same men go to watch her dance and have sex with her that time there is no discomfort among them.

We also see that women are the carriers of the patriarchy. Specially the mother in laws do not allow the daughter in law the freedom they deserve. This is because they want to give them the same pain they went through. So it can be rightly said that women in some ways take the patriarchy forward.

CHAPTER THREE- CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FEMINIST FILM

THEORY AND MALE GAZE IN THE SELECTED FILMS.

Feminist film theory is a discipline of film studies which questions the connection between the reality and the reel life. This group of film criticism is influenced by the second wave of feminism and the theory is derived from the feminist politics along with the feminist theories. Over the years feminist film theory has developed and changed to examine the current ways of films and to compare it with the past films. This theory was developed due to the influence of the second wave of feminism and women's studies in 1960's and 1970's. It also analyzes how the cinema production affects how women are represented in the films and how it reinforces sexism. When studying feminism and cinema, the idea is not to look at the produced films as only a cultural industry but to see the nature of the production, the cause of the production and how it is received by the audience. This is what a feminist film theory attempts to do.

Feminism and its interventions have been in the west as well as in India have majorly contributed in terms of providing the cultural factors about feminism. Second wave of feminism has been extremely influential in expanding the ways in which genders are categorized. An image of ideal women was bombarded in the films. Feminist found it very problematic on two levels. That is women were objectified and sexualized and another view says that it makes a very sexist comments on the body of a woman.

British feminist theorist Laura Mulvey is best known for her essay '*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*' written in 1973. Feminist film theory was extremely influential in providing an alternative feminist perspective and how Laura Mulvey says that 'for men by men.' She argues that films should not be seen as innocent form of entertainment but have a

critical lens to it. In her essay *Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema* she makes the use of the psychoanalysis as a political weapon. This essay however marks the foundation of feminist film theory. It provides essential tools which are needed to understand the film theory from a feminist perspective. The feminist film theory did not stay stagnant since its formation but it did adopt new technologies as well as debates on gender.

Laura Mulvey makes the use of psychoanalytical theory to understand how patriarchy works and how it subconsciously affect the way the films are produced and are received by the audience. Mulvey argues that cinema subconsciously works in accordance with the patriarchal ideologies. She clearly talks about the male gaze and how it is structured in the cinema for visual pleasures. Mulvey identifies two ways in which cinema produces pleasure one is the identification with the image and the other is the objectification of the image. Both the factors however reflect the male fantasies. The idea of feminist film theory is to study a film from multiple feminist perspectives and not just through one aspect of feminism. There should be a critical analysis of how an image is perceived by the viewers.

3.1 Feminist Film Theory and Male gaze in context of Indian cinema.

Mulvey's essay on Male Gaze has been universally appreciated. It is quite Euro-centric in nature. Indian film studies tried to apply the feminist film theory and the male gaze theory to Indian films. Feminist film theory developed as an instructive and impactful tool to understand and analyze the cinema.

Indian films have a very distinctive feature which is not really prevalent in other film industries, and that is inclusion of songs and dance sequences with great ease. These are popularly known as item numbers. The logic behind these numbers is commodification and objectification of women's bodies for the purpose of selling the films. As Mulvey claims that lack of women in the films causes anxiety in men and to overcome this anxiety they fetishize and objectify women for their own pleasure. Men see women as a threat as well as an object of desire.

The term male gaze was coined by feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey in her essay 'visual pleasure and narrative cinema'. The male gaze refers to the visual representation of women in the films or advertisements often created from a male perspective by objectifying a women's body for male visual pleasures.

Mulvey argues that the male gaze is deeply ingrained in the film language. The setup of the camera angles, close ups on a women's body and the objectification of the women's body for the male pleasure is a technique to lure male audience to the theaters. The concept of male gaze is widely critiqued by the feminist film theorist. The critiques want an equal representation of gender in media which will challenge the objectification and sexualization of women in media.

Throughout the history women have become the subject of sexual objectification in films and visual arts. In the movies camera frequently takes a close up shot to emphasize on the woman's body. Women are harmed by the male gaze because it however forces them to conform to the patriarchal ideals of what it means to be a woman. It affects how the women perceive themselves as a lot of emphasis is made on the physical appearances of the female body. Which can impact their mental health. Women who compare themselves with the sexualized representation of female characters in the media often experience body shaming as a result of male gaze.

From psychoanalysis Mulvey borrowed the term called Scopophilia. Scopophilia is the pleasure derived from not only mere looking at someone but in a manner in which that becomes the object of male gaze or female gaze. The second form of visual pleasure is when a viewer identifies with the character which feeds into one's Freudian ego. She calls this as 'to be looked at ness'. This process has two facets one is through the male figure and the other is the placement of the camera both of which objectify woman.

Male gaze have three perspectives one is man behind the camera, the male characters and third one is the male spectator. The picturisation of women in Hindi film cinema is nothing but the re-portrayal of Indian society. So the fact that Indian women are portrayed as submissive or secondary characters the filmmakers keep in mind the commercial aspect of the films they highlight the body of a woman to get money.

Historically female characters in the Indian film industry have often been portrayed as passive objects of desire. Which shows that sexuality is prioritized over their individuality. In the recent years as there is a growing awareness of the male gaze and its criticisms the audiences want more diverse representation of women in the film industry. And this led to

the emergence of more female centric films highlighting women's experiences and stories rather than their bodies.

In the movie *Parched* the male gaze is subverted and the movie questions the patriarchal norms. The film deals with lives of four women in rural India. The movie tries to highlight their struggles and hidden desires. *Parched* aims to provide a nuanced and empowering portrayal of female and to dismantle the male gaze. But in this movie we can also see that the items songs are added to attract the male audience. The main focus is on Bijli's bodily features. During her dance sequence the camera was positioned in such a way that it focused more on her bodily features such as bust and hips rather than her facial expressions and the popularity of such songs lead men in the theaters to watch the film.

In the movie *Mirch masala* we see that even though the women are wearing a sari the camera focuses on the curves of her hips and breasts. This increases the male gaze in the audiences. Similarly with the inclusion of the item songs in the films leads to the increased sexual objectification of the women. There is a dance sequence in *Mirch Masala* where the men are seated and women come and dance on the floor. This is done to entertain the men in the film as well as men who watch the film.

In the movie *Chandani Bar* we see that bar dancers are the focus of male gaze by the male characters onscreen and it serves as a catalyst for the male audience to satisfy their visual pleasures. The movie sexualizes the women's bodies for male visual pleasure. The sexual objectification takes place everywhere in the movie. Mumtaz wanted to give a better life for her daughter but she too turns out to become a bar dancer like her mother.

The costumes they wear in the films, the kind of makeup they put, the kind of language they use all adds up to the account of what men wants to see on the screen. And to satisfy these gratifications of men filmmakers put the best efforts possible to make their movie super hit.

The film like *Lipstick under my burkha*, focuses on the real issues faced by women and they try to resolve the problems faced by women rather than being the focus of the opposite sex. These stories come up as sensitive, powerful, inspiring and holds up a mirror to the society. Even though this film carries a strong social message we see the inclusion of erotic scenes coming up in the film quite often. These open sex scenes are kind of a pull to the audience. Most of these erotic scenes are added in the trailers of the film which gives the audience a hint of what the film contains and they do rush to the theaters based on a small clip to satisfy their visual peasures.

The film *Lajja* shows how women come together to fight oppression from the society. So here is focus is more on the women and their issues rather than their bodies, but even in that the actresses who prefer to perform on the item songs attracted the men towards her objectifying her own body. It can be criticized by stating that the one behind the camera was a man and tried to show the scene from a male perspective.

When women spectators find it quite fascinating to see other women on screen being the object of sexual desire it creates scopophilia for the women as well. Indian women who look forward to the films as their way out of real-life oppression they seek pleasure by looking at women who are being appreciated and praised for their 'sex appeal'. It runs so deep in their conscious that they are unaware of what is real and what is made up for visual pleasures. They do try to become more attractive and fascinating to the men in their lives.

So the feminist film theorist argue that even if the movie is made with a pure intention of imparting knowledge the filmmakers try to make the movie interesting by adding an item number and this item song will gain more popularity than the entire movie.

As spectators when people watch films which misrepresent the women it sometimes does not cross their minds as in their mind it is deeply rooted that these movies are for the sake of entertainment of the audience which gives them pleasure for at least sometime so the critical lens does not get activated at that very moment. However it is very important to have an oppositional gaze. Where the spectators critically analyze the films and voice out their opinions on the wrong doings.

Besides the male gaze there is something called as a female gaze. When male body is objectified for the sake of sex appeal it is very much enjoyed by the female audiences. This new image promotes masculinity which depicts that the protagonist is strong, powerful and physically fit. So women want their real life partners like how they see the reel heroes in the films. They idolize the men on screen and expect the same from the men in real life.

Feminist film theorists argue that to avoid male gaze and female gaze the filmmakers should adopt oppositional gaze. This can be done only when the filmmakers try to deconstruct the patriarchal norms from the films, which will in turn reject the unrealistic and patriarchal projection of women who are used as objects of sexual pleasures.

Films like *Bandit Queen* are not accepted by the audience because they show the real life suffering of the women. It becomes very difficult for the people to accept such films because these films do not cater to their definition of entertainment. This makes it more problematic to divert the minds of the viewers because of their pre-conceived notions on

entertainment. They try to look at the films from stereotypical lens rather than seeing it as real-world problems. But as cinema is becoming more impactful on the people it can be used as an agency to bring about changes in the society and to spread awareness rather than being an advocate of patriarchy. One major factor is that the film industry is totally dependent on the one working behind the camera. If the person is heavily influenced by the patriarchal norms it is very difficult to change the course of his or her actions.

CHAPTER FOUR- AN OVERVIEW OF HOW WOMEN BREAK THROUGH FROM TOXIC MASCULINITY.

Indian film industry is one of the largest film producing industry each year. Indian cinema is famous for its sexist portrayal of women. The favorite part of the Indian audience is to see the women oppressed on the screen. The biggest concern is that Bollywood portrays the sexual harassment, molestations, objectification of women and nobody is talking about it.

4.1 Toxic masculinity and its portrayal in the Indian Cinema

Toxic masculinity can be referred to as an attitude or a set of social guidelines stereotypically associated with the term manliness. This often have a negative impact on men, women and society in general. The term ‘toxic masculinity’ does not mean that the idea of masculinity is bad, but it is meant to point out certain aspects of masculinity, behaviors and thinking associated with masculine traits which ranges from mental and physical toughness. Often connected with sexism.

The term ‘toxic masculinity’ came up during the late 20th century. it was associated with men’s movement to describe narrow ideas of masculinity. That was holding men back instead of empowering them. The characteristics of toxic masculinity are often considered as men who are immature, who still did not find their deep, spiritual masculinity. This men’s movement sought to increase the community among men rather than considering them as competition and to be free to express emotions.

This movement had started on a positive note but it still contained some harmful ideas. Many men felt that they were silenced by all the feminist movements which were going on simultaneously. The excessive interaction with the women was causing the men to lose their

internal masculinity. So they felt a need to voice out their opinions, to assert control over women and show their manliness.

Toxic masculinity often encourages men to assert their power and dominance in the society. Most of them believe that they should have the final say in their relationship. It also praises the men when they have multiple sexual partners while they show disgust when women do the same. Toxic masculinity often rejects the traditional roles and duties. They often refuse to help with the house hold duties. They consider this work as 'women's work'. Men believe that they are the sole breadwinners in the family. They also show a disgust when boys are taught things like cooking, cleaning and child care. Taking risks and suppressing their underlying fears is another trait of toxic masculinity, and as a result of this they become more abusive in nature, drive recklessly and engage in violence.

Toxic masculinity influence men to show sexual aggression towards women. They feel that they are entitled to women's bodies, leading them to sexual harassment more likely leading to rapes and marital rapes. Another vague idea of toxic masculinity is stoicism where the men are not allowed to show their emotional side and if they do so they are considered as feminine. In the society men are expected to be physically and mentally tough without having a breaking point in their life. Toxic men use violence as a tool to get respect. They feel that showing violence and asserting dominance over the society will give them more power the do whatever try like to do.

Toxic masculinity comes with a lot of risk factors. It often disrupts the family environment and has a very bad impact on the growing kids. It encourages violence in various forms. It also gives rise to male dominated society. Toxic masculinity takes a toll on

the mental health of men as they want to portray themselves as strong individuals all their lives. And these men often do not have control on their behavior.

4.2 Toxic masculinity in Indian Cinema

It is often said that cinema acts as a mirror to the society where we live in. It depicts the issues faced by the society. It is difficult to say whether the cinema is influenced by the society or is it vice versa. Films often depict the complexities of the society, culture, identities and various social issues in different ways. Indian society is patriarchal in nature and Hindi cinema is a male dominated industry. So majority of the technical crew, including the directors and producers are men. The 'male gaze' dictates how the interplay and politics of gender are represented in Indian cinema.

Bollywood portrays their heroes with a vivid image of being a character who is larger than life and often people idolize them. They are too strong in nature who do not show any kind of emotions be it fear or pain. Cinema portrayed men how they were perceived by the society and this brought about big changes in their behavior patterns. Men are shown as angry young men and women have to accept the men as they are. Toxic masculinity never left Bollywood. It only transitioned from one phase to another. And to balance these irrational characters there were oppositional characters who were comfortable in their masculinity and were more accepting the changes taking place in the society.

In the cinema the portrayal of toxic masculinity affects men as they have to force themselves to act in a certain way be it willingly or not. And this behavior from men has to be accepted by the women because they are taught from a very young age to tolerate the wrongdoings of men.

4.3 Women breaking away from the toxic masculinity in the selected films

In the movies we see that women go through domestic violence all their lives. They are subjugated and are kept under the control of the patriarchal society. We see that in the movie *Lajja* we see a strong hold of toxic masculinity. Vahdehi's in-laws try to control her movements but do not try to control the actions of their son. They even plan on to kill her after she gives birth to her child. In the same movie we see that men lusts behind Jhanki but later she has to prove her innocence to her boyfriend when she is not at fault. Maitheli's parents were forced to give the dowry to the groom against their will. This shows that patriarchy and toxic masculinity has a strong hold over the society.

Later on we see that all the four ladies in the film try to fight for their rights. Vahdehi tries to safeguard her dignity by running away from the toxic household. Maitheli breaks her marriage due to the unrealistic dowry demands from the groom's father. Janki leaves her coward boyfriend who asked her to prove of her innocence. The fourth character is Ramdulhari who was acting as a social activist in the village. She sent her son to the city to get himself educated which was not allowed because she was belonging to the lower caste. But she did not conform to the rules set by the society. She was encouraging the girls to go to school and get themselves educated. This did not go well with the head of the village and he wanted to teach her a lesson. He got the chance to do so when he got to know that her son was in love with his daughter. So he kidnaps her. She was brutally beaten by his men. And when the head of the village was coming to rape her she cut off his hand with a sickle.

Later his men rape her burn her alive. Ramdulhari's death became a rising factor for all the women who were facing mental and physical oppression and who were captive of patriarchy for years. They tried to give justice to Ramdulhari by publically beating the head

of the village and killing him by firing bullets. There is another minor female character Lata who plays the role of the theatre director's wife. She supports vahdehi and helps her to run away for her safety. Throughout the film she was shown as a submissive and oppressed wife who fits into the category of being the ideal wife. But she takes up the courage to fight against her lecherous husband.

In the movie *Dor* toxic masculinity runs throughout the film. Meera was not allowed to speak up for her rights. She loved to dance but she had to do it very hiding from her in laws. She was not allowed to go out alone. She was always accompanied by the male member of the family where ever she went. Only when she went to the temple she went alone. Apart from this when her husband dies her father in law tries to sell her body to the men who were craving for her body for the sake of little money. Similarly Zeenat was not accepted by her in-laws because she was a working woman and she was an independent woman who was not relying on anyone for her living. And the family only accepted her because she was married to their son and she was giving his salary to his parents rather than keeping it for herself.

Zeenat tries to get the real self out of Meera. Meera enjoyed being in the company of Zeenat as she could express herself without being in the fear of being judged, she was able to dance her heart out when she was with Zeenat. Meera loved her new self as she was able to explore her potential without anyone being police to guard her movements. In the end we see that Zeenat takes Meera along with her and liberating Meera from the clutches of the patriarchal society. It gives a new hope to both of them to start a new life without being scared of anyone.

In the movie *Mirch Masala* we see that women are considered as nothing in front of the men. The girls from a lower caste cannot love a boy from a higher caste and they were beaten to death if they do so. Even when Sonbai does not adhere to the advancement of the subedar the men were taking a decision on her behalf that she should listen to the subedar and follow his orders. Also the men in the movie had lot of extra marital affairs and they felt that a man does not get his dignity until and unless he has a mistress outside. So this toxic masculinity exist within the society at a very large extent.

Mirch masala was a ground breaking movie where Sonbai stands against the demands of the subedar and gives him a tight slap which hurts his male ego. Women in the film were very judgmental towards Sonbai because she refused the demands of the subedar. They had become selfish and were thinking about their own children and families. But later they all come together to fight for Sonbai and they put chilly powder in the eyes of the subedar who wanted to sexually exploit Sonbai.

Mirch Masala is set in the pre-independence era and speaks of male tyranny, caste discrimination, women oppression, feminism, mounds of chilli powder and the rustic Gujarat. Sonbai is an independent, beautiful, insightful and aggressive young woman whose callous husband leaves her alone in the village for a job in the city. This becomes a major reason for the subedar to take sexual advantage of her. During those days, the village was controlled by a chauvinistic Mukhi who in addition to the village also keeps his wife in control. But that same Mukhi is powerless in front of a newly appointed ruthless, cruel subedar played by.

It is said Ketan Mehta directed this film upon hearing several stories of woman heroism in the Colonial era during his travels to Gujarat. The film depicts woman heroism

with Sonbai and the other women refusing to compromise to the needs of the Subedar. Not for once, Sonbai is shown wallowing in self-pity even when her selfish husband leaves her alone in the raucous village. She fights against toxic masculinity and she does not only stand for herself but she inspires other women to fight against the dominating society. The men in the movie want to show themselves as powerful creatures that have the string of women's life in their hands. So they treated the women like their puppets.

Male tyranny and dominance on women are showcased by the characters like Mukhi and Subedar but characters like Abu Miya and village schoolmaster speaks of feminism. They are an example of men created who support feminism. Abu Miya was the only man protecting Sonbai when the entire village menfolk turned against Sonbai asking her to surrender to the lecher Subedar. Amidst many tussles, the village schoolmaster still manages to run the school though he gets beaten up by Subedar's men.

She then finds refuge in the chilli powder factory, where chowkidar Abu Miya protects her and the other women as they are held hostage. In the meanwhile, the Subedar tries to acquire Sonbai, as though she was his property. His desire aside, his masculine pride was wounded and blotching Sonbai's reputation was his only redemption. Of course, Sonbai's reputation and honor are attached with that of the village. But the men of that village failed to understand this.

The scene where Sonbai and Subedar come face to face is perhaps the most powerful one that overturns everything problematic that the film has so far been assuming about women. While the lusty Subedar assumes he's caught his prey, two women run out holding two ends of a cloth holding chilli powder and overturn it, thrusting that hot spice in the Subedar's face.

Mirch masala shows a very dominant system of patriarchy wherein women cannot open their mouths before the men. The society treats women as low class and degraded citizens and they even consider them as their footwear. The subedar of the village has the freedom to pick and choose the ladies he wants to have sex with. The villagers do not obstruct his ways due to his high position. In the films it also shows how only boys are sent to school and girls are not given any education. And even if the mother tries to educate her daughter she is beaten by her husband because he has a upper hand in taking decisions for his children.

Women do not support the girls to be educated. As they thought that girls will turn out rebels. And as soon as a girl child is born the parents are not very happy because they will have to give her dowry when she gets married. So they find ways to kill her just after her birth. So this shows that the life of a girl child does not matter to them whereas the boys are glorified. The dignity of a woman is taken away as they are made to dance publicly to entertain the man. And their bodies are objectified as sexual objects to give pleasure to men. We also see the plight of the women as they have to work as prostitutes to make money for themselves. It is not their choice but a necessity.

This gives the power to the men to discuss the women as a talk of entertainment. Their refer women to as 'garam masala'. The villagers find it very shameful if a man does not have a mistress. So according to the society it is okay if a man cheats and enjoys his life but it is not acceptable when a women cheats.

The film also shows the hypocritical nature of women where they do not support each other in difficult times because they become very selfish and think about their own survival. The caste dynamics in the film is clearly visible though not overtly spoken about. Sarasvati is

a dominant caste woman for she is the Mukhi's wife, also indicated by the fact that she doesn't work in the factory like the rest of the women. She has her own struggles of being caged, which she rebels against.

The women who work in the factory are of non-dominant castes. Lakshmi who also works there, often goes to the Subedar to fulfil his lustfulness, further portraying the assumption of the sexual availability of a non-dominant caste woman. In the same vein, Sonbai is also told that she cannot afford to have the self-regard that she wants to.

The abuses for Sonbai come out in words like kamjaat (low-caste) and dayaan (witch), both of which are clearly caste-connotative. Further, Radha's marriage to Mukhi's brother is denied, for she also works in the factory and mustn't be a respectable woman of the dominant caste.

The film carefully highlights the notion how men must protect 'their' women, and protecting women is a sign of 'masculinity'. A villager comments how men who decide to give away Sonbai probably wore bangles. Eventually, the same bangle- ghaghara-choli-clad women cause the end of the cruel Subedar. Chowkidar Abu Miya also says how he's the only man in the village for he is the only one protecting these women and questions if there is no other 'man' around. The women are real, with real struggles, passions, and pleasures. Even while being held hostage, they find pleasure by playing with chilies and laugh their way through it. In its bright red hue, the best takeaway from *Mirch Masala* in these extremely cynical times would be that problems are not the only feminine reality; but also endurance, pleasure, strength and hope.

In *Bandit Queen* we see a very abusive household who makes it difficult for Phoolan to live in that house. She was sexually exploited and judged based on her caste. Later when she runs out from that household she is shown as helpless women who need man in her life to protect her from all the wrong doings of the society. And when she takes help of the men they try to take advantages of her by exploiting her body and trying to rape her as she was without any male support.

So we see that Phoolan runs away from her toxic and abusive husband. She tries to live according to her wishes but all the bitter experiences make her into a gang leader and she tries to liberate the other girls who were forced to do child marriages. She became a ray of hope to others and she did not wanted the other girls to suffer as she did in her past life. In the film, *Bandit Queen*, the significant issues of patriarchal domination and social stratification become apparent very quickly. The opening scene depicts a wedding involving an adult male and a young girl of a lower caste, Phoolan Devi.

She displays feminism and a resistance to the ruling patriarchy in a society where men have complete control (Ashcroft, Tiffins, and Griffith 67). The misogyny in Indian society is revealed by the slavish and brutal treatment of the women; sexual and physical abuses are not only a common, even expected practice toward women, they are also expected to function as servants to their husbands. Phoolan Devi, the heroine of the film, demonstrates a high degree of autonomy, even at a very young age- only eleven years old and as a subaltern.

This is observed in her resistance to his sexual advances, and her defiance toward her husband and mother-in-law both of whom are members of a higher caste than her. After her husband rapes her, Phoolan Devi returns to her family. She is chastised by her family for

leaving her husband, despite the inherent immorality associated with child marriage. She is pursued by a member of a higher caste, and he tries to have sex with her. She refuses him, so he goes to the village elders and lies; he accuses her of trying to seduce him. Because she is female, and also a member of a lower caste, she is exiled from her village as the village elders would not take her word over the lies of the man who assaulted her.

Phoolan Devi lives with her male cousin for a short time, who also tries to sleep with her, until she is thrown out by his wife. She eventually begins to associate with lawless bandits that live in the rural areas of India called Uttar Pradesh and begins a romantic relationship with Vikram, one of the bandits. Ironically, even those these groups are considered to be lawless, they do not recognize the Indian caste system and also treat women more respectfully than those who are supposedly more civilized members of higher castes;

This is illustrated specifically in the protective and respectful behavior that Vikram shows Phoolan Devi, who earns the nickname “Queen of the Ravines” after she joins the bandits. She remains loyal to him until he is murdered. Despite multiple arrests and nearly continuous sexual and physical abuse at the hands of men, Phoolan Devi refuses to submit to the oppression that denigrates her because she is a female member of a lower caste; she becomes much more militant and violent toward men after the death of Vikram, and looks to exact justice from those who had wronged her and other women, as well as other members of lower castes that make up the subaltern in the film.

She is raped repeatedly throughout the film, by enemies and captors, as a means to exert domination and control over her. The demeaning language toward women and casual references to rape show what a strong influence patriarchal power has over this society. Many aspects of Bandit Queen are also found in Woman at Point Zero. Phoolan Devi, like

Firdaus, is unwilling to conform to her inferior position in society because she is a woman and resists this oppression. Both women are subaltern, yet they are able to demonstrate a high degree of agency (Ashcroft, Tiffins, and Griffith 74 and 6). While there are some differences, these two stories share common themes. Both are resistant to expected gender norms, and display a high degree of autonomy as females despite belonging to societies is controlled by the patriarchy

In the film *Lipstick under my Burka* .all the ladies has to face different kind of toxic masculinity. Shareen had a very abusive husband who raped her every night without her consent. Usha wanted to explore her inner sexual pleasures but always had to hide it from the society for being judged as she was too old according to them for this kind of bodily exploration. Leela have big dream and wants a very rosy life with her boyfriend. But she is forced to get married to the man of her mothers choice. Rehana is a perfect example of the how toxic masculinity is existing within the framework of the society.

She loved wearing jeans, lipstick and live a glamorous life, but due to her fathers strict rules she is forced to steal things from the mall and wear them only in college. But later at home she has to live like an ideal lady. The problem that appears in the *Lipstick Under My Burkha* film is about the four main female characters portrayed in the film. It is about their confusion of their own identity. They try to get out of something that curbs their lives, which certainly deviates from the norms there is. They break the role in order to achieve their desires and their own ways.

This research is important to investigate the gender relation as it has a strong issue about patriarchy and social norms. In this case, the women seem powerless to fight for their rights and freedom because of the social norms. This study aims to analyze identifying the

identity which explains why their behavior is contrary to social norms. This research helps to see concepts that are socially developed in identifying someone. Identity is a way to describe and play a person's role in a social context. Identity is reflected through the representation of female characters in the *Lipstick Under My Burkha* film. The choice of identity will be influenced by various social and cultural construction influences.

Besides the issue of patriarchy, another issue in the film is about social norms. Social norms are general habits that become a benchmark of behavior in a group of people and certain area boundaries. Norms will develop along with the social agreements of the people, it also often referred to as social regulations. Social norms become a barrier for individuals who adhere to these norms. In this film, there is a problem; freedom which is hindered by a system of patriarchy and social norms that work in society faced by four main characters.

In the main character, Rehana Abidi, the father's role and the social norms were too much for her. To wear Islamic clothing in accordance with the Shari'a was contrary to her wishes. Wearing burkha and Muslim clothes made her feel like she lost her identity when she was wearing it all. Then, she negotiates with herself to be another person according to her wishes. She dresses like a teenager in general by wearing a t-shirt and jeans.

She also removes all attributes of her religious identity while on campus and hang out with her boyfriend. There are many scenes that show the changes in Rehana Abidin's appearance from Muslim women with burkha to be a woman who wears jeans and t-shirts. The social norms also handle Rehana's life as a woman in India. The social norms in this film contain very thick patriarchal values. Women are seen as only giving problems to men.

When her father saw Rehana did not wear the dress as she should have, he decided to marry Rehana with a man so she will not be a shame for her family. Rehana's father made a decision because he saw his daughter was not obedient to his rules. So he decided to marry her off to a man. It can be seen from the fragment of the sentence that the role of a father to his family is very large. A daughter was obliged to obey the rules and carry out the orders that her father wanted. And Rehana could not deny it. The role of a male against women plays in this case.

The next character is Sheeren Aslam, a housewife who has three sons. She experienced violence in her household for instance she is a subject of husband's sexual desires. Sheeren Aslam also tried to help her husband's finances by working as a sales girl but what she got was only a curse from her husband and no appreciation at all. The treatment of Sheeren Aslam's husband to her was never good. Although she refused to have sex with him, her husband continued to impose his desire to her. Sheeren Aslam had been abortion three times and her uterus had been infected because of her husband. The concept of patriarchy has a global understanding.

Patriarchy is the relationship between women and men. According to (Walby ,20) "patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women." In the patriarchal concept, men are considered to have a higher role than women. The role of patriarchy in the family of Sheeren Aslam is very sorely. In the scene when she gave contraception to her husband, he threw away the contraception. Her husband felt that using contraception was an embarrassing thing for him and he did not care about the unwanted pregnancies. This toxic behavior was glorified by the society. In this situation, women are exploited in fulfilling man biological needs. Domestic violence felt by

Sheeren Aslam often happens in this film. Sheeren is only regarded as satisfying her husband's passions and her husband has no slightest love for her.

The next character is Leela, Leela also is the main character in this film. She is a beautician who has her own salon, with her daily life she always wears sexy clothes. So, she has high sexual desires in her life and she was forced to marry a man who was not her choice but her mother's choice. The fact is she has a lover who is a photographer and she have big dream to go around the world with him. In this character there are deviations from social norms because what Leela has done.

Women in patriarchy were regarded as socially, intellectually and physically inferior to men, a consequence of various discriminatory , sexist practices, practices which illegitimately presumed that women were unsuited for or incapable of assuming certain positions. This belief was fostered not only by oppressive external constraints but also by women's own compliance with and internalization of patriarchal sexual stereotypes.”

(Gunew) There are several examples of such women in the movie like Rehana's mother who believes women's position is secondary to that of men, the lady who seeks alliance from young 30 year old brides for her 56 year old widower brother, Leela's mother whose solution to have financial security is to get her daughter married. These women are caught in the cobweb of patriarchy losing their individualities in the whole process of assimilation.

In the film *Lipstick under my Burkha* all the four ladies try to become solace of each other. They reflect on their most inner thoughts and suppressed desires. They still show courage and defy the norms and rules set on them by the patriarchal society.

In the movie *Parched* Lajjo is subjected to domestic violence on the daily basis she is beaten by her husband because she was not able to have kids but the real problem was husband and not her. Rani's husband died long back but she was forced to adhere to the rules set to her by the society. Bijli was sold to a brothel at a very young age and she was sexually exploited by the men in the society. So toxicity and male dominance was affecting the ladies mentally and physically.

In *Parched* Lajjo breaks from her abusive husband she lets him get burned alive without helping him to save his life and leaves the family to moves on with Bijli in search of new life and new hope. Similarly Rani throws out her abusive son out of the house and sells her house to pay the debt. She sends Jhanki her daughter in law with her school sweetheart to the city so that she could continue her studies and she too joins Lajoo and Bijli to move out of the toxic society.

All these women centric films are an eye opener to the society. They deal with all the struggles women go through. Women face the issues of castism, domestic violence, toxic masculinity but their voices are choked down by the patriarchal society. They do not have an opinion of their own. The films did try to portray a lot of issues faced by women but this is only a tip of an ice berg but there is lot to explore and a lot to come out in light. But however all these films were not accepted by the audience. It is because the patriarchy is inbuilt in them so much that they do not want to see the change around them. Some films like *Lipstick under my Burkha* and *Lajja* did exceptionally well on the international platforms but were rejected by our own people.

CHAPTER FIVE –CONCLUSION

India has the largest film producing industry and produces a lot of films every year. This study tried to analyze the lives of the women in the rural areas as portrayed in the Bollywood movies. It is a fact that women in India are subjected to different class, caste, and religious subjugation. The portrayal of women in the Hindi film cinema is very sensitive. Some movies try to abolish the power dynamics and sexual exploitation of women. And it is high time to redefine women as the subject to masculine gaze. The experiences of the women are the need of an hour which needs to be represented and show strong connections with their emotions.

For Indian women to thrive in the society and establish her own space and independent space the cinema has to help to create this space where they can voice out their own opinion and feelings. The exposure of the sexuality of the women gives a clear cut message for the audience to emphasize on the preexisting stereotypes in the society.

The relevance of this study would be that there was in depth study of the experiences of the women. The study made a comment on the social stratification of the society and how women are placed on the lower rack. The women issues such as child marriages, dowry system, sexual exploitation, female infanticide is largely discussed. It also commented on the double standards of the society and the hypocritical nature of the patriarchal setup.

The study was done to see the impact of patriarchy and male dominance on the women. Women were not only abused physically but faced a lot of mental abuse as well. This study aimed to analyze the feminist film theory and how this can be applied to Indian films.

We also saw how the filmmakers try to make the movie interesting by objectifying women's body. The inclusion of the item numbers was getting more audiences to the theatres. And this also helped to make more money.

With the increasing demand for the mainstream cinema we see that there is a downfall for the parallel cinema. But the more realistic portrayal is through the parallel cinema. We also saw that not many women centric films are available and also these films are not available on the platforms such as Netflix. Now as we know that these OTT platforms are becoming more and more popular and the youngsters are having access to these platforms these movies should be made available there as well because this will give them an insight about the lives of the rural women.

We also saw how the women fought for their rights against the toxic masculinity. These films were eye openers to the society but however these films were not accepted by the audiences at large because they were portraying the realistic view of the patriarchal society and anything said against the patriarchal norms will have a problematic approach because the society is built in such a way that it readily cannot accept the changes.

In the study an extensive research is done on the issues concerning women in rural areas. Child marriages, dowry system, marital rapes, sexual harassment and domestic violence is studied in depth. Feminism has a great impact on the films in India. It tries to shape the narratives. Feminism in the Indian cinema influenced the portrayal of women on big screen. Each character in the films are going through the journey of exploration of their own self. They try to break the stereotypes created against them. Feminist cinema has the power to bring in social changes and transformations in the society. They try to promote

gender equality and proper representation of women in Indian Cinema. Indian cinema works as a catalyst of change.

The study also dealt with different characteristics of patriarchy and male dominance. Patriarchy and male dominance is the most crucial aspects in the lives of women. They are subjugated. Women under patriarchal society tend to become submissive and are ready to obey men without complaining. The girls are married at a very young age of eleven and twelve and they do not have any say in this decision because it solely depends on her parents. This can be clearly seen in the movie *Parched* and *Bandit queen*.

Nobody talks about the marital rapes taking place in the rural as well as in the urban areas. The women are taught from the very beginning that they have to submit themselves to the demands of man. Men feel that marriage gives them the license to do whatever they want to a woman's body. They feel very much entitled to woman's body.

They are least bothered about the sexual health of women; they do not feel it is important to take consent from the women before indulging themselves in the sexual activities. Forced sex leads to a lot of complications in women. For example women have to suffer from unwanted pregnancies which increase the rate of abortion, there are various infection in the uterus and the pain is unbearable. Marital rape is more problematic when the husband has many sexual partners outside the marriage and the risk of sexually transmitted diseases increases in women as well as men putting their life in danger.

Rapes and sexual harassment is a much explored topic in the films selected for this study. Women are sexually harassed by their in-laws in the absence of their husbands. Being in male dominated society women cannot retaliate against men. If she does so she is thrown

away from the family and it is not easy for her because even her own parents disown her. So woman do not have much choice but to stay in that problematic marriage for her survival and for the survival of her kids.

Sexual harassment also comes with domestic violence against women. A man wants to show his power and assert dominance in all the ways possible. Alcoholic men tend to be more aggressive in nature and they repeatedly beat up their wives for no fault of theirs. Women do not show any resentment because they are used to such abuse on daily basis. Prolonged violence against women makes them physically, mentally and emotionally weak. Women tend to become more passive and emotionless over time. All these factors take a toll on the mental health of women. They do not share their traumatic experiences openly but they suffer in silence.

This study also looked at the feminist film theory along with male gaze theory and its perspectives from Indian lens. The filmmakers try to sell their films by making use of women's bodies by portraying them in dance sequence and item numbers. They sexually objectify woman for the visual pleasure of men. Sometimes the dance sequence or the item number is more popular than the entire movie.

The filmmakers purposely add the sex scenes or item numbers in the trailers itself so that men would rush to watch the films which will in turn generate great revenue. The impact of these scenes is so much that men become more aggressive with their wives in the real world.

The portrayal of very aggressive sexual activities, rape scenes in the cinema leaves an imprint on the minds of men and they try to show this same level of aggression in real life as

well. When women also see other women being sexualized on screen and get appreciated for their sex appeal women spectators find it very fascinating and they try to imitate to impress the opposite sex. So the filmmakers should be very mindful of what is being shown on the big screens.

Women centric films such as *Lajja*, *Parched*, *Lipstick Under my Burkha* have a very strong social message for the society. Despite of this there is inclusion of the item numbers in these films making it quite clear that for entertainment purpose they somehow have to show women in sexy clothing to bring the male audience to watch the films.

The study also did an in-depth study of toxic masculinity and its effects on the society. Toxic masculinity glorifies the violence against women. They want to show their man-ness in the society. The men feel that with all the ongoing feminist movements they are suppressed under women.

According to them manhood should be achieved at any cost. To be born as a man is a privilege by birth and this privilege should be retained by initiating toxicity in their behaviors. Men believe that they should not display any kind of emotions because if they do so they will be entitled with the feminine traits. Men find it very offensive to do the traditional household duties. According to them these duties are supposed to be done by women and they do not want the boys to learn the basic skills such as cooking, cleaning and child care.

The effects of toxic masculinity can be clearly seen in the Indian cinema as well. Men in the films try to control every aspect in the life of women; be it in terms of education or working outside the domestic sphere. They try to assert their control by being physically

violent with their wives. They find it quite fascinating to have multiple sex partners besides their wife. But if the women do the same thing they are slut shamed in public. Having forced sex with their wives which is considered as marital rape is also a portrayal of toxic masculinity.

In the movies selected for the study it is shown how women break through the abusive household and leave behind traditions and societal norms in search their own individual identity. Each woman had the potential to run away from the violence, but they were under the male dominance from so many years that they were unaware of their own capacity to live a life without the support of men. But finally we see that even if it was late women tried to get away from this toxic society.

Coming back to the hypothesis it is stated that issues of women from the rural areas are not given adequate representation in the Bollywood movies. In Bollywood there are not much women centric films which give proper representation of the women in rural areas. Most of the films fall under the category of the mainstream cinema. The issues of the women in rural areas are only highlighted in the realistic cinema.

The filmmakers do not produce more films which portray the societal realities because these films are not accepted by the audience and the filmmakers do not make any profit with realistic cinema. The main aim of the mainstream cinema is to entertain the audience and this is done by sexualizing and commodifying women's bodies. This is accepted by the women at large and do not have any objection over such projections.

Whatever we see is just the tip of an iceberg there is a lot to explore and to expand our understanding. The films chosen for this study are very few but if we go to find out it talks about universal experiences of women be it in rural areas or urban areas. Maybe the oppression faced by the women in rural areas more as compared to the women in urban areas. But they still strive to be independent individuals who yearn for freedom.

Bibliography

1. Gordon, James Alexander, and James Alexander Gordon. "Seeing Like a Feminist: Representations of Societal Realities in Women-Centric Bollywood Films - the IAFOR Research Archive." The IAFOR Research Archive -, 16 Apr. 2020, papers.iafor.org/submission06116.
2. Dr. Sutapa Chaudhuri. scholar.google.com/citations?user=haEk2HwAAAAJ&hl=en.
3. Nandakumar, Sowmya. The Stereotypical Portrayal of Women in Commercial Indian Cinema. 1 May 2011, uh-ir.tdl.org/items/79536255-b300-479c-9817-60bb024b82bf.
4. Gupta, Sukanya Sen. "Kahaani, Gulaab Gang and Queen: Remaking the Queens of Bollywood." South Asian Popular Culture, vol. 13, no. 2, Taylor and Francis, May 2015, pp. 107–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2015.1087107>
5. Majumder, Shirsha. "Impact of Hindi Films on Society: A Study on Portrayal of Crimes Against Women." Sjc Bangalore, June 2016, www.academia.edu/26540197/Impact_of_Hindi_films_on_society_A_study_on_portrayal_of_crimes_against_women.
6. Rajalakshmi, Arthi. "An Analysis of Hindi Women-centric Films in India." B-u, May 2018, www.academia.edu/36745554/An_analysis_of_Hindi_women_centric_films_in_India.

7. Ganguly, Debarati, and Manish Dutta. "The Effect of Toxic Masculinity in Indian Films on Society." Social Science Research Network, RELX Group (Netherlands), Jan. 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3629344>.
8. Kausar, Heena, and Gopal Singh. "Women in Hindi Cinema and Their Impact on College Students With Reference to Eight Women Oriented Films In..." ResearchGate, Dec. 2015, www.researchgate.net/publication/303883022_Women_in_Hindi_Cinema_and_Their_Impact_on_College_Students_With_Reference_to_Eight_Women_Oriented_Films_in_2014_A_study_among_university_students_of_Lucknow.
9. Mannan, Shelly. "Abusing the Marginalised: Misrepresentation of Women in Media." Hpuacs, Feb. 2017, www.academia.edu/31457413/Abusing_the_Marginalised_Misrepresentation_of_Women_in_Media.
10. Sonowal, Rupa. "Representation of Women in Realistic Cinema." Assamuniversity, Feb. 2017, www.academia.edu/31298769/Representation_of_Women_in_Realistic_Cinema.
11. Halder, Antara. "Portrayal of Gender Inequality in Bollywood Cinema." Wbsubregistration, May 2015, www.academia.edu/12314094/Portrayal_of_gender_inequality_in_Bollywood_Cinema.
12. Vallie, Sarah. "What Is Toxic Masculinity?" WebMD, 11 Nov. 2022, www.webmd.com/sex-relationships/what-is-toxic-masculinity.
13. Monamee, Maisha Islam. "Feminism and Bollywood: How the Portrayal of Women Has Evolved." The Daily Star, 8 Mar. 2023, www.thedailystar.net/entertainment/tv-film/news/feminism-and-bollywood-how-the-portrayal-women-has-evolved-3265961?amp.

14. Gupta, Radhika. "Bollywood and the Portrayal of Women Characters Over the Years." *Feminism in India*, 11 May 2023, feminisminindia.com/2023/05/11/bollywood-and-the-portrayal-of-women-characters-over-the-years.

15. Aamir Khan. "Dor 2006 Film Official(HD) | Shreyas Talpade, Ayesha Takia (Eng Sub)." YouTube, 14 Nov. 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=raerqLP8W_8.

16. Agarwal, Ruchi and Mahidol University International College. "Changing Roles of Women in Indian Cinema." *Silpakorn University Journal of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts*, vol. 14–2, 2014, pp. 117–32. www.thaiscience.info/journals/Article/SUIJ/10969014.pdf.

17. Calcutta Viral. "Mirch Masala 1987 / Full Hindi Movie / Naseeruddin Shah / Smita Patil / Om Puri / Paresh Rawal." YouTube, 1 Oct. 2023, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jauKFA8gwMs.

18. Deshmukh, Snigdha. "Women and Indian Cinema—A Tale of Representation - the MIT Post." *The MIT Post*, 20 Jan. 2020, themitpost.com/women-indian-cinema-tale-representation.

19. DRJ Records Movies. “Lajja Full Movie (लज्जा) - Ajay Devgan, Madhuri Dixit, Manisha Koirala, Mahima Chaudhry, Anil Kapoor.” YouTube, 28 July 2023, www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6UGiPvoFJE.

20. Goldmines Bollywood. “Chandni Bar (2001) Full Hindi Movie | Tabu, Atul Kulkarni, Rajpal Yadav, Ananya Khare.” YouTube, 13 Oct. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0eLZSlawtE.

21. Gray, Jordan. “Patriarchy Overview and Examples.” Study.com, 2023.

22. Gupta, Radhika. “Bollywood and the Portrayal of Women Characters Over the Years.” Feminism in India, 11 May 2023, feminisminindia.com/2023/05/11/bollywood-and-the-portrayal-of-women-characters-over-the-years.

23. Hindu College Gazette Web Team. “Changing Face of Women’s Representation in Hindi Cinema.” HCG, 6 Mar. 2023, www.hinducollegegazette.com/post/changing-face-of-women-s-representation-in-hindi-cinema.

24. Ideas, Team Gd. "Portrayal of Women in Indian Cinema ~ Group Discussion Ideas."

Group Discussion Ideas, 21 June 2023,

www.groupdiscussionideas.com/portrayal-of-women-in-indian-cinema.

25. JSTOR Daily. "Feminist Film Theory: An Introductory Reading List." JSTOR Daily,

Sept. 2023. JSTOR, daily.jstor.org/feminist-film-theory-an-introductory-reading-list.

26. Kulhari, Priyanka. Indian Cinema: Making Departure From the Stereotypical

Presentation of Women in Nuptial. 2021,

www.redalyc.org/journal/7038/703873550007/html.

27. Monamee, Maisha Islam. "Feminism and Bollywood: How the Portrayal of Women Has

Evolved." The Daily Star, 8 Mar. 2023,

www.thedailystar.net/entertainment/tv-film/news/feminism-and-bollywood-how-the-portrayal-women-has-evolved-3265961?amp.

28. ---. "Feminism and Bollywood: How the Portrayal of Women Has Evolved." The Daily

Star, 8 Mar. 2023,

www.thedailystar.net/entertainment/tv-film/news/feminism-and-bollywood-how-the-portrayal-women-has-evolved-3265961?amp.

29. movies tribe. “Parched (2015) Movie Explain Hindi/Urdu|Lives of Four Women|SurvivalEmotionalMotivationalहिन्दी.” YouTube, 21 Feb. 2023, www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qs8U2uV8JI.

30 . Mukhopadhyay, Sanchari, and Debanjan Banerjee. “Bollywood, Popular Visual Media, and Sexism in India: A Critical Glance Back.” *Journal of Psychosexual Health*, vol. 3, no. 3, July 2021, pp. 256–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/26318318211027312>.

31. Pathak, Siddhi. “Mirch Masala Review: Red and Revolution Go Hand in Hand.” *Feminism in India*, 22 Dec. 2017, feminisminindia.com/2017/12/26/mirch-masala-film-review.

32. “Patriarchy: Definition – Background – Impact.” *Medica Mondiale*, medicamondiale.org/en/service/glossary/patriarchy.

33. Prasad, Prince, and Rahul Tiwari. “FEMINISM IN INDIAN CINEMA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS.” *International Journal of Novel Research and Development*, vol. 8, no. 7, thesis, July 2023, www.ijnrd.org/papers/IJNRD2307118.pdf.

34. Research Guides: Film Studies: Feminist Film Theory. researchguides.dartmouth.edu/filmstudies/feministfilmtheory.

35. Shandilya, Shanaita. "Bandit Queen: Depicting Rape and the "Third World Heroic Woman"" Feminism in India, 16 Jan. 2020, feminisminindia.com/2020/01/20/bandit-queen-rape-world-heroic-woman.
36. Tnn. "10 Movies That Depict the Victory of Good Over Bad." The Times of India, 6 Oct. 2014, m.timesofindia.com/entertainment/10-movies-that-depict-the-victory-of-good-over-bad/articleshow/44192753.cms.
37. Subh Creation. "Lipstick Under My Burkha Full Movie." YouTube, 26 Jan. 2024, www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2NTXKJz-DA.
38. Vallie, Sarah. "What Is Toxic Masculinity?" WebMD, 11 Nov. 2022, www.webmd.com/sex-relationships/what-is-toxic-masculinity.
39. Vikaspedia Domains. vikaspedia.in/social-welfare/social-awareness/child-marriages.
40. Wikipedia contributors. "Feminist Film Theory." Wikipedia, 17 Apr. 2024, en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminist_film_theory.

41. Yusuf, Rakiya. "THE IMPACT OF CHILD MARRIAGE ON THE GIRL CHILD AND SOCIETIAL DEVELOPMENT." ResearchGate, June 2020, www.researchgate.net/publication/341882475_THE_IMPACT_OF_CHILD_MARRIAGE_ON_THE_GIRL_CHILD_AND_SOCIETIAL_DEVELOPMENT.