

Women Breaking the Threshold in Indian Cinema

Kanika

Assistant Professor
DPG Degree College
Gurugram, Haryana

Abstract

Cinema plays a significant role in shaping the society, it has a more comprehensive range of access to people as compared to any other art form. Movies play an important role in developing cultural values and addressing a contemporary issue. During the late twentieth century, various movies have been made which have addressed social issues like class and caste discrimination, rape, dowry, patriarchy, male chauvinism and widow remarriage. My paper is divided into 3 chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. My paper examines how women are breaking the cage of evil patriarchy and creating their own identity from a marginalized section. I have used feminist theories to understand these movies and the changing role of women in bollywood. Feminist such as Mary Woolstone craft, Simon de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf and others expressed their concern about Women's powerlessness and victimization. The role of women in Indian cinema is transforming as we are moving towards modernization. This paper will start with a focus on the changing roles of women in Indian cinema. Indian cinema has gone through many phases since independence and this paper examines how cinema is breaking the threshold through films like *Bala*, *Panga* and *Queen*.

Keywords: stereotype, representation, self-identity, modernisation

Introduction

Cinema plays a major role in shaping society, it has a wider range of access to people as compared to any other art form. India has a huge cinema audience. In India, more than 1800 films in various languages are made each year. Movies play an important role in developing cultural values and addressing a contemporary issue. During the late twentieth century, various movies have been made which have addressed social issues like class and caste discrimination, rape, dowry, patriarchy, male chauvinism and widow remarriage. In addition to the changes in cultural customs, there have been changes in preferences for dress, food, career opportunities, and belief systems. There is continuous shifting from joint family to nuclear family. The institutions of marriage and live-in partnerships have undergone adjustments, for example, the film *Luka Chuppi* (2019) deals with the idea of live-in relationship in a small town.

Film is a mechanical reproduction of sound and visuals which create emotional and mental effects on the audience. It bombards the images in our mind. Sound and visuals are mixed to create beauty and beauty tracks. Time and space also play a very important role in

film studies, they help the audience to understand and bring certain things in order. Films are considered to be the mirror of society and they give the reflection of what is happening around us. People are greatly impacted by films in a variety of circumstances, and this impact can be both positive and negative. The new wave/parallel cinema emphasizes issues that individuals encounter on a daily basis. As a reflection of society, it offers us to ponder over the shortcomings and problems which are prevalent in our society. As defined by Merriam Webster dictionary, new wave cinema is defined as “A cinematic movement that is characterized by improvisation, abstraction, and subjective symbolism and that often makes use of experimental photographic techniques”. This cinema focuses on social issues without paying attention to glamour and grand setups. The art form of filmmaking is an alternative to conventional commercial cinema, which is noted for its serious themes, realism, and naturalism while keeping a close eye on the current socio-political landscape. Liberalization is a movement that gives space to new ideas, art work and thoughts and it gave space to this new wave, which not only gave voice to women but also focussed on their issues. Parallel films challenge commercial movies in a way that their subjects changed from love stories (*Aradhana*) to women issues (*Thappad, Bala, Queen, Panga*). Films being discussed in this paper are neither completely commercial, nor are they films in the traditional sense. These films can be placed in a space in-between art and commercial cinema.

According to studies and surveys, Indian films are screened in over a hundred countries and watched by nearly four billion people worldwide. Since Indian cinema is considered a powerful medium of entertainment, its studies show how we can use it wisely for change. As Indian Cinema is considered to be a powerful medium of entertainment, its studies show how we can use it wisely to bring change. The Indian film industry is considered to be the largest film industry in the world with over 1000 films produced each year in more than 20 languages where Hollywood produces less than 400 films per year, according to available records. With the highest number of theatre entrances, about 3.3 billion tickets are sold annually in India. Another set of statistics states that about 750 films are made annually in 72 studios and shown in about 12,000 cinema houses to weekly audiences estimated at almost 70 million. The Indian film market gets 90% of its revenue from non-English language films, mostly in Hindi followed by South Indian and other regional language films. The CRISIL Research (2010) projects that the industry is expected to grow from US\$3.2 Billion in 2010 to US\$ 5 Billion by 2014. Since this industry contributes a lot to the business and the society, it is interesting to see the changing trends in Bollywood from the past to the present time. (wikipedia)

The role of women in Indian cinema is transforming as we are moving towards modernization. This paper will start with a focus on the changing roles of women in Indian cinema. Indian cinema has gone through many phases since independence and this paper examines how cinema is breaking the threshold through films like *Bala, Panga* and *Queen*. Cinema is also shifting as women in the twenty-first century become more aware of their rights. Men and women deserve equal rights socially, politically and economically. The twenty-first century is essential as it gives women the capability of challenging and changing their subordinate position in society. The aim of this paper is to show how female characters in Indian cinema fight for their own identity, self-respect and equality; how the characters that are played by the women in films have changed with the emerging status of women of India, as films are a reflection of changes in the social structures. The next section will deal with how the conventional tropes such as fair skin as beautiful, women as soft natured,

mother with sacrificing nature are challenged with the help of films like *Bala*, *Queen* and *Panga* respectively and how the female characters are breaking patriarchal norms.

The paper aims to analyse the idea of self-identity in selected films made in 2010s where the female protagonists break their limits. The first film explores the impact of Indian cultural norms on characterizing beauty standards by narrowing down the traditional Indian beauty norms into a western beauty ideal and promoting the notion that fair is beautiful through the film *Bala*. This paper briefly provides an insight on how modern women are challenging the conventional norms. The paper also discusses how the new cinema of the post-liberalization era is trying to change the mindset of people because it is not men who are the problem, the problem lies in deeply constructed stereotypical ideas of patriarchal structures. This paper shall conclude with an analysis of how cinema is trying to raise issues in society.

In Indian cinema, the role of women changed over time. Initially, they were totally dependent on their male counterparts, but later, by taking films in their hands, they challenged the patriarchal conventions. Women's issues were the focus of this parallel film, which also attempted to portray the difficulties of contemporary life and how they affect women. "The directors affiliated with this genre of cinema constantly tried to investigate the concept of rights and obligations, privileges and duties, independence and concept for authority, and other related subjects which influenced the life of women in India" (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 2004) These women's issues were represented by some female directors, most notably Aparna Sen, Kalpana Lajmi, and Deepa Mehta. These directors have shown immense interest in making films where they address problems and hardships faced by women from the women's perspective.

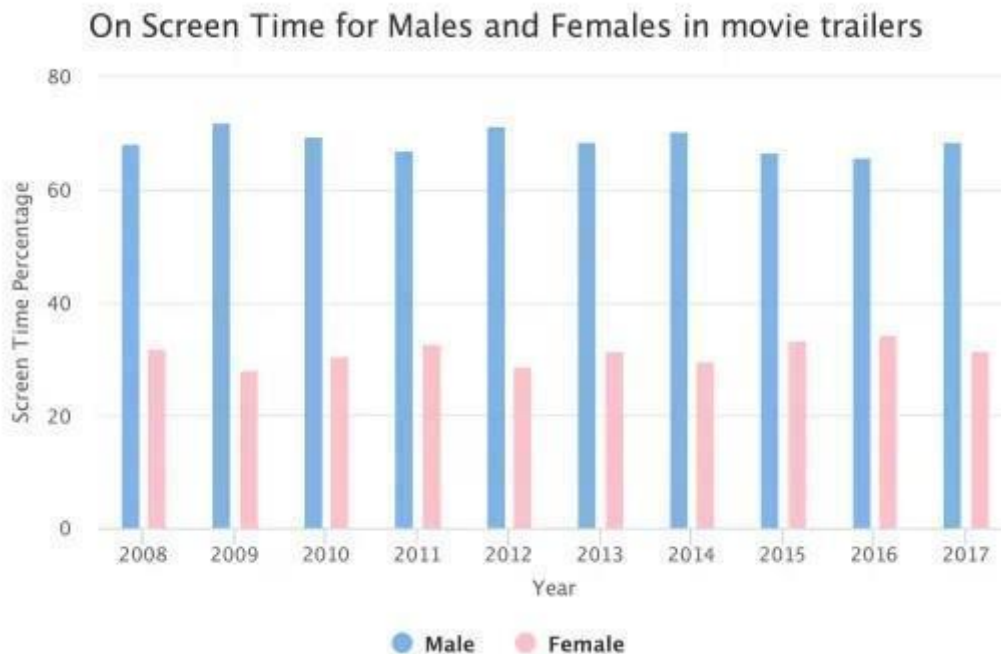
Traditionally, society has always understood women as weak and subordinate to men. Their roles were just confined to being a daughter, wife and mother. Feminist cinema criticism has helped to perceive the reality presented by cinema in new ways and has made substantial contributions to women's positions. The beginning of the 'Golden Era' of cinema, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s is considered to be a more idealistic portrayal of society. The country was establishing itself as a sovereign society, and this feeling of hope and new beginnings permeated Hindi cinema as well. Women during this time period played an important role. Although they were not given equal rights, yet they were seen in different working roles. *Mother India* (1957) is a standout film of the era that captures the essence of female characters' identities and the idea of women being celebrated as the nation's pillar of strength, a thought perfectly represented in the iconic movie poster that shows Nargis lugging a heavy wooden plough.

During this time, women were holding a lot of responsibilities on their shoulders, handling professional and personal life together. Even today, women are not considered working professionals. There are scenes where she is massaging her husband's leg because that's her duty, she is fighting for her children and no one wonders about her husband who left his family alone! In the context of an evolution in the roles of women in Indian films, Laxmi (1991), writes, "From the passive wife of Dada sahib Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) to the long-suffering but heroic mother-figure of *Mother India* to the liberated single-parent of *Mother 98*, it has been a rather long and challenging journey for women in Hindi cinema".

Aradhana is a 1969 Bollywood Hindi-language romantic drama film directed by Shakti Samanta, starring Sharmila Tagore and Rajesh Khanna. This story deals with a love story between Vandana and Arun. Vandana is attractive and beautiful and Arun is strong and successful. They had a secret marriage. Soon afterward, Arun dies in an air crash, leaving behind a heartbroken and pregnant Vandana. Arun's family refuses to accept the unwed mother-to-be since her marriage with Arun was never formalised. Meanwhile, her father also dies, leaving her grief-stricken. Ignoring society, she decided to give birth to their child. Before Arun's death, he always wanted a male child so that he could make him pilot. Here lies the problem where in most of the storylines, males had superior occupations. Vandana never cross questioned Arun because the ideal woman is always considered as submissive, self-sacrificing, chaste and controlled. She gives birth to Suraj, handed him to a childless couple and became his nanny. Arun was sure that there will be good news, it will be a son, who must be named Suraj and who must grow up to be an air force pilot just like him. Women in this age are still considered weak and soft. In Prakash Mehra's *Zanjeer*, a 1973 film which was centred around a policeman. Jaya Bachchan plays the role of knife sharpener which is a different profession given during that time. She is a bold character who speaks her mind freely. She is not like other girls who are soft and dependent on male counterparts.

In the 1990s, the concept of working women vanished and now they are just limited to household chores like in the movie *Hum Sath Sath Hai*. Female characters did not play any constructive role. Sadhana (Tabu) is an independent girl who has returned from abroad but she is only concerned about her family. She gives her everything to make her parent in-law happy. On the other hand, Priti, despite being a doctor, is always seen serving the family only. Not a single day was she spotted doing what her profession demands. This movie is considered a classic movie showing family values, relationships, ethics in day to day life and humbleness in prosperity. The main focus is on “bhartiya sabhyata aur sanskriti”. As a result, it appears that women have lost the space they had constructed for themselves. In 2000's, women were still categorized and this has been achieved through songs, dance, dresses and through various stereotypical images. Women are still victims of male gaze. Movies like *Vivah* in 2006 where Amrita Rao is submissive, suppressed and considered to be an ideal girl. *Jab We Met* in 2007 where Geet (Kareena Kapoor) is an extrovert but she soon loses her identity when she is ditched by her boyfriend. The stereotypical dialogue “akeli ladki khuli hui tijori ke jaise hoti hai”. *Kabir Singh*, one of the year's highest-grossing films, was criticized for portraying an abusive relationship as a type of love and portraying the main character, Shahid Kapoor, who treats his girlfriend like property.

As per a 2017 report by the Geena Davis Institute, only one in ten directors in Bollywood is women. Other statistics reveal that the screen time for females was merely 31.5 per cent, against the 68.5 percent received by male actors. Due to the disparity in the number of men when compared to women in key off-screen processes such as script-writing, film-making, and direction, female characters in Bollywood have been presented through the eyes of a largely male perspective, resulting in the age-old stereotypes and gender biases that prevail in films. (TheMITPost2020)



However, changing times have brought into the limelight several successes directed by women. Different filmmakers have explored new dimensions of Indian woman taking the representation of Indian woman out of the conventional mould. Zoya Akhtar's *Gully Boy* (2019), Deepa Mehta's *Fire* (1996) and *Earth* (1999), and *English Vinglish* (2012) by Gauri Shinde, are a few of the many pieces that are slowly bringing in a much-needed change to the industry, through representation of women from all walks of life.

***Queen* (2014)**

Queen is a 2014 Indian comedy-drama film directed by Vikas Bahl and produced by Anurag Kashyap, Vikram Aditya Motwane, and Madhu Mantena. The film stars Kangana Ranaut in the lead role, with Lisa Haydon and Rajkumar Rao playing supporting roles.

The movie revolves around the life of a typical Indian girl in her early twenties, born and brought up with suffocating values in the name of morality. She is over protected by her family. Rani is a typical girl who never dared to dream beyond having a happy marriage and being a good wife and 'daughter in-law'. Her life changes abruptly when one day before her marriage her fiancé leaves her and decides to break engagement. Rani is devastated by the news and locks herself in a room. There is a storm going inside her and she cannot articulate and understand her feelings. She decides to go on their honeymoon alone where she gets pulled out of her comfort zone and rediscovers herself. A whole new world opens for her when she starts her journey. It is this journey which she takes alone after being brought up in an over-protective environment all her life which changes everything for her. She soon discovers that women there follow their desires, without being judged. As she meets other young people, her flatmates, who are from various countries and cultural backgrounds, carefree, spirited, and living life to the fullest, she realizes that there is more to life than having a "well-settled" life in her early twenties with the perfect job, the perfect house, and the perfect husband/family. She enjoys her life to the fullest, gains confidence and wears the clothes she likes.

The entire concept of perfect woman and ideal wife comes from the Ramayana, where Sita, a virtuous heroine who is faithful to her husband and obeys his orders without question. These patriarchal rules dominated women's lives in traditional India, and they are clearly articulated in Indian cinema, particularly in popular films.

Virginia Woolf talks about personal space in her essay “*A Room of One’s Own*”, she talks about how the experience of life is different from how we perceive reality. She points out that there is no absolute truth in lines “One must strain off what was personal and accidental in all these impressions and so reach the pure fluid, the essential oil of truth”(chapter2).

Panga (2019)

Panga is a 2019 Bollywood sports-drama, which has been directed by Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari. She is an Indian filmmaker and writer who made her debut in 2016 by directing the comedy drama *Nil Battey Sannata*. This movie is about a person’s right to dream and change their lives, irrespective of one’s social status. At 62nd Filmfare Awards, Iyer won the Filmfare Award for Best Debut Director.

Panga honours the endless hours of work that mothers give to their families and at the same time urges them to never give up on their dreams and to take the second chance. Story revolves around Jaya (kangana) who is taking care of her family and doing her railway job. She chose to be a homemaker and was happy sharing her life with her husband, Prashant and her son, Adi. The movie opens with Jaya kicking Prashant in her sleep but rather than making a scene, Prashant jokes that if Jaya’s leg makes contact with the wrong spot than they won’t be able to expand their family. This shows their beautiful relationship. After the breakfast we discover a caring bond between Jaya and Adi where Jaya is giving Adi, a basil and asks van driver to drive slowly. Jaya is very much concerned about her child as he is a premature baby and he needs extra care. Jaya is a railway employee. She has left her glory days but she hasn’t forgotten them. She got excited seeing kabaddi players waiting for their train. She was somewhere expecting them to recognize her as she was the captain of Indian Kabaddi team and she has won so many tournaments. There is a scene where she is watching those kabaddi players and on the same time stressing and ringing up Adi. Jays’s best friend Meenu came to Bhopal for tournament. On the opposite end of the spectrum is Meenu, same age as Jaya who is unmarried, has no kids and is currently coaching aspiring young girls in kabaddi. “Jab ladka tumhe daboch ne ki koshish kare, Pao se pakde, to edi ko aise twist karo, aur patli gali se line ke uss par chale jao”. She points a more realistic picture that a girl in a small city like Bhopal can relate to and while doing that she is telling her gaming strategy on the mat. She inspired Jaya to make a comeback but she refused because of Adi’s health and Prashant’s transfer. After a heated conversation, she asks Prashant “kya sab ko samajhne ki zimmedari meri hai, tumko samjhu, Adi ko samjhu phir office mai boss ko samjhu, or mujhe samajhne ki zimmedari kiski hai...main kar kya sakti thi, aur kar kya rahi hu" Jaya is torn between her responsibilities and dreams. Later in the movie Jaya’s son Adi thinks about her mother’s comeback and tries to convince Prashant by giving the example of Serena Williams and her comeback. Adi blames his father for not taking care of him and not supporting his mother. Prashant talks to Jaya about comeback and he just asks to make a fake attempt but in doing so she soon realises that she still has capability to make a comeback. This changed her entire perspective towards life and herself. She challenges herself once again.

Jaya is no longer a young woman of 25. Her reflexes have failed her, and her body is out of shape. Her spirit is willing, but her head warns her that she may be returning to difficult ground. Jaya has to fight her aging body, her teammates, the idea that she is too old to play and societal notions about motherhood. She interrogates “Main chali jaungi toh ghar ko kon samhalega”. There is an inner and external conflict throughout the film. With the help of her family, friend, neighbour and her passion she made a comeback and challenged the dominant convention. She reclaimed her lost glory and confidence in one self. Jaya’s friend Meenu constantly questions misogyny and breaks it’s hold over herself. The funniest of the lines of the film belong to her and she definitely lights up the screen with her presence. In the essay “*Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist*”, Shulamith Firestone asserts that a woman has her own identity but if she fights for her identity then she is considered to be selfish or cruel. Further she declares that according to society a woman is incomplete if she cannot fulfil her husband’s desire or she cannot give birth. Moreover, if she thinks about herself then also she is considered selfish. When Meenu asks Jaya to take out little time for her dreams where Jaya replies in an anxious tone “mai ek maa hun aur maa ke koi sapne nahi hote, na unka kuch matlab hota hai ,naa unki koi ehmiat hoti hai..... maa ko sapne dekhne ka hak nahi hota hai aur agar phir bhi mai dekhti hu to mai selfish hu, cruel mother.....or mai yaha apni hadd(limits) dekhne ke liye aayi hu”

She seeks to challenge the dominant conventions. According to Radical Feminist, sexism is so deep rooted in society that the only way to cure this, is to completely eliminate Gender. In this movie we see equality. Even Mary Wollstonecraft once said, “I do not wish women to have power over men but over themselves” in her essay as she argues that both men and women are equal. She made an effort to teach society about the importance of education. She wants us to throw out the ancient cultural values, which is creating hindrance in women’s progress. She states that women should be an equal companion to men.

Jaya is torn between her dreams and traditional societal norms when she says “main karna kya chahti thi, aur kar kya rahi hu”. She also points out “main apni had dekhna chahti hu. Isse agay jaungi to cruel mother kehlaungi” A forgotten Kabaddi world champion catalyzes an inner desire to give a new meaning to her existing role as a wife and mother, and makes a comeback. She faced a lot of problems like inner conflict, fight with the traditional norm about motherhood and the ideal wife and many more. Panga is a hindi word which means messing up or meddling with. Even the characters in this film are all taking panga with the defined and established norms.

In the very recent films of Bollywood like *Tumhari Sulu* and *Shakuntala Devi*, we see that though these movies show women in a kind of very progressive light, the film makers are somewhere not able to shed their image of a woman in a conservative setup. For example, in the movie *Shakuntala Devi*, Shakuntala’s daughter says to her mother why can’t she be a normal mom. This image of being a normal mom or a normal woman is what stops women from being themselves and chasing their dreams. A woman who aspires to fulfill her dreams breaking the boundaries of the society is anyway marginalized by being called someone not normal. Also the filmmaker shows how the daughter of Shakuntala leads a very lonely childhood just because her mother is an aspirational woman. Similarly the movie *Tumhari Sulu* shows that when the mother chooses to fulfill her dreams, the life of her child starts to get ruined. Such movies, despite creating a different and strong image of women in the society, somehow fail to fully embrace a strong inspirational woman. A few instances from these movies leave the audience with an impression that if a woman chooses to break the

boundaries created for her and seeks to fulfill all her dreams, her family and especially her children will suffer. This is how the film fails to fulfil its purpose of portraying an otherwise strong female character.

Bala (2019)

Bala is a 2019 comedy film which revolves around the stereotypical beauty standard and what constitutes perfect masculinities and femininities in Indian society. This movie is directed by Amar Kaushik, he has directed several movies related to social causes, for example, '*Stree*' (2018) is a satire and uses horror to bring forth the actual scars of life of women. This film is about toxic masculinity, respect for women and gender stereotypes. *Bala* also deals with the story of premature balding among young people and standard beauty notions, written by Niren Bhatt, co-written by Ravi Muppa, and produced by Dinesh Vijan. This movie is based on an original story by Bengali film director Pavel Bhattacharjee about the life of Rohit Sood.

“The three wishes of every man are to be healthy, to be rich by honest means, and to be beautiful”-Plato

In this movie, Bala (AyushmanKhurana) was more conscious about his hair and because of beauty standards he was considered to be an ordinary man with an extraordinary problem. His classmate Latika (Bhumi), on the other hand, plays the role of a confident lawyer who has faced prejudices all her life due to her dark complexion. She is a career oriented woman who loves to work on her principles. Even though she is more educated and involved in good profession, she had to continuously face societal taunts. Society demands a person to be beautiful, rather than be an educated person. This shows that one's education and talent is inferior to certain beauty standards. The film highlights the problem of India where people are obsessed with fairness creams and other beauty accessories. Latika breaks conventional norms in this movie as she wasn't worried about her looks, she was career oriented and faced the world with confidence. In this movie, another issue is also touched where Pari (Yami Gautam) falls for Ayushman Khurana just because of his looks. Movie has shown two scenarios where Bhumi is very confident and doesn't let her dark-complexion get into her way and on the other hand, where Pari is beautiful and she is only interested in charming men. This shows that women who are not beautiful and have dark skin are not suitable for marriages and don't deserve love.

The film opens in Kanpur where people are shown with their obsession for hair. Bala, with other students, teases their bald teacher. Bala is considered to be very stylish among students and is obsessed with his cool attitude. For impressing a fair skinned girl, he passes Latika's notebook but Latika exposed him in front of class. After this incident Bala went to Latika and the both have a heated discussion where Bala calls Latika “Kaalikubja”. This shows how dark skin people live a cursed life. They are only to be laughed at.

Bala: school kisaari beautiful ladkiya marti hai humpe,tumhari jaise ka toh hamare bare mai sochna bhi allowed nahi hai

Latika: aur kuch bole na toh aise kantap marungi tappa khaa ke phool bagh mai giroge tum

In his late twenties, Bala is suffering from premature baldness. He is working for a fairness cream brand as a salesperson. Soon he goes to Latika's aunt where her aunt asks him to edit Latika's picture and make her fair. She wants to change the complexion of Latika so that she

fits in society and she gets married easily. Latika is very confident but people around her feel like she is not complete. Latika and her aunt go to a seminar where Bala will provide a perfect solution for girls who can't get married. In the seminar, Bala stresses on beauty notions according to society where the one factor everyone stresses on is "fairness" while education, caste and creed come later. He emphasizes Indian songs and ideology where fair skin is associated with beauty. Further we are introduced to Pari who is a fair skinned girl and Bala falls for her. Human beings have always craved beautiful objects, but lately, the desire and preference to look beautiful hits new heights all over the world. In Aryan times, the dark and fair complexion was directly associated with class. Fair complexion is Aryans and dark complexion people are das. Moreover, the caste system in India supplements this notion of beauty standards which further marginalizes the darker-skinned Indians in society.

If we go back to ancient times we will somewhere find its root cause. Beauty is worshipped in our scriptures and scriptures decide how we should live. They play a very important role in the formation of society. So somewhere this beauty notion is coming directly or indirectly from scriptures. Furthermore, globalization has hampered the decolonization process by bolstering and reinforcing Western ideals, culture, and practices that were implanted during the colonial era, where media has been the most effective source of disseminating such stereotypes around the world. Therefore, the question arises: what is beauty? Who is considered beautiful? Is there a universal beauty standard in the world? Who decides what is beauty? The answer to all these questions is the hidden desires of patriarchy where men decide what women should wear and how they carry herself just for the sake typical male gaze.

There was hardly any movie where we can find even one story revolving around a dark skinned female character who fought for herself. The focus remains on their beauty or their bodily exposure. While the West has been globalizing beauty standards, the valuation of fair skin can be traced to colonialism and the caste system. Together, these two institutions create a hierarchy based on colour. According to conventional norms, beauty and body shape is an important characteristic for women rather than for men, although it is becoming increasingly important for men as well, as we can see in the movie *Bala*. Latika and Bala are contrasting characters in the film. Bala escapes from reality and seeks ways to make himself look better so that he fits in the mind of society so that people don't make fun of him, so that he too can love and he knows he can only get love only if he is beautiful. That is why he disguises himself into something he is not. Latika faces the challenges of life and rejects the notions of beauty established by society. Latika fights whereas Bala loses his real 'self'.

Speaking about breaking the strict beauty standards set by society, Bhumi said in an interview with ETimes, "When people think you're not perfect, and that's the idea. The idea is to break these beauty standards that the world has created. There's this mould that has been created for beauty."

Conclusion

Cinema is believed to be one of the tool of entertainment which includes the combination of images, music, dialogue, lighting and sound, which helps viewers to understand their society better. It also provides escape from the mundane life. In the post-liberalization times, as Indian society changed, it also changed the concerns of the people, gave middle-class girls

from small town new dreams. Hindi cinema also began to portray different concerns, aspirations and aspects of modern Indian woman.

Pink, starring Taapsee Pannu and Amitabh Bachchan, was a progressive and empowering film that dealt with the topic of the consent of women. *Lipstick Under My Burkha*, directed by Alankrita Shrivastava, ran into several issues with the Central Board of Film Certification which raised questions on the double standards of the film body's decisions, taking into account that the same board regularly approves of movies containing derogatory joke. This movie is about four ordinary women who steal, lie, cheat and hide in order to live their life, the way they want. Vidya Balan starrer *Kahaani*, she is a spy who is searching for her husband's killer. In spite of her pregnancy, she is focused to her mission and searches the antagonist and kills him. Similarly, *Tanu Weds Manu* and *Tanu Weds Manu Returns* are solely based on female character named Tanu. In the film, she is shown breaking all the images and stereotypes related to an Indian girl. Character of Tanu is so loud and strong that she does not bother to hide her drinking or smoking habits in front of her fiancé or lover. Rani Mukherjee with *Mardaani* and Tapsee Pannu with *Thappad* are synonymous with strong female leads in movies. These roles are defining the new and modern women of changing India. In *Piku*, the protagonist (Deepika Padukone) takes care of her ageing father. She works in a corporate office and takes care of him. She does not want to marry because she doesn't want to leave him alone. Actresses such as Priyanka Chopra and Anushka Sharma are producing movies with women in empowering roles. In twenty first century, women are negotiating more space for themselves, and trying to break out of a tradition that places them only as the ideal daughter, wife and mother. Now they are breaking conventional norms and also expressing their desires. The movie *Dolly Kitty Aur Woh Chamakte Sitare* deals with multiple issues like housework at the office, child struggling with gender identity, women's desires and so on.

Films are the primary source of entertainment which strongly influence society. Initially, women only played subsidiary roles on screen but later there were many remarkable women-centric films that have been made over the years, some of the recent ones e.g. *Queen* which is about regaining her own identity. The movie starts with the typical good girl stereotype who is just dreaming about her happy marriage and the movie ends on a happy note where she is completely confident and doesn't need a man to take care of her. *Panga*, talks about breaking notions about age stereotypes, gender equality and motherhood. Another movie *Lipstick Under My Burkha* focuses on female sexuality. The landlady in the film, who is an old woman, when seeks to fulfill her desires, she's marginalized by not even just the society but her own family as well. She is told to have a look at her age before daring to desire. Whereas in another movie named *Bhouri*, where the main protagonist of the movie turns into a prostitute. There is a man who is old who goes to do some manual labour to earn some money. When asked why he needs to earn at such an old age and what he will do with that money, he says that he'll go to *Bhouri*, as despite being old he does have sexual needs that need to be fulfilled. Here, through such instances in the movies we see how differently are males and females sexualities treated in our society. Traditionally, a woman has been considered as a subordinate of man. She is someone who needs continuous guidance to remain on the path of goodness and purity. The man is supposed to ensure that wife remains 'good' in every sense. Women have been victimized since ancient times; epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata are the classic examples of subjugation of women.

Women in Indian films are trapped in this stereotype. In earlier films, their role was essentially to be available as the support system and caregiver to the family, with no identity or decision making of their own. They suffered all and sacrificed all for their families. Even the beauty standards were also defined. Where glamorous people are given more importance for example in movie *Bala*, Latika who is a career oriented woman and fights with traditional beauty notions of Indian society where girls are just valued because of their fair skin not because of their education. This movie explores male gaze where men are most of the time interested in women's bodies. Today's film is developing a distinct and independent environment for Indian women to pursue their ambitions. Cinema's goal is not simply to entertain, but also to spark social change through such entertainment. Cinema, as a media product chosen to speed the process of modernization, should go beyond simply making films and develop more progressive representations of women. Such portrayals would do women and their roles in cinema justice.

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