

# Conclusion

Films as visual literature have been reflecting the social norms and situations in various ways. This study about the role of women in the Hindi films shows us that in the films, there is a change and evolution in the depiction of women. Though it would be very interesting to visit this issue since the beginning of the Hindi films but it was not possible to do so due to the constraints of time and space. So, we have restricted our choice for the post 1990 Hindi films. Our study has been divided in three main chapters based on the categories of roles in which women are generally shown in Hindi films.

The first chapter is entitled, “The Womanly Woman: The Desire disclosed”. This chapter talks about the woman and her femininity with special reference to her very own ‘body’. The films and characters taken for study portray the growth of the identity of a woman from what socio-ethical codes ‘prescribe’ for her to ‘how’ she defines her own self. Patriarchy has often tried to control woman’s assertiveness and independence by regulating her ‘sexuality’. Her whole body is considered a ‘moral realm’ and a ‘behavioural code’ that she is supposed to maintain. A woman is not what she is or what she wants to be. She is ‘made’ by the society and culture. Right from her childhood, the ‘ideals’ of ‘femininity’ take up residence in her mind very spontaneously and naturally. In her pursuit of this ‘ideal femininity’, she forgets her own self. The moral issues dominate and she is disempowered as an ‘individual’.

All the characters that have been studied for this chapter portray the possibilities of resistance where the women are bold enough to give an expression to their ‘desire’. For them, their female body is not just a ‘biological’ entity. It is the ‘body’ through which they seek to define themselves, identify themselves, and express themselves in different and various situations and contexts of day-to-day life.

Aditi in *Astitiva* is one such woman who gets accustomed to all that happens to her. She never thinks about her own self. She goes on accepting everything unquestioningly unless her life gives her a jolt to realize her worth in her own eyes. The situations in her life change when her extra-marital relationship is exposed. She confesses all of it, explaining honestly the reasons and admits it as her mistake. But her husband’s callousness increases and she is not able to tolerate more. She is punished for using her own body for self- fulfillment but then she decides to listen to the call of her inner urge: the urge to be herself. She realizes her right on her life and

decides to leave her husband. Her decision portrays her progress towards realization and she emerges a resolute and resilient person. She moves beyond all the boundaries set for a woman and chooses 'freedom' with 'dignity'.

Chandravati in *Mrityudand (The Death Sentence)* is another example of a woman who, for long, suffers stoically and silently. She is denied all rights and pleasures as a wife, and is even blamed for being 'barren' which she is not. But then comes a moment in her life which makes her realize her desires: the desire to be loved, the desire to be cared, the desire to be honoured. This moment of self-realization takes her beyond all social fears and inhibitions and she moves ahead to fulfill the needs and desires of her 'body'. She dares to even challenge her husband's impotency. She subverts the whole myth of 'ethical motherhood' and establishes herself more as an individual who unhesitatingly 'owns' all that is 'hers', including her 'desires' as well as her 'child'(which is out of wedlock).

*Mirch* consists of four stories, all about the women who are shown into 'adultery'. But the director Vinay Shukla has himself called the film 'a celebration of womanhood'. So what society calls 'adultery' is actually 'the celebration' of the desire, of the self-determinism of these women who indulge in sexual relationships with partners of their choice, depending on their desires, needs and situations. The women in this film have shown that the same *mirch* (a kind of spice) that has always been used to provide spice (the pleasure) to all, can prove to be more spicy, but for her own pleasure this time. So the whole myth of women used as an 'object' of 'sex' has been subverted when these women become the 'subjects', to use their body for acquiring pleasure for their own sake.

Shai in *Dhobi Ghat (Mumbai Diaries)* is another character who has been depicted as free from the suppressing and smothering traps of society. She can be seen as the representative of all those women who live life free of all prescriptions, keeping themselves open to all the windows that might provide them fresh air of fulfillment as well as the satisfaction of living a life on their own terms.

Paro in *Dev D* is again a liberated woman who understands her desires and is bold enough to express and accentuate them to a man of her choice. Moreover, she is also capable of daring to prevent any unwanted advances by the same man. The whole film gives a powerful representation to woman in Indian cinema who is not a

subordinate of any man but an 'owner' who owns her desire as well as position in society.

*Turning 30* depicts Naina as a woman who is quite open and bold about her 'sexuality'. She has neither regrets nor inhibitions regarding her relationship with men. She suffers various setbacks but at last comes out of all her despairs when she realizes her own potentials. She rediscovers herself, moving beyond all the barriers and boundations. Hers is an inspiring journey of a young woman blossoming into a woman of substance.

*Jab Tak Hai Jaan* shows three women of different natures, living in different situations. They face life with all its hardship and happiness as well. Just like the real women in life, these reel women are shown to make compromises in life, sometimes in their roles of being a wife, or a daughter etc. Sometimes they have to curb themselves for the sake of family and society but the director has left the scope for them to feel that they are just their real selves willing to live for themselves only, unbothered of all social norms.

Akira is a young ambitious adventurous and determined woman. She has been portrayed as free of all bonds and boundations. She never hesitates to talk openly about sex, her relationships with men and even the desire to have sex with some more men. She moves ahead in life freely with a passion and loves her own self primarily, celebrating every moment of her life for her own self. She enjoys and celebrates the voice of the heart which makes her live every moment to its full.

Seen in the perspective of women's status, Meera and her mother's role in this film finds a new dimension which conveys that despite being a mother and a wife, a woman can choose to go for her feelings and desires as an individual. And the daughter too can understand and respect her mother's decision, simply as a woman.

The director has tried to portray the position of women very realistically : sometimes confused, sometimes restrained, sometimes unbridled and sometimes punished. But still he has tried to explore all the possibilities that a woman can take for her own self despite all strict socio-cultural rules and regulations.

*Fire* begins with the role of patriarchy as being founded on the denial of female sexuality. But then the characters of Radha and Nita subvert all the myths.

Nita's already open and frank attitude and Radha's realization of her sexual needs and desires mark the film with the notion that just following one's desires is no sin at all. Instead of being pure chaste and self-sacrificing wives acquiescing unquestioningly to their husband's rejection of them, they think about their feelings, needs and desires and come forward to fulfill them via each other. They stand as the women who make their choices (the homosexuality in this case) and mark the cinema with their boldness.

All the films studied for this chapter put before us the picture of 'real' women with their ambitions, desires and perspectives. They wish to be their real selves rather than being the submissive sacrificing selves. The characters studied for this chapter are the 'flesh-and-blood' women who brave the world to explore their sexual desires, with an awareness and understanding of their own body and their right on it.

Rather than being mere ideal and perfect figures, these women have been shown to introspect, understand, realize and move ahead to find their own pleasures and thereby their own identity in their own way. Defying and deinstitutionalizing the patriarchy, they have come victorious in the assertion of their own individuality. Exercising their right on their own selves in all possible manners and specifically on their bodies, they have shattered the male world of vain vanity. With their bodies working for them as resistant spaces, they step forward unhesitant, uninhibited and unbridled.

The second chapter with the title "The Wonderful Woman: The Stereotypes Subverted" has talked about the four roles of woman: the mother, the wife, the beloved and, the daughter. Women are considered to be the upholders of the family honour, ideals of chastity and purity in all their roles. Confining their roles to the traditional framework of Indian society, Hindi films have often portrayed women as perfect figures and martyrs for their own families, thus depriving them of any sense of power and agency. But the films and roles taken here for study have provided a fresh look at those different roles played by women.

This chapter has focused on the transformation that has taken place in these roles which puts before us the women in all these roles as not the docile and submissive stereotyped characters but rather as the bold and empowered mothers, wives, beloveds and the daughters who 'rebel' against the social norms. The women

who were earlier the prisoners to the roles of selfless mothers, sacrificing wives, sensuous but submissive beloveds and tormented daughters or daughters-in-law are no more the prisoners. They excel in their respective roles and their experiences have been valourised.

The mother in *Hazaar Chauraasi Ki Maa* presents before us an altogether new concept of motherhood. Being a conventional wife and a simple minded mother, she starts her journey of life, following submissively the rules of the family and fulfilling her role as a wife and a mother unquestioningly. But then the death of her son and her consequent search of the true reasons of his death make her rediscover her own self. Being a mother indeed, she now understands the life and the world outside home and her own responsibility for society as a person. Instead of making her weak, her motherly self provides her strength not only to establish her son's true identity, but significantly her own identity also. The innocent mother thinking only about the home and children now knows and understands the meaning of being not only a mother but an individual as well.

*Paa* presents before us the picture of Vidya and her mother: the two mothers again who undoubtedly fulfill their motherly roles very boldly and gracefully. They are bothered about the welfare of their kids but nowhere do they compromise with their individuality. They make sacrifices for the sake of their children but they never sacrifice their own selves. Vidya stands stubborn for the sake of her honour and her mother stands sure of her own role when she supports Vidya for her unwed pregnancy, giving a damn to all the socio-moral codes.

Vaidehi in *Lajja* is remarkable as a wife who does not yield to all that the society demands. She takes care of her own demands as a wife and also as an individual. Considered the upholder of the honour of the father's as-well-as the father-in-law's family, Vaidehi thinks about her own honour first and struggles a lot to keep it intact. She proves herself to be a wife who is soft (since she forgives her husband Raghu, for all pains and tortures he gave her) but not submissive and volatile rather than being docile.

The housewife Madhu in *Kuchh Love Jaisa* leads a monotonous life taking care of husband, kids and the household. She has time for everyone but no one in the house seems to bother her and her feelings. And such unacknowledged moments

make her realize her identitylessness and she dares to step alone of the house to celebrate her very own moments. She is able to realize what she really is and moreover, what she can be. Just one decisive moment brings a great change in her life and she emerges as an assertive and empowered wife who understands the importance of 'being alive', specially for one's own self.

*Lajja* presents Janki as a beloved who faces the trials and tribulations of society, suffering all the agony alone, just for being a woman who is not docile but rather volatile. As a stage actress, while playing the role of Sita, she refuses to follow the stereotyped 'trial by fire' and questions the role of Ram in that context. The consequence is that she is punished for not performing according to society's demands. But she doesn't lose heart and ultimately comes up victorious, establishing herself as a famous and reputed actress and dancer. The same stage provides her a respectful identity which had once rejected her. Thus with all her courage, grit and determination, she is able to love and respect herself for being a woman to follow what she as a woman feels and wishes, and not what people and society prescribe for her.

Nina in *Cheeni Kum* appears as a bold and eloquent beloved who, from the very beginning, is very particular about her choice. She is quite open and asserts herself as a beloved who is frank enough to express not only her feelings but decision also, to her lover. As a beloved, she cannot be taken for granted to follow her lover's wishes and choices. She comes up to express her love but never denies her own self, just to please her man Buddha. If she decides and comes forward to marry Buddha against her father's decision, it is her choice, as an individual, and if she resists marrying Buddha due to her father's resistance, it is again her own choice and decision as an individual to honour her father's wish.

Maithili in *Lajja* presents herself as a daughter who finally realizes her own worth as a daughter and an individual and speaks up against the society for the sake of hers and her father's honour (importantly for him being the father of a 'daughter'). An old lady at her own house appreciates her daring, calling it to be a matter of strength for the 'race of women'. Via her character, the director has portrayed the real picture of society with the problem, the suffering, the solution and the daring ; yet again

the upcoming fear and guilt, but ultimately the victory of the individual (here the daughter) over the water tight customs and mindset of society.

*Kya Kehna*, by its very title, appreciates the boldness of its protagonist Priya. From the very beginning, she has been shown as a bold girl who always speaks against injustice. But then she gets the social punishment for her act of violation when she becomes pregnant in her unwed state. Even after getting severely betrayed by Rahul and rejected by her own family, she takes a firm decision to give birth to her child. She suffers a lot due to this decision of hers, as she has to face humiliation at every front, yet she doesn't lose courage. Her speech on the college stage regarding society, its norms, relationships of life and society, and the irony of unwed motherhood and her decision in that regard, further prove her mental empowerment. Her grit and determination to take her own decision and choose her own way of life, despite all odds, take her more forward in life where all her decisions and choices stand justified and she is able to get the honour of all. She proves herself to be a daring daughter and a wonderful woman.

The analysis of the four important roles of women in the films taken up for this chapter reveal all the women in their 'real' selves sooner or later. Being in their socially categorized roles, they remain very much their feminine selves as the mothers, wives, beloveds or daughters. They accept quite happily all the feminine roles assigned to them. But now what they desire importantly is their identity in these very roles to be redefined, this time, according to their own situations, needs and desires. They are no longer ready to be the 'pathetic' creatures belonging to the 'home-prisons', thereby smothering their own selves completely in the name of these roles. Till now they have existed in relation to men - as their mothers, wives, beloveds, daughters. But now they want to exist independently with no pre-conceived or pre-defined identities of them. They convey openly their need to be honoured as individuals first and then only they can be expected to fulfill any of the roles assigned to them. They cannot be taken for granted anymore. They thus wish to assert the very vitality of their own selves even within these roles.

They are very much the real women who need their own personhood to be recognized within the domestic space and without too. They are no longer the modest, self-effacing women entrapped in the oversize mantle of 'role-frames'. Subverting the



stereotypical definitions of woman and her different roles, these women characters have in fact redefined the 'woman'. Thus the normal definitions of the roles have been radicalized and instead of hitherto sacrificing mothers, dutiful wives, submissive beloveds and docile daughters, now stand before us on celluloid- the magnificent mothers, the vociferous wives, the bold beloveds and the dauntless daughters.

The third chapter with the title "The Working Woman: The Domains Dominated" has talked about how celluloid women live their dreams when it is the issue of their career. Coming out of the traditional moulds, the women are on the scene with changed attitudes, perceptions and outlooks. This chapter has focused on some such films that portray their female protagonists as career women who are into the fields of their own choice, with full sincerity and honesty and undoubtedly the hope and desire to be successful. These are the women who with all their feminine virtues and emotionality know where to mark the boundaries between their 'work' and 'relationships'. They work when they work and they work not just to work, but rather to prove their potentials and worth.

*Band Baaja Baaraat* portrays Shruti Kakkar as a bold, decisive, honest and sincere woman full of emotions who wants to become a wedding planner and live life on her own terms. Her personality is an example of a woman who is very particular about her choices, be it the career or the life partner. In her priority list, her career and specifically the profession of her own choice comes first and she is able to strike a remarkable balance between the career and the life partner. She wishes to live beyond the trap of conventional family roles. For her, family too is important but she is not ready to be subdued just in the name of family and relationships. So she emerges as a successful wedding planner who is successful in other aspects of life also being able to understand and assert her own discretionary powers.

Naina and Riya in *Players* are the examples of stereotypes subverted who choose the unconventional professions and remain in the unconventional roles also choosing everything in life, according to their own self and for their own selves.

Madhavi, the journalist in *Page 3* begins her journey with journalism as her dream profession. She works really hard to prove herself. She dares to even argue with her boss whenever she finds anything wrong. But in her zeal to do some

meaningful journalism, she suffers various setbacks due to the deteriorating value system of the whole society. Yet she doesn't stop but rather moves forward with more force, learning more about herself, her profession and its crude realities along with the other harsh realities of life.

*Naach* has portrayed Rewa's struggle to exist and establish herself as a choreographer in the male dominated film world. Dance is a talent she is born with and she trusts her passion and potential for it. She faces a lot of failures and rejections but all with a great poise, as she is confident of her own determination to become a choreographer who not only understands but also is able to 'feel' dance in every core of her being. She never compromises when it's about dance and she is successful finally not only as a choreographer but a dancer also who is able to justify and prove her talent. Rewa's most important mantra of success is her trust and respect for her own self.

Meera, the journalist in *No One Killed Jessica*, is the example of a dutiful and committed reporter who fulfills her role and duty sincerely. Her character is the source of inspiration for her being an alert, aware, awakened and assertive woman who pursues her profession perfectly and leads her life vivaciously, taking all in her stride.

Gul in *Diary of a Butterfly* has been shown as a woman who possesses not only the never-ending ambitions and dreams but also the courage to fulfill them. She wants to be at the top in her profession and for that she doesn't hesitate to use her body and charms as well. Her talent and creativity get recognition and she becomes a successful woman in the field of fashion designing. Moreover, she is happy with what she achieves, with no after thoughts or regrets for anything. The social pressures try to obstruct her in different manners but she doesn't succumb to them and treads on her self- chosen path to progress.

This chapter has taken up those films that portray women in different professions, with special attention to how do they fare in them. Almost all of the characters taken for study are the examples of women who 'work' for the cause of living and justifying their professions. With very much being the family women, these are the women who refuse to fall into stereotypical womanly roles and don't choose

the typed professions also. They are into the professions of their own choice and their work is their priority. Nothing can hinder their growth, be it their parents, their boyfriends, their husbands or the society in general. They don't allow any social or familial norms to dictate them. Very sure of their own creativities and potentialities, they go ahead in their self-chosen fields and prove themselves.

The analysis of all the films for the role, position and status of women shows that the Hindi cinema that has often been said to institutionalize patriarchy and its norms has now begun to question the traditional mores that have long been imposed on women in the name of culture and religion. Indian cinema has often depicted women at the two extremes: as either docile, submissive and noble, or wayward, reckless and irresponsible. Moreover, women have largely been depicted to either provide glamour, relief, respite and entertainment or uphold virtue and values. But some film-makers certainly seem to have gone beyond those stereotypes. There are certainly some films that depict them, not as one-dimensional characters but as having different shades. They have been projected as 'real' and 'contemporary' instead of being the mere calendar art images of *bhaartiya naari*.

All the characters taken for study are the 'reel' women breaking away from the age old conventions to create a world of their own. They are still the good mothers, wives, beloveds, daughters, sisters and all that they can be, but this expected virtue of 'goodness' no more trivializes them as individuals. Coming out of the dump of their socio-culturally prescribed roles, they have learnt how to think of their own interests and acquire peace and contentment for themselves. They recognize their potentialities and are able to draw upon their own competence and strength. These women are no more the extensions of male egoistical ideas but are rather the true individuals in their own regard. They are no more the 'silent' images who are only the 'bearers' of meaning. They are rather the 'makers' of meaning who come to the front to mark and establish their own importance and identity in the light of their own needs and desires. Debunking all the myths and subverting all the stereotypes, these 'reel' women portray the metamorphosis that has taken place in their lives which actually is a translation of that breeze of social change which is gradually breaking the shackles of all the myths and stereotypes set for women in 'real' life.

As Barthes talks about the language of 'revolution' in opposition to 'myth', these films portraying the change in established gender roles prove that to a certain extent, they have been able to abolish the 'myth' and the 'revolution' has come in the form of the 'metamorphosis' that gets reflected in the evolution of the different and various images of womanhood.

Within the constraints of given time and space, the present research has been able to analyze only a selected number of films. More and more data can be added to further validate the hypothesis of this research which stands proved for the present, where these films are an attempt to portray the changing images of womanhood in its journey from myth to metamorphosis. Such evolution in the images of woman as shown in the analysed films, is not only a translation of social reality to the screen but also sets the path and possibility for the changes in the mindsets of people who get sensitized by films. Such portrayals of 'reel' women with all their struggle as well as success in keeping their honour and individuality intact in all their roles and situations, leave a ray of hope for the 'real' women also to think, reflect and realize their own capabilities and potentialities and progress towards their own 'metamorphosis'.