

# Male Gaze in Indian Cinema: The Presentation of Women in Mainstream Cinema

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## Abstract

Since the advent of motion pictures, movies have had a great impact on the masses. It has been used as a medium of communication with society as it has been said that movies are the reflection of society. In the Indian context, we can see the depiction of different identities in the cinemas, like gender, queer, ethnic groups and so on (multiculturalism). But the question is how far it is to address the problems of these marginalized sections. Even as a common person, we can notice the less or misrepresentation or misrecognition of the subaltern groups in Indian cinema. One of the most misrepresented among these and the most discussed topic is gender as patriarchy is dominant in almost every society which makes the subjugation of women a global grievance. In the cinematic world, too women have been exploited or oppressed and misrepresented by different means. One of the problems which have been talked about over and over is the concept of 'male gaze' (Mulvey, 1975). Women have always been objectified or commodified in the cinemas across the globe. Therefore, the concept of the 'male gaze' given by Mulvey addresses the problems of cinemas often being made from the male point of view and the content is specifically made for a heterosexual male. The 'female-centric' movies which are claimed by the filmmakers as a way of women's empowerment have also been criticized by the feminists as merely a male standpoint. In this paper, I will try to analyze a few Indian movies and see how much the 'male gaze' is persistent in these movies.

**Keywords**— Male gaze, Indian cinema, gender, patriarchy, media, oppositional gaze

## I. INTRODUCTION

The question of gender has always been raised over time. But what are the factors that causes in women subjugation? One of the most familiar debate on gender is of 'nature and nurture' by Sherry Ortner where she explains the subjugation of women in every society. Sex has been connected to biological while gender is associated to social structure. But according to Ortner the whole bases of it is socially and culturally constructed as she states, "Ultimately, both men and women can and must be equally involved in projects of creativity and transcendence."<sup>1</sup> As Simone de Beauvoir states that, "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"<sup>2</sup>, refers to the fundamental problem of gender construct giving an insight on how gender is a social construct rather than a natural phenomena. Different waves of feminism

came from time to time addressing the issues faced by women from different parts of the world, demanding their rights for voting, deconstructs the notion of patriarchy and so on. The feminist movement also takes our attention toward the notion of intersectionality ( Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, 1989) incorporating the layered or intersectional problems of women under the umbrella of feminism. Since a long time women has been exploited and discriminated and sexist oppression in every section and institute of the society which needs to be eradicated and help in emancipating the women from the sexist oppression they face in their mundane life. Feminist scholars have always addressed the exploitation and oppression faced by women in different spheres. One of the spheres among them is media. " Feminist scholars have always addressed the

<sup>1</sup> Ortner, Sherry B. 1974. Is female to male as nature is to culture? In M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds), *Woman, culture, and society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 68-87.

<sup>2</sup> Beauvoir, Simone de. 1973. *The Second Sex*, Vintage Books, New York, pp.301

exploitation and oppression faced by women in different spheres. One of the spheres among them is media.

## II. GENDER AND MEDIA

When we talk about media, vague image of cinemas, books, television, news, etc is created in our mind. We cannot deny the powerful impact of media on the society. The recent emergence of mass media in past few decades has been remarked as a benchmark in the field of communication and representation. It has also succeeded in bringing the world closer as McLuhan says that the media made the world into a 'global village'. It is one of the most influential agencies in our lives as we get exposed to multiple contents while spending most of the time consuming media in the form of television, radio, newspapers, and magazines and most recently mobile phones giving us access to a lot of things. People start identifying themselves according to the representation on media which acts as a looking glass self (Cooley, 1902). In recent past with the advent of globalization we find a kind of similarity in the media system which is mostly borrowed from the west which tries to homogenize the media content which Ritzer will conclude as McDonaldization leading to ambiguous impact on the society by trying to make a homogenized society. Therefore it can be said that "the relationship between mass media and society is a complex one."

When we talk about media, we consider media as a powerful agency of representation and social acceptance, but how far it was successful in addressing the issues of gender or giving them equal representation. Feminist thinkers like Carter and Steiner argued in 1860s that the newspapers or magazines have ridiculed and ignored the women's lived experiences. The portrayal of women in media has been a heated topic for feminist since the second wave of feminism in 1960s. It has been complained by the feminists that the representation of women in media has always been a stereotypical image either it is in soap operas or magazines. They have always problematized the sexist contents and anti women stand of media presenting the hierarchical gender roles. While examining the media it was seen that it favors the patriarchal and ruling class notions in its contents which can be understood by the notion of 'hegemony' given by Gramsci where he mentioned that institutions work to propagate the ideologies of the ruling class. In case of gender the patriarchal notions dominates the media world leading to objectification, commoditization and subjugation of women and making it a part of common

sense. As Carter and Steiner says, "the media are instrumental in the processes of gaining public consent" (Carter and Steiner, 2004).<sup>3</sup>

It has been repeatedly stated by scholars how gender has been constructed by the social system, as Butler states that sexuality and identity have re-defined sex and gender as existing along a continuum rather than in terms of dichotomous polar opposites as male/female or masculine feminine (Butler, 1990). Even Mead through her ethnography on Samoa culture tries to understand how the idea of masculinity and femininity varies from culture to culture. But still we can see only the constructed notion or image of the gender in media because most of us are not aware of the social construct of gender rather we believe in what we see on media. A particular kind of clothing, behavior, action and so on is portrayed in the media which are gender specific. Apart from the stereotypical notion the representation of women is less as compared to men in media. Even in the world of journalism which first comes in our mind every time we hear the word media has a very unequal representation of gender. For instance in India all the so called famous leading journalists whom even a common news watching public know are Arnab Goswami, Ravish Kumar, Sudhir Chaudhary, Rajat Srivastav and so on whereas on contrary leading female journalists are really less in number. Barkha Dutt is one of the prominent leading female journalist in the eyes of a common public as most of the good female journalists are not even recognized by the public because they do not get the chance to become the face of the channel or not provided the 'Prim time' slots for their programs. But does it have any impact on the role of gender in media? According to a study by Tomlinson (2008) in the field of journalism the story presented by the female journalists are more probable to address the stereotypes than those that the male reporters file. Adding to it he said, "Countries that have higher representation of women in journalism industry normally have more proactive female journalists than those that do not have the same level of representation."

In the cinematic world we see a similar pattern that is less participation or representation of women. Along with this a women is always ranked lower and paid less in the media industry as this is a male dominated industry. This trait is found globally in the media industry, even in the cinematic world most of the films or soaps majority of them are male centric ignoring the women or casting them in the movies just for mere entertainment using their sexuality and objectifying it. In 1987 UNESCO stated that if we look at

<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Carter and Linda Steiner (eds.), *Critical readings: Media and Gender*. Maidenhead and New York. Open University Press, 2004. 366pp

the participation of women in television industry, we can see most of the television industries worldwide are dominated by men. Mostly the women are seen in the role of a housewife, secretary, and girlfriend and so on. The role of women in media also varies in respect of their cultural and social context. For instance as Bell Hooks states in her work how black woman would be represented as a mother without children (Julie Burchill, "Girls on Film"), or different other roles which are mostly inferior to the white women. This raises the question of intersectionality. Even in Bollywood we can see that the house maids, poor women, etc are presented by the marginalized class. This kind of representation of women is made targeting a particular set of audience which mostly satisfies the existing status quo. But this creates an ambiguity between representation and the actual reality. If we recall Stuart Halls, he argues that reality does not exist outside of the process of representation (Halls, 1997). Similarly, Baudrillard describes how media is creating images which are taking over reality and making it a hyper-reality.

Media have acted as a propaganda model of the dominant class or the patriarchal notions in the case of gender. Purnima Mankekar in her work mentions how the state through the soap opera was presenting a woman who is dutiful towards her family and the nation<sup>4</sup>. Films like *Mother India* also present a narrative where a woman struggles for her children and society propagates the right-wing Hindutva image of women valorizing the mother figure, (Globalization and representations of women in Indian cinema, Sangeeta Datta)<sup>5</sup>. This kind of image of the woman satisfies the patriarchal mindset of the audience. In recent times movies like *Cocktail* mark a similar culture where a so-called moralistic and cultured girl is chosen by the protagonist as a partner over a modern and bold girl. These movies act as an ideological apparatus to put it in the conscience of the people that a 'perfect Indian woman' should be like what is being portrayed in the cinemas or soap operas.

In recent times scholars have also discussing about the changes in the status of media and gender due to the introduction of different factors in the industry. Because of globalization, there has been a change or shift in the position of women in media leading to a kind of homogenization as argued by some feminist scholars. The representation of women has also increased in recent years forcing the media

to incorporate the contents which shows the empowered version of women. Secondly, as scholars like Maitreyee Chaudhuri would argue is that the advent of globalization has helped in breaking the stereotypical image of gender in the recent past creating an image of a modern and self-dependent women by studying the print media in India<sup>6</sup>. But the same could be applied on the cinematic world too where recently we can see female centric movies are also coming up presenting a very different kind of woman who is no less than men in the society. And it's true that actually some remarkable changes have been seen in the 'media industry where the perspectives are changing in respect of gender. But the question remains, how far this image has been accepted by the film makers or the society? Even today we can see more focus is given to the male protagonist rather than the female. In media industry a women is undermined and misrepresented because again the basic or the most important question is "who produce the media content and for whom?" The feminists are trying to bridge the gap between the 'image of women' and 'real women' (Pollock). Why the inequality and discrimination still exists even after the feminist movements and the criticism of media through feminist perspective?

### III. THE CONCEPT OF 'MALE GAZE' BY MULVEY AND ITS CRITIQUES

After discussing the above how women are misrepresented in the media on the bases of gender stereotypes, it is a very fundamental concern about for whom these contents are made for? Because media contents always target a particular set of audience and shapes their contents accordingly. In this context Laura Mulvey came up with the word "male gaze" in her work "Visual Pleasure and Narrative cinema, 1989"<sup>7</sup>. She mentions how the unconscious of patriarchal society has structures film forms (Para 1). She discusses about how the mainstream movies are phallogocentric and a mere manifestation of patriarchy. In her work of psychoanalysis there are two major concepts through which she explains the male gaze the pleasure by sight. The first one is scopophilia which she borrowed from Freud which means deriving sexual pleasure by seeing others indulged in sexual activity. The voyeuristic content and the environment in the movie hall (dark hall) give the feeling of 'peeing through a key hole' (Judith Mayne) which she calls the 'peeping Tom' (movie, 1960). That darkness helps the audience isolate

<sup>4</sup> Mankekar, Purnima. (1999), *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: Ethnography of Television, Womenhood and Nation of Postcolonial India*, Durhan, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 104-64

<sup>5</sup> Datta, Sangeeta. 2000. Globalisation and Representations of Women in Indian Cinema, *Social Scientist*. 71-82 pp.

<sup>6</sup> Chaudhuri, Maitreyee. (2000). *Feminism in print media*. Indian Journal of Gender Studies, September, 263-288.

<sup>7</sup> Mulvey, L. 1989. 'Visual pleasures and Narrative Cinema' in *Visual and Other Pleasures*.

from others and the scopophilia is developed into narcissism. The second one in the concept of looking into a mirror which she borrowed from Lacan where he explains when child sees his own image and recognize it which helps in the constitution of the ego. The child imagines his mirror image to be more complete, more perfect. Here 'recognition is overlaid with mis-recognition' (Mulvey). The image reflected in the mirror is the representation of self but it is mis-recognized as superior and ideal ego preparing a platform for identifying with others (eg. A child looks at his mother's face). Therefore, while watching the movie the audience identify themselves to the protagonist or the image seen on the screen. So, the two main things we need to keep in mind while understanding male gaze is, first scopophilia where you take pleasure by seeing others, and second is developing narcissism and the constitution of ego which helps the spectator identify the objects on the screen as his own fascination. The first is a function of the sexual instincts, the second of ego libido. She describes further how a woman is presented as an object of pleasure within the cinema and outside the cinema for the spectators which she states as active male and passive female. The female is just a representation of castration (lack of penis). She is just the signifier of male desire i.e. woman's to-be-looked-at-ness by the male audience according to Mulvey. She is sexualized. The gaze also describes the power relationship between the male and female as the male is presented as dominant and powerful whereas the female is just used as a sexual object in the film. She analyses the Hitchcock movies like *Vertigo*, *Rear window* and *Marine* to show the male gaze.

The very important thing about this notion is that, all the media contents are made keeping in mind the male point of view in the content. It is not a new thing as the media industry is dominated by the men; they try to show the things always from a man's perspective. Since the beginning of the media is patronized by the men, always keeping them women is a lower status. The media (cinemas) is mostly made for entertainment and pleasure of the audience, but because of the male domination the content is always made for the pleasure of male audience rather than the female audience. We can always see the hot contents in the cinemas where a woman is over sexualized by the film makers or the director only to satisfy the male audience. For instance, in '*Blue is the warmest color*' (2013), a movie based in lesbian relationship was critiqued by the writer of the book on which the film was based as a mere depiction of heterosexual notions about a lesbian relationship.

Different camera angles are been set up to shoot a women in an erotic manner which can clearly can be enjoyed only by male. Many feminist scholars criticized this male gaze in cinemas which is not limited to mainstream cinemas but also in 'pornography' which is only made for men excluding the women angle of pleasure confirming the patriarchal notion again and again. The cinemas are made in such a way where the male viewers can identify with the male protagonist and the female characters are the subject of their desiring gaze. Male viewers would not want to view the male hero as a sexual object, Mulvey says, 'according to the principles of the ruling ideology' (1975:14), but since he drives the story and makes things happen, identification means he can be admired narcissistically, as an ideal version of the self.

On the other hand Bell Hooks consider the notion of male gaze and how it has always been spotted in mainstream Hollywood movies. She gives the instances of blacks she states how there was a kind of repression by preferring a particular gaze and making the other one inferior which gradually leads to 'oppositional gaze', as she says, "all attempts to repress our/black people's rights to gaze had produced in us an overwhelming longing to look, a rebellious desire, an oppositional gaze."<sup>8</sup> The prior gaze was global in showing the subordinate relations of power, where she again states how black people came out with their own separated cinemas as an alternative gaze. She analyzes the black female as media spectators through which she understands the negative aspects of white supremacy and capitalist patriarchy. She states how repress black people's right to gaze only to produce a staggering desire to look, "an oppositional gaze". Looking is a sign of rebellion and that there is necessarily the possibility of resistance. She explains how there is a crucial gaze that one learns to look a certain way to show resistance. In the private halls or televisions the blacks were no more punished for looking at white women anymore where they can unleash their repressed gaze. She said how black women would not identify themselves with the white women portrayal on the screen and consider them as phallogentric gaze. Here Mulvey's point, "women as image, men as bearer of the look", is deconstructed.

But even in presenting the subaltern side of the gaze in a right way the women were still presented as a desired sex object again bringing in the problematic concept of male gaze into it where she mentions that black male independent filmmakers represented black women in their films as objects of male gaze. With the example of Miss Pauline who

<sup>8</sup> Hooks, Bell. 2013. *The oppositional Gaze: black Female Spectators* in Laurie Quellette (ed.) *The Media Studies Reader*. Routledge: New York and London.

desires to become a white woman as being fascinated by them in the visuals but then it makes hard to come back home. But till the time being it provides a pleasure to the female spectators too who feels good by seeing the representation of a women who satisfy the ambitions on screen which is not possible in the real life. Every black women Hooks spoke to was aware of racism. How they see themselves is most important, not how they will be stared at by others. Disrupting conventional racist and sexist stereotypical representations of black female bodies, these invite the audience to look differently. Cinematically, they provide new points of recognition, embodying Stuart Hall's vision of a critical practice that acknowledges the identity is constituted "not outside but within the representation."

Another scholar David Gauntlet in his book, "Media gender and Identity- An Introduction, 2008" sees how Mulvey's notion of the male gaze is not applicable in all sorts of movies. He gives the example of different female-centric Hollywood movies where the female character is bold and empowered which even the male audience looks up to as a hero rather than a sex object. However, he is not denying the fact that the male gaze does exist in the movies where women are commodified. But we can also not deny the break between the cinemas in the recent era, which has been affected by a lot of factors like globalization, increase in the use of the internet helping gender awareness, which is also reflected in the cinemas or media in general. Taniya Modleski argues that even Hollywood cinemas have women occupying active positions. Moreover, the gaze in itself challenges the heterosexual gaze as it ignores the gay, lesbian and bisexual gaze. She does not consider the different gaze other the male gaze.<sup>9</sup>

#### IV. MALE GAZE IN INDIAN CINEMAS

In India, cinemas have been a powerful influential tool. In recent times we have seen how it is moving towards a more progressive model taking its liberty in it. But as far as the question of gender comes in we can see that women are still dominated and exploited. Recently Priyanka Chopra stated how female actresses are paid less than male actors. In one of her interviews, Kalki Kochlein said how one of her casting directors commented on her beauty and wanted her to expose herself to him to get the role. From time to time, we have seen how some bold actresses come forward and talking about the oppression they face in the cinematic or

media industry. But how far their condition has improved to date? What are the problems they are still facing?

If we compare the condition of recent actresses from the actresses of previous era then we can see the graph of change in it. It cannot be denied that modernity globalization gender consciousness and other factors have helped women come out of their shells and speak for themselves. Not only the women but also the men to come at par to understand the gender construct and help in the ongoing feminist movement, as Hooks also advocates that even men can be part of feminism rather than always be considered as the propagators of patriarchy. In the cinemas, many men came forward to take the issue of gender seriously and portray it in their movies. But are they successful in their attempt? Many feminist scholars critique male directors for showing the female-centric movie from a male point of view. Even the cinemas which are supposedly made in terms of women empowerment are seen as the reinforcement of the same patriarchal notions, as Purnima Manekar in her ethnography found how an independent woman is portrayed with the idea of an ideal woman who takes care of her family and nation and the one who deviates from this path is portrayed as a woman of bad character.<sup>10</sup>

The concept of male gaze is very prominent in Indian cinemas. With the growth of item songs or casting a female actress only to gain the sexual attention of the audience is common. The cinemas generally target the male audience assuming that the males will be their primary consumers. For instance, in the movies 'Dhoom 3' and 'Tees Maar Khan', Katrina Kaif was cast for only two or three item songs in the whole movie rather than having any significant role to play in it. To make the theme songs more appealing to the male audience the actresses or the dancers are made to wear revealing dresses and set the camera angles in such positions which would help to expose more. This is not limited to the item songs, even the whole movies sometimes are based on the sexuality of women like 'Grand Masti', 'Kya kool hai hum' and so on adding sexist satires in the dialogues too. The item songs have become a ritual in every recent film since the late 90s converting it into a mass 'popular culture' (Adorno, 1979) which has no connection to the storyline of the film. If we remember the entry of Rani Mukherjee in "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, she gradually revealing her body to the camera in slow motion giving an erotic pleasure to the male audience"<sup>11</sup>. Along with this they also

<sup>9</sup> Clifford T. Manlove. 2007 Visual "Drive" and Cinematic Narrative: Reading Gaze Theory in Lacan, Hitchcock, and Mulvey. *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 3, University of Texas Press on behalf of the Society for Cinema & Media Studies, 83-103 pp.

<sup>10</sup> Manekar Purnima 1999, *Screening Culture Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Women, Television and Nation in Postcolonial India* Duke University Press

<sup>11</sup> Vishnu Vardhan T. Rethinking Spectatorship and male gaze in the control of Indian cinema, *Research Scholar and Research*

try to homogenize the idea of sexy or erotic by casting women of the same type of figure and hence using them as sex objects creating a permanent image of sexy in the mind of the audience and they always look forward to seeing the protagonist in a particular shape and size to get attracted towards leading to more objectifying of the female body. There is also a particular obsession with the white/fair skin of the female actress.

Apart from this, there is a new genre is growing which tries to show the movie from a female perspective where the lead is played by a female protagonist addressing the gender issues. For instance, 'Lajja' very successfully portrayed the problems like dowry, premarital sex, caste/gender oppression, etc., but even in that, the item song performed by the actresses was about attracting the males toward them by objectifying themselves. It can be criticized by saying that the one behind the camera was a man and showed the scenes as being a man. This would be missing in the female-centric movies directed by female directors. For example, Deepa Mehta's trilogy: Earth, Fire and Water, despite being made on very intense issues shows the only exact amount of scenes necessary or relevant for the storyline. Fire is made on lesbian relationships still it does not have any sort of erotic scene in it rather the actual and natural thing has been portrayed. Film makers like Aparna Sen, Sai Paranjpye, Vijaya Mehta, Aruna Raje and Kalpana Lajmi in their films made a sensitive portrayal of women protagonists in search of social and sexual identity, often firmly located in specific socio-historical contexts.

The film 'Dirty Picture' (2011) can be cited as the perfect exemplification of male gaze as it was depicting a story of a girl who was famous for projecting herself as a sex object in the cinemas. One of the infamous dialogues of the film by the protagonist is "Filme sirf teen chizo se chalti hai – entertainment, entertainment and entertainment, aur main entertainment hoon" (the strategy behind a successful film is entertainment and I am entertainment), which shows how the character within the film is aware that she is being commodified by the film makers for particularly the male audience who buy the tickets of the movie again and again to watch the girl exposing herself in the films. This movie justifies Mulvey's stand where she mentions that, "women displayed as sexual object is the leit-motif of the erotic spectacles: from pin-ups to strip-tease, she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire."

It has been a long practice in Indian cinemas to objectify women. For instance in the film 'Satyam Shivam Sundaram'(1978) , in one of the scenes the hero look at the woman through a telescope and measures her body figure

as '36-24-36' giving a particular male gaze to the scene, along with it a 'perfect body figure is also being imposed by the man. This also have an impact on the female audience to want to attain that particular 'perfect figure'. In a documentary "Misrepresentation" (2011), it has been shown how young women do exercise, dieting, etc., for achieving such body figures depicted by the films. This culture has been encouraged in India by the Indian actresses by promoting the concept of 'zero figure' which is followed by many young women. But then the question is "for who does this figure represents pleasure?"

Few actresses argue that it's their own choice and freedom to be in such pleasure and the women as a part of the audience also take pleasure in it. The women audience is in influence of the popular culture as Ian Ang would say it's 'the ideology of populism'. The voyeuristic content not only gives pleasure to the male but also to the female audience. The women find fascination in the sexual objectified image of the woman presented in the film as it also creates scopophilia for the women as well. Hooks in her work mentions a black woman who seeks pleasure in seeing white women in films and how they are treated by the men, but it also makes it hard for her to go back home into reality. The same situation is created for Indian women who look forward to the films as the way out of their real-life where they can seek pleasure by looking at women who are being praised and appreciated for their 'sex appeal'. It runs so deep in the women's conscience that it's difficult for them to understand what is real and what is unreal alongside confirming the 'patriarchal order'. This can be understood from the movie 'Aisha' (2010), where the protagonist makes it her duty to improve a girl from a rural area who was 'not modern or sexy' according to her, representing how even girls are attracted towards the imposed patriarchal projection of a 'perfect girl'.

In the 1970s Helen was famous for her cabaret dance in films similar to nowadays 'item songs' performed by the girls specifically called 'item dancers', which may not have any connection with the storyline of the line but is still there to attract the male audience. In his work, "Beneath the Red Dupatta (2015)", Farhad Khoyratty mentions how women were used as a means of entertainment in the films in the form of mujra dance presented as a pleasurable dance within and outside the film. All these show how the patriarchal order or the dominant status quo is being portrayed and manufactured by the films. In an article in the Times of India, "Male gaze controls B-town", criticizes the male chauvinist industry by saying that the industry remains male-dominated as the ratio of men and women is 70:30. In

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Associate at Centre for the study of culture and society. Bangalore, 2004-05.

that particular article Tanisha Chatterjee in her interview says, “even today male gaze controls Bollywood, most of our films hardly have strong women characters and the idea is to have women either in bikinis or to focus the camera on their breasts- regulated to being sex symbols.” Therefore, it has been seen that most of the female filmmakers only address the stereotypical image of women presented in the film as the male filmmaker always makes a film from a male point of view. But in the case of filmmakers like Anurag Kashyap, and Dibakar Banerjee the ratio of male and female actors is 60:40 which is comparatively better than other male filmmakers.<sup>12</sup>

The movie ‘Pink’ (2016), based on gender discrimination in society and how women are molested, does not carry any erotic or over-sexualized content in the movie. However, the director of this film is not a female and still, he tried to keep the scenes accurate rather than objectifying the women to attract the male audience. Even as an audience of that film, I did not find any sexist or overtly erotic scenes in the movie. However, we can see certain subtle signs where the man is portrayed as more powerful than the woman. In this film it was shown how the women were helpless and were saved by a man showing the women helpless without a man. But on the contrary, we cannot deny the existence of male feminists who believe in gender equality.

The above observation of mine brought me to an ambiguity or dilemma that can the male gaze be only be eradicated and controlled by the women working behind the camera? Then what about the male comrades mentioned by Hooks who equally are feminists? How can the women working in the media industries would ever be emancipated from the male gaze because still now the male outnumbers the female participation? I am still pondering upon this subject. But maybe filmmakers like Annirudha Roy Chowdhury gives hope of portraying woman free of stereotypes and not as sex object. Pink is a different genre in itself and a mark of a break in the stereotypical films where the women are just commodified and the audience consumes it in the name of entertainment.

Even when I watch Bollywood movies as a spectator I enjoy the movies which misrepresent women sometimes because it was deeply rooted in my mind that these contents are made for the pleasure of both male and female audiences and a woman should be like the one presented in the films. Now I have developed a crucial and critical gaze (oppositional gaze) towards those movies because now realise the amount of misrepresentation and control of males

over the contents. Besides the male gaze now even the male body is sometimes presented as a sex object which is also enjoyed by the female spectators but does that make it a female gaze? It can also be argued that this new image of the male protagonist is to promote an image of masculinity which depicts the hero as strong, powerful, physically fit, etc. But even if it’s a female gaze it cannot overshadow the male gaze as it is too predominant in our culture and common sense. But how many women and from which section develop the female gaze or critical gaze against the male/patriarchal representation of the images of women in the film? To deconstruct the patriarchal phenomena in the films it should be removed from the conscience of the audience so that they can develop an oppositional gaze or reject the unrealistic and patriarchal projection of women in the films who are used as voyeuristic pleasure for the heterosexual male population and also acting as a passive pleasurable content for the women who desires to be the woman depicted in the films. Despite the counter films made contrary to the mainstream films projecting the real world and sufferings like ‘Bandit Queen’, ‘Matribhumi’, ‘Queen’, Pink, etc., the audience is not completely accepting these movies as the mainstream films because they film or cinemas are a source of pleasure and entertainment. The existing mainstream Indian cinemas have been accepted as the ‘popular culture’, as Adorno and Horkheimer say, “the content of any particular TV show, film, or magazine, but is more generally focused on the fact that this ‘rubbish’ takes up so much time in people’s everyday consciousness- ‘occupying [their] sense(1979:121). But people enjoy it, as according to Adorno and Horkheimer’s view people have a ‘misplaced love’ for popular culture (p.134). This makes it more problematic to divert the audience’s mind from the stereotypical images to the real-world problem. But as cinemas are so impactful on the people or the society can be used as an agency for change and awareness rather than imposing the patriarchal dominant order in the films. But the dilemma remains that the ones who are working behind the camera are also influenced by the patriarchal notion, making it difficult to bring a complete break in the cinemas presenting the radical contents opposite to the status quo.

#### **Indian Cinemas analyzed in the Term paper:**

1. Dirty Picture (2011)
2. Pink (2016)
3. Satyam Shivam Sundaram (1978)

<sup>12</sup>Male gaze controls B-town- Times of India, by Priyanka Dasgupta, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2012. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/bollywood/news/Male-gaze-controls-B-town/articleshow/14456220.cms>

4. Cocktail (2012)
5. Mother India (1957)
6. Deepa Mehta's Trilogy: Earth (1998), Fire (1996), Water (2005)

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