Portrayal of the Emancipated Female 'Other Half' in Cinema of the City in Bollywood Post Economic Liberalisation

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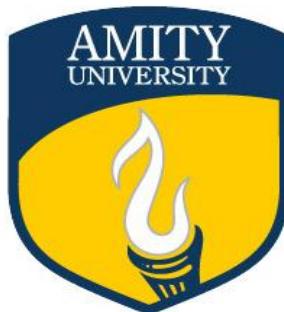
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CHAPTER 6

Conclusion and Recommendations

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Feminism(s) encompasses the various ideologies and tendencies that create domination of men and the subordination of women through the social order (Menon, 2012). Patriarchy is both a social construct and an ideology, where men or males in society have more access to power, resources and agency. Over centuries, this socially licensed access has manipulated the perception of the female as the other Feminist equality entails various forms of efforts to recognize the potential of women/female as a human being as well as identify the possible areas of re-interpreting the role of women in society. Media especially films, is a tool for empowerment and has an important role to play in creating dialogue, introducing behavioral change and re-defining portrayals of women who challenge norms and progress towards capability. Keeping the immense influence of Hindi films in India (Jain & Rai, 2002; Dwyer 2006; Nayar, 2009), in this research, feminist enquiry is aimed at the placement, location and reaction of female protagonist in select narratives of Hindi popular cinema (Bollywood) in the post liberalisation period. The film selected as case studies were selected and fulfilled the following criterion; 1) the films were produced in the post liberalisation period 2) the films featured a female protagonist as the centre of narrative action 3) the film's narrative were focused on the setting of city 4) the films showcased change in behaviour/self worth of the protagonist 5) the change is symbolic of her being out of bondage from social norms on gender roles.

The Qualitative research, through the case studies was done through analyzing and interpreting layers of sub textual content and intertextuality along with the aspect of auteurship. The feminist film theory lens was used to infer the content and form of the cinematic text, which created the cine-reality of the emancipation, empowerment and agency of the lead female character within the context of the diegesis created by the director/auteur of the film. The intent of the research was to identify the challenging of stereotypes in female lead characters, understand portrayal of common tropes of family, nation, motherhood, male female relationships and most importantly the significance of the character's intent to create or conserve her identity. The commitment of the film text to explore and create new perspectives in showcasing the heroine was considered. The significance of the city as a setting in the story, the visual referents of the city as metaphors and conveyors of meaning, in the new

production ideology and new directorial talent of the Hindi film industry are contributory elements in re-structuring of the female protagonist. Any study of content in Indian films includes the intertextuality of the star and the production machinery, which supports the film making enterprise from the backend and the strategized publicity blitzkrieg from the front end. The presence of well-known female film actors like Vidya Balan, Kangana Ranuat, Rani Mukherjee in female oriented films, which a decade ago were considered risky and labeled as parallel to mainstream production is an vital catalyst to the proactive approach of Studios and distributors to engage with such films.

Commercial film storytelling in India is perceived as one of the most popular forms of entertainment and framing popular culture. Its presence in everyday life, is an interlaced aspect of social consciousness, collective memory and praxis of understanding and comprehending symbols of modernity and development in the spectator's universe. (Niazi, 2012) Conceptions of gender, culture, tradition, self and others are created, negotiated, and challenged in this dynamic. As a repository of the cultural, Bollywood is and remains a key influencer and arbiter (Gooptu, 2011). The challenge of re-presenting *Indian-ness* after the advent of economic liberalisation, globalization, is to adjust to the re-aligned notion of nationality, identity and regional diversity, which confronts all media platforms including film. The new liberal market mechanism has repositioned citizens as 'consumers', with more persuasive forms of media like advertising where 'normative visions of social life are expressed and explored' (Mazzarella, 2003, p. 56).

The second decade of the millennial has introduced a distinct entry and sustained presence of the Hindi film heroine in India. This identity is not just that of the glam heroine but of a credible actor who has the ability to generate box office success in an earlier hero- villain conflict led narrative dominance in the 1970' and 80s. In the trade jargon infested world of cinema, 'the *heroine is the new hero', (*Singh, 2016). Film is both a mirror and a vehicle of documentation and creates meanings of socio-political. As a powerful medium and as popular culture, it can be a valuable vehicle for understanding gender formations. Feminist enquiry integrates the absence of the 'her' from the word 'history', which has its roots in greek word *historia. Historia* does not have an epistemological connection with pronoun *his*, but feminist movement signifies the same as an absence of the woman's points of view in

the interpretation of the past due to lack of relevant documents, representation in art and documentation of popular culture in various periods of human history. The term 'her' story is a neologism-indicating pun as part of the feminist evaluation and opposing the conventionally documented registration of male role models, icons, heroes and events interweaving the dominant patriarchal mindset of traditional society. This research goes deeper into 'her'story in Hindi cinema, to gauge the changes in the politics of representation of the female protagonist as a reflection of 'her' inclusion, in the context of the changing mindsets, position of women in society.

It is evident from all the case studies and many more films, which have released in the decade 2010 onwards, that women issues are emerging in Bollywood narratives. These narratives move beyond the surface of stereotyped and repeated imagery and melodramatic rendition of sensitive issues like gender violence, human trafficking. In the same patriarchal social edifice, they attempt to depict the percolation of the 'agency' and the emancipation discourse, the 'new woman' (Chatterjee, 2016), which is noticeable as a counter account to social traditions and mentality consistently prescribing the female other half to take a subsidiary position.

6.1 Breaking the stereotype

Trade analysts have different opinions on this upsurge of the woman's point of view, which converged to catapult women centric cinema in Bollywood. One school of thought credits it to the slow momentum developed post globalization and the release of the film *Kahaani* (2012) that set a trend of powerful female centred narratives. The evolution of Vidya Balan from a female actor to the '*fourth Khan of Bollywood*' (Bose, 2014) is of significance to this trend. Vidya's complete control on her body (Chatterjee, 2014; Bose, 2014) has been a step ahead on the earlier efforts done by female actors to break the stereotype in acting. Her embodiment as a 'character with purpose with a head on her shoulders and a task to achieve independently' not only altered the industry's flow of ideas on women issues but also resounded the affirmation that the audiences accept the personification of a female character with agency and ability to carry the narrative forward in the absence of the HERO figure. The term 'absence' has been frequently cited for gender related representation. In Vidya's case, the absence is overturned as she utilizes the absence of the body ideal in her case as an asset. This created her indomitable rise as an actor. Trade expert Taran Adarsh terms her an '*actor with strengths, limitations, failures*

and accomplishments' or *'one of the most proficient actresses of our times'* (Adarsh, 2012). There are also contradictory views of what started the avalanche of female oriented films in Hindi film industry.

Veteran Trade analyst, Amod Mehra (Singh, 2016) feels that the game changer was the film *Tanu Weds Manu* (2011). The film's plot revealed Kangana Ranuat, a small town girl, *Tanu* with the anti-thesis of moral conduct. The goodness of soul of Tanu attracts you yet she is ill mannered with all the possible habits a male brat would possess. In the success of the film, Mehra had said: *'It's a great sign because women, over the past few years, have proved that they are a safe bet at the box office, and, of course, no one can deny their talent. And it's going to continue in the coming years'*. The female portrayal, freedom, rendering of women issues, is not the only parameters changing in Hindi commercial cinema. A direct variable attached is the portrayal of male hero. The male hero is transforming simultaneously and altering the stereotype. According to Javed Akhtar, (Jash-e-Rekhta, 2016) one of the most celebrated scriptwriters of the industry, the male hero is symbolic of the socio-politic. Akhtar believes that in the 1960s and 70s, his average age was 30 to 40 years in real life. He states that study of the heroes and villains of Bollywood will give a deep insight into the socio-politic of India in different eras (Chatterji, 2014). He further connects cinema-viewing experience of the family with the patron. In the 70s, a visit to the cinema hall was once in 3 to 4 months for an average middle class family and the access to money belonged to the head of the family, which is a middle-aged man. The post liberalization period has seen a marked difference in who is going to the cinema hall and at what age. The contemporary spectators are the young aspirational Indians, who will not go to see the middle aged performer as Hero. In consequence now the hero's are aged younger and perform to this largest community of spectators – the young Indians, the largest demographic divided of the world in PM Modi's words. This mirrors how cinema and spectator share a relationship of give and take for relationship. This is valuable input to understand depiction of women lead protagonist as well.

The referral for concept of emancipation and empowerment in today's postcolonial stance has been implanted during the colonial years. The British unlike our previous conquerors remained culturally isolated from the native community, on the other side, the modernizing of education from the Anglicized perspective, and

exposure of Indians especially males to western philosophers made us " to conceive an overwhelming enthusiasm for the ideas of emancipation from the shackles of superstition and a case-hardened social system" (Murphy, 1953, p. 267). Not surprisingly, throughout the history of Indian cinema, representations have tried to create an amalgamation between the western and the Indian context in relation to emancipation of female representation (Rao, 1989). This also includes the trajectory of Anglo Indian actresses in the 20s to the current trend of diaspora actresses today. Gender has also been a delicate space of negotiation and cultural appropriation in cinema imagery and iconography. Though the rise of women's movement in India can be traced to the 1970s and 80s, the adaption of the issue of re- interpreting gender defined roles and responsibilities on the cinematic narrative remained at the margins. Commercial cinema did engage in stereotypical constructions for the leading ladies. During that period, parallel cinema continuously challenged this status quo. Some of the female artists of the 70's and 80s were engaged in both types of cinematic creations. Shabana Azmi, Dimple Kapadia (Virdi, 2003) and Rekha did attempt to challenge the strong male centrist narratives but these attempts largely failed due to the very male eroticism and heterosexual component of male centric escapist and formulaic cinema during the period.

Liberalisation and globalization have been responsible for many changes in the socio-cultural fabric of India. Appadurai (1990) in his study of the impact of globalization on the cultural economy mentions the concept of the image, the imagined and the imaginary as well as refers to a new envisioning of ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes and ideoscapes. According to Appadurai, Ideoscapes are a series of interrelated images, which are political and have often a direct connection with the ideology of the state and the counter ideologies in that environment. These interrelated images or ideoscapes as Appadurai names them have roots in the Euro centric focus on enlightenment and correlate the knowledge about freedom, welfare, rights, representation and democracy. With the change in world order and post-Eurocentric political presence and influence in the world, the ideas of enlightenment have been customized by various sub nationalities, sub cultures and sub sects or Diaspora. Female identity and its discourse in public domain in India have undeniable offshoots of this euro centric perspective of identity in a postcolonial society.

Women characters are being reinterpreted and their screen identity is no longer arm-candy, in low budget as well as in male centric big budget grossers. For example in 2011, films like *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobaara, Rockstar, Mere Brother ki Dulhan, Don 2, Dirty Picture, No One killed Jessica, Dhobi Ghat, Saheb Biwi and Gangster* and *Ladies vs Ricky Bahl* presented the female other half with an agenda more than love, romance and family. They were charged representations within the acceptable format for mainstream palatability. Such films kindled a new phase in spectator reception for unconventional female character sketches with grey tones. *Kahaani (*2012) was the full-fledged packaging of a woman led narrative, with aesthetic, production and functional value. *English Vinglish* was released the same year and its success was also a trade sign that audiences are willing to experiment and watch 'meaningful cinema'.

In these films, identity of the female other half takes centre stage and is discussed and the spectacle of the body is challenged by introducing a diverse range of issues and re-positions like a pregnant woman in full bloom in Kahaani, a non-sexualized girl in Queen, a desexualized police officer in Mardaani. New Bollywood reinterprets the woman character with a fresh justification of gender, performance and gender characteristics both physical and mental makeup. Actresses like Vidya Balan (*Paa, 2009, The Dirty Picture, 2011, Kahaani, 2012, Ishqiya, 2010, Tumhari Sullu, 2017*) and Konkona Sen Sharma (*Page 3, 2005, Wake Up Sid, 2009 Life in a Metro, 2007 Mr. and Mrs. Iyer, 2002 Mixed Doubles, 2006*), Kangana Ranuat (*Tanu weds Manu,2011, Revolver Rani, 2014 Tanu weds Manu returns, 2015 Simran, 2017*) have been pioneers in this change of direction.

2017 emerged as a year with umpteen debates on the women's issues in cinema, especially her agency within society. Internationally the Harry Weinstein episode highlighting the casting couch and sexual harassment in Hollywood began discussion on gender and film environments. The controversy involving top Hollywood stars put the women at work safety question right into the centre of the commercial cinema discourse (Morris, 2018). As a result of the Weinstein disclosure the #metoo movement started on social media due to which woman after woman started speaking out about sexual assault and harassment in Hollywood. There were other firsts as well. Patty Jenkins broke the glass ceiling with the advent of *Wonder*

Woman; Sofia Coppola was the second woman in history to win Best Director for *The Beguiled* at Cannes.

2017 was also special for Bollywood. The film *Secret Superstar* on the coming of age of a teenage girl became the highest grossing film for a female protagonist and one of the most profitable films of all time. It grossed Rs 965 Crores on a production budget of Rs 15 crores, almost 6000 percent return of investment. This proves both the creators of Bollywood films and the audiences have evolved as viewers of non-star ensemble big budget films.

A brief look in the past will highlight that it is not as if attempts were not made by yesteryear heroines to change or revise their screen roles. In the earlier years, female actresses struggled to challenge the stereotypes portrayals. Actresses like Jaya Bachchan, Smita Patil, Shabana Azmi did deliver some memorable performances which highlighted the woman's spirit and strong, independent roles which '*shifted the camera's focus from the women's body to her identity as an individual*', Tere (2012).

The change in portrayals has been a gradual process since the 1990s. With the advent of globalization, there was a dichotomy in Indian society. On one hand the influx of new ideas peculated society with new interface with multiple mass media platforms in which women were either a substantive part of the driving force (as in case of soap operas). On the other hand, the influence of diaspora Indian audience and new paradigms of 'Indian-ness', convinced film makers who intended global circulation, about the potency of 'celebrating the Indian family' and family values. These embedded values in the earlier familial patriarchal milieu implied the absence of the contemporary woman of Indian society. It had the combination of docility, humility, self sacrifice mixed with a notional grab of educated workingwomen. For example, in *Hum Aapke hain Kaun* (1994), both the sisters played by Renuka Shahane and Madhuri Dixit did have an educated identity but were never seen at their workplace. *Hum Saath Saath Hain* is also another example. The workingwoman was absent from the early 1990s although she had emerged and appeared briefly in the early 80s within the pure formulaic text in mainstream Hindi cinema. Hema Malini and Rekha were depicted as the modern women in a working capacity in the blockbuster film *Trishul* (1978) or Rekha as the sole earning member in Jeevan Dhara (1982).

The 2000s have seen the actual reflection of women being part of the dominant narrative as the social domain witnessed the emergence of the empowered woman as the real narrative /nation builder today. This was in contract to the ideal, courteous, well-bred and educated family girl. This period initiated fresh and earlier taboo issues concerned with gender debate like sexuality, infidelity, divorce, live-in relations, surrogacy etc. Films like Astitva (2000), *Filhaal* (2002) *Jism*(2003), Salaam Namaste (2005) Chak De India (2007).

Most media platforms in contemporary India engage with the issues connected to female emancipation and empowerment (sometimes in the same literal context). The Electronic medium on the year-end 2017 broadcast many round ups. The *Best of We the people* (NDTV 24X7, 2017, Dec 31, 8:20 pm), had a debate around women identity and sexuality in cinema. The panelists included Prakash Jha (Producer and Director), Ratna Shah (Theatre artists and film actress) and Ekta Kapoor, the TV czarina who also produces films under the Company Balaji Motion pictures. Ekta stated that when 'saree clad women raise an issue in a family' on television as part of her shows, liberals find it very conservative. This combination of traditional versus modern is a constant in the discourse of portrayal of the female other half. Rajan (1993) in the context of cultural hegemony states that "*the 'new Indian woman' is brought into being in response to specific social, economic and political imperatives, equally we perceive how the unresolved contradictions between gender and culture are foregrounded in other arenas of representation.*"

This new identity and leverage in narrative construction given to women cannot be equated to the representation found in art cinema. Art cinema is more intense in its larger setting of human life conditions and relationships. The current trend in mainstream cinema is a market driven and market supported initiative with a combination of change in auteurship and intentionality. In all the films discussed as case studies, the aspect of authorship, intentionality and reading of the film text cannot be avoided. The intent of the Bollywood marketplace with new exhibition spaces to highlight the women's point of view is of addressing the growing women spectator. The diligent and deliberate concoction of *histoire* and *discourse* leads to a new argument for third wave feminism. The diegesis reflects the author's imagination, yet the reading reflects stark structural embellishments to challenge the

woman in the traditional misc en scene is the modern resurrection of the woman character.

6.1.1 Addressing and Reshaping Gender Roles

A gender role is also termed as a sex role. It is social role that is prescriptive incorporating a range of behaviours and attitudes based on the biological sex of the person in any culture. Gender roles are usually centred on basis of the binary of male and female. (Comfort, 1963, in Glover & Kaplan, 2009, p. 11) contested to be a construct adopted from western society (Menon, 2012, p. 54-55). Feminist movements constantly debate on these assigning of roles and stereotyping the physical and mental traits of female members of society. This is considered by feminists as one of the many reasons women of female members, are not able to achieve their desired potential as human beings sans gender. According to World Health Organization, gender roles refer to what males and females are expected to do (in the household, community and workplace) in a given society.

English Vinglish re-assesses gender roles and is a unique experiment in Indian Cinema. It combines a yesteryear star Sridevi and a Gauri Shinde, a debutant director recast Sridevi in her comeback film. The same star who inspired generations of girls to wear chiffon sarees and get wet in the rain to romance the hero. This time she comes on screen as an 'average' Indian housewife. Shashi Godbole (*Sridevi's Character*) is a woman who still lives a life untouched by globalization at least in her private home sphere. She epitomizes traditional qualities of a housewife who is unquestioning & committed. *Shashi,* the lead protagonist is a simple average housewife and the significance of her individual desire to evolve as a person is restricted by the roles assigned to her as a daughter in law, wife and mother. The narrative does not depict that Shashi is unwilling to render the 'care-giving' that is feminine, but highlights how within the familial structure, her dignity, needs and desires are the most neglected. Emancipation and the woman's ability to survive without 'her' male support system is the winning streak of the script's plot.

In the rulebook of Indian cinema business, *English Vinglish* has no formulaic elements. There is no 'item number' to sell, no histrionics in a male baritone, no female or male bare body, no goddess to compare with, no traveloguesque love affair Shashi rediscovers her existence through a series of motivated incidents in a mostly

continuity bound linear progression of the dramatic arc. An almost in descript long distance aunt, passes on essence of a woman's identity and the quality of 'non-judgmental' thought process to foreign bred her nieces, her daughter and most importantly her husband. The film questions the assigned gender roles and states the following as cine text:

1. Average Indian house wives or home makers have identities and desires of their own. These desires are not just about the body and sexual pleasure within or outside the marriage, these desires can be very simple identity seeking efforts.

2. English learnt as a language does not compel change in the way a woman conducts herself

3. Learning cannot have a bar, and housewives or homemakers deserve the space to evolve.

4. The emancipatory impact of minute entrepreneurial activity can empower the female other half and endow her with financial agency.

This new approach to sketch the woman in cinematic space is a momentum where spectatorship continues to play an important role. It reflects in the film *Queen*, released on the same day (March 8 – woman's day) with *Gulaab Gang* at the Box Office. The New Bollywood is creating a female identity which is both reasonably placed in the social praxis in films like *Kahaani*, *Queen* as well as creating a new form of the 'action heroine' in *Mardaani* and capitalizing on the new found identity of the woman spectator in social life. *Inkaar* makes an attempt to go deeper into the mind of an ambitious working professional. It does attempt to reassess the perception of women as a lesser leader because they are emotional, patronized by men, even asked to engage in sex to progress professionally. Women are also considered or labeled *emotional*, an attribute, which may be located in the private space as a care giver but is a threat to leadership in a work environment. Based on the situation that suits the male counterparts either at home or at work, this side of woman disqualifies her from benefits. At home she is too emotional hence cant have access to financial independence, at work she is too emotional, hence cannot move to the next spot in the hierarchy. The vulnerability to this argument, as '*they (women) are the intersection point of the traditional gender-based denigration of emotion with a colonial form of*

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'argument' that holds the people of developing countries to be, in general, excessively emotional and unfit for self-government (Nussbaum & Glover , 1995, p. 365). Glover and Nussbaum studied the 'capability approach' suggested by Amartya Sen for inclusive gender participation in their research and highlighted the deficiency in the way the parameters of progress and development excluded quality index of life especially in terms of assessing women participation.

Queen as a counter - narrative unique to Bollywood, explores in detail through one girl's story in of modernized Delhi. The capital symbolizes many other spaces where young girls are groomed as a mix of old and new values oblivious of their own identities. The film presents the concept of individual freedom as a differentiator to how a common woman faces her challenges. The film also highlights the cultural differences in handling freedom by women in the world. *Rani* ends up meeting *Vijay Lakshmi* who shares her first name with her estranged fiancé. *Vijay Lakshmi* is open to each day and lives life at her own terms. Her sense of freedom, her cultural values are different but she has the same resilience that Rani possesses. She meets *Rukhsaar* in Amsterdam who is caught up with her own circumstances.

Queen stands out in the crowd of Hindi films because of the wisdom in justifying the actions of a naïve *Rani* in an alien space with a trust on her new found friend *Vijay Lakshmi*. Her presence in the dormitory with three unknown men from different races and cultures and her T shirt- Alice in Wonderland. A strong text laden and hidden, within the narrative. If only women were considered equals and beyond their bodies, it will be paradise i.e Rani's wonderland like Alice. Gender identity, is connected to the public and the private spaces. The correlation between spaces in popular cinematic practice and role of female protagonist in the urban city can be a correlational symbiotic of the earlier flaneur (Chakraborty, 2016). *Kahaani* (2012), *English Vinglish* (2012) and *Queen* (2014), all films revolve about discovering the self, travelling within the aesthetic of a city, challenging the gender responsibility to be restrained in movement when in public spaces. Bollywood Cinema from the 1990s has extensively used the outdoor foreign location to its advantage in story telling. The location creates a new vantage point to interpret Indian values in the global landscape. It becomes easier to converse on human existence, travails and spirit in a canvas where no single culture or norm becomes the reference; rather the world's cultures collide. The significance of exploring the self and creating respect both for what's

good in Indian- ness and what are the positives of western society combine to create a well-balanced perspective which is palatable to both kinds of audiences since Bollywood is now consumed in the homeland and the diaspora. The female protagonist is alienated from the forces of traditional gender expectations back home and is free to take her decisions whether positive or negative.

In *Queen* and *English Vinglish* (2012), the female protagonist is positioned on the fringe of the new world of opportunities. Both are by- stander/ observers of modernity, urbanization, and globalization. In these films, the female protagonists are the everyday ordinary, the average female who are absent featured in emancipatory political rhetoric. Sometimes present in the commodity rhetoric when multinationals pitch to sell household products. Their identity, self-esteem, self-image is hardly depicted on screen as much as they possess a strong untapped intent and potential. They form the bulk of female presence in real urban India, they contribute to the nation as home makers, small time entrepreneurs. The aspirations of this segment of the female other half and their stories if any of unfulfilled desires due to the expectations of performing utopian roles remain untouched in films. They are situated in the larger narrative of modern hybrid concoction of values and social change but on the peripheries of silence.

Rani and *Shashi* both depict the germination of the average as Hindi heroine. The heroine, who thru class, caste, religion was tied to the substantial burden of upholding tradition and symbolizing collective social conscious. In *Piku*, the gender roles are redefined to explore the mindset of an educated free emancipated female and her social agency. The daughter is the caretaker of the house when the mother is absent; a balanced representation to acknowledge women as care givers yet not forced but voluntary. At the same time, to invite the boyfriend for a night in the same house where the mother is absent, a way to convey the latitude of experiences for the modern woman. The male character, Rana's leaving his job in a foreign country to take responsibility of his father's business even if it is below his educational qualifications is reflective that gender roles apply on both sides. The film questioned some very crucial gender myths.

- Daughters without mothers go astray and a girl who is a feminist can never find a partner.

- A girl child is incapable of taking care of parents when they get old.

- Fathers want to marry off a girl since they are a liability

- Upper class good girls should not mingle with anyone who does lowly jobs like running a taxi business!

6.1.2 New Occupations and Biopics

The rapid surfacing of women in socio political milieu post economic liberalisation, their presence, contribution and achievements as leaders, activists, workers and professionals have changed the mindset of both film making professionals and audiences. Most of the female protagonists in the films selected as case studies were either projected as employed or having a goal and purpose in their lives. *Maya* in *Inkaar* is an advertising professional, *Shivani* in *Mardaani* is a Senior Police Inspector in crime branch, *Piku* in Piku is a partner in a company, *Rani* occasionally helps out her father at the shop and is doing graduation in home science. Their workspace is depicted explicitly. The new female other half is a professional on screen, economically independent. In the case she is not, the film discloses their desire to be one. The magazine Manushi in the 1979 founded by activist Madhu Kishwer and described as a 'pioneering feminist journal' by Amartya Sen was a major platform for voicing feminist concerns. In an analysis done by of several Hindi films, Kishwar and Vanita (1987) highlighted a diminished importance of women's work outside the home in film narratives and examine how middle class ideal of a domesticated woman is reinforced in divergent work roles. This assessment has largely changed in the last decade. The woman's question now is with the increasing inclusion of working women and their challenges depicted in Hindi film narratives, what is the stance taken by these directors and how justified or close is it to the correct interpretation of the gender perspective and agency argument for women in Indian society.

In the current decade film on sports women have also been conceptualized. Sports and the female hero Biopic in fact has become a full-fledged genre in its own right. In the current trend of looking for everyday heroes for fresh content creation, the female sports person has emerged as a good bet for the commercial film market. The trend was initiated by *Chak De India* (Dir: Jagdish Sharma, 2007). The theme of a women's hockey team creating glory for India at an international scale with

Shahrukh Khan as the main protagonist was a successful formula. Mary Kom (2014) based on boxer Mary Kom was also very well received, through the protagonist's role played by Priyanka Chopra, created an accompanying critical debate on not selecting an actor from Mary's ethnic community or looks to play the role. The film worked both at the box office and for Priyanka. Poorna, the film on Poorna Malavath, the youngest girl to achieve climbing Mount Everest released in 2017. Films are also being planned on Saina Nehwal and P V Sindhu as per trade gossip (Bandyopadhyay & Saggar, 2018)

6.1.3 Male in a Supporting Role

In a patriarchal film industry, the female other half is suggested as being 'looked at' by the camera and the male counterpart. This has been the backbone of feminist film theory. To change this 'looking', it is important to delink the female with the attributes of sex, body and desire alone nut also introduce her human side of her character. In the analysis of Movies, Masculinity, and Modernity, Derné & Chekki (2000) discuss how films in India give ideas about sex and sexuality to its male spectators. Derné & Chekki state in connection to feminist film theory and the gaze identified by Mulvey; '*Consistent with Mulvey expectations, Hindi films position male viewers to gaze at on-screen women by making women the object of both the camera's gaze and the gaze of men within the narrative. By showing on-screen male characters gawking at women who display themselves in sexy dances, filmmakers encourage the male audience to look, too*' (p. 147) The dichotomy of the gaze in Hindi cinema is omnipresent. While the hero is gazing with good intent, (presumed by star persona for the audiences), the villain simultaneously gazes back with a bad intent at the same moment. The case studies analysed in this research confirm either the absence of the gaze or a control on it. This takes the researcher to the next step of an alternate representation. To incur a thought process within fabricators of reality into the cinematic text, and actors about the repeated objectification of women, it is important to have dialogue within the industry and outside to ensue cognizance of the basic manner in which genders are differentiated or labelled. (Global Symposium of Gender in Media, 2016)

The evolution of feminism and the discourse on equal opportunities and status has simulated major changes in the socio- cultural context of India. The demand for more women participation in the parliament of the largest democracy, acknowledging

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of women in various fields earlier occupied by man, schemes with a focus on the girl or the daughter in society (*Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao)* are all observations and possible ways of sensitizing as well as generating ideas for the filmmaker. In a study conducted by De Wolf (2015) on men's participation in women's emancipation movements with a focus on Belgium and France, the participation of male groups who supported feminist movements in Belgium in the 1970s during the peak of second wave feminism was analyzed. De wolf looks at all possible tangents of male activism in contributing to consciousness on female or feminism related subjects. The movement discussed in the paper belonging to the 1970s faded away in 1980s.

India on the other hand is at the foreground of involving men in the women issues. Male stars like Farhan Akhtar support causes like MARD, (Men Against Rape and Discrimination). In the near future, with the growing focus of women characters leading narrative constructions, film directors have already started re-interpreting and re- aligning the role of the male hero in feminist empowerment. (*Pink*, 2017; *Dear Zindagi*, 2017; *Dangal,* 2017). The improvisation of male characters; heroes who were the eternal protectors or villains, who were aggressors is slowly witnessing change. The case studies like *Queen* (2014) or *Piku* (2015), supporting the feminist cause will make a difference to the trajectory of portrayals.

Women liberation in the past has been seen from the perspective of feminist lens both by the state and individuals. If Bollywood wises to emancipate its female character, it will also need to emancipate the outlook of its male characters. The patronizing attitude of the Bollywood hero will need a drastic resurrection to accommodate the new emancipated heroine, empowered and with agency. The diversity of masculinity will also have to taken into account to give it a realistic approach. Masculinity itself can be a burdening social expectation from men. Such a kind of 'mixed sex activism' when both genders initialize fresh perspectives will definitely activate revolutionary change in portrayals.

Hailed as a superstar of the millennium with a body of work representative of a patriarchal Bollywood, Amitabh Bachchan has been the poster boy of the 1970s anti-establishment film blitzkrieg as the angry young man. The major part of his oeuvre has been films where he has been the sole saviour of human kind, nation and women around him. Amitabh Bachchan has reinvented himself and his reinvention is largely motivated by the changing shape of small, new director oriented cinema seen

in the multiplex and the woman's question. *Pink,* (2017) is a film showcasing three girls living independently in the city judged as available by young boys who meet them at a rock fest. The film is a journey of their legal battle. Amitabh Bachchan was applauded for his role in the film and drafted a letter in public domain to his granddaughter. Such off-screen events are further highlighted by the media, thus confirming to the spectators and fans, the relevance of the women issue in contemporary society. Gauri Shinde's second directorial venture *Dear Zindagi* (2017) starring Shahrukh Khan as a second lead is another example.

Shahrukh Khan initiated the concept of placing the female actor's name before his in the credits of Chennai Express in solidarity of the woman question. (SRK wants…2013). These incidents create the male hero as representative and advocate of women rights thus exposing others in a patriarchal system to the women issues. The presence of the male patriarch implying the 'star' in the 'woman issues film' is a big signifier of the change in mindsets of the professionals in the film business be it actors, filmmakers, producers. The real cause of this renewed vigour for woman equality, dignity, mobility and education cannot be proved in this research but the influences of market trends, increasing number of male stars being involved and success of films with female leads set in the cities and its problems with good content on women can be considered as some of the indicators of change in the portrayal of female other half in cinema of the city.

6.1.4 Drag as an Alternate

Feminists have long argued the objectification of the ideal female body endorsed by media as a major argument of women empowerment discourse. It is believed that such a representation restricts the perception of women to only the physical attributes of the female body. (Virdi, 2003; Jain & Rai, 2002; Menon, 2012) Female actors across the world including Bollywood are challenging common perceptions of gender by participating in alternate narratives. Actors like, Vidya Balan, Priyanka Chopra, Anushka Sharma, Deepika Padukone, Radhika Apte, Alia Bhatt constantly appear in public spaces and represent a new paradigm of women in cinematic narratives, femvertising, digital content, and TV shows.

The same film personalities also appear in shows like *The Kapil Sharma Show* where they are witness to and in some instances participate in strong patriarchal

humor germinating out of stereotype when they interact with cross-dressed characters. These cross dressers or Drag performers represent traditional feminine behavior or identities with a humorous twist. The trend of male actors cross-dressing across the comedy genre is on the increase. These roles engage in a new low in terms of language, non-verbals, identity and sexuality. The dilemma in this ironic interaction between iconic female actors and popular drag characters like in *The Kapil Sharma Show*, endorse two important aspects:

i) Patriarchal humour centred around woman assets, body and looks will continue as a parallel in society and media thus maintaining the stereotype.

ii) The convolution of pure female (performed) or pure male (real) identity of these characters creates a favorable ambiguity.

This ambiguity of performed and real gender, allows the drag character to touch and feel men. The physical 'feeling up' of the male in public on these shows may not be sanctioned as moral by the same audiences across liberals or progressives, if the cross-dressed character was a biological female actor. Moral conduct or socially acceptable gender roles are bypassed in this performance of stereotypes for the sake of the 'act'. The collective knowledge of the 'male' actor under the 'female' attire of the audience generates an abstraction of gender for both male and female viewers. The titillation in front of audiences, although a 'not acceptable body image', is ridiculed simultaneously. The participation of famous female actors who advocate women rights on such shows, where stereotypical elements of patriarchal humour are validated; comments on female body parts, sexual desire, infidelity etc. are accepted as humour, is contradictory. Such humour is also appearing in mainstream films like Hamshakal (2014). On the one side, female actors are taking the lead in narratives and on the other, Drag characters, to display earlier patriarchal humour and sexual innuendoes. This *gender camouflage* may be used by film directors in the name of creative license, to endorse subtexually perfect body image and simultaneously avoid disputes and controversies on gender stereotypes.

6.2 Woman as 'Solo' Protagonist

The Hindi film heroine is emerging as a 'solo' protagonist in many current films. This portrayal projects her as the centre of narrative action, absence of a known male star, experiments with the cinematic medium, a convolution of mainstream and

art cinema cinematic techniques. Richa Chadda, is a female actor, who has experimented with her roles in *Fukrey* (2013), *Masaan* (2015). In response to the researcher's question about the trend of Bollywood to make female oriented cinema with a gendered lens, Richa Chaddha (personal communication, Jan 30, 2018) states,

> '*From an insider's perspective, I feel like there are more women today who are involved in writing, producing, creating content – that could be a reason for this change. Gender sells, but trust me, jab producer ko paise daalney hotey hain, (when a producer wants to put money), he doesn't understand gender – he understands profit. These films are working at the box office. But have films with women-centric themes arrived? I don't know, because they're still not marketed at par. They are still not promoted at par. What you see is, you see a film like a… like a Shubh Mangal Saavdhan, where the woman has an equally important role, she's not just a glam doll, or you see Fukrey, where one woman is making (dominating) four guys, you know, unko apni ungliyon pe nachaati hai, (making them do things the way she wants) films with stronger female characters. I don't know if they are women-centric films, but the change would take a long time to come, but we are progressing, for sur*e.

Richa's comments are supported by another research on women centric films, which highlights bias against women portrayal seems to be lessening. Research was conducted on woman portrayal in Bollywood by IBM Research, India; Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology (IIIT, Delhi); and Delhi Technological University (DTU). The researcher analysed trailers of 880 films (2008–2017) sourced from official sites & YouTube. Plots of 4,000 films (1970s onwards) were sourced from Wikipedia. (Madaan, Mehta, Agrawaal, Malhotra, Aggarwal, & Saxena, 2017).

Table 6.1: Share of Female-Centric films in Bollywood
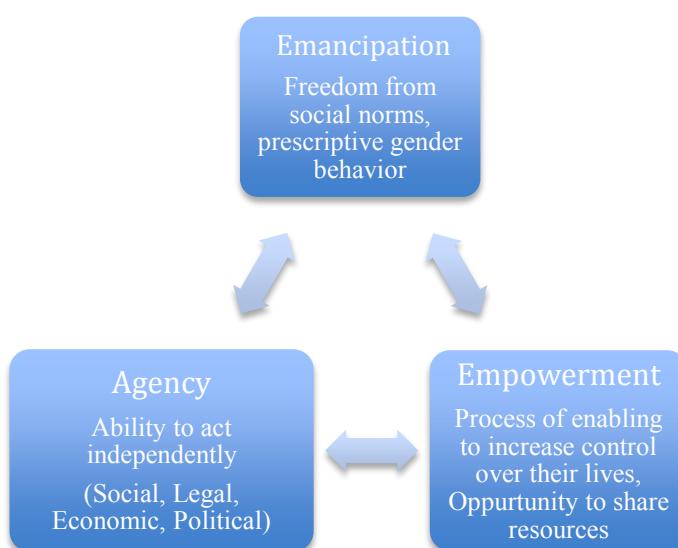
Year	1970-1975	1975-1980	1980-1985	1985-1990	1990-1995	1995-2000	2000-2005	2005-2010	2010-2015	2015-2017
Percentage of female-centric films	7.1	7.2	8.4	7.7	7	6.9	10.6	10.2	11.7	11.9
Percentage share of female mentions in plots	38.8	34.5	35.6	31.3	32.9	27.9	37.7	33.2	33.3	35.4

Source: Livemint.com (What data says about patriarchy in films, 2017, Nov 10)

The findings (Madaan et al, 2017) illustrate that the share of female centric films are increasing but at a considerably slow pace.

6.2.1 Quasi-Empowered

Based on the conceptual and theoretical framework of earlier research and the analysis of the films with a female lead character, depicted as empowered, this research wishes to incorporate in its conclusions, an important contribution to understand future portrayals. The triad of emancipation (freedom or liberty from social mores), empowerment (access to resources- legal, social, economic) and agency (ability to take action socially, economically and legally) form the complete circle of a visionary portrayal of the female other half in today's day and age. If these triad is followed in terms of imagining the psychological make up of the female lead character, it can lead to a genuine representation of emancipated female 'other half.'


Figure 6.1: The Cinema Emancipation Triad

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The use of myth (Devi) for example in the case of *Vidya* (*Kahaani*) and *Shivani* (*Mardaani*), reduces the emancipation bestowed with the agency to make the characters, semi- empowered or *Quasi – empowered (Partial)*. Quasi empowered is a term this research suggests for all portrayals, which miss one of the elements of the above-mentioned triad. In this case both their empowerment and agency is juxtaposed with the mythical representation of the goddess and the partial credit accrued to the Devi, implicitly (*Mardaani*) or explicitly (*Kahaani*), although the characters put all the effort to get the task entrusted to them in the given diegesis. This can be inferred as either they are incarnates for a brief while or incompetent without the support of the supernatural strength that surrounds their kind. The research wishes to question the invocation of Hanuman with Chaalissa and Kali as the *namastaye namstasye* shloka, which is non-synchronous technically as well as non-diegetic? Why are these fragmented pieces used in a very sensitive topic and the motivation of using referential non-diegetic sound as a metaphor?

Queen and *English Vinglish* succeed tremendously in the triad model by identifying the core of the empowerment debate, which is emancipation or freedom from the social condition of gender, identifying core strength of individual to take control of their lives and act independently. The concept of daily mundane struggle usually avoided in empowerment rhetoric is accommodated as being their macrocosmic. The essential ingredient of Bollywood song and drama remain intact yet present something concrete with due diligence. Most commercial Hindi films identify themes which are larger than life thus approaching the evolution of an individual ordinary character in a span of three hours of screening time is not even a possibility.

6.2.2 Sisterhood and the New Bollywood Female Actor

The debate on private space versus public spaces has become the focal point of the feminist standpoint, post Nirbhaya or the Delhi Rape incident in 2012. Though repeatedly scholars are of the belief that the 'sisterhood' meaning welfare beyond one single individual has disappeared in the political demand for equality for women and the forums of activism have disappeared and individualism has taken precedence in the post-feminist period, incidents like the above, do instigate a sporadic protest rooted at the heart of the feminist demand of human dignity and basic rights. Films like *No One killed Jessica* (2012) emerge from this socio contemporary, where the

protest involving the Jessica Lal murder and the debates addressed the larger discussion on changing mindsets and social conditioning of both men and women in order to bring in an egalitarian society. The spinal discussion on stigma and social mindset, which does not allow women to come out in the public when their modesty is breached, is also emerging as a core issue. Pink (2016) is an example of realistic film making techniques, which question independent young women living in the city on their own. Feminist struggle is also being projected as a movement engaged to protect the interests of the rape survivors, who are no longer considered lone warriors. Sexual desire and its expression are being viewed by women filmmakers, as another symbolic to shackle common trends of male domination of sexual relationships depicted on the celluloid. In the 2010s, Bollywood has seen the emergence of the new heroines, who do not qualify as per the basic requirement of the earlier patriarchal unorganized film industry. This heroine has the following new qualifications:

1. She is an actress who enters it as a profession   (Ex:Kangana Ranaut)

2. She identifies and chooses narratives which are presumed to be risky, challenging and probably unsellable   (Ex: Vidya Balan)

3. She is a valuable contributor and supporter of women issues and is vocal about the same in public spaces   (Ex: Priyanka Chopra)

4. She is open about her personal challenges   (Ex: Deepika Padukone)

5. Her body type may or may not be conventionally beautiful or her vital statistics perfect.   (Ex: Konkana Sen, Kalki Koechlin)

6. She doesn't prefer perfect language   (Ex: Richa Chaddha)

7. She picks projects which are women centric   (Ex: Vidya Balan)

Actresses have been vocal about the change and have voiced it at various forums. An example of a different heroine who is conscious of gender portrayals is Kalki Koechlin. Kalki is an Indian actress of French descent who has performed distinct out of the box roles. A theatre personality, who has also received a special

jury award (National film awards) for her film *Margarita with a straw*, Kalki has at many forums highlighted the importance of understanding the true content of the feminist struggle. In the decade hailed as the decade of the women actress, Kalki has mentioned that people in the Indian film industry often don't realize the true context of feminism and associate feminism with that of 'ranting women' who hate men and that there is 'a misunderstanding and lack of awareness about the word' (Kalki Koechlin: Feminism …, 2017) According to her as an insider who has constantly picked roles, which defy stereotypes, '*gender equality in cinema requires no less than a social movement where strong roles are written for women*'. Actresses have been vocal about feminism, nepotism in industry, women rights for the fraternity, reproductive health, Swachch Bharat w.r.t women, patriarchy and personal problems like depression.

Table 6.2: Female Actors, Uniqueness and Public Persona

Sr No	Name	Uniqueness	Non Stereotype trait	Public controversy
1	Vidya Balan	Self-confidence, candidness, intelligent, multitalented and rebellious	Body shape	Her body type and choice of clothes
2	Kangana Ranaut	Multilayered roles of girl next door. Harmless yet assertive. Petite yet courageous	Speaking style and small town look	Statement on nepotism in the Hindi film industry
3	Konkana Sen Sharma	Adaptable as both urban and rural, nuanced actor	Skin colour, body type, facial features	Separation from husband
4	Kalki Koechlin	Skin colour, anglo Indian look performs well in both big and small budget films.	Skin colour, accent, Flat chested	Very vocal on social media and web about feminism
5	Richa Chaddha	Unconventional, feisty, deep dark characters, vocal about feminist rights	Small town look, accented speech	Blunt and straightforward, not politically correct
6	Taapsee Pannu	Athletic and adaptable look	Unconventional, Short hair	Film on cleavage, Motorcycle Rally,
7	Swara Bhasker	Rural, middle class characters	Unconventional, Body type	Speaks on women issues and causes
8	Tanishtha Chaterjee	Core film school subdued acting	Unconventional, Body type	Fighting criticism on her skin tone

6.3 Independent Cinema and New Brigade

The media world is taking notice of the evolution of new Bollywood as it is termed in the west now. The meteoric rise of 'the new pack of movie moguls in B-town', (Jha, 2018) who have no godfathers or family to promote them and are charged with new ideas is creating a fresh innovative approach to project their leading ladies and gendered balanced stories. Another reason for the same can be that these new directors have grown up with the discourse of feminist equality on their personal lives and hence it is not a mounted effort for them to seamlessly include gender as a critical aspect of correct representation. The industry ecosystem is changing hence the effect is visible in portrayals as well. The directors are both enabled and enablers by promoting the work and producing for other junior directors. For example, Anurag Kashyap produces films with new ideas under Phantom Films Banner. Anand Rai, himself a director, has produced the film Nil Battey Sannata (2016) for Ashwini iyer Tiwari, a success both in aesthetic terms and market analysis. This trend is supported by the change in audience tastes as well. Middle class audiences are dealing with new social and economic realities. As Mines & Lamb, (2010) point out, "*New social and economic realities impacting gender have emerged especially among India's urban middle classes, in part spurred by the economic liberalization policies of the early 1990s*" (p. 75).

This independent cinema basis its aesthetic and production values in low budget productions with realism and naturalism. Since the intent is to shoot on location with as realistic characters as possible, it gives the female characters an additional lease of life. The term independent stands for non-mainstream. Non-mainstream in turn inspires mainstream stakeholders since there is a freshness of style and perspective. In yesteryears, the films of Mani Kaul, John Abraham (them termed middle cinema) were reference for fresh aesthetic perspectives. Films like *Masaan* (2015), *Titli* (2014) are examples of independent cinema today. *The Lunchbox* (2013) was a key contributor to the vigour of such unusual narratives winning applause not just at top international festivals, but also back home it attracted both niche and mainstream viewers. (Ghosh, 2016)

6.4 Conclusion

Modernity is not about miniskirts, and tradition is not about opposing miniskirts. Modernity is about constantly interrogating traditions and interpreting them for a new era but just wearing skimpy clothes can't be used to assert modernity. Similarly, using an imagined 'Indian tradition' to curtail fundamental democratic rights, such as the right of any citizen to travel wherever she wants at whatever time she wants, is a horrible misinterpretation of tradition. ("Time to Make a choice," 2013) This article by Sagarika Ghose relates to the post Nirbhaya discussion on female mobility based on the threat posed to women by moving in public spaces.

The question of fundamental democratic rights to citizens as listed in the constitution of India, grants rights without a precondition of gender. (Singh, 2008) Yet a majority of the world population is restricted in harnessing their own potential because of the various idiosyncratic opinions of the concepts of modernity, emancipation, empowerment and agency and the threats created due to non-sensitization of vast majority of male members in society.

Development, education, professional skills are often restricted to the men in the society, leaving the female children who then grow to be individuals or the lesser 'half' with little exposure of the world around them to form their own subjectivity and judgment concerning their lives. According to a study conducted by Glover & Nussbaum, (2010) on the paradigms of development in developing nations, it was observed that 'Women, a majority of the world's population, receive only a small share of developmental opportunities'. In the countries for which relevant data are available, the female human development index is only 60% that of males. (Glover & Nussbaum, 1995, p. 61) This data is a pure statistic but it reflects that female members of developing societies, especially the young generation who have been through the state's intervention on basic education still may not be prepared to face their daily lives without the presence of a male supporter.

In her essay, which relooks at feminism in a global context, Kaplan (2014) places the feminist film theory in a new social order. According to her, the cine psychoanalysis that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, though the 'gaze', which has been the subject of interest in understanding feminist texts, has gone through varied introspections. With the emergence of terrorism and relook at marginalized, the

acknowledgement of gay and lesbian culture, feminism has moved to its fourth phase. She believes that the context of world politics at the time the gaze was suggested, capitalism was pitted against communism (cold war) and socialism with Hollywood being perceived a part of capitalism.

The earlier study on feminist film theory had wide gaps with its construction of the cornerstone 'white woman' while ignoring other marginalized women. With advent of television, the approach to screen spectator relationship also evolved. Even after all these changes, she believes the gaze will stay, though reinterpreted at the local level since there are still many parts of the world where women still live in patriarchal cultures.

Feminist independent cinema from the feminist standpoint will play a larger role in the future. As filmmakers and audiences become aware of gender nuances, the frequency of ambiguous and fractional discourse to create a hyper reality of empowerment, to either please the new Indian woman or project a futuristic picture will gradually diminish.

Tere (2012) in her concluding remarks on gender reflections in Indian Cinema states: "Cinema has to create a separate and independent space for Indian women to help them realize their dreams". Veteran film critic Anupama Chopra, posits the vibrancy and popularity of Bollywood and its visibility on the world stage, as a 'larger Indian economic and cultural renaissance' (Chopra, 2011) supported by the State and its ideology. A report by Goldman Sachs in 2003, projects India as a fastest growing economy in the world for the next fifty years (p. 365). Hindi film's indigenous storytelling techniques combined with an optimum portrayal of the female 'other half' will possess the potential to reach wider audiences.

Currently, there is visibly more women participation in the various film industries of the world. Though female directors are still limited but as the years pass by, more discussion is taking place in the world about women breaking the celluloid screening (Lauzen, 2012; Kelly & Robson, 2014). Women today are directors, assistant, camerapersons, sound engineers, producers, and distributors.

Alankrita Srivastava celebrates the acknowledgement of her directorial venture, the film *Lipstick under my Burkha* even under the most difficult circumstances posed for the film including Censor Board refusal, non-availability of a

distribution pattern for a female or women issues film. She echoes the same temperament and conclusive yet elusive possibility of more women in the making of films, which will bring about the change in the approach of projecting women's cinema. Alankrita (Srivastava, 2017) poses a critical and concluding question of this research by asking:

"That is not to say all women will make films about women with a strongly female gaze. But the climate of filmmaking will change entirely when it includes an equal number of women in every aspect.

We do not know what will happen when 50 per cent of the films are made by women, when 50 per cent of the films made are about women, when 50 per cent of the films have female cinematographers, when 50 per cent of the film crew is female, when 50 per cent of the decision makers in studios are women, when 50 per cent of the film distributors are women, when 50 per cent of the theatre programmers are women, when 50 per cent of the management teams of cinemas is women… We don't know."   *(Alankrita, The Pioneer, Dec 2017)*

The research concludes by stating that portrayal of the emancipated female other half is changing in the cinema of the city. The characters are more self than the other. Male counterparts support the representation both on reel and in their real spaces as Bollywood icons.

6.5 Recommendations

The concept of emancipation and cinema can be formalized into an emancipation theory specific to Indian cinema. This can enhance the understanding of the relationship between film and women based issues. This research also recommends a consortium of filmmakers in the industry who can associate with Institutions imparting knowledge on gender, its significance and essentials of presenting the gender debate. In a UNESCO supported forum for Recommendations on gender portrayal in media in South Asia, the researcher recommended feminist groups to have more interaction with film makers rather than a questioning mode on their creative presentation. It was felt by all attendees that more dialogue should ensue between the creator and the personified.

The research also recommends the interpretation of regional cinema texts. An extensive gender audit of the Hindi film industry is also suggested. With the arrival of the professional Studio system funded transparently and also a multinational culture, a gender audit is possible.

As the platforms of viewing films expands for example, viewing on mobile devices, the theatre window of cinema distribution will be challenged to engage the spectator with content that is in tune with the current spectator expectations. In such a scenario, niche genre of films will get consolidated (as they are presently) and allow a focused consumption of cinema narratives. The study recommends that filmmakers to keep cognizance of these changes, not just with the box office gain parameter but also with interface with social scientists and researchers. The researcher also recommends a special committee to undertake revision in the policies of the Censor Board and a sensitization of the Board members in areas of gender and its representation allowing more autonomy in portraying range of issues and emotions connected to female characters.

Award forums in the Hindi film domain should engage with the women's question in a more focused and constructive way rather than tokenism to the cause. The researcher recommends a gender sensitization based course in all film training institutions and programs to sensitive future filmmakers and enable them to represent optimum portrayals of the emancipated female other half in Hindi Cinema.

6.6 Limitations

The question of female, female spectator, feminist viewing, are not monolith of meaning, homogenous, universal and perimetered concepts. Who is a female and how she is represented exists beyond the boundaries of dualism, binary and a stand-alone academic research. The concepts are fluid, dependent on ethnographic understanding of gender and sex and therefore a constant re- examining of the socio-ideological dynamics. This qualitative research is one effort to dissect some attributes of common portrayals that are emerging in commercial Hindi Cinema. An exhaustive analysis of a heterogeneous female universe is beyond the scope of any single research initiative. In the absence of a central and current repository of film studies and film production data in India, the researcher faced the limitation of multiple data pools with limited data repository.

6.7 Future Scope

There are many possibilities to further this research. The concept of the triad of emancipation, empowerment and agency can be applied to regional cinema as well considering there are many locations in India, which have been influenced with the economic liberalisation and this has percolated into the socio-cultural fabric. Further research can consider a gender audit and quantitative research of gender portrayals in the Hindi film fraternity. The aspect of female filmmakers on film training institution, which are emerging, and their trajectories in the future could be another possibility. The nuances of sisterhood films like *Jia meets Jia (2017)*, is a separate topic of enquiry. The prospect of low budget like *Secret Superstar* (2017) and guerilla filmmaking for both theatrical multiplex releases as well as the digital medium can be explored. The popularity of cross dressing in future film and TV shows can reveal critical insights into so called gender equity in principle compared to patriarchal dominance or alternative in concealing gender identity completely.