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An analysis of Hindi women-centric films in India.

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AN ANALYSIS OF HINDI WOMEN-CENTRIC FILMS IN INDIA

By

Srijita Sarkar

M.A., University of Calcutta, 2007

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville
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Department of Sociology
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

December, 2012

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A Thesis Approved on

November 13, 2012

by the following Thesis Committee:

Thesis Director (Dr. Patricia Gagne)

Dr. Gul Aldikacti Marshall

Dr. Bronwyn Williams

DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my parents
Mr. Sukanta Sarkar and Mrs. Sathi Sarkar
and my fiancé
Mr. Abhik Ray
for supporting all my endeavors in thinking out of
the box.

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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF HINDI WOMEN-CENTRIC FILMS IN INDIA

Srijita Sarkar

November13, 2012

My study examines women-centric cinema in India that are in Hindi. In these films women have revolted against the injustice. The content analysis of the movies (parallel and middle) focuses on representation of women-centered issues. The Parallel Cinema is serious and artistic in its representation, mainly attracting the elites, whereas, and the middle cinema is a cross between the commercial and parallel cinema, and is meant for the masses. This study compares and contrasts both types of cinema.

The main implication of this thesis was that representation of women in such films encourages social change in the treatment of women in Indian society, which is very male-dominated and patriarchal, by showing women as emotionally and economically independent. Therefore, by acknowledging the open-secrets like domestic violence, abuse etc, it brings these problems upfront, by allowing women to talk about it in public.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

India is a male dominated society where women have been considered inferior to men in practical life (Gupta 2003). Although women have been given a higher position than men in the ancient Indian scriptures, in reality the case is just the opposite (Altekar 1955). Even today women are prohibited from participating in many domestic as well as external matters especially which require decision making. They are under the influence of their parents before marriage and their husbands after marriage (Chakrapani and Kumar {ed.} 1994). Sons are preferred over daughters in most parts of the country. This leads to a preferential treatment of boys in families right from their birth (Agnihotri 1996). Demographic trends also show that there is deep-rooted gender discrimination that begins with female feticide/foeticide and prenatal sex determination (Dilip and Mishra 2005). Sex determination is a common practice in many states of the country like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana. The country has witnessed an unfavorable sex ratio of 927 females to 1,000 males except for in the states of Kerala and Goa (Arksoswamy 2005). The female infant mortality rate of 49.14 deaths per 1,000 live births is higher than the male infant mortality rate of 46.12 deaths per 1,000 lives (World Bank 2011). Girls are also deprived of certain basic needs like nutrition, access to health care, educational and employment opportunities. Girls are brought up to adjust to the male-dominated and patriarchal society. They are taught to do all the household work, so that they can be good wives once they are married (Gupta 2003).

The Indian Constitution conferred equal rights on men and women to eradicate gender inequality in the year 1950. A number of laws were implemented to liberate women from oppression in the society. Various laws relating to maternity benefits, inheritance, divorce, equal wages, and action against domestic violence came into existence after independence was achieved in 1947 (Chakrapani and Kumar {ed.} 1994). Despite all these laws, culturally women are still viewed as weak individuals and who are secondary to men (Chakrapani and Kumar {ed.} 1994). Many women are still the victims of domestic violence and harassment at work; even today a female child is disadvantaged from the time she is born (Menon-Sen and Shivkumar 2001). The number of women in the workforce is much less than men. Women in most cases make less money than men. It is estimated that women earn only 17 percent of the non- agricultural wages, out of which 13.9 percent belongs to the urban sector and 29.9 percent to the rural sector. The average wage rate of women is only 75 percent that of men and comprises 25 percent of the family income. Women in agriculture do not earn equal wages as men in any part of the country (Human Development 2003), and women are still victims of violence like dowry death, rape, sexual abuse, domestic violence etc (United Nations 2010).

This unequal treatment of women is reflected in the media in general and in the Indian Cinema industry in particular (Bollywood Cash 2003). The Indian film industry is a male-dominated industry (Ganti 2004). Women who pursue a career within the industry are mostly either actresses or playback singers. This trend has undergone a little change in recent years, where women have emerged as choreographers, costume designers, editors and screenwriters, but the number is much less when compared to their male counterparts. Very few women are lyricists or composers. While a handful of them have

ventured into film direction, they have not achieved the commercial success like their male counterparts (p. 94). So, in an industry that has a very sparse number of women behind the camera, it can be assumed that the portrayal of women onscreen by male directors and other male professionals will have gender biases and constraints and this may not always convey women's world views, perceptions and subjective realities (Nandkumar 2011). The roles played by the women onscreen are mostly the male director's notion of what roles women ought to be playing. This notion is based on the director's beliefs, attitudes and values, combined with the director's perception of the viewers' demand (Nandkumar 2011). In their study of Indian movies, Gokulsing & Dissnayake (2004) found that women were given two major kinds of roles in commercial films, that of the mother (whose attributes are matched to that of the supreme form of feminine energy, the Goddess) and the wife based on the mythological character of Sita (epitomizes extreme devotion to the husband). Similarly, Richards (1995) observes, "The Hindi film upholds the traditional patriarchal views of society which, fearful of female sexuality, demands of the woman, a subjugation of her desires" (p. 3). Male Indian audiences who view commercial Indian movies tend to hold more patriarchal values and view films that reinforce these stereotypical images of women (Rokeach 1968; Littlejohn and Foss 2005).

Thus, cinema plays an essential role in shaping views about gender roles and gender identities within the Indian context where women are viewed as playing subordinate roles to men (Bagchi 1996 and Ram 2002). Numerous studies have shown that cinema and society influence each other. It has been shown that many films in India are made in respect to what is going on in the society and cinema has also had massive

influence on shaping up the society's beliefs, practices and providing a new insight into the social milieu (Ahmed 1992). Family melodrama and well- choreographed song and dance routines are the basic essence of most Indian films (Acharya 2004). Blockbuster movies have been either family oriented or movies that have encompassed certain traditional values. Commercial films portrayed "ideal women" as submissive, self sacrificing, chaste, and controlled (Dasgupta and Hegde 1988). The "bad" woman on the other hand, is characterized as individualistic, sexually aggressive, westernized, and not sacrificing. Commercial Hindi films have constantly glorified the image of ideal Indian woman as accepting of the injustice and violence meted out towards her by men and society (Saidullah 1992 and Gargan 1993). Hence, violence against women has always been one of the standard components of the Hindi commercial/ formula cinema (Dasgupta and Hegde 1988: 209-216). These movies have shown men in lead roles, where in most cases women did not have a substantial role to play (Acharya 2004). Generally, most of the Hindi films (Bollywood), that are produced every year is a combination of romance, action violence, family dramas with a lot of songs and dance. This genre of cinema is known as "masala" (formula or commercial films) (DasGupta 1996). In most of these movies women are objectified, playing the role of the Hero's love interest (Nandkumar 2011).

The stereotypical portrayal of the ideal Indian woman in commercial Hindi films has been a matter of concern amongst feminists (DasGupta 1996). Despite the tendency to portray women either as the hero's love interest, successful homemaker, or as a vamp in mainstream commercial cinema (Nandkumar 2011), an alternative approach has been the emergence of independent films that portray issues of concern to women from a

gynocentric perspective. Many of these films portray women as strong-willed and independent (Rahman 1988). Although some research has examined the historical emergence of this genre of film, very few, if any, social scientists have analyzed the content of women-centered films in India. The main purpose of this thesis is to address this void in the literature. This thesis will also analyze women-centered cinema, where women have made a stand against the violence meted out to them. It will also focus not only the portrayal, but also on the cultural meaning of that portrayal.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have been conducted on the Indian Cinema Industry, and on the stereotypical portrayal of women in commercial Indian cinema. This stereotypical portrayal of women in Indian cinema has been a subject of debate amongst the feminist scholars. Although there have been some women – centered movies that have tried to address women’s issues, there has been very little, if any, sociological research done on the portrayal of women in these films. In these movies, women are shown to break out of the conventional roles, and stand-up for themselves. This thesis is an attempt to analyze such movies.

The Literature Review section will do an in depth analysis on women oriented movies. It will further analyze stereotypical portrayal of women in Hollywood, Bollywood, and evolution of independent movies which tried to depict women in a different light.

Stereotypical Portrayal of Women in Hollywood Movies

‘Films are one of the great storehouses of society's stereotypes about women’ (Blewett 1974 pp.12).

The magic of mainstream Hollywood industry lies in the fact that the commercial films are extremely visually pleasing for the audiences. Most of these mainstream movies follow the voice of the dominant patriarchal order. These movies have portrayed women as ‘sexual objects’, the way men would enjoy seeing them on the silver screen (Mulvey

1975). John Berger suggested that the idea of portraying women as a display object in Hollywood movies came from the tradition of the Western easel painting. This form of art developed a detailed '*scenography for presenting female beauty in frozen moments*' (Carroll 1990). The main function of Scenography is to encourage the '*male interests in erotic contemplation*'. Thus, leading film makers captured the 'male erotic contemplation' and staged women as an object satisfying the 'male gaze' (Berger 1975). Mary Blewett (1974) discussed the stereotypical role of women in Hollywood films, where women were shown to be victimized, and tolerating it. She further argued that most Hollywood films convey messages about sex roles in the society, but a lot of these films show how culture forbids and condemns a woman's life. Movies portraying women as sexually aggressive have proven to be a failure in the industry, especially if the movies have ended without any punishment for the women (pp.12-20).

Powers, Rothman and Rothman (1996), studied a random sample of 440 top-grossing movies spanning over a period of 50 years. They dealt with various stereotypes in the movie industry, out of which gender issue was one of the major topics (Klinger 1997). Although, in reality, half of society is comprised of women, in these movies only one-fourth of the total number of characters were coded as women (Powers, Rothman & Rothman 1996:154). These movies further presented women mostly engrossed in romance and marriage, and even if a woman were very successful in her career, she would quit it after marriage, as family was her priority. Women were portrayed as being more submissive and favorable as compared to men (Powers, Rothman & Rothman 1996:168). While analyzing the stereotypical images of relationships between men and

women, it was seen that many award –winning movies depicted a woman as the primary care-giver with no identity of her own, and being dependant on a man (Wood 1994).

Even today, women in Hollywood are viewed as sexual objects. Instead of focusing on the other potential of women, Hollywood places more emphasis on women's sexuality, demeanor and appearance (Fischer 2011). Females are still objectified by their physical appearance and a slender body and attractive features are highly in demand (Signorielli, 1997 and Lippa 2005). Most films in the industry rank women's sexiness above their intelligence (Loredo 2012). Women in most commercial movies have been portrayed as weak, gentle, passive and overly emotional (Hofstede 1998; Calvert et al. 2003; Thompson & Zerbinos 1995). Happiness and sadness are stereotyped as women's emotional expressions (Thompson & Zerbinos 1995; Kelly & Hutson 1999). By contrast, men in these movies are portrayed as real heroes, who are tough, powerful, successful, aggressive, competitive, athletic (Hofstede 1998 and Calvert et al., 2001), independent and intelligent (Signorielli 2001& Katz 2002). Men cannot display fear, sadness or any type of emotion except anger and are responsible for protecting women (Calvert et al. 2003).

Hollywood's Influence on Bollywood

Hollywood has massively influenced the Indian cinema industry (Acharya 2004). In the year 1992, the government liberalized the demand of films (Policy for Import of 2002), leading to the rise in the release of foreign (Hollywood) cinema in India. Numerous Hollywood-based companies, along with many domestic importers, started marketing movies in India, which were dubbed not only in Hindi (national language), but also in other regional languages. This led to a huge rise in revenues for Hollywood as

well as local Indian distributors for Hollywood (Desai 2000). Blockbusters like *Titanic* earned a huge amount of revenue in India (Acharya 2004). Moreover, Bollywood commercial filmmakers try to use the hit formula in their films, which is usually borrowed from Hollywood blockbusters with an Indian touch to it (Acharya 2004). Many immensely successful commercial movies in the 90's and 2000's have been outright copies of commercial Hollywood movies with an Indian flavor ("chutneyed") (Nayar 2003). This phenomena is known as '*Hybridity*', (Appardurai 1996). According to the cultural studies experts cinema is one of the most hybrid art forms as it draws from various forms of art like classical, local popular, and also adapts to the new changes that has been borrowed from outside. Similarly, major Bollywood directors have been immensely influenced by Hollywood. Vasan and Mehboob Khan were the most enthusiastic observers of the techniques and style of Hollywood films. However, the filmmakers have altered what they lifted from outside to suit the condition and sensibility of the Indian audiences (Pendakur 2003). Films like "Sabrina" (Yeh Dillagi), "Mrs Doubtfire" (Chachee 420), "The Fugitive" (Criminal), and "Sleeping with the Enemy" (Agnisakshi) are examples of such borrowings (Acharya 2004).

Stereotypical Portrayal of women in Bollywood Movies

The influence of historical and socio-cultural factors on the growth of women's roles in commercial Indian films suggests the stereotypical portrayal of women (Nandkumar 2011). According to Laxmi (1991), "From the passive wife of Dadasaheb Phalke's 'Raja Harishchandra' 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.” Nandkumar (2011) suggests that the portrayal of women in the history of Indian films from the era of silent films to the present has undergone numerous changes. Despite the changes, women are still portrayed as a secondary character in most commercial films even today. This stereotypical portrayal of women in Indian cinema is mainly due to historical and cultural reasons (Gokulsing & Dissanayake 2004). Initially, the society stigmatized women from acting in films (Ganti 2004). So, when women started acting, the directors had to comply with the social norms in the portrayal of women. Women mostly played the roles of a daughter (taking care of her brothers, helping the mother in the kitchen, and marrying the man of her father’s choice), a great wife (who was responsible for all household chores, taking great care of her husband, children, and would lead the rest of her life by embracing her husband’s memories, once she became a widow), and of a great mother (who is self-sacrificing) (Gokulsing & Dissanayake 2004). It was seen that these roles of women were mainly inspired from ‘*Manusmriti*’ (An ancient code of conduct guiding the social and familial lives of individuals), which had an immense influence in shaping society’s proper code of conduct. A woman was never given independence, and she was expected to obey and have a subordinate status to her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and finally her son after she became a widow (Gokulsing & Dissanayake 2004). The ideal wife depicted in these movies was like a few mythological characters such as ‘*Savitri*’, ‘*Sita*’ (the immortalized image of an ideal woman, wife, of Indian epics, who sacrificed everything for her husband). Thus, the wife was expected to be immensely devoted to her husband at the cost of her own pleasures, desires, and ambitions. This

ideal wife had to be sexually pure and epitomize sexual fidelity (Gokulsing & Dissanayake 2004).

The themes concerning family, marriage, being married and performing the role of an ideal wife, mother, and daughter by conforming to family values had become pivotal in most commercial Bollywood cinema. This central theme immensely appealed to the patriarchal social structure (Nandkumar 2011). Chakravarty (1989) pointed out the realism in Indian films as it pertains to a women's social and individual identity being tied to marriage. Marriage—a traditional institution—was not only responsible for teaching a woman to maintain her traditional duties, but also it promised its share of fun and excitement (p. 46-47).

One of the highest grossing films in the history of Indian commercial cinema, was “Hum Aapke Hain Kaun” (1995), (Nandkumar 2011). The story of this movie revolved around marriage, family values, and sacrifice (Koutaniemi 2011). The leading characters were played by the young superstars, representing the youth of the country. However, they still uphold traditional family values and are ready to sacrifice their love for the sake of supporting their family (Dwyer 2005, pp. 113).

Another popular portrayal of women in Indian movies is the character of a vamp, which is exactly the opposite of the role of an ideal wife or mother. The vamps were characterized as women who showed disrespect for tradition values by emulating Western women. Furthermore, they were shown drinking, smoking, partying, visiting nightclubs and being promiscuous. Thus, they portrayed the characteristic traits of an immoral person, with unacceptable and offensive behavior that was punishable (Gokulsing & Dissanayake 2004 pp. 79). The basic difference between the heroine and

the vamp demonstrates how the 'Madonna' and the 'whore complex' functions in Indian community. Madonna, symbolizes the girlfriend /wife/mother and, therefore, has to perform all the rules associated with sacred traits in contrast with the vamp, who is a whore, and as usual is expected to be unchaste and impure (Nandkumar 2011; pp 33-34).

Despite both these diverse images of women being portrayed on the celluloid, there is one thing in common: these actresses have to be beautiful and sensual. Irrespective of the roles played by a woman, she always serves as an '*object of desire*' for men, just like her Hollywood and British counterparts (Pendakur 2003). Women in commercial Indian films are often seen dancing in '*tribal dresses*' or in a '*wet saree*' to cater to men's erotic fantasy (Gokulsing & Dissanayake 2004). This '*wet saree dance*' was described by Richard (1995): 'legitimized by a sudden, torrential downpour that soaks the woman's flimsy saree, and allows for a very provocative and tantalizing exposure of the female body' (pp.81).

The Indian cinema industry also objectifies women according to the male gaze (Nandkumar 2011). The Bollywood industry demands that female stars sport a svelte figure, sharp features, and fair skin tone (Pendakur 2003). The industry also endorses the actresses to be '*young*' because the audience in a 'male dominated society' appreciates a blossoming, youthful, charming leading lady, who not only appears physically attractive to the male lead but also dances sensuously to a song (Ghanti 2004; Pendakur 2003 & Nandkumar 2011). Thus, the producers and directors are always looking to launch '*fresh faces*', and cast them opposite very senior heroes, who rule the roost (Nandkumar 2011), '*just to titillate the male libido*' (Pendakur 2003; pp.150). It is quite common for a teenage actress to be romancing on screen with the hero who is in his forties (Ghanti

2004). Most of the Indian actresses start their careers sometimes as early as teenagers. They start getting considered '*old face*' once they hit their late twenties or early thirties. Whereas, their male counterparts who start in their mid twenties have a much longer career -span lasting until their late forties or sometimes even early fifties (Ghanti 2004 & Nandkumar 2011). Besides this, male actors are far better remunerated than their female counterparts (Pendakur 2003).

Thus, in a male- centered society, it is very common to see popular films being structured, written around the hero, where he is responsible for sympathizing, and protecting the heroine (Pendakur 2003). Women in these films are always portrayed to be happy. Violence or any form of abuse against women is repeatedly magnified in Bollywood commercial cinema (Derne 1999). Critics have seen sexual violence against women in various forms, such as eve- teasing (a term used to describe teasing of women in public like commenting on their sexuality, appearance etc), rape, marital rape, etc., that have been glorified time and again (Birla 2001 & Ravindran 2001). Derne (1999) in his study of Indian commercial cinema implied that most of these films suggested the idea of coercion and physical invasion as accepted expressions of romantic love. The portrayal of sexual violence on screen in a love relationship between the actor and actresses was usually expected and appreciated (Ramasubramanian and Oliver 1997).

In spite of the presence of many talented female stars, it is rare to find plots centering around the heroine (Pendakur, M. 2003; pp.145). Popular Indian Cinema's notably exaggerated interpretation of dramatic techniques of storytelling has received criticism for being excessively theatrical as well as for being unrealistic. Realism is mostly misinterpreted as naturalism in acting, dressing, singing, and various other aspects

of the popular cinema. Efficient directors who have made films for the public have been successful in delivering natural and believable narratives (Pendakur 2003). Instead of concentrating on what comprises 'good' filmmaking versus bad filmmaking, the Indian cinema has always been challenged with the issue of realism. One of the main reasons behind this has been attributed to the lack of government funding that has led these filmmakers to concentrate only on the commercial "*masala*" (commercial hit formula) cinema (Pendakur 2003). Thus, there are only two types of images of women and her sexuality shown in this type of cinema (Nandkumar 2011). Gokulsing & Dissanayake (2004) explained women's sexuality shown in Indian commercial cinema in respect to the movie named *Dastak* (1970). They claimed that, "The film hovers between the two spaces in which woman's sexuality is distributed: the home and the brothel. In the former, woman's sexuality is reduced to its reproductive functions; in the latter, it is pure and explicit sexuality, available to all" (pp.82).

However, a few filmmakers tried to change the cinematic practices associated with the commercial cinema, and thus marking the beginning of a new genre of films that came to be known as new/ new wave/parallel cinema (Pendakur 2003). These directors substituted the themes of commercial cinema with social realities (Sethi 1983).

History of Alternative Cinema (Parallel/New Wave)

"When Americans think of Indian cinema they most likely think of classic Bollywood: movie stars dripping with old-fashioned glamour, long films with improbable plots improbably interrupted by song-and-dance sequences (and never by kissing)" (Saltz 2007:B9).

“And if Americans think at all about the other Indian cinema- often called the parallel cinema- they probably think of the lyrical naturalism of Satyajit Ray, whose greatest films were made a decade ago” (Saltz 2007:B9).

According to Maithili Rao (2003), the presence of Bollywood in India is analogous to the presence of Hollywood to the rest of the world. India, a country which is roughly one –third size of the US is swamped with many regional cinemas too. Along with this, there is also a so –called parallel cinema/ new wave industry, born in the sixties and inspired by Satyajit Ray. Post Ray, it is maintained by a group of directors known for their distinctive tastes. These directors interpret their personal absorption into films and take pride in their local roots and traditional beliefs. These cinemas are still truly very regional, and most of the well known works have been in three states: Kerala in the South, West Bengal in the East, and to some extent in another southern state of Karnataka. These films try to analyze the concerns of Indian society, which is deeply divided by gender and religion (pp.12).

The basic difference between ‘art cinema’ and ‘commercial cinema’ in India is essentially the difference between serious films and degenerate ‘entertainment’. The genre of alternative cinema in India marks the inception of top- notch scholars who were actively acquainted with problems and other conditions that people in India faced (DasGupta 1983). In a culturally vast country like India, people generally fall for Bollywood’s glitz and glamour when it comes to films irrespective of their regions and languages. However, another alternative to Bollywood, a genre of film making known as parallel/ new wave cinema, came into existence and was immensely inspired by the Western art house styles. This parallel/ new wave cinema dealt with subjects which were

critical, and not like the regular Bollywood movies that created a perfect world devoid of any tensions. Instead of soothing the troubles in the story and the directors keeping up with the conventional song and dance pattern, this alternative category of cinema revealed a storyline full of problems to the audiences (Fay 2011).

Thus, the alternate cinema welcomed an array of film directors in the mid 1960s, and these directors' work in some way or the other did not fall within the routine frameworks of the reigning Bombay-based Hindi commercial cinema (Gopalan 2009). It was further argued that the directors who made these kind of films belonged to the privileged class, who had the sense of shame embedded about the unequal treatment that people in India suffered from. Directors who worked on these sensitive topics and film-making to them was more of a sacred art that could be used to address the social evils rather than just a tool to mint money (Vasudev and Lenglet P {eds} 1983).

The themes of parallel/new cinema are not new; these themes were previously investigated in regional literatures during the pre and early Independence era. The main question is the degree in which these social problems have been discussed in these films today (DasGupta 1983). As a result, it can be said that the late 1960's witnessed the growth and development of the Parallel Cinema. This comprised an insignificant number of directors, who were considered as high brows and well educated. This style of cinema created a very well- defined shift and an entirely separate domain for itself that co-existed with the mainstream Bollywood/commercial cinema industry. This style of film making managed to enter the new television culture of India as well as get the attention of the media, and praises from the Government because these films were critically acclaimed globally (Krishen 1991). In fact, surveys confirm that these films are more critically

acknowledged than commercial Bollywood cinema. It has also been debated that parallel/new wave films are more efficient than Bollywood to accomplish eminent international awards and draw the attention of Western audiences (Banerjee 2011). However surprising it may seem, there are no general standard trends of filmmaking in this kind of cinema, unlike commercial cinema (Krishen 1991).

The term '*Parallel*', '*New Wave*' or '*New*' cinema was first used in the late 1960's to describe this school of film making. However, the term '*Parallel*' was chosen over '*New Wave*' because '*New*'ness has a tendency to dwindle with time. The emphasis of the word is unsubstantial even though it is still used today (Krishen 1991: pp.25). These films were also known as '*Avant-Garde*' and '*Offbeat*' cinema but they were never accepted. The term '*Art*' cinema began to be associated with exclusivity and prestige, and hence was problematic in attracting people. The term '*Good Cinema*' did not do any good to this school either. So, the term '*Parallel*' and '*Alternate*' cinema were considered as the most neutral and simple. At the same time, the alternate cinema had the capacity to address the negative elements that burdened the society. These films also maintained their uniqueness by not incorporating the elements of pop values, degraded depiction of women, and creating utopian bubble that the world of commercial cinema 'Bollywood' had created (Krishen 1991 & Fay 2011).

In the next section, a more detailed insight about this group of filmmakers will be given.

- ***Film Makers of New Wave/Parallel Cinema***

Satyajit Ray is known as the fountainhead of the post colonial art house cinema (Fay 2011 & DasGupta 1983). This exceptionally talented director was

born to a family of elites in the state of West Bengal, India. It is believed that he was also influenced by the great poet and the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore (Fay 2011). He was the first director who was bold enough to break the conventions of commercial Indian cinema and introduce social issues like poverty, violence against women, and superstition in his movies (DasGupta 1983). Ray has been awarded numerous prestigious international awards, including the Lifetime Achievement Oscar in the year 1992. Besides this, he has been immensely popular in the western pedantic domain of cinema, as his works have been mentioned in various film text books (Sengupta 2011).

His work influenced various other directors like *Mrinal Sen* and *Ritwik Ghatak*, who were also considered as legends. These directors captured the struggles of the middle class. Their direct, empathic approach toward social problems and filming them beautifully enabled them to carve a niche (DasGupta 1983). Ghatak's film *Subarnarekha* (1962) deserves a special mention for its distinguished characterization of a young woman who gets tired of fulfilling all her father's and brothers' responsibilities and wants to live a life of her own in the end. However, the works of these two directors were mainly in Bengali (DasGupta1983; Gokulsing & Dissnayake 2004).

Director Mrinal Sen's '*Bhuvan Shome*' (1969), was considered as the beginning of New Wave Cinema. Being one of the early new wave films made in Hindi, it captured a wider array of audiences. Moreover, this movie achieved three National Awards for the Best Film, Best Actor and Best Director (Gopalan 2009). Aruna Vasudev in her book '*The New Indian Cinema*' said, "With

Bhuvan Shome, Sen arrived with a bang on national scene” (pp.135). It is also believed that French *nouvelle*, Italian Neo- realism, the style of French New Wave, and works of European film-makers like Vittorio De Sica, Jean-Luc Godard, Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini had influenced the works of these directors (DasGupta, C.1983, Gopalan, L.2009, Fay, G. 2011; and Gokulsing & Dissnayake 2004). Their main aim was to portray realism in the cinema. These directors, especially Ray, began the trend of using the new and inexperienced artists to create a sense of authenticity (Fay 2011).

Along with this, the style of British New Wave filmmaking had an enormous influence on its Indian counterparts (Fay 2011). The British New Wave, just like the Italian, French and Czech New Wave analyzed a new series of feature filmmaking. These films pursued new elements like timely subject matters, and an experiential attitude in their style of filming and editing (Seino 2010). These films were shot in ‘*rubble- strewn*’ cities, shabby houses, with untrained or novice actors to add to the ‘*reality effects*’ of the films (Seino 2010 and Fay 2011). The colorless and the gloomy locations enabled the films to accomplish accuracy, unlike the commercial films which were shot in well furnished studios with professional actors (Seino 2010). Art films incorporated the elements of ‘surface realism’ and ‘moral realism’; the former accredits the location itself within the provincial significance of the actors, while the latter cultivates affinity and understanding towards social problems experienced by the people residing in these places (Seino 2010).

Thus, Ray who saw *De Sica's Bicycle Thieves (1948)* drew immense inspiration from his style of filmmaking (Fay 2011). Ray said, "In 1950 I went to England, just in time to see the early Neo- realist films. I suddenly realized that films like De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* were made very cheaply, with non-professional actors. This really opened my eyes. On the boat back from England, I wrote the entire shooting script of *Pather Panchali*." (Cardullo 2007: pp.8). To summarize, two main aspects of the *Bicycle Thieves (1948)* that impressed Ray were using modest budgets and working with new actors, yet making a great piece of work.

Thus, these directors were known as independent filmmakers, who did not belong to the world of commercial cinema (Gokulsing & Dissnayake 2004). These films were made on extremely modest budgets (DasGupta 1983). Despite this, these filmmakers had to fight for finances. Ray, the pioneer of these films, having been through immense financial struggles too, initially relied on self – financing. Sources even claim that not only did he pawn his wife's ornaments but also was employed in a full-time position at a Calcutta based British-owned advertising agency known as DJ Keymer, while working on his first film '*Pather Pachali*' (1952) (Fay 2011). Ray had contacted a few producers based in Bombay, but he found no backers because no one wanted to invest in films devoid of songs, dances and music, or films with a script that addressed the social evils (Fay 2011). However, atypically, the West Bengal State Government helped Ray a little bit financially that enabled him to finish his film in 1956 as well as provide a security for the production. Furthermore, this move of the West Bengal Government

stimulated the central government to create a national film fund to generate aid for non-Bollywood films (Fay 2011). The success of Ray's first film in the western circuit along with the legendary filmmakers like Renoir, Huston, Capra, Pudovkin, and Rossellini visiting India made a huge difference. This recognition of Indian cinema in the international platform gave impetus to the Indian Government to establish a documentary film division, a film archive, a film-school, awards for such films and finally the Film Finance Corporation (FFC) (DasGupta 1983). Thus, India's Film Finance Corporation, presently known as the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) came into existence in 1960, probably nine years later than its initial suggestion (Gopalan 2009). Consequently, by 1968, the FFC agreed on granting loans to encourage innovative, first time directors with low-budget films. Under the new proposition, these loans were rewarded at a low rate of interest that varied from nine percent to seventy-five percent of the production's costs. No security was required for loans up to Rs.250, 000 (Gopalan 2009). Under FFC's initiative to finance independent directors, around ten films of this genre in different languages in India were made in a year. This cause was further championed in 1971, by Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. The government granted loans to a group of promising and talented avant-garde filmmakers to foster the nationalism, culture, education and decrease various social evils like violence against women (Gopalan 2009: pp. 140). This was an attempt to advance the standards of Indian films by financing productions established of higher caliber rather than just backing the commercial financiers. Moreover, granting small loans to these independent

filmmakers involved lower rate of risk for the FFC in contrast to the huge unpaid amount from the commercial films (Gopalan 2009).

Therefore, this financial subsidy by the government enabled non-commercial talented filmmakers to benefit from the scheme and invest in the genre of parallel film making (Gopalan 2009). This also accredited the off-beat films to make a mark for themselves in Bollywood which had been prolific after the success of *Bhuvan Shome* (DasGupta 1983). The achievements of this movie boosted the confidence of the FFC to invest in a huge number of filmmakers of this school including the debut directors (DasGupta 1983).

As a result, this step by the government had not only inspired the existing filmmakers but also created a group of immensely gifted directors like Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani, Ketan Mehta, Adoor Gopalkrishnan, Shyam Benegal, Shekhar Kapoor, Aparana Sen, Bhanumati, Kalpani Lajmi and Vijaya Mehta. In addition to creating new directors, new brigades of actors were also discovered. Actors like Smita Patil, Sabana Azami, Naseeruddin Shah, Girish Karnad Shah, Om Puri, and Kulbhushan Kharbanda shot to fame in their own rights and were critically acclaimed around the nation (DasGupta, 1983; Gopalan 2009 and Krishen 1991).

However, this movement could not survive for more than a decade (Rahman 1987). According to the 'Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema' (1994), with the beginning of the emergency period in India in the year 1975, the Committee on Public Undertaking charged the FFC's strategy to financially support these independent, off-beat films. This was further aggravated by the fact that only a little over half the total amount that was loaned out for around thirty films was

recovered (Rajadhaksha & Paul {eds.} 1994). Again, many Central government officials refrained from granting loans to this school, as they were unhappy with the projection of India's image that Ray had pioneered and its social evils to the rest of the world. These executives assumed that these films had also damaged the West's image of India (Fay 2011). On the whole, the workability of these films was impaired by the complicated terms and conditions under which the loans were sanctioned and subsequently poorly executed for the marketability of this kind of work (Rajadhaksha & Paul {eds.} 1994).

In addition to all of these problems, FFC had also failed to set up appropriate national agencies to distribute this type of work. It was mainly due to the independent nature of the work that did not follow any constraints and conventions of mainstream commercial cinema. So, it became nearly impossible to attract the audiences (Rajadhaksha & Paul {eds.} 1994). Moreover, these films were pitted against the big budget commercial films with all the melodramatic ingredients that had conditioned the audiences to this particular form of entertainment. Therefore, the journey of filmmakers from this brand was not as easy as it initially seemed to be (DasGupta 1983). As stated by British Film Institute's (BFI) Dossier on *Indian Cinema*: 'From the forty or so films made with FFC money between 1968 and 1973, hardly any received a commercial exhibition of more than one day at a time, usually in special morning screenings.' (Gopalan2009: pp. 140).

These films were further criticized for the absence of lucid philosophy (Pendakur 2003) as well as their excessive use of artful elements, absoluteness,

social critique and intuitiveness contradictory to the fantasy, incredible songs, dance sequences and the escapism provided by the commercial cinema (Gopalan 2009 and Krishen 1991). This type of cinema received condemnation for using the state's financial support and targeting an eclectic group of audiences comprising only the educated middle or upper-middle class with refined taste (Gopalan 2009 and Krishen 1991). These audiences were often termed as '*highbrows*', unlike the '*plebian's*' (Gopalan 2009 Krishen 1991). On the whole, these movies were considered to be superior to the basic formula of commercial cinema based on their storyline and filming techniques. So, it can be inferred that these movies were not made for mass consumption (DasGupta 1996).

Thus, all these factors discouraged the private film financiers and distributors from investing in this kind of cinema, and this was further exacerbated by the untimely demise of one of its champions, actress Smita Patil (Rahman 1987). Patil died in the year 1986, due to complications while giving birth to her son (Sharma 2009).

Even today, these directors are struggling for finances (DasGupta 1983 & Banerjee 2011). One of the most celebrated directors of the present day, Sudhir Mishra, opined that most Indian producers lack the knowledge of this category of cinema, and are reluctant to produce a script that is not similar to the rest that are being commonly made. Mishra further adds that the most fundamental problem is that the audiences also watch the '*bad films*'. Hence producers wish to finance '*rip offs*' or the stories that have been used previously and have proven to be big

hits. On the same note, exhibitors have ignored parallel films, identifying them to be tricky ventures (Banerjee 2011: pp. 10-11).

Therefore, the prospects of New Cinema continue to be in question, with its films still pending legal charges. Many questions have been raised regarding the fortune of its production, the site and the circumstances of these films. On the whole, these films have been challenged with extreme adversities. To add to the already existing miseries, there has been a shortage in the elements required for re-establishment. Moreover, the dearth of ancient consciousness and of political inclination to maintain and publicize this type of work still keeps its scope uncertain. The paternalism of post-Nehruvian state produced outstanding administrators and a super efficient management system along with classes which were dependent on its charitable alms. So, the state financed few of these films but the independence and autonomy demanded by these films caused them to lose most of the government funds (Amaladi 2009).

Being confronted with all of these adversities, the '*New Wave*' as a movement began to cease (Rahman1987). The critics had already made a stark contrast between 'off- beat' and commercial cinema, and the one that found a middle position was known as the '*Middle Cinema*' (Gopalan 2009). After discussing the history of alternative women-centered cinema and its controversies, the intricacies of '*Middle Cinema*' will be discussed in detail.

History of Alternative Women-Centered Cinema

Various places in the world like France, UK, and USA were influenced by women's issues and movements which were reflected in filmmaking, and these countries

also influenced filmmaking in India (Marie 2008). Film critics generally recognize that objections to mainstream cinematic film portrayal of women began in the 1960s (Abbas & Sathe 1985) and that such critics tend to divide these films into two genres. Starting in the 1960s, the stereotypical portrayal of women in commercial films was questioned by a few directors, who were known as the "new wave" group (DasGupta 1996). It is believed that the concept of parallel/ new wave cinema emerged from the Italian neo-realism film making tradition (Bindford 1987). Most of these films addressed various real issues like poverty, and numerous forms of exploitations. Out of these issues, topics concerning women drew the attention of a group of directors making alternate cinema (DasGupta 1996). These movies belonged to the genre of artistic cinema. The directors who belonged to this school of thought made an attempt to portray a different image of women. Instead of portraying women as an object of male desire, they were shown as "products of diverse social formations", and trying to overcome their sordid circumstances (Gokulsing & Dissanayake 2004: pp 84). These directors were interested in representing the predicament of women in their day to day lives, as well as the problems that women faced as they were 'caught in the contradictory pulls of tradition and modernity, past and present, and individuality and modernity' (Gokulsing & Dissanayake 2004: pp 84).

This alternative genre of film (parallel/new wave) has been a trend in Indian Cinema from the late sixties (Pendakur 2003). The Indian Cinema Industry is represented by "Bollywood" but in reality it does not encompass various kinds of Indian cinema. The various genres of Indian cinema are known as popular Hindi cinema, alternative cinema (new wave, parallel) and the middle brow cinema (Sengupta 2011). Thus, the Indian

cinema Industry has been majorly divided into two broad categories from the sixties onwards, namely the art (parallel/ new wave) and commercial cinema (Pendakur 2003).

The new wave/parallel cinema that dealt with women's issues tried to represent the complications of modern life and its influence on 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 & Dissnayake 2004). These women's issues were examined by some female directors, most notably Aparna Sen, Kalpna 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. As it has been argued by the feminist critiques those films portraying women's issues made by even the most liberal and impartial male directors in India still present some proportion of patriarchal tendencies (Gokulsing & Dissnayake 2004). The films made by the women directors explored various themes like the question of female identity in a male dominated society, and women, who always have been a symbol of submission try to overcome it, and trying to gain confidence, power and self identity in a male dominated Indian society. These films were initially made to address the marginalization and oppression of women due to gender discrimination (Gokulsing & Dissnayake 2004).

However, these films brought forth huge controversy over topics of morality, family structure, and most importantly an attempt to change the society (Gokulsing & Dissnayake 2004). Although few women directors have tried to make films related to women's issues from the perspective of women, they have not been a huge success. The

women directors who have been successful in carving a niche out for themselves have either been funded by the West or have worked in certain regional cinema industries. In fact, a negligible number of women directors in the Hindi film industry have focused on gender issues. Many women directors do not want the feminist label as this might be a hindrance to their career and future work. The spirit of women directors are also dampened from making films which have explicit feminist themes (Gokulsing & Dissnayake 2004).

Controversies surrounding Women-Centered Cinema

Women centered films where women have tried to break the conventions have stirred immense conflicts and controversies in the Indian society (Pendakur 2004). There was huge controversy over the release of films like *'Fire'*, and *'Water'* (Nandkumar 2011). *Fire*, which was released in India in 1998, was directed by *'Deepa Mehta'*. This film was the recipient of several international awards when it was released in the US and Europe in 1996. This movie depicted a romantic relationship between two sisters in law in an urban, middle class household of North India (Gokulsing & Dissnayake 2004). According to Gopinath(2003: 271):

“Filmmaker Deepa Mehta quickly establishes the familiar familial violences and confusions that underlie this space home: both women (ironically named Radha and Sita) do most of the labor for the family business while their husbands alternately abuse or ignore them; this eventually precipitates them turning to each other for sex and emotional sustenance.”

In other words, this movie dealt with the issue of lesbianism and violence in an Indian household (Kumaramkandath 2000). This theme created a fury in rigid Hindu

circles. The *Shiv Sena*, an extreme right wing of Hindu organization led by *Bal Thackeray*, violently opposed the screening of this movie leading to riots. According to them, this film's story attempted to degrade Indian women, and it encouraged the collapse of marriage and family. The protesters, who were mainly women associated with this political party, attacked theaters where this movie was being screened. They further protested about the names of the protagonist, which were '*Radha*' and '*Sita*' (names of mythological Hindu women, known for their extreme devotion to their husbands), and demanded that these names should be changed (John, Mary E. and Niranjana 1999). Deepa Mehta, in an interview in the film's DVD, said, "I think what I remember was the viciousness in the expression of the women who were tearing up the posters. And it felt like such a desecration." (Nandkumar 2011: pp.65). Mehta was flabbergasted by the violent outrage that this movie created (Nandkumar 2011).

The 2005 film *Water*, another film directed by Deepa Mehta, a period film belonged to the pre-independent India in 1938. The story revolves in an era where child marriage was still practiced in India, and it was pretty common for child brides to be married off to much older men. Most of these girls would be child widows, as their husbands would die of health complications due to aging. The widows were not allowed to remarry as they were considered to bring misfortune. Thus, they were sent to widow homes where they were expected to lead the rest of their lives in chastity and strict discipline serving God (Nandkumar, S. 2011). This story focuses on the fact that this was ruse of what was actually occurring. In reality, the woman head of the house, who was similar to a master pimp, would send the young and attractive widows to wealthy *Zamindars* (land owners). The film focuses on the lives of three widows. One of the

protagonists is an eight year old widow named Chuya. Her parents send her to the widow house, where she witnesses the lives of young widows in their early twenties. She gets very close to a young widow in her early twenties named Kalyani. Kalyani has been forced into this prostitution so that she can serve as the bread winner of the widow house since most of the other widows living in that house are middle- aged and hence have no takers. Beautiful Kalyani receives marriage proposal from a young man named Narayan, a believer of Gandhi and the Satyagraha movement (Nandkumar 2011).

Even though Narayan knows that Kalyani was his father's prostitute, he still wants to marry her. Knowing this, the widow commits suicide in shame as she could not marry the man to whose father she was a prostitute to. Marrying Narayan would not only be considered as incestuous, but at the same time it would bring a lot of social humiliation to him. Thus, she sacrificed her life more to save the grace of Narayan. The eight year old widow is an eye-witness to all these events, and was next in the line to be sent to the same old Zamindar, Narayan's father after the death of Kalyani (Nandkumar 2011). Another protagonist, named Shakuntala-- a middle- aged widow was very sympathetic of Kalyani's conditions, and did not want the same to be repeated with Chuyia. Shakuntala runs away with this young girl, and hands her over to a group who follow the Gandhian principals. So this child gets a proper upbringing based on Gandhian principles away from the dirty world of prostitution in the guise of widowhood (Nandkumar 2011). This movie tried to show the restrictions and pressures of society on the widows, along with the emotional and physical violence they underwent. The other widows in the film conform to the social rules, and could be considered stereotypes of that period. But Shakuntala violated the rules and stood alone firmly on the grounds of

ethical and moral principles in the film. Furthermore, she was instrumental in bringing forth the harsh realities of the widows in widow homes. She protested against the existing systems, and therefore turned out to be quite a rebel (Nandkumar 2011).

The portrayal of the lives of the widows in a different light led to riots. The set of this film was demolished even before the shooting could start. This movie was supposed to be shot in the town of Varanasi (a town situated in the banks of the holy river Ganga, it considered as a holy city for the Hindus) in Uttar Pradesh (Mason 2007). Deepa Mehta in an interview said, “What happened with *Water* in fact is incredible. We were not allowed to shoot it even before our first shot and a lot of it has to do with internal politics... our shooting was shut down two days into the filming in a brutal way... our sets were thrown into the Ganges in India... it was perceived that water was somehow detrimental to the health of Hindu culture.” (pp.69-70).

The main reason of this riot was not due to the portrayal of women like her previous film *Fire*, but it was because a women director was daring enough to make a period film that divulged the dark side of Hindu religion, especially to the Western audience. The various religious and political groups anticipated that this was an attempt to make an anti-Hindu unit for the West. It was further believed that there was political doctrine and plan behind organizing a nuisance even before the shooting of the film. The various religious camps vehemently opposed the portrayal of the evils of the Hindu religion. Beside this, they were also opposed to the description of widows in this film, as they felt that it would tarnish the sacredness attached with the River Ganga and the city of Varanasi. These groups also questioned Mehta on her choice of storyline. They further raised points like why she would always select plots that were controversial and

misrepresented the Hindu religion. Thus, the theme of this film was obnoxious and arguable because it featured the dark side of the Hindu religion. Due to the opposition from political groups, this film reached the masses in a very restricted manner (Nandkumar 2011; Gokulsing & Dissnayake 2004). All these oppositions led Deepa Mehta to complete her shoot in Sri Lanka. The movie was screened in some states of India. This was a commercially unsuccessful film and was not nominated for any Indian Film awards. On the contrary, this movie won many prestigious awards and accolades abroad, especially in the West (Mason 2007 & Nandkumar 2011).

Neither of the films mentioned above was commercially successful or was appreciated in India. Both the films were dismissed by most people as an art film that had a woman director, who was of Indian origin brought up in the West and had no knowledge about the foundation of Indian society, and the ethics of Hindu religion. Her films were perceived as a disgrace to Indian society and Hindu religion (Nandkumar 2011).

These are the examples of two alternate, women- centric films that stirred immense controversies, and in order to know more details about these kinds of movies. These movies have not been commercial hit (Nandkumar 2011).The critics had already made a stark contrast between ‘off- beat’ and commercial cinema, and the one that found a middle position was known as the ‘Middle Cinema’, which served as a great substitute to the parallel genres (Gopalan 2009). Therefore, in the next section, the intricacies of ‘Middle Cinema’ will be discussed in detail.

Middle Cinema

The arguments between art and commercial cinema are unending. It is basically arguing about a difference between art and commerce. However, few filmmakers have been able to find a middle route, where they have used the elements of both these films in a compelling manner. (Pendakur 2003). According to Raina (1986), the Middle cinema, appealed to the middle class -- who enjoy the comforts of their 'petty bourgeois life style' and aspires to achieve a wealthy lifestyle--because it was a combination of commercial as well as the elite art cinema. Thus, he tried to explain that this category of people watching this cinema were fans of elite art, but at the same time, they wanted these issues to be handled lightly with elements of escapism.

The Middle cinema also deals with important issues, but their approach distinguishes this category from both art cinema and popular cinema (Gokulsing & Dissnayake 2004). However, the formal distinction between all these cinematic moments continues to be analyzed. It is without doubt that these films brought change in the subject matter of commercial cinema and storytelling technique of parallel cinema towards the late 70's and throughout the early 80's (Gopalan 2009).

Shyam Benegal is considered as the pioneer of this category of cinema in India. He was the first director from the group of Parallel Cinema to target all members of the Indian audience at once. Being an ardent supporter of the '*gradualist strategy*,' he believed that the essence of good cinema depends on the right concoction of the popular elements of the mass audience with pleasant suggestion. As a result, he acted as an agent between the exaggerated image of the popular cinema and the more depressing approach

of the art films. To give things a newer look, he polished both the genres of cinema in his own style (Krishen 1991).

Benegal's Middle Cinema had the elements of glamour, great storyline and perfect production values as compared to the drab filming techniques of parallel cinema. However, Benegal—like the parallel school of thought—used less known actors or launched many new actors who grew in stature. Unlike parallel/ new wave cinema, this school attracted a lot of audiences and also private investors (Krishen 1991).

Later many directors like Basu Chatterjee, Amol Palekar, Mahesh Bhatt, Kalpana Lajmi, Sai Parajpe and Arpana Sen had made such films in Hindi that could be termed as middle cinema. This cinema could attract audiences irrespective of their class (Pendakur 2003). Many directors like T.S Nagabharana had made films on a stringent budget with music core to its narration. These directors displayed immense caliber in accommodating their artistic approach along with the requirements of the market in a brilliant manner by avoiding unrefined commercialism, crudity, and unnecessary prominence of women's sexuality (Pendakur 2003). Their films boast of ingredients like great photography, development of character, thought provoking story line, outstanding acting, songs, lyrics and music (Pendakur 2003).

The main aim of these directors is to transform the '*masala*' of the commercial Bollywood films into a piece of aesthetic work to give out a message against social evil to the masses, rather than to just aim for the box office gain. Films like *Sparsh* (The Touch, 1979), *Masoom* (The Innocent, 1983) and *Chakra* (The Wheel, 1980) showed women protagonists in various roles (Pendakur 2003).

Raina (1986) criticized this genre of film for using the elements of women's sexuality just like the popular cinema under the guise of portraying violence against women. Also, Raina argued that despite using extremely mundane cinematic design, few of these films have been successful in approaching the predicament of women accurately (pp.135).

However, Hope Marie Childers (2009) studied the treatment of woman in a single film '*Kya Kehna*' (What to Say 2000) that focused on the attitude of Indian society towards unwed mothers. This movie had a message; unlike the commercial cinema, it showed that the unwed mother decided to fight society and give birth to this child. At the same time, this movie left plenty of opportunities to explore the issues faced by women in India. Moreover, she added that the portrayals of events like rape and violence against women in the mainstream cinema are portrayed with a bit more sensitivity due to the post feminist age (Brewer 2009).

Although film critics have commented on the general content and significance of these alternative (or independent films), little, if any, social scientific research has focused on a systematic content analysis of these films. The purpose of this thesis is to address the gap in the existing scholarly work. Along with this, the thesis will also make an attempt to find the gap that exists between the view point of male and the female directors that are portrayed in the films.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study analyzes the content of women – centric alternative films and the attitude of viewers towards these kinds of films. Along with this, it also determines the gap that exists between portrayal of the view point of male and female directors of the films. Thus, these concepts must be first placed in a theoretical framework. The main aim of this section is to provide a theoretical lens to study the topic. The major theories that will be used here will be various feminist theories, sub-altern approach, critical theory, theories on globalization and hybridity, and popular culture especially the theory of high brow and middle brow culture.

Feminist theories:

According to feminist scholars, women are classified in the mainstream media and especially in the commercial film industry as objects. However, they mention that efforts are being taken to expand the women's role beyond the stereotypes that existed years ago (Brewer & Chand 2009). Feminist film scholars have emphasized a term called the "male gaze", which is identified as the way the camera portrays women on screen as sexual objects (King 2007). This idea of "male gaze" has been elaborately explained by Laura Mulvey in her work "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" published in 1975. According to her, women in films play a secondary and more ornamental role for the male audiences in the traditional cinema (Mulvey 1975).

Mulvey argued that '*Scopophilia*' is one of the numerous pleasures offered by cinema. "There are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at" (Mulvey 1975: pp.16). Scopophilia was also explained as "taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze" (Mulvey 1975: pp.16). Voyeuristic actions of children and their willingness to watch and ensure that the secret and the censored body parts exist in others is one of the clearest examples for explaining *Scopophilia*. Most mainstream films have been purposefully designed to illustrate a world that is free and magical. Therefore, cinema unfolds a whole new arena for the audiences where they are nonchalant towards the existence of other audiences members-- that is displayed by enabling them to create a feeling of detachment-- and by entertaining their voyeuristic fantasy (day-dream) (Mulvey 1975), the patterns of on-screen light and shade that waver from time to time are also instrumental in creating a bubble of voyeuristic separation.

According to Mulvey, cinema has been affiliated with "three different looks": looks of the camera as the pro-filmic actions are recorded, looks of the audiences as the final product is viewed by them, and finally the 'characters at each other with in the screen illusion.' But, the main practice of narrative films techniques disagrees with the first two looks and considers them to be inferior to the third. So, the main intention is always to remove the presence of prying cameras and by restricting distant information from the audiences (Mulvey 1975). Thus, with the presence of these two objects (the material existence of the recording process, the critical reading of the spectator), the essence of reality, accuracy, and facts cannot be portrayed by imaginary drama. At the same time, the look of the audience is not accepted as a central force, especially when the

appearance of women in films as an object of desire is threatened by dispersing the illusion. Moreover, this enables the spectators to the erotic image on screen directly (without mediation). Therefore, Mulvey's theory breaks the main motive of illusion that is to create a world of obsession-- by hiding the fear of unmaning, being enchanted by the image on screen-- so that the spectator concentrates to an extent that it encourages one to fully associate with the image in front of the viewer (Mulvey 1975).

Numerous Indian feminist film critics drew on Mulvey's analysis and have theorized the workings of Indian cinema. In her essay, 'The Avenging Women in Indian Cinema', Lalitha Gopalan on the lines of Mulvey's essay 'Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema' theorizes that the female body has always been the main object of focus. Women in Indian films are type cast as objects who abide by all rules and regulations of the patriarchal societies. Furthermore, the concept of conventional heterosexual division of labor is employed to give pleasure to the audiences. Adding to this, the style of narration-- just to suit the sensibilities of male audiences—portrayed men as active and female as passive (Gopalan 1997). She also discussed the feminist film theories on sex and violence and the movies which portray women as avengers. Carol Clover, a famous feminist film theorist, argued that these movies — which are otherwise very cautiously managed by the mainstream films tailored for male gaze—very superficially touch on some complicated issues like gender and spectatorship (Gopalan 1997).

Indian feminist film theorists like Vandana Shiva (1990) argued that the male ego is gratified by objectifying women. Steve Derne (2000) provided ethnographic evidence to support the applicability Mulvey's arguments in Indian Cinema. Hindi films treat women on screen as an object of men's and the camera's gaze (DeLaurentis 1984;

Deveraux 1990 and Chakravarty 1993). Women in these movies exposed themselves in sexy dance numbers being lustfully stared at by men (Hero, villain or any other male character), thereby encouraging the male audiences to do the same (Saari 1985 & Hansen 1992). Besides this, the pleasure of scopophilia was true in the context of Indian male audiences, especially while discussing their favorite heroines. The heroines were chosen based on their physical beauty, sexiness, and dancing capabilities (Derne 2000). Early feminist scholars have considered mass media as a powerful agent of gender socialization because it deals with numerous gender related programs (Walter 1995; Tuchman. 1978; Dasgupta & Hedge 1988). According to Indian feminists, media honors the male dominance by portraying women as objects. Along with this, the Hindi films and various beauty contests devalue a woman's sense of individuality and intellectual prowess by emphasizing only on physical beauty (Gandhi & Shah 1992). They further discussed that the stereotypical portrayal of women in Hindi films enables men to expect women to always serve them (Gandhi & Shah 1992).

Mulvey also draws on works of famous psychologist Sigmund Freud and critiques Freudian theory in her analysis of scocophilia. According to Freud, the fact that femininity arises out of a critical course of parallel development between the sexes -- also known as masculine or phallic for boys as well as girls--- is the major cause of complicating femininity (Mulvey 1975). The terms used by Freud to perceive femininity are similar to those that he laid out for the male. The real position of women in a patriarchal society is precisely shown by these problems of language. He further explained various terms used by general male to define women for example, men were described as 'active' and women as 'passive'. Freud also felt that *femininity* by being

'*passive*' authorized the control of 'the active' or' the 'phallic phase' (Mulvey 1975). According to this study, the majority Hollywood movies catered to the masculine pleasures by recognizing with the '*active*'.

Problems of aesthetic languages and politics of images are of common interest to feminism and film theory. In addition to this, various intellectual debates revolving around the nature of signs and psychoanalysis has influenced various theories of film and feminism (Mulvey 1989). Various film feminists theorist like Pam Cook, Laura Mulvey and Annette Kuhn drew heavily from the empirical and more scientific approach offered by semiotics and structuralism (Hayward 2000). In her essay on Dorothy Arzner, Pam Cook explains that Hollywood cinema situates spectators in a particular closed relationship that keeps it away from any sort of contradictory image. These arguments strengthen the theoretical claims made by the avant-gardists (parallel film makers) (Hayward 2000). .

Also, patriarchal ideology comprises various 'truths' and beliefs regarding the significance of sexual difference, place of women in society and the confusion regarding femininity. According to the political viewpoint, aesthetic debates have influenced feminist film theories. However, ideologically, it is important for feminists to be acquainted with the fact that none of these ideologies--patriarchal or bourgeois-is eternally holistic, and the contradictions between them can affect the feminist viewpoint (Mulvey 1989).

Various avant-garde movements during the twentieth century have led to the progress of 'oppositional aesthetics'. Julia Kristeva has studied how the relation between the avant-garde and semiotics affect women. In her work on modern poetics, Kristeva

studied the conditions that resulted from connecting the language of modernism with 'the feminine'. Traditionally, language also represented 'the feminine' as pleasurable and illogical and inferior to patriarchy. Thus, the main idea of her work suggests that disobeying the norms will enable a change in the existing use of language. Hence, this logic can also be applied in the area of film making too; especially in the area of feminist films, independent of the constraints of commercial cinema. Therefore, these types of cinema would mainly play the role of signifier that had been totally ignored previously. According to feminists, this kind of filmmaking has three major attractions: 'aesthetic fascination with discontinuities; pleasure from disrupting the traditional unity of the sign; and theoretical advance from investigating language and the production of meaning' (Mulvey1989:pp.122). These feminists centered their arguments on three major assumptions. First, all women have capacity to scrutinize the credibility of the portrayal of women in the film, and, second that these women film-makers were feminist. And the most important of all, they called attention to the fact that "Belief in a fixed feminine essence meant legitimating patriarchy through the back door. By 'order of things', implicitly what was also being accepted was the 'naturalness' of the patriarchal order." (Lapsley&Westlake1988: pp.25).

However, during the late eighties and early nineties feminists wanted to broaden the arena on the textual operations of films by examining them within numerous social contexts like the historical and social contexts of reception (Hayward 2000). Thus, this approach --not only expands the discussion around spectatorship, but also reestablishes the questions of class that had been overshadowed by the question of gender as it was the major focus by the previous feminist era (Hayward 2000). According to Silverman

(1981) Mulvey's discussion on female spectator positioning as male, the debate had moved on to consider that positioning as masochistic, or as either "masochistic or transvestite" (Doane 1984). By now feminists were aware of disadvantage of psychoanalysis (Filterman & Lewis 1990). Various discussions centering on sexual differences concerning languages had opened based on Lacan's notion of construction of the subject. But this notion also could not solve the problem of defining femininity in relation to masculinity, and the male as the subject and women as the other (Filterman & Lewis 1990). During this era, British feminists studied the influence of class, gender, race, the structure of power and resistance on popular culture and tried to associate it with their research. On the other hand, the American feminist and cultural studies experts, unlike their British counterparts were immensely influenced by Michael Foucault. They concentrated more on Michel Foucault's theory of power and his social notion of technology and its application in the real world (De Lauretis, 1984). For Foucault, technology was a combination of power (*technos*) and knowledge (*logos*). Therefore, *technologies* meant *discourse of power* (Foucault 1977 & De Lauretis 1984).

Feminist film theorists have based their analysis on two major aspects of Foucault's theory of power. First, the idea that film produces a reality effect is not entirely applicable because 'reality- effect' is also produced by the film product's textual operations, conditions and (im) positions' influence on production and reception. Thus, the social relation of power between the various parts of the film industry like camera, director, producer, crew, editors is equally influenced by the reality effects as the spectators. He further elucidates that audiences are not the only product of an ideological apparatus. In addition to this, he implies that each spectator is a unique socio-cultural

individual, actively participating in creating reality while watching film. So, they are not classified as male or female spectators but numerous factors like age, sex, gender, class, and race has an impact on the reception and meaning of production (Hayward 2000). Therefore, the analysis of films on a wider scale allowed feminist film theorists to use the effects of psychoanalysis in new a context unlike its old that was male- centric. So, in other words the femininity could be defined without using masculinity (Hayward 2000). Moreover, femininity not only becomes more than *just* a male construct but also it is seen *as multiform and pluralistically position: Women* (Doane 1987).

The other aspect of Foucault's theory that influenced the feminist film theorists was his idea of 'resistance' which existed with power relation. He also suggested that resistance leave their traces despite being separated by social and institutional strata (Foucault 1978). Foucault's discussion on counter-investment has been of immense influence on the feminist film theorists' idea of counter-cinema. He defines counter-investment as a flip side of power relation (Foucault 2000). On the similar lines, the role of power relations is contradicted by counter-cinema. Thus, it represents a set of various ideas that is an antithesis to the existing hegemony. So, this represents that patriarchy is not superior to femininity. The counter-cinema argues that patriarchy is nothing but an outcome of certain theoretical discussions like psycho-analysis. Therefore, women's counter-cinema, in Foucault's term is an attempt to concentrate on discourses that have been avoided so far (Hayward 2000). Claire Johnston (1976) suggested that one should learn to function at various levels, which means that movies should also be made in different genres other the male-dominated ones. Not only did he appreciate the handful of

women filmmakers, but also hoped for an increase in number resulting into a change of outlook.

Thus, it is seen that general film theories have been influenced by numerous feminist film theories, that have been practiced. However, these theories have been also criticized. The Black feminists have criticized the narrow scope of applicability of these theories. According to them, these theories only deal with the social and cultural experiences of the white and mostly the middle class women. The Black, Asian and Latin feminist filmmakers have also commented that the studies on popular culture have been restricted to the White-only area in their analysis. Despite an increase in the number of Black, Asian and other non-white women on-screen their presence has been completely ignored in these theories (Hayward 2000; Kuhn &Radstone 1990; Attille &Blackwood 1986).

The Critical traditions

According to Alvesson and Deeds (2000), the scholarly works of various German scholars and the Frankfurt School have been instrumental in establishing the critical tradition. Social thinkers like Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, and followed by Jürgen Habermas are considered to be the founding fathers of this theory. Not only, does this theory draw heavily from the post-modernism, post-colonial discourse and feminism, but also its focus on various subjects like--power, privilege, and oppression--makes its application relevant to this thesis.

One of the major aims of these thinkers is to study the traditional values that are known to be 'taken-for-granted' in a society and to find ways for subverting them. As

Max Horkheimer (1982) puts it, “a theory is critical in so far as it seeks to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (pp.244). Thus, critical tradition focuses on social, economic, political inequities and power structure in the society that favors such inequalities. It argues that each activity and thought in a society is dependent upon power relation that comprises political, economical and social aspect (Aich 2009).

According to Littlejohn & Foss (2007), the critical tradition “seeks ideologies that dominate society, with a particular eye to whose interests are served by...power structures.” They further elucidate that critical theorists basically seek to disclose “oppressive social conditions and power arrangements in order to promote emancipation, or a freer and more fulfilling society.” However, the duo utilized this theory in the context of portrayal of the image of Indian women. They found that the concept of womanhood in India was also influenced by the Eurocentric ideologies that perceived women as a commodity.

The critical tradition also seeks to explain how power is maintained by media and therefore, this idea perfectly situates it in the theoretical framework of this thesis. One of the major intentions of this study is to explain how media (an authorized social institution fulfilling social, economic, and political functions) is responsible for the stereotypical portrayal of women, which focuses only on their physical beauty instead of other real characteristic traits. This thesis argues that Indian women in reality are not always the same as portrayed on screen. They have their desires, voice, intelligence, depth, complexities and struggles. Therefore, this thesis tries to analyze films where women have been either avenger or have stood up for the violence against them --unlike the women in the commercial cinema (generally made for mass-consumption), where they

are portrayed as pretty faced, self- sacrificing individuals--dependant on a man for everything including their physical security.

As Craig (1999), maintains critical theory as: “theoretically reflective social action.” Critical scholars therefore seek to “accomplish change in the conditions that affect society” (Littlejohn & Foss 2007). Thus, the critical tradition tries to reduce the gap between theory and practice, by refraining from solely theorizing the causes and solution of social problems.

The critical tradition also promotes the idea that certain media practices encourage the benefits relished by dominant groups and the suppression of minorities. This study pertains to women centric- issues, their on screen presentation and their stereotypical portrayal by media. Therefore, this study, by selecting various women-centric movies tries to foster critical consciousness amongst consumers of media (cinema). So, the application of critical theory can be very helpful to practitioners or researchers--studying ideologies or images (of women) that media produce -- that might initially seem to be harmless-- but in reality, the oppression of women encouraged by main stream film and media. On the whole, as Griffin (2008) notes, “critical theorists interrogate three primary features of contemporary society – the control of rhetoric to reinforce asymmetries of power; the role of mass media in desensitizing people to suppression of minorities; and accepting empirical data uncritically, believing that it is unbiased and not value-laden.”

Thus, this study through its analysis of women-centric movies tries to challenge the power system, abolish the oppression of women and by analyzing women-centric

films as a voice for violence against women. In addition, this theory makes an effort to minimize the gap between theory and praxis, and also tries to solve the problem of supremacy of the dominant class and the suppression of the weak /subaltern. I will try to focus on the theory of globalization that also influences films. Bollywood films have been using a lot of new concepts in the commercial cinema to appeal to the audiences worldwide.

Globalization theory

Globalization is a very well- known concept (Chanda 2002). It has four aspects namely goods/services, capital, technology and people (Kohli-Khandekar 2006). It is a holistic process involving transnational formation, in spite of being situated at national or sub national levels (Rao 2007). Desai (2004) defines it as a process that “connect(s) multiple locations in networks and complex and contradictory ways” (pp. 15). Globalization has affected trade and commerce, culture industry as well as the media and of course filmmaking in India (Acharya 2004). The culture experts Shome and Hegde(2007) defined the influence of globalization on media as a: “vector of uneven, unequal, and unpredictable global flows and motions . . . Global relations of capital today are utilizing spaces and places in ways that produce complex planes of exclusion and inclusion, empowerment and disempowerment” (p. 173).

Globalization and economic integration in India started in 1990’s, encouraged by liberalization of the economy (Pal 2001). This resulted in advent of wireless technology (wireless telephones, Internet, satellite television) exposing Indian viewers to numerous options, by enabling them to watch domestic and foreign films at home (Acharya 2004 &

Rao 2007). This new technology also changed the tastes of the middle class (the social group between the upper and working class. They could be also known as the bourgeois) (Acharya 2004). This changing taste forced the filmmakers to introduce new ideas in filmmaking in order to cater to the needs of the middle class (Acharya 2004), comprising a major group of audiences (Rao 2007). Rajadhyaksha (2003) defines this phenomenon as “Bollywoodization of the Indian cinema,” where Bollywood is seen more as a culture industry.

Globalization and liberalization have affected Bollywood in many ways. Increase in alternative sources of entertainment (Internet, satellite television), music, upcoming multiplexes in India, rising price of tickets, and achieving more revenues (Acharya 2004 & Rao 2007). This is followed by rising job prospects and fostering a new taste of an emerging middle class. (Acharya 2004).

Popular Bollywood films provide escapism by satisfying the viewers’ ideological and material desires (Dwyer 2000). However, in the era of globalization, new meanings have been attached to the dream world portrayed by current films (Rao 2007). This wonderland comprises exotic foreign locations, a display of expensive commodities like designer clothes (Deshpande 2001). The display of such material comforts provides escapism to the middle class viewers in India who aspire to lead such a luxurious life (Rao 2007). Moreover, popular Hindi films also borrow foreign concepts, actors and special effects to attract more viewers (Pillania 2008& Rao 2007). These techniques are employed to create what is known as “interpenetrating globalism”. This term can be defined as a complex web of narrative production and structure where Indian filmmakers make films about the lives of the Indians living abroad hoping that it would appeal to the

Indians living abroad as well as Indians living in India (Rao 2007). Thus, various techniques are employed by film makers to please the Indian audiences settled round the globe (Shukla 2003). Thus, during the 1990's Hindi films demonstrated "common identity" by creating ideology fascinating the Indians across the globe (Malhotra & Alagh 2004). Furthermore, it witnessed rising interest in Bollywood movies among Indian diaspora (Shukla 2003). Today, Bollywood cinema plays a very important part in shaping the cultural aspect of the Indian diaspora and vice-versa. The Indian population is quite impressive in various countries like US, UK, Dubai, Malaysia etc, and it is also one of the fastest growing diasporas in the world (Mishra 2002).

Bollywood has also proven to be a successful culture industry abroad. Hindi films have featured in the top ten movies lists of UK and USA (Pillania 2007). These movies have been generally successful because the first generation NRI (Non-Resident Indian) maintains or (tries to maintain) traditional Indian values like such as the importance of community, family, and arranged marriages. Experts argue that the feeling of being away from home, fewer in number and the fear of rejection encourages such imagination in the diaspora (Mishra 1996). Hence, films like *Hum Aap ke Hain Kaun* (1994), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (DDLJ)* (1995) were massive hits in the UK and USA, as the storylines revolved around second generation Indians in the West, and they maintained stronger traditional value than Indians in India (Mishra 2002). Chopra (2004:pp. 92) on *DDLJ* said: "that an Indian is a hybrid who easily enjoys the material comforts of the West and the spiritual comforts of the East, has strictly sanitized view of the lives of second-generation NRIs" (p. 92). Therefore, the protagonists who were born and brought

up in the West, enjoyed all material comforts, and occasionally wore western dresses but on the other hand; they were deeply rooted in the traditional Indian culture.

Songs and dances are the major highlight of popular Bollywood cinema (Dwyer & Patel 2002). The song- dance sequences are the storehouse of numerous expressions and various emotions and desires (Rao 2007). Moreover, recently, a new kind of song-dance sequence known as ‘item numbers’ have been incorporated in Bollywood cinema making it a distinct part of cultural product. These item numbers seldom have any relation to the actual storyline of the film. These songs portray erotic dancing by scantily dressed women in the pubs or disco. Such dancers are known as “item girls”, who comprise an important of the industry (Rao 2007). Some item numbers have been shot on white-female dancers for authenticity (Rao 2007). American hip-hop, pop music, salsa inspired these item numbers. Brittany Spears’ video ‘*One More Time*’ (1998), had a tremendous impact on item numbers. Several item songs in Bollywood movies had used similar dancing techniques and wardrobe oozing sexuality. It is argued that these songs are just an excuse to show skin (Rao 2007). Songs in Hindi cinema have always been associated with eroticism, an outlet for seeking sexual pleasure (Kasbekar 2001). By contrast, item numbers are have been created only to titillate the desires audiences and cater to “excessive voyeuristic” sexuality (Pendakur 2003:pp. 301). Item numbers have been created to encourage the voyeuristic tendencies of men. It also held true for the Indian diaspora, as the NRIs (non-westerners by origin) also took active pleasure in viewing women’s body as a commodity (Chow 1995).

Thus, this theory of globalization and the creation of a diaspora are very important to this thesis, as this theory conceptualizes the employment of new techniques in the

cinema and treatment of women just to fit the men's ideas just to make them commercially successful. This can be better understood by the concept of hybridity.

In her study of Indians settled in London, Gillespie (1990) situates the culture of the Indian diaspora in the framework of Hybridity. The Indian diaspora's culture was seen more as "intentional hybridity" unlike the "organic hybridity" of the African- British (Young 1995). Gillespie (1995) discussed three main characteristics of intentional hybridity that was specific to the Indian diaspora. First, dominant cultural forms were only consumed and not redefined or reproduced. Second, the members of these diasporas lived far away from home and remained unaffected by the fundamentalist politics of their homeland. Third, television and video were instrumental in determining the space of Indian diaspora. Thus, Bollywood cinema was crucial in bringing the homeland abroad resulting in the creation of cultural solidarity amongst varied linguistic groups of the Indian diaspora. Therefore, Bollywood cinema was one of the major "translatable" signs or a "synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios" in the production and reproduction of the Indian diaspora (Appadurai 1996).

Hybridity theorizes itself as a product where new techniques of production in the consumption of films and music are encouraged. Hybridity of both the cultures (East and West), has created music and films that have successfully catered to "orthodox" and the "contemporary" needs of the viewers (Dutta 2009). Thus, hybridity simplifies cultural consumption for all from a fashionable youngster to an orthodox person (Dutta 2009). Theorists like Bhabha, Ella Shohat, in their study of hybridity, explained it as a combination of social conformism, forced assimilation, internalized self dejection, cultural mimicry and creative transcendence that combines the culture of both

the world(the place of origin and are the places where these audiences are based) (Dutta 2009).

These theories have been influenced by popular culture that influences society the most.

Theory of Popular Culture

The study of popular culture influences the study of mass media. Experts believe that popular culture influences the television culture and is also influenced by the demands of viewers (Gans 1974). Popular culture is also known as, taste culture or “mass culture”. It is a German concept that was used to refer to the taste of the uneducated, unrefined working class in Europe. So, this kind of entertainment remained unattractive to the educated, elite and “cultured” group of people in the European society, and their taste was termed as highbrow. Furthermore, a middle ground between the high and low brow was considered as middle brow (Gans 1974).

Therefore, based on these assumptions culture was categorized as high brow culture, middle brow culture and low brow or popular culture. This analysis, also saw that popular culture was created by a group of profit-minded businessmen who borrowed the high culture’s ideas and debased them to cater to the entertainment needs of the masses for money—thereby, resulting to an adverse effect on the high culture (Gans1974).

Van Wyck Brooks (1915) in his essay, “Highbrow and Lowbrow” saw that this antagonism between the high brow culture and the low (mass)-brow culture had become a topic of social criticism (Faber 2006), and so he suggested for a “genial middle ground” that would enable the “cultural life” to grow (Rubin 1992), leading to the emergence of

“middle-brow culture”. Russell Lynes further elaborated on the term “middle brow”, as a category, which was a cross between the chief patrons of society and the working class. This group was very keen on improving their minds and fortune by trying to emulate certain habits of the high- culture (Rubin1992).While these are useful categories for theorizing popular culture, it should be understood that these categories are fluid and people move between these categories in their consumption of popular culture.

Catherine Strong (2011) analyzed the cultural values associated with women in filmmaking, composing, and editing. She found that music composed by the male bands were known as “serious music”, whereas women’s contribution to music was criticized as “pop”. Moreover, music created by men was considered as “high-brow” and the ones that were composed by women were considered as “low brow”. Furthermore, studies have shown that “Popular Culture” has a relation with “consumer culture”. Popular culture is influenced by consumer culture and vice-versa. Also the concept of gender and gender roles-- a product of the society directing that an individual functions as male or female in the society also has a great influences the popular culture. Drawing from this assumption, popular culture in the mass media has portrayed women as consumers and men as producers. This phenomenon is known as ‘feminization of consumption’ (Sandlin &Maudlin 2012). This is where Blumler & Katz’s gratification theory comes in that has influenced Haun. Haun (2010) argues that gratification theory can be applicable to the consumers. The consumers are considered as active participants, who make choices based on their needs and desires (pp.94).This happens in case of Indian cinema, where the male audiences look forward to satisfy their needs, desires through the images on women on screen. The gratification of men becomes very important because most audiences and

filmmakers are men (Nandkumar 2011). Even in the Indian context, Popular Culture is influenced by dominant culture, and the popular culture caters to the need of the masses creating an influence on them in turn. Therefore, in my analysis, I will try to see how popular culture is applied to the Indian male audience. Popular culture's emphasis on Indian films has stressed hierarchy and male domination. Most commercial cinema has portrayed the heroes as an ideal man, who is an extremely strong individual capable of winning all the challenges at societal, familial, and official levels. Besides this, they are portrayed to be extremely responsible and protective towards spouses and elders (Hansen 1992). These are few examples of Indian men maintaining 'Indianness' in movies conformed by popular culture. Therefore, Indianness for men is being brave, responsible and offering protection whereas for women it means being sexually chaste, obedient, and being extremely devoted to the family (Derne 2000). Even films portraying women as strong willed, career-minded individuals always maintain male supremacy (Derne 2000). Bollywood films have always upheld dominant values of society-- that have been barely challenged- and if at all challenged; they have been challenged by men (Hansen 1992). On the other hand, they portray women as immensely adjusting and patient in finding a solution to the most serious and stressful real life problems. This encourages women to think that calmness and patience ensures a successful solution to their problems (IenAng1985). Therefore, Bollywood movies provide a vicarious feeling for men to be rebellious and women to be calm and obedient (Derne 2000). Thus, the popular culture of Bollywood films plays a very important role in shaping the status of women in reality. According to Marxist tradition, popular culture is just like religion that serves as "opium of the masses". Moreover, Herbert Marcuse (1968) argued that popular culture reduces

the experience of pains amongst women in order to bear oppression. They always are always taught to obey patriarchy, and this encourages a fatalistic nature amongst women as they are portrayed to succumb to their existing fate (VanZoonen1994).

Antonio Gramsci's (1998), concept of hegemony is at its best in the Indian context. The dominance and influence of patriarchy affects the society and most Bollywood films are based on this ideology. This hegemonic ideology, also endorsed by religion has become the most powerful, internalized, common and dominant ideology of the Indian society. Thus, various factors of religion influence and govern popular culture in the Indian context. The epics and mythological tales of Hinduism have always celebrated male dominance, and this has been adopted by filmmakers (Nandkumar 2011).

Therefore, this explains why women centric films or films in which women are shown as self dependant and responsible have not been considered as mainstream movies, and have stirred controversy as well. Instead of sticking to the usual patriarchal framework, these movies challenge the common beliefs through non- stereotypical roles that are discouraged. Moreover, challenging the ills of religion and culture causes severe controversies (Nandkumar 2011).

Thus, this thesis attempts to see the role of popular culture plays in women centric movies. Although popular culture has shown women challenging the system, these have been under the guidance of men. However, popular culture in the domain of Indian cinema has not appreciated the idea of self dependant women capable of fulfilling their emotional, financial needs and above all they do not need a man to protect them.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Many movies have been made in Bollywood focusing on various atrocities against women (Derne 1999). However, the literature in academia is yet to address those women-centric movies where women have stood up against these atrocities. One of the major aims of this research is to address such movies. In this chapter, I explain the general methodological approach that is being employed in this study. Out of the numerous methodologies employed by social science researchers, the most suitable methods used for this topic are discussed below, as the project seeks to question the manner in which the concept of Indian femininity (ideal woman) is portrayed on screen.

Thus, for this analysis I use ethnographic content analysis [ECA]. According to Altheide (1987), ECA is “embedded in constant discovery and constant comparison of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances” (pp. 68). Thus, ECA relays information about society based on electronic, audio-visual, or print documents as cultural artifacts. This method is a combination of content analysis and grounded theory (Burden 2009). This combination is designed in such a manner that a researcher starts with some coding schemes but is flexible and keeps adding new themes as they emerge while conducting the research (Paisley 1969). Thus, ECA comprises narrative as well as numeric data that define these categories of analysis. However, a profound analysis of various patterns of human behavior can emerge and those cannot be deciphered by solely using quantitative content analysis through the exploration of narrative within content

(Altheide 1987). In order to know more about ECA we need to define content analysis and grounded theory approach because they both work together to make ECA.

Grounded theory creates theory during the process of analysis that is being conducted in the research (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Thus, grounded theory is defined as “a set of integrated conceptual hypotheses systematically generated to produce an inductive theory about a substantive area”(Glaser with Holton, 2004). Therefore, according to Altheide (1987), ECA is a great combination of these methods discussed above. ECA is methodical yet flexible, open to accepting new concepts that can emerge from the data, and use the guidance of the variables that have been defined previously.

Qualitative textual or discursive analysis or discourse analysis : According to David Silverman, the method of qualitative textual/discursive or discourse analysis “focuses on how different versions of the world are produced through the use of interpretive repertoire, claims to ‘stakes’ in an account....and construction of knowing subjects’”(2003:349).

This method is also relevant in this study because it enables researchers to develop a detailed and critical insight into the belief systems that are generated through cinema. This method also directs researchers to choose the dataset very carefully in order to “identify the most important themes, issues, and examples of dialogue, combined with more systematic analysis of selected passages that represent the identified themes” (Gans-Boriskin & Wardle 2005). For example, it was used by Merskin (2001) to study the stereotypical portrayal of Native Americans as primitive by various American brands in their commercials.

Thus, this method is useful in this study, as it seeks to analyze one of the various ways in which unequal distribution of power in society is maintained or challenged (Gitlin 2000). This method also provides this thesis with a critical lens to study the stereotypical portrayal of women in Indian cinema and the unconventional roles portrayed by women in women-centric films. Moreover, it critiques the cinematic representation of issues like gender and its roles. This method, known as ‘discursive analysis’, helps to understand the message given to audiences by these films in numerous layers (Adorno 2002). Moreover, this method provides a base to analyze the “underlying theoretical structures within a text” (Potter & Wetherell 1987:175,7). Thus, this method will be used to study the manner in which femininity in Bollywood cinema is interpreted and how the women centric movies try to deconstruct the concepts of reality, self, status and consumption portrayed in commercial Bollywood films. In order to understand this better, we first need to conceptualize the notion of ‘discourse’. According to Foucault, the concept of ‘discourse’ provides the base for knowledge. Stuart Hall elaborates on Foucault’s point:

“What interested [Foucault] were the rules and practices that produced meaningful statements and regulated discourse in different historical periods. Discourse, Foucault argues, constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about” (1997:44).

Hence, Foucault’s idea of discourse with its focus on power emphasizes on the importance of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Martin 2006). This method provides an understanding of the discursive outline that is used by media to cater to the interest of

certain sections of a population (Aich 2009). According to Littlejohn & Foss (2007), this method seeks to “promote particular ideologies, establish and maintain power, and subvert the interests of certain groups and classes.” Thus, based on this principal CDA is used to see how women in Indian cinema are typecast and how women - centric movies try to subvert their image and the notion of femininity.

The Sample

The movies chosen for this thesis were women-centric movies where women have been portrayed as avengers or protesting against the violence that they suffer. Women as avengers or women in lead are very intrinsic to this study because it tries to portray the real problems that a woman goes through in Indian society. These movies not only try to bring forth the problems that women face in society but also give women in general the confidence to protest against the violence and challenge the social norms.

In this study, the movies were chosen based on the degree that they addressed the challenging, independent and brave spirit of the women. These movies have portrayed women in an entirely different light than the commercial Bollywood films, where the focus is solely on their beauty.

Various literature reviews have shown that typical Bollywood commercial formula films are made more in number because they are extremely successful in generating great revenues. On the other hand, films belonging to this genre are not very commercially successful, and, therefore these films are very few in number as compared to the commercial Bollywood films.

I employed the purposive sampling technique to determine my sample selection. Vogt (2005) proposed that the utility of purposive sampling to researchers is that the characteristic of the sample are assumed to closely represent the entire population that is being investigated. Thus, based on this assumption my main aim to use purposive sample design was to sample films that purposely represented the genre. As I was using purposive sampling, I had to select a particular number of films from a list of films belonging to this genre.

I found a list of forty- six (46) movies belonging to this genre. However, it has to be noted that numerous movies that belong to this category are unaccounted for and have remained unreleased (Abbas& Sathe 1985). So, I made a list of such films that were available, and listed them in Appendix A.

Out of a pool of 46- full length movies (feature films) produced/released between the 1980's to 2011(See. Appendix A), nine (9) were selected for this thesis (around 20% of the total sample size) (shown in the table below). Note, I retained the same serial numbers for the movies below as they were in Appendix A.

Table 1: Movies selected for this study.

Serial Number	Release Year	Title of The Movie	Director	Plot Synopsis
15	1983	Arth	M.Bhatt	Extra-marital affair and unfaithful spouse.
24	1988	Sherni	H. Malhotra	Violence, murder and rape
29	1995	Bandit Queen	S.Kapur	Rape, Sexual abuse, Caste system, Child marriage.
32	1998	Fire	D. Mehta	Homosexuality, infidelity and infertility
35	Daman	2001	K Lajami	Domestic & marital violence
36	Lajja	2001	R. Santoshi	Dowry, violence, pre-marital

				pregnancy, killing of women, abortion and single mother.
40	2005	Water	D. Metha	Widow prostitution, child marriage and widowhood
42	2006	Chingaari	K.Lajmi	Prostitution and violence.
45	2007	Saat Khun Maaf	V. Bharadwaj	Marital problems of a woman.

The sample size that I have chosen is a combination of the middle as well as the art cinema that has been elaborately discussed in the literature review. In addition to this, these movies were chosen as a sample size for a number of reasons that are discussed below:

First, all the selected films have feminist themes and in these movies women fix their own problems, unlike a lot of other movies which claim to be women-centric, but have men solving the problems in the end. Moreover, these movies portray women as self-dependant, capable of solving their own problems, and proving that they don't need a man because they have the ability to perform all the duties of a man. Second, these

represent women from various social classes, who fight for justice. Unlike a lot of women-centric movies that revolve around the high brow and convent educated women (women who come from economically sound families and have been to good English schools, where the main focus is on imparting great education, inculcating co-curricular activities, and overall personality development). Third, these movies show women as individual having desires, and the capacity to express their opinions and an exception to the self-sacrificing mother or wife in commercial cinema. Fourth, this thesis deals with Bollywood, so all the movies had to be in Hindi. The women-centric movies that are made in other regional languages could not be analyzed due to the researcher's inability to comprehend other regional languages. Moreover, Hindi being the national language of India captures the widest array of audiences. Finally, these movies that I have chosen represent all the issues pertaining to women in the Indian society. However, I would like to mention that these movies portray women who believe in the "eye-for-an-eye" ideology. Women in these films have inflicted emotional, psychological and physical pain on their wrong-doers.

Data Analysis and description

These films are generally two and half to three hours long and cannot boast of A-list star cast. The female stars in these movies are either not very well known (beginners) or are famous actresses whose careers are dying due to age. Therefore, these superstars are now trying to get critical acclaim as "actresses" rather than just being known as the "glamorous superstar". However, there are certain talented actresses like (Late)Smita Patil, Sabana Azami, Supriya Pathak, Nandita Das etc, who are known to belong to this

genre of films and are appreciated for their exceptional contribution to this school of cinema.

The inability of these films to perform well at the box office indicates that they have not been widely accepted and they are not a part of popular culture. Although these movies have been critically acclaimed and have received many prestigious awards, they have been commercially unsuccessful. For instance, films like *Daman*, *Bandit Queen* have won National Award in various categories but these movies have not been commercially successful. Finally, the movies which have been included in this study have male as well as female directors with their perspectives in it.

These movies were watched various times to see how women as avengers and standing up for themselves dealt with various unfavorable situations that they faced. Moreover, while watching these films, I noted whether these films were made in their own right or had a film formula like any other commercial Bollywood film. I watched these films also to find out how the on screen portrayal of women from various sectors of the society dealt with the problems they faced.

The Coding scheme

I employed the academic literature and the various theories used in this study to provide sensitizing concepts. I had gotten a fair view of the themes that could emerge while analyzing the literature review. Thus, I had an outline that guided me with the existing themes and these themes were validated (Ryan & Bernard 2003:275).

The coding scheme was developed using the literature review and the theory about the topic (Conquergood 2002). I used Blumer's sensitizing concept. The method

was developed by Blumer (1954), American sociologist, who contrasted definitive concepts with sensitizing concepts who explained it as:

“A definitive concept refers precisely to what is common to a class of objects, by the aid of a clear definition in terms of attributes or fixed bench marks. . . . A sensitizing concept lacks such specification of attributes or bench marks and consequently it does not enable the user to move directly to the instance and its relevant content. Instead, it gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look”.

(pp. 7)

Social researchers define sensitizing concepts as a device that interprets and marks the starting point for a qualitative study (Glaser 1978; Padgett 2004). For instance, this method was applied by Bowen (2003 & 2005) while conducting an antipoverty project in Jamaica. The sensitizing concept helped him to form his conceptual framework. Similarly, the sensitizing concept was included in the study to form the conceptual framework. Various concepts were derived from literature review on parallel cinema, commercial cinema, art cinema and stereotypical portrayal of women in cinema. Note, this technique was employed as I tried to get into the data analysis with no preconceived notion (which social scientists have when they test hypotheses). Since, it is impossible to go with a blank mind, so I used my literature review for sensitizing concepts --where the major idea is that-- I am sensitive and open to without ruling out ideas and concepts that emerge from data. Once all the movies were watched and

important notes were transcribed, I used few concepts to further my study (1) difference between Middle and Parallel films; (2) difference in the perspective/presentation of male and female directors/technicians in the portrayal of woman; (3) the use of narrative and semantics, places they contradict each other; (4) considering funding sources; (5) other important findings. I gathered from the literature reviews that these movies portrayed women in a different light, unlike “conforming” women as shown in Bollywood movies. The portions of the movies that portrayed violence against women and women standing up for them were transcribed. Special attention was paid to the dialogues and the background music while these movies were watched. The themes of each of these films were also watched attentively.

One has to keep in mind that a major concern of these movies, especially the middle cinema is to reach to all the audiences (Nandkumar 2011), therefore, a lot of entertainment factors have been introduced in these movies that might be absent in real life. Moreover, these movies had been edited and manipulated in a certain way to reach to the audience and to avoid controversies. However, because of the purpose of the study, I concentrated on the ways these movies were portrayed onscreen. Although, numerous characters were in different light were shown in these movies. I concentrated my analysis on the women lead in these movies and analyzed their relationship with the various other characters in the movies. However, I kept my focus on the activities and conversations by the lead woman/ women. These conversations were the ones that were shown on the television screen.

Because this study narrowly tries to understand women who stood up for themselves in these movies, only the relationship between the women and other

characters were focused instead of focusing it the other way round. These films wanted to show-case the plight of several women subjected to violence in reality. Hence, many of these films were either true stories or were massively inspired by true stories.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter all the five categories used to analyze the topic will be explored. These five categories will be discussed in great details in this section. These categories used in the coding scheme were an outcome of the literature review and theory to provide sensitizing concepts. By using this analysis, the research will try to find out what messages these films gave, the way they portrayed women and the significance of such portrayal. All the films in this research were examined based on the five categories that were outlined. For easier understanding, I began by offering a brief synopsis of the films used in the dataset. Therefore, this would acquaint the readers with the subject of the films being investigated, and thereby enabling them to contextualize the results and findings. In this analysis, a lot of importance has been given to the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). These principles were applied to study the major themes that were employed to depict the women in the movies. The make-up, dialogues, techniques and various other categories intrinsic to this study will be analyzed.

Plot Synopsis of the Films

The films are categorized according to their genre: Parallel or Middle.

Parallel Films:

Arth (the meaning) (1983): This story is about a middle class woman, and how she denounces her husband for cheating on her. Pooja (by Shabana Azmi) plays the pivotal role in the film. She is a well-educated girl who grew up in an orphanage and lives happily with her husband Inder (played by Kulbhushan Kharbanda) -- a film director by profession. On coming to know about Inder's clandestine extra-marital affair with actress Kavita (played by Smita Patil), Pooja decides to leave her husband's home with the meager amount that she had saved before her marriage. She lives in a ladies hostel, and during this time her new-found friend Raj (played by Raj Kiran) supports her extremely to overcome this crisis. The plot takes a climactic turn when Raj proposes marriage to Pooja, and at the same time Inder expresses his desire to reconcile with her after being ditched by his mistress. Pooja was strong enough to reject these proposals in order to concentrate on her new job and raise her maid- servant's daughter. The maid-servant (played by Rohini Hattangadi) has entrusted her daughter to Pooja's care after she has been sentenced to life-time imprisonment for murdering her unemployed, alcoholic, gambling, and philandering husband after he stole her entire savings, meant to put towards her daughter's education.

Arth has a running time of 138 minutes. It is directed by Mahesh Bhatt, and has some beautiful and memorable songs. This film has won numerous awards, including the National Award for the Best Actress for Shabana Azami, and Filmfare Award for Best Supporting Actress for Rohini Hattangadi.

The Bandit Queen (1995) - This movie is based on the true story of Phoolan Devi (a dacoit). It is believed that Phoolan became a bandit to avenge for all of the ill-treatments that she had faced throughout her life. As a teenager she had been molested by several men on various occasions including her husband, higher-caste men in the village, and even the police authorities. Phoolan belonged to an extremely poor and low-caste family residing in a small North Indian village. She joined as a member in a gang of robbers, and very quickly became the gang leader. It is believed that Phoolan Devi and her gang attacked all high caste people who ill-treated the lower caste and especially women. Phoolan had several murder and kidnap charges against her. Her criminal charges got her into national prominence. In 1981, the police force of India started a massive search against her. However, Phoolan finally surrendered herself to the Police in 1983, and she was released in 1994.

This movie is 119 minutes long with a great depiction of real incidents. Shekhar Kapur was the director. The film was subjected to harsh criticisms for showing nude scenes. In addition to this, the film was initially banned in India, due to the onscreen depiction of many nude scenes. However, the ban was eventually removed. Although this movie did not perform well commercially, it received critical appreciation, numerous national and international awards in various categories. Along with this, the actress Seema Biswas won several accolades for portraying the character of Phoolan Devi in the film.

Fire (1996)- This film for the first time addressed the issue of lesbianism to Indian audiences. This story is about two women named Radha (Played by Sabana Azami) and Sita (played by Nandita Das) who belong to a lower middle-class family.

These two ladies are sisters-in-law married to two sons of a family, who torture them at various levels. Radha's husband is a celibate, and her physical desires have never been fulfilled. Similarly, Sita's husband has an extra-marital affair, and continues to be with his mistress at the cost of completely ignoring his wife and her desires. These two women lead a life of excruciating pain by performing household chores and attending to their ailing mother-in-law. With the passage of time, these two women realize that both of them are facing similar difficulties in their lives, and so they decide to break free. They find true companionship in each other, and slowly discover their romantic inclination towards each other, resulting in a homosexual relationship. On coming to know of this, their respective husbands create a furor, order them to leave the house, and these two women leave their homes to start living with each other.

Fire has a running time of 108 minutes. It is written and directed by Deepa Mehta, and the music is created by A.R.Rahaman. The storyline tackling issues of homosexuality infuriated the audiences, giving rise to numerous controversies, protest, and anti-film campaigns that even led to riots. This film was banned in India, but won accolades at the Canadian film festival

Daman (Oppression) (2001) - This film is an attempt to strongly showcase the plight of several women undergoing tremendous domestic violence on a regular basis in India. Durga (played by Raveena Tandon) is the protagonist of this story, who is verbally and physically abused on a regular basis by her alcoholic, gambling, womanizing, very short-tempered and cruel husband, Sanjay (played by Sayaji Shinde). Durga tolerates all these tortures, but resists Sanjay's decision of getting their daughter Deepa married to a rich, but old man. In order to save Deepa's life, she runs away with her, settles in a

different city, and cuts-off all her ties with her family. On coming to know of their whereabouts, Sanjay orders his wife and daughter to come with him. Durga, thinking of her daughter's future, refuses to obey his orders.

The climax of the film shows Sanjay getting violent, while the mother and the daughter show resistance. In order to save her daughter's life, Durga kills her immoral husband as well as an undutiful father.

This film was directed by one of Bollywood's most seasoned women directors, Kalpana Lajmi. This film was commercially unsuccessful, but won the most prestigious National Award for the Best Actress. Note: Raveena Tandon was a very famous actress belonging to the genre of commercial cinema, but this film was shot toward the end of her career.

Water (2005) - This film exposes the widow prostitution that occurred in the widow homes prior to Indian independence. This story revolves around one of many such widow homes (vidwa ashrams) set in Varanasi (a holy town in India), situated on the banks of river Ganga. Kalyani (played by Lisa Ray) is a beautiful and young widow in her early twenties. Kalyani is forced into prostitution in order to financially support the vidwa ashram. Kalyani, much against the social norms, falls in love with Narayan (played by John Abraham) who is an elite man, follower of Gandhi, and lives life on Gandhian principals of *ahimsa* (non-violence)-- they decide to go far away from this world of hypocrisy. While Kalyani prepares to escape with Narayan, she realizes that his father has been one of her former clientele, and in a state of shock she commits suicide. On coming to know of Kalyani's death, the owner of the house starts negotiating the price of

Chuiya (a seven- year old, who is a child-widow) with the clientele, and prepares to push her into the world of prostitution much against her knowledge. On coming to know this, Shankuntala (played by Seema Biswas), one of the central characters- a literate widow in her forties, dares to resist the decision of the vidwa ashram, and escapes with Chuyia. She wants to save Chuiya from the nasty world of flesh trade, something all these widows have been a victim of during their youth. Rather, she wants Chuiya to lead a great life, and so she entrusts her to Narayan's care knowing fully well that she will have a great upbringing, as it will be based on Gandhian principals.

This 114 minutes long film is directed and partly written by the famous Indo-Canadian woman director Deepa Mehta. She used some of the best technicians of the West, and had the best Indian music director AR Rahaman. This movie won various international awards at various categories, and it was also nominated for an Oscar. However, the film was not at all well-received in India. The story had angered various Indian religious and political groups to an extent that the sets of the film were destroyed in India. Mehta was shocked to see this animosity, and therefore, the film had to be shot abroad much against its initial plans.

Middle Cinema:

Zakmi Auart (*wounded woman*) (1988) - This story is primarily about rape victims expressing their vengeance against rapists by castrating them. Kiran Dutt (played by Dimple Kapadia), a police officer by profession— is also a victim of gang-rape. To her utter dismay, she is defeated in the court case, and this defeat shakes her up

emotionally, mentally as well as physically. Moreover, she faces a lot of stigma attached to a rape victim in the Indian society. However, instead of committing suicide or becoming a recluse like other rape victims, she decides to take revenge, and punish the rapists in her own way. She starts executing her plans by forming a sorority, comprising numerous women coming from various professions, economic and social strata. These women are either rape victims themselves or have had their close family members go through this painful experience. All these women unite and take revenge against rapists across the city by kidnapping and castrating them. In the end of the film, this organization is applauded by women all over India for their 'eye- for- an eye treatment' approach.

This is a 140 minutes long film that has few good songs in it. The film is directed by Mr. Avatar Bhopal. Dimple Kapadia's performance was appreciated in this film. However, this film received a lot of criticism for offering an extremely unrealistic punishment to the rapists (Gopalan 2002). Thus, the film was adjudged to be flop. Note: Dimple Kapadia was one of the greatest actresses belonging to the genre of commercial cinema, but this film was shot toward the end of her career.

Lajja (Shame) (2001) - This revolves around various plights that women suffer in India. Vahedehi (played by Manisha Koirala) is one of the protagonists, a wife of a rich sophisticated man. The film begins by showing that pregnant Vahedehi is running helter skelter, in order to hide from her abusive husband—who would kill her as soon as she delivers their child. On her journey, her paths cross with three different women, named Janaki (played by Madhuri Dixit), Maithili (played by Mahima Chaudhury), and Ramdulaari (played by Rekha) --belonging to different towns, socio-economic strata of the society, and facing different problems that most women in India face.

Maithili (played by Mahima Chaudhury), a bride-to-be from a middle class family, shows extreme courage by calling off her wedding due to the ever increasing, unreasonable and insatiable dowry demands from the groom's family.

Janaki (played by Madhuri Dixit), a resident of the small town named Hridaypur and an extremely successful theatre actress. An independent woman, living life on her own terms and not caring about society's norms, is pregnant with her lover's child. However, her fiancé refuses to marry her, due to some misunderstandings created by Purrosottam (director/producer of the theatre group) in the relationship. Unable to bear the brunt of this break-up, Janaki suffers a miscarriage. However, unlike other women, she is determined to make Purrosattam pay for this act.

Raamdulari (played by Rekha) is a brave widow and a midwife by profession. The only person in the entire village not only supports the education of women, but also protests against the exploitative nature of the village leaders (zamindars), towards the women in particular. The zamindars Virendra (Gulshan Grover) and Gajendra (Danny Denzongpa), vehemently oppose Ramdulaari's efforts to educate the women in the village. However, undeterred, Ramdulaari continues with her action, with the help of her educated son. However, an unanticipated situation arises when Raamdulari's son falls for Gajendra's daughter and they elope. This infuriates Gajendra, therefore, he brutally rapes Raamdulari, burns her alive to seek revenge for her, and her son's actions. All this takes place in front of Vahedehi's eyes and she decides to punish Gajendra for this behavior. After a few months, Gajendra shifts to politics, and he is campaigning for himself in the public. On coming to know of this, Vahedehi reaches to the venue, where he is at, and successfully exposes his real identity of a killer and a rapist in front of the crowd. His

reality outrages the women present in the crowd, and he is assaulted by them. Thus, the rapist is killed and he gets his punishment

The story can boast of an unusual ending, where Vahedehi gives birth to a baby girl who is named after Raamdulari. Maithali is happily married to another man. Janaki and Maithali are active members of a women's organization that helps women in distress. This organization plans various dance and cultural shows, where Janaki is the main dancer and choreographer. The story ends by showing that all the money earned from these shows is donated to the central women's organization of India.

This is a 165 minutes long movie, directed by Raj Kumar Santonshi. This film has wonderful songs (two of which are item-numbers), great costumes and makeup. The star-cast can be called without doubt as A-list, because three out of four actresses featured in this movie, were considered as divas during their yester years in the circuit of commercial cinema. Despite all these successful ingredients, the film failed to fare well at the Indian box-office, but it did a pretty decent business in the UK and the USA. This movie won several Indian awards in the Best Actress and Support Actress category.

Chingaari (The Spark) (2006) - This film is based on a novel *The Prostitute and the Postman* by Bhupen Hazarika. This film addresses the problems of women, caste norms, purity and pollution still dominant in rural India. This film sends out a very strong message to the audiences by showing the central character standing against the religious head of the village.

Basanti (Sushmita Sen) is playing the pivotal role. She is a prostitute with a little daughter named Titali. Basanti is responsible for satisfying the physical urges of priest,

Bhuvan Panda (played by Mithun Chakraborty), the religious head and temple priest, and worshipper of goddess Kali. The story takes an interesting twist, when Basanti and the new mailman of the village named Chandan (played by Anuj Swahaey) fall in love and decide to get married. This news aggravates Bhuvan, and he kills Chandan. The plot reaches its climax when Basanti kills Bhuvan in front of the whole village to avenge her fiancé's murder.

This 135 minutes long film is directed by Kalpana Lajmi. Through this film, she attempts to critique all the social injustices that women face in India. This movie was commercially unsuccessful. However, Sushmita Sen got some great reviews for her power-packed performance. Kalpana Lajmi later revealed that she had faced a lot of problems during the filming process.

Saat Khun Maaf (Seven Murders Forgiven) (2011) - This movie is based on a short story *Susanna's Seven Husband* by Ruskin Bond. This story revolves around an extremely beautiful and wealthy woman named Susanna (played by Priyanka Chopra), who marries six times and ends up killing each of her husbands, as they inflict terrible pain on her.

Her first husband Edwin Rodrigues (played by Neil Nitin Mukesh), a Major in the Army, is extremely jealous, possessive and overbearing by nature. He physically abuses her, as he is suspicious of her faithfulness towards him. Jimmy (played by John Abraham) is her second husband. A famous singer, who is extremely arrogant, womanizer, gambler, and a drug addict. Moreover, he torments Susanna mercilessly physically and mentally on a regular basis. Her third marriage is to a soft-natured and

romantic poet named Musafir (played by Irrfan Khan). However, in reality he is a sado-masochist, and derives pleasure by brutally beating up his wife. She is married for the fourth time to a Russian spy, named Nicolai Vronsky (played by Aleksandr Dyachenko) who also becomes extremely abusive towards Susanna when she confronts him about his other marriage, children and his ulterior motives of owning her property. Susanna is raped and faces brutal physical abuse in her fifth marriage as well. She kills her fifth husband named Keemat Lal (played by Annu Kapoor), a police inspector by profession, and a sadist by nature, just like most of her other abusive husbands. Finally, and for the sixth time, she marries Dr. Modhusudhon Tarafdar (played by Naseeruddin Shah), who saves her life. The otherwise loving and caring husband, is bankrupt in real life who tied the knot with her with a plan of slow-poisoning her to death, and then solely inheriting her property. On knowing this, Susanna shoots her sixth husband to death for the sake of saving her life.

The story ends with a touch of spirituality where she decides to marry a man who would accept her despite all her sins. Thus, she confesses that 'Jesus' is her only husband as he is the only one, who has never hurt her. She finally donates all her wealth to an orphan boy named Arun (played by Vivaan Shah). Later, Arun grows up to be a very famous forensic doctor.

This is a 165 minutes long movie, directed by Vishal Bharadwaaj. It has awesome songs, camera and makeup work. World famous makeup artist and his team from Hollywood were employed. Many feminist critiques feel that this movie actually shows the plight of women because these characteristic traits can be commonly found in many

men. This movie failed to be commercially successful, but it won many national as well as international awards.

Differences between Art and Middle Cinema.

The concepts and the differences between art and middle cinema have been thoroughly discussed in the literature review section. In the findings sections, I would focus on the difference that I found between these two genres of films. It has already been discussed that these movies are very different from the popular or commercial Hindi films, especially when it comes to the subject matter and most importantly in their portrayal of women. Films belonging to both the genres do not portray women as passive individuals who serve as sexual objects to the men. These films have portrayed women in a different light; they have brought forward the problems that women face in the Indian society. These films have portrayed women in a different light; they have brought forward the problems that women face in the Indian society. Moreover, these films have portrayed women as individuals having desires, opinions and most importantly these women have the willingness to stand up for themselves. Women have played the central character as well as the main subject matter in these films.

However, watching films from the parallel as well as the middle cinema genre, I realized that there were a lot of differences in the overall presentation of cinema, including their style and representation of women. The middle cinemas (*Lajja*, *Zakhmi Aurt*, *Saat Khun Maaf*, and *Chingari*) have made an effort to put in certain aspects of commercial cinema in the story. Therefore, there are songs, great music, and lyrics attracting the major population. While watching these films in great details, I clearly

noticed that a considerable amount of effort had been put into making the actresses look beautiful. Most of the actresses in these movies wore costumes and jewelry by well-known designers. In addition to this, the makeup also deserves a special mention. These actresses had their makeup done by some of the greatest makeup artists who are generally known for their work in the commercial cinema. In fact, according to a leading daily, a group of makeup artists had been hired from Hollywood to work their magic on the leading lady of *Saat Khun Maaf*. In *Lajja*, all the actresses were draped in colorful saris, awesome jewelry and even while performing the most challenging scenes, they were all decked up and looked great. The costume designer in this film was one of the most renowned in the Hindi film industry. Akin to this, *Zakami Auart* had the actress wear lovely western as well as Indian outfits throughout the whole film. Even in the last scene where the actress was being prosecuted in the court, she was shown wearing a white sari (modest/simple color as per Indian standards) but she had make up on and with her hair down in a proper style. This can be rarely seen in real life. In *Chingari*, the actress plays the role of a women belonging to the lower middle class residing in a village, but her makeup, hair and dress was impeccable. In summary, I felt that an equal amount of hard work had been put into make-up; style and making the actresses look beautiful as in the commercial movies.

Another aspect that I remarked was that all the actresses featured in these films were/ are famous for their beauty. For instance, Madhuri Dixit, Manisha Koirala, and Rekha in *Lajja* were popular for their beauty, sexiness and dance skills. Not only were they known as the most gorgeous actresses during their yesteryears, but even today they are considered as legends of Indian cinema. (Note, these actresses ages range from late

forties to early sixties now). Dimple Kapadia, the actress of *Zakami Aurat* has also been one of India's most beautiful actresses. Similarly, Sushmita Sen, the actress of *Chingari* and Priyanka Chopra, the actress of *Saat Khun Maaf* were crowned Miss Universe 1994 and Miss World 2002 respectively. In fact, Sushmita Sen was the first Indian to be crowned as Miss Universe and it is believed that she is one of the first models who introduced the concept of tall, svelte figure and husky voice to the Indians. Priyanka Chopra is also known for her extremely beautiful, lean and tall body.

Moreover, I also observed that all these actresses were fair, light skinned or towards being fair (or made so by make up or photography) as per Indian standard. I immediately placed this observation in a study conducted by Steve Derne (2002), where he had interviewed male audiences of Indian cinema and he found out that most of the men wanted the actresses to have fair skin, great features and good body or a combination of any two qualities. Fair skin was at the top of their priority list (Derne 2002). In fact, the other thing that caught my attention was that none of these actresses except for Priyanka Chopra and Sushmita Sen were tall and/or sported a svelte figure like these world class model-turned-actresses--but they had voluptuous bodies and average height that caters to the notion of femininity and attraction in India. However, all these actresses have been known for their fair complexion and lovely long hair that is mostly considered to exude sexiness, attraction and femininity in India.

The middle cinema had some very well-written songs and well-choreographed dances along with it. As discussed in the literature review, songs and dances are the major ingredients of popular Hindi cinema. In fact, a few of the songs from middle cinema that are a part of this analysis have also topped the music charts even if the films

failed to be commercially successful. These songs were a combination of various different genres of music ranging from folklore, hip-hop, classical, western, ghazal (Indian soft music), etc. The dancing or the types of dances were also very intriguing. The filmmakers of these movies had hired the top-notch choreographers and dance directors of the film industry. These dance directors had shot to fame by choreographing dances in commercial Hindi cinema. These dances had incorporated various forms of Indian and western styles to make them attractive to the Indian audiences. As known, in Indian commercial movies song and dances are a part of celebration and they are an event in themselves, so they have a lot of experienced side dancers along with the main dancers (actors or actresses), the middle cinema songs have utilized all the ingredients used by the commercial genre to make a hit song. The middle cinema, unlike parallel cinema, had used a lot more songs and dances to express various incidents like the romantic relationship of a woman with her man, her happiness, sadness etc.

I also noted that most of the middle cinema, unlike the parallel cinema, generally started with the actresses having a romantic relationship with men till they came across an unfortunate circumstance that turned them vengeful. These incidents led to an overall change in the entire perspective of the central character, thereby leading to a major transformation in the storyline, songs, lyrics and dances.

My other major observation was in terms of the location used. Most of these movies were shot at exotic locations just like the commercial cinema. *Lajja* was shot at Ramoji film studio, a very famous film studio in India where many commercial movies are shot, and a part of the film was shot in Hungary (imbd pro). Similarly, *Saat Khun Maaf* was also shot at beautiful locations in India as well as abroad. I found this analysis

congruent to the findings of Dwyer and Patel (2002), regarding popular Hindi cinema, where they mentioned that popular Hindi cinema are known to be shot at extremely fascinating Indian and foreign locations. The main reason behind this is that not only does this provide escapism to the audiences but also transports them into a fairyland. Thus, in order to appeal to the audiences, various middle cinemas were also shot in these locations.

Having discussed details about middle cinema in the previous paragraphs, I would like to concentrate on my analysis of parallel and art cinema in this paragraph. Along with this, I would point out the differences between these genres of films. The parallel films that I have watched for this project are *Daman*, *Arth*, *Fire*, *Water*, and *Bandit Queen*. These movies have focused on the various plights of women in India. However, these films have adopted an entirely different approach compared to the middle cinema. None of these movies have been shot at a great film location. In fact most of the films have rather been shot in a drab background. These actresses have a minimum make up or no makeup look. In fact, in the movie *Water*, the actresses were shown wearing a white sari without any design on it just to bring forth the reality effect. Similarly, in *Arth*, Sabana Azami was playing the role of a middle class house-wife for the most part; she too wore dresses that are mostly worn by women belonging to this class in reality. None of the dresses came from any famous brands or designers. In fact in one of her interviews about the wardrobe in *Arth*, the actress said, “In *Arth*, I am not playing a sophisticated woman, I think that comes across. In this film I look as I do in real life” (Vasudev and Lenglet 1993, pp 153). Nandita Das and Sabana Azami, the two actresses of *Fire* have used no makeup when they are in the house doing everyday household chores. However,

they used a little bit of makeup towards the beginning just to portray that Nandita Das was newlywed. While watching this film, I noticed that the makeup and costume were very real just like a normal middle class woman would look. I also observed the same thing in the movies *Water* and *Bandit Queen* as far as the makeup and dresses were concerned. In all these movies tremendous efforts had been given to maintain originality. For instance, the actresses of *Water* had shaved their heads completely to portray the widows of that era, where widows had to shave off their hair. All the actresses in the movie did not use any prosthetics and risked to shave their hair, which is a very daring act as long hair is considered to a sign of extreme attraction and femininity in India. Similarly, in the film *Bandit Queen*, the actress was given an extremely plain Jane look. As a matter of fact the saris she wore were very simple, and the other thing that I grasped was the hairstyle- the actress of *Bandit Queen* just had two simple braids with cotton ribbons. Even in the film *Daman*, the gorgeous actress Raveena Tandon had also sported a no makeup look for the most part except for a scene or two, where she was shown getting married. As discussed in the literature review, that one of the most important attempts that Satyajit Ray had made while making parallel films was to induce the reality effect. Thus, we can place these films into the framework of originality, where the stars were made to look 'real'. This is a total contrast to the middle cinema, where the actresses looked ravishing (or are made so) even when they are being abused or performing something as simple as household chores. Nandita Das, a famous parallel film actress, had once mentioned in an interview how a makeup artist had assured her that she could look 'fair' and pretty on screen.

The parallel cinema actresses do not qualify as ‘conventional’ beauty according to the Indian standards of beauty. Nandita Das, Smita Patil, Shabana Azami and Seema Biswas are neither fair nor do they flaunt a model- like figure. Lisa Ray and Raveena Tandon could be considered to cater to the notion of Indian beauty, but on the other hand, Lisa Ray is half Canadian and so her looks have not fit the idea of ideal Indian beauty, as her skin color is a bit too pale and westernized, something that is a little bit unusual for the general Indian audiences. Raveena Tandon was no doubt considered to be a beautiful actress but she worked in *Daman* during the last stage of her career. During this time, she was in her late thirties and was not as gorgeous as she was when she first started her career. She was shedding her gorgeous image. For instance, she did not have a great figure anymore as she was having weight issues. In this movie she did not have a great body either and because she had very little makeup, a lot of imperfections surged which would otherwise be concealed. So, while watching the parallel films, I felt that I could concentrate very easily on the subject matter of the films, whereas while watching the middle cinema, I was constantly being challenged to keep my focus just to the content or the narrative of the plot rather than getting attracted to the beautiful costumes, makeup and gorgeous actresses.

In parallel cinema as opposed to middle cinema there was no unnecessary use of songs. Even if there were songs and/or dances they were kept very low profile and to the point, unlike the middle cinema which was full of songs, some of them being even out of the context. For example, ‘*Item number*’ (songs that portray women exuding their sexuality to cater to the senses of male viewers) (Item songs) were used in some middle

cinemas. There are numerous songs in the middle cinema that emerge out of nowhere and do not relate to the scene.

Another aspect that adds to my analysis was the depiction of certain incidents like rape or other violent scenes onscreen. I found the depiction of rape and violent scenes in parallel cinema to be very real, painful and not 'shot aesthetically' as done in middle cinema. In middle cinema (mostly by men) the camera used a stylized angle, where the rape victims face or facial expressions were not properly shown. For instance, in *Lajja*, Vahedehi had impeccable makeup while she was pregnant and running for her life. In most cases the camera did not focus on the women's facial expressions to depict her mental, emotional, and physical agonies. In parallel cinema, the camera shots concentrated more on the facial expressions of the actresses to suggest that she was in pain. For instance, in *Arth*, a close-up shot of Pooja's face make it clear that she is dreading the fact when a man tried to molest her. I found a base for this point in an interview given by Shyam Benegal (a veteran parallel film maker and the pioneer of middle cinema in India), who stated that censorship depends on the power and position of the people. One of his films '*Nisant*' was banned as it had a rape scene. He further added that Mrs Indira Gandhi had found unobjectionable content and requested the censor board to pass it. Despite, the request from the then Indian Prime Minister the movie was given Adult certificate. He also said, "Actress Nargis (a very famous actress of Bollywood, who later joined politics) who was then also a parliamentarian thought that the rape scene in the film was ugly so she emphasized the movie to be given an A certificate. But, I don't understand how one can beautifully re-create a rape scene, an act which itself is considered ugly "(Interview in Times of India, Sept 12, 2012). The same sentiments were

echoed by director Shekhar Kapoor, who was criticized for presenting rape scenes in a brutal manner along with portraying few village girls using curse words against the high-caste men (who were sexual abusers) in his movie *Bandit Queen* (Fay 2011). Thus, all these aspects were missing in middle cinemas; I observed that the middle cinema had more polished language and jargons as compared to the parallel cinema, perhaps to avoid controversy faced by the parallel film makers.

Another important concept I grasped while comparing films from these genres was that in middle cinema when the woman was shown avenging or standing up for herself, she wore costume that covered her whole body. For instance, the actress in *Zakhmi Aurt*, was a police officer, who was gang raped. She wore her police uniform that covered her and she draped a sari in a way that covered her completely while discussing her plans to trap the rapists or while punishing them. Contrary to this, when she was trying to entrap the victims, she wore revealing western outfits or wore the sari in a very revealing way fitting the female body to the male gaze. Similar trends were followed in the movie *Lajja* and *Chingari*. Finally, the movie *Saat Khun Maaf* the most recent film in the list that was released at least after a gap of ten years or more from rest of the movies being discussed in this project. Given the claims of the directors of middle cinema to have become different, I was surprised to see that even in this movie there was nothing new, but it was just old wine in a new bottle. It had incorporated all the ingredients that middle cinema is known for, but the presentation was different with the story line being similar. On the other hand, in the case of parallel cinema, I found that various other bold issues were brought forward like lesbianism, widow prostitution and caste system.

In the end of this comparison, I would like to quote Sabana Azami from one of her interviews on the difference between commercial, middle and parallel cinema. Azami said, “In commercial film you act more than you react. In realistic films you are reacting. Reacting realistically to given situations. Over there you are just acting and in middle you are doing both, with the ‘act’ being more prominent than ‘react’” (Vasudev and Lenglet 1993). She emphasized on the fact that in parallel cinema the actors have to react to the real life situations, whereas in commercial cinema the actors have to act because the situations are far from being real life. In the middle cinema, actors are acting and reacting both at the same time, where its reacting to the situations of real lives but acting with the presentation and props used in the middle cinema to portray serious incidents in a light manner.

The differences are discussed in a tabulated manner below:

Table 2: Differences between Art/Parallel Cinema and Middle Cinema.

Category	Art/Parallel Cinema	Middle Cinema
Makeup, Costumes and Onscreen presentation.	Actresses had minimum or no makeup. The costumes used were not by any renowned designers. The actresses were made look real onscreen.	A lot of efforts were taken in making the actress look beautiful onscreen. The clothes and jewelry they used were by renowned designers.
Songs and Dances.	Songs and dances were used, only if they were relevant to the situation.	Excessive use of songs and dances, like the popular cinema. These films also had ‘Item

		<i>numbers</i> '.
Star-cast	Most of the actresses in these films, began their career in this genre. These actresses do not have all the qualities that qualify them as Indian beauty (for instance, great body, facial features, and most importantly fair complexion).	Most of these actresses are known for their beauty, fair complexion, great body, and dance skills. Most of them had been considered as divas in them commercial cinema. Most of them shot these films towards the end of their career.
Representing the problems, and storyline	Parallel cinema depicts the problems faced by women with a more reality effect. These films have dealt with comparatively bold issues like lesbianism etc.	Majority of middle cinema, have a storyline that begin by showing the women in a happy relationship with a man, unless some surprising incident take place that leads her to take a drastic step.
Location	These films are shot at drab and real locations.	These films are shot at exotic location in India as well as abroad, just like the popular/commercial cinema.
Use of Camera	The camera focus was mainly of the facial expression of the victims that brought forwards	The camera focused on the cues, props, and the semantic to convey the severity of the

	her disgust and agonies after facing the violent incident.	violent incident. Even if the face of the victim was shown, she looked pretty with her makeup intact, just after being abused or assaulted.
Comments by Shabana Azami (a parallel film actress)	Parallel cinema is about reacting to a real situation. In commercial films you act, as there is no reality	In middle cinema, do a bit of both is done. There is act and react effect, as middle cinema is a combination of both the extreme genres of films.

Difference between male and female directors

The films that are being analyzed have male as well as female directors. Four out of nine of these films have female directors. However, two of them have directed two films each that are present in this list. As the literature review has suggested, there are very few female directors or technicians as compared to males in Indian film industry, but Deepa Mehta and Kalpana Lajmi are the most well-known among the few female film-makers in India. They are known for making women-centric films addressing very bold issues. For instance, Deepa Mehta brought forward the idea of lesbianism in her movie *Fire* and widow prostitution in her film *Water*. Similarly, the film *Daman* was about the bitter truth regarding the marital violence that most women face on a regular basis in India. *Chingari* was about a rural prostitute avenging against the religious head

of the village. One of the significant observations, while comparing the films made by male and female directors, is female directors portrayed their actresses as more aggressive individuals. By this, I mean the story line did not suggest or let the viewers feel sorry or sympathetic towards the female characters, unlike the films by male directors, where enough room was left for the audiences to feel sympathetic towards the avenging woman—and thereby supporting her actions.

For instance, in the movie *Saat Khun Maaf*, directed by Vishal Bharadwaj (a famous male director), in the opening scene, a narration says that the actress had some psychological insecurity, as she did not get proper love from her parents at an early age. It further goes on to create sympathy amongst the viewers by showing that the central character, in order to be loved, gets married-- but when she finds that all her husbands torment and abuse her, she kills them.

Also, in *Lajja* the main actress is shown to be a woman who has been abused by her husband. Despite trying her level best, she could not reconcile with her husband. Moreover, she had to flee from her husband as she became aware of the fact that he had planned to kill her as soon as she gave birth to his baby. While watching the film, I found the same emotions being conveyed as it portrayed the plights of other women. For instance, the character played by Rekha, who is very active in protesting against the high caste men (zamindar) in the village, and encouraging the women's education, immediately asks for forgiveness when her son eloped with the zamindar's daughter—and his people were searching for the son to kill him. Here, the 'mother' in character was shown begging for her son's life. Similarly, the dancer/theatre actress (character played by Madhuri Dixit) was initially shown crying and coaxing her fiancé to come back to her

as she did not want to be an unwed mother. The character of the bride (played by Mahima Chaudhury) called off her wedding only after her father had been extremely insulted by the groom's father for a long time. Thus, the male directors no doubt portray women who revolt against all these situations, but they are shown to have a more sad expression rather than anger. I felt that one of the biggest reasons behind this was to evoke a sense of sympathy to attract more audiences. In fact, there is a scene that upholds this idea, in an election campaign where the zamindar (who raped Rekha and killed her) is one of the candidates contesting the election; Vahdehi (played by Manisha Koirala) delivers a heart-warming and sympathetic speech stating his rape acts. This angers the audiences especially the women who ferociously stone him to death. The film ends in showing that all the protagonists form a NGO for women. Now, I felt that the ending was made to remain happy and neutral, just to avoid any controversy.

Similarly, in the movie *Zakhmi Auarat*, after the actress was raped, she suffered a lot emotionally. Her sufferings were held very sympathetically to the audience to an extent, where she had taken the decision to quit the job of a police inspector. She did not resign from the job, only because she was encouraged by her fiancé to continue with it. Further, her parents-in-law were unwilling to accept a rape-victim as their daughter-in-law. I also felt, this whole thing added to the emotional quotient of the audiences as well, leaving them to sympathize with her. Another thing that struck me was the sorority of women she formed had women, who were either rape victims themselves or had loved ones, who had been raped. Therefore, these women came forward to avenge the rapists. Almost all of the victims were shown crying that conveyed their feeling of helplessness after this incident. These victims also confessed that they were ill-treated by the society

and had to undergo severe difficulties, and to add to their miseries, it was an insult to the families to have a rape victim at home. All these led many rape victims to commit suicide, just to save their families from this disgrace. These women proved themselves to be different from the rest of the films, by not ending their lives, but nevertheless, the directors made sure that they had incorporated enough elements to create sympathy for these women amongst the viewers. The main motive behind this could be to let the viewers have a sense of sympathy towards these victims, thus rationalizing their actions. I personally felt that this act of gaining sympathy, was a calculated step taken not to annoy the audiences in general, especially the male audiences (as they are more in number). This point found its base in one scene, where the actress after having been raped, made a statement about how these rapists would feel, if their sister, mother or daughter had to go through the same trauma. Interesting that pity is acceptable, but anger is not. Pity seems to neutralize the effort to change things, making the injustice individual, while anger seems to generalize from one woman's plight to that of all women. Although, both male and female directors aim at criticizing social oppression against women in such films, I strongly feel that male directors give this message out in a very discreet fashion by evoking pity against the particular character onscreen (this could be an attempt not to anger the male audiences). By contrast, the women directors try to give a very real description of social oppression. This depiction on-screen causes a vicarious feeling amongst the women in the audience, as they can identify the injustice in their lives with the character on screen.

In the similar fashion, *Bandit Queen*, one of the landmarks of parallel cinema portraying an avenging woman, director Kapur used a lot of tools to call for pity from

amongst the audiences. For instance, he emphasized on the fact that Devi was raped several times, and she became a dacoit to take revenge from her rapists and men belonging to their caste. This is no doubt a great assumption, but Kapur could have also tackled other factors, like the poverty issues she faced, with equal importance. Instead, he had over-emphasized on the rape and sex scenes. This claim was also supported by Fay (2011, p. 118). Kapur was very harshly criticized by the Indian feminists for his over usage of sex scenes in the film, and Devi herself was upset at the playing up of the sexual abuse factor, and she added that the not all of it was real.

However, Bhatt proved himself to be an atypical director, because his portrayal of the women character was a combination of ingredients used by the male as well the female directors. His film, *Arth*, portrayed two women, one a middle class woman who divorced her husband because of infidelity, and went out to fend for herself. The second one was a maidservant, falling below the poverty line; she surrendered herself for murdering her drunkard, gambler, and abusive husband. Regardless of this portrayal, I feel that the director very surreptitiously tried to cash in on the sympathy factor. For instance, in one of the scenes, right after the husband moves out to be with his girlfriend, the wife goes to his office and asks for forgiveness from her husband, and urges him to get back to her. Similarly, in one of the initial scenes, the maid's husband was beating her, but when her master tried to save her and was about to call the police to arrest the husband for beating his wife, the maid, like an ideal wife, fell at her master's feet and requested the master to forgive her husband, as she did not want him to be imprisoned. On the other hand, Bhatt very intelligently and effortlessly negated the sympathy factor, by showing the housewife rebuking herself for apologizing for her husband, and she

informs her husband through a letter that she had decided to leave his house to be on her own. Moreover, he also destroyed the scope for arousing any sympathy for the maid's actions because the maid killed her husband for stealing her savings that she had planned towards her daughter's education rather than because he used to beat her and abuse her on a regular basis. A possible reason behind this could be the music director and the editor of this movie were women. Another important reason could be the era in which the movie was shot; India had a female Prime Minister, who took active interest in women's issues, and this could be an attempt to please her.

In contrast to traditional male directors, films like *Chingari*, *Fire*, *Water* and *Daman* that were directed by women had used the sentimental aspect much less than their male counterparts. Moreover, they tried to convey the message that these women were very brave, and they could do without garnering sympathy. For example, in *Chingari*, the actress kills the head priest not because he had sexually abused her for years but because he had killed her fiancé. In *Fire* the central characters are shown to get involved in a homosexual relationship by choice, and in the end they decide to leave their home and live with each other. *Water* portrays the guts of a widow to flee out with another younger widow in order to save her from the world of prostitution. In fact, the widow Kalyani (Lisa Ray) commits suicide not because the whole world is aware of her profession, but she strongly feels that it would be unethical to marry one of her clientele's sons. In both the films *Water* and *Chingari*, both the central characters have been prostitutes to the priest and zamindars exclusively, but throughout the entire films, the actresses are shown keeping the abusive nature of these men clandestine by not discussing it or by not emoting it. Similarly, in *Daman* the gutsy behavior of the wife is applauded as she runs

away with her daughter and later kills her husband – in order to remove his bad influence out of her daughter’s life. This step could be considered as vital, because she disregarded the absence of a father-figure from her daughter’s life, rather she concentrated on removing the dominance of a drunkard and abusive man from her daughter’s life for the daughter’s betterment.

The other major finding, portrayal of the sex scene and the exposure of female body were way less elaborate and illustrious in films by women directors. This observation also provoked me to notice that whenever a rape scene was shown in the films having male directors, the facial expression of the women were not shown well. For instance, in *Zakahmi Auart*, when the actress was shown being gang-raped, her hair was constantly shown falling on her face. A sort of fight scene conveyed that the woman was being raped. After the rape, the victim was shown crying but in *Chingari* and *Daman*, the fact these women were disgusted or were undergoing severe pain was clearly shown through their facial expressions. Similarly, in movies like *Bandit Queen*, *Saat Khun Maaf* and *Lajja*, the fact that the women were being raped were depicted by focusing more on the overtly exposing their certain body parts, but their facial expressions or the fact the women were undergoing severe pain were implied through the use of props. For instance, in *Lajja*, Rekha’s back is being exposed to the audiences, and she is heard screaming while she is being raped. Then, the rapist is shown coming out of the house and setting it on fire, while Rekha is heard shouting for help. On the same lines, in *Saat Khun Maaf*, Chopra is shown using make-up or a veil to cover-up her bruises, that resulted from her being beaten up by her husband.

As making movies is a collective process, special attention was also paid on the screenwriter, producers, music directors and other funding sources of these movies. I clearly noted that the movies by male directors had funding from famous producers and/or production companies. As a matter of fact, most of these films earned a lot of revenues from some of the leading commercial brands by advertising certain products of those brands. On the other hand, the films by female directors had to face loads of difficulties in finding private financiers. For instance, Kalpana Lajmi's *Daman* ended up being funded and distributed by National Development Film Corporation (NDFC), a government program offering much less money. She also served as the screenwriter and storywriter of the film. In addition to the funding problem, most of her technicians, who were men, aggravated her miseries because they were either new to the business or did not deliver quality work. Lajmi was lambasted by critics for portraying the central character to be very aggressive and opinionated. Along with this, her films were slandered on the technical grounds. Lajmi, angrily addressed these issues in an interview, where she said, "it's easy for someone to slash a woman-centric film. They don't see what goes into making a film. And with the kind of budget we get, what do they expect us to make? Even if we get half the money that producers of commercial films get, we can create wonders" (TOI, September 7, 2001). Contrary to the rest of the crew, Hazarika-- the music director of the film known for creating Assamese folk music --did not give the director any tough time, and he was a pleasure to work with. An important fact deserves a special mention here Hazarika due to his age was not as busy with commitments, and this allowed him to devote more time and concentration to this project (Hindustan Times November, 2011). Moreover, his romantic relationship with Lajmi is

much known as they have been living together for the past three decades (Lajmi's interview to IANS February 20, 2009). Besides this, she also complained in another interview, that she had to go through equally difficult situations to manage funds for *Chingaari*. In *Chingaari*, Lajmi served as the director, story writer and she partly produced the film too. She expressed her disgust over her male stars as well as the technicians, who were very uncooperative and difficult to manage. Lajmi felt that a huge part of this behavior stemmed from male chauvinism and ego, where they felt challenged and insulted to take instructions from a woman. She further added, one of the male stars in the movie had shown absolutely no commitment towards his work, and for the most part he came drunk on the sets. Lajmi, while expressing her frustrations on the unfavorable situations that female directors face, added that she was even verbally abused by this particular star because she had urged him to maintain basic professional ethics and manners on the sets. Apart from this, she confessed that the other male lead and also the debutant, was very difficult to manage. In addition to his arrogance, his non-existent acting skills, made the situation extremely difficult for the director. He had been given the opportunity mainly because his father had produced a part of the film. Moreover, Lajmi added, she had approached numerous male stars, but none of them agreed to work in a women-centric film that was being made by a female. The music director of the film, Aadesh Srivastav, also behaved very unprofessionally, and tormented her by not giving the film its minimum due. He paid the least attention to this film, and concentrated more on other projects (Glamsham Magazine 2007). Apart from this, the literature review section discusses the problems faced by Deepa Mehta, while working on her films. Her films faced oppression in India and they were even banned. However, finding funding

sources was comparatively easier for Mehta, she being a Canadian citizen used her western connections to fund the movies. This also enabled her to hire better technicians from the western film industry. Moreover, she used the most famous Indian music director, named A.R Rahman(music director of *Slumdog Millionaire*) for her film *Water* and *Fire*. Here, I think a possible reason could be that Rahman treated this opportunity more as a vehicle to get a foothold in the Hollywood industry, as he was trying to go global for a long time. *Water* was nominated in the Oscar awards and Rahman got recognition in Hollywood too.

In the end, I would summarize my observations: women directors were more sensitive and brave in their portrayal of women characters and issues. In fact, the women directors had a detailed analysis of certain challenging issues, like fighting against a religious leader, prostitution, and finding ways to live life their way. I was also amazed, as a viewer, how bravely these women directors portrayed their characters without making them a subject of sympathy to the viewers—this was a stark contrast to their male counterparts. Also, I could sense a stronger desire to fight for justice amongst the characters of the woman directors, as opposed to the films of their male counterparts.

Further, I noticed a greater tenacity amongst the woman characters from the films of woman directors to emerge as winners even in the most challenging situations. I think an important reason behind this could be the fact that the women directors, through their films subtly tried to convey the message: despite going through a lot of challenges during the filming process, they were not discouraged. Rather they took all of them in their stride and successfully finished these films and also received various awards.

The differences are listed in the table below:

Table 3: Difference between Male and Female Directors

Category	Male Directors	Female Directors
Portrayal of incidents, and the reaction of women.	They portray the incidents that women face with a lot of sadness. Therefore, they try to evoke a sense of pity amongst the viewers to rationalize her actions.	They portray women as much stronger characters. They evoke a sense of anger for the social injustice that the women face. Therefore, they try to evoke a sense of reverence towards these characters because the brave step they take to fight such injustice.
Characterization of actresses.	The characters are initially shown to be docile, they revolt only when are pushed to the extreme limits.	The characters are shown to be self-opinioned, brave and aggressive.
Role of financiers and technicians.	The male directors have had little, if any, problems in getting financiers for their films. The technicians have co-operated. On the whole, the entire process has been devoid of any difficulties.	The female directors have faced great troubles in finding financiers or producers for their films. These directors have also worked in various other capacities like screenwriters, producers, etc. They have faced numerous problems from the

		male actors as well as male technicians, while shooting.
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Narrative and Semantic

Another important category that I included in this section was the narrative and semantic used in these films. I will divide this observation into three parts: first, the concept of narrative semantic in Hindi movies, second, how they are used in these films, and finally how the semantic contradicts the narrative.

Narration and semantics are an important part of any Indian cinema. In India, with a huge bulk of the population still living below the poverty line, owning television or having cable connection might not be possible for a sizeable chunk of people. Cable and television are more expensive than buying a ticket to a movie hall once in a while. According to Abbas and Sathe (1985), India is a country where a very small percent of the total population can read or afford to buy newspapers on a daily basis. Thus, the major source to seek entertainment is through watching films in movie halls (talkies). People, irrespective of their social and economic status, invest in watching films in movie halls. They go to the movie halls to watch the narration and they are drawn to the movie halls by the semantics of still pictures of the cast from the movies, that are found stuck all over the streets, public transports and on the billboards. So, Hindi films shown at the talkies serve as the most popular form of entertainment and education to the largest part of the population.

Narration techniques have varied from dialogues, songs, background music, voice over and even dances. In Hindi cinema, song and dances play a very important role in narration. On the other hand, semantics have also played a very vital role in the over-all shaping of these films. According to Hayward (2000), semantics refers to the study of signs and pictures. These movies have heavily relied on semantics. Especially, in India still photographs of the movies have played a very substantial role. To illustrate this, I would like to bring forward that posters of the movies, carrying still pictures be found everywhere. Growing up in India, I know that advertisement of the films in print is one of the major sources to attract the audiences. In fact, the best looking pictures of the actresses or actors from the films are put on these posters.

Semantics and narratives are extremely intertwined in the process of filmmaking. Dwyer and Patel (2002, pp.8) have emphasized, not only does Indian cinema reflect everyday reality, but also it has become a part of everyone's existence. According to Chilania (2009), around 11,639 posters of numerous sizes are published every year. Pendakur (2003, pp.116), says, that in popular Hindi cinema, directors for the most part convey their ideas or portray the popular taste through the use of semantics provoking the most probable narratives in the minds of the viewers. For instance, a love making scene is not very explicitly shown onscreen, some songs or pictures showing the woman's bare back hugging a man is used to make this clear. Another illustration to add to this, would be the murder scene, instead of showing a person being stabbed to death; the murderer is shown holding the dagger that is followed by flow of blood.

However, there are certain places where narrative and semantics contradict each other that are discussed below. This can be further illustrated, the film *Hum Aapke Hain*

Koun, was a family drama, where a major part of the story had revolved around death and depression, but none of the posters had ever revealed this. All the pictures in the posters showed either a romantic scene between the actor and the actress or the picture of all the family members, happily enjoying life. Similarly, in the movie ‘*Kya Kehna*’, the posters all over depicted that it was a love triangle between two actors and one actress—who belonged to a very loving and doting family. Contrary to this whole depiction by the semantic, the actual narrative was about was mainly based on the idea of pre-marital pregnancy, and the tremendous harsh consequences the girl faced, as she decided to give birth to her child, instead of aborting it. (Note, pre-marital pregnancy, and unwed mothers are considered to a huge taboo in India). But none of the posters even gave a slightest hint about the actual storyline.

The movies that I am analyzing, like any other Hindi films, have a great influence of narratives and semantics. In all of the movies, still pictures of the beautiful actresses were shown. For instance, in *Lajja*, still pictures or the posters (semantics) had pictures of all the four actresses looking extremely gorgeous or images of the four beautiful ladies along with very sophisticated and good-looking men. For a better insight, I observed all the still pictures of the movie that were available online along with the pictures that were on the cover of the films DVD. None of these pictures ever suggested that the actual story (narration) was about the struggle of the women in India. Rather, the most convincing narration as suggested by semantics that came to my mind as a viewer of these still photographs about *Lajja*—it was a typical Bollywood film featuring four breath-taking charming actresses and three handsome men. When I tried to analyze the each of those still pictures, I found that in most of the pictures, two of these actresses were shown

interacting with each other, mostly one being Vahdehi (protagonist), along with the other women she met on her journey. These pictures mainly communicated various things that were antithetical to the actual narration. In one of the pictures she was shown talking with a smile on her face to Janaki. The semantic can persuade the viewers into believing that these two ladies share camaraderie, and are enjoying their chit-chat session to the fullest. However, in reality, these two women have met each other for the first time, and Vahdehi is discussing about her problems with Janaki, as she is asking Janaki to give her shelter, and help her to hide from her husband for the time being. On the other hand, Janaki is assuring Vahdehi to provide her with an accommodation. Moreover, at the same time she is advising Vahdehi to take certain calculated steps against her husband in order to teach him a lesson. Similarly, in the other picture, Vahdehi was shown very affectionately hugging Raam dulari. Therefore, the semantic used in these pictures can quite likeably convey that Vahdehi is hugging her dear friend as gesture of love or she hugged her out of joy and excitement. However, in reality narration behind this picture is that Vahdehi has just met Raamdulari, as she was brought to her because she is pregnant, and Raamdulari is a midwife. Vahdehi relates her painful story to Raamdulari, and requests Raamdulari to help her. Raamdulari is moved by hearing about Vahdehi's pathetic story. Therefore, she hugs Vahedhi to comfort her, and promises to help her at the same time. Contrary to the pictures, they are neither close friends nor close acquaintances.

While I focused on the still pictures of the men in the film, I interpreted them to be very polished, professional, well-settled and ravishing from their appearance on the pictures. However, the semantic contradicts the narrative once more here. In reality, one of the men is Vahdehi's husband who is a rich doctor, but he is very inhuman.

Furthermore, he looks polished, but he is extremely unrefined and abusive by nature. He speaks very roughly in abusive languages, not only with his wife, but also with his other people around him. In addition to this, out of the other two male characters: one is a petty thief, and the other is a robber. Both of them are uneducated and extremely crass in reality. The last and the final picture available caught my attention. It was a sole picture of Vahdehi (Manisha Koirala) on the poster, along with the tagline said, “Not just a slick chick flick!”. Despite this tagline, the semantics in this picture failed to backup the actual narrative, and thereby ended up contradicting each other. The semantic here, were not suggestive of the actual narrative facts. It remained unsuccessful in explaining the main narrative of the movie, about women who chose to protest against the violence that they face, instead of just tolerating the ill-treatment. Rather, from the analysis of all these pictures, I was encouraged to conclude that the film narrated the story of four beautiful women and their friendship, interaction, fun times along with three very polished and good-looking heroes. The last picture with this tagline drove the shaped the idea that the probability for this film to be a ‘right-out college romance’ was almost nil. The main reason was the cast was not “young”, and particularly the actresses, who were aging and were shedding their girlish charm. The pictures of four actresses on the upper part in one of the posters and three men right below them, made me comprehend that this could be a love story of three middle-aged couple, along with one of their best-friends who was shown to be single. This was an absolute contradiction to the actual narration, because the protagonist was not friends with any of these actresses. She met them, while she was trying to escape from her husband. Each of these women was facing various problems from the society. In fact, none of the four women knew each other; as they were based in

different towns and villages. (Note, in the last scene Janki and Maithili are shown to be members at a women's organization, but both of them never met Ramdulari, as she was killed). As far as the men are concerned, one of them was Vahedhi's husband, whereas the other two were anti-socials by profession.

In an equivalent manner, the use of semantics also contradicted the narratives in the film *Arth*. I analyzed all the five still photographs available online. The first still picture/poster had all the four characters of the movie in it. This poster clearly portrayed Smita Patil (Kiran) to be a modern woman wearing western dresses (western dresses were considered to be the sign of being modern, especially in the eighties. This holds true today but the intensity has reduced a lot), and cozily hugging Kulbhusan Kharbanda (Inder). The semantic here made the narrative clear, Kiran and Inder were deeply in love and most possibly married. The next picture strongly reaffirmed this claim, as Kiran was shown lying on the bed while Inder hugging her from the back. (Note, in most Indian film, especially during the eighties, physical relation before marriage was considered to a big taboo. Thus, none of the films showed unmarried couples making love, even today to a large extent this trend continues). However, the semantics in the first poster presents Sabana Azami (Puja) to be a beautiful and a traditional woman, as she is wearing salwar kameez (a traditional Indian dress). Her makeup and looks in this picture make it crystal clear that she belongs to middle class.

In another picture she is shown sitting at a distance from Raj Kiran (Raj)- the other actor-and is in a conversation with him- and he has guitar in his hand. In the next picture, Kiran along and Pooja are placed on the upper part of the poster, while Inder's picture is in the bottom part, somewhat placing him in between these two leading ladies.

Therefore, I positioned my analysis, on the very basic outline of the narratives of Hindi films using such semantics. For illustration, I would like to use the demonstration given by Hayward (2000) in her analysis of semantics. Whenever, in America (or worldwide) one sees the picture of young Marilyn Monroe, it is thought that the film will endorse her beauty, glamour, and sexuality. On the other hand, the picture of old Monroe would suggest her drug abuse and depression. However, in many movies, especially in the narration has not always been about the factors mentioned above.

Therefore, while analyzing the narratives of this film based on semantics provided by these pictures, it presented various possibilities. First, the pictures with the two leading ladies, and one man in between, encouraged me to assume the most possible narration. For instance, it could be a love –triangle, where both women are in love with the same man, and the man doesn't love either of them (this is a very common ingredient in Hindi film, where the man loves a third woman). Second, from the pictures, it could be interpreted that these women could be friends in love with the same guy, but the guy loves one girl. Therefore, on knowing this, the other friend sacrifices and does not reveal her feelings. Third, the guy loves one girl but she doesn't love him, so he chooses to be with the other woman who loves her. Furthermore, as Inder and Kiran were shown sharing an intimate moment, the audiences were provoked to think that these two were married. However, the presence of the other woman (Puja) on the poster made it very clear that she had played a vital part in Kiran and Inder's love story. The actual narration of the story, Puja's husband Inder has left her to be with his beloved Kavita. Inder and Kavita have a live –in relationship leading them to share physical intimacy. On the similar lines, the semantics also contradicted the actual narration of Raj's character, his

pictures in the posters suggested that Kiran and Inder had little or no interaction with Raj. As he was shown to be occupying a tiny corner in the posters, deceived the audiences into believing—he was either a guest-artist or a support for the lovelorn Pooja. Although, the semantic and narration were congruent in suggesting that Raj had no interaction with Inder and Kiran, he was not a side-artist. Rather, he was one of the most powerful characters in this film. He had provided Pooja the strength and courage to withstand the brunt of having a philandering husband, and coping with other problems of separation at various levels.

Moreover, in another picture Kiran, Pooja and Inder are shown together. Pooja is shown standing in between Kiran and Inder, where Pooja and Kiran are looking at each other. The women are holding each other's hands, while Inder is holding Pooja as she is almost falling. The only message, comprehended regarding the narration as emanated from the semantic of this picture, could be Pooja she is falling, as she stepped over something. So, in order to save herself from falling Pooja is holding on to Kiran's hands for support--and Inder is holding Pooja from the back to save her from falling down. However, none of these still pictures express the real narration. The reality behind this picture is diametrically opposite from the still photographs. Actually, Pooja is invited to a party where she meets Kiran, who has been accompanied by Inder. Pooja holds Kiran's hand in utter disgust and curses her to be a 'witch' and a 'home-breaker'. Kiran is extremely dismayed by Pooja's demeanor, and she tries to free her hands. In the meantime, Inder comes there, and threatens Pooja to leave Kiran. Pooja refuses to do so, as a result, he holds her from the back, and forcibly tries to pull away Pooja to relieve

Kiran. Here is another instance from this movie, where semantics have contradicted the narration.

Concentrating on the narration the picture where Pooja is shown sitting with Raj, the semantics give rise to various ideas: First, these two people could be very close friends having a music session played by the man on his guitar. Second, they could be in a romantic relationship, where the man is singing to his ladylove. The actual narration of this picture is contradictory to the semantics. Raj, an aspiring singer, expresses his disgust of not having enough to mend his only guitar that has broken. Raj is in love Puja, but he expresses his love for her in the last scene of the film by showing his willingness to marry her. However, throughout the entire film he very efficiently camouflages his romantic inclination towards Puja.

On the whole, none of the pictures on the posters ever suggested or even gave a slightest hint of the narration regarding the real story line. The actual story was about an extremely bold step taken by a wife to deal with her unfaithful husband. Instead of forgiving him and making amends with him, she decides to not return to her husband and dedicate her whole life towards the upbringing of her maid-servant's child all by herself.

I also analyzed the still photographs from the movie *Saat Khun Maaf*. There were around fifteen pictures available. In two of those pictures, the actress was placed in the middle of the poster, with the six actors around her, and the number '7' was written in red. As the number seven means *saat* in Hindi. Thus, it was clear from the title that this film had seven characters. So, the semantic and narrative regarding these two posters gave out the same interpretation in two ways. First, one of these posters had six men and with their dresses signifying their profession. For instance, the man shown wearing an

army uniform, portrayed the role of an army officer. The other actor who acted as a singer in the movie was represented singing in front of the microphone in the poster. The picture of the actresses was placed in the center of the poster, with all the six men around her, and the number 7 was written across the face of this poster in red. This poster clearly indicated that the all the six men had some sort of a relationship with her, and the number 7 in red had some special connotation. On analyzing the a few other pictures, the semantics there demonstrate, the actress (Susanna) getting married in various customs to all these six men, as she was wearing different bridal dresses. Furthermore, the pictures also displayed her sharing moments of intimacy with these men. Therefore, the semantics clearly depict that she is happily married with all the men and enjoys her time with the doting husbands. The narrative and semantics support each other by stating that she was married to these men, and all of them belonging to different religions as well as profession. However, the main contradiction in the narrative and semantics came, when Susanna's unhappy married life, and the extremely torturous nature of her husbands was revealed. The number 7 in red, and especially, the manner which was suggested by the semantics, could lead the audiences of Hindi movies into the most predictable narratives of such pictures. Generally, Hindi movies have a popular trend of casting the actors/actresses in double or more roles, the title and the presentation on the poster would mislead the audiences into thinking that the actress is playing seven roles. Moreover, the emphasis on the number seven could be mythological associated. According to Hinduism, a human being is reincarnated seven times, and numerous Hindi movies have been developed around the concept of seven lives and reincarnation. So, another possibility of the narrative based on the semantic might also lead the viewers into

thinking that the story could revolve around the life of a woman and her marriage in all seven births. This assumption gets stronger as the other posters/still pictures shows her in different outfits representing various religions and era. For instance, in one picture she is shown wearing a salwar kameez with her head covered like an orthodox muslim lady, whereas in the next picture, she wears a skimpy outfit that is akin to the identity of today's modern and urban Indian girl. The analysis of the last picture in the list deserves a special mention; Susanna had a revolver in her hand, and she was sitting on a chair. However, this picture does not suggest from anywhere, that she trying to kill anybody because her hands are not on the trigger of the revolver, and no one is shown to be around her. However, in reality, this semantic contradicts the narration very strongly here, as she shoots one of her husbands to death, who is sitting right across the breakfast table from her.

Thus, in summary of the findings and analysis of this film, I found that most of the semantics used (still pictures) contradicted the actual narration. Each and every still picture suggested that the story was about a beautiful woman happily married to all these men (with possibility of this depicting her married life from seven different lifetime or she could be possibly leading seven roles). Contrary to the much suggested idea by semantics, the narrative of this film was about one woman belonging to the same lifetime--who gets married to all these men belonging to different religions and professions for love. However, to her utter dismay, she is extremely physically, mentally and emotionally abused by each of her husbands. Although, she tries very hard with them, she is unable to accomplish her mission. Therefore, unable to tolerate this torture on a regular basis, she kills all of them and avenges the ill-treatment that she underwent.

Therefore, number 7 is red as suggested by semantic does not mean marrying seven birth (as red is the color of marriage or married women), rather it the red in the narrative signifies blood and depicts that she has killed six men, now on her way to fill the seventh.

In the ends her life by surrendering to God and donates her entire wealth for the betterment of an orphan kid.

In the similar manner, I am analyzing the role of narratives and semantics in *Chingaari*, *Daman*, *Fire*, and *Water*. These movies have a major thing in common. All the films are directed by women, who have also contributed in many other capacities. I had to limit my analysis of narratives and semantics based on the very few number of still pictures that were available.

Out of the four still pictures from the film *Chingaari*, that was available. Basanti (played by Sushmita Sen), looked (made to look) extremely attractive and beautiful. Her images on these still pictures absolutely had no resemblance with the character of a poor prostitute living in a rural area that she had depicted.

In addition to this, one of the still pictures (semantics) presented her sharing an intimate moment with the postman. She looked gorgeous, as her long flowing hair left open, and she had a red bindi on (a dot on the forehead). From this still picture, the audiences claim the narrative to be on the lines of her being happily married, and in love with the postman, as it is clear from the fact that she is wearing the red bindi (one of the insignias of a married woman). The narrative and semantics partly keep up with each other, as Basanti was madly in love with him. However, most of this semantic, contradicted the actual narration, as Basanti is unmarried. She is a prostitute by profession--so she wears the red bindi, and keeps her hair open, probably to attract

clientele, as these two are considered to be signs of extreme femininity and attraction for men. Furthermore, this poster could also serve as a business gimmick, as the still- picture of an attractive and young couple making love have proven to attract more audiences (as posters of films are stuck all over the streets in India).

In another still picture Bhuvan Panda (played by Mithun Chakravorty) is wearing saffron color robe. The semantics suggest an image of an extremely devoted priest, who surrenders his life to service of God. According to Hinduism, Priests of the highest regard and commitment towards the service of God wear the saffron colored robe. So, going by that assumption, the priest in the picture depicted to be a devoted worshipper. The semantics partly conveyed of the actual narrative. No doubt, Bhuvan Panda played the role of a Priest, but the semantics contradicted the narrative, when the characteristic traits of the Priest were revealed. In reality, it was about a selfish, arrogant, and violent priest. Moreover, he was a sadist by nature, and had he had a voracious appetite for sex. Note, Priests of this stature are celibates, and they do not give in any carnal pleasures, but none of the pictures implied the real nature of this priest. It would impossible for the viewers of the poster to comprehend this aspect of the Priest's nature, as it is diametrically opposite to what Priests of this stature are known for. Moreover, Priests of this calibre are known to be self-sacrificing and pleasant by nature. However, the reality that the story presented Panda was far from being any of these, he used Basanti to fulfill his lustful desires. Furthermore, he obtained immense gratification by raping and inflicting pain on her.

As the actual twist in the narration comes when Basanti falls in love with the new postman of the village, and they decide to tie the knot. On coming to know of this, the

priest kills the postman and in turn gets killed by Basanti. However, on viewing the semantics the most possible narrative that can be derived is that Basanti and the postman is a couple, of whom the priest approves of or showers them with blessings. As discussed above that the semantics is not suggestive of the actual narration.

The film *Daman* also followed the same path like *Chingaari*. Out of the most circulated still pictures, the actual narration could not be derived from any of these pictures or what the semantics suggested. The actual narration or storyline is based on a victim of marital violence--who kills her husband to protect her daughter from a father, who is willing to ruin her life. Instead, in all the pictures the actress was made to look very attractive; most of her pictures available in the form of posters had her in bridal dress, where she was decked up with great costumes and jewelry, and this added to her beauty and attraction. None of the pictures give even a slightest hint about the immense torture and pains that she suffers as she is in an extremely abusive marriage.

In one of the pictures, where she looks very gorgeous, she is shown looking into the mirror and putting on the vermillion and the man is shown standing at the back, with his reflection in the mirror. While trying to infer a possible narration from this semantic, the audiences can easily interpret it to be a scene, where the husband is admiring his wife's beauty, as she is getting ready for some occasion. However, the actual narration is in contradiction with the semantics. As the man standing behind the actress is her brother-in-law, who is standing outside her room, and trying to sympathize with her because of his brother's abusive nature. Therefore, in these examples clearly narratives and semantics contradict each other.

Focusing on Deepa Mehta's *Water*, Mehta boasted of portraying the characters without makeup onscreen. Having a fairly good idea about the film's storyline, and Mehta's claim to make the actresses look real, I had hoped that the semantic would be suggestive of the actual narrative. Therefore, I started my analysis by looking at the very few still pictures and posters that were available. Moreover, there were not enough posters or still pictures of this movie available, as it was banned in India for various cultural and religious reasons-- that have been discussed in great detail in the literature review.

In all the still pictures, all the characters of *Water* had worn a completely white saree without any design on it. The costume suggested that this story narrated the story of widows belonging to the pre-independence era. In another picture, a little girl was shown wearing a white saree, with her head shaved, and she was standing by a river. In this case, the semantics of this picture kept up with the narration of the actual storyline. The little girl named Chuiya, played one of the pivotal roles of the movie. Chuiya was a child widow because due to various societal norms she was a victim of child marriage, and her husband had died due to old age. In this picture, her actual marital status is depicted, and she is shown standing on the banks of a river. The semantics also accurately shows that as a widow, Chuiya also lives in a widow home situated on the banks of river Ganga.

On the other hand, the main actress Kalyani (played by Lisa Ray) wore a white saree, but she was made to look extremely attractive. The depiction of a white saree in the poster implied that a part of narration was about the beautiful and young widow. However, playing up the attractive part suggested otherwise; the viewers of this poster could be tempted to think that this film narrates the beauty of a widow. This factor was

made stronger by keeping her long black beautiful hair open. Contrary to the storyline suggested by the semantics, the actual narration was about a young widow, who was made to look unattractive because of her widowhood. Kalyani, had her hair cropped or shaved in the major parts of the film.

I also noticed that deliberate efforts had been made by presenting the semantics in such a manner that they contradict the narrative. For instance, in one of the pictures Kalyani's head was covered with her saree in such a way, that it would be impossible for anybody who has not watched this film, to fathom that she is bald, or has her hair cropped in an unattractive manner, just like any other widow of that era. The semantics of another picture portrayed Kalyani wearing a white saree, but her shoulder and a little part of her cleavage were exposed. The styling of the actress subtly suggests that she is sexy, but in the entire movie she is wearing the saree, the way the widows are expected to wear them, covering her body fully. The semantics in these pictures are trying to emphasize the fact in every way that she is a sexy and beautiful widow, who does not follow the expected norm of looking ugly. On the other hand, the narration is about a young and beautiful widow, who is depressed with her fate, and follows the norms of looking unattractive, as per the expectations of society. Furthermore, another aspect that I found contradicted the narrative, as the picture of the widow Shankuntala (played by Seema Biswas), another pivotal character in the film was missing from the semantics. An important observation that crossed my mind, Biswas, otherwise a great actress, has been criticized for her plain Jane looks. A possible reason for her being not in posters could be that she does not have the looks to titillate or attract the audiences that Lisa Ray has.

As a concluding comment to the analysis of *Water*, I would like to mention that the semantics have contradicted the narrative in most places, and the depiction of the women as gorgeous and sexually attractive on posters has even occurred here.

On a similar line, I analyzed the movie *Fire* by the same director. This film revolves around the issue of lesbianism in a middle-class family. Moreover, Mehta once again bragged to present the actresses in very ordinary and middle-class looks. While, watching the narration, I witnessed that for the most part the actresses looked quite simple and believable. For instance, unlike most other Hindi films, they were not noticeably wearing make-up or good clothes, while performing everyday household chores. In a couple of places in the narration, the actresses were shown decked out for special occasions. However, the semantics of the pictures suggested otherwise. The still pictures that were circulated online or found on the cover of the film's DVD had used still pictures of the actresses where they had been dressed up and looked very beautiful. The other still picture emphasized the actresses looking beautiful, as it had Nandita Das wearing her bridal trousseau.

The semantics of the other set of pictures depict a great level of friendship between two women, and at the same time these two women are shown with their husbands in these posters. The viewers of the Indian audience can easily believe the narrative of the plot to be about the friendship of women, who have happy marital life. In contradiction to the semantics, the narrative is about two women who are extremely unhappy in their married life. Further, none of these women share a conjugal relationship with their husband--as one of them is trying to be a priest, and is practicing celibacy, whereas the other woman's husband has an extra-marital relationship. In addition to this,

a movie narrating lesbianism cannot cross the minds of most people in India, as lesbianism is not a very common phenomenon. Moreover, it is considered to be a taboo in Indian society. Therefore, while watching the movie and the picture, it is quite clear that the narrative extremely contradicts the semantics.

Apart from this, the semantics also suggest that these women are extremely affluent, as they appear to be very polished and dressy in the posters. However, the narration reveals that in reality, they belong to a middle class family, not having as much exposure to be as polished and refined as suggested by the semantics. Finally, the tagline across the poster says, “Bold, sumptuous, and taboo breaking”. The women are presented as very alluring, classy, and refined. By looking at this picture, it would be very hard for the viewers of this poster to decipher the actual narration of the storyline. Rather, the picture along with the tagline encourages the audience to comprehend the narration of the story to revolve around two good looking women, from a rich household, who have proven their mettle or prowess in their professional lives--or have taken some tough decision of not supporting the mistakes of the most important men (son, father, or husband) in their lives.

Therefore, while summarizing the use of narrative and semantics by the women directors, I was surprised to notice that even in the most typical women centric movies by women directors, the semantic of the plot contradicted the narratives in most places. The most important observation to prove this claim is that in all the posters the female characters have looked (or are made to look) very sexually attractive and beautiful. On the other hand, the narratives mainly revolved around the various hardships that they face at each and every level. Thus, it was very disappointing to observe that even the female

film directors--whose films addressed very bold issues--had conformed to the parochial practice of using the semantics, narratives, and their contradictions, in order to attract audiences.

The other two movies that were analyzed on these grounds were *Zakhmi Aurt* and *Bandit Queen*. *Zakhmi Aurt*, a middle cinema, ought to differ from *Bandit Queen*, which is considered as a parallel film. The analysis in the next two paragraphs.

First, the still photographs of *Zakhmi Aurt* portrayed Kiran (played by Dimple Kapadia) as the main protagonist. The photo of semantics backs up the narration by showing Kiran in a police uniform. However, none of the pictures portray a close resemblance to the actual narrative, where she is a police inspector as well as a rape victim. The narration of this film focuses on her decision to punish the rapists and seek revenge from them, who are not penalized by the law. The film is mainly about portraying the pains of the rape victims, but the film does not address this issue adequately by their use of semantics. For instance, in the film the rape scenes have been edited and various semantics have been used to portray the act as extremely less severe as compared to real life. For illustration, the rape victims have been shown just crying instead of showing her in a half-dead condition and groaning in severe physical and emotional pain. While watching these scenes, I analyzed that the severity and seriousness of such a disastrous incident are given very light treatment. Thus, this film borrowed the use of semantics from the commercial Bollywood cinema, which narrate rape as more of an entertaining incident. However, this film varies from the commercial cinema as the victim avenges her rape.

In another still picture, a group of well dressed women are shown sitting and talking to one another. Therefore, the semantics here provoke the audience to come up with the most probable narration that these women belonging to the same social and economic strata are having leisure or a fun time. Contrary to this image, the narration is about a group of rape-victims comprising women from all walks of society, discussing their painful experiences, and planning to punish the rapists. In addition to this, the semantics of other posters contradict the narration. For illustration, Kiran's beauty and attraction was kept intact in all these posters, whether she wore her police uniform or a civil dress. Her make-up and hair remained impeccable all the time. Even in the scene where she is being raped, right after the incident she looks equally gorgeous. This is in total contradiction, as no rape victim can have make up on and look beautiful in such a life-threatening situation.

While, analyzing the concept of semantic and narrative, I found the basic framework had been applied to *Bandit Queen*, just like *Zakhmi Aurt*, but with little alteration. *Bandit Queen* is loosely based around a true story of a poor village girl, who was sexually abused several times by high-caste men, along with the police authorities. The protagonist, in her quest to take revenge from all of them, joins a group of bandits, proves herself to be one of the strongest members, and gradually ends up leading the group. The only picture available showed the actress carrying a rifle in her hand, wearing full-cloaked dress and high boots. She also tied a red bandana around her head, the color red signifying revenge in the context of this film. This look came very close to Phoolan's actual look as a bandit, and the semantics and narrative were in sync with each other. However, after an in depth analysis of this picture, I observed that the semantics had

contradicted the narrative. For demonstration, the semantics of the photo show her shouting and attacking people with her gang in the background. A possible narration could be shaped around this picture, that this film is about an unkind woman, who chose to be a very vengeful, angry and dangerous dacoit. But, none of the semantics or pictures were used to give an insight into the hardships that she faced that led her to choose this profession. However, the narrative crux of the story is modeled around the untoward incidents of her life that forced her to become a bandit. I also believe that, since Seema Biswas played the central character and the costumes of the bandit did not leave enough room for makeup to attract the audience to her. Furthermore, the sex scenes had been censored because various women groups in India had protested against it. Therefore, there was no scope to make the semantics in the posters look alluring to the audiences in order to attract them. May be the by depicting a new image of a woman an interesting attempt was made to draw the audiences. Note, by now, the audiences were well-acquainted with an 'eye-for-an-eye' treatment in women-centric films. The semantics were shaped in a way to put across a message that the film was about something else, whereas the narration heavily depended on the 'eye-for-an-eye' treatment. In conclusion, it can be said the even here the narratives contradicted the semantics.

In the overall analysis of the concepts of narrative, semantics, their similarities, and their contradictions in these movies, I found a common area that, irrespective of the genre and gender of the director of these films, the narratives contradict the semantics in most places. The semantics and the still pictures mainly concentrate on drawing the audiences to the movie hall, and then the narratives take place, which in most cases is different from what can be inferred by seeing the semantics.

Other findings

Apart from the major findings discussed above, I also came across a few other findings that have been discussed below:

Spiritual or Mythological Connection

All the films analyzed in this thesis had a pretty strong mythological connection. Generally, while these women were inflicting pain on men, the background score was inspired by the music that is usually used to worship goddess Durga and Kali (Goddesses of Power, who, according to the Hindu mythology killed the monster 'Mahisasura' who disturbed the peace of heaven). The comparison between these women and these two goddesses has been used in the films. In fact, most of the movies analyzed in this thesis have the protagonist named after the goddesses or have names that have some association with prayer. For illustration, in *Arth*, Sabana Azami who played the central character was named Pooja/Puja. This name means prayer. In the movie, *Bandit Queen*, the actress was named after the bandit Phoolan Devi. The word devi means goddess, and she was shown to be an ardent worshipper of Goddess Durga. In a similar manner, all the actresses of *Lajja*, had various names of the Goddess Sita. It could be argued that all the characters have been named after goddesses, in order to portray their immense devotion toward men in their lives, but if need be they can stand up for themselves just like these goddesses. The major concept is women should not be understood as weak; the hands which rock the cradle can rule the world. According to Pattanaik (2009), in India, children begin their lives by listening, reading and hearing stories about epics, and Gods. Therefore, people internalize these stories as a part of their everyday life. This further enables them to build

their various notions and perceptions of life. Hence, filmmakers formulate this idea, and entwine these ideas with the beliefs of the common audience.

It was surprising to find, that even the women filmmakers had their protagonists named after these goddesses. For instance, Deepa Mehta had initially named her pivotal characters of *Fire* as Radha and Sita. She also named the central character of *Water* as Kalyani (another name for goddess Durga). In the same way, director Kaplana Lajmi, named the central character of *Daman*, as Durga. Furthermore, in the film *Saat Khun Maaf*, Sussana's character was shown visiting several religious places in the movie, but the point that caught my attention was, despite the character's name not being inspired by any Hindu goddess or with any associated rituals, here the influence of mythology was given an entirely new treatment. Towards, the end when she had already killed all her six husbands, she confesses that her seventh husband loved her, as he has never tortured her, and he will accept her despite knowing that she is a sinner. Her seventh husband is no one else but Lord Jesus.

Characterization of Women in the film: Take of the actresses

In each of these films, women were shown coming from various strata of Indian society. Not all of them were educated or belonged to economically sound families. In few of these movies women were also portrayed as prostitutes. The motivation of these women to take such strong actions was tracked. It can be presumed that avenging against men or leaving their husbands was portrayed much easier on screen than it would be in the real world. Most of these movies had actresses who were beautiful, but aging. These women were shown to avenge after they had been ill treated for a long time and reached their point of saturation. Thus, the women portrayed in these movies belonged to various

social and economical strata facing such problems. One of them was a prostitute, while others were wives of rich men, while the few characters were comprised of a street dancer, widows, a poor girl married into a rich family, girls from very poor families and daughters-in-law from extremely middle class Indian households.

As various sections of this thesis have suggested, when the actresses from commercial film genre act in women-centric films, they are towards the end of their careers and girlish charm has almost faded. This observation can be better explained by citing a recent interview by one of the top-notch actresses in the commercial genre, named Katrina Kaif. On the eve of the super-success of her film *Ek Tha Tiger* (that grossed around US\$ 10 billion), the actress was interviewed. So far, she acted only in commercial films, where she was just a pretty face. She was asked about her willingness to do women-centric films, like her other leading contemporaries, who have starred in such films. She stated that the other ladies were in their thirties, and they were much senior to her in age and term, whereas she is still in her early twenties, and she would like to focus on commercial movies for the time being (Digital Spy August 22, 2012). Actress Kareena Kapoor, on the music release of her recent woman-centric film *Heroine*, the 32 year old confessed, although women-centric films are being appreciated, and are more in number than they used to be in the past, the truth still remains that in a male-dominated industry, women are given a secondary treatment, and they will continue to be shown as glamorous dolls and will perform insignificant roles (Film Tadka September 17, 2012). In fact, actresses have also mentioned on various occasions that it is very difficult, nearly impossible for women-centric movies to make half as much money as the films with male superstars in them.

In addition to this, I would also like to mention the ideas of actresses like Sabana Azami, Nandita Das and others regarding women-centric films. All these actresses have shot to fame by acting in parallel films. In fact, they are known as actresses who started their acting career in parallel films and have been working in the non-commercial film genre. During an in-depth analysis of these actresses' biographies, I found that they started their careers much later and not as teenagers. These actresses had completed their Bachelors and even Masters, after which they joined the elite institute FTII, Pune to study acting. Furthermore, they did not fit the ideology of conventional beauty as per the Indian standards. Sabana Azami, armed with a Masters degree in Psychology and acting from FTII, has often claimed that it is beyond her dignity to do mindless commercial movies. She has also added that being a daughter of a famous poet, having graduated at the top of her class, she is too strong and intelligent to give into such rom-coms (Vasudev and Lenglet 1983; Ganti 2004). One of her other contemporaries, and also a product of FTII, Smita Patil, echoed the same sentiments. More recently, a younger actress, Nandita Das spoke in an interview given to Digital Spy of April (2012) on the lines of her seniors, and mentioned that she would never do a commercial film. Time and again, these actresses emphasize on their intellectual upbringing and educational background to challenge the norms.

Role of Women as Audiences:

I would like to add that in many movies that have been included in the list, when the protagonist takes a strong decision like leaving her husband's home she faces a lot of problems from the outside world. For example, in *Lajja*, Manisha Koirala was seen

running everywhere, and falling sick as she was pregnant. In *Arth*, when Sabana Azami moves into a ladies hostel with a meager amount of money and starts looking for a job, she is shown that on coming to know of her condition, men try to exploit her in various ways. Similarly, in *Daman*, Durga undergoes a lot of survival problems when she moves to the new city, whereas, with her husband, at least she did not have to worry about shelter and food. By seeing the women go through the struggles, on the face of it, being a woman, even I felt like they should not have taken the step that they took. It may be women, while watching such movies which shows the potential hardships, right then do away with moving out as an option.

Moreover, as discussed previously in this thesis, that the act of avenging is not as easy in reality as it is portrayed onscreen. A major reason behind the difficulty of standing up for themselves either by moving out or avenging is societal pressure and financial insecurity. It should be noted that a lot of women are still financially dependent on their husbands. Due to their lack of education and any other financial support (as their parents have spent all their money on the wedding of the daughter), they cannot leave their husbands, and they choose to accept their living conditions. I found a base for this observation in the consumption of everyday culture. According to Ono & Pham (2008), media in the overtly informative world delivers the audiences with a plethora of information in very little time. The audience on the other hand believes that it has all the necessary information, and further starts thinking that they are very well-informed about a lot of people whom they do not know personally. Wilson et al. (2003) have emphasized that this assumption is not true as the media provides a certain part of the whole picture, and most of the time the information is distorted reality, and just presents the pleasing or

the entertaining factors to its audiences. Therefore, it could be a reason that a lot of women as viewers do not take the onscreen depiction of such films very seriously, knowing fully well that this might not be an option for them in real life. Hence, they watch these films more as an entertainment factor, and therefore the violence portrayed onscreen and the women as avengers is pushed back in their minds. Second, I also noticed that the use of semantics to portray dangerous scenes like rape or murder reduces its brutality. Lalitha Gopalan (2002) mentioned that the semantics are used strategically so that the viewers can sit through and watch the movie that is otherwise portraying a very horrid scene, that no one wants to witness in real life. Thus, the semantics effects are used to portray the acts indirectly. For example, in *Lajja*, the horrid rape and murder of Ramdulari is depicted as the house being set on fire, and a female voice screeching from inside that implies that the character has been raped and is being burnt alive. In *Zakhmi Aurat*, the rape scene has been shot around the lines of a fight sequence, where the scene shows that the actress's Kurta (shirt) that she was wearing is thrown outside. This conveys to the viewers that she is being raped, and she is stripped naked. Finally, I would like to bring forth the point that is majorly applicable in case of middle cinema, where the actresses are made to look so beautiful plus their song and dance numbers absorb the audiences. This absorption is so immense that they tend to push back the real issue that the film is trying to address, and admire their outfits (note, a lot of women are absorbed trying to watch the dresses of their style-icon as they try to imbibe their style).

Overall in the findings sections, I found that the treatment of the women-centric films vastly vary in respect to the genre they belong to, the gender of the filmmakers, and the difference between the narrative and semantics that contradict each other in most

occasions. These elements are intrinsic to the art of filmmaking in these films as opposed to the commercial genre. Therefore, I focused on these aspects to aid my findings and analysis.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will discuss certain important factors that have been extremely intrinsic to this study. A brief summary of the findings in the study will be given, along with the rationale behind choosing this topic.

Summary:

The main aim of the study was to analyze the women-centric films, and their significance in India. This study also investigated how differently women were represented and the portrayal of women in alternative films, which is incongruent to the stereotypical portrayal of women in the genre of commercial cinema.

This study began with introducing the unequal treatment of women in the Indian society in general and the film-industry in particular. This is followed by a literature review section, where a detailed analysis of the portrayal of women in commercial Hindi films, and the way these films draw inspiration from Hollywood films, is given. The literature review also gives a clear insight into the emergence of art and middle cinema that concentrate on the various women-centric issues, with women playing the central characters in these films. These films have been extremely different in their treatment of women compared to the typical rom-coms. The section also focuses on the numerous

problems the women directors had to face during the filming process and after the release of the films.

The study is based on the four major theoretical assumptions– a) Feminist and Feminist Film theory, focusing the on- screen portrayal of women; b) The Critical Tradition, discussing the power– relations that exist in the society, and their implication in the media; c) Theory of Globalization and Hybridity, which centers its analysis on how Hindi cinemas use the ingredients of Western and Eastern culture to appeal to the growing Indian diaspora worldwide. Finally, the theory of Popular Culture takes up the issue of high brow, middle brow, and low brow culture, and the application of these concepts in the genre of Indian cinema. Therefore, keeping up with these assumptions, the main aim of this thesis was to analyze women–centric film, where women have taken a strong stand against the violence faced by them everywhere. Another important point of focus for this project was to address the gap, and the different point of view between the male and the female filmmakers. The absence of adequate research regarding the women-centric films in the Indian cinema, as compared to the commercial Hindi cinema, raised a need for research in this area. As a result, the discourse analysis was used in the study that gave certain results, such as the various (art and middle) genres of women-centric cinema that failed to garner the appreciation and acceptance that it had expected. Furthermore, their box-office collections remain much lower than any commercial cinema.

The goal of this project was to examine a small sample of women-centric films, and the message that they gave out. The findings section has suggested that the presentation of women is way different in the parallel and middle cinema as compared to

the commercial cinema. Here, by using the lens popular culture theory, and the concept of high, low, and middle brow culture, I am able to understand the relationship between the genres. The parallel cinema was known as high-brow because it boasted to retain much reality, and catered to the needs of the elite groups—the very definition of high-brow culture given by Gans (1974). The very definition of highbrow culture and parallel cinema was more artistic and intense, only appealing to a limited audience with an extremely refined taste. On a similar line, he suggested that choice of the unrefined or uneducated was known as low-brow, and the combination of both these was middle. According to this categorization, the high-brow referred to the art cinema, the low-brow was the commercial cinema, and the middle path is known in both contexts as middle cinema. These definitions apply to the Indian cinema as well, where middle cinema has used glitzy and glamorous components from the commercial cinema and the thought provoking storyline from the parallel cinema. The middle cinema had been more of a part of popular culture, as it tried to incorporate the ingredients of the low-brow culture, and the parallel cinema. I found there was a stark contrast between the treatment of the women as central characters given by male and female directors, dependent on the genre. The presentation of women by female director in parallel cinema was subversive, and the ill-treatment against these characters evoked anger against the social injustice and problems faced by women. However, middle cinema by male directors provoked a sense of pity for the woman character in particular, and thereby justified her avenging actions rather than offering commentary about the system. Adorno's ideas, about high culture having educational values, and the moment the entertainment quotient is introduced, makes the subversive purpose less intense, and this ties in very well with this finding.

However, it must be remembered that middle cinema, which does not portray subversiveness as overtly as the parallel cinema, has also affected the dominant cultural norms in terms of resistance to a varying degree. Dasgupta (1993) treated women-centered cinema (parallel and middle) as a single genre against commercial cinema, in their portrayal of women characters. She claimed that both these films had challenged the stereotypical portrayal of women. Women were presented as avengers, who punished their criminals for their deeds--as well as upholding the ideology of 'eye for an eye'. Furthermore, Rahaman (1988) studied the weapons used by the women in such movies. He concluded that these women not only used and handled weapons of various shapes and sizes as efficiently as men, but also they showed equal deftness while performing martial arts. He further added, "...it is no longer possible to play the suffering, sacrificing woman. Nor can the audience accept the character any more..." (1988: pp 82). Thus, according to his analysis, the concept of woman as a strong-willed and an independent character was the brainchild of women-centric cinema, with the motive to challenge the depiction of women that had become an intrinsic part of popular culture. Aggarwal (1992) added to Rahaman's findings by analyzing the character of mothers in Indian cinema. He said, "Today's mamas are young, attractive, and very assertive" (pp.71). These mothers were not the ones devoid of any desires, wearing white sarees, accepting their fate, and teaching their daughters to repeat their story. For illustration: In *Daman* Durga kills her daughter's father, as she does not want her daughter to face the similar situation in her life as well. In *Chingaari*, Basanti wants to give her daughter a better life and tries her level best to ensure it. Similarly, in *Water*, Shakuntala- mother figure to Chuiya runs away with her and entrusts her to the care of Narayan, a member of a group which leads

life on Gandhian ideologies. The character of Raamdulari—a widow mother and a mother figure-- in *Lajja*, is shown to encourage women's education in the village. Finally, in *Arth*, Puja on refusing Raj's marriage proposal makes it clear to him that she would focus on child-rearing of her adopted daughter. She wants to pay her full attention into making her daughter into a strong, educated, assertive, yet a kind human being. Marriage at this point would mean losing her focus in the upbringing of her daughter.

However small it be, this portrayal of woman was successful in influencing the principles of the censor board too. In 1988, the release of the film '*Pati Parmaeshwar*' (Husband is god) was banned. This film was based on the ideology that portrayed women as majorly dependent on their husbands (Tripathy 1988). A major question that this part of the analysis probes is whether middle cinema portrayal of resistance to the dominant culture is very overt and clear, or partial and fractured. The possible answer can be found by placing this analysis into de Certeau's concept of tactics. The concept of tactics is practically manipulating oneself into a favorable position. In his words "it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing'" (de Certeau, xix). He puts this into the framework of "La perruque"- equivalent to a worker, who is present in the office, pretending to work, but is using the time to complete his personal work that gives him more creative satisfaction at the cost of "company's time", instead of concentrating on the job. Moreover, based on this principle, he argues that culture industry also uses the practice to poach in through the cracks. Thus, this concept can be applied to middle cinema, where various aspects of commercial cinema are used, along with the storyline that is antithetical to commercial cinema, and congruent to parallel cinema. Middle cinema uses tactics to portray the storyline of the parallel cinema, just like the employee

of a company, who uses the ways and means to break norms very discreetly to satisfy his personal creative urges during his duty. Similarly, middle cinema uses certain ingredients of commercial cinema to attract the audiences (by showing clippings of beautiful songs, sequences, locations, and beautiful actresses in their trailers or semantics such as posters, and using sympathy to rationalize women as avengers).

Furthermore, de Certeau's idea of applying tactics is to:

"...make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse." (37)

Hence, the filmmakers of the middle-cinema are tactful enough to find that fissure in the principle, that otherwise has a strict surveillance in terms of catering to the needs of the audiences. In this case, on one hand, it is the light-hearted and entertaining narration techniques of commercial cinema, while, on the other hand, the serious description employed by the parallel cinema. Therefore, on identifying the fissures in the respective narrative techniques, the middle-cinema makers encroach into certain areas of the parallel and commercial cinema, that is almost unexpected, and this results into their embracing the ideas from both these genres, and creating a product that is a surprise to all. Therefore, the middle cinema makers are like an employee who is physically present at work, but not doing what s/he is expected to do. Middle cinema uses the framework of commercial cinema, but it very discreetly or subtly gives out messages about women who dare to show resistance, thereby challenging the portrayal of women as depicted by dominant popular culture.

However, the entertainment factor of commercial cinema used by middle cinema has a detrimental effect on the social commentary about the status of women in the Indian society. For instance, in *Lajja* Vahdehi and Janaki are shown dancing. As a viewer, my attention was drawn to the fact that two extremely gorgeous women, who are also great dancers, were setting the screen on fire, rather than concentrating on the real motive behind this dance sequence. The major idea here was Vahdehi was dancing with Janaki, in order to hide from her husband, so that he would confuse her with a part of the dance troupe that Janaki leads, and that commentary about her problem is pushed back. de Certeau would call this as finding a fissure which gives out the message it wants to, but only partially, and puts it more in the framework of popular culture. Adorno would argue that the entertainment factors here: the lovely music, beautiful actresses with great dancing skill, and great costumes would make it partially complicit rather than being totally subversive like the parallel cinema that focuses only on the cause and effect of spreading awareness amongst the women about the problems they go through.

Another major finding was modeled around the uses of narratives and semantics in these movies, and special attention was given to places where they contradicted each other. In all the movies that have been included in this list, the semantics contradicted the narratives in most places. The semantics were mainly the posters or the still pictures that were used to advertise for the films to attract the audiences. These alternative films used the framework, applied by the commercial cinema, to make the still pictures look attractive, and their narration was entirely different. To much surprise even the films with women directors succumbed to this practice. The physical beauty of the character was played up in the still pictures. This finding is corroborated by Laura Mulvey's (1975)

argument regarding the casting of women in films just for ornamental factor. Even though most of the actresses were ageing, they were previously known as the beauties of the commercial film. For instance, actresses like Madhuri Dixit, Rekha, and Dimple are still known as Divas in Bollywood. Mulvey's phrase 'to be looked-at-ness' certainly applies to these women because efforts were also taken to enhance their attractiveness even in alternate films. However, the other school of actresses contradicts Mulvey's claim of 'to be looked-at-ness'. These actresses were known to specifically belong to the alternative genre. They started their career by starring in these films, and they shot to fame from here. They were pretty, but they did not fit the concept of conventional Indian beauty, for instance having fair skin. Stalwart actresses of this genre like Sabana Azami, Smita Patil, and Nandita are not light-skinned. Furthermore, they have often times bragged about their education and upbringing that discourages them from just being a pretty face in a 'mindless' commercial film. Another observation to back up this claim would be almost none of these actresses were shown featuring in middle cinema. These actresses have had enormous exposure in terms of getting education at the prestigious institutes of India. They used this privilege in a more productive way, instead of being like their counterparts in the commercial sector, who mainly work for money and fame. The actresses belonging to the parallel school upheld their social responsibilities more as actresses; as discussed in previous sections cinema is the major source of education for the masses. These actresses tried to contribute to the understanding of women, no matter how big or small their influence was; this was an attempt to help women regain their confidence as individuals, which they have lost being subservient to the men in their lives. At the same time, they put across the message to the unmarried women, and the

next generation, to concentrate on their studies and education by emphasizing the importance of being financially independent. They can also influence the married women to rear their daughters to be confident individuals or teaching their sons to treat women with respect.

I also found that the connection with mythology was an important factor in these films. According to Nandkumar (2011) “stories of the Gods, myths and epics are the stories people are told through their lives. They are stories children are raised with. Since it is so much a part of everyday life, people internalize the values in these stories for life.” Therefore, mythology becomes an intrinsic part of popular culture, and these ties into their notion of women in society. It can be stated that based on this assumption the films are referencing mythology to name the characters after Hindu goddesses, who have killed demons and punished wrong-doers. These films have tried to draw a commonality between these goddesses and the female characters. Through this characterization of women in these films, they made a commendable effort at subverting the traditional gendered beliefs in Indian society. According to Ramasubramanian and Oliver (2003), the men in the Indian society are considered “being manly”, only if they are aggressive in their treatment of women physically to express their affection or ambivalence. Women, on the other hand, are expected to remain submissive to such behavior. This behavior reinforces the common belief amongst the masses that women are to be treated in this way. However, these films have tried to challenge the common norms and bring forth the idea to the masses that women who are victims of sexual aggression in and outside home, should not be taken for granted, as they are capable of being great wives as well as protesting and punishing the wrong-doers—just like the goddesses they are named after.

However, the success rate of these movies in inspiring Indian women, who have been victimized at several levels, still remains an unresolved issue. Perhaps, a major portion of the female population dismisses the option to avenge against men or follow other steps taken by the women in the film, as something that has been shown on the silver screen and cannot be translated into reality. Steve Derne (2002) explained that women centric films have not been successful in providing any solution to the women who face these problems in reality because a majority of them are financially dependent on their husbands. Moreover, they have no other way to support themselves financially due to the lack of education, and getting financial support from their parents. Furthermore, one must not forget the taboos that are associated with divorced women in India, and the extent of societal humiliation that these women along with their family members face is beyond imagination. Even though they can't leave their husbands or divorce, they can always encourage their daughters to become financially independent women, who are not stuck in an abusive marriage, just because it fulfills her financial needs. If not anything else, these films bring forth a solution to its women audiences that they can discuss with their daughters, and encourage a change in the perspective of viewing women in the next generation. Being aware of the problems, they can rear their sons in a way where they can respect women (life-partners) as human beings who suffer uniquely because they are women, and not as living beings who are blank slates, and are just treated as commodities.

Finally, most of the films made and released during early 2000's had filmed a considerable portion abroad. These films had also used foreign technicians and cast. For instance, Lisa Ray of *Water* is an Indo- Canadian actress. In *Lajja* Vahedehi's husband

was a doctor settled in the USA, and *Saat Khun Maaf* had used foreign technicians and had a Russian actor. In addition, these movies were marketed to a global audience, and they had used various concepts of the east and the west to keep Hybridity intact. As the globalization theory has illuminated, the obsession of foreign audience with the exotic, without being engaged and critical to the severity of the issue, results in a problematic interpretation of the situation because the audience is not reading the message correctly. Rather they are indulging in Mulvey's idea of 'to-be -looked-at-ness', where a woman looks beautiful irrespective of her pains. Therefore, the audiences enjoy looking at her beauty by pushing back the actual message of her sufferings, especially to a global audience whose urge for the exotic-ness is satisfied. Note: the audience around the world might not know the cultural context, and the fact that the movie is a commentary and not a totally direct representation of how things are in India.

In the end, by tying women-centric cinema with Adorno's theory of culture industry, the commercial cinema as cultural object may lose its significance, as the audiences want a variation in their product. Therefore, based on this assumption, it can be said that the efforts taken by a handful of directors to challenge the existence of Bollywood commercial cinema, which more or less has a monopolistic standing, should be appreciated. The alternative genre tries to show real incidents in variations rather than simply entertain like commercial cinemas. Therefore, the representation of women in alternative cinema is a better commentary about various problems the women face.

I feel the women-centric cinema in general have an effect on the social-change in varying degree. These films have at least a partial effect on the society. For example, a woman who is being abused in her marriage might not move out, but can always teach

her daughter to be aware enough of the dangers, and be strong enough (financially and emotionally) to fight such situations if she encounters any in her life. It has entertainment (middle cinema), but it is not totally valueless, as it inculcates a consciousness amongst the women audiences, who end up having a vicarious feeling for the character onscreen as described by Mulvey. Since, these women onscreen become role-models for women in general, they can talk about certain stuff, which previously was an open-secret (abuse by husbands). In conclusion, these films at least try to provoke critical thinking by raising women's consciousness that there are alternatives, even if it is taking a small step like starting to respect themselves and their experiences, raising the women of the next generation to be self-dependent, or a major step like moving out of the marriage.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

On the whole this thesis was a discourse analysis that enabled me to understand the sociological and cultural implication of women-centric films as more than just another film presented on the silver screen. Through the use of discourse analysis my main aim in the study was to find the various layers on which the women-centric films operate, and their difference from the commercial Bollywood films. I also tried to see the message that these films wanted to give by portraying women who opposed patriarchal commands as brave enough to fight the injustice against them. However, Dasgupta (1983) has argued that such women who dare to challenge the patriarchy have been either forced to reconcile or have been punished to an extent that they have regretted taking such steps. This study, working against this claim, considered films where women have dared to resist patriarchy, but have not regretted their decision.

This study contributes to the literature by making the topic of women-centric films in Hindi available to international scholars. On the other hand the study can be criticized on various grounds. Therefore, the positive and the negative aspects, along with the future scope of the study are discussed below:

Positive Aspects:

This study analyzed the women-centric films, where women have challenged the norms without regretting their decisions, in the Indian cinema. The study also gave a detailed analysis of alternative cinema and compared its difference in perspectives and techniques with the commercial film. Along with this, it delved into the differences in perspective of male and female directors, and how their gender affected the portrayal of women, who played the central characters in these films. Despite the limitations discussed below, the findings and the result of the study lives up to the expectations of suggesting, what it initially wanted to: the attitude and perspective of women who dare to resist the mandates of patriarchy.

Negative Aspects of the study:

First, it can be argued that this study has only taken into consideration Hindi films, and has not included films in other regional Indian languages. According to Subramanian and Oliver (2003), there are numerous films produced in various regional languages, like Gujrati, Bengali, especially Tamil and Telugu, which are equally popular just like the Hindi films in India as well as the Indian diasporas in countries like USA, UK, Dubai, Singapore, Malaysia, and Canada.

Second, the small sample size can also be a topic of criticism. As mentioned previously, women-centric films are very few in number compared to the commercial Bollywood movies, and at the same time these movies are at most two-an-half to three hours long. Therefore, the researchers have to analyze more scenes for evidence, and

smaller sample size makes larger arguments more difficult. Thus, including more films might prove to be beneficial for future researchers (Subramanian and Oliver 2003).

Third, in a study such as this, based solely on content analysis, only on-screen portrayal of women could be analyzed. All the findings have been based on what was available to the researcher on-screen. However, for future study field work would also enhance this analysis, as the researcher can find out what goes on behind the camera that influences the depiction of women in such films.

Avenues or Scope for further Research:

Further projects including state by states analysis can ensure a stronger development and conclusion of a study in representation of women in cinema. India is not only a multi-lingual country, but also culturally heterogeneous. Therefore, analyzing each of these films would offer different portrayals of women specific to the culture of that particular state. This would enable the researcher to get an in-depth analysis of the status of women in each state of the country versus this study's focus on Hindi cinema.

Additionally, field work including being present on the sets of such films, interviewing male and female directors, technicians and cast can enable the researcher to comprehend better the on-screen portrayal of women. It would allow them to decipher the immediate significance behind such portrayal more efficiently, rather than just having to concentrate on the on screen portrayal. For illustration: the researcher can go to the sets of commercial and the women-centric films to gauge the significant difference in the treatment and representation on women also behind the camera.

Thus, in the conclusion, Hindi cinema has included various aspects in their representation of women, but still there is a long way to go, until these women-centric films become a part of regular Bollywood cinema. In fact, in the past five years there has been a surge in the women-centric cinema, and these films have tried to convey positive messages regarding the strength and power of women in the Indian society. This portrayal can have a double layered meaning: it can be an attempt to stop sending the wrong message to the masses in general that women are submissive, and so they can be treated as desired by men; also, a political or social significance is attached to these portrayal. It can be argued that, the growth in the number of women-centric films for the past few years can be attributed to the fact that India had its first woman and twelfth President, Smt. Pratibha Patil reigning from 2007 until August 2012. Similarly, the late seventies and early eighties saw a rise in the number of women-centric films because the then Indian Prime Minister was a woman (Smt. Indira Gandhi). Thus, rise in the number of women-centric films portraying the empowerment of women can be considered as a very calculated endeavor to please the heads of the nation. Also, it reflects the current social atmosphere, where the power of women is visible—but, when the women are not in power, there is backlash, and a climatic shift resulting in less women-centric films.

On the whole, it can be said that these Hindi films, dealing with these ideas in general transpire a positive argument about women in Indian society. Thus, women-centric films, at least try to change the thought of Indian women, which may vary from introducing a change in rearing up their daughters, teaching their sons to be respectful towards women or thinking of some strong alternative like walking out of an abusive

marriage or not accepting a marriage proposal by refusing to succumb to the dowry requests.

NOTES

1. Pre-marital pregnancy, unwed mother, and divorce are considered as huge social taboo.
2. A woman is expected to serve her husband without protesting against anything.
3. Saree is a long piece of cloth that women in India drape around them; it can be treated as formal as well as informal wear. Widows are expected to wear totally white saree with no color or design of any form on it.
4. Sita, Durga, and Radha are Hindu goddesses.
5. Interviews of various actresses and directors were found on the links listed below:
 - a. Veteran parallel and middle film director Shyam Benegal's views on this genre of films: http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-09-13/newsinterviews/33816112_1_film-maker-art-films-indian-cinema
 - b. Kalpana Lajmi on the problems of women directors: http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2001-09-07/news-interviews/27239747_1_kalpana-lajmi-quandary-distributors
 - c. Actress Katrina Kaif's take on acting in Women-Centric films: <http://www.digitalspy.com/bollywood/news/a401151/katrina-kaif-kareena-kapoor-priyanka-chopra-are-my-seniors.html>

- d. Kareena Kapoor is a very famous commercial film actress. Her take on her recent film *Heroine* <http://www.filmitadka.in/201209172844/news/kareena-and-karisma-kapoor-root-for-woman-centric-movies.html>
- e. Actress Nandita Das on commercial films: <http://www.digitalspy.com/bollywood/news/a378258/nandita-das-i-dont-want-to-be-in-commercial-films.html>

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Appendix A

Serial Number	Release Year	Title of the Film	Director	Plot Synopsis
1	1980	Aakrosh	G.Nihalani	Rape and murder
2	1981	Ahista Ahista	Esmayeel Shroff	Societal oppositions faced by a courtesan's daughter when she wants to get married.
3	1981	Chakra	R.Dharamraj	Rape, severe victimization of women and poverty
4	1981	Ek Hi Bhool	T.Rama Rao	Unfaithful husband.
5	1981	Sindoor Bane Jwala	D.N Rao	Oppression of a wife in her household.
6	1981	Shradhanjali	B.Gangooly	A widow's life.
7	1981	Umraojaan	M.Ali	A courtesan's life.
8	1982	Bazaar	S.Sarhadi	Prostitution.

9	1982	Jeewan Dhara	T.Rama Rao	Story of a young girl who sacrifices all the joys of her life and works hard to fend for her widow sister, recluse father and a drunkard, unemployed and gambler brother.
10	1982	Lakshmi	B.S Thapa	Never ending miseries of a courtesan.
11	1982	Mohan Joshi Hazir Ho	S.A Mirza	Struggles of Indian middle class (women).
12	1982	Vijeta	Nihalani	Estranged marriage.
13	1982	Yeh Nazdikiyaan	G.Pandey	Unfaithful spouse.
14	1983	Ardh Satya	G.Nihalani	Domestic violence and corruption

15	1983	Arth	M.Bhatt	Extra-marital affair.
16	1983	Mandi	S.Benegal	Physical abuse, flesh trade and prostitution
17	1983	Khandhar	M.Sen	Social humiliation of a single woman, who was falsely, promised marriage.
18	1984	Bhavna	P. Bhatt	Rape, single mother and murder.
19	1984	Kamla	S.Mundra	Severe physical violence.
20	1984	Katha	S. Paranjape	Story of a jilted pregnant woman.
21	1984	Subah	J. Patel	A woman trying to oppose the restrictive nature of society.
22	1987	Mirch Masala	K.Mehta	Severe physical violence

23	1987	Paar	G.Ghosh	Exploitation of women in rural areas.
24	1988	Sherni	H. Malhotra	Violence, murder and rape
25	1988	Zakhmi Aurat	B.Bhopal	Sexual violence and rape.
26	1992	Roja	M Ratnam	Distress of a woman whose husband is missing.
27	1993	Damini	R. Santoshi	Rape and domestic violence.
28	1993	Rudaali	K.Lajmi	Alcoholic husband, poverty and misery that follows in the life of a rustic woman.
29	1995	Bandit Queen	S.Kapur	Rape, Sexual abuse, Caste system, Child marriage.
30	1998	Dushman	T. Chandra	Rape and murder

31	1998	Mehendi	H. Ali Khan	Domestic Violence, mean in -laws and dowry.
32	1998	Fire	D. Mehta	Homosexuality, infidelity and infertility
33	2000	Kya Kehna	K. Shah	Problems faced by an unwed mother.
34	2001	Chandni Bar	M Bhandarkar	Prostitution and rape
35	2001	Daman	K Lajami	Domestic &marital violence
36	2001	Lajja	R. Santoshi	Dowry, violence,pre- marital pregnancy, killing of women, abortion and single mother.
37	2001	Zubeidaa	S Benegal	Life of a Muslim woman when she becomes a second wife to a Hindu King.

38	2003	Pinjaar	C.P Diwedi	Problems that a woman faces when her family refuses to accept her after she was kidnapped.
39	2004	Phir Milenge	Revathi	Problems faced by HIV positive victim (women).
40	2005	Water	D. Metha	Widow prostitution, child marriage and widowhood
41	2006	Ankahee	V.Bhatt	Spouse cheating.
42	2006	Chingaari	K.Lajmi	Prostitution and violence.
43	2008	Fashion	M. Bhandarkar	On the lives of ramp models (their claim to fame and decline in status).
44	2011	No One Killed Jessica	R. Gupta	Murder of a women by

				mistake.
45	2011	Saat Khun Maaf	V. Bharadwaj	Marital problems of a woman.
46	2011	Dirty Picture	M. Luthra	Based on the life of a poor woman, who later became an actress and was known as a sex symbol but she committed suicide at very early age,

CURRICULUM VITAE

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JOB OBJECTIVE

To obtain a position where I can apply my Qualitative and Quantitative research skills and knowledge of communication theory in the field of marketing, public relations and outreach.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Recently received accolades for Thesis Defense.
- Consummate team-player.
- Excellent inter-personal skills, especially in a multi-cultural environment.
- Close to 4 years of overall work experience.
- Ability to perform under pressure.
- Good multi-tasking skills.
- Excellent public-speaking skills.
- Proficient in MS Office Suite and Statistical Analysis tools.

ACADEMIA

- Currently pursuing MA in Sociology from University of Louisville, KY. (Expected graduation Nov, 2012)
- MA in Sociology from University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India in 2007.
- BA in Sociology from St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, India in 2005.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Information Technology Operator at University of Louisville Information Center, KY (August 2009-May 2011)
 - Directed people to call up the right offices.
 - Provided them with the guidance on whom and where to call.

- Involved in **outreach programs to increase awareness** of IT Helpdesk services.
 - Provided training to new hires.
- **Tutor at REACH, University of Louisville, KY** (August 2009 – December 2009).
 - Mentored and tutored undergraduate students in MS Access, Word, PowerPoint and Excel.
 - Mentored and tutored undergraduate students in Sociology and Statistics.
 - Created **templates for advertising** and **gave outreach talks** to undergraduate classes about REACH.
- **Student Assistant, Communication Department, University of Louisville, KY** (April 2009 – August 2009)
 - Checked the quality of the articles (formatting, style).
 - Indexed journals.
 - Contacted publishers to promote Intercultural Communication Studies.
 - Prepared presentations for undergraduate classes.
- **Teacher at Erudite Educational Pvt. Ltd., Ranchi, India** (June 2008 – November 2008).
 - English language tutor to GRE and MBA Entrance Test aspirants.
 - Coached for Corporate Social Responsibility, Group Discussions and Personal Interviews.
 - Prepared course material.
 - Worked in **outreach programs to attract students** to various coaching courses.
 - Conducted training sessions for new teaching staff.
 - Supervised the English language teaching team.
 - Oversaw the Corporate Social Responsibility classes.
 - Led a team of two in training a group of students to work as customer care representatives.
- **Knowledge Executive at Compare Infobase Ltd., Kolkata, India** (August 2007 – May 2008).
 - Developed Website about Tourism in India.
 - Worked on Economic and Financial Papers.
 - Worked in the Structure Team with Google Adwords.
 - Partially responsible for induction of new hires.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

GIS Packages: ArcGIS 9.3 , ArcMap 9.3, ArcCatalog 9.3

- Data Management
- Analysis
- Mapping

Databases: MS Access

Statistical Packages: SPSS, SPSS AMOS

Other Software: MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint

Platforms: Windows XP, Windows 7

ACCOLADES

- **Recently received accolades for Thesis Defense.2012.**
- **Bank of Baroda Scholarship for exemplary performance in high school finals, India, 2002.**

REFERENCES:

Available on request.