

# **Representation of Muslim Women in Hindi Commercial Cinema of Twenty-First Century: A Narrative Analysis of Select Movies**

A Dissertation Submitted

To

**Sikkim University**



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the  
**Degree of Master of Philosophy**

By

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation titled “**Representation of Muslim Women in Hindi Commercial Cinema of Twenty-First Century: A Narrative Analysis of Select Movies**” is submitted in partial fulfillment of the **Degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil)** in Mass Communication, to the School of Professional Studies, Sikkim University, Gangtok, Sikkim. This is my original work and the dissertation or parts thereof has not been submitted for any award, degree or diploma, fellowship, or any other similar title or prizes at this or any other university.

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled “**Representation of Muslim Women in Hindi Commercial Cinema of Twenty-First Century: A Narrative Analysis of Select Movies**” submitted by Sonam Sultana Shah for the award of the Degree of **Master of Philosophy (M.Phil)** in Mass Communication is a record of research carried out under my supervision and guidance in the Department of Mass Communication, Sikkim University.

The dissertation or parts thereof has not been submitted for any degree or diploma at this or any other university.

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**“Representation of Muslim Women in Hindi Commercial Cinema of Twenty-First Century: A Narrative Analysis of Select Movies”**

Submitted by Sonam Sultana Shah under the supervision of Dr. Jasmine Yimchunger of the Department of Mass Communication, School of Professional Studies, Sikkim University.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

At present, any discussion on the minority representation particularly those associated with the Islamic world, be it from the standpoint of the victor or the vanquished, is mediated by the certain graphic spectacle of the media both online and traditional forms like Television and Films. A film is a work that can be projected photographically in a theatre (Mammer, 2003). The moving image is the medium of mass culture and the most important and universal art form of the twentieth century. More than any other art form, it has the power to entertain, to educate, to reflect, and to shape our sense of who we are and our understanding of the world in which we live. The moving image gives expression to our hopes and aspirations-to help us imagine what we might be (IMAX, 1996: A bigger vision, London: BFI).

From advertisements to movies and from tablets to smart phones, we are constantly engaged with and surrounded by images, helping us deem the world in visual terms. Scores of academicians, experts, and scholars, argue that the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary societies, marking the move to post-modernity (Rose, 2001). Author and critic John Berger fittingly point out that, seeing comes before words. The child or an infant looks and recognizes way before it can even articulate or speak, emphasizing the magnitude and significance of the visual form (Rose, 2001). It is hypothetically supposed that almost every one of us collects, receives, and obtains over in the region of nearly around 80 percent of information through our eyes (Berger, 1978, 2008). It is believed that other than films, the visual media or the moving image essentially caters to provide objective information. On the other hand, meaningful films apart from just 'providing' objective data, may 'connote', 'imply' or 'signify' various facets of politico-democratic events specific to a particular region. Besides, they are different from other visual media because of the 'human factor' associated with them.

Since its inception and origin, the relationship between cinema, society, and representation is evident as well as manifested, which to some extent is dialectical. Cinema is considered to be one in every of the foremost powerful media of storytelling. It has been testified that, "Cinema under the portents and patronages of being moving visual images subsequently has the ascendancy, control, dominance and supremacy to position across, pass on to this world and elicit durable and sturdy emotions in an attempt and effort to depict and present



the dynamic images and pictures of social reality” (Wajda 1974: 98). Cinema is supposed and believed to entertain and take the viewer to a world that is starkly and completely different from the actual one, a world that allows one to break loose and provide an escape from the daily grind and toil of life. Cinema is believed to be a common and popular medium of mass consumption that plays a key role in molding opinions, constructing images as well as illustrations, and reinforcing a definite set of dominant and overriding cultural values and standards.

Cinema and television have long held as well as protracted the mainstream entertainment plea and appeal. Commencing from the mass media perspective and point of view, the substantial content in cinema or movies is frequently classified vis-a-vis the standing and status of the society. Using that rationale, Max Weber (2008:5) advocates facilitating that, “Films create and construct a visually historical and chronological experience for the viewers that can affect their memories of the event”. There have been those films or movies that mirror, emulate, and represent the life and times of the audience and its spectators. Furthermore, its presence has been both regressive and progressive in bringing up themes into which productions can be categorised and hooked on to a range and variety of lenses through which they can be understood. Esnault (1969/70: 5) establishes that cinema targets on the psychology of the audience as they are “plunged into the silence of a dark- end theatre, more or less comfortable, where the spectators receive, somewhat passively, an absolute completely ordered manifestation and exhibition which appears as a realized dream or a dreamed reality”. The author also states that what an audience perceives is guided and processed by the expression to which they submit, tender, and surrender. As cinema combines the “innumerable tricks of photography and editing of images and sounds, it comes with the power of conviction of the sentiments and ideas expressed on the screen”.

The issues of media representation of identity, stereotypical instances, and gender are being discussed all over the world today and as a result, have become an integral and fundamental aspect headed in favor of the discipline of media studies. The reason may be attributed to the popularity and diversity of media as a source of mass consumption and its influence on constructing ideas and generating debates. Currently, the media scene in India has expanded in recent times as there are a superfluity and plethora of media choices available to the audiences, and late cinema has emerged as one of the most prominent and preferable choices. Cinema has been capable and competent enough to transcend and surpass borders and look at certain issues more holistically rather than merely in the context of nationalism or promoting an assorted mixture of ideologies. Consequently, these

developments are bound to impinge on and have an effect on the approach in which the media scrutinizes the significant issues that are prevalent in society. The media, therefore, draws nearer and tries to wrap up and enfold in their covering of quite a lot of relevant and pertinent issues-particularly representation and gender being the most considerable and noteworthy ones.

A (UNESCO, 2009) survey scrutinizes and interprets that women are the major consumers of mass media and therefore the way they are being represented in any domain and sphere of media coverage is a major concern for the feminist critique. Several international forums worldwide have recognized and distinguished the effects, outcomes and ramifications of such a reworked and transformed media setting and environment on women's access and admittance to media, their role within the media structures and therefore the presentation of their perspectives and outlooks in media coverage, especially in the cinema/movies/films.

Film criticism for that reason has importance as well as the significance and worth for literary studies for the reason that it permits and allows us to view and analyze them in a different way, to look for the unconscious and out cold manifestations and reflections of social reality, the underlying essential power structures, the frames which melt and dissolve into each other, the repetitive and recurring narrative patterns, the dialogues which employ myth and history, the juxtapositions which take place and the simultaneity which the medium allows, There is no probable or possible way that literature departments can embrace and grip on to themselves aloof from the Cinematic medium, especially when the Cinema has never shown any hesitation or uncertainty in appropriating literature for its purpose.

Correspondingly, as the clamour for parity and equality in terms of the minority representation and image portrayal grew louder, the issue or concern that this study/research tried to undertake was solely to assess, examine and unfold how and to what extent the female presence or representation of the minorities particularly the Muslim women characters in cinema and media of India as a whole was depicted. Moreover whether/if there appeared traces of stereotyped depiction of their roles changing or shifting in any manner or conduct, whether how women were claimed to be seen and objectified on screen for men viewing pleasure, are still existent. Besides that, the study also ventured into aspects of how they were being portrayed, represented, underrepresented, misrepresented, and stereotyped in the select Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century.

## **1.2 Hindi Commercial Cinema in the Twenty-First Century**

Hindi Cinema prevalently acknowledged and infrequently metonymically noted as “Bollywood” is referred to as the Indian Hindi language silver screen industry encompassing its pedestal base within the settlement of the Mumbai metropolitan area - geographically located in the region of the state of Maharashtra. The Hindi film industry is a rapidly growing fragment and a segment of the entertainment market in Asia, which is regarded as a multi-billion dollar industry that brings into being more films annually than any other country in the world. A combination of Bombay and Hollywood, the term’s birth and its parentage are contested within Indian film scholarship and the Indian film industry. The name Bollywood itself demonstrates the conflicted relationship that popular Hindi cinema has with its use of foreign source texts. In the academic spheres of the world, one has a predisposition and propensity to employ and draw on it loosely to refer to the Indian film industry as a whole, but to a great degree and extent like Hollywood, it has also come to plunk and stand for auxiliary aspects and facets of film production such as choreography, music, costumes, make-over and even hairstyles. The term “Bollywood” whilst indefinite and ambiguous, bestows the impression to give out different rationales and purposes for different people.

Prasad Madhave (2004) asserts and verifies that the Indian film industry is the largest around the globe with a hold on to the ticket rummage sales and number of films produced annually (1177 short films and 877 feature films were made and released within the year 2003 alone). Indian Cinema is a global enterprise; its films have a subsequent following throughout Asia especially the Southern part of Asia and across Europe, North America, the Greater Middle East, Eastern Africa, China, and elsewhere, reaching in and triumphing over 90 countries. As of 2013, India ranked first in terms of annual film production and output, followed by Nigeria, Hollywood, and China. In 2012, India produced 1,602 feature films. The Indian film industry reached by and large revenues of \$1.86 billion (Rupees 93 Billion) in 2011 and by the year 2015, the total box office gross collection of India was US\$ 2.1 billion, which was the third-largest in the world (UNESCO, 2009).

A survey conducted by United Nations interprets that Hindi Film Industry is ahead of Hollywood as the global leader in the number of films produced each year (UNESCO, 2009). The emergence and surfacing of it have been met with critiques of the excellence and quality of films produced by the industry as compared to that of Hollywood. For example, Aft (2011) remarks that what has been written about Hindi Cinema as the second film producer to that of Hollywood in the world was based on a very flawed UNESCO

report comparing the number of extremely elevated and high budget films produced by Indian producer/director/star/marketers to the films theatrically released in the Asia, Africa, Europe, U.S., U.K., and other countries. This manner of critique implies that Hindi Film Industry should not be counted as part of the world's top and apex film producers because the films are in general produced with extremely high budgets sometimes but with poor production values. Notwithstanding the debate and difference of opinion over the quality of Hindi Cinema, the legitimacy and verity still residues that it has an avid, ardent, and devoted audience both at home and abroad.

Hindi commercial cinema in recent times has pulled off an up-to-the-minute situation in the current global order. Long dismissed by academics and critics, Hindi cinema, now inaccurately referred to as a monolithic Bollywood, has come to serve up as a metonym for India's publicized economic growth, an increasingly observable and powerful Diaspora, and its global cultural influence. Being the flag bearer of one of the biggest and leading film industries in the world, Bollywood or Hindi cinema has to a certain extent instituted relatively well, the task of sketching and drawing the attention and interest of the people in the field of academics. Therefore, in the contemporary debates and discourses hovering around India's economic growth, one cannot encompass a discussion about globalization without discussing India, and apparently cannot talk about India, without invoking Bollywood as a considerable parameter. It has been established through noted analytical assessments and exploratory and preliminary surveys that the Indian film industry particularly the Hindi commercial cinema these days is enjoying and grabbing a huge and large share in the international market. Numerous and varied films are being created, made, produced, and exported to countries across the world. For that reason conjointly the audience and spectators for viewing them are additionally growing overly and excessively. These surveys and wide-ranging inquiries ascertain that earlier, the former generation of Indian migrants viewed these films for the sake of nostalgia, yearning, longing, and wistfulness, whereas the contemporary modern generation of this epoch view a lot of Indian or Hindi cinema more in terms of associating themselves with an identity concern. They have in effect appropriated and impacted Hindi cinema's music and dance as a way and means of cultural assertion to carry on or hold on to something of their own (Dutta, 2000).

Starting from the time when the Indian film industry's very inception and initiation happened at the beginning of the last century, it has ever since played an integral and deep-seated role in the expression of social frustrations, representations, image portrayals as well as in the construction and formation of national identities. As a result of which they have

been extensively recognized as an instrument or apparatus for soft power diplomacy excessively far and wide. Their reach and appeal have surpassed and transcended borders and left an indelible and innate impression on even India's fiercest foes. Despite the cosmic and immense cultural differences in the nation, Indian cinema has held out and withstood the test of time. India's cultural diversity has fostered and promoted a diverse assortment and medley of films—collectively forming the largest film industry in and across the world. Demonstrating and indicative of a healthy and robust annual economic growth of eight percent in the past few years, India is increasingly viewed internationally as an emerging economic and political power, one manifestation of this status and position is how India's popular culture is being perceived outside India, particularly within the metropolitan centers of the globe. The globalization and commercialization of the mainstream Indian film industry is a mere extension of this phenomenon.

In an ever-increasing global market, for the Hindi film industry to contend and compete with Hollywood's hegemonic global appeal and demand, the Indian films for the most part—the Hindi commercial cinema is obliged to make every attempt, endeavor and effort to do its utmost to strive and vie with their contemporary counterparts. In the preceding decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the history of the films began with the invention and contraption of the first motion-picture cameras and the establishment of the first film production companies. Within the first decade of its origin, the Indian film industry or cinema evolved from a novelty and innovation to that of the established large-scale entertainment industry. Although the technology of film was imported to India, the very knack and art of the nitty-gritty of cinema was born in India, a century ago, soon after the dawn of cinema in the West. The identity of Indian cinema is very unique and unmatched. Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, (popularly known as Dadasaheb Phalke), the father of Indian Cinema, released his epochal feature film *Raja Harishchandra* on third May 1913. It is unlikely that neither the pioneer filmmaker nor the exhibitors realized they were unleashing a mass entertainment medium that would hold and embrace millions in sway for the subsequent hundred years and beyond.

Considerably, the popular Hindi cinema nurtured significantly in importance, stature, style and reach in the last decade of the twentieth century which was a period of artistic, innovative, creative, resourceful and commercial activities that were as frenzied, exciting and eventful as any other in the archives and chronicles of filmmaking in Mumbai. Hindi cinema conquered several new frontiers, leading the edges in the geographical and market terms. Quite a few of these releases also managed to push the boundaries of Bollywood's typically flashy, extravagant, flamboyant, glitzy, color-spangled, tacky, exaggerated, and

kitschy accounts and descriptions of narrative idioms and expressions. The contemporary Hindi films are vigilantly packaged and branded as a product in which every minute visual or the physical detail and element, from the components that make up the setting and the backdrop to the attires, outfits, and accessories of the stars. The contemporary Hindi cinema has evolved through ages. From romance to realism to comedy to action; it has traversed a long path.

### **1.3 Cinema, Women and the Indian Society**

India is a multi-racial and multi-lingual country composed of an assorted and diverse culture. In India, the family serves as the basis and foundation of the social organization which identifies and defines roles based on gender, age, and generation; and uses a system of patriarchy (Falola, 2000). This sense of family importance and significance is on the whole apparent and evident in Hindi Cinema, which approaches and draws closer in an all-embracing and an extensive array of assortments ranging from one genre to another.

According to Holdsworth (2007), Cinema plays an imperative role in shaping, questioning, and reinforcing the identities of man and woman, in addition to helping shape and outlining perceptions about gender relations and equality in society. From time immemorial, it has been witnessed through times gone by and the accounts on the archive that men in for the most part in all societies were the bread earners at the same time as the responsibility, role and the position of women were confined and restricted to being excellent homemakers, outstanding wives, and good exceptional mothers. This applied to women predominantly in a very much decidedly patriarchal society of India. Women have a distinguished place in Indian society and their status and standing within and outside the home is always kept at a high plinth and pedestal. No doubt, the addressees by the stand and witness these days incidents and episodes of abuse and exploitation of women sexuality and otherwise, but these could be eccentricities and aberrations. In India, the family ties are strong and well-built and the crucial focal point in these ties is women in different and remarkable roles of a mother, wife, and sister. Women are typically stereotyped by the media (Singh, 2011). There is a devaluation of women's image in their portrayals as it is that of structured subordinate to the primary definers. They are shown to be more passive than men who are represented as subordinate to men with restricted status or limited power. Be it in the world of advertising, television programs, newspaper, magazines, comic books, popular music videos, and cinema/films but even in video games as well, the women and girls are more likely to be revealed or shown performing domestic chores or as objects of sexual desire or as victims who are the natural recipients and heirs of harassment, aggravation, and assault.

Mostly time and again we are to observe and witness stereotyped and mediated images of the Muslim women.

The 2006 Sachar Committee report, prepared by the Prime Minister's High-Level Committee, concluded that a large proportion of the Muslim population of India suffers from severe and relentless deprivation in many social, economic and educational vicinities and areas, as well as in suspicion of their patriotism. The report moreover says that Muslims carry the twin burden and lumber of being labeled as the anti-national however being appeased at the same time. This, according to the report, has caused strong and tough resentment among Muslims towards their stereotypical representations perpetuated by the media (Sachar, 2006: 11-12).

Deniz Kandiyoti (1994) in the critique of an article, which discusses the relationship and rapport between the women and the nation, argues that the multi-religious nation-states like India form and structure the state policies under the name of a secular state, that are substantial to a considerable extent, influenced by the norms, values, and lifestyles of the dominant and overriding religious group (Hindu), irrespective of the features of the other religions of the state. According to the analysis and scrutiny did by Maidul Islam, the identity and characteristics of a 'Muslim Other' contained within the Indian public discourse are additionally influenced as a result of the decade-long resurrection of Hindutva (Islam, 2007). Ignoring and disregarding the relentless, persistent as well as institutionalized deprivation of the Muslims in India, according to the Hindutva discourse, Islam is viewed and considered to be the lone and exclusive locus of the Muslim women's deprived and poor socio-economic standing and status in the society. The Sachar Report furthermore confirms that: 'The compulsive and fixative focus on the chosen along with the select cases of Muslim women passionately discussed and mentioned within the media results and ends up in identifying and distinguishing the Muslim faith and belief as to the sole or only locus of gender injustice in the Community. Consequently, the civil society in toting up, state, trace, mark-out and locate or establish the Muslim women's deprivation and dispossession not in terms of the 'objective' reality and veracity of the collective or shared societal discrimination, as well as the out of order, flawed and faulty development policies, however merely or simply within the religious-community space only. This allows and gives consent to the State to shift, modify, and re-allocate the charge and blame to the Community as such and to absolve as well as the release itself of the disregard and neglect.' (Sachar, 2006: 12-13)

Hindi Cinema has persistently been the foremost point of orientation and reference for the Indian culture in this contemporary era. It has shaped and expressed the altering and shifting scenarios of modern India to an extent and degree that no prior or preceding art form could ever outline, achieve, accomplish, or pull off. It has influenced the line of attack in which people identify, classify, and perceive an assorted aspect and facet of their individual lives. In the past few years, the film industry has bestowed us with several women-oriented films. However, a number of post-2000 films on Muslim societies made by Muslim and non-Muslim filmmakers, are pivoting around strong Muslim female characters. These films have opened up innovative as well as new-fangled dimensions for academic analysis and inquisition on the subject of depiction, portrayal, and representation of women in the media. With feminism and women empowerment emerging out as an intense field of research worldwide, Hindi cinema is not far behind in promoting such topics. Projecting women in a strong light goes back a long way. The long-negotiated debates and discussions about feminism and female-centric films have always been at the forefront. Furthermore, it is solitarily superior that such an important aspect and facet is further pushed ahead and has been gaining more momentum as witnessed by a plethora of upcoming female-centric films. These films consequently have been thriving to render and portray women in diverse colors and shades.

Cinema in India makes available a semiotics space for the articulation of the global imaginary and its formation within the phenomenology of the local. Globalization and Western influence have played a major role in the way Hindi Cinema has developed and changed over the past few years. What upshots and outcomes does the escalating westernization of the films being produced have on the perceptions of beauty, splendor, exquisiteness, sexuality, and gender roles for women is a matter of concern to contemplate, deliberate and muse upon. As societies entered the world of modernization and globalization, the role of women changed dramatically. The Indians after the 1991 liberalization of the Indian economy both at home and the overseas, were mugged with a swiftly and rapidly altering and varying social structure, as a changing economic structure and system had its effects and consequences on the societal norms and standards. Here too films fulfilled its role as a societal narrator, chronicler, and influencer, and significantly impacted how modern Indians understand their position in a global context. Taken simultaneously, the increased marketization of Hindi Cinema, enduring colonial racism in length with the caste system, and the depiction and portrayal of Indian women in Hindi Cinema create, produce and reinforce the women's roles in a strictly heterosexual,



unyielding and inflexible fashion. This does not abscond for scores of discrepancies and variations in the arenas of representation.

Feminist and activist Laura Mulvey in her essay — “*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*” which was published in the year 1975 held that in cinema women are represented as objects of ‘gaze’ because the control of the camera is decided by assuming that the heterosexual men are the default target audience for most of the film genres. The concept was accepted by many when it was written because during that time most of the Hollywood protagonists were males in the lead, and while the discussion hovers about and flit around Hindi cinema, the concept still exists as the viewers are mostly believed to be men and women are watched, stared and gazed at even with the increased number of films targeted towards women featuring female protagonists. Though the term was introduced as the part of film theory, it is also used in critiques of television, advertisements, photographs, and paintings. Mulvey introduced and put forward the concept of the “*Male Gaze*” as a feature of power asymmetry in the essay. Mulvey also argued that in the conventional mainstream cinema, the male gaze typically takes precedence and primacy over the female gaze. The concept and thought of Male Gaze since then have been strongly influential and powerfully authoritative on feminist film theory and media studies. This concept of the male gaze was at all times prevalent in the Hindi cinema. Mulvey (1989) mentions that in a film, there are three kinds of gaze- first the viewpoint of the camera or the way or how the camera follows the characters; second is the look or gaze of the audience and thirdly, the gaze of the characters within the film. She contended that the look, glance, or gaze of the characters within the film subordinates the other looks and it essentially follows the existing socially gendered practice wherever any women play a minor or subordinate role and are essentially the sources of voyeuristic pleasure and gratification.

Mulvey (ibid) establishes that: “*The contentment and pleasure in looking, staring or gazing, has been split and ripped off between the active male and the passive female in a world, ordered by sexual discrepancy and imbalance. The decisive and determining male gaze puts forward as well as projects its desires and fantasies onto the female body/figure, which is styled accordingly. In their customary ancient or traditionally exhibitionist role, women are concurrently checked out, looked at and displayed, with their coded for strong and sturdy visual in addition to the erotic and titillating impact and collision that they can be aforementioned to imply or connote to-be-looked-at-ness*”.

Jacques Lacan (1968) brought into an accepted and popular usage of the term ‘Gaze’ considering that it can be explained and fashioned as a psycho-analytical expression to

describe the anxious, agitated and fretful state that comes with the attention, awareness or understanding that an individual may/can be viewed. In a film/movie/cinema, the male gaze crops up and occur when the audience is positioned into the perspective and viewpoint of a heterosexual man. A scene could now and then loiter and lurk around or keep lingering in and on the curves of a woman's body or figure, for the case in point. As Rosemary Betterton (1985: 4) asserts, given and specified that images of female sexuality in this culture — *“are multiplied endlessly as a spectacle for male pleasure ..... What kinds of pleasure are offered to women spectators within the forms of representation ..... Which have been made mainly by men, for men?”*

Lacan (1968) further claims and promotes that the emotional or psychological effect is that the subject loses some sense and sagacity of autonomy and independence upon realizing that he or she is an observable and visible object. This concept is bound and certain along with his theory of the mirror stage, in which a child encountering a mirror realizes that he or she has an external appearance. Lacan, therefore, suggests that this gaze effect and impact will equally or similarly be created and produced by any conceivable or reasonable object such as a chair or a television screen. This is not to say that the object acts or behaves optically as a mirror; instead, it means that the awareness or responsiveness of any given object can induce, provoke or encourage an awareness or alertness of also being an object.

The feminist film theory was influenced and developed by second-wave feminism and therefore the development of women's studies ensued and flourished within the academy. On the approach to analyze films, feminist scholars began captivating cues from the new theories arising from these progressive movements. In the early 1970s, the initial attempts and tries surfaced within the United States which were by and large supported and generally based on the sociological theories and they targeted and focused basically on the function of women characters in particular film narratives or genres and of stereotypes as a mirrored image or reflection of a society's outlook of how they view women. These aspects and facets of gaze, sex, and sexuality have ever since also been dominating Hindi Cinema. The penetration and infiltration of western ideals, pre-set standards, and principles hooked on to a film play an essential, integral, and crucial role in naturalizing imageries and images of women for our consumption. The digital era has escorted and ushered the images and illustrations of the Indian women into our homes, whether it be on our television sets, our computer screens, and our newspapers or in whichever outlines or sketches of media. Hindi Cinema therefore as a consequence over the years has been the trendsetters in sartorial and beauty matters almost being the benchmark or yardstick for contemporary tastes.

With the beginning of the spreading of a neo-liberalist socio-economic order, Hindi cinema made an entry into the realm of the projection of the postmodernist trend. Postmodernism is taken into account and considered to be an inclination and tendency in the contemporary modern culture characterized by the matter of objective truth and inherent suspicion towards the world's global cultural narrative or meta-narrative (Dissanayake, 2004. 1998). It involves the postulation and belief that many, if not all, apparent realities are only social constructs, as they are subject to change inherent to time and place. The emphasis or prominence is bestowed upon the function and role of language, power relations, and motivations; and in particular, it attacks the employment and use of sharp classifications such as the male versus the female, the straight versus the gay, the white versus the black, and the imperial versus the colonial. Rather, it clings on to realities and holds onto them to be plural and relative, and dependent or reliant on who the interested parties are and what their interests consist of. It attempts and tries to problematize modernist impertinence, impudence, and overconfidence, by drawing into sharp contrast or disparity, the difference between how confident and assured speakers are of their positions in opposition to however assured, convinced and confident they have to be, to deal and dole out their supposed functions and purposes.

To the enchantment and delight of the coherent, rational, and progressive human beings, the issues of feminism, empowerment, and emancipation of women in different forms are time and again chosen by contemporary Indian filmmakers. Cinema adds and contributes to social transformation and conversion as well by rejecting social divides and splits in the name of caste and community. At the same time, as many films take up, portray and depict the issue or concern of representation of women, others delve into and explore out the issues of misrepresentation as well as under-representation in the narratives. Despite the advancements and progress that Hindi Cinema has made in the twenty-first century with the increasing accessibility and ease of understanding the films produced, things haven't changed significantly for the Indian women, as these kinds of representations in point of fact display, exhibit or demonstrate. These continuities are pieces of evidence and testimonies of the constant ongoing influence of western neocolonialism, most often devoted, endowed, and invested in the circulation of cultural products that articulates and expresses western or racist ideals of women and femininity.

#### **1.4 Cinema and Representation.**

Cinema is venerated as one of the most admired and accepted popular media forms. The movies are still an extremely effective, potent, and persuasive entertainment and socializing

medium, and as such warrants and deserves an extensive, broader, and wider understanding and investigation (Linton and Jowitt, 1977). The relationship between the content of motion pictures and the role that such content plays in shaping the behavior of the audience is not easily understood. As Gerbner (1969) has said that the mass production and distribution of message systems transforms selected private perspectives into broad and wide public perspectives, and brings mass publics into existence; and therefore, without knowing what general terms of collective cultivation about existence, priorities, values, and relationships are given in collectively shared public message systems, it is not possible to reliably interpret facts of the individual or social response. Cinema industries throughout the world depict, portray, illustrate, and represent innumerable images of various races, groups, and communities on screen. These cinematic representations have the potential and the power to allow audiences to generate thoughts, views, and opinions based on what they perceive to be true or credible. Hence, for the sake of convenience, the film industries often repeat plots, characters, and specific characterizations. Notwithstanding their virtues and vices, cinema, with its audio and visual properties, has the ability and the capacity or to say the least, ample scope to create everlasting images in the minds of those who experience the moving images with sound, if projected and positioned effectively. Cinema is believed to be a popular medium of mass consumption which plays a significant role in molding opinions, constructing images, reinforcing dominant cultural values as well as to bring about key changes in the society. It is therefore intended and supposedly considered to keep the viewers amused and entertain them by captivating them into a world that is starkly diverse and somewhat different from that of the actual one, a world that provides a gateway to break away from the daily toils and grinds of life.

All over the world in the present day, the searing topic of discussion centers around the matters, issues, and concerns related to the parameters of media, identity, and gender and as a result, they have become essential and integral to the discipline of media studies. The reasons behind this can be relayed to the popularity and diversity of media as a source of mass consumption and its influence and authority on constructing ideas and generating debates. Hence, as there are a plethora of media choices available to the audiences in recent times, for that reason the media scene in India has also expanded and inflated, and cinema has turned out to be one of the most preferable choices of the masses. Over the decades, social, political, and economic conditions have changed the media landscape along with the entertainment scenario in India as well as in the world over. These changes have furthermore influenced our cultural practices and preferences and how we view and analyze the depiction of a certain art form. This study will, therefore, try to find, hit upon,

seek and endeavour to determine how cinema in particular, too, has mirrored such depictions, transformations, and image portrayals, with a focus and spotlight on minority representation of Muslim women in particular as its central theme and premise.

The relationship between reality and its representation is the first question we think of when considering the relationship between the media and society. When talking about the representations of reality in the contemporary electronic media—specifically television and the film media—we should look at the widest framework of representations available to mankind, namely, art. It has been a commonplace to argue that art imitates life. As an accepted and popular cultural medium, the Hindi film industry or Bollywood can be seen to have disseminated, propagated, reinforced along with underlining this popular ideology of doubts and mistrust or disbeliefs along with suspicion towards the Muslim community of India. Bollywood movies in all its essence and spirit, have created and shaped stereotypical images of the Muslim characters with clichéd forms of cultural and religious symbols like ‘beard’ and ‘caps’ for men and conservative Islamic headscarf, ‘*Hijab*’ or ‘*Burkha*’ for the women creating a monolithic portrayal of the community. Simultaneously, these portrayals completely ignore and disregard the regional and socio-economic differences within the community. The portrayal of Muslim men as terrorists, villains, and gangsters has also been a recurrent theme in Bollywood movies (Islam, 2007: 405-406).

The Hindu-Muslim sagas of romances are furthermore an added common and widespread theme through which the Muslims are represented in Bollywood. Whether it is in the aegis of a cross border (India-Pakistan) or within India phenomenon, the apprehension, as well as the fear of intermarriage, paved the way in favor of the success and victory of many Indian movies like *Henna* (1991), *Bombay* (1995), *Gadar-Ek Prem Katha* (2001), *Veer Zaara* (2004), *Fanaa* (2006), and so on. Such movies, like the ones being mentioned, discussed, and concerned on here and scheduled to the subject of representation, serves as a knick-knack in addition to a reminder of/to the impossibility of the cross-border or the cross-cultural love between the Hindu-Muslim lovers (Hirji, 2008, 2010). The nationalist philosophies along with the ideologies of the Hindi cinema positions the *Qaum* (community) against the *Mulk* (nation), which is declared as a synonym to *Ghar* (home) (Fazila-Yacoobali, 2002: 184). Following Fazila-Yacoobali (2002), the *Mulk* is the Hindu, middle-class, a territorially distinct, efficient, benevolent, reasonable, forward-looking, and militarily-vigilant modern nation-state that India aspires to be. On the other hand, *Qaum* is constructed as the antithesis or exact opposite of this Indian modernity. It is constructed as feudal, dissolute, and decadent, not capable of keeping the sufferings of the past in the past, unable to move forward, calcified, irrational, sentimental, somewhat deranged, criminal,

and ultimately dangerous. Thus the Muslim *Qaum* is viewed as threatening and hostile towards the Indian modernity because of its association and involvement with the partition and setting up a Muslim *Mulk*-Pakistan as opposed to the much anticipated or imagined secular Indian *Mulk*.

To a great extent like the demonized Muslim man, the Muslim woman as well has time and again been incorporated into the imagination and thoughts of the Hindi cinema or Bollywood as the inferior or substandard 'other' to that of the 'ideal' upper-caste Hindu woman. This may be paramount to, as well as illustrated by further substantive cinematic examples of the nationalist classic, *Mother India* (1957), and the romantic classic *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960). In *Mother India*, the de-sexualized character or personality of that of Radha is representative and archetypal of the dignified and noble Gandhian mother who is submissive, dutiful, chaste, virtuous, selfless, patriotic and self-sacrificing. This sharply contrasts with the character or personality of Anarkali in *Mughal-e-Azam*, who is a *Tawaif* (courtesan) and the ultimate decorous seductress and dancer with whom the Mughal Prince Jahangir falls in love and rebels against his father, Emperor Akbar. The representation of Radha corresponds in a nationalistic sari, symbolically binding and obligatorily protecting and shielding her body from the exposure, vulnerability, and permeability of access and admittance by men. At the same time as for Anarkali, regardless of her fully covered body, her breasts are frequently accentuated and highlighted by the cut of her dress, her swirling dances reveal her full leg even though they are covered up, and the only exposed parts of her body, her palms, and feet are fetishized through long nails painted red, jewelry and elaborate and intricate dancing gestures using her hands and feet (Dwyer, 2000:148). If the ideal model of the coherent, consistent but gendered nation is represented by Radha, then the selfish, disruptive, rebellious, and erotic presence that disrupts as well as interrupts the *status quo* of power, authority, and supremacy is being represented by Anarkali (Ansari, 2008).

The representation, portrayal, or depiction of the veiled Muslim woman has achieved and been successful in gaining iconic status, both in India as well as globally. It has become a trope in support of the clash and conflict of the civilizations' argument flanked by the civilized Hindus and the barbaric Muslims in India. The women's dress in India is produced, performed, and interpreted throughout in the course of the opposition of putatively 'Hindu', thus the Indian sari, and 'Muslim' thus the un-Indian 'veil' (Osella and Osella, 2007). Controversies in the region of the Kashmiri militant group Lashkar-e- Jabbar announcing that all Muslim women in Kashmir must wear a Burkha became a project and venture of marking and sketching out the inside/outside boundaries of the Indian Muslim's

nationalism (Menon, 2005). Muslim women's preference and choice of clothes became a symbol of their rejection of the nation. The perspectives arising out of such considerations and understandings discounted an analogous ideology of the Muslims, whereby intimidations and threats to the Muslim communities' identity, survival or existence, resulted in the conceited and proud declaration and assertion of their communities' characteristics and identity on the bodies of their women (Menon, 2005). For example, in the state of Kerala, the practice of wearing or donning a *Hijab* was rare and uncommon, however after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, it became a more prevalent and widespread practice among the Muslims to institute and establish their superior or greater affection and attachment to the Islamic identity, and a reaction or response to the Hindu bigoted chauvinistic nationalism displayed through the events of the demolition of the Babri Masjid (Menon, 2005; Osella, 2007). Such dichotomized accounts and versions of the representation of Hindu-Muslim women come into sight in the descriptions and imageries of the docile, submissive, and subservient veiled women, evoked in the image of the Muslim Pakistani woman *Zara* in the movie *Veer Zaara* who constantly covers her head and wears a *Salwar-Kameez*. She is indebted to the Hindu hero for saving her life and falls in love with him, only to suffer further by her countrymen's conspiracy to separate her from her lover for many years. She is shown to be passive and subservient, in need of protection from the brutish Muslim man. Unlike the dangerous Muslim man, the Muslim women in Bollywood, particularly post 9/11, are shown to have some possibility of redemption through allegiance to the nationalistic agenda. For the case in point, *Zooni* (in *Fanaa*) forfeits and sacrifices an earthly or worldly love for her lover who is a terrorist/separatist for a larger and superior transcendental love of the nation, to a large extent like in the movie *Mother India* as described previously. *Zooni*, whilst doing so, constructs an autonomy, liberty, and space for herself and her son as the depoliticized 'good Muslims' contained by the nationalist legroom and space of the Indian nation (Khan 2009).

By conveying and passing over an extreme and powerful image or illustration of the 'dangerous other' or the 'inferior other' Kumar (2013) recommends as well as suggests to facilitate that the representation of a Muslim in the Indian films has sociologically broadened and expanded the classification and definition of the Islamic terrorism. By plummeting and reducing the discursive space and position conferred to the Muslims in India and elsewhere making them more exposed and vulnerable to social banishment or else ostracism, state violence as well as mob fury. *'The depravity and wickedness of the present discourse are such that it has Muslims eternally and everlastingly on the defensive*

*or blameworthy side/part, which is explicitly and specifically the agenda and outline of the Hindutva in addition to all such forms of authoritarian, assertive and dictatorial ideology'* (Kumar, 2013: 464).

There are several important reasons for examining Hindi movies in the Indian context. This study will help create increased awareness about gender bias and the nature of stereotypical instances in popular Hindi movies and subsist evidence for how Muslim women are being represented in the Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century. Therefore, throughout in the lines of the discourse and discussion on the narrative analysis of the select Hindi commercial cinema produced in the twenty-first century, this study investigates the Hindi cinema's representative role in the creation, construction and formation of the hierarchical identities in the Indian society wherein the Muslims are seen to occupy and take up the place and position of the inferior or the substandard 'other' to the superior or the greater Hindu 'self'. Focusing on the edges of the Muslim women characters, in particular, the study demonstrates that the selected narratives attempt to move away from the older binary identity narratives of the Muslim women such as the nation vs. religion and the hyper-sexualized courtesan vs. the submissive and compliant veiled women, headed for the identity narratives borne out of Muslim women's choice and preference of education, career and life partner, political participation as well as the embodied practices. Hence this study has consequently explored the depiction, position, and portrayal of Muslim women in the complex representational scheme in the Hindi commercial cinema. Apart from that, the study made an effort to understand the perceptions of the audience, film critics, and filmmakers regarding the select films. It also sought to capture the intricacies of the Hindi commercial cinema which includes factors such as stereotyped images of Muslims, patterns of changes in the representation of Muslim women over the years, the socio-cultural background, the kind of roles played by Muslim characters in the films, etc. Nevertheless, in association and comparison to the warnings and signs of change and transformation, the sites of continuity and permanence are strappingly embedded and implanted in the religious-nationalistic meta-narratives that compel the paradigms of Indian femininity or womanhood. All this has been done from a qualitative point of reference and orientation to understand the film texts and the perceptions of the audiences. Accordingly, bearing in mind that the driving fundamental objective of the study is to trace, locate and outline the representation of Muslim women in the Hindi commercial cinema produced mainly in the twenty-first century in addition to also attempting to understand how audiences, filmmakers and film critics make sense of the representation of Muslim Women in Hindi commercial cinema, the findings have thus



contributed in providing a knowledge base through which the harmful gender bias and stereotypes in Hindi Cinema are perhaps possibly or gradually or however be progressively eliminated and purged. An analogous and comparable scenario, to a great extent like that of in Edward W. Said's (1978) theorization of representing Muslims as '*Others*' in the Western media, is extensive and hence rampant of its prevalence in the Indian media's entertainment segment, on the whole in the Hindi cinema as well. In an approximate hovering over the umbrella of all the genres of the Hindi cinema, the Muslims are frequently by and large represented as the '*Others*'. A few convinced and definite cultural symbols such as clothing, food habits, and etiquette were used to mark out the 'Muslim identity' as '*Others*', which for the most part are sometimes beside the point, irrelevant and extraneous. Those were put together and clubbed into the particular community in a situation to construct a mystifying, baffling and clichéd image, and stereotypical representation of Muslims- significantly a lot like what the western media did to the citizens and populace of the Middle-East countries. Either it is in India or a different place in and around the expanse of the globe, although all Muslims are adherents and followers of Islam, in its actuality and veracity they are not a homogenous community inhabiting in a society. Even though they are heterogeneous by character, temperament, and personality far and away, the media, both print and electronic, represent and signify Muslims as a homogeneous community in terms of their food habits, clothing, language, or occupation. As a consequence, an essentialised identity of "the Muslim community" and even "the Indian Muslims" is attributed, ascribed, and assigned to them. Nowhere is such an essentialised and homogeneous representation of Muslims as ubiquitous and persistent as in the films. Being certain that such depictions as well as representations have extreme outlying and far-flung consequences, both for the Muslims and also the society within which they reside and subsist. Cinema thus bestows us with a tremendously remarkable and vital supply of information, sources of data as well as a point of reference to sociological and cultural studies or research. Given that, therefore in this study, the researcher has sought to explore and look at the representation of Muslim women in Hindi commercial films of the twenty-first Century and its perception and sensitivity among the audience, which view them.

In the Indian film industry or cinema, the representation of Muslim identity is extensively rampant, particularly in the Hindi Cinema or movies. In different periods or eras depending on the socio-political circumstances and state of affairs of the times, the Muslim identity has been depicted and represented in different ways. While the films of the 1950s and 1960s, the so-called, Nehruvian era, reflected the "tolerant" secularism of the state and also

depicted an idealized Muslim world where *Nawabs* lived with their grandeur and idiosyncrasies intact, the 1970s and the surfacing and emergence of an alternative and unconventional politics of minority representation was witnessed in the 1980s. In this period, the aristocrats were pushed to hedonistic and self-indulgent pursuits. The demolition of the Babri Masjid on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1992 and the riots that followed became the theme of many memorable films. Consequently, innovative and up to the minute modifications and changes could be noticed, observed, and perceived in the popular cinema after 1992. Besides, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and a section of the Pentagon have left a mark worldwide on the manner or way in which the Muslims are identified and perceived. Instantaneously after the attack, many movies were made and produced on terrorism in Hollywood as well as in Bollywood. There are films, which have depicted the ideological conflict between the nationalist victim and the *Jihadi* terrorist. As mentioned earlier, the media has an important role in molding a citizen's identity, and Indian cinema plays a key role in that. Through preceding literature, it has been noticed that (Gopalan N. T., 2014), in the course of different genres (The Muslim Historical, The Muslim Social and The Muslim Political) that the popular Hindi cinema has dealt with the minimalism of the Muslim Other in the nation space by representing Muslims in stereotypical ways, but the Muslim Contemporary films depart from earlier mainstream films' stereotypical representation of Muslims to one in which Muslims are depicted as "evil" and alien to the nation. The Muslim Contemporary movies inspect, examine, and scrutinize film narratives that represent and depict Muslim characters without any symbol or identification. In such movies, the indicators such as language, cloth, and etiquette do not smear or mark Muslim identity. Though the Muslim Contemporary films do not carry any extra baggage of religion there are films in this category, in which Muslims are made to prove their allegiance to the nation repetitively despite their liberal, modern and secular images.

### **1.5 Statement of the Problem**

Criticisms of mass media productions often include a discussion and symposium of how women and minorities are systematically excluded and/or relegated to minor roles, or roles that match traditional stereotypes. The representations portrayals and depictions of these types are significant factors in the social construction of reality among the general public and therefore may perpetuate racism and sexism on a larger scale. Available and existing literature indicates that there has been a derisory or inadequate amount of research on gender studies focusing on minority representation, especially the representation of Muslim women in the contemporary Hindi Cinema. To date, there has not been any sufficient, well-

thought-out, or ordered study carried out on the varying constructs of minority representation, gender bias, or the transformation of Muslim women's portrayal in the Hindi Commercial Cinema of the twenty-first Century. Therefore, this study analyses how the select Hindi movies represent the image of Muslim women characters with regards to dominance, power, control, authority, gender bias, stereotypical instances, under-representation, and misrepresentation.

From a very Indian perspective, the media representation of minorities has been minimal and negligible in art, cinema, and culture. In the process of showing and screening larger than life characters on screen, somewhere the depiction and portrayal of women remain clichéd. Hence to analyze the effects of media on minorities and particularly women, it is obligatory to study their representation in the first place. It intends to deal with long-negotiated minority issues where minorities have been under-represented, misrepresented, or portrayed in a limited manner and style and these narratives have evolved over the years. With a very few exceptions, Hindi Cinema typecasts religious minorities and seem to portray them stereotypically.

## **1.6 Purpose of the study**

In the modernization of societies, the media is considered to have played an important role along with greatly affecting the image of women in today's modern world. To a convinced extent a whole lot of research has been done through on the role of women in different societies. Conversely, little and petite has been thought or supposed regarding the importance or significance of films in portraying women in shifting roles over different decades and the impact it has on the societies in general. Indian cinema has witnessed a major and significant conversion and transformation in the approach in which the women are portrayed through films over the past decades. Seeing that the contemporary-modern-present-day cinema has been instrumental in portraying and representing women as more independent, confident, and career-oriented, this study also tried to deal with such fast-changing roles of the Muslim women as portrayed in the Hindi cinema in addition to its influence on the patriarchal Indian society with a focus on the select representative Hindi Commercial cinema of the twenty-first century. The aim is to link the changing character played by women in films with the emerging status and position of women in India, seeing that films/cinema are a manifestation and reflection of the changes and transformations that are very much prevalent in the social structure. During the last two decades, Indian women have shown that they will not submit or surrender themselves to any attempts to remove them from the public sphere and diminish their social, economic, political, and legal rights.

Interestingly, rabid opposition to women activists came also from *Daughters of Islam* who espouses religion-based positions supported by right-wing groups (Chenoy, 2002). For this reason, the purpose and rationale of the study are to examine the diverse roles played by Muslim women in the Hindi Commercial Cinema of the twenty-first century as well as to analyse their representation, image portrayal, and gender construction by scrutinizing their role, position, and characterization in the select movies. Further, the study aims to depict and describe the potpourris of quite quintessential condiments of contemporary Hindi Commercial Cinema's shiny flecks and the tinsel town of the twenty-first century where due to the incipience of the liberalized, privatized and globalised era; Muslims are socially, economically and politically marginalized. By encapsulating and analyzing the movies and going through the contemporary film industry in India, the study will try to group the nature of stereotypical notions forming the scope and extent wherein there is narrowly any string distinguishing the real and reel aspects of Cinema but in the essence, it directly touches the sensibilities of the Muslim minority, particularly that of the Muslim women. It will significantly examine how and to what extent the Muslim women's role is being represented, misrepresented or under-represented and portrayed by the Indian film industry and how such depiction and portrayal has warped and influenced in reforming the lives and thoughts of heaps and oodles of people within the Indian cultural contexture further elucidating, enlightening and shedding light on the portrayal and representation of the Muslim women's image in the Hindi Commercial Cinema of the twenty-first century after dissecting and scrutinizing the valuable observations.

### **1.7 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this research is to study the representation of Muslim women characters in the Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century.

The specific objectives are:

- 1) To analyse the gender construct in Hindi cinema concerning Muslim women characters.
- 2) To examine if there are predictable patterns of dominance and authority.
- 3) To examine the nature of power in the select movies.
- 4) To explore the changing contours of the archetype of Muslim women in Hindi commercial films if any.

### **1.8 Research Questions**

This study will take in hand the question of how Muslim women are represented in the Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century. It will discuss the findings on the occurrence of features (representation, gender, gender role, stereotyping). Specifically, it will focus on the following research questions:

- 1) How Muslim women are portrayed in the Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century?
- 2) What kind of cultural context is represented through the Muslim women characters in the select movies?
- 3) How is religion embedded when representing the Muslim women in Hindi commercial cinema?
- 4) Is there a particular pattern of representation of Muslim women in the Hindi commercial cinema?
- 5) Is there a bias in how Muslim women have been represented in the Hindi commercial cinema?
- 6) Have the characters representing Muslim women been stereotyped?

### **1.9 Social Significance of the Study**

Whitney (2006) explains that the media is an essential, indispensable, and a reasonably vital part of the state power-structure. In its practical and realistic application, it is more valuable and important than even the military or armed forces. There are explicit drawbacks of using force and power; whereas, propaganda and public relations tend to be less inconvenient to the normal flow of business. The most important objectives of the media are to shape and outline the public opinion and outlook, and restructure or reshape them yet all over again if looked-for or considered necessary and obligatory.

Throughout the 1990s, the portrayal and representations of rogue Muslims were restricted to Kashmiri separatists and their sympathizers alongside with the underworld/mafia concentrated in Mumbai. Many of the films throughout this period, tried to put in the picture the story of the Indian (predominantly Hindu) families threatened by the Islamic terrorists, thus demonising the Muslims as the 'other' (Hirji 2008; Jain, 2011; Rajagopal, 2011). If truth be told, in most of the movies Hinduism and its cultural symbols came across as 'the norm' through the elimination of the other religions in the country (Rajagopal, 2011). The 'Muslims as terrorist' genre of movies or cinema became trendy and popular in the 1990s and the themes have since then evolved, elaborated, and diversified in the recent times with detailed and specific references to the trans-national nature of dread and terror since the events of 9/11 in the USA. For example, in *Fanaa* (2006), Amir Khan plays the character of a Kashmiri separatist character named Rehan acting violently against the Indian nation. Although the political ideology of Azadi (independence) from India is mentioned in passing in the film, it is framed from the beginning as being in contrast to the patriotism of the Muslim women- the female lead character- Zooni and her school teacher parents, who are portrayed and showcased as the

co-opted de-politicized ‘Good Muslims’ in Mamdani’s (2004) formulation. Even though it is pointless to note that the character of Rehan in the narrative account of the plot is the embodiment and personification of Mamdani’s fanatical ‘Bad Muslim’ that habitually contests and defies “the national order and mandate of things” (Malkki 1992: 34). The plot of the ‘story’ of *Fanaa* appears to occur and suggest itself in isolation from the complex political realities and people’s ideological positioning in Kashmir, by labeling all forms of political dissent from the Kashmiris as terrorism or anti-nationalism towards India. This premise or theme has frequently been replicated in many plots of movies churned out by Bollywood or the Hindi cinema in the 1990s, 2000s and thereafter from then on, where the Kashmiris have been replaced by the Indian Muslims and the acts of political dissent and disagreement amid the Indian state is labeled as anti-nationalism, constructing a *patriot in opposition to a terrorist*, dichotomy.

In the *patriot-terrorist* binary, at the same time as in the *Good Muslim-Bad Muslim* binary, it appears that the only reliable and trustworthy Muslims are those who position and situate India first. Remarkably the designated title and the lead character in *Fiza*, *Sarfarosh*’s Salim, *Mission Kashmir*’s Inayat Khan, and *Fanaa*’s Zooni, are all religiously devout, pious and uncritically patriotic. The *good in opposition to the bad* dichotomy also encompasses the *tradition opposed to the modern* and *the religious in opposition to the secular* dichotomies in which the Muslims embodied by the terrorists, the mafia dons, the lecherous *Nawabs*, furthermore almost immediately get presented as intrinsically incompatible with the values of modernity, democracy, and secularism that the post-colonial Indian state espouses for. Therefore the exploration of nuances of the representation of Muslim women in contemporary Hindi commercial cinema can reveal a socio-political construction of the representational scheme of the Muslim women’s depiction, portrayal, and identity. Seeing that films are considered to be the cultural artifacts and works of art that supposedly reflect and replicate reality, but do they provide justice to this very statement? If women have more rights, power, and voice in today’s society, is this reality being re-constructed on screen in the contemporary, mainstream films that reach the widest audiences? To what extent are we consuming ‘real’ images and to what extent are the images just perpetuations of antiquated thoughts or reconstructions that continue to have the same subtle prejudices from before? At the same time as our digitally advanced and technologically driven age has sped up the rate and access of media products, so it is very much essential to analyze the present-day Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century, in particular, that are exceptionally consumed as well as viewed across the globe.

## **Chapter-II: Review of Literature**

This chapter on the review of literature endeavors to assess, evaluate, and gauge the critical points of existing knowledge and understanding and discusses the substantive findings and contributions available about the topic undertaken for the study. It is a summary of the recognized facts and information about a specified subject or area under discussion which brings forth the justifications of the reasons for conducting the research. The researcher thus tries to convince the importance and benefits of the topic under study. Therefore, to get a proper and appropriate understanding of the works that have been done in the concerned field and considering the various theoretical concepts that are related to the study the researcher has categorized this chapter into various categories and thematic divisions which underlines the researcher's thorough and deep connections to the field of study that is undertaken and develops the foundation which in due course serves as the groundwork for the entire thesis.

This chapter hence discusses, appraises and reviews most of the related preceding research carried out on the representation of women's gender with special reference to minority representation and gender stereotypes, particularly dealing with the image portrayal and depiction of the womenfolk and the Muslim characters especially that of the Muslim women in Hindi commercial cinema, taking into consideration the issues which are concerned with representation, misrepresentation, underrepresentation, language, gender, and gendered language, stereotyping, dominance, authority, women in media and cinema, media as the gender state. More specifically, this branch of the study undertakes and scrutinizes the discussions on the early research that has been conducted and also the studies undertaken in different parts of the world on academic content and substance to present a narrative analysis of the select movies within various disciplines with an emphasis on the construction of stereotypes, stereotypical instances, gender bias, and minority representation.

Witnessing the tracks of the preceding literature under review, it can be stated and ascertained that as not a good deal of previous research works have been undertaken or delved within the said field, therefore efforts have been made to examine, analyse and evaluate the studies that were undertaken and made available through secondary sources on the issue of minority representation with special reference to Muslim women characters in the Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century. When we see a film, though we may not be always aware and sentient of the fact, we are also seeing portrayals of certain types of people and of the societies in which they live (Berger, 2008). Subsequently, the

study or analysis of a film lends itself quite naturally to visual analysis, and more specifically, visual semiotic analysis, to further understand what portrayals are being projected on-screen. Accordingly, cinematic images carry tremendous weight in our lives since they transmit particular ideas about such critical topics, usually in a very meandering, subconscious, and entertaining approach or manner. By decoding the various signs in the cinematic text, one can uncover or unearth visions on social, political, economic, or cultural issues. Films then have the potential to delicately create, generate and disseminate ideologies, and through visual semiotic analysis, one can embark on to dissect or scrutinize what ideologies, if any, are being circulated. Ideology refers to those representations that reflect or replicate the interests of power. In particular, ideology works to legitimate social inequalities, and narratives of semiology, then, is centrally concerned with the social effects of meaning (Rose, 2001).

The well-chronicled history of Bollywood moviemaking has been one long testimony to the immense and vast power of visual images to evoke and induce popular emotional responses, indeed to reflect and influence the process of social change (Codell, 2007). Films have the power that moves clear of or far beyond pure and untainted entertainment. In particular, they can influence and sway one's collective imagination and influence our perceptions on crucial issues related to race, class, gender, etc., but the extent to which they reflect real-world situations is bleak, particularly in regards to women. The female characters in films reflect and perpetuate the status and options of women in today's society and play an active part in creating female role models (Kord, 2005). Accordingly, it is important to examine how women are represented on celluloid to better understand the ideologies they bear.

In the book titled, "*Constructing Empowered Women: Cinematic Images Of Power And Powerful Women*," authored by Jean-Anne Sutherland (2013), the author has put on record that the motion pictures' unique power of attraction lies in the façade and semblance of the reality that they convey. In the course of the visual images, the medium of film is able and proficient in creating a convincing and persuasive account and version of reality to the viewer. The stories told throughout a film boom, reverberate and resonate with the audiences for the reason that they converse and verbalize to several shared aspects and facets of the lived experience and know-how in the social world. But not all lived experiences are represented in film, and some are skewed by racism and ethnocentrism (Basler). Sutherland also focuses on the sociological perspective with an emphasis on power and women in film by taking an intersectional approach to explore gender, race, ethnicity, and social class in films about women. Drawing from Amy Allen's (2017)



conception of power as the inter-related triad of domination (power-over), empowerment or resistance (power-to), and solidarity (power-with), we can then apply Sutherland's elaboration on those forms of power in terms of how they are being depicted in films. A few results reveal that most feminist films revolve around stories about power-to; women finding the courage to individually confront and challenge existing norms. Power-to films were predominantly tales of white or higher middle-class women. Women of colour were most likely to be featured in power-over films. Very few could be considered a power-with film that demonstrates solidarity among women. It was concluded that more women and men with feminist values behind the camera is a necessary, but not sufficient, a requirement to change the cultural representation of women and power in films.

The absence of the minority, ethnic and racial groups in films tell a Eurocentric story, while stereotypical representations of racial and ethnic groups have wide-reaching consequences in the attitudes and beliefs of both stigmatized and dominant group members (Roman 2000-2001). It is important to note that much of the literature about how certain ethnic groups and minorities have been represented and depicted in the film actually creates and often re-enforces its distortions, creating "stereotypes of movie stereotypes" (Cortes 1992: 75). Members of the stereotyped groups are also affected and at risk for internalizing the discredited and demeaning characteristics portrayed (Garcia Berumen 1995; Roman 2000-2001).

Producers do little to stop such developments and rarely challenge sexism or unequal gender relations in their screenplays (Ross, 2006). 'Mainstream genres express broader cultural, social values than classic works of art' (Bondejberg, 2001). Imbalances in gender representations are longstanding and come out strongly in genre films via their fixed formulas. Hollywood producers prefer delivering a far less risky formulated lie than exposing true realities and potentially losing out a devoted viewer base. Schatz agrees, 'Film genres express the social and aesthetic sensibilities not only of Hollywood filmmakers but of the mass audience as well' (Schatz, 1981). So in essence, both the producers and the audience are responsible for the circulation of patriarchal ideologies in a cyclical process, where one claims to be responding to the other. 'A movie's genre is based on a set of resolutions and concords that affect or sway both the production of individual works within that genre and audience expectations and experiences' (Bondejberg, 2001). Genres are constructed through these conventions, which can reinforce ideas about gender. 'Genres have traditionally been central to preserving female (and male) stereotypes in classical Hollywood cinema' (Gledhill, 2012). Large, blockbuster films that Hollywood continuously churns out tend to fall into a specific, long-standing, and popular genre.

Ardener (1975) conceives of women as a muted and man as a dominant group concerning language, meaning, and communication (Kiran, 2000:98). On an analogous procession, Germaine Greer (1971) called for a revolution of women based on cooperation for wrecking the stereotyped images cast as well as radiated on them by men and asserting themselves as persons with individual identities. To substantiate with that, it can be stated that in the recent times, numerous and plenty of scholarly and journalistic research articles and quite a lot of book-length studies (Chakravarty, 1998; Prasad, 1998; Kazmi, 1999; Mishra, 2002) have offered an attention-grabbing textual analysis of the fascinating and interesting aspects of the Hindi cinema. These facets vary from nationalism to culture along with the representations of the women's role/character to that of the nature of the hero/actor. These existing texts and literature in-store, have championed the diverse aspects of the films making the public and its spectators believe and presuppose that viewing them is for all intents and purposes-Indian, thoroughly traditional, or radically popular because of the reason that it allows and empowers Bollywood audiences by linking and connecting them to a set of essential and obligatory cultural traditions.

The accounts of the representations of the Indian nation in the popular cinema of post-colonial India are relatable and significant to the broader cultural and ideological debates concerning the national identity (Chakravarty, 1987: 1). "Indian cinema has remained remarkably inward-looking throughout its history. It is a detailed reality that possibly explains the frequent and recurrent bafflements in addition to the misjudgments of even its most sympathetic critics and detractors from the West" (Chakravarty, 1987: 219). According to Chakravarty (1987: 38), except the token of acknowledgments of its creative, resourceful and prolific outputs and the critical attention given to a handful of filmmakers (like Satyajit Ray), Indian cinema, in general, remains to a large degree marginalized within film studies; although the recent years have brought some interest in India's popular cinema particularly in Britain and elsewhere apart from the Indian audiences, and individual films/cinema and actors/stars are being studied of late. However vast spheres of influence, realms, and domains remain, lingering and hanging around unexplored.

K. Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake in the book titled "*Indian Popular Cinema: A narrative of Cultural Change*" provides a historical-cultural survey of Indian cinema-popular, artistic and regional, where the authors have reviewed nine decades of Indian popular Cinema and examined its immense influence on people in India with special reference to the issues of representation and the complexity of the Indian Diaspora and reflected its immense influence on the spectators, viewers or audiences India and abroad. Additionally, the authors provide a powerful critical analysis of the culture and history of

the Indian film as an art form and popular medium thereby affirming that, times have undergone a dramatic change, and that at the present set-up, the movies that are being produced in the contemporary scenario have to do their utmost and strive with a plethora of soap operas on satellite Television for its popularity and recognition. The authors extensively the complex and fascinating relationship between women, cinema, and third world feminism, thereby illuminating the aspects of the representation of women in Indian films, focusing on two areas: the representation *of* women and the representation *of* women. They comment that in a traditional Indian society, there were definite and consensual norms of behavior-that regulated the conduct of women-all of them handed down from the past and that their lives were severely circumscribed, where strict rules and regulations had to be followed (Dissanayake, 2004:77). Women's roles were essential as daughter, wife, and mother. According to the *Manusmriti*, which had a profound effect on shaping the morals of Indian society, a female should be subject in childhood to her father, in youth to her husband, and when her husband is dead; to her children. *Manusmriti* is emphatic that a woman must not strive to separate herself from her father, her husband, and her sons. Women were given no kind of independence, she was told to be always cheerful, efficient in the management of household affairs, fastidious in cleaning utensils, careful with expenses, and expected to be unwaveringly obedient to her husband, and after his death, she is expected to make every effort to honour his memory, and these norms governed the lives of women in traditional India and thereby they find clear articulation in Indian cinema, especially in Hindi commercial or popular cinema (Dissanayake, 2004:77-78). The authors also deal with the changing scene in Indian popular cinema which has been shaped largely by four inter-related developments: economic, social, political, and technological (Dissanayake, 2004:109). They have commented that as the film making in India has acquired 'industry status' it owes greater accountability to the public (Dissanayake, 2004. 1998).

Women are always projected as an entity or object of visual pleasure in the Hindi cinema from the initial point in time. Laura Mulvey (1975; 1989) has asserted that the cinema puts off and contributes to the male power by enabling men to make the women the objects of a controlling gaze, which she identified as scopophilia. According to Mulvey scopophilia means “*Using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight is one of the primary pleasure of the cinema*” (Derne and Jadwin, 2000: 244).

Ferdinand de Saussure (1966: 68) has squabbled and argued that —*one characteristic of the symbol is that it is never wholly arbitrary; it is not empty, for there is the seed and origin of an innate and natural connection or correlation between the signifier and the*

*signified*. The women's body in Hindi cinema is mostly projected as an object of viewing pleasure for the men spectators and Laura Mulvey (1975) came up with the concept of male gaze which states that the women representation in cinema/films is mainly to present and provide voyeuristic pleasure to the male spectators. Hence, the post-modernist feminist movement always criticized the inequality which existed in the society between men and women, and the projection of women in the cinema used to be questioned as according to theorists filmmakers used to objectify women just to provide voyeuristic pleasure to the male spectators.

Shalini Shaji in her article "*Gender Equality: An illusion in Indian Cinema*", which is a study on women in the Indian Film industry, has put on record that a female protagonist or character has been always depicted and projected merely as an entity and object of sexual desire. Furthermore, it is also reviewed in the research article that most of these movies fail to qualify the *Bechdel test*. *The Bechdel test can be defined as a means or tool to gauge, assess and measure gender inequality, particularly in films but it is also being used as a tool for Feminism in plays and short stories as well.* The author in her research article also states that misogyny has been eternalized in these movies and the women on screen, for the most part, had been a subject of objectification. The author also states that 'If an individual focuses on the entertainment films it has been observed that not any of the movies are liberated from the incorporation or inclusion of the item songs where a woman is exposed and rendered to like dancing amid drug peddlers, smugglers, drunkards and a bundle of such goon gangs and after that if and when she is about to be assaulted or else molested, if at all she is lucky enough, the hero of her life or the so-called Mr. Superman will come to her rescue as he will exchange blows and fight off the criminals and eventually will be triumphant in saving her from their clutch. The Hindi cinema or Bollywood over and over again to a certain extent enchases on these item songs as they often portray and depict right from a 9-year-old to a 90-year-old as if everyone loves to tap their feet or groove on to them. The item songs are habitually provocative in its depictions and they furthermore have bilious lyrics, however, it is ascertained in the prior explorative surveys and researches that they are the ones which are used to keep up the alluring, appealing and tempting factor to attract viewers so that the Hindi cinema or the film industry continues to exist at the box office and hang about quite being active with the box office collection. The researcher additionally emphasizes that a few certain and definite item songs whose lyrics are utterly disgusting, grimy and filthy as a whole, for instance, the songs akin to: "*Choli ke peeche kya hain*" from the movie *Khalnayak*, "*Sexy sexy sexy mujhe log bole*" from the movie *Khuddar*, "*Ankhiya Na Maar*" from the movie *Ek Khiladi Ek Haseena*, then

“*Chamla No 1*” from the movie *Zilla Ghaziabad*, then again “*Chikni Chameli*” from the movie *Agneepath* and a bundle of it furthermore. Subsequently, this is it- a woman is used to generate and formulate the Box office hits with these item numbers or songs. In addition to this is how the males or men all together acquire and obtain an erroneous and a wrong message or point about the females or the women as a whole and how it sounds and bestows the impression that as if the Hindi cinema industry has no issues or problems by the manner of it.’

Furthermore, it has also been reviewed in the article that a report by Geena Davis Institute (2014), released at the '*Global Symposium on Gender in Media*' states as an acknowledgment as well as a testimony that the proportion or ratio of gender in the Hindi cinema of India rests at 6.2 males to every female, in addition to merely one-in-ten directors only, is a woman. The statistics reported by [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com) (2017) on the ‘Share of female filmmakers in the selected countries worldwide between January 2010 and May 2013, by function’, says that in the Indian Hindi Film industry, the percentage of female or women directors is merely 9.1%. The chunk of the percentage of the female or women writers and producers is 12.1% and 15.2% respectively. These figures put forward the gender disparity as well as inequality in the field evidently vis-à-vis the total number of cinemas being produced by the industry, which ranges or stick between 1,500 to 2,000 relatively.

Thomas (2016), states that film-making for the women in India is one of the most strenuous decisions taken as a profession or a career choice. The rationale in the wake of this is often the established patriarchy within the industry. It is further complicated by the constraints and restrictions imposed by the family. The setbacks and problems are not only confined to the workplace sexism but are set in motion right from the case in point as and when a female student aspires to pursue a career in films. The inhabitant existing in the very social order of a given society hardly or scarcely mull over or regards women or females as competent, proficient, and worthy enough of building a career in the arenas of a film or movie-making profession (Prateek, 2016).

The under-representation of the women or female characters in the film industry can be noticed by analyzing the number of women filmmakers in the industry. The number of women involved in the streaks of Hindi cinema or Bollywood within the choice or range of cinematography, art direction, and editing is insignificant and negligible (Dasgupta, 2011). Arghyakamal Mitra (2011), a film editor and a former student of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), states and at the same time affirm that the most important reason

for the absence, shortage, and lack of females or women as film technicians in India is basically due to the mindset and outlook of the people as a whole.

In an assessment of a survey that was carried out by Quartz India on 4,000 Hindi movies produced between the years of 1970 up till 2017 along with 880 official trailers that were surveyed between 2008 and 2017, it was established that the Hindi cinema industry is well-known for its gritty and unsavory reputation as well as in support of its notoriety of mistreating women characters, and as specified underneath are the facts and figures which ascertain and establish the same. *“Despite the verity of the fact that 80% of the movie plots have more male mentions than the females, amazingly more than 50% movie posters feature or attribute to the females or women who are the actresses,”* referring to the examples of the movies approximating *Gangaa Jal* and *Raees*. In these movies, the males have more than 100 mentions in the plot and females have much fewer, yet the posters feature females *“very prominently.”* Quartz India also pointed out that, on the arguments centering around the off-screen gap it is also observed that the number of male playback singers or artists is more than the female singers. As weighed against in significant comparison to the 200 female singers there were 400 male singers; furthermore, the females had been to a convinced extent quite voiced and vocal of this discrepancy and inequality.

Barbara Creed (1989:133) because of that highlighted four different definitions operating within the feminist film criticism: the diegetic (the woman on screen), the imaginary (construction of patriarchal Ideology), the theorized (in feminist film criticism) and the woman within the audience. Creed’s separation of these four definitions is unusual and remarkable. The more typical and idiosyncratic dichotomy conceptualizes the female spectator either as an effect of discourse, a position, a hypothetical site and situate of the address of the cinematic discourse (Bruno, 1989: 105), or seeing that the woman within the audience who particularly brings and conveys to the film the scrupulous account and description of her history as well as about her social identity and distinctiveness.

Banaji, Shakuntala (2006), describes the habit of the Hindi film viewers’ interpretation phenomenon and the process and procedure of selecting the desirable movie. *“Despite or perhaps because of the continued popularity of the Hindi cinema, it has time and again been assumed that the audience responses can be interpreted from the box office earnings and profits or the film texts. Declarations and assertions are also made concerning how young male audiences of the Hindi commercial films set off to the cinema halls for the reason that they are fond of action, nudity and sex, while the young female audiences abhor*

*and deplore it and go to view moral narratives, romance, and melodrama. When it comes to young people viewing Hindi cinema or 'Bollywood' films, very few have made more than outward and superficial attempts to engage and take on seriously with the socio-cultural contexts of such Hindi cinema consumption or to explore and walk just about roughly within the range of pleasures and meanings the Hindi cinema hold for viewers transversely across the globe."*

Sunderland (2000: 203) states that gender is incredibly something which is "not always apparent or obvious but at all times present". Gender seems to have introduced flourishing as well as thriving potentials for research, theory, and practice in the media studies over the preceding decades (Hruska, 2004; Norton and Pavlenko, 2004b). An explicit and unambiguous amount of research on gender bias and its predispositions is constructive, useful as well as valuable for the very reason that it helps to depict a clear picture and assists in drawing attention to along with underlining and highlighting the elements or rudiments of gender bias in the social order or instruct of a particular society.

Chinn therefore notes that, "Gender bias refers to the prejudices or the injustices based on the inequitable and partial pieces of evidence, which can be strong, rigid, along with being capable of distorting perceptions and erstwhile thinking activities (Chinn, 1990). It is the organized and systematic oppression, subjugation, and exploitation of human beings based on their belonging to the female sex, which is tightly linked with language (Banfield, 1976). Gender bias is time and again insidiously conveyed through social practices and language use; Stereotyping of occupational roles, behaviour, and personality can be for the most part instigated in Cinema. Exploratory researches on gender bias have delved into revealing that even watching movies comes into view to have encouraged the inclination towards the trend.

Hindi movies are not screened for the outlay of gender biases but to a certain extent they declare, reassure and vouch for stereotypically portraying and depicting women as gentle, passive and tentative; occupying the roles of caregiver and caretaker with career options rarely expanding afar and beyond the realms and spheres of the women dominated professions like teaching, nursing, secretarial and clerical work (Kumari, 2004).

Language is one of the most dominant disciplines for the study of society and culture (Heller 2003). It is through language through which each human being makes sense of their ideas and feelings about the world (Connell, 2008; Mineshima 2008; Montgomery, 1995). The language also plays a crucial role in the socialization of children (Mineshima, 2008)

and influences and promotes gender conceptions (Connell, 2008). It also promotes gender stereotypes that exist in textbooks, classrooms, homes, and societies (St. Pierre, 1999). According to McClure (1992:39), 'language can also be a primary factor through which gender biases are explicitly and implicitly perpetrated'. Research studies conducted on language, gender, and power in the past two decades have documented many different dimensions of language use and have documented a rich variety of suggestion about the interaction between gender and language and especially about the connection of power this is hidden in the language (Cameron, 1998; Connell, 2008; Mineshima, 2008; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Fairclough, 1989; Kalbfleisch & Cody, 1995 Talbot, 1998; Todd & Fisher, 1988).

Fairclough (1989:2) links language to power through ideologies. The author states that the exercise of power, in modern society is increasingly achieved through the ideological workings of language; commonly, people associate power struggles with the use of coercion or force. However, through the use of language, power can be legitimized through the consent of the masses. A good example of this is the use of a standard language. Of all the dialects in use in a country, the one considered 'standard' is the one used by the 'dominant' people, that is, the group that usually holds the economic and political power. For example, Fairclough, (1989) states that standard English went through a long process of 'colonization' taking over major social institutions and pushing out the other languages such as French and Latin. Gradually it became accepted by growing numbers of people and emerged as the language of political and cultural power. In this way, social, economic, and political power is equated with the use of Standard English (the Queen's English) and legitimized by the 'consent' of the masses.

Asmah (2002) states that there is no doubt, that there exists a relationship between that of language and power. This relationship flanked by language and power is manifested in different spheres of society, be it academic, professional, commercial, and political. However, this does not mean that every structure used in the English language carries any 'hidden power' or some form of implication or proposition. In the educational sphere, these ideological assumptions as well as postulations, and this power dominance or supremacy made their existence and presence felt in the realm of gender bias verily. This basis and foundation are insidiously conveyed and put across through the set social practices as well as language use.

Often the words and structures that one tends to take for granted and which often more or less frequently occurs and transpires in the media are carriers of gender bias. By accepting



the use of these forms unquestionably, the individuals have a propensity or predilection to legitimize the hidden power behind its use. One way of bringing out this hidden power is by exposing gender bias in the Hindi cinema. As Threadgold (in Leckie-Tarry, 1995:15) points out, ‘to teach genres, discourses and stories are inevitably to make ‘visible’ the social construction and transmission of ideologies, power relationships, and social identities.’”

*Power* is defined as the aptitude to influence and persuade what happens or takes place in interfaces and interactions, the ability to gain or limit access and admittance to resources, as well as the capability to classify and define experiences for others, i.e., was it “friendly flirting” or “sexual harassment”? (Fairclough, 1989). Those with power can confer, negotiate, or settle in a straight line in support of what they want or fancy. The powerless must employ and use indirect means, such as lying low, being passive, hinting, being nice, withdrawing, pleasing, and so on (Kurth, Spiller, & Travis, 2000: 323).

Viewing the nation as narrative Bhabha (1990) emphasizes how the nation is articulated in terms of languages, signifiers, textuality, and rhetoric. It emphasizes the difference and discrepancy between the nation-state as a set of regulations, policies, institutions, and organizations in addition to the national identity - that is the nation as a culture. Underneath the impression of taking into account the nation as a text or else as a culture, questions the tantalization of the national culture and unwraps as well as opens up the extensively disseminated forms through which the subjects construct and assemble the 'field of meanings associated with the national life'. Bhabha (1990), talks about the spaces in between through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated. In the face of one of the studies based in India (Derné 2000) in addition to several thought-provoking small-scale studies on the Diasporic viewing (Dudrah 2002; Bhattacharya, 2004) Hindi cinema audiences hang about being an under-theorized realm or sphere. Clichés concerning them that circulate and pass through amid the intelligentsia have time and again suggested that they have a propensity and tendency to be pre-rational, self-indulgent, childish, individualist, and superstitious, easily or effortlessly influenced, rigid, patriarchal, authoritarian or dictatorial and tradition-bound (Valicha, 1988; Nair, 2002; Vishwanath, 2002).

Unquestionably as well as undeniably, given the affinity and predilection of the Hindi films for melodrama, a diminutive number of audience theorists have seen the audience’s poignant and emotional engagement and their pleasures in the cinemas as ample, adequate and sufficient grounds intended for conducting a study. Exclusively devoid of any doubts,

the suppositions and postulations about viewing Hindi cinema tend to tag along in the path of the dominant and overriding assumptions concerned much about the other accepted and popular cultural spectatorship across the globe. Specifically, the critics inscribe and engrave as if the spectatorship is massive or monolithic and based on demographics; the film texts themselves are lucid, coherent, and consistent as well as viewed in a linear approach or manner; their spectators encompass fixed identities and are more or less extremely susceptible and vulnerable to the textual influences depending on their social backdrop and settings. Many rip off or bring to a close from this that textual closure or finality must prompt and indicate psychic closure or conclusion in the sense and sagacity that the endings of the Hindi films, with all their impending and apparent or probable erasures of class or cultural differences along with ethnic intergenerational and other conflicts, are in one way or another seen to have an outcome or effect on the audiences more than the other set sequences in the films. These inclinations and trends in terms of the theorizing of film texts commencing from the production processes to the narrative plots and these assumptions regarding the spectators have, in general, preordained that there are unremitting and unrelenting apprehensions and concerns expressed concerning the effects of the Hindi cinema. Those writers for the most part, perturbed and uneasy with regards to the commercial films over and over again eulogizes the neo-realist cinema along with the third cinema in India, and function or operate resting on the principle or premise that the effects of the commercial films necessitate to be off-set or counteracted through censorship or expurgation or the ideological decoding as well as the rational or intellectual critiques and appraisals for the masses.

Sangeeta Datta (2000: 71-82), describes the changes in the representation of women and men in Indian cinema, —The nationalist rhetoric of the pre-independence years produced films valorizing the mother figure. *Aurat*, an unpretentious and modest film produced in the early forties by Mehboob Khan was re-made in color as *Mother India* in 1956. The building and construction of the new-fangled nation, the protuberance, and outcrop of the Indian way of life and culture to the world market, the first International Film Festival in Delhi - conceivably all these aspects and factors led to the incredible as well as remarkable reception of the films mutually at home and overseas. It was the instantaneous and immediate post-independent moment that led to the extraordinarily phenomenal ionization along with the identification and classification of the mother and the nation in an admired and popular awareness and perception. The autonomist and pro-independence discourse and discussions constitute the female body as a privileged signifier and a range of struggles are waged over the connotation, significance as well as ownership and possession of that

body. What does it connote or signify for women to be clearly and explicitly evoked in theories of the nation merely whilst their specificity can serve up a particular exacting cause?

In the composition on “*Avenging Women in Indian Cinema*” by Lalitha Gopalan (1997), it is established that visual representations and illustrations of rape in the Indian cinema furthermore strikes a chord is us of the authority and power of censorship regulations and policies in addition to putting forward the possibility and prospects of the sadomasochistic pleasures structuring around the rape scenes. Constantly or invariably at the equivalent time as the revenge or vengeance narratives award or endow the female stars with more dominant and overriding roles, the women's access and admittance to the avenging power, authority, and supremacy in these films is confidentially and thoroughly predicated on rape. The avenging women genre or field can be said to be an essentially giddy masculine concoction. The assault or a rape scene or prospect provides the narrative trick and deception for the revenge plan despite providing the spectator amid a range and variety of scopophilic pleasures. Gopalan (1997) further comments that the interconnecting or intersecting narratives of rape, assaults, retribution, and vengeance do not amply, thoroughly, or adequately extricate or displace the conventional representations of the Indian cinema.

Madhava Prasad's (1998) “*Ideology of the Hindi Film*” is incredibly a sort of landmark or milestone in the study of the Indian cinema. The first efficient and systematic application of the semiotic film theory to Indian films over a book-length work, Prasad sets up an enquiry that speaks to the foremost major issues generated in the Euro-American film studies over the last quarter-century: the debates hovering over film realism and film melodrama, the inquiry and question of how audience or viewers are addressed, situated as well as positioned by the cinematic storyline and narrative processes, how the industrial organization influences the character and disposition of the cinematic product. However, this is often not an easy or a clear-cut undemanding application and relevance of an agenda positioned or set elsewhere. Prasad's argument verily squabbles, frames and deploys the issues and problems with that of film studies to spell out, identify and then specify the politics, philosophy, and the ideology of film culture in a post-colonial society. This is not by the common, familiar, or recognizable route of asserting the cultural fetish or peculiarity of the Indian film culture.

Instead, as an alternative, Prasad approaches the cinema as emblematic and representative of India's challenging as well as the problematic evolution and transition to a capitalist

organization of society and polity. This argument develops in the order of three themes: the economic dimension of the popular film, its characteristic narrative form, and the historical amplification and elaboration of the institutions of cinema in the 1970s. To put the economic argument rather boldly, Prasad (1998) argues that: *“In contrast to Hollywood, where production companies controlled distribution and exhibition, in the Indian case, an industry struggling to establish its claims to state support, bank loans, and legitimate investment, was dominated by the distribution sector for its finance. This formal rather than real subsumption of production to capital left the different components of production disaggregated into explicit and specific skills such as music direction, choreography, and dialogue, whose application and relevance was not administered by the requirements of a singular or remarkable storyline. Even the most important narrative elements were defined by the performative enunciation of the already known story elements, moral imperatives, and rhetorical modes of character speech; they did not seek to render characters and events in terms of an enigma. However, this is not an economic argument”* (Prasad, 1998: 258).

Prasad (1998) suggests that this loose assemblage of elements positions the spectator in ways governed by an ideological imperative. In contrast to the Hollywood system in which linear narrative inducts the spectator as a complicit agent in the construction of the narrative, and the signs of an external clout or influence narrating the accounts and chronicles are occluded, where this influence, authority or power sticks out, dispatching an address to tackle with the bystander or observer from the Symbolic Order, the overall foundation or source of connotations, significance, and meaning in the society. Catering to this logic or reasoning, the economic system would change or revolutionize when the transcendent source of social meaning is transformed and thereby addresses the spectator on different terms. Prasad (1998: 258) uses the category ‘feudal family romance’ to define the dominant structure of symbolic authority retained by the mainstream Bombay film and mirrored in the work of the major film industries of the south. In this narrative form, the identity of characters is not covered by individualist drives to romantic and social fulfillment, or through the resolution of narrative conflicts by modernizing state agencies represented by judges and policemen. As a replacement, this purpose is executed and accomplished by the paternalist authority and influence reclined in the ancestral patriarchs, highly regarded and reputed landlords and the metropolitan gentry. For Prasad, this reflects the ideological conciliation and compromise whereby the Indian National Congress deriving its support from the bourgeoisie and modernizing bureaucracy had to adapt its transformative agenda to pre-capitalist forms of power. However, the feudal family saga of

romance is a complex and multi-faceted ideological form, outline or structure, carrying and hauling within it an impending or prospective allegiance to an impersonal state form, individualist drives, and consumerist desires, even as the authority or influence of conventionally regulated or standardized social relationships are reasserted in the narrative resolution and pledge.

Henry, Hamilton, and Thorne (Gundy Kunst, 1998: 119) states that sexism, chauvinism, and the sex-role stereotyping are manifested for the most part mainly through language. This can encompass a very unconstructive and harmful effect on the young people, in the vein of the self-esteem of the children and the young adults, creating an invalid and negated space that has detrimental and unfavourable effects on the self-image, aspiration, ambitions, desires as well as motivations of both the genders (Kimmel, 2004; Smith, 1988). In everyday interactions, dominant behaviour (direct demands or threats) elicits negative evaluations of women, but not men (Copeland, Driskell, & Sales, 1995:53). On another level of analysis, even in the most egalitarian societies, and for as long as archaeologists can tell, it is mainly men who enact and enforce laws, lead governments, reveal and interpret God, amass fortunes, instigate and wage wars, and threaten others. Even though there have been many changes in gender roles and gender relations over the past centuries, and even though there is an ongoing pressure toward change in contemporary societies everywhere around the world, men generally control the courtroom, the corporate world, the computer lab, the medical center, and the university classroom. At every level, powerful men shape and determine the course of the lives of others. Living arrangements, economic arrangements, and social institutions have all been constructed to maintain the power and control that one group has over the other (Copeland, Driskell, & Sales, 1995).

Numerous research studies have been devoted to movie content, investigating racial discrimination and Xenophobia in the 1960s. Subsequently, researchers turned their attention to sexism, that is, stereotypical sex roles in the movies. Further commencing from 1981 onwards research studies in this area were found to be extended to a greater extent. These studies expose sexism and the existence of a considerable bias against women by looking at several female characters in movies, occupational and domestic roles of (UNESCO, 2001).

However, to foster a more inclusive ideology in men and confidence-building mindset in the women, government policies promoting equal employment opportunities alone may not be enough. All over the world, the issue of women empowerment is in a discussion. Feminist writers have upheld this issue and have given way through various platforms.

Gayatri Spivak and Meenakshi Thapan, talk about women empowerment in detail in their works. Empowerment is seen through women's assertion. Spivak in her work "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" upheld the subject of the subaltern women. Thapan (2009) calculates women's assertion in terms of voice, will, and agency, and Spivak in her book, "*A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*", defines agency as institutionally validated action. The ideology of an inclusive society where everyone is equal and has equal opportunities in the professional world, need to begin very early, at home and in the schools – parents, as well as teachers, should promote the nations of equal opportunities and not influence the minds of the younger generation with stereotypical ideology. Gender bias is often insidiously conveyed through media, especially through movies. One of the means through which it is conveyed is electronic media. Overwhelmingly, females have continually been underrepresented in cinemas. Moreover, both genders have been shown in highly gender-stereotyped ways in the household as well as in occupations, and actions, attitudes, and traits portrayed. Almost everyone who has researched gender bias in Indian Cinema has reached essentially summed up with the same conclusion. It is important to address gender bias in Indian movies because it is part of the educational experience that helps determine ideas and values that children come to accept as norms. There is a considerable tendency for children to carry with them into adulthood misconceptions and preconceived ideas about the roles of males and females, which they receive in their early years. These misconceptions may lead to role stereotyping which will affect their career advancement as well as their personal lives. Although gender bias is an important issue, it is not always easy to identify its existence in Cinema because it may be conveyed very subtly and perhaps inadvertently.

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (1986) in the book titled "*Film Art: an Introduction*", establishes that, a narrative storyline is an account as well as a sequence of events in cause-effect relationship or affiliation occurring in the works of time and space. A film is an art form which is outlined with a language and an aesthetic scheduled in all of its own. 'Narratology' is the study and theory of narratives or composite stories analyzed for what they are made of, how they are structured, and what we gain from using them as a medium or vehicle for communication. We tend to find complex narratives—that is, ones with curtailed and incomplete information—more attention-grabbing and interesting because they invite as well as entice and tempt us to fill in from our imaginations. Within the narrative structure and composition, are the ingredients of power and identity, they display and put on view people making independent choices, they are also compelling and convincing when the protagonists are influential and powerful, when they have exceptional

and unique abilities, when they have acute and finely tuned insights, and when they ascend and rise above certain challenging and demanding circumstances— especially aligned with an equally powerful and prevailing adversary who stands in their way and approach of meeting and accomplishing a futurist aspiration and a visionary goal. The narrative structure for that reason has an enormous dispense on grabbing the attention and interest of the audience and in the wake of the achievement as well as behind the success of a film (Thompson, 2016).

According to Hirji (2010)—who has focused and put the spotlight specifically on the role and function of Islam in Bollywood films or Hindi cinema, remarkably analyzes the central themes and premises in addition to the production practices and assesses whether these have changed substantially over time—given India’s complicated political, cultural, and religious history and the more global concern with Islam’s meaning and significance to a great extent. Hirji remarks on to what degree and extent Islam has inevitably been playing a considerably significant (and somewhat transformed) role in the popular Indian cinema in addition to how it also bears and carries recognizable and decipherable associations with that of terrorism, violence, hostility and intercultural misunderstandings and misrepresentations. The author furthermore comments that starting from the 1970s to the contemporary state of Hindi commercial cinema, the representation of the Muslims has conformed to certain norms, even when those norms have gradually and progressively changed.

Islam (2007:403) has criticized the Hindi commercial cinema for more often than not misrepresenting the Indian Muslims in terms of characters and protagonists and wrongfully confining their portrayal to the realm of non-modern feudal characters, anti-national, terrorist, villain, anti-social characters, among others, with their mythical constructions. To replace the imaging of Muslim characters in negative terms with a positive tendency for depicting more Muslim protagonists in Bollywood films, he has recommended, “The bias in projecting the image of Muslims as ‘terrorists’ or ‘anti-national’ should be resisted both inside and outside the film industry by the secular-democratic and politically conscious people (Islam, 2007:419).”

Chadha and Kavoori (2008:134) opine that in mainstream Hindi cinema, “the cinematic ‘Othering’ of Muslims has occurred through a variety of strategies of representation ranging from exoticization and marginalization to demonization, that is extensively or widely recognized by anthropologists as critical to the production and maintenance of social and cultural difference”. They observed that, among other things, Muslims in Hindi

films of the late 1990s and early 2000s was depicted “as Pakistani aggressors fighting valiant Indian military forces in films... that focused on the conflict between India and Pakistan” and “their frequent representation as terrorists engaged in acts of violence against the Indian nation” is part of the trend of demonization” (Chadha and Kavoori 2008:140-141).

Akbar S. Ahmed’s research article in the *Journal of Modern Asian Studies*- titled “*Bombay Films: The Cinema as Metaphor for Indian Society and Politics*” presents a narrative and sequence of events on how political philosophies, social values, group behavior, speech, vocalizations and clothing in the society are reflected in the cinema or films and, like an accurate mirror, imitate, replicate and reflect in the society. Indifferent to the questions of resistance/hegemony, Akbar (Ahmed, 1992) goes on to contrast and ascertain the disparity and discrepancy upon the 'genuinely Indian', delicate, fragile and androgynous appearance of the pre-1971 heroes with that of the aggressive sexuality of the present stars and actors of the contemporary era. While the former heroes in the early times, were, by and large, witnessed to be representing the Gandhian values of Satyagraha and non-violence through their physical appearance, the currently existing heroes and actors of the contemporary period are mostly seen to have been representing all the downbeats and negative aspects of a diabolic and materialist culture (Ahmed, 1992). Although, regrettably, yet even the pre-1971 heroes, imitated only the alluring, captivating, exciting, enchanting, and the glamorous lifestyles of their Hollywood counterparts and however did not learn or discover the discipline that the art requires. Given Ahmed's position and arrangement of the institutional dominance and supremacy to cater to and function as a spokesman for the Indian audiences than the audiences themselves, one begins of the current attempts in progress within the Anglo-American scribed or notched socially marginalized groups into the accounts, achieves and records of history.

Furthermore, the author emphasizes that the film stars and actors cross over and intersect from their fantasy castle in the sky into the world of politics to come into sight and emerge as powerful and influential figures guiding the destiny and fate of millions of people. It is thus possible and promising to view the films or cinemas as a legitimate and valid metaphor and an allegory for society; this perception helps one to comprehend and understand society better. This understanding further helps us to observe and scrutinize the following-

- (a) How the Indians identify and perceive themselves (in terms of 'role models', values, behavior, dress, and speech, etc.) and how they observe and perceive the considerable and



significant features of their society (religious revivalism; law and order; the emergence of the 'south' and its stars; the fortunes of the Indian minorities, in particular, the Muslims).

- (b) How the current Indian films mirror and emulate India's role and perception of itself as a 'big brother' or regional power in the realms of South Asia and what impact this has on the neighboring countries like Pakistan, in particular their cinema and society. (Ahmed, 1992)

On a similar note, Ajanta Sircar's research article titled, "*Of Metaphorical Politics: Bombay Films and Indian Society*" establishes that the practices of representation at all times alluded to in addition to implicate positions of enunciation and representations of Indian society derive and draw out their legitimacy not from their engagement with the many-layered socio-cultural formation and structures of the present-day Indian nation, but from a perspective which reinforces the continuing relations of dominance and supremacy between metropolis and former colony. By perceiving the new patterns of consumption as an internal degradation of the Indian masses, the author further states that Akbar A. Ahmed (Ahmed, 1992), fails to address in his academic piece of writing the fundamental question of whose socio-economic interests these new social values do ultimately serve. A recent historical scholarship as claimed by the researcher (Sircar, May 1995) has documented the reinforcement of Western European concepts and notions of 'cultural refinement' and 'modernity' in the Indian context served to consolidate the interests of the Empire and a small collaborationist minority vis-a-vis the vast subaltern sectors. So, to the extent that the present-day hero is 'angry and disillusioned with the corrupt social order', mainstream Bombay cinema can be seen as a cultural practice standing firm and resisting the hegemony of the ruling elite. (Sircar, May 1995)

Kalyani Chadha (2015) in the research article, "*The Muslim as Other in Hindi Cinema: Exoticized, Marginalized and Demonized*" establishes and engraves that although India boasts of itself of being the archetype and epitome of the concept of unity in diversity, Hindi films generally more often than not, resist on the Hindu-Muslim separatism. The researcher/author further states that the depiction and representation of the Muslims in Hindi films have received partite and diminutive attention and interest. The author all the way through in the context and substance of the research article traces and outlines the portrayal of the Muslims contained within the territories of the mainstream Hindi films or cinema, starting from the 1950s to the contemporary era of the twenty-first Century. The researcher further goes on to conclude by wrapping up the discussion with the impression and notion that the Muslims have been variously "othered" throughout in the course and tracks of their exoticization, marginalization, and demonization in the Hindi films shortlisted and embarked upon for the study (Chadha, 2015).

Andrew Dudley's (1984) book titled, "*Concepts in Film Theory*" focuses on the key concepts in film study: perception, representation, signification, narrative structure, adaptation, evaluation, identification, figuration and interpretation, where the author builds up an overall view of a film while presenting opinions relating to that of- semiotics omnivorously absorbing all of the intelligible and lucid experience when it deals with such natural and innate signs for in so far as the elements of the world are interconnected by space and time, and by cause and effect and opines and says that semiotics imply as well as recommend that all sorts of knowledge are derived from the mechanics of codes operating on different materials and even lukewarm semioticians maintain that every particular art form is effusively coded since by definition they articulate meaning in delimited material forms like words, gestures, sounds and so forth. The author deals at length about perceptual psychology, an ideology of realist representation and semiotics and realism and further quotes Norman Holland as saying that "aesthetic value is measured as a relation between the core desire and fantasy represented in a film and the particular intuitive as well as psychic type of spectator".

Rajinder Kumar Dudrah (2006;2008) in his ordered and extensive work, "*Sociology Goes to the Movies*", rejuvenates a dormant dialogue within cinematic sociology of Bollywood about understanding the possible relationships between cinema, culture, and society, done through an interdisciplinary conversation with studies of the cinema drawn from film, media, and cultural studies, where the author views Bollywood from a sociological perspective and endows one with the globalization paradigm as a background or setting contained by which one may comprehend and understand the content of Bollywood films. As the author demonstrates, illustrates and depicts postmodernism, globalization, and liberalization, such perspectives are an understandable and comprehensive first step, but the process of contradicting and disproving the applicability of the globalization paradigm is what illuminates the nature and role of Indian films in the Indian society. The researcher further articulates that for several Bollywood scholars, the globalization tag is adequate and sufficient enough. Conversely, to edge the debate for the globalization paradigm is to leave the intricacy or density of the film's responsibility in the society to the side, in support and favor of a more convenient, and conceivably a more appetizing answer.

Thoraval (2000), states that the Hindi Cinema in recent times has been radically and significantly criticized for defiance and violation of the Indian cultural values and its dialogues of divisive and controversial topics. Besides, it is also considered to be the most liberal out of all the Indian language film industries. Thoraval asserts that the regional movies are typically different and unusual from those contained under the banner of Hindi

Cinema or Hindi movies, as the stories, narratives and themes of the regional movies mainly depict and portray the way of life, customs, and cultures of the region or area from which they originate and start, while most of the Hindi Cinema and movies now days are profound to a great deal influenced by the Western culture.

Suresht Bald (2013) in the research article “*Globalization and Hindi Cinema: Indian Cinema and Globalization of Indian Imagination*” establishes that the Hindi Cinema of the post-liberalization era differs drastically from post-independence in its portrayal and interpretations of the protagonists' fantasies. The researcher further puts forward the piece of information stating that the audience and spectators are privy to these fantasies as the hero and heroine sing and imagines the good superior life they would like to go ahead with and lead together. The songs attempt and endeavour to endow and provide with the prospect and opportunity to the audience most often to watch and look at the famous and prominent Indian monuments from the history along with the landmarks that traverse and go across the geographical countryside of India (Bald, 2013).

It is difficult to discuss about the female gender depictions without turning to British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey’s approach to film studies via psychoanalytic and feminist film theory. Mulvey reveals how a cinematic text communicates dominant and sexist ideologies through an active male gaze. Laura Mulvey’s essay “*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*” (1975) expands on the conception of the passive role of women in Cinema to argue that film provides visual gratification and satisfaction through scopophilia and identification with the on-screen male actor. Mulvey squabbles that the Hollywood movies bring into play the utilization of scopophilia and sexual pleasure or gratification through viewing, so as to communicate and correspond through a patriarchal system. Women are constantly ‘looked at and displayed’ for the male spectator’s pleasure (Mulvey, 1975). This is evidenced throughout countless films where women are ‘undermined by lingering close-ups’ of their curvy figures and tight clothes, all ‘made to order for the male gaze’ (Ross, 2006). Both male and female viewers look through this male gaze since the camera is constantly positioned in such ways. In this approach, the women tends or turns out to be the images of meaning rather than becoming the creators or makers of meaning (Mulvey, 1975). Mulvey further asserts that within their conventional long-established exhibitionist role and position, the women are concurrently looked at and at the same time displayed, with their appearance and manifestations coded for a strong and sturdy visual as well as for an erotic impact and brunt in the order that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*, and as a result contends that in the film a woman is the “bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.” While another set of academicians and scholars argues that the

representation and portrayal of women characters within the narrative of the films have various treatments where in a noted few, they are no longer subject to male gaze or as a mere silent spectator who is subjected to the dominance of patriarchy. Mulvey further argues that alternative filmmakers could counter the dominant discourses by ‘transcending outworn or oppressive forms or daring to break with normal pleasurable expectations to conceive a new language of desire’ (Mulvey 2000:485). However, Kaplan (2008) criticized Hollywood cinema’s “male gaze”, believing it to be ‘set up so that men could identify with the idealized male hero within the symbolic order imaged in the narrative, while women were left to identify with figures relegated status and silenced’.

With the 1990s came the Third Wave of Feminism, ‘Third-wave feminists often take cultural production and sexual politics as key sites of struggle, seeking to use desire and pleasure as well as anger to fuel struggles for justice’ (Hammer and Kelner 2007:9). In “*Third Wave Feminism and Television: Jane Puts it in a Box*”, Rhonda Hammer and Douglas Kelner point out how contemporary theorists reference past feminist literature to explore how women experience films on a unique and personal level: ‘many third-wave feminists reflect upon, describe and analyze their pleasures in viewing, interrogating the texts and culture that produce the pleasure’. The emergent female existence and charisma in the film industry are seen as a constructive step by drawing attention to feminist issues and putting forth alternative, more true-to-life views of women which are beautifully portrayed by the filmmakers through the female characters in their films.

Mark Lorenzen and Florian Arun Taeube in the “*Internationalization of Indian Film Industry*” analyze indigenous growth and internationalization of the Indian film industry. They argue that India is the world’s biggest commercial film centre. Hindi Cinema can be seen as a paradigmatic case for suggesting insights into the growth and internationalization of industries in emerging economies. The authors emphasize the importance of the home market, government regulations, and industry structure for Hindi Cinema’s recent export growth and discuss how the existence of a well-defined and geographically-centered social network among producers, directors, etc. play a key role in filmmaking in Mumbai.

Raminder Kaur and Ajay J. Sinha in the book “*Bollywood: Popular Indian Cinema Through a Transnational Lens*” opines that Hindi Cinema is a critique of common scholarly tendency in the field of popular Cinema of defining significant Indian films in terms of their modernity and longing for nationhood. The authors emphasize that Indian Cinema cannot be understood in terms of the national paradigms, and must be more properly described as a field of visual and cultural production that interlinks sites as diverse

as the cosmopolitan city of Bombay, now Mumbai (Sinha, 2005). The authors' endeavours to track the international and transnational movements of Hindi Cinema and discusses the technology and aesthetics of India's commercial Cinema, films as different manifestations of globalization and highlights the changes in the post-liberalization period of Indian Cinema and focuses on the overseas reception of Indian films in the light of economic liberalization, multiculturalism and a strong voice of migrant Indian populations. The authors' further state that lavish costumes, the increasing exotic locales, and the presence of a huge production infrastructure make the text, sequence, and narrative the cinematographer's domain. It also throws a flood of light on the representation and portrayal of women in some famous dance sequences of hit Hindi Cinema songs.

Subhajit Ghosh in "*Significant Women Roles in Indian Cinema*" opines that innovative women's roles in mainstream Indian Cinema are few and far between. However, some directors have depicted some hunky characters. Ghosh cites the examples of many women-oriented films like *Achchhut Kanya*, *Biraj Bou*, *Parineeta*, *Devdas*, *Abhiman*, *Guddi*, *Abhimaan*, *Mili*, *Khubsuroot*, *Majhli Didi*, *Khubsurat*, *Griha Pravesh*, *Prem Rog*, *Triyacharittar*, etc. At the same time as *Achchhut Kanya* gave a picture of the theme and premises of untouchability, *Biraj Bou* was based on a noble, selfless and altruistic woman who endures and goes through hardships and myriad sufferings for the sake of her husband. *Abhiman* is the depiction and portrayal of the sagacity of the self as well as of the ego clashes of a musically talented wife with that of her husband. *Triyacharittar* portrays the exploitation, misuse, and abuse of women. *Majhli Didi* is on the subject of a woman's empathy and compassion towards an orphaned child. While *Griha Pravesh* deals with the mania and obsession of a married man for a much younger office colleague; *Prem Rog* is a vibrant, dynamic, and forceful portrayal of the agony, anguish, and distress of a young widow.

A Nandy in the research article titled "*The Secret Politics of Our Desires: Innocence, Culpability and Indian Popular Cinema*" deals at length the findings of a four-year-long study into the association and correlation between the Indian or the Hindi film industry and national politics. The first half summarizes the crisis and predicaments of Indian public life as reflected in popular Indian films. The second half focuses on the technical aspects of the entertainment package and narrates the way audience receives the political messages that are embedded in the film stories.

Yuves Thoraval in the book titled "*Cinemas of India*" comprehensively wades through the Journey of Indian Cinema. Thoraval states that Indian Cinema has earned the smugness and

haughtiness of being the world's largest film industry. The actuality that the Indians on no account gets exhausted of watching movies on the screen causes alarm bells to the Hollywood film industry. That is why they dubbed American blockbusters into Hindi and Tamil for release in theatres to capture such a luscious market. The book serves as a journey through the galaxy of Indian films and filmmakers since its instrumentalization by Dadasaheb Phalke. It is a work of indispensable referral value.

Shamita Das Dasgupta, in her study *“Feminist Consciousness in Woman-Centered Hindi Films,”* claims that the Hindi film industry adheres to the ideals of chaste and acquiescent womanhood. The researcher’s study is based on a survey of Hindi films made between 1975 and 1990 which further reveals that normally lower-class women are portrayed as suffering corporal violence and exploitation at the hands of the men-folk. Conversely, on the other hand, the women from the upper class are depicted as victims and sufferers of mental distress as well as psychological trauma and strain. The Hindi films are fundamentally profoundly cynical and contemptuous on the subject of the liberty, autonomy, freedom, and equality of women. The study states that women in Hindi films in due course capitulate and surrenders to the desires and cravings of their husbands.

Lalitha Gopalan in *“Projecting the Past”* concedes that there is a growing fascination with the past in a spate and increase of the recent Indian films and videos and states that it is an approach of being appreciative as well as in understanding the different looms and approaches of writing and in scripting history that surpasses the age-old overriding and dominant genre of costume drama for evoking the history (Gopalan L. , 2013).

Monika Mehta in her research article on the topic *“An Anomalous Case: The Censorship of the Self-Sacrificial Woman”* describes and points out that even though an average or ordinary film keeping in view the standards of the Hindi Cinema, the movie *Pati Parmeshwar* is a glitch in the history of Indian censorship and that various examining committees have commonly employed the rule stating “scenes degrading or demeaning women in any manner are not presented” to cut sexually overt scenes, including close-ups of bosoms, thighs, gyrating hips. Nevertheless, with regards to *Pati Parmeshwar*, the examining or probing committee used this rule or statute to ban a film. These rambling and incoherent steps along with its ensuing subsequent consequences reveal the ambivalent nature of the Censorship board. At first, the reviewing committee supported the examining committee’s verdict and when it was challenged, the Bombay High Court overruled this decision and granted the producer permission to release the film. The researcher further divulges into how the female body becomes the site for debates on tradition and modernity.

Sheena Malhotra and Tavishi Alagh in “*Dreaming the Nation: Domestic Dramas in Hindi Films Post-1990*” states that Hindi Cinema has functioned as a site for the production of national identities and ideologies by citing examples of some of the most successful films of the 1990s- *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun*, *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, *Pardes*, *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, etc. They divulged the emergence of the domestic drama in Hindi films. Their success has significantly lessened the diversity, multiplicity, and secular constructions of Indian identities arguing that this trend reflects the significant socio-political and economic changes that have taken place in India during this time. At times the minorities find themselves expelled and progressively erased from this landscape (Alagh, 2015).

Torben Grodal in the book “*Moving Pictures*” deals with symbolic replication and reality such as Formalism, Realism, Hypothetical acts, and reality indications in visual communication. In the book, the author discusses the elements of cognitive identification and empathy and states that empathy includes identification in film theory, empathy, and canonical narratives. Describing the typology of genres of fiction the author traces the modes of grief and static melancholia, crime, and horror fiction as well as comic fiction and states that crime fiction is the sub-genre of a canonical narrative. It has a characteristic strong emphasis on cognitive control; compared with the typical canonical narrative in which cognitive control is more closely integrated with physical acts.

Anil Saari in the book “*Hindi Cinema*” deals with the dynamics of the Hindi Cinema, where the author discusses various themes including those of usurpers, political, parallel Cinema, and renaissance in South Indian films and opines about the films glorifying Bhagat Singh and Mahatma Gandhi. The author articulates that parallel or art cinema that made its debut in the 1970s was supposed to be the sophisticated answer to the crudeness of commercial Indian Cinema and was supposed to create choices for the more discriminating viewers and further feels sadistic to note that it did not happen. Discussing the subject of the great Guru Dutt, Saari says that he went ahead of the contemporary frame of mind and mood. Guru Dutt’s *Pyaasa* (1957) confronted with class avarice and opportunism that was eating into the entrails of modern Indian Society. Mani Ratnam influenced certain trends in shot-taking and song picturization in the Hindi Cinema. Correspondingly, the leading and top actresses of the Hindi commercial cinema like Hema Malini and Rekha took up the gun in the saga of the narratives depicting dacoit culture and that seemed to summon up the pyrotechnics of Nadia’s *Hunterwali*.

In a study undertaken by Azizan Baharuddin (2003), the author exhibited and revealed that growing up with the beliefs and ideologies that the society has certain expectations and

prospects of the women and along with that they are supposed to cross the threshold of only those professions which the society has reserved for them, some women take it for granted that this is the way of the world. They do not even question the fact that they are being marginalized or oppressed because they accept and agree to their pre-defined role in society. This acceptance of their passive roles in the male-dominated society is fostered from a very early period; it is usually the males who get preferential treatment at home and school. Sometimes parents, unintentionally or intentionally, undermine the girls' confidence, self-image, and aspirations. Baharuddin (2003) concludes that such societal and cultural stereotyping can also put across very powerful messages to girls to avoid technical and scientific subjects. Preferential treatment of boys and the bias of girls by teachers can also convey and leave a negative impact on the self-confidence and emerge up to be an unconstructive blow to the overall performance of girls.

The stereotypes in a film or movie have always been formed by gathering definite group traits, sometimes even transversely across groups, and assembling them into a particular meticulous image. The shaped image embodies stereotypical 'looks', 'behaviours' and 'actions' that are then reified as an accurate representation of members of that group (Rodriquez, 1997). One can consistently see contradicting gender representations in films, which Rikke Schubart refers to as 'in-between-ness.' Movies thrive on large budgets, an already engaged and devoted audience base, and identifiable and strong characters that create an entire cinematic universe. Combined, these elements contribute to the perpetuation of genre categories, and in turn, to gender representations. Many consider genre categories themselves to be gendered, even if not etymologically. 'Westerns, war movies, action movies, martial arts movies, spy movies, gangster movies, and road movies are male film genres Romance, romantic comedy, and melodrama, on the other hand, are female genres with a female protagonist and a female audience' (Schubart,2007). These segregations imply that men have a propensity for violent, dangerous, heroic, and aggressive films, whereas women like sappy, dramatic, and passionate films. Such implications say a lot about our society and culture today.

Besides, to end with or as a final point, Weber (2008:5) establishes that Cinema has the power to influence human minds because it acts as a memory agent and can facilitate the "remediation of the narratives of the event and if portrayed effectively enough, it can erase traces of remediation by blurring the lines of reality and becoming the new accepted account".



## **Chapter-III: Methodology**

This chapter is devoted to explicitly state the methodology which is being divided into various sections that deals with the study method, design, sampling and its justification. A method is adopted for carrying out the study, addressing the objectives and resolving the research questions. Basically, the research methodology involves the explicit procedures or techniques used to classify, identify, select, process, and analyze information in relation to a topic or study that is undertaken. The methodology on the whole predominantly presents the methods, tools, instruments, techniques, designs and procedures employed in trying to find and discover so as to achieve the aims and objectives of the research as well as seek out the answers to the research questions. In a research paper, thesis or dissertation, the methodology section allows a researcher to assess and critically evaluate a study's overall validity and reliability. The major findings of the research are further undertaken and explained with an attempt to illustrate and establish the study's quality and efficiency.

### **3.1 Design of the Study**

For this research, narrative analysis is carried out to study and analyse the select films. The films under consideration for the study undertaken have been rendered to narrative analysis which is used as a research technique. Propp (1928/1968) have argued that the best possible way to understand a narrative is to comprehend and classify it in terms of the actions of the main protagonist. The select films are thus exposed to narrative analysis which is therefore used to find out the meaning arising out of oppositional forces operating within the text and between the environment within which the text is produced and consumed. The research undertaken gauges the Muslim women's identity, role, depiction, image portrayal and representation in Hindi commercial cinema and scrutinizes the select movies with a view to give an idea about how Muslim women are represented and depicted and how their characterization and image portrayal have been constructed in the Hindi Commercial Cinema of the twenty-first century.

The study subsequently has adopted a considerable, significant and analytical method which is qualitative in nature. As Morse and Niehaus (2009), examined and noted that whether or irrespective of the methodology employed is quantitative or qualitative, sampling methods are intended to maximize competency, efficiency and validity of a study undertaken. However, a sampling must be consistent with the aims and assumptions inherent in the use and application of either method. Qualitative methods are as such for the most part, intended to achieve depth and layers of understanding (Patton 2002). The

qualitative methods thus employed in the study in a way consign and relegate the primary emphasis on saturation and dissemination (i.e., obtaining a comprehensive understanding by continuing to sample until no new substantive information in sequence is acquired) (Miles and Huberman 1994).

### **3.2 Sampling**

Sampling is a critical and perhaps the most technical part of designing and conducting a survey or a research. In looking at it in the arena of a research, sampling means the method or procedure of selecting a fraction or part of the population. A sample therefore can be referred to a group of people, objects, items or entities that are taken in use from a larger population for measurement intended and designed for the study to be conducted in the research undertaken. The dependability and reliability of the findings of a research depends upon how well the selection of the sample is made and done. The sample is ought to be representative of the population to ensure and guarantee that a researcher can generalize the findings from the research sample to the population as a whole.

To evaluate the objectives of the research in addition to answering the research questions of the study, a total of four films have been selected and chosen. The films are selected by purposive sampling method of research. Burn and Parker defines (2005) that an analysis of any media text require a basic —systematic order of signification (2005:30) implying how texts produce meanings. They are based on certain stipulated criteria and parameters that include the film's overall ratings, category, awards, appreciations, honours, recognitions and the kinds, categories and types of roles being assigned or played by the Muslim women/female characters in the movies that have been decided upon for the study. The select Hindi movies also follow as well as fulfil the criteria and therefore fit the bill of also being commercial movies that are produced in and within the time-frame of the twenty-first century.

#### **Sampling Technique for Primary Data**

The primary data for this research/study is selected on the basis of a multi-phase or two-phase technique, which is also known as double sampling, by combining and merging criterion sampling and stratified purposeful sampling techniques.

#### ***Multi-Phase or Double Sampling***

The term double sampling is essentially a two-phase technique or method of sampling for an experiment, research project, or inspection where an initial sampling run is followed by preliminary analysis, subsequent to which an additional sample is taken and a supplementary analysis is run. Double sampling is hence a method that assembles and pulls together in sequence the necessary information from a large sample of units and then, for a

subsample of these units, collects more detailed information. Double sampling can also be called or termed as sequential sampling or multiphase sampling which is the probability sampling technique wherein the sampling is carried out in several stages such that the sample size gets trimmed down at each and every stage. The most familiar and recognizable form or structure of the multi-phase sampling is the method or technique of the two-phase sampling or the double sampling. Cooper and Schindler (2006) argue that it might be necessary (due to financial or convenience reasons) to gather information by sampling, and then use the data as the basis to select a sub-sample for further study. This technique was necessary for this study in order to trim down and reduce the number of films for the primary data to a manageable figure—using two-phase sampling, an initial random sample which allows the researcher to target the second sample appropriately.

### ***Criterion Sampling***

Criterion sampling involves reviewing and studying all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance, since, in criterion sampling, the objective is to include instances in the sample that match a predefined profile (Patton, 2001). Criterion sampling is for that reason very functional for identifying and understanding cases that are information rich as it can provide an important qualitative component to quantitative data. This method of criterion sampling hence selects those samples that convince and gratify a certain and definite specified criteria that help a researcher to separate out as well as take apart the information rich samples.

Usually this involves a combination of characteristics, which, together, specify a phenomena under study or a restricted population in which this phenomenon is likely to occur; the resulting sample is consistent and standardized with respect to the selected criteria (but may be assorted and wide-ranging in other respects), and decisions about these criteria are made in advance; this sampling strategy is especially very practical and useful for exploring a phenomenon in depth (Flick, 2017). Criterion Sampling accordingly helps a researcher to get a hold and grasp of more information from smaller number of samples. This technique saves a researcher's time as well as money for the reason that the information collected from samples are collected applying multiple criteria which indeed can be useful for multiple purposes excessively.

### ***Stratified Purposeful Sampling***

Purposeful sampling as defined by Patton is a technique which is extensively or widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2001). Stratified sampling can be

defined as a process that first divides the overall population into separate subgroups and then creates a sample by drawing subsamples from each of those subgroups (Given, 2008). In qualitative research, the procedure of stratified sampling is considered as a specific strategy for implementing the broader goal of purposive sampling. Patton further describes the process of stratified purposeful sampling as samples contained within samples and suggests that purposeful samples can be stratified or nested by selecting- exact as well as particular units or cases that fluctuate oscillate or vary according to a key dimension (Patton, 2001). “Stratified samples are thus, samples within samples” where each and every stratum is fairly and reasonably homogenous; the purpose of stratified purposeful sampling is to capture and confine major variations even though a common core may also emerge in the analysis (Patton, 2001: 240). This method or technique for the most part habitually engages in identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell and Plano Clark 2011). Not only that, in toting up to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) put together a note of the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability and aptitude to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner.

According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), stratified purposeful sampling is different from quota sampling or stratified random sampling in that the sample sizes are likely to be too small for generalization. Often, traditional reviewers tacitly draw on stratified purposeful sampling by clustering studies according to a key dimension of variation and then discussing each cluster in-depth making stratified purposeful sampling especially useful for examining the variations in the manifestation of a phenomenon as any key factor associated with the phenomenon is varied and in a research synthesis, this factor may be contextual, methodological, or conceptual (Suri, 2011). Furthermore, Patton (2001) squabbles that the logic and supremacy of the purposeful sampling broaden out in selecting information-rich cases—cases from which one can learn and discover a great deal of concerning issues of vital importance and significance to the rationale as well of the validation of the analysis and inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling—for an in-depth study along with studying information-rich cases yields insights and an in-depth understanding rather than empirical or pragmatic generalizations.

## **Samples and Sources**

### ***Primary Sample:***

The Hindi commercial cinema and feature films released in the theatres of/in India during the twenty-first century (the period between 2001 and 2017), are included in the study as the primary sample. During the period and span of approximately about 17 years starting from 2001 up till 2017, using criterion sampling, a total of twenty-one (21) commercial Hindi films/cinemas have been found to correspond to represent Muslim women/female characters as protagonists or in key/important roles. Based on the date of release of the particular movie of/in the theatres of India, the chronological list of films representing Muslim women is presented in **Table 1**.

During the time-period chosen for selecting and short listing the Hindi commercial cinema for the study, it is ascertained and instituted that there were no relevant movies/films released with regards to depicting or representing Muslim women/female characters as protagonists or in key/important roles in the following years: 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2011. Whereas in the rest of the years, there were even multiple relevant releases as well. In the case of multiple releases in a single year, the selection of films representing Muslim women in key/important roles for the analysis has been done on the basis of stratified purposeful sampling.

The four (4) films chosen for the study/analysis has been identified and shortlisted out of the twenty-one (21) films that represent Muslim women characters in key roles. The selection process also caters to the pre-set parameters and criteria that have been considered for the study, by using the multi-phase or double sampling method, which is, a combination of criterion sampling and stratified purposeful sampling methods as elucidated and explained above. The justification of the sample for the same has been specified, listed out and presented in **Table 2**.

In the initial stage of the sampling process, the stratification is done on the basis of the number of years and underneath the parameter of the set thematic criterion (representation/image portrayal of Muslim women characters), and in the second stage, in which the target variable is studied, is taken over the stratification categories in a representative way.

#### ***Secondary sources of information:***

Although the Muslim women's representation centric Hindi commercial cinema or feature films released in theatres of/in India during the period from 2001 to 2017 serve as the primary sample for this research work, the following have been used accordingly as secondary sources of information for this study: previous research work and preceding

literature which includes books, journals, chapters, research articles, film reviews and criticism, news media articles and reports, interviews of filmmakers regarding concerned laws, censorship issues and judicial verdicts.

The secondary sources of reference provides and endows the data for formulating the background and rationale of the study, review of literature, theoretical framework of the study and in general, provide an overview of the contemporary circumstances, especially in the context of representation, cinema/media and the inter-relation between the two.

**Table 1- List of Hindi Movies from 2001-2017**

<b>Sl. No</b>	<b>Name of the movie</b>	<b>Year of Release</b>	<b>Key Role</b>
1	Zubeidaa	2001	Protagonist (female lead)
2	Gadar: Ek Prem Katha	2001	Protagonist (female lead)
3	The Hero: Love Story of a Spy	2003	Protagonist (female lead)
4	Tehzeeb	2003	Protagonist (female lead)
5	Veer Zaara,	2004	Protagonist (female lead)
6	Fanaa,	2006	Protagonist (female lead)
7	Umraon Jaan,	2006	Protagonist (female lead)
8	Saawariya	2007	Protagonist (female lead)
9	Kurbaan	2009	Protagonist (female lead)
10	My Name is Khan	2010	Supporting/Side role
11	Once Upon a Time in Mumbai	2010	Protagonist (female lead) Supporting/Side role
12	Ishaqzaade,	2012	Protagonist (female lead)
13	Ek Tha Tiger	2012	Protagonist (female lead)
14	Raanjhanaa,	2013,	Protagonist (female lead)
15	Daawat-e-Ishq	2014	Protagonist (female lead)
16	Baji Rao Mastani	2015	Protagonist (female lead)
17	Lipstick Under My Burkha	2016	Protagonist (female lead)
18	Begum Jaan	2017	Protagonist (female lead)
19	Secret Superstar,	2017	Protagonist (female lead)

20	Haseena Parker,	2017	Protagonist (female lead)
21	Naam Shabana	2017	Protagonist (female lead)

**Table 2- Justification of the sample**

<b>Name of the movie</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Year of Release</b>	<b>Key Role/ Genre</b>	<b>Cast</b>	<b>Ratings/ Awards/ Recognitions</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<b>Zubeidaa</b>	Shyam Benegal, Story by: Khalid Mohammad	19 <sup>th</sup> January, 2001	Protagonist (female lead) Drama/ Romance	Karishma Kapoor, Rekha, Manoj Bajpai	6.3 <b><u>National Film Award</u></b> Best Feature Film <b><u>Filmfare Critics Award</u></b> Best Actress- Karishma Kapoor	2h 33m
<b>Ishaqzaade</b>	Aditya Chopra, Habib Faisal	11 May, 2012	Protagonist (female lead) Drama	Arjun Kapoor, Parineeti Chopra, Gauhar Khan	6.6-U/A <b><u>National Film Award-</u></b> (Special Mention) - Pariniti Chopra. <b><u>Zee Cine Award-</u></b> Best Male Debut- Arjun Kapoor, Best Lyricist- Kausar Munir (Pareshaan ) Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Fresh Singing Talent - Shalmali Kholgade (Pareshaan) <b><u>Stardust Award-</u></b> Star Icon of the year and Superstars of Tomorrow Female- Pariniti Chopra Male- Arjun Kapoor New Musical Sensation Singer (Female) – Shalmali Kholgade (Paresh	2h 13m

					<p>aan)  Best Lyricist -  Habib Faisal and  Kausar  Munir (Chokra  Jawaan)  <b><u>Filmfare Award</u></b>  Special Mention-  Pariniti Chopra  Best Singer  (Female) -  Shalmali  Kholgade (Paresh  aan)  <b><u>Producers Guild</u></b>  <b><u>Film Award</u></b>  Best Actress in a  Leading Role-  Pariniti Chopra  <b><u>People's Choice</u></b>  <b><u>Awards India</u></b>  Favourite Female  Actor (Debut)-  Pariniti Chopra  <b><u>Screen Award</u></b>  Best Singer  (Male) - Javed  Ali (Ishaqzaade-  Title song)  Best Singer  (Female) -  Shalmali  Kholgade (Paresh  aan)  <b><u>Star Guild</u></b>  <b><u>Award</u></b>  Best Singer  (Female) –  Shalmali  Kholgade (Paresh  aan)</p>	
<b>Lipstick Under My Burkha</b>	Alankrita Shrivastava	21 <sup>st</sup> July 2016	Protagonist (female lead) Drama/ Black Comedy	Konkona Sen Sharma, Ratna Pathak, Plabita Borthaku r, Aahana Kumra	6.9-A <b><u>Screen Award</u></b> Best Actress (critics)- Konkona Sen Sharma <b><u>Film De</u></b> <b><u>Femmes</u></b> Grand Jury Prize-	2h 12m



					<p>Best Feature Film  <u><b>Glasgow Film Festival</b></u>  Audience award-  Alankrita  Shrivastava  <u><b>Granada Film Festival</b></u> Cines  Del Sur- Best  Feature-  Alankrita  Srivastava  <u><b>London Asian Film Festival</b></u>  Best Film-  Alankrita  Srivastava,  Stand Out  Performance-  Ratna Pathak  Shah  <u><b>Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival</b></u>  Audience Choice  Award- Asian  Frontiers-  Alankrita  Srivastava  <u><b>Mumbai Film Festival</b></u>  Best Film on  Gender Equality-  Alankrita  Srivastava  <u><b>Tokyo International Film Festival</b></u>  Spirit of Asia  Award- Alankrita  Srivastava</p>	
<b>Secret Superstar</b>	Advait Chandan	19 <sup>th</sup> October 2017	Protagonist (female lead) Key/ Supporting Role Drama/ Adventure	Amir Khan, Zaira Wasim, Meher Vij	8 <u><b>National Child Award for Exceptional Achievement- International Indian Film</b></u>	2h 35m

					<p><b><u>Academy Award-</u></b>  Best actress in a Supporting Role- Meher Vij  Best Playback Singer Female- Meghna Mishra</p> <p><b><u>Filmfare Critics award-</u></b> Best Actress- Zaira Wasim,  Best Supporting Actress- Meher Vij  Best Playback Singer- Meghna Mishra,</p> <p><b><u>Screen Award-</u></b>  Best Actress in a Supporting Role- Meher Vij</p> <p><b><u>Zee Cine Awards-</u></b>  Jury’s Choice Award- Best Debut Director- Advait Chandan  Best Actress in a Supporting Role- Meher Vij  Best Actor in a Negative Role- Raj Arjun  Best Music- Amit Trivedi</p>	
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### 3.2 Narrative Analysis:

In order to study and analyse the representation of Muslim women in Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century, narrative analysis is carried out and used as a tool all the way through to gauge and analyse the data and narrative structures in/of the study undertaken.

An assessment of narrative analysis ought to begin with a definition of what we connote by the word narrative. The term *narrative* comes from the verb “to narrate” or “to tell (as a story) in detail” (Ehrlich, Flexner, Carruth & Hawkins; 1980:442). In narrative research designs, the researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about

people's lives and write narratives of individual's experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The provisional definition of *narrative* means: When narrators tell a story or account, they present and provide a 'narrative form' to a know-how experience. They arrange, assemble as well as position or situate characters in space and time and, in a very broad and extensive sense, bestow order to and make sense of what happened--or what is imagined to have happened. In the analysis and scrutiny of that, it can be argued, that narratives attempt and try to *explain* or *normalize* what has occurred; they position out why things are the way they are or have turned out to be the way they are.

Whether one has thought on the subject of it as such or not, the narratives, whether by word of mouth, or it be textual, are a distinct genre that we all identify at large and draw on. In actual fact, we all tell and acquaint with stories about our lives every day in view of the fact that narrative provides a practical means for a person to construct and put up a coherent and rational plot about his/her life with a beginning, middle, end – a past, present and future. Each account or story, whether told only to oneself or to others, provides a robust technique of integrating the past experience into an evocative and meaningful learning, locating oneself and others in the account, and foreshadowing as well as professing the future. Narratives integrate, incorporate and slot in temporality, a social context, complicating events, and an evaluative conclusion that in concert make a coherent and consistent story. Most importantly, the narrator or the protagonist is an active as well as a dynamic agent not a dupe in the account (Elliott, 2005). Narratives, therefore, grant and provide a window into the process of identity construction (Riessman, 2008). Through the construction, unfolding and recounting of narratives, individuals form and re-form who they have been, are presently at the moment and hope or expect to become. Further, since narratives offer and present long-term reference points to replicate, live up to or overcome (Sfard & Prusak, 2005), these stories can go on and continue to influence in persuading how the narrator in fact views himself or herself plus formulates and makes decisions to act (Holley & Colyar, 2009). As a final point, narratives, when told to others, may also possibly influence and probably sway how others see and witness the 'storyteller.' Narrative, for that reason, can be said to endow, in addition to presenting a threshold, into two realms or empires:

- 1) The realm of experience, where speakers lay or put out how they as individuals experience certain events and confer as well as present their subjective meaning and significance onto these experiences;
- 2) The realm of narrative means (or devices) that are positioned and put to use as well as employed in order to make (this) sense.

In the first instance, one normally encounters research *with* narrative and in the second, *on* narrative. At this point, it cannot be exactly or for that matter precisely specified whether narrators employ or make use of narrative means to make sense to others in any communicative and interactive settings or whether the narrators attempt and endeavour to make sense to themselves, as when writers write for themselves, or clients speak ‘in search of their selves’ in a therapeutic setting. Additionally, it has been further left unspecified whether the narrators converse or narrate with reference to themselves, i.e., put in the picture personal experiences that they imagined or underwent in person (first-person experiences basically), or whether they talk or speak on the subject of the experiences of others-even fictionally invented others (third-person experiences most often). Furthermore, a close analysis is taken into scrutinizing *the kinds of* experiences or themes that are configured or hooked on evocative as well as meaningful significant units by drawing on the use of different narrative means and resources. Whilst all these issues are essential and imperative, a closer characterization of narrative analysis has been initiated as well as instigated.

However, yet again starting from a very interim and expansive definition, one that requires more specification, narrative analysis attempts and endeavors to thoroughly and systematically narrate, recount as well as relate the narrative means deployed for the function and purpose of laying out and making sense and sagacity of the particular kinds of, if not totally exclusive or unique, experiences. Here, the narrative analyst or a forecaster can place and situate more credence and weight on analyzing the narrative means; or the intention or objective or may be to extrapolate and enhance a better understanding of particular experiences

Of course, in the most excellent of all worlds, both approaches put in the picture each other, i.e., that learning more on the subject of narrative means improves or analysis of what kinds of narratives are employed for-and vice versa. In any case nonetheless, narrative analysts are required to arrange and lay out the relationship flanked by narrative means and experience that is constituted by such means to facilitate construct and make things apparent and transparent along with documenting and formulating how they arrive and appear at their interpretive conclusions.

There are in essence three approaches and aspects to Narrative Analysis-

- 1) Narrative Structure,
- 2) Process of Narration,
- 3) To examine its broader social, political or ideological meanings in essence the process of social representation.

Social representation can defy and challenge stereotypes and can explore the wider history of representations as well as reveal about power relations. These approaches offer and also recommend insights into the ways in which narrative texts work from different vantage points as a particular way of combining parts to make a whole, as a dynamic and vibrant process as well as a practice of communication and meaning construction and as social representation. Although quite different, these approaches habitually go beyond and often overlap in practice and for this reason can be regarded as complimentary. Whenever the methodical, analytical or the critical focus or spotlight is on the narrative, qualitative and quantitative approaches have been employed alongside with a modest and petite joint consideration or contemplation. Explorations and investigations of how children become skilled at or learn to make use of narrative means that ascertain and establish characters in a story, how to tie clauses together into evocative and meaningful episodes, or how to appraise and evaluate what is going on from an overarching outlook or perspective, have turned up intricate or sophisticated coding systems that consent to and allocate cross-age and cross-linguistic quantitative comparisons, delivering insights into the acquisition as well as possession of narrative competencies.

The relationships flanked by the employment of concrete and tangible narrative means for the construction and production of extremely subjective, skewed or slanted and very explicit, precise and specific life situations up to retrospective and fair evaluations of life courses is open and unfastened to both quantitative and qualitative analytic or reasoned procedures. As a result of that, a narrative approach is not just merely concerned with the story-telling components or characteristics of an account or description, but also with the social and collective interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee that encourage, persuade, promote and influence the very approach and way in which an account is being presented.

Therefore, the technique or method of narrative analysis or narrative inquiry can be liberally termed as a qualitative research approach whereby the researcher analyses the stories people create as well as construct, engaging in an inquiry and inquisition of asking a given question of the narrative 'texts' for a given purpose. Narrative analysis is therefore often implied as a functional and relatively useful method and technique for revealing and uncovering the essential underlying ideologies that are embedded in stories in addition to the larger culture that creates the narratives (Stokes, 2003). Starting from the interpretative paradigm or standard, the focus is to identify and be aware of or understand how individuals interpret and construe their day to day lived experiences. It still comes under the banner of social constructionism and it is a qualitative research method or technique. It

is a genre of analytic frames whereby researchers interpret stories that are told within the context of research and/or are shared in everyday life. Scholars who conduct or carry out this type of analysis make diverse—yet equally substantial and meaningful—interpretations and conclusions by focusing on different elements. These elements take account of, but are not limited to, how the story is structured, what functions the story serves, what the essence or substance of the story is, and how the story is performed. Communication scholars from a variety of perspectives ranging from quantitative to qualitative as well as traditional to postmodern conduct and carry out narrative analyses, which makes it challenging to cover and coat up all of its nuances; however, broad and extensive strokes are in all probability achievable or possible.

Narrative analysis is accordingly invested in cooperation with both the means and the approach or way in which these means are put to draw on to arrive and appear at presentations and interpretations of meaningful and significant experiences, it is thus an approach and technique taken to infer, interpret and deduce data that is concerned with understanding and being appreciative and considerable of how and why people talk or converse about their lives as a story or a series of stories. This inexorably takes account of subjects and issues of identity and the interaction or interface between the narrator and audience(s). The renowned sociologist Ken Plummer (1995), whilst retaining an interest and concern in narrative structure, examines stories as both symbolic interactions and a political process. His concern lies in producing a sociology of storytelling concerned with: ‘[t]he social role of stories: the ways they are produced, the ways they are read, the work they perform in the wider social order, how they change, and their role in the political process’ (ibid.:19). In both symbolic interaction and political process we will see the importance of representation.

Representation is ambiguous and indefinite and for this reason it is open to multiple and manifold interpretations, and identifies five levels of representation that are present in the compilation, collection and analysis of data: attending, telling, transcribing, analyzing and reading. At each and every point or level the researcher is engaged in a process and progression of analysis and interpretation of a life to which they have no access and admittance: Meanings in the wide arena of connotations are ambiguous because it very often arises out of a process of interaction and interface between people: self, teller, listener and recorder, analyst and reader. Even though the goal or objective may be to put in the picture and acquaint the whole truth, our narratives about others’ narratives are our world creations. Meaning is therefore fluid and contextual, not fixed and universal. All we have is

talk and texts that correspond to and represent reality partially, selectively, and imperfectly (Riessman, 1993: 15).

Hence narrative analysis, whether it is undertaken using models more commonly associated with literary theory, or using Plummer's approach, offers the social researchers a new way of looking at and understanding accounts. Instead of viewing an account as simply representative of an individual life, it directs attention to the 'joint actions' involved in the production of the story. Furthermore, it designates as well as indicates the way in which the meaning of the story and hence its consequences are for all time are dependent and reliant on first of all the social location and position of those involved in the creation, production and consumption of the story and, second, the wider social context in which the story is told. Therefore, Plummer's assessment and examination of the essential as well as imperative role of 'communities' who hear, take notice of and receive the story, yet again highlights the way in which different and diverse communities over time will receive the story in different ways. This helps us to comprehend and understand the way and approach in which stories can be understood as political processes that entail and involve power relations. In order to get a comprehensible and clearer conception or idea of what spurred the current or recent flow and surge of interest in narrative analysis and narrative methods, as well as to better understand debates among proponents of different analytic and methodical practices, it is worthwhile to formulate a distinction between:

- a) How it was possible that narratives have become accepted as a genre that seems to closely reflect and replicate people's sense making strategies--particularly the narratives of lives, as in (auto-)biography, life writing, confessions and other disclosures and revelations of identity;
- b) How narratives could project, catapult and fling into the role and function of a method--one that is said to be the main or chief portal or threshold into individual and communal sense making, experience, and subjectivity; and how there are differences (and commonalities) between a variety of narrative methods that are seemingly competing with one another as analytic tools.

Riessman (1993), have furthermore turned to briefly consider and reflect upon these distinctions under the headers of *narrative as genre*, *narrative as method*, and *narrative methods*.

### 1) *Narrative as genre*

The relevance of putting into practice the instances of narrating stories in addition to story-telling practices are assumed to be strictly tied up with the phylo-genesis of language, human-social formations and the historically emerging up-and-coming apparitions as well

as visualization of individuality and the contemporary modern person. Initially at the very outset, the narrative forms, reaching back as far as 1500 BCE, reflect and mirror the forms of recorded chronological and historical experience and occurrence in epic formats and are argued to be instrumental as well as influential in the creation and formation of communal (tribal) education. In the course and track of socio-genesis, the epic form is joined and to a certain extent replaced moderately by folk tales, fables, travelogues--all already foreshadowing and forewarning the rise of the romantic fiction and the narrative or else descriptive novel, starting roughly, just about 1200 and culminating in Europe between 1600-1750. The new and innovative narrative techniques put to use in these genres--in concert with the development of the print culture--gave rise to the writing (and reading) of letters, confessions and memoirs. This in turn fed readers' interest in personal histories, the biography, life history, and auto-biographies--all making use of temporal sequences of lived events for a systematic and self-reflective quest of the (authentic) self. Notably, the story-character in these quests, the person the story is centrally about, is becoming more and more open to be construed in terms of change and personal *development*. On the journey from the epic via the novel to the biography, narrative has emerged as a new but central formatting device for the organization of self and (modern) identity. It quite effectively and productively fed the commonly or universally shared belief and conviction that- who we are, or who we think we are, is realized in the stories we tell or put in the picture concerning ourselves; everyone not only *has* a story but also has a right to tell their story (Bamberg, 2010b). As a sheer consequence, not only is the pursuit as well as quest for the modern self in the appearance, outline and form of the- *who-am-I* question profoundly rooted in the account and history of narrative, but, additionally in toting up, the story in point of fact becomes the very data to be analyzed when on the lookout and hunt for answers to the- who-am-I question.

The very apprehension of the realization that the (modern or contemporary) personality as well as the identity of the self is open to change or transformation, and that the means or resources for an actual, concrete and definite change have to work in the course of the narrative, has led to a second wave and wield of interest in narrative. In keeping by way with the "therapeutic narrative of selfhood" (Illouz, 2008) and its command or injunction "that we become our 'most complete' and 'self-realized' selves" (2008: 172), we are continuously urged to hunt for and look or seek out *the problem* in our narrative, the one that is causing our lack and requirement of fulfillment and the anguish, suffering and distress that comes in its wake. Grounding 'the problem' in some preceding events, frequently reaching back into ones upbringing as well as childhood experiences, and



establishing a narrative connection or association that has led to the problem, not only is said to boost or enhance self-reflection but is regarded as the first step in a healing and curative exercise or implementation that is supposed to liberate or free the narrator of ‘the problem’ and the anguish or suffering it causes. Narrative self-reflection, in concurrence or juxtaposition with narrative self-disclosure, is taken to outline and shape the cornerstones of a narrative grounded approach/loom to a rationally-reflexively monitoring of selfhood.

## 2) *Narrative as method*

Despite the actuality that the relationship linked between narrative and identity has been theorized by philosophers, historians, literary critics and psychologists (among others), the acknowledgment and appreciation for moving the narrative approach and style of sense-making into an exceptional status and standing belongs to Bruner (1986, 1991) and Lyotard (1984). Lyotard and Bruner have argued coherently that there are two kinds of sense-making modes, which plunk in disagreement and resistance to one another: one best characterized as a “logico-scientific” mode, and the other, frequently underestimated and disregarded, as a *narrative* mode of ordering experience or occurrence and making sense. Both methods of knowing rely on different and diverse processes and procedures for authentication and verification, with narrative knowing centering on the distinctiveness and specificity of what transpired or occurred, and the association or involvement (and accountability/responsibility) of human agents in bringing about these explicit and incidental events.

Therefore, viewing narrative as a fundamental human way or method to formulate sense is more than sharing how sense has been made in the form of stories. The expression and phrase- ‘*narrative as method*’ implies an across-the-board as well as extensive approach that views the individual or character contained within their social environments as animatedly or dynamically conferring meaning as well as significance onto objects in the world, together with including the others and selves; the way or manner, in which this happens in everyday situations, as well as in interviews or surveys, is essentially as well as evidently subjective and also interpretive. If narrative or accounts are elevated or hooked on into “the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful” (Polkinghorne, 1988: 1), then it makes sense to argue and squabble that the stories we acquaint with, tell and put in the picture are such because they reflect and replicate *the stories we are* (McAdams, 1993; Randall, 1995).

Tapping into these narrative processes of meaning making although is not unproblematic. In favor of one, there are different and unusual stories with reference to ourselves (or what we put in the picture or claim and tell our experience or incident to be) at different or

various occasions. And the ways these occasions are brought off impacts on the internal organization of what is being told, its content or subject matters, and the meaning that both the teller and the audience mutually may take from them. Further, an additional crisis or problem is the frequently claimed assumption, hypothesis or supposition that the distribution or sharing of narratives with reference to situations in which narrative meaning has been conferred onto others and selves are open to manifestations along with reflections and apparently on the very face of it, crystal clearly transparent to mutually both the narrator and the audience (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008).

Even though the narratives can grow up or turn out to be, and in particular settings can be used as, reflective or insightful means, there is no a priori reason or basis to render and provide stories unanalyzed as reflections of subjectivities or presentations of participants' "own" voices (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). However, a more dangerous and precarious bearing or deportment may be lurking in the *narrative as method* allegory or metaphor when life and experience are leveled as narrative so that not only human knowledge but also interactive practices, particularly interviews, become narrative inquiry, analysis or inquest and blur or smudge the boundaries linking and involving us as existing as well as living our stories and us as analyzing the stories of others. It should be noted that even if narrative is elevated into a central or even primary method of sense making, it still needs to be open to elucidation, interpretation and reinterpretation; and as such, interpretation requires laying open or untying the angles and perspectives from where meaning, implication and significance are being conferred, and scrutinizing the methods employed by narrators in arriving inwards at their stories (and lives).

### 3) *Narrative methods*

Notwithstanding the fact that the argument and squabble for *narrative as method* was influential as well as instrumental for an immense number of inquiries along with explorations into the delicate and subtle personal sense making of experience (in different disciplines and on different experiential or pragmatic topics), *narrative as method* is to be split up and kept separate or detached from what has conventionally been held below or underneath the purview of *narrative methods*.

Whether the narratives are acquired or obtained in the course of fastidious, scrupulous or particular elicitation techniques, such as interviewing, or "found" in natural (private, public, or institutionalized) interactional settings, characteristically on an average are the consequence or result of a research stance, orientation or point of reference. Critical vis-à-vis traditional survey or assessment practices, the narrative interview or conference was designed and aimed to overcome and surmount the common affinity, propensity or

tendency to fundamentally as well as radically de-contextualize and disconnect or detach the respondents' meaning making efforts from the actual concrete setting for which they formerly were originally designed and from the larger socio-cultural grounds of meaning production (Mishler, 1986: 26). A number of qualitative, in-depth interviewing techniques in the recent times over the contemporary years, have been designed to elicit and extract explicitly the narrative accounts --some open-ended and unstructured, others semi-structured and guided; the *free association narrative interview technique or method* (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008), the *biographic-narrative interpretive method*--an interview technique that leads into personal or individual experience, lived situations by the side of varied life-histories (Wengraf, 2006), or *narrative oriented inquiry*, to name a few (Hiles & Cermák, 2008).

At the same time as the focus and spotlight on different methods in 'narrative interviewing' has led to interesting insights into the relationships between narrative form and content in the face of different elicitation strategies, others have taken this to shove and set in motion more in the direction and track of carefully as well as vigilantly considering the conditions underneath which narrative means are employed in narrative practices. The notion or perception of narrative practices here incorporates interviewing practices of all kinds, including the focus or brainstorming groups, and also opens up the area or field for narrative analysis and inquiry into institutional along with everyday storytelling practices such as at some point in dinnertime, sleepovers and on schoolyards, in courtrooms, meetings or during medical anamnesis.

The lone approach to distinguish or differentiate between the narrative methods is to rely on the distinction and peculiarity between the structure and performance (Bamberg, 1997). Gubrium and Holstein advocates and puts forward a similar and analogous bipartite division or allotment, one that draws on narratives as texts and narratives as practice (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). The study of the textual properties of narratives characteristically is concerned with the textual structural properties as well as with content in terms of themes and the ways characters are presented in (narrated) time and space. The focal point of significance on narrative practices "takes us remotely outside such accounts and records as well as from their transcripts to varied storytelling or narrative occasions" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009: 210).

Riessman (2008) suggests a tripartite dissection and rundown with regard to different or dissimilar analytic or investigative stances on the subject of narratives: Riessman (2008) further differentiates between thematic, structural and dialogic or performative approaches.

Although thematic approaches are first and foremost mostly interested in what topically and thematically surfaces in the dominion or realm of a story's content, those analysts concerned with a story's arrangement and structure become conversant with and familiarize itself or orient more strappingly headed for the linguistic phenomena as well as the story's overall sequential composition largely. Analysts who fall into the third group combine and merge the aspects of the preceding two analytic orientations, but in adding together and toting up, ask "who an utterance or expression may be directed to, when, and why, that is, for what purposes?" (Riessman, 2008: 105).

Notwithstanding the fact that previous scholarly works and efforts discusses stereotyping and gender imbalances in films, the extent of their role, how they affect the plot etc., very few have been substantial in looking at how the women folk are represented through the visual imagery of representation, and what these imageries actually mean. Even fewer employed or used a pure narrative analysis technique to answer these questions. In this manner, as practically not quite a great deal of academic work focuses on the visual and narrative images of representation in films over our very recent past and the meaning behind the signs and meanings they bear.

Thus, the rationale, purpose and justification in the wake of employing Narrative analysis as a research technique for the study/research undertaken is for the reason that it aims to identify and unearth the ways in which Muslim women characters are represented as well as to make visible the salient ideologies of women in the Hindi Commercial cinema of the twenty-first century to see if they are in fact progressing forward in a positive way, or simply clinging to outdated patriarchal stereotypes. We live in a world of things seen, a world that is visual, and we disburse much of our physical and emotional energy on the act of seeing (Berger, 2008).

Narrative analysis whilst analyzing the kinds of stories has discussed and documented about the researched phenomenon and the kinds of story representing the phenomenon in culture and society. Keane (1993) therefore argues that primarily, through narrative analysis, meaning is created through actors and their actions; hence, analysis of dramatic representation becomes important in order to interpret performances, which is mostly based on our perception of the actors as they appear and are studied in any particular directors' films. Hence, it enables the researcher in categorizing the depiction, portrayal and representation modes under study in terms of its structure, concepts, terms and points of views.

Consequently the usage of narrative analysis for this research has been instrumental in producing generalizations of thinking, actions, meanings and attitudes related to the phenomenon, 'looking at narratives of movies as dynamic and lively in building up and constructing social reality presenting and offering definitions and categorizations which are linked to the broad, extensive as well as the wide artistic, societal and edifying structures, relations and processes' (Aapola 1997: 50). Therefore the focal point is the analysis or discourse instead of the story or histoire of the narrative plots of the movies- a conceptual distinction popularised by film theorist Christian Metz in his seminal essay entitled 'Story/Discourse (A Note on Two Kinds of Voyeurism) published in 1975. For Metz (1975), narrative or discourse is the abstract or rhetorical dimension of the story, i.e. the way it is made to persuade and manipulate the audience, in contrast to the story itself that seems to exist in its own world.

Using the narratives of Muslim women or female characters in the select movies, it has been demonstrated that certain ideological or hegemonic discourses around religion, gender, sex and representation are legitimised. By exploring this intersection of narratives on gender, sex, religion and representation within the narrative plots of the movies and the characterisation of the central roles and characters of Muslim women, the study attempts to contribute to the existing literature on the representation of Muslim women and their construction of identity through women's representation in popular culture particularly the Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century.

## Chapter-IV: Theoretical Framework of the Study

This chapter presents and discusses the theoretical framework that has been implemented for the research undertaken, which in its approach necessitates a detailed and specified discussion on the 'Theory of representation'. Social research has a long tradition of using qualitative methods to gain an insight into people's lives and to understand the meaning that people attach to their lived experience, so, for the theoretical framework of the study the Cultural Representation theory of Stuart Hall has been adopted and incorporated.

The concept of representation is an exhibit, whether it comes in the form of legal guidance or in the form of artistic expression. The process of representation has to do with reinstating, replacing, acting, or performing on behalf of something that is original. In the arena of media studies, the act of representation is the way in which the aspects of the society, such as gender, age or ethnicity are presented to audiences. Cultural representation is a concept cultivated by Cultural theorist, Stuart Hall within cultural studies. Hall breaks down and interrogates the role of representation in images, and discusses culture's central role in representation. He looks at the issue within the most commonly used definition of representation, meaning to re-present something which already holds meaning. Hall squabbles that there is no *finally fixed* denotation, meaning, or significance to any one image or any incidence or occurrence. The interpretation of meaning changes from person to person, and is completely dependent on the historical and cultural context from when or where it is being presented or seen. Therefore, there is no one fixed meaning from which to re-present. Simply put, if we privilege the notion of representation as 'giving meaning' - we are giving culture a central role (Hall, 1997).

Stuart Hall focuses on cultural representations of race, ethnicity and gender. Therefore the study attempted not only to study Cultural representation but also describe the present condition of women and men, to present ways of understanding and to prescribe methods to change convinced conditions towards the elimination of gender, race, class and sexual hierarchies.

### **Representation**

The concept of representation embodies a range of meanings and usages ranging from mathematical, scientific, political, and legal discourses to media studies. According to Stuart Hall (1997:15), "Representation connects meaning and language to culture". Here, 'language' denotes much more than linguistic language; language is one of the 'media' through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in a culture. He further draws a

distinction between three different accounts or theories: the reflective, the intentional and the constructionist approaches to representation (Hall, 1997). In this research work, in tandem with the technique of narrative analysis, the constructionist approach to representation is adopted. In the recent years, this approach has had the most “significant impact on cultural studies” (Hall, 1997: 15). From the perspective of the constructionist approach, representation involves construction of meaning by forging links between three different orders of things, what we might broadly delineate and outline as the world of things, people, events and experiences; the abstract or conceptual world—the mental concepts we bear and carry in the region of our heads approximately; and the signs, arranged into languages, which ‘stand for’ or corresponds to as well as communicate these concepts (Hall, 1997).

According to Bohman (2016: 95), “in view of the fact that self-consciously created *mini-publics* seek to include all relevant stakeholders”, instead of relying on representation as the mode or approach of communicating interests, or even the “inclusion or toting up of efficient and capable actors as a mode or approach of achieving effective and valuable implementation or performance, they unbolt and open up a consistently as well as an unswervingly deliberative process within the institution that includes as scores of perspectives as possible and can be repeated when essential or necessary”. Martin (2014:32) quotes Flusser (1988) explaining why people need to be taught “to ask the right questions” (so that they do not “become victims of the image”) as well as his (Flusser’s) commitment to use the image as a tool for critical analysis, since “images are just as concrete as is the table” and there are no ontological tools to distinguish or differentiate between a simulation and a non-simulation, and the only tool available at hand for this purpose is “the critical tool which we have to use is *concentricity* as opposed to abstractness.”

According to Colman (2014), the newer paradigms of theory and philosophy for critical analysis did not emerge until the late twentieth century. “Cultural studies developed different critical theories and methods to analyze the production of texts, their polysemic meanings, and their complex uses and effects (Kellner, 2003:165).” Colman (2014:119) rejects the diagnostic, rational, logo-centric and gender-based categorical analyses, and refers to these different forms of theory as “contemporary” philosophy, or schools of critical thought. Colman (2014:120) further says that contemporary philosophy produced new ways of thinking: “meta critical methods that provide critical and significant analysis of traditional ways of doing philosophy and critiquing the criticism itself...for the study of film forms and cinematic conditions, new distributions of the knowledge terms and new

ways of understanding the sociologies of representation and how normative ideas are maintained”.

According to Kellner (1997: 25), the theoretical essence and political substance derived from the new significant discourses that have emerged since the 1960s have enriched most forms of cultural studies, and most critical social theories, which “have encompassed, enclosed as well as engaged the concept and idea of feminism and presented an assortment of the multicultural theories which essentially highlight and focus on the representations of gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality”.

Citing the example of British cultural studies, with its “problematic representations of gender, race, class, sexuality, and other identity markers”, Kellner (2003:165) observes that, critical theory turned to a “politics of representation and depiction” during the 1960s and 1970s concerning to an analysis of the ways in which “images, discourses, and narratives of an extensive and wide array of cultural forms from philosophy and the sciences to the advertising and entertainment of media culture were embedded in the texts and consequently reproduced social domination and subordination”.

What Hall (1997b) says about ‘race’ can in many instances be applied to other dimensions of ‘difference’—the examples analyzed by him are drawn from different periods of popular culture, of how an established regime of *racialized* representation emerged, and identified a number of its attributed characteristic strategies and tropes; he considers several theoretical arguments as to why ‘difference’ and otherness are of such fundamental importance in cultural studies; he has thoroughly unpacked stereotyping as a representational practice, looking at how it works (essentializing, reductionism, naturalization, binary oppositions), at the ways it is caught up in the play of power (hegemony, power/knowledge), and at some of its deeper, more unconscious effects (fantasy, fetishism, disavowal); and, he has also considered some of the counter-strategies which have attempted to intervene in representation, trans-coding negative images with new meanings, opening out into a ‘politics of representation’, a struggle over meaning which continues and is unfinished. Similarly, Colman (2014) puts forth the following argument:

The notion of the cinema as a medium for ‘bearing witness’,...a common aspect for thinkers in this era, to realize that the ‘image’ of the cinema can be located not only visually, but in sound, the voice or in disjunctions of various ‘non- human’ kinds. The so called ‘reality of representation’ on screen, as each and every discussion and discourse necessitates or describes, comes to determine history: a history that is the contingent and



the causal politics of the twentieth as well as the twenty-first century. Reality on screen is thus described in the purely aesthetic terms of non-representational forms or in the overt displays of political expression, or in the reflexive terms of both. (Colman, 2014: 120).

Hall (1997c) explains two processes or two systems of representation: firstly, the ‘system’ by which all sorts of objects, people and events are correlated with a set of concepts or mental representations which we carry around in our heads, and without which the world would not be interpreted meaningfully at all; and secondly, language, which as the second system of representation, is involved in the overall process of constructing meaning. In the first system, meaning depends on the system of concepts and images formed in our thoughts which can stand for or ‘represent’ the world, enabling us to refer to things both inside and outside our heads; however, only a shared conceptual map is not enough, since there must be ample scope to represent or exchange meanings and concepts and this can only be done when there is access to a shared language and this shared conceptual map must be translated into a common language, so that the concepts and ideas can be correlated with certain written words, spoken sounds or visual images (Hall, 1997c).

Hall (1997c) uses the term ‘language’ in a very broad and inclusive way—the writing system or the spoken system of a particular language are both obviously ‘languages’, but so are visual images, whether produced by hand, mechanical, electronic, digital or some other means, when they are used to convey or express meaning and so are other things which aren’t ‘linguistic’ within whichever ordinary, usual or common sense or judgment: the ‘language’ of facial expression and appearance or of gesture, for example, or the ‘language’ of fashion, of clothes, or of traffic lights. The common term used in a broad or wide-spectrum for words, sounds or images which bear and carry meaning is signs, which stand for or represent the concepts and the conceptual relations between them which are carried around in the mind and together they make up the meaning—systems of any culture (Hall, 1997c).

Representation, along with meaning and language, is a critical element in the study of culture, wherein meaning is constructed by the system of representation (Hall, 1997c). Hall (1990:230) says, “Meaning persists and unfolds, so to speak and verbalize, ahead of as well as beyond the arbitrary and subjective closure which makes it, at any instant or moment, which is feasible or possible. It is constantly either or both ‘over-’ or ‘under-’ -determined,” i.e., either an excess or overindulgence or an increment or supplement and a bit of something is persistently ‘left over’. Hall (1996a) begins listing the enormous and massive theoretical advances, prepared by the encounters that bump into that of

structuralist, semiotic, and post-structuralist work, which had at all times attended to questions of language:

- the fundamental and decisive importance or significance of language and of the linguistic metaphor or symbol to whichever study of culture;
- the increased expansion and extension of the concept or notion of text and textuality, mutually as a basis or source of connotation or meaning and as that which escapes, break away from and postpones meaning;
- the acknowledgement and recognition of the heterogeneity, of the variety and multiplicity, of meanings, of the effort or struggle to close or secure subjectively the infinite and inestimable semiosis/semiotics ahead of and beyond meaning;
- the acknowledgement of textuality along with cultural and literary power, of representation itself, as a site or position of power and regulation or parameter; of the symbolic as a basis or foundation of identity.

According to Hall (1997a:1), “Culture is concerned all about collective ‘shared meanings’. Nowadays, language is the privileged intermediate or medium in which we ‘make sense’ of things, in which meaning is produced and exchanged;” and in view of the fact that meanings can just merely be shared all the way through our common, frequent and widespread access and admittance to language, he concludes that “language is essential and central to meaning and culture and has constantly been regarded as the key repository or storehouse of cultural values and meanings.” Language is competent and proficient enough to construct and create meanings and prolong, sustain as well as uphold the dialogue or discourse between participants (which allows and facilitates them to construct or build up a culture of shared understandings and subsequently infer and interpret the world in approximately the equivalent or comparable ways) because it operates as a representational system; in language, signs and symbols—whether they are sounds, written words, electronically produced images, musical notes, even objects—are used to stand for and put up with or correspond to, represent or signify to other people’s concepts, ideas and feelings (Hall, 1997a). “Language is solitarily one among the distinct form of the ‘media’ all the way through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in a culture. Representation in the course or track of language is for that rationale essentially imperative to the processes by which meaning or connotation is produced,” states Hall (1997a: 1).

Material, accepted or natural attributes and characteristics of ‘things’ (that exist and subsists in the material and natural world), are what determines or constitutes them and they have an absolutely apparent and clear meaning, external to- of how they are

represented—this was the conventional and usual view, making representation a progression and procedure of a derivatively secondary importance or significance, which enters into the field only after things have been effusively or completely formed and their connotation or meaning constituted, but with the ‘cultural turn’ in the human and social sciences, meaning is at this instant thought to be produced or constructed relatively than simply ‘found’; on the contrary, in the new—age ‘social constructionist approach’, representation is conceived as inwardly bound into the very constitution and establishment of things and culture is conceptualized as a crucial primary or ‘constitutive’ process and progression, as important and imperative as the economic or material ‘base’ in determining and shaping social subjects and historical events—not merely a manifestation or reflection of the world subsequent to the event (Hall,1997a). Hall (1997c) mostly in a broader canvas classifies the approaches to explaining how the representation of meaning through language works into three categories—the reflective, the intentional and the constructionist or constructivist approaches.

In the reflective approach or mimetic approach, meaning is thought to lie and recline in the entity, object, person, idea or event in the real world, and language functions like a mirror, to *reflect* the true meaning or connotation as it already exists in the world; and, in view of the fact that visual signs do accept and bear some association and affiliation to the shape, outline and texture of the objects which they represent, there is a convinced apparent truth and legitimacy to mimetic theories of representation and language, although nevertheless there are many words, sounds and images, which are entirely well understood regardless of being exclusively fictional or fantasy or referring to worlds which are altogether imaginary in every aspect (Hall, 1997c).

The second approach to meaning in representation, the intentional or premeditated approach, argues the contradictory or opposite case as it holds that it is the speaker or the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language and words connote and signify what the author intends they should mean (Hall, 1997c). Since nothing can be the exclusive or unique foundation or source of meanings in language, as that would mean that every single individual could express and put across himself or herself in an entirely exclusive private language, as a universal theory of representation through language, the deliberate and intentional approach is also flawed; even though, all individuals do employ and make use of language to convey, express or communicate things which are exceptional, special or unique to them, to their approach and manner of seeing the world, but, language can by no means be wholly a private game altogether, as the core and essence of language is communication which, in turn, depends on shared linguistic

conventions and shared codes (Hall, 1997c). Language, being a social system through and through, implies that the author's classified and private thoughts have to confer or negotiate with all the other meanings for words or images which have been stored in language which the use of the language system will inevitably and predictably prompt or trigger into action—the author's private intended meanings, however conversely, personal to him or her, have to enter and contract into the rules, codes and conventions of language to be shared and understood (Hall, 1997c).

The third approach, called the constructivist or constructionist approach to meaning in language recognizes this public, the social character of language and acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of the language can fix meaning in language (Hall, 1997c). According to Hall (1997c: 25-26), Things don't *mean*, we *construct* meaning, using representational systems—concepts and signs...According to this approach, we must not confuse the material world where things and people exist, and the representative, symbolic or emblematic practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language function or operate. Constructivists do not contradict or refute the continuation or existence of the material world. On the other hand, it is not the material world which puts across or transmits meaning: it is the language classification system or whatsoever system we are using to correspond to and represent our concepts. It is the social actors who bring into play or draw on the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct and create meaning, to make the world evocative along with meaningful and to correspond or communicate in relation to that world expressively and meaningfully to others.

Evidently and of course, signs may possibly also have a material aspect or dimension. Representational systems consist of the concrete, actual and authentic sounds we make or create with our vocal chords, the images we make on light sensitive paper with cameras, the marks we craft with paint on canvas, the digital impulses we transmit or pass on electronically. Representation is thus a practice, a category or type of 'work', which employs and uses material objects and effects. But the meaning depends, not on the material quality or superiority of the sign, but on its symbolic function or purpose. It is because an exacting particular sound or word stands for, symbolizes or represents a concept or perception that it can function, in language, as an indication or sign and convey or pass on meaning—or, as the constructionists articulate and declare, signify (sign-i-fy).

According to Hall (1997c), there are two approaches to 'constructionism'—the semiotic approach, influenced by the great Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, which is

concerned with ‘poetics’ of representation (the how of representation, with how language produces meaning), and the discursive approach, associated with the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault, which is more concerned with the ‘politics’ of representation (the effects and the consequences of representation).

Semiotics, being the study or ‘science of signs’ and their general role as vehicles of meaning in culture, in the semiotic approach ‘language’ provides one general model of how culture and representation work; on the other hand, any approach in which meaning, representation and culture are considered to be constitutive is generally referred to as ‘discursive’ and with the advent of the discursive approach, the preoccupation with meaning has taken a different turn, being more concerned, not with the detail of how ‘language’ works, but with the broader role of discourse in culture (Hall, 1997a). Hall (1997a:6) distinguishes ‘discourse’ by the following attributes:

- The way of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice;
- A cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices, providing the ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society.
- Formation defining what is and is not appropriate in our formulation of, and our practices in relation to, the following:
  - An exacting issue or meticulous subject or site of social activity or action;
  - What information or knowledge is considered constructive, relevant, valuable and ‘true’ in that context or perspective; and
  - What sort(s) of persons or ‘subjects’ embody or symbolize its characteristics.

In the discursive approach, not only how language and representation construct and produce meaning is examined, but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the manner in which certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied; consequently, the emphasis in the discursive approach, instead of being on ‘language’ as a frequent or general concern, is always on definite or specific languages or meanings and how they are deployed at particular times, in particular places. i.e., on the chronological or historical specificity of a fastidious and particular form or ‘regime’ of representation, pointing towards a better and greater historical specificity—the way representational practices function or operate in actual and authentic practice or in concrete historical situations (Hall, 1997a).

According to Hall (1997c: 28), “Representation is the production of meaning through language. In the process of representation, the constructionists time and again squabble and argue that, we formulate the use of signs, organized into languages of different kinds, to communicate meaningfully as well as expressively in the midst of others”; and so languages can be capable of making use of signs to denote, indicate, signify, symbolize, stand for or reference objects, people and events in the so-called ‘real’ world, but they can also lay down references to imaginary things and fantasy worlds or abstract and non-figurative ideas which are not in any apparent or obvious sense part of the material world. Hall (1997c) deduces that since language does not exert and work like a mirror, a simple relationship of reflection (imitation or one-to-one correspondence between language and the real world) is non-existent and therefore the world is not accurately and precisely or otherwise reflected in the mirror of language. “Meaning is produced within language, in and through various representational arrangements or systems which, designed for convenience or expediency, we entitle and identify ‘languages’. As an outcome or upshot, meaning is constructed and accordingly produced by the practice, the ‘work’, of representation. It is constructed throughout the course of signifying—i.e. meaning-producing—practices (Hall, 1997c: 28).”

Hall (1997c) focuses at the furthest and utmost length on the constructionist theory which proposes a complex, intricate and mediated relationship between things in the world, our concepts in thought, contemplation and language, i.e. the correlations between the material, the conceptual, theoretical and the signifying levels which are governed by our cultural and linguistic codes and it is this set of interconnections which produces meaning. Hall(1997c) provides evidence for how much or to what extent this general model of how systems of representation exert or work in the production of meaning owed to the work of Ferdinand de Saussure: the key point, in this case, is the association and linkage provided by the codes between the ‘*signifiers*’ (the forms of expression used by language—speech, writing, inscription, illustration, depiction, drawing or other further types or kinds of representation) and the ‘*signifieds*’ (the mental or rational concepts or notions associated or connected with them); the connection and relationship between these two systems of representation produced signs, and signs, organized as well as hooked on to languages, produced meanings and could be used to reference entities, objects, people in addition to events stirring in the ‘real’ world.

According to Hall (1997c: 51), “Foucault’s approach to that of representation is not that easy, effortless or straightforward to summarize,” since, being more inclined to analyze and evaluate the entire or complete discursive arrangement and formation to which a text or a

practice belongs, he is concerned with the construction and production of acquaintances of knowledge and meaning all the way through communication and discourse; Foucault does without a doubt analyze particular texts and representations indeed, as the semioticians did and his concern and unease is with knowledge provided by the human and social sciences, which organizes behavior, conduct, understanding, practice, conviction and belief, the regulation or parameter of bodies as well as whole populations. Hall (1997c) opines that Foucault's work is prepared through in the wake of, and profoundly influenced by, the 'turn to language' which marked the constructionist approach to representation; yet, until now his classification and definition of discourse is much broader than language, and includes many other elements of practice and institutional regulation which Saussure's approach, with its linguistic focus, excluded—therefore, Foucault is always much more historically specific, seeing forms of power/knowledge as always rooted in particular contexts and histories; and above all, for Foucault, the production of knowledge is always crossed with questions of power and the body, which greatly expands the scope of what is involved in representation.

Hall (1990: 10) comments, "By neglecting to analyze how the social positions of individuals interact with the construction of certain 'empty' discursive subject positions, Foucault re-inscribes an antinomy between thematic and subject positions and the individuals who dwell in or occupy them. Thus his archaeology provides a significantly critical, but one-dimensional, formal account of the subject of discourse." The major critique levelled against his work is that he tends to absorb too much into 'discourse', and this has the effect of encouraging his followers to neglect the influence of the material, economic and structural factors in the operation of power/knowledge; and some critics also find his rejection of any criterion of 'truth' in the human sciences in favor of the idea of a 'regime of truth' and the will-to-power (the will to make things 'true') vulnerable to the charge and indict of relativism (Hall, 1990). Irrespective and regardless of such disparagement or condemnation, there is little qualm and uncertainty or vagueness for that matter in relation to the major influence or sway which his works and efforts has had on the existing contemporary theories under the aegis of representation in addition to meaning.

"The image or picture carries many meanings, all by the same token equally conceivable and plausible. What is essential or imperative is the fact and actuality that this image mutually shows an event (denotation) and carries a 'message' or meaning (connotation)—Barthes would call it a 'meta-message' or myth—about 'race', colour and 'otherness'," drawing on Barthes, says Hall (1997b: 229). Stereotyping as a signifying practice is central to the representation of racial difference and the essentializing, reductionist and

naturalizing effects of stereotyping reduces people to a few, simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by nature—stereotyping plays its part in the maintenance of social and symbolic arrangement and order by creating or setting up a symbolic edge or frontier between the ‘normal’ alongside the length of the ‘deviant’, the ‘normal’ as well as the ‘pathological’, the ‘acceptable’ along with the ‘unacceptable’, what ‘belongs’ and what does not or is ‘Other’, between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, Us and Them; it facilitates the ‘binding’ or bonding together of all of Us who are ‘normal’ hooked on to one ‘imagined community’; and it sends into symbolic exile all of Them, ‘the Others’ (who are in some way different), ‘beyond the pale’; and, since power is usually directed against the subordinate or excluded group, stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power (Hall, 1997b). Drawing upon Foucault and Gramsci, Hall (1997b) summarizes, Stereotyping is what Foucault called a ‘power/knowledge’ kind or sort of game. It categorizes and sorts out people according to a norm or standard and constructs the excluded as the ‘other’. Captivatingly, it is very interesting to note that, it is also what Gramsci would have called an aspect or characteristic of the effort and struggle for hegemony... Hegemony is a form and outline of power based on leadership by a group or faction in many fields of activity and goings-on at on one occasion, so that its ascendancy or dominance commands a prevalently widespread approval or consent in addition to appearing natural, inevitable and to be anticipated. (Hall, 1997b: 29).

Hall (1990) identifies three hypothetical positions from which decoding of a tele-visual (or audio-visual) discourse may be constructed:

- Dominant-Hegemonic Position wherein the viewer takes the connoted meaning of the media message full and straight, and decodes the message in terms of the reference code in which it has been encoded, thereby ‘operating inside the dominant code’.
- Negotiated Code or Position wherein majority audiences probably understand quite adequately what has been dominantly defined and professionally signified. The overriding or prevalent dominant definitions, conversely, are hegemonic specifically because they represent definitions of situations and events which are ‘in dominance’ (global).
- Oppositional Code wherein it is possible for a viewer—who ‘detotalises’ the message in the preferred code in order to ‘retotalise’ the message within some alternative framework of reference—to perfectly understand both the literal and the connotative inflexion given by a discourse but to decode the message in a globally contrary way.

According to Hall (1997b: 270), despite the strenuous efforts to fix meaning—that is precisely what the strategies of stereotyping are aspiring to do, often with considerable



success, for a time—“ultimately, in the due course meaning or connotation begins to slip and slide”, it begins to drift and float, or be wrenched, or inflected into new directions; and as new meanings are grafted on to old ones, words and images carry connotations over which no one has complete control, and “these marginal or submerged meanings come to the surface, allowing different meanings to be constructed, different things to be shown and said.”

Hall (1997b) considers the merits and demerits of three out of the different transcoding strategies have been adopted since the 1960s when questions of representation and power acquired a centrality in the politics of anti-racist and other social movements:

- To reverse the stereotype is not necessarily to overturn or subvert it. Escaping the grip of one stereotypical extreme may simply mean being trapped in its stereotypical ‘other’. Although this may be advancement on the former list, and definitely a welcome change, but “it has not escaped the contradictions of the binary structure of racial stereotyping (Hall, 1997b: 272).”
- The second strategy for contesting the racialized regime of representation is the attempt to substitute a range of ‘positive’ images for the ‘negative’ imagery which continues to dominate popular representation. This approach has the advantage of righting the balance. It is underpinned by an approval, acceptance, and recognition— indeed, a celebration— of difference and variation. It inverts the binary opposition, privileging the subordinate term, sometimes reading the negative positively and tries to construct a positive identification with what has been objected. It greatly expands the range of racial representations and the complexity.

Underlying this approach is an acknowledgement and celebration of diversity and difference in the world. The problem with the positive/negative strategy is that adding positive images to the largely negative repertoire of the dominant regime of representation increases the diversity of the ways in which it is represented, but does not necessarily displace the negative. “In view of the fact that the binaries hang about in place, meaning continues to be framed by them. The strategy challenges the binaries—but it does not undermine them (Hall, 1997b: 272-274).”

➤ The third counter-strategy locates itself within the complexities and ambivalences of representation itself and tries to contest it from within. Being more concerned with the forms of racial representation than with introducing a new content, it accepts and works with the shifting, unstable character of meaning, and enters, as it were, hooked on to an

effort or struggle over representation, whilst acknowledging that, since meaning can on no account, as a final point be fixed, there can never be any concluding or final victories. This strategy, however, makes an elaborate and detailed play with ‘looking’, hoping by its very attention, to ‘make it strange’—that is, “to de-familiarize it, and so make clear and explicit what is frequently hidden (Hall, 1997b: 274).”

Hall (1990: 222) says, “The practices of representation constantly associate and implicate the positions from which we converse, speak or put in writing—the positions of elocution and enunciation. What the modern theories of enunciation propose or recommend is that, though we speak or articulate, so to say ‘in our own name’, of ourselves and from our own experience and understanding”, however in view of the fact that identity or individuality is neither apparent or translucent nor without a hitch or glitch- uncomplicated, “who speaks”, and “the focus on the subject and theme that is spoken of”, are by no means identical, never exactly in the same place.

Hall (1990) suggests that instead of assuming that identity is an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, identity should be treated as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation—this view challenges the very authority and authenticity to which the term, ‘cultural identity’, lays claim, by opening a dialogue and/or an investigation, on the subject of ‘cultural identity’ and ‘representation’. Hall (1990: 222) further elucidates, “Of course, the ‘I’ who writes here must also be thought of as, itself, ‘enunciated’. Each and every one of us writes and speaks from an exacting particular place and time, from an account of history and a culture which is precise as well as specific and detailed. What we say is at all times ‘in context’, positioned.” The two different ways of thinking about on the subject of ‘cultural identity’, according to Hall (1990), are as follows:

➤ The categorization or classification of the foremost and primary, point of key arrangement or agreement classifies as well as describes ‘cultural identity’ in provisions and stipulations of one, shared culture, a sort or variety of a collective ‘one true self’, hiding within the many other, more artificially apparent, superficial or unnaturally imposed ‘selves’, which people with a shared history and ancestry embrace or hold in common.

Surrounded by the terms of this definition, our cultural identities imitate, reflect and replicate the frequent and widespread historical experiences and shared cultural codes which bestow and endow us, as ‘one people’, with an established, stable, unchanging, unremitting and continuous frames of reference and meaning, underneath the changing as

well as shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual or concrete history. This ‘oneness’, essentially underlying all the other, more shallow and superficial differences, is the truth, the essence and soul, it is this identity which must be discovered, excavated, brought to light and expressed through cinematic representation. “The importance of the act of imaginative rediscovery which this conception of a rediscovered, essential identity entails should not be underestimated or neglected even momentarily, since ‘hidden histories’ play “a critical role in the emergence of many of the most important social movements of our time—feminist, anti-colonial and anti-racist.” (Hall, 1990: 223-224).

➤ The subsequently or consequently succeeding point or position, which is a related but different stance or outlook of cultural identity, recognizes that, above and beyond the numerous points of connection and similarity, there are in addition considerable as well as vital points of profound and significant distinction and peculiarity which amount to and constitute ‘what we in actuality or reality are’; or to a certain extent ever since history has intervened—‘what we have become’, i.e., the ‘other’ side have got to be acknowledged, as an alternative or substitute of a discussion on just ‘one experience, one identity’ making this second outlook or view of cultural identity is to a great extent less familiar or recognizable, and more confusing, disturbing as well as upsetting or stressful—“If the pre-determined or stipulated distinctiveness and individuality of the self’s individuality or identity does not ensue or proceed, in an instantly- straight, unbroken or uninterrupted line up or procession, on or after a number of fixed basis, foundation or origin, how are we to, classify identify with and appreciate its formation?” (Hall, 1990: 225-226).

Although in this sense of the term, ‘difference’ is not purely synonymous with ‘otherness’, critiquing Jacques Derrida, Hall (1990: 227-229) argues that difference, irrespective of preference or disdain, “is by now already engraved and etched in our cultural identities” and persists in and flanking alongside continuity. As a marker which sets up a disturbance in the settled understanding or translation of the word/concept, Derrida indulges in wordplay, using the anomalous ‘a’ in his way of spelling ‘difference’ as ‘Difference’ and setting the word in motion to new meanings without erasing the trace of its other meanings—this second sense of difference challenges the fixed binaries which stabilize meaning and representation and show how meaning is never finished or completed, but keeps on moving to encompass other, additional or supplementary meanings; and although without relations of difference, no representation could occur, yet “what is then constituted within representation is always open to being deferred, staggered, serialized (Hall, 1990: 229).”

The claim and command for identification—that is, to be for an Other—entails the representation of the subject in the differentiating order of Otherness and Identification is always the return of an image of identity which bears the mark of splitting in that ‘Other’ place from which it comes (Bhaba, 1986: 15-16). According to Bhaba (1986), there are three conditions that underline and understanding of the process of identification in the analytic of desire, namely:

- to exist is to be called into being in relation to an Otherness, its look or locus and it is a demand that reaches outward to an external object;
- the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting and it is precisely in that ambivalent use of ‘different’—to be different from those that are different makes you the same—that the Unconscious speaks of the form of Otherness, the tethered shadow of deferral and displacement;
- as disclosed by the rhetorical figures of Bhaba’s account of desire and Otherness, the question of identification is on no account the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy or insight—is at all times the construction or creation of an ‘image’ of identity of the self and the alteration or the conversion of the focused subject in assuming that image. (Bhaba, 1986:15-16).

Hall (1996b: 1) focuses on the absolute ‘veritable discursive explosion’ in the region of the concept and perception of ‘identity’:

The de-construction has been accomplished and conducted surrounded by an assortment of disciplinary and punitive areas, all of them, in one approach or another decisive, grave and considerable of the concept and notion of an essential and integral, amalgamated and unified identity. The critique of the self-sustaining subject at the centre of post-Cartesian western metaphysics has been comprehensively advanced in philosophy. The issue and inquiry of bias or subjectivity and its insensitive, insensible or unconscious processes of arrangement and configuration has been developed surrounded by the discourse of a psychoanalytically influenced feminism and cultural criticism. The continuously or incessantly performative self has been advanced in commemorative and celebrative variants of postmodernism. Within the anti-essentialist account and assessment of the ethnic, cultural, racial and national conceptions, notions and outsets of cultural identity and the ‘politics of location’ a number of audacious, exploratory, speculative and theoretical conceptions and ideas have been outlined as well as sketched in their most grounded forms or structures.

Hall (1996b) cites two reasons behind the need for further debate on ‘identity’, the first of which is to observe something distinctive about the deconstructive critique to which many of these essentialist concepts have been subjected. He further explains that the second kind of answer requires taking note of where, in relation to what set of problems, does the irreducibility of the concept, identity, emerge—the answer floating and hovering in its centrality to the question of agency and politics (meaning both the significance in modern forms of political movement of the signifier ‘identity’, its fundamental or pivotal relationship to a politics of location or scene and also the apparent manifested difficulties and instabilities which have in fact characteristically affected as well as influenced all contemporary and existing forms of ‘identity politics’).

Negotiation—which is neither assimilation nor collaboration—makes achievable and possible the emergence of an ‘interstitial’ agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism (Bhaba, 1990). By ‘agency’ Hall (1996b: 2) expresses “no desire whatsoever to return to an unmediated and transparent notion of the subject or identity as the centered author of social practice, or to reinstate or re-establish an arena of approaches which ‘places its own viewpoint or outlook at the origin and source of all historicity—which, in a diminutive manner, leads to a transcendental consciousness or psyche’ (Foucault, 1970: 14)” moreover whilst in a well-disposed agreement with that of Foucault, he additionally says that as an alternative or substitute of ‘a theory of the deliberate knowing subject’, ‘a theory of discursive practice’ is required. Hall (1996b: 2) says that “the evolution of Foucault’s work clearly shows” that it is not an abandonment or abolition of ‘the subject’ but a re-conceptualization (thinking it in its new, displaced or de-centered position within the paradigm) in the attempt or endeavour to rearticulate the relationship between “subjects and discursive practices that the question of identity recurs—or rather, if one desires or favors to stress or hassle down the procedure of subjectification to discursive practices, and the politics of elimination and segregation somewhere in which every part of such subjectification comes into the prospect and sight to entail or necessitate, the question of identification.”

Hall (1990: 4), concludes that the concept of identity deployed here is not an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one which accepts that identities are never unified and increasingly fragmented, fractured and ruptured; by no means remarkably singular but multiply and proliferate as soon as constructed transversely across different or unusual or often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions, subjected or focused to a deep-seated or thorough historicization, and are persistently in the process or progression of change, alteration, modification and transformation— as a result, *identities*

*are constituted within, not externally or exterior to representation*, arising from the narrativization of the identity of the self, but the inevitably necessary fictional or illusory nature and stance of this process in no manner undermines its discursive, material or political affectivity, even though the belongingness, the ‘suturing into the story’ in the course of which identities arise and come to a pass is, to a certain extent, in the make-believe fantasy or imaginary (as well as the representative or symbolic) and for that reason, constantly, moderately somewhat constructed in a fantasy or desire, or at least contained by a fantasmatic field. In particular, to be explicit or specific because *identities are constructed within, not outside representation*, they call for and require to be understood as *productions* in definite or precise historical and institutional sites within the detailed or exact discursive formations, patterns, arrangements as well as practices, by various specific or exact nuncupative strategies.

According to Hall (1990), identity emerges or surfaces contained by the play and participation of explicit and detailed modalities of authority, control, command as well as power, and as a consequence is further the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, rather than the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity—an ‘identity’ in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation); and, above all, and directly contrary to the form in which they are persistently invoked, identities are constructed all the way through, not outside or external to, difference. “This entails and demands the fundamentally disturbing or distressing identification, classification or recognition that it is merely through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to specifically or precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the ‘positive’ meaning of any term—and thus its ‘identity’—can be constructed (Derrida, 1981; Laclau, 1990; Butler, 1993; cited by Hall, 1990).”

Identities can therefore function as points of identification and attachment simply because of their capability or competence to exclude or prohibit, to abscond or leave out, to make or render ‘outside’, abjected and each and every identity has at its ‘margin’, an excess, intemperance or overindulgence, something more—the concord, unanimity, unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term or expression of identity treats as foundational or initial is not a natural, but a constructed form of closure or conclusion, every identity naming as its necessary, even if silenced and unspoken other, that which it ‘lacks’ (Hall, 1990: 5).

“Encoding and decoding can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from the larger ideological discourses (McKahan, 2009: 56).” Frankfurt school theorists’ suggested that the narrow range of instrumental discourses of efficiency, productivity, profit and control which were propagated by cultural institutions during the evolution of industrial and corporate capitalism, can be understood in part as reproducing ideological discourse (McKahan, 2009).

Hall (1990) further draws in the lead, upon Althusser’s *‘Ideological state apparatuses’* essay (1971) introducing “the notion of interpellation, and the specular structure of ideology”, and attempting to “circumvent the economism and reductionism of the conventional Marxist theory and conjecture of ideology, and to convey or simultaneously bring in concert within one descriptive and explanatory framework mutually the materialist function or role of ideology in reproducing the social relations of production (Marxism) and (through its borrowings from Lacan) the symbolic function of ideology in the constitution of subjects.”

According to Hall (1990), the term ‘identity’ is the site of the difficulty since it arises precisely at the point of intersection between ‘the rudimentary levels of psychic identity in addition to the coerces and drives’ and at the intensity of the discursive arrangement, configuration and practices which comprise and amount to the societal or collective field and that it is in the articulation of these mutually constitutive but not identical fields that the real conceptual problems lie. Commonly taken as a statement about historical determinism, the idea that history repeats itself, according to Bhaba (1990: 59), emerges frequently within liberal discourses when consensus fails, when the consequences of cultural incommensurability make the world a difficult place and it is at such moments, that the past is seen as returning, with uncanny punctuality, to render the ‘event’ timeless, and the narrative of its emergence transparent, thereby raising questions like, “Do we best cope with the reality of ‘being contemporary’, its conflicts and crises, its losses and lacerations, by bestowing history with an elongated and stretched out memory that we subsequently barge in or interrupt, or get amazed, startled and astounded, with our own personal amnesia?”—which lay emphasis on an observation that is becoming increasingly commonplace: the rise and mounting up of religious ‘fundamentalisms’, the increase or spread of nationalist movements, the redefinitions of claims and assertions to race and ethnicity, returning to “a former or prior historical movement or faction, a renaissance, resurrection or restaging of what the historians have called the extensive, protracted and long-drawn-out nineteenth century”.

Bhaba (1990) argues that underlying this claim is a deeper unease, a fear that the engine of social transformation is no longer the aspiration to a democratic common culture, heralding an anxious age of identity, in which the attempt to memorialize lost time, and to reclaim lost territories, creates a culture of disparate 'interest groups' or social movements; here affiliation may be antagonistic and ambivalent; solidarity may be only situational and strategic; and commonality is often negotiated through the 'contingency' of social interests and political claims.

Hall (1999) borrows the terms circulation and reception from Marx and postulates that circulation and reception are 'moments' of the production process in televised mass media and are reincorporated, via a number of skewed and structured 'feedbacks', into the production process itself, although production and reception of media messages are related (not identical though) and are differentiated 'moments' within the totality formed by the social relations of the communicative process as a whole.

According to Hall (1990: 511), since "reality exists outside language, but it is constantly mediated by and through language", what is known and said has to be produced in and through discourse and, therefore discursive 'knowledge' is the product not of the transparent representation of the 'real' in language but of "the articulation of language on real relations and conditions" as there is "no degree zero in language"; 'naturalism' and/or 'realism', i.e., the apparent fidelity of the representation to the thing or concept represented is the result or the effect, of a certain specific "articulation of language" on the 'real'—"the result of a discursive practice".

While highlighting the importance of the visual medium in representation, Rose (2012: 2) draws up a clear distinction between visuals and visibility—meanings may be explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious, they may be felt as truth or as fantasy, science or common sense; and they may be conveyed through everyday speech, elaborate rhetoric, high art, television soap operas, dreams, movies or music; different groups in a society will make sense of the world in different ways; and, irrespective of the form they take, these made meanings, or representations, structure the way people behave in their everyday lives. Due to the high level of proliferation of visual technologies (photography, film, video, digital graphics, television, acrylics, for example) and the images (TV programmes, advertisements, snapshots, public sculpture, movies, surveillance video footage, newspaper pictures, paintings) offering views of the world and rendering the world in visual terms, the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary digitised societies (Rose, 2012).



According to (Rose, 2012), the visual is considered to be the most fundamental of all senses by some writers, but this rendering, even by photographs, interprets the world and displays it in a very particular way and hence, it is never innocent as these images can never be transparent windows onto the world—this is the distinguishing factor between vision (what the human eye is physiologically capable of seeing) and visibility (the way in which vision is constructed in various ways). Narratives of historical reconstruction may reject such myths of social transformation—communal memory may seek its meanings through a sense of causality shared with psychoanalysis, negotiating the recurrence of the image of the past while keeping open the question of the future and the importance of such retroaction lies in its ability to re-inscribe, reactivate, relocate and re-signify the past; more significantly, it commits the understanding of the past, and the reinterpretation of the future, to an ethics of ‘survival’ that allows us to work through the present and such a working through, or working out, frees us from the determinism of historical inevitability repetition without a difference—making the confrontation with that difficult borderline possible, the interstitial experience between what is taken to be the image of the past and what is in fact involved in the passing of time and the passage of meaning (Bhaba, 1990).

## Chapter V: Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter discusses the analysis and interpretations of the select movies of Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century and sums up the results based on the employment of narrative analysis as the research technique that has been adopted to scrutinize as well as evaluate the select movies for the study undertaken.

Films are considered to be the cultural artifacts and works of art that supposedly reflect and replicate reality, but do they essentially provide justice to this very statement? If women have more rights, power, and voice in today's society, is this reality being re-constructed on-screen in contemporary, mainstream commercial films that reach the widest audiences? To what extent are the audiences consuming 'real' images and to what extent are the images just perpetuations of antiquated thoughts or reconstructions that continue to have the same subtle prejudices from before? Many academicians argue that the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary societies marking the move to post-modernity (Berger, 1978, 2008). Berger appropriately points out that, seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak, emphasizing the importance of the visual form (Rose, 2001). It is said that most people receive over 80 percent of information through the eyes and this information conveys messages about our society and the world we live in (Berger, 1978, 2008). The images of women as being represented in the select Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first-century function and operate as signs of ideological discourse in a patriarchal society. The influence of films is more than the other way round. The way the Muslim woman characters as protagonists are represented and depicted in the films and the consistency and reliability of such portrayal can bring about changes in a society's perceptions over a while (Prasad, 2005,2010). People follow the film's narrative respectively without grasping the realities. The impact is on the psychology of women as well as other strata and segments of the society. People perceive the negatives aspects straight away and neglect the other side of pain, harassment, discomfort, loneliness, disillusionment as well as misery. These cinematic narratives, on one hand, set up the glimpse and couture of Muslim women in the mind of other women as well as it has led to creating strenuously vehemence in their relationships crossways with one another (Khan, 2017). The digitally advanced and technologically driven era has sped up the rate and access of media products; therefore it is crucial to analyze the representation of Muslim women in the select Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century.

## 5.1- Zubeidaa

Recipient of Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan, the legendary world-class director Shyam Benegal's movie, *Zubeidaa*'s narrative plot smeared on and marked its opening segment into the silver screen and theaters in the year 2001, thereby illustrating a red scarf (*dupatta*) tumbling down from the sky to set off with the narrative stratagem. Commencing from time immemorial, the cinema in India have uncovered as well as exposed an awareness and interest in representing and engagingly recording the courtesan culture, and the movie *Zubeidaa* is one of such masterpieces which has bagged the National Film Award and has received a lot of admiration and appreciation for its astounding characters in its narrative chronicles (Mohamed, 2006). Taking center stage, this movie represents the tale of a young spirited Muslim woman in all her valor. The narrative accounts furthermore depict, showcases and vehicles a surprising aspect and facet of misery blended with sensuality, music, and symbolism; all coming into view and appearing to capture and detain the spectator into a transient world of life and ardor. The movie's narrative plot concentrates on the explicit whirling, the eloquent, and persuasive movement of the eyes, the charming as well as charismatic reminiscent and evocative, malodorous lyrics are reflective of viewing the women as 'other' from a very stereotypical and clichéd masculine gaze. Nonetheless, *Zubeidaa* did set its foot in the Cineplex ushering a beacon of change and transformation by recapitulating and rebuilding the very quintessence of cinema through the importance and significance of Muslim women characters in a narrative account and their representation in Hindi cinema (Priya Kumar, 2006).

At the spirit of it, the movie's narrative plot is woven around in the order of the tale of a young man named *Riyaz* and is based on his journey to discover the past which revolves around his mother, a woman who he was detached and separated from as an infant. As he grows up his thirst and desire to be acquainted with who his mother was, grows along with him. Desperate and anxious to know the mystery behind the taunts over his mother, he attempts and endeavors to find the linkages of his mother that he has been hearing since childhood. Since his maternal grandmother raises him in the absence of both his father and mother, he tries his best to get the coins out of her regarding who his mother was and why she left him alone and is hence keen and curious to discern and know about his legacy as well as bequest the chronicle of his mother, *Zubeidaa*, which has been consciously and deliberately hidden and kept a secret from him by everyone, including his grandmother. Commencing from there starts the chase and trail for his mother's identity and accordingly starts the story of *Zubeidaa*.

Anchored in the descriptive account of *Zubeidaa's* scriptwriter, Khalid Mohammed's mother, who was the Zubeidaa Begum married to Raja Hanuwant Singh, the tale is organized as a story within a story. Through this convoluted and intricate narrating of *Zubeidaa's* story, Shyam Benegal and Khalid Mohammed depicts a significant number of concerns in the Indian culture in the early twenty-first century, most notable ones being: gender, the restrictions forced by the society upon women, female sexuality, the Muslim minority identity, and how the political battles in a democratic India developed and impaired privileged ruling families (Priya Kumar, 2006).

The movie *Zubeidaa* re-presents the story of a real-life actress named Zubeidaa Begum and depicts the accounts of her ill-fated life. In the accounts and narratives of her image portrayal, the blending of the grandeur of the royal life with convoluted and intricate human relationships is presented through its narrative which is both exceedingly as well as highly wrought yet minimalistic in style and manner. *Zubeidaa's* character as depicted in the movie is represented and portrayed as an aspiring actress from an affluent family of the Bohra Muslim community, whose first marriage fails and remains unsuccessful because of India-Pakistan's partition. After which *Zubeidaa* is subsequently depicted as falling in love with a Rajput ruler - *Maharaja Vijayendra Singh* and goes off to marry him to turn out to be his second wife. However, towards the closing stages they both expire or pass away in a fatal accident whilst their plane has a collision and crashes. The movie ends with *Riyaz* watching his mother's only film *Banjaran Ladki*. Coping and juggling while connecting and linking *Zubeidaa's* story and *Riyaz's* quest, the narrative chronicles of the movie keeps the viewers and audience uniformly and comparably vested in both.

In the representative accounts of *Zubeidaa's* narrative, it is all about in an actual and concrete fact or verity, an apparition and vision of female follies and desires. There have not been scores of movie narratives like this, since in its analysis the narrative of the movie has combined reality, desires, fantasy, and the veracity of authenticities with immense colossal effects and upshots. And that itself ensures *Zubeidaa's* cult-status for years and years to come. Captivating and entrancing the center stage, the movie engagingly represents and depicts the accounts of a young girl- a spirited Muslim woman- *Zubeidaa*, who is represented as being persistently and relentlessly tied down, first and foremost by her traditionalist and dominating father, *Suleiman Seth* who is himself a filmmaker, but conversely in opposition compels and forces *Zubeidaa* to give up her dreams and aspirations to be a movie actress. And secondly, after imposing his autocracy and dictatorship over her, he vehemently marries her off against her wishes, resolves, and tenacities to the son of a family friend, thus putting her into a forced marriage. The

marriage prospect and panorama in the auxiliary thereby projects an account and description where a dourly or grimly hushed and silent *Zubeidaa* refuses to confer, provide or grant her assent and consent to the conjugal nuptials and her father is depicted as speaking and sanctioning for and on behalf of her, thereby representing and thus giving an impression that, even the possibility and prospect of defiance or valor is being denied to *Zubeidaa* in such a purported and professed patriarchal set of dominance, supremacy, arrangement, and connections.

*Zubeidaa* subsequently a year later or so after the wedding is being portrayed as having a baby boy in her arms in next to no time. Nevertheless, the marriage does not last for long, as her father has a verbal brawl and spat with her father in law. Consequently, *Zubeidaa's* husband is convinced to split-up and divorce her and in that case return to Pakistan with his father as the authority and clout of the fathers' influence and authority here appears or seems to be like that it cannot be contested even by their sons and daughters. *Zubeidaa* apparently at that time, is left behind alone and unaided with a baby to look after and be raised along with the stigma of being a divorced mother, confined within the four dead walls and corners of her house. Even though afterward, to her parents' dismay and consternation, she is not at ease or content to spend the rest of her life detained and sequestered at home.

As the narrative plot of *Zubeidaa* hushes up, the portrayal and depiction of *Zubeidaa* in that plight appears to be too much for a girl of such a young age, and thus another character-*Aunty Rose* who is an actress and also allegedly her father's mistress comes to her aid, assistance, and support. She is depicted as taking *Zubeidaa* away and out of her house to watch a polo match. At this point at the polo match, *Zubeidaa* at the initiation of *Aunty Rose* happens to meet and get up-close with *Maharaja Vijayendra Singh*, popularly known as *Prince Victor*, who then infatuated by *Zubeidaa's* beauty and charming galore proposes marriage to her almost immediately and subsequently the narrative zeroes down to *Zubeidaa*, who now, has a choice to make and accordingly set her priorities - her child or her love. *Zubeidaa's* short-lived ecstasy and joy of being proposed for marriage are dashed. Although, whilst her father though unwillingly lets her take her call and move-on, but with a condition applied to it that she has to set out and go ahead without her son as he insists on keeping her son, despite *Prince Victor's* assurances that *Riyaz* can be raised as a Muslim. As a final point, the *Maharaja* after the proverbial whirlwind courtship takes *Zubeidaa* off to Fatehpur to be his second wife.

The narrative sequence of the movie furthermore analyses the breakdown and disintegration of a family which is imperative as well as a social element or constituent of society. In the least, any woman's societal identity and distinctiveness are constituted in the course of her family, however, when the disintegration of a family occurs it is a woman who is the solitary victim and sufferer in whichever form and outline she is associated with the family unit. Over and above that, in the anon accounts and narratives of the movie's plot, *Zubeidaa* is subsequently depicted as being buffeted by the forces that she does not understand and can neither control nor be in command of, for the case in point- by the callous and stringent dictates of the new-fangled settings in existence to that of royal life and appreciation to her controversial wedding to *Maharaja Vijendra Singh*. *Zubeidaa* enters a new splendid royal world. Here she meets *Maharani Mandira Devi* who is the *Maharaja's* (*Victor's*) first wife and therefore the *Maharani*. At this instant and juncture, after a few romantic months, *Zubeidaa's* romantic fantasies soon collide with the realities of *Victor's* relationship to his first wife, who is also a Hindu by faith and the mother of his sons. *Zubeidaa* discerns and discovers *Maharani Mandira Devi* to be the priority of her husband. What trails or pursues all along is the cold war between *Mandira Devi's* imperial and majestic royal status and position and *Zubeidaa's* earthly or worldly needs. *Zubeidaa* abrades and scrapes underneath the precedence and superiority that *Mandira Devi* is ought to be given along and specified with the time that *Prince Victor* is required to fritter and splurge with her. Furthermore, when *Maharaja Vijendra Singh* decides to contest the provincial elections, he is seen to the ensemble in touring the villages with his Hindu consort, and not his Muslim wife. *Zubeidaa* by and by, in a little or short while discovers eventually in due course the love she had been longing for; and the love she had ultimately gained in compromise and conciliation for her son, has in explicit fact, turned out to be nothing but an illusion or figment of the imagination and somewhat relatively an apparition or misapprehension on her component and fraction of life.

*Zubeidaa* in its narrative is represented as a free-spirited strong Muslim woman character who wants to break free, be familiar with everything in life, and experience all that love has to offer as well as tender with the intention that she escorts and leads a blissful, contented and happy life. But her relationships continue to persist with to keep on taking the better of her, leaving her relatively in a dilemma, predicament, or quandary that she is to a certain convinced extent and degree in-capable as well as unable to set or figure things out. Even her death or demise, under mysterious circumstances, in the narrative draws closer or comes at a point when she is essentially for all intents and purposes, confused regarding where her marriage in addition to her life decisions are headed to. In the re-presentation of

the titular character's narrative, *Zubeidaa* is characterized as radiant and luminous in both her beauty and her concert of representation. Spectators by stands and witness her first as an ambitious female teenager who aspires to be an actress and even shoots for one film. She is furthermore depicted as spoilt and rebellious and also at the same time, as someone who does not wish to conform or be conventional by any means. At the same point in time, as the movie gains momentum and measures off, *Zubeidaa* is represented and portrayed in the realm of playing multiple roles of a wife, a young single mother, a divorced single woman, and then, the second wife or the 'other' woman. What persistently hangs about being common and familiar in all her assorted avatars is the representation depiction of an innocent and naïve young Muslim woman to a great extent seeking love desperately. Capturing innocence, purity, maturity, confidence, and coyness, *Zubeidaa*'s narrative plot and structure are magnificent and spectacular throughout the movie's accounts. The narrative analysis of *Zubeidaa* therefore beyond doubt depicts the conspicuous and extraordinary journey of a young girl budding into a grown-up woman, depicting and tapping imminently every single emotion and sentiment that a woman experiences and goes through in the due course of her life.

The movie's narrative furthermore touches upon numerous concerns and issues: women's lack of freedom, the wounds of Partition, the second-class status of the Muslims in a Hindu-dominated society, the attempts and efforts undertaken by the Post-Partition Indian government to dis-empower the long-established hereditary ruling classes, the conflict and variance between the traditional and the novel (Mohamed, 2006). The treatment of these issues by Mohammed and Shyam Benegal through the narrative of *Zubeidaa* is extraordinarily subtle, delicate and restrained; there are no heroes, villains, or melodrama, but on the whole clearly and simply ordinary people acting out of comprehensible, if sometimes hypocritical or cruel, motives (Priya Kumar, 2006). *Zubeidaa* hence depicts, represents, and puts forward an assortment of perspective vignettes and so the narrative explores and looks at the female psyche, consciousness, and interaction or interface in different environmental set-ups. The compassionate, considerate, and humanly apparition and visualization of the female follies and characters are in this manner justified in the narrative accounts with regards to the female motivations, desperations, and desires throughout their portrayal.

Much acclamation and credit of the narrative analysis are owed to Mohammed and Benegal for the numerous significant and noteworthy moments in the film (Priya Kumar, 2006). When *Zubeidaa* and the *Maharani- Mandira Devi* first meet, she criticizes *Zubeidaa*'s sleeveless blouse- *Choli*; it is apparent and clear to the viewers and even for that matter to

*Zubeidaa* that even though *Mandira Devi* reluctantly accepts *Zubeidaa's* presence or charisma, she is envious, jealous and resentful of her position in *Victor's* affections. Yet, the next time the viewers ensure or happen to get a glimpse of *Zubeidaa*, it is portrayed that she has silently changed into a more demure style--her begrudging dispensation or compensation to *Mandira Devi's* authority within the household. Towards the later plots and sequences of the movie's narrative, when an angry and irate *Zubeidaa* creates a scene at the airport by insisting on being taken on to what turns out to be a deadly and fatal plane flight in place of the *Maharani*, *Mandira Devi's* embarrassment, indignity, humiliation, and disgrace are expressed in a distinct single lowered glance and fleeting look at those folks and individuals gathered there to see them take off.

The hold-up or setback with *Zubeidaa* is she. Even though her reluctance and unwillingness to be limited to her traditional roles gain the audience's or the viewer's complete sympathy, that sympathy is bit by bit eroded gradually by her displays of tantrums, willfulness, stubbornness, childishness, and petulance through the narrative sequences of the movie. Her rebellion and upheaval remain a little more than the simmering resentment and antipathy that intermittently explodes into fits of pique sporadically. It is allegedly suggested, put forwarded, and implied that *Zubeidaa* possibly may perhaps have deliberately caused the plane crash with her intent that seized away her life along with that of her husband, which is only loitered around as suspicion and disbelief, simply partly dispelled in the movie's concluding moments. The viewers happen to merely hang around and linger in vain for *Zubeidaa* to identify and recognize that anything and everything other than getting her way might be at stake- to grow up and mature, to put it straightforwardly. She is eventually at the end of the day portrayed as a victim not only of a patriarchal society but of her self-centeredness.

From the archives of an extensive three-day event held in Abu Dhabi, named- *Shyam Benegal Retrospective*, that concentrated on Benegal's trilogy of movies related to Indian Muslim women, it has been put on record which holds along the testimony of bordering on the focal point of the issues encompassing women empowerment with regards to the Indian nationalism and how Shyam Benegal's narratives addressed the necessary alterations in India's gender and political standards (UAE, September 27-30, 2012). Specifically, Mohammed and Benegal's movies summons the viewers or the individual to think about how minority, religious and social contrasts might be perceived without settling them into the position of necessary and permanent antagonism, and what sorts of political cases might be expounded from such positions. In the strings and sequences of progression consisting of three parts, the first one being *Mammo*, the second *Sardari Begum*, and



*Zubeidaa* being the third in the squad has been established on the lines of both corresponding and commercial cinema with its unrelenting and persistent artistic as well as creative interventions. So in *Zubeidaa*, the narrative goes on with however another female grappling with an unjust life, and with all the avidity that it requires. *Zubeidaa* is portrayed to be a free bird that will unsettle, agitate, and perturb the quills of her orthodox family and society of the 1940s. The movie very well depicts glorious accounts and tends to revolve around the narrative theme of a fearless female who is restricted by the shackles and manacles of the patriarchal society. As such in the narrative chronicles of a radiant and creative movie, *Zubeidaa* cannot be demonstrated or depicted as a vulnerable lady who passively as well as unreceptive becomes the victim of the patriarchal notions of the society rather; she can furthermore be demonstrated as a lady who can take life head-on and has all the courage, gallantry and valor to fight and struggle for it. The representation of the character and role of *Zubeidaa* greatly has converging shadows to it. The movie has such blazing and roaring feminist impulses as well as besides, is insubordinate and jagged until the end. She lives her life on her terms. Simultaneously, *Zubeidaa* can besides be depicted as powerless, vulnerable, helpless, and immature at times. Absolutely and entirely informed about the *Maharaja's* first marriage and family, she is portrayed as being completely prepared to accept and agree upon an atypical as well as a peculiar or odd situation and an alternate faith and religion for love. In the wake of surrendering to the paternal authority once during her first marriage, she is not ready or willing to throw away or set out and dispose of her opportunity prospect and the possibility for finding contentment and coming across happiness the second time. *Zubeidaa* whilst in her role and character has outperformed herself in the movie's narrative as the energetic, vigorous, rebellious, obstinate, willful, and agitated *Zubeidaa*, the truly and justly modern woman.

For the most part, the very significant facet of the movie *Zubeidaa* is that Benegal could exceptionally very well depict and portray through the narrative of the film the various aspects of women or female relationships. Despite the consequences despite whether it is *Zubeidaa* with *Fayyazi* or *Zubeidaa* with *Maharani Mandira Devi*, the women portrayed in this movie collaborate, respond, exist, and compare with one another, despite the restrictions set by the males. They comprehend and acknowledge one another's position and sentiments. *Maharani Mandira Devi* and *Zubeidaa*, undeniably, have a straightforward and clear-cut dialogue about their separate and taken apart relationship with the *Maharaja*. They both identify, recognize and distinguish their contrasting roles in the life of the *Maharaja*, however, and yet still, that final role is assigned by the *Maharaja* himself as the *Maharaja* says about his first wife *Mandira Devi*, that "*Woh Ek Achchi Rajput Bahu Hai*"

(She is a perfect *Rajput Bahu*), and then he says to *Zubeidaa*, that "*Sada Haseen Bane Rehna Aur Humesha Dil Behlaate Rehna*" (continue to keep on pleasing and satisfying me with your charm and beauty forever) thus and thereby, depicting no obscurity in the roles assigned to his respective wives. The narrative chronicles of *Zubeidaa* portray and depict that even though *Maharaja Vijayendra* loves *Zubeidaa*, his first wife *Mandira Devi* continues to be his confidante for the reason that she adheres and sticks on quite able-bodied to the image of a royal family princess as she is portrayed to be accepting and accommodating the limitations set up by the patriarchal society, to also the fact that she was not a Muslim, and consequently, will not be an encumbrance or a hindrance to the *Maharaja* in the dome or arena of his political career.

On the whole, in the narrative structure of the movie's plot, there are depictions and accounts of flitting around with four very strongly etched characters in the film's narrative for the most part. Where *Fayyazi* (*Zubeidaa's* mother), the Muslim wife of *Suleiman Seth* (*Zubeidaa's* father) is depicted as a dutiful, obedient and submissive Muslim wife dwelling in an urban, educated setting who comply and act per the rules laid down by her husband and accepts his autocracy and despotism as a conformist, conventional as well as a conservative male sphere of influence and domain which was quite evident when *Zubeidaa* was forced into her first marriage, and she told *Zubeidaa* that "*Tum Jaanti Ho Hume Wahi Karna Hota Hai Jo Saheb Chahtein Hai*"-(As you know very well that your father has his way, we have to abide by what he says and wants). On the other hand, *Fayyazi's* contemporary is *Rose* who plays *Miss Rose Davenport*, a dancer in the movies and representatively her husband's mistress and she is entirely and unreservedly irrepressible! Out to have a good time, she interacts on a superficial level with everyone connected to her. At a standstill, *Miss Rose* is portrayed as a compassionate woman, who has a kind heart and is empathetic when she decides that *Zubeidaa* has had an adequate amount of tolls and moping around after her divorce and therefore she promptly introduces *Zubeidaa* to the dashing and elegant *Prince Victor - Maharaja Vijayendra* and quite audaciously or barefacedly abets the spark of romance between them. Her statement, "men and horses are more my style my dear", said with a mischievous and playful wink is absolutely and completely the good-humored her! The interesting aspect is that the same fact when examined by *Rose* and by *Fayyazi*, portrays entirely diametrical different views of the truth making one realize that truth is never absolute or fixed! These two quite utterly different women, belonging to the same generation, remain true to type till their old age.

Whereas on the other hand, *Zubeidaa* is represented as having overlapping shades to her character as well as role. *Zubeidaa* has sweltering and blistering feminist instincts and is

rebelliously unruly, passionate, and tempestuous until the end. At the same time, she is equivalently represented as youthful, feminine, vulnerable as well as susceptible. She chooses to subsist and live her life the way she wants to. Effusively and completely aware and sentient of the *Maharaja's* previous marriage and family, *Zubeidaa* is all set and ready to accept an odd or strange environments as well as a different religion for the sake of love. She makes her choices and sacrifices willingly and knowingly. *Zubeidaa* is portrayed to have surpassed herself in the narrative accounts as the fervent, passionate, defiant, willfully headstrong, and a troubled *Zubeidaa*, the accurately and truly modern woman. In straight contrast or dissimilarity to her is *Mandira Devi*, the *Patrani* of the *Maharaja*. Elegant and graceful, mature yet traditional, she upholds the role and duties of the *Rajasthani Maharani*, yet surprises *Zubeidaa* by saying, "Call me *Mandy*". She is portrayed as treating *Zubeidaa* with resigned and amused affection and warmth, on no account losing her *savoir-faire* whilst she coaches and instructs *Zubeidaa* in her expected role. The most essential and imperative facet and aspect that the movie's plot has been able to bring out and convey through its narrative is the authenticity, verity, and actuality of female attachments, acquaintances, and bonding. Whether it is *Rose* with *Zubeidaa* or *Zubeidaa* with *Fayyazi* or *Zubeidaa* with *Maharani Mandira Devi*, the female characters in the narrative accounts-interrelate, respond, subsist and equate while existing with each other, regardless of or despite the consequences of the parameters set down by their male counterparts. The women are represented, depicted, and portrayed as if they immeasurably comprehend, identify with, understand, acknowledge, and accept each other's drives and emotions. *Zubeidaa* and *Maharani Mandira Devi* are in fact, depicted as having a frank and straightforward conversation and discussion on the subject of their respective individual relationships with the *Maharaja- Vijayendra Singh*. Both are depicted as agreeing to and acknowledging that they encompass or take in different and special roles to play in the *Maharaja's* life—although in the final and ultimate narrative accounts that exacting role and position is assigned by the male. So, in the condition, the *Maharaja* is portrayed and depicted as a character that leaves no ambiguity, uncertainty or for that matter vagueness of any sort in conferring the respective role anticipation, expectation, and prospect from then on or thereafter with regards to his life taking into consideration *Zubeidaa* and *Mandira Devi's* role.

It is also essential and imperative to note that the accounts underneath the narrative plot of *Zubeidaa* have been narrated, portrayed, and chronicled in an era where men were the rulers and women were considered as just an ensemble or consort. As has been likably and pertinently remarked by Laura Mulvey (1975) in her essay titled "*Visual Pleasure and*

*Narrative Cinema,*” that woman planks and situates in the patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic array and order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through the linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied and attached to her place as a bearer, and not a maker, of meaning.

In its narrative analysis, *Zubeidaa* can be exhibited, analyzed, and demonstrated as a movie which in itself is a milestone so far as women-oriented or women-centered movies are concerned. *Zubeidaa* is also vibrant along with a vivid reflection and manifestation of sexual politics and societal mores. The narrative, theme, characterization, and issues that the analysis of the film inspects and scrutinizes are fair, rational, just and realistic to women and for that reason have been examined exclusive of in the least any concentrated, intense or searing criticism to blight impair or mar the tone of the picture. This movie is a perfect fusion of reality and fantasies which narrates and guarantees *Zubeidaa's* faction status for a considerable length of time and years to come. *Zubeidaa* is like a fairy tale story with a tragic end with an awe-inspiring and overwhelming component of fantasies thus, depicting the multi-layered approach of Benegal's cinema. *Zubeidaa*, even though dismissed the established traditional instruments of the Hindi commercial cinema and adopted an alternative and unconventional cinematic approach, it has been successful in proving out to be a discerning and sensitive experience for the audience. Magical yet melancholic, *Zubeidaa* is indeed one of Hindi cinema's or Bollywood's most ingenious and artistic movies which have created a bequest and legacy for the Indian cinema and therefore will be at all times remembered as the movie that blurred and distorted the lines of commercial, parallel and analogous cinema.

## **5.2- Ishaqzaade**

Marking its entry and looming within the reach of approaching the theatres in the year 2012, Habib Faisal's *Ishaqzaade* depicts a nonconforming passionate love story of two defiant, insolent and rebellious individuals. It puts into account an impulsive, volatile, concentrated, and intense narrative plot which is set up with ample and abundant doses of fanatical romance that is relatively engaging in concert with being successfully appealing to a pan-India audience. “Story writer Aditya Chopra and Director Habib Faisal take up the age-old plot of a love story between members belonging to feuding families and gives it a very apposite treatment which is well etched and that thereby leaves an impression in the viewer's mind,” comments Mrigank Dhaniwala (Koimoi.com, May 11, 2012). The narrative of the movie unfurls with the idealistic and intimidating scenario of North India,

wrapped up in a small- town layered love story of a loud, strident, ruffian and a sturdy tough male character, depicted with the right amount of boisterousness and roadside hooligan, who is a good-for-nothing local enforcer- *Parma Chauhan* and an energetic feisty, lively, vivacious and high-spirited female character represented as *Zoya Qureshi*, who is a college student. Amidst and along with the set of these connections, the plot of *Ishaqzaade* comes to convey and pass on a fictional love story in the aegis of an illusory North Indian town named *Almore* where two families- the *Chauhans* and the *Qureshis* are depicted as ruling the socio-political perch and roost. *Ishaqzaade's* narrative structure is set against the backdrop of the political wrangling that divides these two families. "The narrative plot of the movie is racy and the narrative does not waste too much time in establishing the love story," comments Shomini Sen (Zee News, 2012). Due to their political differences, they are depicted as avowed and sworn enemies whose reciprocated mutual hatred for one another goes way back to generations. They are depicted as existing and subsisting life amidst guns and bullets and the pervasiveness and prevalence of a law and order situation are given away and shown as no more crucial, essential, or imperative in a societal arrangement. The narrative because of that revolves in the region of this two disputing political families and the two fiery individuals and their battle and scuffle for power, control as well as superiority and hovers on the issue or subject of warring families, religious differences, wrath, rage, rebellion and being on the run, however, it is not just the political contention and rivalry or enmity that divides the families, but religion as an imperative aspect and ingredient is also embedded into the narrative accounts of the plot. The *Qureshis* are portrayed as Muslims and the *Chauhans* are Hindus.

The chronicle of *Ishaqzaade* begins with an impending or forthcoming election that further pushes the tensions between the two families to a steaming and sweltering point where they battle, brawl and scuffle it out for the very motive and reason that both the families have opinionated political ambitions and also the male protagonist *Parma* is depicted as campaigning in favour and on behalf of the *Chauhans*, whilst at the same time, the female protagonist *Zoya* is depicted as shoring up in support of her family, the *Qureshis*. When the local elections take place, *Parma* and *Zoya's* campaigning and canvassing efforts escorts to a clash and spar between them, which end up with *Parma* being slapped precisely right on the face by *Zoya*. "The protagonists in their characterizations are at loggerheads, bartering cusswords, flaunting guns and trying to be one-up on the other and therefore, both are equally electrifying," asserts Taran Adarsh (Bollywood Hungama,2012). While *Parma* is enamored by *Zoya's* fearlessness and audacity, *Zoya* is intrigued by his raw and rare allure and charm including his inability to properly or correctly pronounce her name, where

*Parma* instead of calling her "*Zoya*" with the accurate, acceptable, exact pronunciation, and intonation as well as tone, he brusquely calls her "*Joya*".

'*Ishaqzaade*' is nothing one has not seen or heard already: the old Romeo-Juliet romance reworked into a small-town setting with guts and gore, Yash Raj style. Thrown in with some French kissing, colourful swearing, street fighting, a righteous mother and small-town politics," asserts Rubina A. Khan (Firstpost, 2012). Because of that '*Ishaqzaade*' is, therefore, an avid, ardent and passionate love story ignited by extreme and intense abhors and dislike, which is the emphasizing premise or theme of the film. It has a promising initiation and consequently establishes and sets up its tone quite rapidly and swiftly. It is not merely a propos to aggression, antagonism, violence in addition to romance; the viewers throughout its narrative accounts also happens to get a preview, glimpse, and peek of the arrogance, haughtiness, and conceit of people in small towns in India. But as accustomed in Hindi cinema's age-old narratives, affection or love does stumble on, ascertain and unearth an approach or way to conquest, prevail and triumph over in the due course of the portraiture of the energetic young leads and strong protagonists in their depictions.

*Parma Chauhan's* character is the first to be introduced to the viewers and the first impression or notion of him is not precisely that of a positive one. *Parma* in the narrative plot is portrayed while wearing track pants with *Dabbang* printed diagonally across the derriere, flexing his biceps and spewing slangs and cuss words like it is second skin to his urban-bred self. More to the point he is depicted as the youngest grandson of his patriarchal and chauvinist grandfather- *Chauhan*, who time and again is shown as taking a dig at *Parma* by scoffing off or mocking him for being the worthless and useless son of his widowed daughter-in-law *Parvati*. This makes *Parma* endeavour and makes efforts to prove him as admirable and worthy He is marginalized in the family hierarchy in part because of his age, but also because his mother is a widow (not that she was responsible for her husband's death). *Parma* is fraught and frantic to get in his grandfather's good graces, but *Parma's* attitude makes him a liability. *Parma* has a devastating combination of a short temper and a sense of entitlement and prerogative. When *Parma* along with his friends are exposed as picking up some fuel-diesel for an upcoming party that his family is pitching out that particular night, they bully, intimidate, threaten, throve, thrust and push the diesel seller around, and especially after discovering and finding out from the merchant that the gallons of diesel has already been sold off and paid for by the *Qureshis*, *Parma* burns the merchant's warehouse "to teach him a lesson." *Parma* and his friends abscond and run-off by forcefully taking the diesel and then soon after they set the diesel seller's

warehouse to make a point of it. He fails to consider that abusing the common folk impairs his grandfather's election prospects. However, they are shown promptly and quickly to be somewhat little more than a bunch or cluster of young hooligans and muggers of that particular situate.

Meanwhile, the female lead and protagonist *Zoya Qureshi* is the youngest member of the Qureshi family who at first is represented to the viewers to be happily trading her gold jewelry- *Jhumkas* to procure a gun. *Zoya* is noticeably or perceptibly excited to have finally got hold of one to entitle it entirely in possession of her own, as the first thing she does is to pompously confirm and show it off to her friend. *Zoya* is represented as an endearing gun-wielding young Muslim woman who somewhat under religious compulsion or obligation offers *Namaz* five times a day. She is depicted as a trigger-happy, tetchy, hot-tempered, and the only daughter in a traditional Muslim family full of brothers, along with her parents. She is fairly herself incredible of a firebrand, who desires and wishes to set off into the arenas of politics following the footsteps of her father; however, this dream and vision of *Zoya* is being relentlessly and persistently laughed at by her family. She is responsible for coordinating her father's campaign on her college campus but is enthusiastic and willing to do more. She campaigns for his election to local office, and she dismisses her mother, who does not seem to get into the narrative of politics. Viewers express amusement at when her father brings home a prospective groom and her brothers' issue threats about what will happen or ensue if he does not take proper heed and appropriate care of her because *Zoya* does not seem to need or require the fortification and safeguard of these burly male members of her family. At least *she* thinks she does not. When *Parma* and his goons kidnap a dancer performing at a *Qureshi* party, *Zoya* chases after him in her jeep while firing her newly acquired gun. However, her father's plans for her are limited to marrying *Zoya* off to a banker from London, and he laughs at her political ambitions as well. *Zoya* and *Parma*'s story in actuality begin with an on-campus encounter. He urinates on her father's campaign poster. She slaps him. He points a gun at her forehead and she stares back unflinchingly, *Parma* is impressed that *Zoya* does not cringe or flinch at the loaded gun. But when he follows her to the bathroom at her college and locks the door behind him, he makes her feel – possibly for the first time – like a girl. She is impressed when he sneaks into the girls' bathroom to make an apology and ask for forgiveness. At first, they bicker like equals, which they are in a way, as both are children of political families, but when a teacher begins to rap at the door, wanting to get in, *Parma* cautions *Zoya* not to scream, shout or yell because if she is discovered with a man, her family will be dishonoured. The director Habib Faisal's ideological perspective and

viewpoints give the viewers the idea that, in no uncertain or vague terms, what it is like to be a woman in this part of the country, in *Zoya's* India, and community 'izzat' (honour) is everything.

Whilst, from their representation, the narrative avows that these protagonists are not the conventional or predictive hero and heroine of a typical Hindi commercial cinema. It is apparent and understandable from the actions set forth all through the chronicles that the fictitious *Almore* town is a place or situate where aggression and violence rules. *Ishaqzaade's* narrative on no account lets romantic film conventions vague or obscure the social norms of the region in which the film takes place. Religious differences are not something to be toyed with and are not easily surmounted or conquered. Politics can be a similarly deadly enterprise; with seemingly no offense too minor to be greeted with gunfire. What is most fascinating in the narrative is the role of women in the film. *Zoya's* headstrong personality makes her a fine mascot within her family but does not lend itself to a quiet life as a wife and mother, the only future her father sees for her. *Zoya's* mother and *Parma's* mother are sympathetic to her but pragmatic as well. Undersized and out-gunned, the women in both families have little choice but to submit to the will of the men. Further, the only other women in *Ishaqzaade's* narrative, external to that of the two warring families are prostitutes. The kidnapped dancer and performer, *Chand Bibi*, is admired for her beauty and dancing skills, but in its narrative chronicles, it is at all times apparent and clear where she ranks in the social order or categorization of the community. Grandfather *Chauhan* refers to *Chand Bibi* as "the whore."

When men consign so much emphasis and prominence on controlling and scheming women (and their sexuality in particular), it makes women a natural soft target for abuse, exploitation, and misuse. From a convenient and realistic standpoint, it seems an extravagant and reckless squandering of resources. *Zoya's* brothers are although superior for carrying out effortless or simple orders, but they lack her cleverness and are short of passionate commitment to the cause. Through the narrative, the viewers will hardly find a single character that is adverse or undesirable to violence in the given set-up because it is a way of life for the inhabitants of the town and akin or parallel to *Parma* and *Zoya*, the people of *Almore* live and breathe in such hostilities. This is a world where communities of inhabitants are accustomed to firefights, death threats and ultimately using violence to end their means. At the beginning of the film, spectators are presented with two very strong-willed characters that are taught to hate each other since they were born. However, at the same time, they are also so young, and so rebellious that the possibility of change is not entirely impossible. There is so much potential underlying in the portraiture. When two



such defiant and hot-blooded individuals come to pass in concert, the very upshot of them getting into a confrontation or conflict will categorically be extremely aggressive, feisty, and explosive. And thus exceedingly explosive and fiery it gets all along in the narrative accounts of *Ishaqzaade*. *Zoya's* life (and *Parma's* too) is changed by one wee action she undertakes – when *Parma* points a gun at her, *Zoya* decides that the retribution or vengeance that she must dish out is to be the first to slap him. It is that slap that changes the course of both their lives. The panoramic view where *Zoya* quite boldly as well as fearlessly faces off *Parma* is so exhilarating and thrilling. She stares at him accurately and precisely right in the eye, just audaciously daring him to shoot or put a bullet in her head.

The narrative paints the love story in a few deft, skillful, and vivid strokes. *Zoya* begins to fall for *Parma* when he barges into her home, enters the female bathroom in the hunt, and search for finding *Zoya* and braying for forgiveness – this appears to be this film's equivalent of *Romeo and Juliet's* balcony scene. Much later, in a lovely stretch, after she is snuck out to meet him, she returns home. She walks past her brothers playing cricket outside, passes by a brother biting into mangoes at the dinner table, then her mother who asks her to *is-smile* where she advises her mother that it is “smile”, and further passes by her grandmother who plants a kiss on her cheek, and when *Zoya* enters her room, finally, the viewers are under the impression that this cavalcade and parade of reminders of who she is, where she is from, is going to make her reassess or reconsider, if only for that instant, the astuteness and wisdom of her falling for a *kaafir* from an enemy clan – but what *Zoya* bursts into is a smile. After marriage, *Parma* and *Zoya* consummate their relationship in an abandoned or dilapidated and ramshackle train, while or as soon as *Zoya* faces the prospect or vista of the physical intimacy, she is illustrated to have turned shy and reticent for the first time. Moreover, she is depicted as moony and addicted bestowing the viewers with the very feeling and idea that as if her alteration or transformation to a woman is complete. She even puts on or wears a sticker *bindi*, which is as close to a “*sindoor*” moment a modern-day movie can acquire or get hold of. She tells *Parma* that the place is too open – “*bahut khula-khula hai*” – but after a deplorable and shocking pre-interval twist, she picks up a gun again. The relationship that appears to be blossoming between *Zoya* and *Parma* is not what it seems, and results in the betrayal of *Zoya* by *Parma* in a way that is both unexpected and shocking.

*Parma* reveals that he tricked her into marrying him and hence he defiled her to take revenge or vengeance against her clan because of the humiliation she caused him by slapping him when he misbehaved with her during the election campaigning. *Zoya* is then left brokenhearted, inconsolable, and ravaged as *Parma* unites and joins his family in

festivity and merriment of "becoming a man" and celebrating it. *Zoya* invades and marches on to shoot and gun down *Parma* but is however seized and intercepted by his mother, *Parvati*, who urges her to calm down. In the heat of the moment, *Parma's* Grandfather *Chauhan* shoots *Parma's* mother when she tries to shield and protect her son and daughter-in-law from the bloodthirsty families. *Parma* realizes his mistake, inaccuracy, and fault and guards as well as protects *Zoya* from being murdered by his family. *Parma* and *Zoya* set off on the run from their unkind, ruthless and murderous families and take refuge and shelter in a brothel where *Chand Bibi* dwells and inhabits as well. At first, *Zoya* is still enraged and infuriated with *Parma* for his deception and fraud and therefore she even believes that he was trying to trade and sell her off to the brothel. She hits *Parma* with a piece of broken and conked out glass piece, attacking and cutting his arms badly. The brothel's owner agrees to and allows them to take refuge and stay there whilst *Parma* recovers and *Zoya* though at first reluctantly but afterward begrudgingly and willingly nurses him. He asks her for forgiveness, and though she refuses to grant it, showing that she still loves him through little actions of affection and care. However, their mutual grief reciprocates and soon brings them together, giving their love a second chance. The two renew and restore their marriage vows in an appropriate and proper ceremony at the brothel. *Zoya* decides to attempt and endeavour with reconciling and integrating with her family and takes *Parma* to her home to win over her father. They are instead met with resentment, hostility, and gunshots when *Zoya's* father puts a gun to her head, threatening to kill his daughter. The couple escapes and flees away from there as *Zoya's* father sends his men after and behind them. *Zoya* and *Parma* get ready to run away to Jaipur, but when *Parma* leaves the safety of the bus to get water, their pursuers' identify and spot him and get hold of *Zoya* and seizes her. She breaks free as *Parma* energetically as well as furiously fights to save her. They are briefly reunited for a short duration, but promptly are found by *Parma's* former friends and subsequently run-up to the college to hide, which remains closed on account of *Eid*. The two rival families respectively come to a decision that *Parma* and *Zoya's* marriage is a stab to their respective individual religious communities and political careers; consequently, they reciprocally make up their minds to exterminate and execute the lovebirds by amalgamative forces.

*Parma* and *Zoya* seek out for refuge and take shelter on the terrace, engaging in a barrage of bullets of a gunfire scuffle or battle. With merely a petite number of bullets left in the gun, *Zoya* realizes that they are outnumbered. She, therefore, asks *Parma* to shoot and gun her down so that their love can be triumphant and they can depart off from their lives in the conquest and victory of their love, rather than be somewhat riddled with bullets by their

own families, thereby consenting to hatred to prevail otherwise. The two, therefore in consequence shoot each other in the abdomen readily and willingly breathe their last in each other's arms, in a jovial manner. The goons confirm, corroborate, and verify if they are dead or not and subsequently happens to go and inform the two families, who are as a final point convinced, gratified as well as satisfied. The movie ends with *Parma* and *Zoya's* bodies lying on the terrace, and an on-screen significant message that explains how thousands of lovers like them are killed every year basically because of falling in love outside their social order, caste, faith and/or religion. Furthermore, even in the second half, of the narrative, it is *Zoya's* story that is imperative – the hero is more or less incidental – and at that instant, the viewers witness apprehension, dread, and trepidation in *Zoya's* eyes. *Zoya* is memorable with such a dramatically shaded character, lifting herself to an entirely different dimension, has an open face that is alive to every nuance, and what she feels, she transmits to the viewers quite efficiently. *Parma* and *Zoya's* romantic dalliance in essence does not fit into the grand and striking scheme or system of things. Consequently, the narrative hovers and hangs around on the whole how *Parma*, a Hindu boy, and *Zoya*, a Muslim girl, fall in love and are afterward consecutively pursued to be the hunted, with one, big appalling and deplorable twist and twirl is the over-all chronicle and narrative of *Ishaqzaade*.

Certainly and it all happens in a rural Indian milieu that depicts the stereotypes that always stand against love. The families do not support the lovers' choice or decision to be together in consort. And when they cannot separate them, the only other option or preference is to forfeit or sacrifice them. In their improbable as well as implausible standoffs lies the ember and spark of an incredible, dodgy and dubious romance. Habitually, not very often spectators or viewers get to witness lovers embroiled in political rivalries. But *Ishaqzaade* represents the guy and girl just on the subject of approaching, impending, shoving, intimidating, threatening, and pointing guns at each other. The whole concept of 'opposites attract' is given an entirely new meaning altogether within the movie. On the countenance of it, *Ishaqzaade* is an incredible as well as to some extent a fantastic Indian adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* type romance set in the terrifying world of local politics, which can be termed as "*Love Rebels*", rechristened "*Born to Hate, Destined to Love*". In an astonishingly and exceptionally testosterone obsessed, driven or determined world, the character of *Zoya* is represented as a strong-willed and tough Muslim woman, who try to bout, match and contest the machismo with her spunk and spitfire and carve or whittle out a position for herself that is equivalent to that of the male members of her family. She is not depicted as someone frightened or scared of death or fatality besides, she is portrayed as

spunky, fiery, and has a mind and psyche of her own. *Zoya* is no *Juliet*, who was mostly shielded from her family's feud or grudge. *Zoya*, conversely, is depicted in its narrative, to have personally witnessed many times the hostilities between her family's and that of *Parma's*. She is very well aware that *Parma* is the enemy's son and she has more than a few times got into brushes and quarrels with him, which makes it all the more attention-grabbing and appealing to the audience or viewers on how they fall in love when the abhorrence, detestation, and hatred are evidently or noticeably clear and palpable. *Ishaqzaade's* exertion of the narrative flounces off so well because it is an atypical love story that is out of the accustomed and usual run of things where there is something more at pledge and stake than the sheer question of will-they-get-together. There is *Zoya's* honour, their warring families, the English medium-Hindi medium divide, and their religious beliefs and faiths embedded, the shockingly outrageous casual gun culture – and amidst these matters of immense and great consequence necessitate a romance where the boy and the girl *become skilled at* and learn to love each other. *Ishaqzaade's* narrative is a smack on the face to all those love-at-first-sight movies because it very well asserts that what an individual merely seeks is not what they just get, and that love has to be earned in the due course of trust, forgiveness, and oceans of understanding. The director touches upon some astute, insightful, and sensitive themes like the religious disparity and discrepancy, social stigma, disgrace, dishonour, and political opportunism and the ensuing or consequential mix up thickens the narrative plot which as a result makes the film's representative accounts appear authentic and realistic. The narrative of the film to a great extent seems to be proclaiming along with a testimonial of the oppressive and domineering nature of the patriarchal society of rural India; it at times does not hit it home adequate or sufficient enough for it to be impactful. The accounts accent and voice the condemnation and disapproval of the non-acceptance of traverse or cross religion romances.

*Zoya* is the spirit, essence, soul, and drive of the film. She is represented as a bubbly, effervescent, vivacious as well as vibrant and it is barely impossible for the onlookers to not be fond of someone so full of life, playing the role of a young Muslim woman character. It tries to emphasize and underscore how a spirited girl like *Zoya* can become broken by the oppressive, male-dominated society she lives in, but then the narrative at times fails miserably to stick strictly to this account because she blissfully forgives *Parma* and is shown being available to him altogether. When *Parma* starts pursuing *Zoya*, he is still the same deplorable and dreadful person who burned the merchant's warehouse. *Zoya* is immature in her own right, in that she allows her feelings to take precedence over her consciousness that her father would never consent to or allow her to marry a Hindu, leaving

off a member of the *Chauhan* clan. Her character is very well-etched out, with her spinning and whirling around from a fearless *Zoya* to an ambitious wannabe politician into that of a credulous and gullible fool for love as well.

*Ishaqzaade's* narrative analysis at times undergoes and reveals less of a love story and more than that of some sort of societal screed – so single-mindedly it does smite and cleave to its female protagonist arc and sweeps efficiently into the bold, strong and tough Muslim women character. Her rebelliousness, her subsequent subjugation, her annoyance and fury at being put in her place (as only a *woman* can be, in these parts), her falling in love, her wisdom and learning to pardon, forgive and forget, her overestimation of her family's love for their only girl-child – these colours of *Zoya* stain and tinge the other women too. When *Zoya's* father warns and threatens her by placing a gun on her head, *Parma* pulls out *his* gun and holds and points it up to *Zoya's* mother, both men rowdily and riotously oblivious and insensible to how cheaply they consider and regard the opposite sex. No one seems to care or be bothered whether these women live or die (and after they die, no tears are shed as well) – they are just pawns in macho games of honour, equipped, geared and ready to be sacrificed in the subsequent move. And then if the chronological line of connection is strained and drawn it is apparent, evident and manifested why *Zoya*, in that earlier introductory scene, bought herself a gun. In a Freudian sense, she is practically buying herself a tool or apparatus to go with her father's waistcoat. After a predominantly contemptible or despicable turn of events, *Parma's* mother *Parvati* heaps blows on him and screams, “*Tu Kaisa Jaanwar ban Gaya hai,*” (that he has become such an animal). However a modestly after quite some time, *Parvati* is astonished and cannot even believe and accept easily that *Zoya* wields a gun as well – the women have become animals too. Only the character of *Chand Bibi* (the sturdy prostitute depicted as having a heart of gold) possesses any façade, pretense, and a semblance of *female* power, and she does not need a gun– she is the only woman in these parts with something amazing and incredible that the men value and give importance, and more importantly, *need*. But the spectators are left with some ideological rationality and prudence like if ever they loved someone without a sense of inhibition then deeper in the recesses of its chronicles, *Ishaqzaade's* narrative is thus a saga of love being more important than life and death.

It is not the absurdity, silliness, preposterousness or irrationality of how fast *Zoya* fell for misogynistic *Parma*, but rather how that of her and another character reacts to the whole fad and cult of what *Parma* does to her which is, in essence, is physical or sexual abuse, assault, and exploitation. Under deceit and trickery, he pursues her to fall in love with him, deceives her into participating in a counterfeit or fake marriage, accomplishes and

consummates an intimate physical relationship with her under the pretense that they were married, and then nastily as well as maliciously put it in the picture and accustom and acquaint her that it was all a deception and sham. He then proceeds to send pictures of the marriage ceremony to everyone in the town to ruin wreck and tarnish her reputation and status in the society. After which *Zoya* is infuriated, but the dilemma is that the narrative does not seem to juggle or deal with so much around the sexual abuse and exploitation but relatively to a certain extent the infidelity or treachery that in actuality gets to *Zoya*.

Consequently, *Zoya* creeps, slinks, or sneaks into *Parma's* house on tenterhooks to kill him out of the vengeance of the settling of scores. She gets detained in and then apprehended by *Parma's* mother who indicts, accuses as well as charges *Zoya* of not having genuine feelings or true love for him because she is not willing to stay by his side. *Parma's* mother says that *Zoya* can get barmy and mad at *Parma* with all she wants, but she should not abandon or leave him. If *Zoya* abandons him that would mean *Zoya's* love must not have been indisputable or true because, “had it been, (*Zoya*) would not have given up on him so effortlessly”. Killing is meaningless. If *Zoya* is truly brave, she should not try to kill him, but to endeavor in transforming him from an animal to a human being. Captivating and endearing him over will be the exact and proper conquest or triumph, not by killing him. This scene from the narrative plot was put into the account in such a way where it supposedly illustrated how this oppressive misogynistic society has distorted the psyche and consciousness of these women. However, the character of *Parma's* mother is depicted and portrayed as what women tend to become when living in such a repressive environment. Yet somehow, the narrative's stance on the entire “you should stay with him and use your love to change him” was so grave and staid that it cannot be taken in that context. It is nearly unexpected and likewise unanticipated to consider and suppose that of all people, *Parma's* mother, who should be the most compassionate, considerate, and sympathetic to *Zoya's* state of affairs, would be the one to churn or spew this excrement out to *Zoya*. After what *Parma* did, barely or hardly anyone would expect or anticipate looking forward to any woman to continue to stay beside or hang by the oppressor's side. It is appalling to be a bystander and witness how *Parma's* mother accumulates the audacity and courage to defy, flout, indict as well as taunt *Zoya* of not having genuine feelings and unadulterated love for *Parma* when *Parma's* personal feelings and love happens to be dubious, uncertain and disputed as there are no concrete and tangible hints or indications that *Parma* ever loved *Zoya* as a stand-in of just using her as a contrivance. Therefore why the whole concept and impression of *Parma* ought to have or for that matter is worthy of having *Zoya* by his side to “change or transform” him remains absurd, illogical, and

incongruous. Towards the conclusion *Ishaqzaade's narrative* merely presents a regressive, misogynist ideal that does nothing with it or for anybody at large. It does not make a coherent or consistent political or social avowal or declaration of any kind. What goes on to make it all the shoddier is somehow the justification of the setting which is based and put up in a rustic, rural setting. This is a grave stereotype and disservice to all the rural towns. Even if, it is a fact that rural places do tend to have more of such problems such as the ones represented in the narrative plot.

The narrative accounts of *Ishaqzaade* are not so much that it is regressive, but it is that it dares and defies to promise and pledge something more – to represent to us a Muslim women character- a heroine who is potent, powerful, as well as commanding and who goes after what she wants with no concessions – and then snatches it back by reverting to the typical Hindi commercial cinema or *filmi* form. Regressiveness is never more dangerous than when it is pretending to be liberal and moderate. The narrative's shockingly backward stance on women at times is particularly disappointing and unsatisfactory. *Ishaqzaade* is a skillfully illusory or unrepresentative anti-women film that diverts attention or concentration from its true colours with a Muslim women character that spews out and sputters blaze and also can fire a gun with such confidence and panache that is infrequently or seldom seen in a Bollywood's or Hindi cinema's protagonist or leading lady. Nevertheless, like so many Hindi films that have come before, it also stipulates that a woman obligatorily is ought to forgive and let go of even the nastiest or worst and most inexcusable crime, misdeed or offense committed by the man she loves. And making no gaffe, blunder or mistake about this: what the hero does to the heroine in the narrative accounts at one point is nothing but crime and pure felony! Love makes *Zoya* vulnerable and susceptible, and it is that vulnerability that *Parma* exploits, to an immense and great effect in the narrative. However, at the same time, it also dilutes and divulges her strength, her passion, and her power and command as a burly, tough, and physically powerful Muslim woman character.

The narrative chronicles do redeem and trade-in itself somewhat in the end, appreciatively, when *Zoya* is depicted as making a decision that allows her to be decisive, take control, and authority over this misogynistic cycle of violence and repression in which she finds herself caught up in. But the one option that is left open to her to retain and keep hold of that control, over how she will live, and how she will die, well, that one option just enough and justified. And conceivably, in the end, perhaps that was the director Habib Faisal's ideological interpretation or intention all along.

### 5.3- Lipstick Under My Burkha

Life for a woman, in a patriarchal and male-dominated society, is profoundly prescribed. In such a limiting, off-putting and restrictive mode of existence and survival, could one be an undercover or stealthily rebel and realise one's unfulfilled wishes and then if such a leeway or possibility materialises, would it be still acceptable and satisfactory to the customary and prevalent social order of or in a particular society? On the whole, how does a college student who wears a *Burkha* but also loves Miley Cyrus reconcile her schizophrenic life? How does a modest woman, married to a careless man find the courage to change the ongoing situation and how does a small-town woman who seeks pleasure or enjoys ecstasy and is smarter than her suitors find a way to make her dreams come true. These are some of the pertinent questions, issues, and concerns that Director Alankrita Shrivastava's narrative plot of the movie "*Lipstick Under My Burkha*" addresses. It opens with one of the most appealing narrative devices seen in a while in a mainstream Hindi commercial cinema. The film which made its mark at the theatres in July 2016, presents without melodrama or shrillness the struggles of the ordinary women in the country and explores through its credible, plausible and convincing performances with a bold, engaging, valiant and heartfelt narrative, establishing how the *Lipstick* and the *Burkha* establishes a woman's identity and individuality in the public spaces and liberates as well as unshackles them in the concealed and classified private estates and domains. Broaching many crucial subjects that impact women, both across India and beyond, the director Alankrita Shrivastava ensures that the film initiates a conversation that has long been overdue (Galani, 2017).

The narrative plot of *Lipstick Under My Burkha* is set in the backdrop and crowded by lanes of the Indian city of Bhopal where the narrative begins as *Rosy* is introduced as the heroine of an erotic pulp fiction Hindi novel, '*Lipstick wale Sapne*' (*Lipstick Dreams*), which is narrated in secrecy by *Usha Parmar*, a 55-year-old widow who is known as "*Bua-Ji*". The storyline further revolves around and chronicles the secret lives of four women who come from varying levels of privilege and dispensation, in search of a little freedom—a youngster- an adolescent college girl *Rehana Abidi*, a beautician-a young adult woman running a beauty parlour- *Leela*, a married woman in a sales job *Shireen Aslam*, and a formidable old woman in a grand old mansion *Usha Parmar (Bua-Ji)*, where they are rendered as neighbours in a congested lower-middle-class neighbourhood — and all of them are representatives of the different stages of womanhood. *Lipstick Under My Burkha* has a very powerful narrative plot because it carries multiple layers of rebellion and upheavals amongst these women characters, Bhopal being a microcosm of an India one does not read or know much about. The narrative beautifully knits a rebellious world of



women amid the stereotypical ‘mankind’ in the city of Bhopal and introduces the viewers to these four women characters, each leading a battle starkly different from the other, but woven tautly, with a unifying undertone of sexual reveries. Nevertheless, a pulp fiction storyline of a Hindi novel titled “*Lipstick Waale Sapne*” (*Lipstick Dreams*) whose central character is a lipstick wearing *Rosie*, exploring her sexuality, sets the prevailing mood and disposition of the film, and eventually subsumes all the stories that could have been. This emblematic or representational character of *Rosie* displays the desires of all the protagonists to live their life following their interests and aspirations. Out of the whole lot of everything that the fictional and story bound *Rosie* sees through her window turns out to be representative of all that the *Burkha*-clad women comprehend, realize or take in throughout their journey in the film’s narrative (Galani, 2017).

The young girl *Rehana* is represented as a feisty college going student subsisting in a traditionalist conservative Muslim family where an austere, stern and strict adherence and devotion to conventions and principles may seem civilised, but in genuineness or legitimacy, is restrictive, limiting and restraining. Young high spirited *Rehana* is portrayed as a *Burkha* -clad college girl, who wants to be cool and trendy, loves dancing, idolizes the pop star Miley Cyrus and is a huge fan of her and therefore aspires to nurture into a musician. She is further depicted as a tailoring whiz-kid hard at work that chips in at her father’s tailoring shop or unit in the evenings. Unknown to the parents, she rebels against their restrictions and the *Burkha* forced on her (*Burkha*, is a customary traditional attire or apparel worn by Muslim women in public which is essentially preordained to cover up, guard and protect the one who puts on or wears it). *Rehana* leaves for the college attired in a *Burkha* and dreams of being part of a music band. Singing Led Zeppelin at the audition, she catches the eye of the male band-leader as well as the ire and indignation of his girlfriend. *Rehana* is depicted as stealing frequently and recurrently to feel right and fit into the grand swish set at the college. While managing her *Burkha* for the outside world and her parents, *Rehana* nourishes her aspirations and rebels alongside her college mates for the right to wear jeans. *Rehana* is put on a telecast while in a demonstration where she brings up a connection for the right to be dressed in or wear jeans with that of the right to life and live. *Rehana*’s college mate, knocked up and hospitalised for an abortion, avenges the theft of her boyfriend in the earlier stances, by getting *Rehana* arrested for stealing or shoplifting. *Rehana*’s outraged father subsequently bails her out and brings her home from the jail and slams the door shut on her further higher education or studies in the college. The representation of undergraduate life is on banal and predictable lines, where smart girls

drink, smoke, dress in designer clothes and party all night, sleep on bonnets of cars and get pregnant while apparently or ostensibly running audition clubs for western music.

The young beautician *Leela*, who is an adult woman, is raised by a mother, a nude model at an art school for over seventeen years. *Leela* is besotted with a local glib and shifty photographer *Arshad*, but her mother finds a stable partner for her. *Leela* tries hard to run away from that arranged marriage set-up as she is in love with her small-town studio photographer boyfriend who happens to be a Muslim. She is depicted as running and managing a ladies' beauty parlour and rides her bike and these two things are very close to her heart as those facilitate to complete her and in them, she takes immense pride and delight. *Leela* masterminds many extravagant and spendthrift schemes to earn money with her Muslim boyfriend *Arshad* whom she also desires extremely. Her engagement to a stolid young man, the least offensive male in the film, makes little impression on *Leela*, much to her mother's dismay or disappointment in the intervening time; *Leela* in chorus plans a new business and concurrently continues to have an affair with her Muslim photographer boyfriend, unknown to her loving, fond and affectionate fiancé or her widowed and financially distressed mother. Regardless of rough and shabby treatment from her boyfriend, *Leela* cannot have enough of him. She wishes to get away from Bhopal and live a liberated sexually fulfilling life in place of an emotionless, impassive, stolid, and a lackluster or unexciting arranged marriage. *Leela* shares her mother's perception of men as ultimate providers and pleasure givers and remains incapable or unable to frame life choices independent of heterosexual men.

Then, there is this Muslim woman character- *Shireen Aslam* who is represented as a conservative and traditionalist *Burkha* clad married woman, with three small kids- all boys caught up in a loveless marriage and thereby develops into pleasure making machine. Her rapacious, predatory, and sexually dominating husband *Rahim*, who depicted as returning from the Gulf, has no job and hopes to earn a huge commission by selling *Usha-Buaji's* property to a moneyed builder. A stone's throw from her residence, unknown to an authoritarian husband, *Shireen* has been depicted as working as a door-to-door salesperson with great success, only to return home each day to be abused and raped by him. *Shireen* is a victim of brutal marital rape, due to which her 'lady parts' have been affected; she has had abortions and a husband unwilling to use protection or meet the gynecologist. She doesn't want her Saudi return husband to gift or impregnate her with another unwanted child or pregnancy and thus she pops contraceptive pills every time they have forceful intimate physical relations which are often to the extent of qualifying as marital rape. *Shireen* accordingly is portrayed as using the anonymity, secrecy, and obscurity provided

by the *Burkha* to carry on or continue her job as a salesperson. Her work life is under wraps and when she is offered a promotion as a sales trainer, she is under pressure to talk-out or converse regarding the longer working hours with her husband who is now based in Bhopal. She never brings up her aspiration or desire to work, her promotion, health, or fidelity issues with her husband. She contemplatively remarks that she is not able to hold the interest of a single man, unlike fictional Rosie.

Unknown to all of them, *Usha*, popularly referred to as *Bua-Ji* by the whole neighbourhood and what appears to be her sole identity, is a widow in her fifties, who is in complete command when it comes to running the household, dealing with property sharks and handling the sweet shop business routinely. She is lost in a world of dodgy, sordid and sleazy romantic novels and covertly reads Hindi erotic fiction at night even as she oversees the running of her sweet shop and a large, crumbling residential building which she appears to co-own with her nephews. As a final point, in a chance encounter, this old lady, with streaks of grey hair along with an authoritarian manner articulate her excruciating and throbbing passion when she happens to meet and fall for a young man- a strapping swimming instructor and coach who reignites craze and passion in her otherwise average or ordinary life. *Bua-Ji's* so called repressed desire to find an outlet into some steamy phone pornography. As *Bua-Ji* reads out the fantasies of *Rosie*, the protagonist of her pulpy romance novels, the character becomes a symbol for everything that the four women long for. Through the symbolic character '*Rosie*' of the erotic fiction that *Bua-Ji* secretly keeps reading, she in a way exerts her desire of and intimacy and being sexually inclined. At the later age of her life, she is ready to learn swimming, just because of a desire for attaining carnival instincts from swimming coach. The intensity of her libido instincts exposes through phone sex under the name *Rosie*. *Usha's* empowerment is seen in her skills of negotiating and crisis management which are great. She is a master of crisis management skills. She identifies a power- money nexus between builder and government officers. When municipal officers approach with a notice to demolish *Hawai Manzil* on a trivial base, she discerns the builders' hand in this act and quickly settles the matter by bribing them. She asks them in such a manner, "How did the government think of *Hawai Manzil*? We all know who's put you up to this. How much have *Bemisaal* Builders paid you?"

A raucous realism surrounds the four women residing in this older part of Bhopal within a large residential building that houses several families. The representation of the Muslim women characters are typecast or stereotyped as victims or sufferers of utter, sheer and unmitigated circumstances and if the worst be assumed; perhaps such stories are exact and true of small towns and of the lives that women must be leading there and puts into account

the detailed graphic horrors of being a woman in small-town India (www.hindustantimes.com). The film's narrative captures the slides, resentments, and silent languishment that these women do endure daily furthermore, pushing the envelope on social issues and physical intimacy. By themselves, these are innocuous beginnings and possibly lived by women in the length and breadth of India which are very diminutive in their representations. Be it in the bustling metros or a small town like Bhopal, where the narrative plot is set, the venom and malice of patriarchy are spewed in every rung and tread of the society that is being taken into this narrative account and portrayal of the characters. Through the commanding and powerful portrayal of the women characters, the narrative has dealt lucratively with the filth of patriarchy very proficiently along with vehemently opposing the idea of having set roles for a woman in their depictions (Galani, 2017). The narrative also takes charge and indicts to challenge or defy the crucial as well as essential deep-seated and unprogressive Islamic practices and religious conservatism and carefully shreds and slashes down the shackles associated with Muslim women or the female sexuality, pre-marital sex and marital rape in a country that is very often loaded or weighed down with a surplus of set cultural norms, morals and values as '*Sanskaar*' (sacraments).

In the narrative chronicles, the four women of different ages, coming from different backgrounds, marital status, and educational status, are metaphors for lipstick as an expression of self-assertion and liberation from the patriarchal controls they wish to defy, disregard or ignore but since they cannot do it publicly, they do it under the safety and protection of the *Burkha*, also metaphorical for two of the four women and real or valid for the other two who are represented as Muslims by faith as well.

What hits the spectators are that these women are not chasing dreams of world domination, they are just looking for small joys, they want something as basic as the right to live and breathe freely-but in their narrative accounts and chronicles, even that is depicted as a long and arduous journey In each of their representations throughout the narrative accounts, what one woman gets, the other craves. Be it the college-going rebellious student *Rehana*, or the free-spirited and to be tamed by an arrange marriage *Leela*, or *Shireen*- the one frustrated with marriage to a dominating husband and too many kids, or the stern and powerful from the outside but tender inside *Bua-ji*, the narrative plot offers an analysis of the ideal and perfect blend and intermingling of female characters. The movie is explicit and realistic and the representation of the four central women protagonists proved themselves up to be compelling and convincing characters. The characters especially stand out on assured as well as convinced core and crux elements which make the narrative exceptional, entertaining, and dramatic. Each of these women – ranging in age from teens

to fifties – longs for a life ahead of and beyond the one in which they have been at that instant trapped in, each one has a reason or rationale to be perennially annoyed, angry or depressed, yet somehow or even so each one finds and unearths within themselves the strength, potency and vigor to desire, hope, anticipate and wish.

From the analysis of its narrative, it is indicative that all women are forced to escort and lead double lives – one for the public domain or realm and one concealed up in private which is essentially in point of fact an expression of their self-will and their way of living a life on their conditions, requisites, and provisions. All the four protagonists – *Usha Bua-Ji*, *Shireen*, *Rehana*, and *Leela*, in a way, are represented as living a two-fold life of duality – both in personalities and in dreams. One that adapts to the customs or norms of the society and the other that pleasures them lets them explore and live freely in a world margined for women. It is sometimes tough to reconcile these two lives as the film's climax depicts. But the women deals with and manages to circumvent, evade and outwit all this ingeniously and skillfully without their families knowing about their other lives where beneath the *Burkha*, both the real and metaphorical; they freely wear the lipstick which may acquire or take the form of intentional exploration of sexual desires and voluntary pre-marital sex by *Rehana*, or it may be as a clandestine but very successful career in marketing and sales by the young Muslim wife *Shireen* who is brutally raped by her unemployed husband every night. Or, like the elderly lady- *Bua-ji*, engaged in verbal pornography with a young hulk over the phone and so on. The young Muslim girl *Rehana* who is forced to wear the *Burkha* to college slips out of it in the college's restroom to reveal tight jeans and a fashionable tee applies a bright red lipstick and joins the college fraternity in a protest raising its voice against the stopping of wearing jeans in college! Conjectured or flanking at the side of a life of labour in *Burkha*-stitching, *Rehana's* dreamy-eyed adoration and exaltation for Miley Cyrus and her desire for the teenage joys of dancing and drinking are prone to be seen and represented as offensive, blasphemous and profane 'un-Islamic' distortions and perversions. Correspondingly, *Shireen's* experience of everyday sexual hostilities and aggression in marriage and her helplessness or incapability to seek out for a divorce regardless of the proof of her husband's disloyalty and infidelity owes and obligates to a manipulated 'contractual' of most Muslim marriages. It is explicable that *Shireen*, regardless of her strategic and tactical reserve of drollness or humorousness and unscrupulous smartness, is trapped into the subject-position of the wronged Muslim wife by the cunning or sly exploitations and manipulations of delicate personal laws prevalent or overriding marriage nuptials and assets.

Despite the grim themes of female subjugation and the right to choose (one's career, spouse, the timing of pregnancy or in exploring unfulfilled desires and sexuality), the narrative chronicles their representations with a light touch, and there is as much to smile about as to weep over for its representative accounts.

Though *Usha- Bua-ji's* rendezvous with the potboilers are funny, but at no point the narrative makes one laugh at her. It is reasonable as well as understandable, of course, that desperation might compel and drive a lonesome woman to seek out for refuge in such silly literature. By juxtaposing the narrative of dirty stories with events that unfold, the emotional graph of the movie's narrative reaches remarkable and significant heights. The older woman- *Bua-Ji*, a cougar (a jargon that is indicative of an older woman desirous of a young man) craves for intense passion; hushes up that women in their fifties do have access and admittance to erotic pulp fiction and can desire and crave for young men. Married women with small children can aspire to work, both for self-fulfillment and the money notwithstanding any contempt, derision, or disdain. Young and mature unmarried women can aspire for and desire moments that are far from carnal. They too can dream of a career in successful entrepreneurship or of singing and performing in a band and be popular and trendy.

Besides this, the narrative quite delicately, as well as subtly, challenges stereotypical expectations of behaviour from women at any particular or picky age. A cautious and vigilant analysis and understanding of the characters will disclose and divulge the actuality or fact that the narrative plot has included every probable phase of a woman's life and the efforts or struggles allied, associated, and coupled with it. At crucial points in the movie's narrative accounts, all the women characters wear red lipstick, almost clinching the issue. All these women embark on to carry out and accomplish what they want to achieve and pull-off.

All in all, on the whole, the narrative is convincingly nuanced and shaded up to be one exceptional representative film that showcases and vehicles the bursting potential and prospective of the womenfolk. The cravings, desires, longings, and yearnings set up in the film's narrative are not something new-fangled, unusual, or astonishing. The narrative has as a result opened an out-and-out as well as a veritable Pandora's Box of the concealed and secreted agendas women can slide or slither under with the help and assistance of these two different items of feminine adornment stripped of their cultural and religious references. It provides an explicit and detailed account of the dangers of unbridled promiscuity and heterosexual aggression or violent behavior that cuts through class and community.

Pleasurable or plural sexualities continue and persist to be an implausible as well as an improbable alternative option for Indian women essentially. In the caste and class-ridden India, infinite and inestimable aesthetic strategies including self-pleasuring have lent themselves effectively in point of fact towards articulation and enunciation of female desire and yearning.

The lipstick in the film's narrative carries symbolic value for the strange and sweet bonding between the women who are rather distanced by race, culture, language, dress, yet bound to each other by that lowest common denominator called friendship standing independent of their other relationships within the office and out of it. The *Burkha* in the title of the movie is symbolic to the veil through which society expects them to filter all their actions. The lipstick is very tantalizing which represents the desires that exist regardless of how they are veiled. With excellent arcs given to each of their backgrounds, the characters are well fleshed out and tangible (Galani, 2017). It has been used as a metaphor that represents colour, adornment, and self-love perhaps, but certainly embellishing the lips forms part of the *solah-shringar* that constitutes the pedagogy of female adornment in India. Lipsticks are accessories that highlight and make one look attractive. Women apply and make use of them as fashion accessories to enhance the shape and colour of the lips. The "*Burkha*" in the narratives of *Lipstick Under My Burkha* is analysed with all the baggage the word carries.

It is not an exact indication or unembellished reference to the form-camouflaging apparel or attire worn conventionally or traditionally by Muslim women. *Burkha*, however, is not just a clothed veil here, but also a wholesome representative of the boundaries set by family, society, and patriarchy, for a woman to be idyllic. *Burkha* is a reference both to the piece of clothing and the curtaining off of a woman's dreams, desires, and feelings, it is more like a metaphor for the way women veil their desires. It is an expression of the claustrophobia that many women live with. Contrasting or dissimilar to the lipstick, it can effortlessly without doubt or uncertainty become a representative symbol for repression, subjugation, and camouflage. However, such a concealed adornment or titivation is supposed to represent concealed and hidden female aspirations and desires.

As the title and as props, lipsticks provide a superficial allure while *Burkhas* obscure and obstruct outlooks, perspective, and perceptions in the course of the film. *Burkha*, then, stands for the opposite of freedom here; "*lipstick*", depending on how an individual or spectator interpret the narrative, stands variously for the hidden and veiled self-brimming with dreams or the mask one use to hide one's inner miseries, one's secret escapades or

jaunts and so on. The representation of the Muslim women in *Burkha* in the narrative as a symbol of camouflaging dishonesty, trickery, and deceit is distressing and perturbing especially in the communal times that the populace subsists in. Ringing a doorbell, the married Muslim woman *Shireen* enquires if the fake necklace she holds in her hands belongs to the woman living at that address. Asking for water, she wheedles her way into the house, requests for a glass of lime juice-*Nimbu-Pani* enters the kitchen, and points a gun at the mistress of the house, only to dispel her fear by saying that the gun is a pest repellent. Next, she opens a cupboard and points to dead cockroaches on a shelf which she had previously transferred from her handbag and clinches a deal. This illustration is representative of starring the super saleswoman *Shireen* is meant to be humorous and witty but remains unconvinced. *Rehana* is depicted as using the safety and protection of her *Burkha* to steal lipstick, copper designer dress, and boots at a mall, run apparently by proprietors with no CCTV in place. The prominence of highlighting the *Burkha* as domineering or oppressive and as a camouflage for theft, treachery, and deceit is offensive, objectionable, and quite regressive.

The narrative does not exoticise its characters for foreign consumption or utilization of ideologies or set of beliefs nor end on a conclusive, unrealistically optimistic note. It merits mention too that the world outside an oppressive or stifling house is not painted as a paradise here, and we are reminded of the risks it holds for an inexperienced youngster a Muslim woman like *Rehana* who is accustomed to isolation and segregation. The inconclusiveness or vagueness and the admonitory or cautionary notes are among the agreeable things about this film. Who can acquaint with what the women possibly will or might perhaps achieve for themselves if they opt, prefer, or choose to throw the veil away? Are the aspects of freedom, self-determination, and liberty not valuable or worthwhile end in itself, regardless of the pitfalls accompanying or associated with it? After portraying and representing so much right throughout in their depictions, towards its conclusion or wrapping up the narrative ends up reinforcing a hugely reductive and extensively prevalent or rampant discernment and perception of feminism.

Patriarchy is patriarchy even when couched in gentle, moderate, or placid terms. The narrative boldly attacks patriarchy but remains unable to envision the world outside of heterosexual desire. It documents relationships between men and women that are undesirable, perhaps, even undesired. Such short-changing of women's imagining or dreams and a reduction of possibilities, sexual and otherwise is to a certain degree or extent alarming and disconcerting. Humiliated severally by patriarchy, the four women characters, whose lives intertwine towards the end grow to be friends and tend to reflect on their



repressions. In a scene intended to exemplify female bonding in the film, the four women move into *Rehana's* stitching room with mannequins, get drunk, chats, pass around and share a cigarette to smoke and revel in their desire and yearning for freedom and finish reading the last section of *Rosie's* story. This is not a casual occurrence, it is a very pointed exercise considering that it is a climactic moment and the first time the Muslim women are straightaway and unswervingly represented and shown around a cigarette or trying their hand at it. The cigarette smoke possibly clouds and numbs their minds further by reducing oxygen levels as they have been represented to have suffered stoically and thus read aloud the endings in pulp imaginary tale or literature, clumped and clustered in unventilated rooms which little by little is depicted to have been filled up with musty stale smoke.

Conversely, the narrative analysis has also been successful in underlining the horrendous gender stereotyping of the women characters and the romanticization of power or force in books of pulp fiction of this nature is self-contradictory. It takes the viewers into that space and lets its characters out, to start walking down forbidden paths, finding support in sisterhood, and in the recognition that they all have the shades of *Rosie* in them. It busts many a myth and serves the purpose of lifting the haze and miasma of prudery that generally surrounds the representation and portrayal of Muslim women in Hindi commercial cinema. It touches, ephemerally, upon this aspect of female bonding that is removed from the compulsions of protesting.

The reality that these desires continue to stay behind, concealed, and veiled from society makes the women character's desires seem like audacious, impudent, or adventurous trips. Lipsticks, in the film's narrative, are these desires whereas the patriarchal society is the *Burkha*. Of the assorted representations that the narrative of *Lipstick Under My Burkha* has been significantly consigned to – the concluding fate and outcome of its Muslim women protagonists or characters and their deficiency of extravagant courage and valor, a half-hearted intolerance, radicalism or the prejudice of conflict and confrontation, pointless and unnecessary bewilderment and perplexity between the ethical, moral and the political, or an arbitrary and indiscriminate denunciation or tirade in disagreement or opposition to all species of men as 'actively' patriarchal – there is one that has taken on the facet of a grave and staid indictment.

Scores of viewers and spectators amongst the journalistic class and academic or scholastic ilks have upheld that the film's narrative composition is hinged on popular-representative make-believe imagery or fantasy of Islamophobia – functioning itself out in the cinematic medium through existing presented visual stereotypes as well as convenient and expedient

narrative representations or schemas of characterization and portrayal. The film's director Alankrita Shrivastava was quoted by the British newspaper titled "The Guardian", to have said, "I never imagined that my feminist politics would rattle the censor board of India (CBFC) so much that they would refuse to let the film be shown. It came as a shock – and yet, when viewed in the context of the status of women in India, Islamophobia, and the representation of women in popular Indian culture, it perhaps should not have done." She added, "The popular Indian cinema narrative is dominated by the male gaze. Women are objectified, there to fulfill the desires of men, or they play simply peripheral subservient parts. There is very little space for realistic portrayals of ordinary women who laugh and cry, who are flawed and funny, and who have desires and dreams of their own. Women who are struggling to achieve or gain agency over their own lives and bodies. In short, real women." Another scholastic research article or study published in 2017, titled "*Beneath the veil – Lipstick under my Burkha and debates around the Uniform Civil Code (UCC)*" by Debaditya Bhattacharya and Rina Ramdev in line with the film's narrative chronicles also brandishes, among its representational array of these Muslim women, the repertoire of Muslim men, as the archetypal make-believe prototype of the "*Love Jihadi*" youth *Arshad* whose professional failures do not dissuade or deter him from plotting an escape or get away with his 'working' Hindu girlfriend *Leela*. In the narrative accounts of the movie, *Arshad* is depicted as repeatedly slut-shaming *Leela*, barely and only to finally dream of a fanatical and passionate escape into some fairy-tale blend or concoction of 'Delhi and the hills'. All this would have arithmetically approximated to Islamophobic 'unreason', but for the fact that there is neither a demand nor stipulation for forced conversion in their connubial fantasies nor is there any trace and outline of discomfort or distress with the woman's economic independence.

Contrasting with this is *Shireen's* husband *Rahim*, who is depicted as jobless after a stint in Saudi, is violently averse, indisposed and disinclined to the idea of a successfully-employed wife – and seeking in turn to rip-off or swindle out a fortune through devious and underhanded deals with the real estate mafia. But, if all these instances were to amalgam or compound into a project or scheme of communal disparagement of vilification directed at a religious minority, there needs to be an allied edifying cultural claim and assert to the enlightened majoritarianism. The authors conclude with the outlook that by delinking the demand for civil reform from the question of gender/sexual rights and rooting the latter in a progressive reimagining of the 'community', *Lipstick Under My Burkha* calls the bluff on the Hindu man's civilizational burden of liberating the 'poor' Muslim woman. The rhetoric of majoritarian messianism – parading as 'little' acts of charity for the archaic and

primitive discourteous or uncivil other – is imploded within its fascist-feudal circuits of cravings and desires.

Whilst addressing and depicting the dilemma and plight of the two Muslim women characters in the film – one *Rehana* labouring underneath the injunctions and restrictions of a conservative conformist Islamist father swearing and profaned by the community assertions and claims of ‘*imaan*’ and ‘*tehzeeb*’, and the other *Shireen* raped by an abusive-adulterous husband for being bold and daring enough to venture out and work – the all-encompassing and invasive rhetorical-visual symbol of the ‘*Burkha*’ becomes a signifier of coercion, oppression or domination along with variability, mutability, volatility, self-abnegation, and recuperation of desire. The ‘*Burkha*’, it seems, is both the prison and its only escape or secure unit– in which it allows these two Muslim women the right to contravene or transgress roles and appropriate and apposite desires.

Nurturing their dreams is to some extent depicted as an offense, transgression, crime, or felony that these women at the narrative chronicles of this film are culpable and guilty of. Dreams of leading the life they want to, of taking ownership of their bodies, of breaking free from the shackles of their controlling families and from a sexist, prejudiced society that insists they must toe the line. On the flip side, the male characters are almost all-dominating and unsympathetic, thereby perpetuating the popular feminist stereotype of men. Therefore throughout the analysis of its narrative, it can be established that the film is not only particular about the Muslim women of any particular place or situate, or a religious minority group where a fastidious religion or faith is embedded in their representations but relatively to a certain extent is on the subject of all women living and breathing in the gloominess and silhouettes of domination, oppression, subjugation, and tyranny.

The narrative analysis consequently offers one with an account that is bold and valiant enough to arouse, stir-up, and provoke a woman’s hidden desires and valiant enough to question the patriarch mindset by puncturing the bubble of patriarchy in ways more than one. In the current social and political climate, where great strides are being made to alleviate problems faced by woman, films like *Lipstick Under My Burkha* must reflect similar objectives, hence this movie is just the first of many to come while heralding a change for better, both for Hindi commercial cinema and our society in general (Galani, 2017).

## 5.4- Secret Superstar

Dreams can sometimes be the blueprint for life. They can inspire, encourage, and motivate as well as can assist or facilitate one to set goals. Written and directed by Advait Chandan, "*Secret Superstar*" is a movie whose narrative plot emphasizes and underlines many pertinent concerns and relevant aspects at once: an inspirational and stirring journey towards empowerment, a case for pursuing one's fervor, passion, and zeal against all odds, a testament, and demonstration to a deep and profound mother-daughter bond and attachment, and a convincing as well as realistic depiction and representation of teenage years (Lobo, 2017).

Perceptive of and knowing what an individual anticipates or expects from life can help one achieve, attain, or accomplish them as well. The narrative is based on this straightforward and uncomplicated but intimate premise and principle. Not only that, but the narrative also encapsulates and puts, in a nutshell, the genuine or indisputable agony, distress, and anguish over kids' aspirations and desires under jagged, patchy or uneven conditions to their future as far as their life and career go – a pertinent issue that several young kids, especially girls in India essentially, have to face.

The narrative chronicle of *Secret Superstar* puts into account the layered story of one such teenage Muslim girl and her halves and share of hurdles to achieve and live her dream. *Secret Superstar* is not merely based on the subject of such an issue or concern in particular, but also is an entertaining, heartwarming saga of people and hope, and the representation of two luminous Muslim women characters that eke smiles, mirth, and laughter out of their dejected and miserable lives as being depicted. The narrative hence proffers alongside an account of dreams, disappointments, little petite revolts as well as dreadful and terrible blowbacks that makes spectators chuckle and whimper and thereby transporting them to a fluffy, feathery and warm precinct.

"*Sapne dekhna toh basic hota hai, itna toh sabko allowed hona chahiye,*" (to dream is a basic right, and that even on the very least and slightest terms, everyone should be allowed to dream), this dialogue from the movie's narrative accounts, being delivered by the protagonist, remains essential and crucial for manifold rationales. Firstly, it daintily ushers an idea and finely explains and put in austere and unadorned words the essence, gist, and substance of the film's narrative plot; secondly, it does some admirable and excellent character development of the protagonist in the representative schemes and helps the spectators to set up and establish a connection and bond with

the film's protagonist— *Insiya Malik*, a fifteen-year-old high school going Muslim girl (Sanap, 2017).

The narrative plot is set in the backdrop of Vadodara in Gujarat where the protagonist- *Insiya* is represented as a teenage Muslim girl who loves to strum or plunk her guitar and sing like an absolute rock star. *Insiya* is portrayed as a student of 10<sup>th</sup> standard, who is immensely talented in the arena of singing and music and accordingly dreams of becoming a prominent and popular singer and guitarist. She subsists with a middle-class *Gujarati* Muslim family along with her compassionate and supportive mother *Najma*, an abusive, rude, and orthodox father *Farookh Malik*, an ageing grandmother and a doted-upon younger brother *Guddu*, and these people complete *Insiya's* family. *Insiya's* spirit is depicted as being ripped in the representative accounts of the narrative because her mother is in a troubled, brutal, and violent marriage. As *Insiya* is very fervent and passionate about singing, however, her father is portrayed as being against and not in favour of encouraging or supporting her dream of becoming a famous singer. Irrespective of such premises, she still quietly keeps honing her ability and skill away from her father's restrictive, limiting, and regressive gaze along with her mother's calm back-up and quiet encouragement.

*Insiya* is portrayed as being extremely close to her uneducated mother who happens to be a housewife and the one who understands her daughter's aspirations and supports *Insiya* within or contained by her capacities. As *Insiya* has dreams of being a popular singer, she wants the world to hear and take notice of her voice and appreciate her talent. The only problem is her temperamental and orthodox father. He is the closeted and abusive head of the house who just does not appreciate it. He beats up *Insiya's* mom *Najma* at whim and does not even acknowledge the emotions of his daughter let alone acting upon them. So *Insiya* strums her guitar but makes sure it is not in front of her dad. It is not that *Insiya's* father *Farookh*, is unaware or naive of her interest in music, but that he considers it just another girlie hobby rather than an all-consuming passion or fervor. It seems far-fetched that a father would not recognise his daughter even if she is in a *Burkha*. Still, *Insiya's* resolution and pledge—and her YouTube video's viral success—sets up the narrative's primary or crucial conflict, which echoes and reverberates the twist or strained affiliation and relationship at the heart of a film.

*Farookh* is depicted as an abusive man and a typical patriarch who loves and is very fond of his only son and wants his daughter to be confined to or detained within the set realm and dominion as dictated by him. Nevertheless, *Insiya* still dares to pursue her

dream of becoming a singer and in conjunction with that she also valiantly attempts to free and liberate her mother from the clutches of her conservative, sadist, and cold father. The state of affairs at home besides is coloured by discourteous and insolent moments. While being represented as the crabby, bad-tempered, and perennially distracted cranky man, whenever happens to return home from an official trip, the wife opens the door and he is depicted as asking: *Guddu Kaisa hai* (How is *Guddu*)? *Guddu* is the couple's only son but does not inquire about *Insiya*. The son *Guddu* gets to attend wedding parties and movie outings, not his daughter. It is as if the daughter has no existence, and that apparently makes *Insiya* battle and brawl further to avow and assert her as well as pursue her goal by being all the more astringent and mordant. It is also established how his values are posturing and swaggering at best when he suggests in a prospect that *Najma* need not wear a *Burkha* when they happen to supposedly attend the wedding of an affluent and incredibly well-off household and how “they would or might not like it” if *Najma* puts on or is clad in one.

The narrative has the luxury of establishing and presenting the alarming and disturbing circumstances existing in *Insiya's* conservative household. While the womenfolk in the family tries to support and sustain each other, the patriarchal father abuses disregard and neglects as well as taunts them for being failures in life, and thereby shows affection, love, and adornment only to the son. *Insiya's* father's representative accounts make him into a repulsively and sickeningly believable or plausible hound, one who treats the son as a precious child and takes pride in this possession and the daughter is being treated as a liability or burden. Such formulaic and stereotypical characters not merely acquaint the audience with what to anticipate and expect but also strike and hammer down the essential central idea or thought of a woman being stereotyped as the underdog (Lobo, 2017).

Consequently, *Insiya* is further put into the representative accounts as a feisty, rebellious, and spirited girl who goads and provokes her mother *Najma* who is a victim of domestic abuse, exploitation, and violence, to take a stand against such hostilities. It is her ever-positive mother, who is her therapist, counselor, guide, and mentor regardless of the dismay, horrors, and revulsions that she has to rally or meet head-on or confront and deal with as the wife of an aggressive, ferocious and vicious boor. "*Mujhse Maang Lena, Zindagi Se Nahin,*"-(I had told you to wish for something from me, not from life) the mother insists and resolute to *Insiya* when she expresses a desire and longing for something that appears to be afar and beyond the ken of the possible or probable. How *Insiya* breaks through herself and how her mother assembles and builds up her courage and valor to cultivate and nourish her dreams and aspirations is what is

being represented depicted and portrayed throughout the entire narrative accounts of the movie.

*Insiya* is not depicted as a bright student but is rather portrayed as to be struggling with her studies, her rage, temper, and fury, domestic abuse, along with an environment that seemingly appears to not let her take the leap of faith, ever. While being lost in her thoughts during an English class, a distracted *Insiya* is pulled up by the teacher and caned when she fails to explain the meaning of the word 'irony'. *Insiya* thinks the world of her mother, *Najma*. Simultaneously, in concert, the mother-daughter pair is depicted as the duo who dares to dream of the times when they will stand on their capacity, potency and strength.

The narrative of *Secret Superstar* deserves praise and acclamation for representing an authentic, genuine, and honest to goodness mother-daughter attachment, where *Insiya* is the most raucous and strident, whereas *Najma's* is the silent and unvoiced rebellion. Their respective independence is celebrated incomparable and similar ways. However, as *Insiya's* middle-class household reels underneath the fright and terror unleashed by her aggressive and violent father, being financially dependent on him and years of conditioning and habituation have weakened the family. But they are not broken or conked out yet. *Insiya* in her representation of a teenage Muslim girl is depicted as being quite mature for her age. She tries her best to convince and persuade *Najma* to set out off for a divorce, and as specified by her condition; it seems like the right and correct decision according to their representative accounts in the narrative. *Insiya* even if aware and sentient of her singing talent however does not have a concrete or tangible plan of action.

*Insiya* adorned by all the hostilities of life, wants to in reality escape and get away from the domineering, oppressive and dead-end Vadodara life using the videos she uploads in the online platform YouTube, where she sings songs that she has written or composed and plays the guitar whilst wearing a *Burkha* to conceal and secrete her identity and individuality from the world as well as her autocratic and patriarchal father. It is an incidental and throwaway moment in the film's narrative, in which a *Burkha*, considered and viewed by many as a symbol of dominance and oppression, becomes incredibly the very thing that liberates, sets free, and unshackles this young Muslim girl.

The narrative plot thus revolves around reinstating and representing the efforts, struggles, and toils of this young Muslim girl *Insiya*. Both the mother and daughter

live out their desires and dreams in the absence of the father. Though *Insiya* could not participate in a music competition, *Najma* gifts *Insiya* a laptop which was the prize. *Insiya* does make an earnest attempt at chasing her dream. She records a song wearing a *Burkha*, so that *Farookh* cannot find out her identity, and uploads the video on YouTube under the name of 'Secret Superstar'. On the affirmative plane, the narrative takes recourse to no conventional signifiers to underscore the religious identity of the Malik family of Vadodara, barring the *Burkha* that is fished away out of the closet by *Nazma* for her daughter to cover up and secrete *Insiya's* individual 'identity' and personality as such in the videos of her YouTube channel that eventually twirls her into an immediate overnight singing sensation. She seeks and hunts for a rife and pervasive recognition for her talent but her conformist and orthodox father wishes to have not even a scrap of it. For this rationale, it is mounting combat for *Insiya* and her compassionate and keenly encouraging and empathetic mother.

As *Insiya's* voice travels far and wide through the viral video, the opinionated yet vulnerable teenager becomes an overnight sensation and grabs the attention of *Shakti Kumaarr*, a talented but pretentious and pompous music director and composer based in Mumbai. He requests *Insiya* to record a song, but she refuses as she hears a lot of negative reviews of him. His character is wacky and flamboyant but surprisingly also deep as a good guy in isolation, he is portrayed as an awards-hungry musician who is hurting from being repeatedly overlooked for accolades. Through the character of *Shakti Kumaarr*, the narrative takes good-humored swipes at the ways of the music industry, award shows, and the entertainment media. Nevertheless in the process of being a singing sensation, *Insiya* realizes the value of family. The storyline does not just help *Insiya* become who she wants, but offers a compelling coming-of-age narrative is its biggest strength. *Insiya* realises that the contributions of those who believe in one's dreams and help one attain and conquer them are just as important and that itself is brilliant. This realization of *Insiya* sets off a chain of events that brings to the fore and elevates hopes of emancipation and liberation in her (Lobo, 2017).

A quavering teenage love story is also dovetailed into the narrative accounts. *Insiya's* inconspicuous classmate *Chintan Parekh* makes no bones regarding the soft corner that he has for her. Regardless of her initial reservations, he becomes her best friend and the most trusted accomplice and collaborator when she challenges and defies breaking free from her restraints and shackles. One day, whilst *Insiya* leaves her tuition test to read a newspaper article about her. At her roof, *Chintan* reveals that he is aware and



knows that *Insiya* is the so-called '*Secret Superstar*' who has gained all the accolades from the viral YouTube videos. He then proposes to her which she blushes and rejects.

Owing to her poor performance in the test and low grades, *Farookh* smashes and breaks *Insiya's* guitar. Subsequently, the next night, after discovering that *Najma* sold and traded her gold jewelry- a necklace to procure *Insiya's* laptop, *Farookh* thrashes her mercilessly and tells *Insiya* to throw away the laptop. *Insiya* consequently gets so angry and annoyed that she snatches the laptop and drops it from the balcony where it falls and shatters on the street. *Najma* looks on, shocked. After seeing a renowned lawyer on the television set, who won a divorce case against *Shakti Kumaarr*, *Insiya* decides to accept and agree to *Shakti's* offer, which is put forward to her to sing for him to get her parents to divorce. *Insiya* gets in contact with *Shakti* and goes to Mumbai to record a song. While escaping from school with help from *Chintan*, she declares her love for him.

In Mumbai inside the recording studio, *Insiya* is unable to sing the party song, as she feels the song composed by *Shakti* is like a remix of another one which he never released, subsequently he sings to her his originally-written and composed song. *Insiya* records the original version of the song and her fame and prominence increase as she is nominated for the Best Female Singer. *Shakti* reluctantly fixes her meeting with his ex-wife's lawyer who gives *Insiya* some files for signatures. Once home, her mother harshly rejects *Insiya's* suggestion for divorce as they would have no financial support otherwise. *Insiya* becomes angry and irate but later absolves her mother after her grandmother reveals how *Najma* struggled to keep *Insiya* alive despite *Farookh's* efforts to abort and terminate her. *Farookh* reveals that he got a better job in Riyadh, and *Insiya* is disappointed as he is taking the entire family with him and that *Insiya* is also expected to get married to *Farookh's* friend's son. He thereby confirms their departure to Riyadh on the last day of *Insiya's* exams.

On the final day of school, *Insiya* and *Chintan* spend their last blissful and joyful moments together. A counter clerk from the ground staff at the airport notifies *Farookh* regarding an extra bag having the guitar. *Farookh* then scolds *Najma* to which she finally dissents and protests, leading her thus to angrily and irately sign the divorce papers, and afterward she is depicted as marching out of the airport with her kids thereby getting separated from *Farookh* and leaving him behind.

Soon after, all three- *Insiya*, *Nazma*, and *Chintan* are depicted as being present and attending the awards ceremony where *Insiya* has been nominated for Best Female Singer. Unfortunately, the *Secret Superstar*- *Insiya* does not win the award. But, *Monali Thakur* the actual winner asks *Insiya* to come on stage where she renounces and hands over the award to *Insiya*. *Insiya* at that instant as a final point reveals her identity to everyone present there and dedicates her award to *Najma* and deems her to be the true '*Secret Superstar*' since *Najma* constantly supported and fought for *Insiya* always. Towards the conclusion, when the narrative wraps up, *Insiya* drops the microphone and embraces *Najma*. The screen fades to a message dedicating the movie "To Mothers and Motherhood." Later, *Shakti* releases his party song on YouTube which is further dedicated to *Insiya*.

Hovering through the intense and concentrated analysis of the narrative chronicles, the narrative on no account loses the panorama, prospect, and sight of its foremost purpose: lending stature, heft and height to the representation of Muslim women- a daughter's derring-do and a mother's mutiny and defiance to cut loose from the clutches and grasps of patriarchy. Nevertheless, her journey to realizing her dream proves to be one rollercoaster ride. Her avid and insatiable attachment with her mother *Najma*, and their spirit and resilience make the narrative of *Secret Superstar* an appealing and endearing film. The narrative depicts emotions straight from the heart. It is not sharp; instead, it brims with the most honest and sincere emotions. This story proves that benevolence, kindness, and compassion are the basis as well as the cornerstone of human behavior and conduct (Sanap, 2017).

The portrayal and representation of women characters as protagonists and in key roles in the world of a middle-class Muslim family in which the womenfolk in all their roles still have to pledge and subscribe to authoritarian and stringent social codes are prominently and remarkably earnest and heartfelt in the narrative accounts. At times, it is not restrained or subtle. The man of the house, an itinerant engineer, is given to flying off the handle, leading to the women being subjected to verbal abuse, mistreatment as well as physical violence, aggression, brutality, and viciousness. The film's narrative captures nicely the excitement of getting one's first computer, and even the flush of first love. It is particularly unflinching in its depiction of domestic abuse, and especially rattling as viewed through the eyes of young children.

*Secret Superstar*'s narrative accounts wear its emotions on the sleeve. The narrative takes a tried and tested approach and creates genuine magic with the sense of balance

and stability— between the idea of a teenager dreaming big and the power of their mothers as saviours, the mothers who are first battered wives—becomes a tad uneven. Providentially throughout the film’s narrative, the spectators are left with young *Insiya* and her unblemished shining face beaming with inspiration and the flare of hope for herself and girls in analogous or comparable difficult situations. The narrative represents an inspiring and stirring journey of a young Muslim woman towards empowerment, a case for pursuing one's dream, passion, and zeal against all odds, it also lays a shred of evidence and testament to the deep and profound mother-daughter bond, and a convincing and true to life depiction of teenage years apart from also dealing with crucial, grave and weighty social issues including feminism, gender equality, stereotyping and domestic violence as well.

Although the physical abuse of wives and girlfriends is widely prevalent across the world, it is a subject usually brushed under the carpet. Communities, by and large, justify it or pretend it does not happen, and the entertainment media does not often discuss it. Moreover, the issue of domestic violence is handled in the gentlest of ways possible and has been kept real throughout the narrative plot. It plants the issue unequivocally at the centre of its universe, building up an atmosphere of such terror around *Farookh*, that every knock on the door signaling his return home becomes a moment of dread, a dread so real that it is almost a separate character in the screenplay. At first, it threatens to be clichéd, dramatic, and spectacular, but then the director from his ideological point of view inserts moments that are inclusive of the little things.

Like how *Najma* steals to save and accumulate money--which is how she was capable of endowing *Insiya*, her guitar at the age of six. Or how *Najma* understands *Insiya's* inconsistent, disproportionate and lopsided mellowness in the veil of maturity and encourages it in hushed and quiet ways, for the rationale that she might be resigned to what she thinks is her fate and destiny at the same time as she would never let that ensue and happen to *Insiya* at any cost. The narrative does not divulge or reveal an underdog story with a predictable trajectory even though it has its share of emotional beats originating from similar tropes. It is not as much of on the subject of *Insiya's* career breakout as it is concerning her literal breaking out of her life's shackles. *Insiya*, as depicted to be born into an ambiance and atmosphere where domestic violence and hostility is very much prevalent consequently her very existence can be analysed and witnessed as a form of protest and demonstration. Something that the narrative chronicles gradually unfolds. It is therefore not surprising in that case that *Insiya* is the

most flippant, irreverent, and impudent in her family and perhaps the only one stridently so. This cannot-take-no-for-an-answer is what makes and builds up both *Insiya* and the film's narrative. Spectators' warm-up and get affectionate to *Insiya's* singing, her looking out for her mom, but in her representations, she can also be the rudest person in the room. When she is weighed against and compared to an animal locked in a cage, it is not a bird but a leopard. She is nippy and quick to snap at her friend *Chintan* who has a soft corner and a huge crush on her. When she is angry or irritated, she might even break a thing or two. Though it might be her first time to have travelled in an airplane, setting off to Mumbai to record a song on *Shakti's* persistence, if she must forcefully vacate the man sitting in her seat, she will and accordingly does. She does not even bat an eyelid and gathers all the guts to criticize and disparage *Shakti* -the music composer who gives her the first signing break—in teaching him a few lessons about himself. All of these chronicles and accounts representative of and inform *Insiya's* go-getter spirit and that she is not just all talent. It means the narrative too is not just about *Insiya* getting name, fame, and recognition.

In the representative accounts of *Insiya*, and her family's Muslim identity or distinctiveness, apart from giving the literal and unembellished emerge-victorious-out-of-a-*Burkha* shot, the narrative facilitates in establishing their Muslim faith and minority status, modest ambitions, and the dreams kept in check, quite modestly and that further aids in locating the kind of feminism that *Secret Superstar* is after. Though people may be offended by the way *Secret Superstar* uses *Insiya's Burkha* as a symbol of oppression. The prevailing mood of Islamophobia worldwide has caused well-intentioned feminists to mindlessly defend aspects of Islamic culture that do not deserve to be defended, going to the extent of calling the *Burkha* a matter of “choice”. The director is therefore brave not to prevaricate or beat around the bush over this point. The veiling of women in every culture is rooted in the belief that the onus is on us to guard men from their actions when they see female beauty. Except where veils are worn as protection from the elements, it should be comprehensible as well as lucid that even if a woman genuinely does have the freedom to choose, that ‘choice’ arises either from centuries of deeply ingrained social conditioning or a willingness to subordinate our freedoms to what is seen as a larger cause, such as the desire to snub Islamophobes by “reclaiming our culture” as many liberal Muslim women in the West say they are doing.

The anger in the latter sentiment is understandable, but in any gratifying terms or manners, people should not be hindered from calling a spade- a spade because of any

established or prevailing current norms of political correctness. like *Insiya* becomes high-profile almost overnight on the worldwide web and the fact that she appears to escape the internet's online or virtual trolls who in reality and veracity would viciously attack or assail such a kid because of her gender and her Muslim identity and individuality. This authenticity, that is found lacking in how reality television show or program is represented on screen and in *Shakti Kumaarr's* characterisation, is thereby found in the *Najma-Insiya* relationship. *Insiya's* mother *Najma's* representative accounts, therefore, renders her in emerging out as a prominent and standout character because of how she manages to convey and get across her coward-to-brave heart journey from the sidelines. She is instrumental in making the narrative account more than just one about a religion embedded minority culture, a climate, feminism, or a stifled *Burkha*-clad young girl becoming a viral sensation overnight; she becomes the pain in *Insiya's* voice and the determination in her eyes to keep slogging out. She becomes the reason for which one demands a resolution – a dramatic one, for the spectators therefore the battle and struggles feel personal with *Najma* in the same frame.

While the narrative is transparent in its desire and needs to make a point, it does not stroke its didactic intentions in the faces and aspirations of the spectators. It is also remarkably significant in or to that point where it often makes one disregard and overlooks that its central characters are represented and depicted as Muslims, which is distinctly contrasting and dissimilar from most of the commercial Hindi cinemas featuring the faith of the minority community members that end up being steeped in surface markers of the community in question. Although *Secret Superstar's* narrative does not shy away from cultural specificities, the universality of the theme is in no way lost, gone astray or mislaid on the raconteur.

## **Chapter- VI: Conclusion**

This chapter discusses and wraps up the major findings of the study that have helped the researcher in realizing the objectives of the research and in bestowing answers to the research questions. It has been made clear and comprehensible that the study under consideration has taken up narrative analysis to arrive at and disembark upon an evenhanded and reasonable set of key findings, the subsequent sections thereby enfold and concludes the major pronouncements of the study undertaken.

### **6.1 Discussion and Major Findings**

All media are expected to construct reality though in essence it's a mediated reality. The media is characteristically regarded as an authentic, reliable, and convincing source of information and knowledge dissemination and in this manner is an essential aspect and factor in the process of social construction of reality (Shepherd, 1992). The messages and ideologies communicated through the medium of cinema and the cinematic images linger in the reminiscences and memories of the individuals (audiences). Cinema as a form of art, not only replicates the society it is set in, but in a way also acts as a reflector or mirror to that society. Several films leave their mark on the society and the societies in turn, react to these representations in a variety of ways and are in a way significantly more instrumental in influencing the society more than the other way round. Cinema has been the most powerful medium since the early twentieth century which comprises of several forms ranging from art movies to commercial films. Hence, the medium's greatest menace or threat can be that of viewing it submissively or passively as it may be in command of or in control of the viewers' responsiveness, psyche, consciousness and awareness if they are passive or inert consumers or passive audience. Consequently, there lies a necessity and need to analyze, construe and interpret its accurate, exact, and precise messages, ideas and themes. Regardless of the assertions of fairness, balance, accuracy, objectivity, and truth-telling by the media, the end product is always a construction or representation of reality from meticulous standpoints and particular perspectives. The images portrayed in the visual media particularly in cinema have an explicit and overt impact on the thought processes or patterns of the society (Kaul & Sahni, 2010). A person can be categorized because of an action or feat seen or perceived by others, or being recalled from an extensive or long term memory or recollection (Martin, 1986). In any countenance, face to face dealings or personal interactions, an individual observes or monitors another person's verbal and non-verbal conducts or behaviours. They either encode or predetermine these behaviors and

manners into various outlines or forms of representation, which by and large happens to be an amalgamation of images and verbal narratives or descriptions (Gergen, 1982).

Women are treated indifferently all across the globe irrespective of their religion, class, caste, creed and geographical locale (United Nations 2008; Shah 2010; UN Women 2012; Amnesty International 2013). The Indian women's image, status, position and illustration in the visual media have been subject to scores of immense changes and transformation over the past few millennia. From equivalent status and standing with men in primordial times throughout the low or stumpy points of the medieval period to the endorsement and promotion of equal rights by numerous reformers, the history of women in India has been exciting and eventful (Kumari, 2004). From time to time, one goes over reports of either gathering of women activists challenging against what they depict or portray as wrong exploitative projection of women in media especially in the electronic media, leading to gender stereotypes. Stereotypes are one of the most imperative schemes used for orientation in the social environment and they somewhat act as points of reference, which eventually is the representation of the opinions about a certain community or group amongst some others. Stereotypes are by and large curtailed, forged and are skewed and subjective by nature. Women are most often essentially seen and can be viewed as performing an ornamental and decorative capacity and being minor to national development and improvement. Their essential spot is seen as being within the home and this worth is reflected in the substance and setting of the greater part of the cinematic medium. The plural nature of Indian society and differing part that a woman plays is neither recognized nor conveyed. These outcomes in support and shoring up of the stereotyped picture and part, particularly of the women are an un-dimensional protuberance of their reality (Adhikari, 2014).

However in the contemporary scenario, the womenfolk are no longer confined within homes or consolidated behind the four walls of the kitchen; they have adorned high offices including that of the President and Prime minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition and so on. With time, they are progressively being more exposed to education and have been increasingly participating in the workforce; and as such gender demarcations are undergoing rapid change (Ghosh, 2012). By 'Gender' we imply and signify the roles and responsibilities that have been constructed by the society at large, in a given culture or particular situate. These roles have political, cultural environmental, economic, social, and religious aspects and factors persuading or influencing them. The Laws, customs, traditions, class, ethnicity, and individual predispositions or institutional bias also sways and influences 'gender stereotype' (Kumari, 2004). One of the most important schemes

used for orientation in the social environment are stereotypes which is the representation of the opinions about a certain community or group among some other group. Usually stereotypes are incomplete, false and are subjective by nature. Stereotypes are hard to change. Within this conceptual framework, gender attitudes and behaviours can be learned and can also be changed. According to gender stereotypical perceptions, women are supposed to be contingent, reliant, dependent, feeble, frail, incompetent, emotional, weak, fearful, supple, flexible, passive, submissive, modest, soft-spoken, humble, and gentle care takers while men are influential, powerful, competent, imperative, logical, decision-makers, aggressive, focused, strong, strapping, and assertive. The womenfolk at this instant in the contemporary epoch have a much greater and superior physical, cultural, economic and social mobility than what their mothers and grandmothers used to have. Today's woman has the liberty and freedom to explore new ways of living, the choices and preferences of/to peer bonding, handling and managing relationships, and so on (Singh, 2011). But even in the recent years, the visual media including cinema, together with television, soap-operas or serials, and advertisements etc. in the Indian context tend to depict women most often as the weaker sex who are habitually portrayed as tedious, submissive, meek, confused, and fragile generally in need of assistance or help and so on. With that, it becomes progressively more in the media to encroach or trespass the delicate private life or the subtle personal matters of women. A lot of debates, discussions and tittle-tattle about women's affairs in the visual media have become a day to day event and as such an entertainment forum to the masses (audience). Such media projections affect the images of women who have been referred to and all these corrode the self-esteem of women which is totally unjustifiable (Singh, 2011). This encourages women to suppose and believe that they are, or they yearn or desire to be ought to be fragile, frail, weak, gratuitous, and deprived. It develops a downbeat and unconstructive self-image among women and they do not see themselves as vivid, bright, capable and independent or self-sufficient to handle the situations. They are subjected to humiliation and dishonour and so lose self confidence in life (Prasad, 2005, 2010).

Preceding literature avows that women in cinema's representative accounts have constantly been crucially stereotyped, only with a certain set of convinced narratives, carving out an exception. The representation of women in the visual culture, specifically in the cinematic world has been predominantly stereotypical with the confinement and internment of women to household chores (Adhikari, 2014). The men are largely posited as strong, independent and macho men, while the women are generally confined and captivated to household chores, or as mothers and in caretaker roles whose world centers on the



confinements of the house. As the visual media's cinematic representations are by and large charged with depicting women as objects of sex to grab the attention and interest of viewers (Kumari, 2004). The underlying and essential messages accentuate and put emphasis on sexuality, habitually emphasizing and presenting women with a male gaze and as sex objects. The media's manipulation of women's sexuality also promotes and serves as a proof that women's bodies are still not their own in any dome or arena. The unsophisticated, indecent, crude, loutish and coarse representation and exposure of women in the visual media has affected women's status and thereby has led viewers to consider women as objects of sex, desire and entertainment (Katharina, 2004).

The Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century, as specified and prearranged in its overall and puffed up global recognition as well as its position as an influential cultural product in its representation of the Muslim women, mutually constructs and disseminates the important paradigm of the 'Indian-ness' and 'collective identity' (Mishra, 2006); (Ansari, 2008). The Hindi commercial cinema's all-encompassing, pervasive and wide-spread local and global reach heightens its impact and significance as a persuasive and potent or effective discursive contrivance and as an apparatus that provides the rationale of legitimizing the assured uniqueness and identity claims (Ghosh, 2012). As the medium of cinema acts as an apparatus or instrument of escapism, it habitually leads people into their fantasies which are restrained by what is or is not acceptable socially. While it is true that movies impersonate the discernible and visible reality, and are becoming more inclusive with time, it is also true that the evident and visible reality is often demarcated by stereotypes (Cortes 1992: 75). The study in line with evaluation of the related preceding literature documented and revealed that the characters of Muslim women who were represented on screen were rarely shown as equal partners; for instance, as an individual who is employed and working or has her own resolve or will, and which would in due course have had an effect or upshot on the social status and standing of the womenfolk at large. Therefore, cinema being a very influential, potent and powerful medium of imaginative, creative and visionary confabulation, needs to go deeper into the characterization of particular roles and characters of the Muslim women, so that the womenfolk on the rampage as spectators or viewers could build up, widen and develop an admiring, appreciative, and approving understanding of the sympathetic understating of their compulsions more perceptively and with sensitivity as a whole.

The study further divulges that the representation of Muslim women predominantly for the most part in the narrative accounts of the select movies of the Hindi commercial cinema has been inadequate, insufficient, and meager. There have been barely or hardly any films

exclusively or solely dedicated to the Muslim women's individuality, distinctiveness, and characterization, and in the narratives where they can in-point of fact be found on as envoys, their roles, images, identity, construct and characterization are often more consistently diminished and habitually clichéd and have been purely conventional and stereotypical (Prasad, 2005,2010). Therefore, the pronouncements reinforce and underpin the representation of the Muslim women's identity and characterization where they have been stereotyped, portrayed, and represented varyingly in different pinnacles and summits of instances and occasions depending on the socio-cultural- political state of affairs of the times. And so, in the subsequent segments, the changes and variations that were seen and documented in the recent representations and portrayals of the Muslim women in the Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century, have been illustrated under the banner of various prevailing and overriding narratives of change, and the nature of these changes have been analysed, scrutinized, and documented in the larger sequence and progression of events and narratives of representation of women, gender and religion within the prototypes and paradigms of the Indian distinctiveness and identity. Through this study, it has been found that the representation of Muslim women characters on screen in the select movies of the Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century was not by and large being portrayed visibly, unswervingly or overtly with an absolute or fixed patriarchal approach or in an utter normative manner, however, peppered through their image portrayal were narrative accounts and chronicles that pointed to a regressive and male-dominated society's expectations for women.

The most crucial and fundamental case in point about the findings that have emerged from the study or analysis is in effect noteworthy and remarkable that they tried to ease out and facilitate notwithstanding the fact in detail that media have the power to create, challenge, or reinforce one's beliefs and values and popular cinema can be labeled as an 'escapist', 'fantasy' and 'entertainment medium', as it acquires a hegemonic and ideological role to play (Hirji, 2010). Though films are always inspired by social reality, they mould, shape, and articulate the authenticity and reality to represent certain assured or convinced perspectives. As documented, starting from the early history of the Hindi commercial cinema, in the case of representation of minorities especially that of the Muslim community, a dominant and overriding discourse has always been constructed (Khan, 2017). Thus, throughout the history, filmmakers tried to endeavor and venture into and project the issues and problems concerning the Muslims but ultimately, they stereotyped them by representing them as exotic characters like kings and 'Nawabs' and as villains like terrorists, anti-nationalists, underworld dons, and ultra-nationalist persons. The Muslims

with their minority status have been more or less, for all times portrayed as the 'others' in popular culture, particularly in the cinema and as such were represented according to the dominant and overriding notions of the adhering society (Agnes, 2012; Sachar, 2006; Kandiyoti, 1994). The Muslim community as a whole, due to the continuous stereotypes through films, has become more susceptible and vulnerable in the society, living alienated and in trepidation of riots or mob ferocity, fury, and wrath. The research findings advocate and suggest that, in the recent times, there have been several cinematic attempts to somewhat re-cast the female or Muslim women characters as the new age girl who does not cease, desist or abstain from meandering and bending the conservative and conventional (Muslim) societal customs and norms (Daily Mail, 15 February 2013). However, these avid, ardent and devoted 'new' representations of the Muslim women characters in the select movies of the Hindi commercial cinema neither challenge nor confront or deal with stereotypes about the Muslim's subsidiary or subordinate position through their portrayals as the stereotypical or as the 'other' (Hirji, 2010); (Jain, 2011) nor do they present or recommend a nuanced and shaded portrayal or depiction of the association or involvement of the Muslim religious practices with that of the women's experiences of gender injustice (Agnes, 2012; Sachar, 2006; Kandiyoti, 1994). The findings also point out and indicate that even though the Muslim women's characterization and construct have made some advancement in their representations, compared to their image portrayals as documented in the referred preceding literature, research, and academic studies, the characters in their depictions as Muslim women are still under-represented in leading and key roles in the representative accounts of the Hindi commercial cinema, and their portrayals are often consistent or unswerving with traditional stereotypes (Kumar, 2013); (Khan, 2017).

The findings moreover uncovers that these kinds of representations which can be seen in the select movies of the mainstream genre and that of the commercial cinema have opened up the cinematic discourse to question the autonomy and sexual choices for the Muslim women having carried thematic strains of the Indian Diaspora that has entered the public consciousness and that the film narratives have become more varied and nuanced in the build-up and construct of the Muslim women characters covering parameters of empowerment, liberation in making empowered choices, decisions, and judgments along with the exploration of their desires, dreams, and sexuality.

The Muslim women characters in the representative accounts of the select movies have been portrayed as having an evocative, indefinable, and elusive talent and have possibly created a Muslim diegesis, which has perhaps; represented an original and inventive and resourceful approach (Hirji, 2010). The Muslim women characters in their representations

have been depicted with diverse arrays and types of portrayals and expressions that range from ambitious, bold, expressive, emotional, and inspired to humorous, eccentric, dramatic, cutting, or intricate in approach, using artistic, resourceful, and ingenious loaded tropes and a rich ideological and psychological web. These convolute elaborate, intricate, and sophisticated characters express conflict or dissonance and give some of these narratives a sort of 'baroque' flavour (Prasad, 2005,2010); (Ansari, 2008) (Islam, 2007) .

Distinguished scholars and academicians through their observed studies and research have commented that starting initially from the 1970s to the contemporary state of Hindi commercial cinema, the representation of Muslim women has conformed to certain definite, specific and convinced norms, even when those norms have gradually and progressively changed (Hirji, 2010). The literature reviewed and sources referred for analysing the select movies put forwarded that there has been seemingly endless misrepresentations of Muslim women as they have been typically portrayed in the media as one of the three characters, when one thinks and looks back in time to how the Muslim women characters on screen were represented earlier or previously in the narrative chronicles of the Hindi commercial cinema, the most common and frequent representation of the character's image portrayal has been in the form of that of a tawaif (the mysterious and sensual courtesan or a dancing girl). Films like *Mughal-e-Azam* and *Umrao Jaan* are ideal and definitive examples of the same, where the narratives and storylines framed for such characters would almost always entail or approximately imply that the women are into the profession of being courtesans because of the lack of a proper family, or economic stability but on no account out of choice or alternatives. And even as they explore the world of attraction, appeal, and infatuation, they do so whilst maintaining their chastity and purity. The sexualised job of a courtesan is absurdly, inappropriately, and paradoxically presented exclusive of the conscious or cognizant sexual feelings of the woman. The only mere feelings perceptible or visible in the narrative accounts would be principally on behalf of the man, and even when the woman is shown to have any interest in the man, it is shown as a purer love deficient of or lacking any sexual desire (Khan, 2017).

The second most common type of representation was that of the silent Muslim woman, subservient and docile and easily or effortlessly oppressed or wearing a veil, victimized by the males in her family and by the society at large. The character of *Zaara* in *Veer Zaara* is an idyllic example, as a very stereotypical representation of women was being depicted where the character of *Zaara* was exposed as the inert and passive woman who her lover must fight for (Khan, 2017). The third most common portrayal of Muslim women in the Hindi commercial cinema can be traced to movies like *Fiza* and *Mission Kashmir* and in

more contemporary movies like *Raanjhanaa*, where the character of a woman who is patriotic, devoted, loyal and decisive in her ideals and principles, were different and unusual from the most common or familiar portrayal. As a final point, the eventual or ultimate disposition or depiction of the Muslim women was that of the rebellious Muslim woman character dressed up in military clothes or operating as part of a terrorist cell or as secret service agents (Said, 1981; Kutty, 1997). In view of such depictions chronicled and attributed in the representative accounts of the Hindi commercial cinema, it can be stated and asserted that the most general or universal characteristics attributed or traited or traced to the Muslim women character's role, orbits and trajectories around being typically portrayed as the backward, uneducated, diffident, exotic, oppressed, voiceless, antiquated, submissive, or victimized furthermore being part of a barbaric faith and religion (Said, 1979).

Nonetheless, with a closer observation and a more rapid analysis or look at the role of the Muslim women characters in their representative accounts makes an individual apprehend and capture how these characters in their representative accounts and depictions were incredibly exceptional and exceedingly stereotypical. Further, the apparent, perceptible, and inextricable associations shown between Islam and terrorism in such movies have been exceedingly knotty and challenging. The only place and consignments where the Hindi commercial cinema tried to explore, examine and analyse the lives of women with political opinions and views, it did so merely by and through the stereotypical representation of the religion (Khan, 2017).

In the narrative chronicles of the movie *Ishaqzaade*, the representation of the Muslim woman *Zoya* has been like an ordinary young Indian girl caught in some way or the other between family expectations, an inter-religious love story, and an aspiring political career. What stood out in the movie's narrative is the least and slightest portrayed political identity or personality given to the character of *Zoya*. However, here too, her vocation in politics rose only out of her association with the males in the narrative accounts- firstly her father, and secondly *Parma* the man with whom she is in love. In fact, in the closing segments of the movie, she is depicted as a gullible fool for love, who could not fulfill her dreams of either making it big in politics or her love life. Also, when considering the movie distinctively from the point of studying and analysing the representation of Muslim women, there is only a limited angle to do so. The character of *Zoya* could have belonged to any other religion and the storyline or the narrative plot would have come out the same. Since the movie explicitly centered and overly focused on the aspects and facets of the woman's

religion, it did not stay away from stereotyping the woman's role in the representative accounts, where her religion and faith were blatantly and deliberately embedded.

Then again, the movie with its assorted characters in the representative accounts and the inter-faith romance had the prospect and possibility of exploring in depth the life of a Muslim woman in a Muslim household, something which the movie's narrative did not explore to a great deal, therefore it can be asserted that an apparent, comprehensible and holistic representation of a Muslim woman as such was missing in the movie's narrative accounts. From the inception of the Indian cinema, it has sidelined marginal elements- especially women- but in the fullness of time it is eventually adopting and implementing the road not taken approach. In reference to facilitate and impede it, it can be affirmed that there has been an impetuous shift and a reckless reallocation in the representation of the Muslim women's role and character in several contemporary movies of the Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century.

Narrative accounts of movies like *Lipstick Under My Burkha*, asserts such an approach where women empowerment in the character portrayals is reflected in the course of the Muslim women's assertion in the narrative chronicles where their tools of assertion are seated through the rebel, resistance, negation, retaliation, confrontation, skills of negotiating, and conflict or crisis management, and use of abusive language. This rendering can be perceived and witnessed when the Muslim women protagonists' in the film's narrative accounts –explicitly articulate, express, and put across their dreams, desires, sexuality, and seek freedom from the social, cultural, economic, and bodily clutches. Their empowerment is reflected through their rebel against society's set and pre-conceived norms and standards. These depiction of the Muslim women who are aware of their identity and dignity and who fight against oppression and subjugation are empowered woman, who thereby represent the emergence of the image and reflection of the new woman who is no longer passive or submissive but rather assertive and self-assured and therefore tries to outline and sketch new equations of equality (Azmi, Nawawi, Rouyan, & Rashid 2016).

*Rehana Abidi's* character is exerted through the aphorism of liberation. Liberation and emancipation is her motto, be it jeans or life, she aggressively voices against the society thus questioning, 'why does our freedom scare you so? Don't we have the right to live freely? We want our rights. Our right to jeans! Our right to live! Whereas *Shireen Aslam* the breadwinner who secretly works as a salesgirl, her empowered characteristic lies in her noteworthy negotiation skills which leads her to promotion from a salesgirl to a sales trainer. Although she is depicted as having no right over her body, contrasting that of

*Rehana*, her identity and empowerment is mirrored through her courageous outlook and bold attitude in terms of her preference and choice of career. *Shireen* is depicted as courageous enough in her representative accounts, when she reaches the home of a woman who is an alleged other woman- the beloved of *Rahim* thereby audaciously and unflinchingly cautioning and warning her to stay away from her husband thereby threatening her thus as, “of course, you cannot claim and put what is mine into your baggage. *Shireen Aslam*, wife of *Rahim Aslam*”. *Shireen* shuns her husband *Rahim* for his bad character and infidelity and avows, “You are the one who is blatant, shameless, and unfaithful, without any job or salary and seeing another woman!”

*Lipstick Under My Burkha* the title of the movie accordingly has been apposite and suggestive, since the significance of the *Burkha* is the leitmotif of suppression of women by patriarchy; however the Muslim women characters in the narrative chronicles, tore it using the scissors of lipstick signifying desires, especially by *Rehana* who although sews *Burkha* but throws it when she happens to move or get out of the house. In this regard, Kriti Tulsiani (2017) observes that the strength of this film’s narrative, however, lies in Alankrita Shrivastava's handling and treatment of the subject and offers one with a narrative, bold enough to awaken, fuel, and stimulate a woman’s concealed and veiled desires to be sufficiently courageous and audacious enough to question the dominant or overriding patriarch mindset and outlook.

The director depicts and pragmatically portrays very authentic and realistic characters through embedding equal representation of characters in terms of religion and faith- the two Hindu (*Leela*, *Usha Bua-Ji*) and two Muslim women (*Rehana*, *Shireen*) as protagonists in the narrative or representative accounts. Paradoxically, both the youngsters in the roles and characters of *Rehana* and *Leela* are more rebellious, defiant and outward and both the slightly elder protagonists *Usha Bua-Ji* and *Shireen* who are yielding yet forward are from Hindu and Muslim- religions respectively. Evaluating on this point, all are spokespersons of the contemporary era, be it style, desire, sexuality, boldness, etc. In this regard, Riya Ghosh (2017) comments that, Alankrita Shrivastava scrutinizes every corner and empathy to instill and inculcate an emotive and stirring account of the representation of the women’s empowerment.

The study through its analysis and evaluation presents us a glimpse of the portrayal of the empowered women’s depiction, thereby representing the image of a new woman who is no longer passive or subservient but self-assured, and self-confident, and the study accordingly makes an effort to structure out new-fangled outlooks of parity and egalitarianism, that

snoops to their inner voices and brings forth the issues and subjects of social taboos related to that of their exploration of desires and sexuality thereby asserting themselves covertly as well as overtly. Their background of belongingness to either a-village or a city- or any situate is no more the hindrance and obstruction to their empowerment. The DNA of the rebel exhibits an analogous nerve connecting the village and city-dwelling protagonists. Their breaking free and collective empowerment has been thereby expressed through *Usha Buaji's* voiceover, where she narrates, “Rosie will not veil her desires any more the iron bars of the window cannot hold Rosie back now! Rosie fixed her hair, wiped her tears and jumped right out of the door.”

Through the analysis, the discussed portrayals of the Muslim women in the representative accounts of the Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century designated some stereotypical representation of the Muslim women. Thus, although the Muslim women's recent portrayals in the select movies specifically *Zubeidaa* and *Ishaqzaade* depict and represent elements of political connection, involvement, and participation in for the most part, and their feminine or womanly dispositions and outlooks that are deployed towards opinionated, personal, political, and autonomist agendas or outlines are not always controlled by them constantly.

Representation of Muslim women as political agents remain embedded in a patriarchal structure whereby their political agency is converted into sexualised narratives of damsels in distress, which ultimately helps to maintain hierarchical power relations. The Muslim women characters can practice their political agency mostly within the restricted frameworks of family honour and shame (Das 2006). These narratives about the Muslim women's choice of relationships, public mobility, and education indirectly help solidify the age-old dominant narrative of disruptive Muslim masculinity. Consequently, it can be asserted through the analysis that in the narrative accounts of the select movies, when the protagonists as Muslim women characters are empowered to make 'choices', these choices are confined, checked and controlled within the category of the benevolent and virile Hindu men capable of protecting the Muslim women and the Muslim community's honor.

The major findings that emerged from the narrative analysis furthermore include the changing contours of gender practice or gender bias in terms of authority, power control and dominance. Through the representations that has been analysed, it will not be very substantial to note and predict that there has been a total paradigm shift in terms of gender practice or gender bias. If a film's narrative is to be considered as a gendered practice especially in terms of film viewing conventions vis-à-vis male gaze, then it can safely be



inferred that male body exposure has to be firmly ingrained as an auteur practice. The study refers to the symbolic representation of male sexuality in abundance and most of the times it is deliberate like the usual tantalizing practice of showing the female body in a Hindi commercial cinema, but so far as its ability to yield a response in the female audience is concerned, the preceding literature that has been reviewed puts into focus that the response has been muted to an extent. Though the nature of gender stereotypes is changing, there is a long way to go before the peculiar ways of stereotyping changes.

The analysis also reveals that women characters in the representative accounts have been convincingly forthright in leasing out and letting their emotions loose. It may be too early to comment conclusively on one hand that the depiction of the women are no longer delicate, squeamish, or prudish if there are dirty or abusive talks or sexuality being explored out in a film's narrative, as it is very difficult and also intricate to establish it as a pattern of diversion or recreation from fashioning the text as being a prototype of gender inequality in a society which essentially objectifies the women. Through the analysis, it can be further asserted that it is intricate and tricky to hit upon any major change in the theory of male gaze, or the patterns of dominance, power, control or authority but in consideration of possible changes, the representative patterns in the cinematic world is changing where spectators have begun to develop the expectation that the filmmakers should make films keeping in mind the requirement of women viewers.

It can hereby be wrapped up that the study undertaken tried to grasp the nature of stereotypical instances, concepts and image formation and portrayal of Muslim women characters of Bollywood's Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century. In the contemporary scenario, attempts have thereby been made and undertaken by some upcoming film-makers in producing movies that espouses and upholds the message and significance of the progressive rendering construct of a Muslim women's portrayal, depiction and representation. Cinema as a communication agent is expected to focus on the causes for social understanding and greater awareness. A good cinema can go a long way in educating people through entertainment towards the grass-root level as well. It must also work for the grave issues regarding the equality of women because Muslim women are also equal to other women of the society. Art of equality is also applicable to them (Chadha, 2015). In this early part of twenty-first century, it has become the pace-setter and the trend-setter and it must support sentiments of women, steer towards nation-building, arise national as well as self-consciousness by valid popular matters and sentiments (Adhikari, 2014).

Films are the mirror of the social image of various aspects of the terrain. Therefore, it must be kept in mind that the foundation of a nation must go ahead in a positive manner keeping all the dynamic aspects hand in hand. Cinema must pay heed to the positive ideology of the mind of people towards grave matters as the images are worth their measure in gold (Dissanayake, 2004. 1998).

The analysis through the examination and assessment of the preceding literature related to the study undertaken has also identified and shown several contexts of change in the representation of Muslim women in the recent Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century. The first context of change is that Muslim characters are now being portrayed as occupying central roles in the plots of commercially viable mainstream movies. Secondly, there has been a distinct diversification in the portrayals of Muslim women in different roles and contexts. For instance, this study has revealed and depicted several fulfilling roles of daughters, mothers, political activists and campaigners, etc. and making active choices in terms of education, career, love life and life partners. This represents a change where the intersection of gender, nationalism, and religion now forms their public identities, as opposed to orientalist depiction of restrictive private lives of veiled women in the previous generation of movies.

The selected portrayals attempt to break free of the sensual courtesan's role enabling the new age or contemporary Muslim women characters to possess 'respectable' yet sexually transgressive qualities which were historically associated only with the Tawaif and had hyper-sexualized negative connotations through their narrative and representative accounts (Ansari, 2008). Hence, to put into account a realistic assessment and a pragmatic evaluation of the recent representations of the Muslim women characters in the Hindi commercial cinema, the contexts related to any kind of changes or transformation or of varying patterns of representation and portrayals, needs to be necessitated or located within the contexts of continuity, constancy, stability, and intransience of long-established or time-honored discourses on and of the Muslim women's identity, distinctiveness and individuality (Kumari, 2004).

To wrap up and end with, the Muslim women characters as protagonists in the narrative chronicles of *Zubeidaa's- Zubeidaa*, *Ishaqzade's- Zoya*, *Lipstick under my Burkha's- Rehana*, *Secret Superstar's- Insiya*, all of them are some way or the other being connected, linked, associated with and protected by the Hindu men from their conformist, conservative and aggressive Muslim male family members, either for falling in love, or while aspiring to dream or whilst making empowered choices (Khan, 2017). The select movies hence

underpin and represent the hierarchical gender relations through the mediated modernity of the Muslim women characters by that of the Hindu man. Furthermore, in terms of the parameter of religion being embedded, there are strong elements of continuity and connection around asymmetrical Hindu-Muslim relationships in the narrative chronicles (Islam, 2007). Muslim men are still portrayed as the impetuous, brash, uncivilized, and uneducated 'other', from whom the Muslim women need safeguard, protection, and fortification; (Hirji, 2010). The Muslim women in their representative accounts are differentiated from the Hindu women through sartorial practices, where they are by no means shown or depicted in a nationalist sari or a fully western attire and garb as representative of modern India (Mishra, 2006). The Muslim women's identities and distinctiveness are constructed and embedded through the association of her clothing practices with her religion or sexuality, as opposed to the Hindu women who choose her nation (Ansari, 2008).

To summarise it all, from the analysis it has been found also through the review of preceding literature that the select movies of the Hindi commercial cinema tactically adopts the 'good Muslim women' as a discursive troupe to reinforce the dominant religious supremacist discourse of vilifying the Muslim men as an antithesis to that of 'Hindu men' who happen to be the defenders, protectors and armaments of the Muslim women from the 'bad Muslim' men (Kavoori, 2008). This conceptualization then supports and acts as the yardstick against which the Muslim men should be measured. Such a discursive practice supports Das's (2006) model that the representation of Muslim women (and men) in Bollywood helps maintain a communalized, Hindu patriarchal structure among the genders, between Hindu-Muslim communities in India.

It can be argued that 'good Muslim' women do not challenge the status quo of hierarchies between the communities, and through the acceptance of the benevolence of dominant religious supremacist men align themselves with the Indian nation, simultaneously providing a discursive blueprint for the 'bad Muslims' to be accepted in the imagination of the Indian nation (Islam, 2007). This potentially helps to maintain the dominant supremacist moral and national order where violence against the Muslims is rationalized, legitimized, and normalised as strategies for building and protecting a Hindu nation in popular mediated discourse. The record of change vis-a-vis continuity in Muslim women's representation in the Hindi commercial cinema is at best mixed and its future highly contingent and deputed on the political climate of India (Prasad, 2005, 2010) (Hirji, 2010). Even when women are represented or portrayed as power holders, the patriarchal context is

unmistakably present. In fact, the attributes of power and aggressiveness is portrayed as something unnatural to a woman and a challenge to the male ego (Karthika, 2005).

As women in visual media especially in cinema and on television entertainment programmes are projected as non-thinking, and sacrificing (Kamla-Raj 2010), therefore researchers have established that such portraiture, gender bias and stereotypes can have a negative effect on women themselves. A systematic overdose of nudity and vulgarity is being forced into the brain of common viewers through the visual media especially through movies and cinematic images. The media seems to give more equality to female images and female models are increasingly depicted in the visual media as commodities or objects, who advertise products that may or may not be unswervingly associated or connected to them (Kang, 2002); (Kumari, 2004).

Women as being represented or depicted and portrayed in the cinematic world of visual representations, may as a whole perceive and identify the empowered or oppressed image typecast or stereotype as a cultural dictate, directive, or pronouncement in almost an extremely limited and narrow range of roles which in turn may show the way and lead them to put out-of-the-way their individual desires concerning their line of business, careers as well as their delicate personal lives and reinstate and swap them with the ideals and principles presented through visual culture specifically the cinematic medium (Geis et al., 1984; McArthur & Resko, 1975). These studies, strappingly advocates that the women's construct, morals, characterization, identity, and social status is essentially determined on the foundation of the degree and extent of coverage and exposure of her substantial form as well as her physical appearance or manifestation to that of public analysis and outlook (Adhikari, 2014).

Semati (2002) has thereby contended that the arbitration or mediation of the tele-visual generates a delicate and tricky situation and creates complications in the relationship between the 'cinematic' and the 'real' consequently, as a result of that it can be avowed and acknowledged that the role of the Muslim women characters on screen, in their representative accounts of the Hindi commercial cinema have essentially been for all intents and purposes flat, trite, and insipid and therefore, considering and going by this approach and manner it can be affirmed and asserted that the Muslim women have been portrayed and represented as being parts of the whole.

There has been hardly any movie which has solely or exclusively dedicated its narrative plot or storyline to explore completely, the absolute ideas or subject matters like the

conscious sexuality of Muslim women, or having their political identities all in and by themselves (Semati, 2002). Even when the women are represented or depicted as bold or power holders, the patriarchal wand of perspective and framework is unambiguously constantly present. In fact, the attributes of authority, power, control, and aggressiveness are portrayed as something aberrant or unnatural to a woman and as a dispute or challenge to the purported brittle male ego (Karthika, 2005).

Women per se in the cinematic world of representations and visual culture are customarily projected as non-thinking, and sacrificing (Kamla-Raj, 2010). Conversely, the study also reveals and discloses that there has been an optimistic, positive, and constructive trend emerging out over the years in portraying women, especially Muslim women in proper light. The analysis offers and gives an impression and notion that, more needs to be done to shed an apposite, accurate, appropriate, and realistic portrayal to justify the role and character construction of the Muslim women characters in the Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century. Hence, it can be concluded that even if with the coming up of a plethora of new upcoming directors producing a superfluity of women centric movies in the contemporary times which have touched upon and triggered the themes of boldness and valor, and with some attempts to essentially portray reality, the Hindi commercial cinema have not evolved beyond the monochromatic dimensions of either the faithful wife or a submissive damsel or a conniving rebel or the under headed scheming vamp.

Furthermore the cinema's contemporary narratives also endeavoured to explore definite and explicit bold issues related to social taboos. Nevertheless, it can still be affirmed that the Hindi commercial cinema of the twenty-first century however have been deficient in and lack an intact approach and manner concerning the concept and notion of holistic representations, for the reason that the Muslim women characters in their representative accounts of the select movies of the twenty-first century lack apposite articulations in their authentic and concrete constructs and characterizations.

Audiences tend to take back home some message or some of the elements shown in the movies, so the narratives or storylines as well as the characters of women in the representative mode needs to shift and swing high so as to inspire, enthuse and put forward some characters, that the society, particularly the womenfolk at large can look up to. As such, it can be avowed and established through the analysis that the mottled, diverse, and varied strings of a Muslim woman's life, identity and individuality are still left behind untouched, improbable and unrealistic thereby remaining at a stand-still (Kumari, 2004); (Jain, 2011); (Kumar, 2013); (Khan, 2017). Though it is also innate a trait as the select

movies undertaken and analysed for the study are commercial films and as such are thereby supposed to strengthen and reinforce the existing hetero-normative discourses.

Thinking, reflecting, discussing, and reacting are all fractions and ingredients of decisive ideas, and accepted wisdom. One needs to be able to 'read' a text and deconstruct visual messages (Considine, 1992). As women in films have always been stereotyped, with certain films, carving out an exception, therefore, women in cinema, instead of being depicted or portrayed in representative accounts of being the damsels in distress, objects of sex and male gaze, glam dolls or as oppressed, radical and subjugated agents, should rather be represented and projected in an upbeat or proactive and empowered manner. It can then have an utmost impact and brunt in the societal set-up and in doing so, also put across, convey or bring about an alteration and change in the attitudinal and behavioural aspects of the people in terms of determining, shaping and moulding their attitudes and outlooks towards the womenfolk.

## **6.2 Limitations of the Study**

Narrative analysis demands analysis of narrative content, hence it necessitated the analysis of the textual and narrative content and arrangement, to evaluate the objectives and validity of the research undertaken in a qualitative manner. The varying aspects of different kinds of analysis in generating meanings and themes was challenging since the similar aspects of the different types of analysis overlapped while carrying out the analysis and putting into account the interpretations of the study. Furthermore, narrative analysis can be contested in its apprehension and uneasiness of considering the relationship of elements and production of meaning in and from a given text or code which may leave a hint that narrative analysis is not really concerned with the art but only with the creation of meaning and modes of perception and discernment thereof. Sometimes a text may be conquered by the critic and then it may further exist as a justification or validation for a skillful performance by the semiologist.

Another limitation to this study is that, there is a dearth and shortage of adequate theoretical and conceptual frameworks in employing theories, concepts, narrative and thematic analysis with regards to cultural representation and cultural studies in the Indian cinemas specifically with regards to the Hindi commercial cinema's context. Consequently, as a result of that, a lot of western theories and concepts had to be applied and employed effusively (within an Indian context) while analyzing the select movies undertaken for the study. Furthermore, as there is not much ordered or structured work done, carried out or undertaken in the Hindi commercial cinema's archive to explore the objectification of

women and the emergence or surfacing of a female's sexuality and conduct, therefore, as a consequence, the researcher had to refer to and study numerous western theories and concepts put forward by various theorists and academicians namely Laura Mulvey, Lacan, etc to identify with the various related concepts, and thereby understand the notions and perceptions related to the concept of gaze and a women's sexuality as a whole.

### **6.3 Scope for Further Study/Research**

If we converse and talk of the society at large, it can be asserted that there can be many more researches conducted related to this theme. To name a few like representation of the Muslim female children- the girl child, old or elderly women, house-wife, working women and an assortment of other themes touching upon the lives of Muslim women on the whole. The analysis of film posters as visual elements and pre-texts or giving an external or extended meaning to generate codes can also be taken into consideration. The element of audience feedback was not used, considered or incorporated as a component or a parameter in this research/study hence the parameter of including the feedback of the audiences regarding how they interpret, deduce, or decode a text, code or narrative from their perspective and outlook, could also be incorporated as a further scope for study. Hence, it can furthermore be recommended that more structured studies can to be conducted and undertaken with regards to Hindi commercial cinema's representation of a Muslim woman's life and individuality.

On a concluding note, it can be established that cinema as a form of influential mass media should shoulder the responsibility to enlighten the masses by depicting and representing bold, realistic, confident, pragmatic, and non-stereotyped portrayal of women characters. Because of cinema's popularity, status and mass appeal, the cinematic medium thus can be effectively utilized for circulating information, or efficiently creating awareness and responsiveness along with moderately highlighting prominent and pertinent gender issues for men and women reasonably, rather than reinforcing or underlining gender stereotypes.

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