

**Women in Hindi Cinema:
Between Tradition and Modernity**

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Cinema as an art form is one of the most interesting subjects for socio-logical analysis; an art form that is not only formed by the social reality but actually has the power to change it. Cinema represents reality in a manner entirely its own, sometimes even distorting it beyond recognition. This article endeavors to look at the images of women portrayed in Indian cinema, in particular the Hindi cinema, in context of the theoretical framework of 'Tradition' and 'Modernity'.

This framework consists of socio-economic conditions, traditions, values prevailing in the society or the one the story-teller adheres to. Popular cinema creates a reality of its own with improbable story lines, characters and narratives. However, popular cinema is not entirely removed from reality. It may portray problems of corruption, unemployment, dowry, communal prejudices. This becomes clear when we see the different themes prevailing at different times.

The seventies was a period of social unrest, wayward governance, inflation and the break up of the joint family. So we have a spate of films depicting the problems of unemployment, poverty, the issue of joint family versus the nuclear family. The eighties was the era of terrorism and disappointment with State. This gave rise to films which showed a leader who brings people together, mobilises them to fight against injustice. The nineties brought with them the themes of romance, materialism, revival of traditional ideas along with modernity due to globalisation. This last point is what we will be discussing in greater detail in this article.

Stereotypes die hard

A film often uses stereotypes to build its characters. Thus what we see on the screen may actually be a bundle of prejudices and preconceived notions dressed up in the garb of a movie. They may be ideas about a particular community, notions of "masculinity" or "femininity". The film depicts through symbols, language, signs as to what is wrong and what is right, what is good or what is bad, who is the ideal man or woman and who is not, these are not necessarily true representation of the society. Films often take a moralistic stand to show that evil is eventually vanquished and that truth triumphs. At the same time films perpetuate certain wrong notions and strengthen the stereotypes. To prevent rejection by the public which translates into economic loss, the films function on the basis of predictability and changes within the limits of acceptability.

“Stereotypes act like codes that give audiences a quick, common understanding of a person or group of people- usually relating to their class, ethnicity or race, gender, sexual orientation, social role or occupation”. [1] Codes are used extensively in the analysis of media. The message passed on, say through television, is a combination of codes. The way a certain thing is said, even what is said has a social implication. Codes help in analysis in cultural studies. On interpreting any text, whether it is a film or television programme, the codes act as cues and can be used to trace the ideological framework within which the text was produced. Codes also help in the transmission of verbal and visual meaning.

Gender Stereotypes

Hiddian and Best (1982) write that “gender role differentiation is associated with gender differences in behaviour, attitudes, and disposition traits. It also leads to stereotyping formation of consensual beliefs about differences between the sexes”. [2] They also observe that “in keeping with the similarities in the pattern of gender role across societies, there is considerable degree of similarity in gender stereotypes”. [3] The society determines as to how each sex should behave and what is expected of them and men and women incorporate. School, parents, role models, mass media play a major role in conditioning desire and expectations.

Feminist critics have decried the representation of women in culture, the images, stereotypes and archetypes. The representation of women repeat themselves compulsively thus firmly entrenching themselves in the minds of the viewer. The ideological analysis of the late 1970’s and early 80’s was influenced by post structuralism and psychoanalysis, had rejected mainstream cinema for its production of patriarchal and bourgeoisie spectatorship and simultaneous representation of femininity. Gender representation is in fact seen as the heart of cultural negotiation.

The UNESCO report on “Women and Media” states that the “perspective of women reflected in messages disseminated by the mass media expresses male concepts of women. The commercial media produces media messages systems and symbols which create or structure prevailing images of social reality which in our set up show women as house wives, consumers and sex objects. Women in advertising are always young and attractive; they are frequently depicted as sexual objects and are seldom shown as intelligent people. The mass media’s role is primarily to reinforce definitions set in a framework constructed for and by men.” [4] The identity of the woman has been submerged by the limited variety of roles she is expected to play on and off screen. The women shown in media are essentially traditional submissive, mothers, efficient housekeepers which is taken as the ‘ideal’ woman by the audience. It has been observed that the working women are portrayed in a negative light: she is selfish and scheming. In utter contrast is the traditional housewife: loving, forgiving, and sacrificing- a paragon of virtues.

In advertisements women are seen as ‘selling’ everything from cosmetics to cars and electronic gadgets. The female body is seen as an extension of the object being sold. It was in USA first and later Europe that a particular image of the women spread. The new woman was a wife, mother, elegant, beautiful, in short a superwoman, to which thousands of women were to respond. “Women’s magazines are full of articles urging that if they can just lose twenty pounds, they will have it all - the perfect marriage, loving children, great sex and a rewarding career” [5]

The diet industry in USA is worth 100 billion dollars which clearly indicates the success of the media in creating the need in women to subscribe to the new image propagated by it. Many women who could not assume the bodily proportions 'advised' by the media lacked confidence and were prone to depression. Television and cinema reinforce the slim and beautiful image where slim is actually underweight. Women are then in pursuit of the perfect face, figure and dress without which they feel incomplete and worthless.

Representations and images of women have also been used "as symbols of political aspirations and social change".[6] There are various examples from the Soviet media which showed the woman farming, working in factories- capable and sturdy. This was to prove that the communist regime meant emancipation of women and did not highlight the problems faced by the women or probably did not project the reality.

Sarah Graham Brown voices the dilemma faced by the Arab media which incidentally is similar to that faced by the Indian media- the dilemma of tradition versus modernity. The question here is, should one let go of the past in the name of progress or should one adhere to one's traditions, outdated though they may seem? Societies which have a tradition completely different from that of western societies face the tradition-modernity dilemma to a much larger degree than essentially western societies. Traditional societies are willing to accept changes in the media as long as they do not change the existing status-quo of the society where men still decide the extent of westernisation or modernisation of women acceptable to them. So we have the "new man (gentle, supportive, emotional) and the new woman (independent, assertive, resourceful)".[7]

Modernity

We shall now discuss the theoretical aspect of modernity; its rise and what it entails. According to Eisenstadt, modernity is the reshaping of the world according to liberal principles. "The contemporary world is strongly characterised by modernity and modernisation expressed in technology, different patterns of economic development and limitations; as well as by political ideologies, modes of political protest and participation."[8] Modernity challenges the symbolic and institutional premises of the societies, which were incorporated in it, calling for responses within them and for new patterns of interaction and opening up of new opportunities and possibilities. The societies which have undergone the phase of 'modernity' share certain common characteristics while they may be different. The responses of societies were influenced by modes of technology and by the economic structure of the society. Weber remarks that major manifestations of modernity could be found in the spheres of social life such as:[9]

- Emergence of capitalist civilization
- Bureaucratisation of different forms of social life
- Secularisation of worldview.

According to Giddens modernity evolved through an interaction among institutional dimensions like capitalism, industrialism, surveillance, control of information by nation state and development of military power. In Giddens' scheme of analysis there are following dynamic aspects of analysis:

•*Separation of time and space*: people can interact with each other across time and space. This is due the development of communication like telephone, telefax, computers etc. Efficiency is created by several people acting in consonance towards a specific goal but not necessary at the same time or in the same place.

•*Disembedding of social systems*: earlier the institutions and actions of society were embedded in the local community. They were then lifted out from the local community and replaced by a new economic system, transport system (this he calls the abstract systems) especially with money creating new forms of interaction.

•*Reflexivity*: Giddens identifies two forms of reflexivity of modern society. The first form is when we are constantly reflecting on our actions and are able to alter it according to the situation. The second form is more important, it is the use of our knowledge for bringing about social change and for social organisation. The second form of reflexivity is a result of the development of mass media. The media gives us information which shapes our thoughts and actions rather than tradition alone. This is important in our analysis of the media bringing in change or reflecting forthcoming changes.[10]

According to Giddens processes of communication develop and become part and parcel of everyday life, this in turn helps the global extension of modernity. Further more modernity affects the personal lives of individuals. Earlier people were guided by tradition, kinship, local community and religion in making personal decisions. Modernity brought in greater trust on abstract systems which were impersonal. It placed before the individual many options to choose from according to one's economic status, gender and education. People are constantly on the move for working, education etc and have to take decisions in various situations, often on their own. Giddens believes that modernity has also affected our social relationships. Earlier social relationships like- marriage, friendship - were guided by tradition. Today it is no longer so, people continuously reflect on the relationships they enter into and decide the rules for it. Marriage is no longer an economic contract, life partners are chosen on basis of emotions, compatibility etc. Similarly marriages and friendships are easily broken as the concept of compromise just for the sake of society has taken a back seat. Thus modernity brings about changes in both individuals and institutions.

Modernity saw the rapid growth of mass communication, especially the visual media like films, television and graphic design. Globalisation is one of the consequences of modernity. Globalisation refers to the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation-state. As a result goods, capital, people, knowledge, communication, culture, belief etc flow across boundaries. This has meant the development of a global media system. It is believed that by compressing time and space globalisation brings closer civilizations and cultures. This at once creates shared social spheres where ideas, values and knowledge meet and also reinforces social prejudices and boundaries. It has been argued that communication media not only transmits information, instead it creates new forms of interaction, action and social relationships. Media has also been useful in transmitting the notion of national culture, symbols, history. Films have been actively involved in transmitting ideas of nationalism, patriotism and creating a sense of pride in national history. The function of communication today can be thus summed up as[11]:

- Transmission of cultural heritage
- Supply of information, instruction, entertainment
- Conferring status and legitimacy
- Surveillance of environment
- Raising of issues/debates of contemporary significance
- Enlarging cognitive horizons and awareness profiles
- Building of public and consensus
- Encouragement to innovative thinking

The New Meta-Narrative: Cinema

Indians are said to be crazy about two things- cricket and cinema. Even small towns which may not have any facility chances are they will have a cinema hall or theatre as it is called. The poorest of person will save money to go and watch his favorite hero in action. India was introduced to films way back in 1896 and by 1900 Mumbai (then Bombay), Chennai (then Madras) and Kolkata (then Calcutta) were holding regular film screenings. The initial movies were based on the mythological tradition of India. People- literate and illiterate- could understand the stories and relate to them. It was as early as this that we find films based on “wayward husband, virtuous wife and exotic vamp”. Interestingly the heroines of such films were Anglo Indians and ‘nautch girls’. The heroines had to change their names to gain acceptance by the audience- so Ruby became Sulochana, Renee Smith became Seeta devi.

Change is the law of all things and the Indian society of the twentieth century was one of the most turbulent periods of our history. The changes in the society meant that the audience now wanted a change from mythological stories and films based on Victorian attitudes and values (India was under British rule and hence the influence). Women were breaking the mould by joining the freedom struggle; some were defying their families to take part in the struggle. It was at a time like this that film makers too were willing to try new themes which would reflect the concerns of a society which was awakening to its new identity. Thus there were new films like- Wronged Wife (1930), The Enchanters (1930), Wild Cat of Bombay (1927)- this was based on the story of a female Robin Hood, Gun Sundari (1927) which questioned the ‘traditional, submissive role of the Hindu wife’.

It is important to mention here that all Hindu women are supposed to have ‘Sita’ as their role model. (Sita is a mythological character from the epic Ramayana and is also worshipped by Hindus. She is known for her devotion to her husband and lived in exile for 14 years with her husband). At the same time a movie based on Rabindranath Tagore’s story of a widow forced into prostitution was banned because of its ‘low moral tone’. The advent of talkies meant the end of the reign of Anglo-Indian actresses. The actors and actresses were needed to be fluent in Hindi or Urdu and also be good singers. The Indian films consisted mainly of songs, dance, action conflict and a happy ending. This is the basic structure even today.

The quest for different themes carried on. Movies like Amar Jyoti (The Eternal Flame), 1936 based on how a wronged wife takes revenge, ‘Duniya Na Mane’ (The world may not accept). The latter movie showed how a young woman trapped into marrying an old man refuses to consummate the marriage. The old man commits suicide out of a sense of guilt. It is apt to

mention here that the tradition of an old man marrying a young woman was common and can still be found in certain parts of rural India. The main reasons are poverty, inability to pay dowry, seeking a higher status. In 1935 a movie was made dealing with a couple both of whom are working and unable to give time to each other. The movie ends with the wife giving up the job. This led to a lot of protests from feminists. Nevertheless the film was a hit as it appealed to the traditional mindset.

In 1954 there was an anti-cinema campaign as many felt that cinema was a threat to the moral health of the country and major factor in incitement to crime and general unsettlement of society. There was an effort to restrict certain kinds of films. Cinema had to function within certain boundaries defined by the censor board. The censor board laid down the rules and regulation keeping in mind public sensibilities, thus, prohibiting 'closeness' on screen, exposure, undermining of state machinery. The public rejected love scenes, kissing, and nudity and labeled them un-Indian. Censorship is still a debatable issue with people divided into pro-censorship and anti censorship camps.

In the seventies movies attacked the State and the state machinery and hence were essentially hero oriented. The problems of poverty, class differences, smuggling and prostitution were highlighted by these films. The heroine would be just waiting to get married and mostly play the damsel in distress. Widow Remarriage was a sensitive issue and the hero would be killed rather than be shown as marrying a widow. The heroines had to be 'pure', with the hero being the first and last love. There would not be any intimate scenes between the hero and the heroine. It is worth mentioning that in India movies are essentially family outings hence any intimate scenes would be embarrassing for the children and parents and would eventually stop such outings. The film makers were aware of this and would make the movie keeping in mind this factor. This is just a picture of the general pattern of films. With about 200 movies a year a few movies were bound to be different. Also the more serious or contentious issues were being dealt by what is called 'art' or 'parallel' cinema. These movies were watched mainly by the educated elite and failed to generate any popular enthusiasm.

The eighties saw themes like revenge, rape occupying the centre stage- rape of a widow by her brother-in-law, an unwed mother being forced in prostitution. But a new development was the crude depiction of such scenes. In a particular movie a beauty pageant winner and model is raped. The criminal lawyer remarks in court that the woman is in the kind of profession which suggests that she lacks morals and thus she cannot be technically raped. Further that a true Indian woman would not spoken of her loss of dignity in public. Another extreme case was of a movie which depicted that in spite of suffering at the hands of a cruel and sadistic husband the wife- an educated woman- refuses to leave him. The movie was banned for 'depicting women in ignoble servility to man and glorifying it'. But the producer believed that he was upholding Indian tradition.

So we see that the movies were based on the traditional concept of what a man should be like- bold, outspoken, intelligent and romantic. The woman as the upholder of tradition; she should look pretty, religious, willing to sacrifice and just wait for the right man to come across. The hero needed to excel in studies while the heroine passed her time in college dreaming of getting married. The patriarchal system does not give a woman the decision making power regarding her

own life. Two important areas where women are denied any say are marriage and reproduction. Hence divorce as a solution to a troubled marriage was never portrayed in movies.

The nineties are seen as the romantic era, with the main theme being romance, marriage and extravagance. The nineties saw the beginning of economic liberalisation in India. India started following the open market policy whereby more choices were made available to people. The emphasis was on development, modernisation and increasing the economic power of people. Thus began the consumerist culture in India. We have already discussed that modernity brings in institutional changes and also changes within the individual. The new economic scenario brought in new job prospects. Thus many young people moved to cities from small town for both education and jobs. But movies showing extreme poverty declined. Opulence was the buzz word. The rich had personal jets, wore designer clothes and traveled across the globe.

The heroines were now seen in western clothes, using more of English, were bolder, slimmer-often seen exercising. But after marriage they would revert back to the traditional image of an obedient sari clad daughter-in-law who respects her in laws, loves her family and would take up the cudgels to fight injustice. Successful films are those which have been able to cater to the expectations rather than try and bring changes; those which “represent social types that are structured in such a way that they represent a conceptual idea of a social order”¹². The other type of women are the ones with evil designs say the bad mother-in-law, the spoiled rich woman who is totally westernised and scorns traditional values.

Elaborating on the role of a vamp in Indian cinema Ashish Nandy writes that “the attempt is to place such women outside the acceptance limits of bi-cultural living (i.e. outside the optional mixture of tradition and modernity)¹³”. Western ideas have been shown to have a negative effect and are the villains and vamps are the embodiments of undiluted westernisation and modernity. In Indian films even the prostitute may be depicted as the true Indian woman “purity of mind if not of bodies’, dying for the hero if needed. The image of a woman has to fit into a framework and anything outside it has to be condemned. The image of a woman in a film has to therefore fit in the mental image (audience) has of what a woman should be like. Any change in representation has be explained in such a way that it becomes more acceptable .Most of what we see on screen is essentially a clash between tradition and modernity.

Synthesising Contradictions:

The essential dilemma in Hindi films is how much of modernity to embrace. As Giddens had observed modernity brings about changes in interpersonal relationships, ideas about marriage etc. We see that friendship becomes more important than kinship ties, movies move out from small town and villages to cities, where the relationship between parents and their children is different. The formal relationship with parents; clash over love marriages has given way to friendly parents who even help their children in their love lives. But the latter happens mostly with the hero than with the heroine, the latter still faces the ire for daring to choose a person of her choice.

Dissanyake and Gokulsung write that films have a “dominant, pervasive role in creating in public mind the notion of heroism, duty, courage, modernity, consumption, glamour”[14].

According to them there is a close relationship between Indian popular cinema and modernity; “whatever the genre may be Indian popular films display culturally grounded engagement with modernity”[15]. They further elucidate that the ideas about the woman have been borrowed heavily from the Manuscript: “The woman must not strive to separate herself from father, husband or son. She should be cheerful, efficient in the management of household affairs, fastidious in cleaning utensils, careful with expenses. After the death of the husband she must make every effort to make honor his memory. All this have clear articulation in Indian cinema”[16].

Patriotism as a theme has also been popular in Indian cinema. There was a spate of such films after the Indo-China war where the enemy was not named but was identifiable by their slanted eyes! Today ambiguity has been replaced by vitriolic dialogues blaming the neighboring state of Pakistan for terrorism, war and violence. Some of these movies did very well as they whipped the passions of the people and we should remember that the Fundamentalist Right were riding the political crest at this time. The nation is the mother whose dignity has to be protected at any cost.

The mother is a much stereotyped figure in Indian cinema. “If the villain is a westernised figure; than the mother is his anti thesis”[17]. Rosie Thomas gives a detailed explanation about the role of the mother. The mother is a traditional figure, wears white sari if she is widow and spends most of her time in religious activities. She is concerned about protecting the family and following the traditions. As a wife she is instrumental in maintaining the ‘izzat’ (honour) of the family. “Mother is frequently identified with and likened to the figures of the Hindu pantheon - most notably Sita who circulated in popular commonsense currency as the prototype of traditional Indian womanhood”[18]. The mother may be evil as a mother-in-law or as the stepmother. But everything is set right at the end when she repents for her actions and asks for forgiveness she is then transformed into an ideal woman.

The filmmaker has to see to it that that evil is either reformed or vanquished. A film thus circulates ideas about women, morality, and nationalism. This trend was followed in the nineties, the past few years have seen a healthy change. The mothers are younger, if separated then not apologetic about it, if widowed then not necessarily white sari clad; they are smarter, often working. These portrayals are in urban based films and very often these films do not do very well in small towns or villages. “Indian cinema which is a product of cultural modernity and has accelerated the process of modernity punishes a woman who identifies with modernity”[19].

Aruna Vasudev echoes the same idea. She says that there is a sharp dichotomy between the women as wife, mother, mistress or lover. “The modern women who dresses provocatively, wears western clothes, speaks English and smoke is defeated by the traditional, sari clad and barely literate woman”[20]. In the 1980s when the stories were centered on rape-revenge formula, the heroine found a male mentor or surrogate father. Maithili Rao writes “The unfamiliar image has to be periodically stripped off its alien accoutrements to reassure us of her docile Indian ness and its promise of sexual transmission to the patriarchal order”[21]. Modernity in Indian cinema for long has been restricted to only outwardly appearances, better production technology and projection of scientific advancement on screen. To further quote Rao “the

crassest of popular cinema, invokes the magic of ritualised iconography, infiltrating potent of myth, seduction of song, seduction of societal approval”[22].

She analyses films which reinforced the fear in the society: about male doctors, the single working woman as a threat to married women. The ambitious woman who spurns marriage for a career is portrayed as a bitter woman who goes around disrupting her sisters’ life. The former is shown in such a negative way that the audience will have no sympathy for the ambitious woman and will support the sister who gets married so that the groom and her parents do not suffer any loss of face.

When a film appears to challenge the existing notions of tradition the audience finds it difficult to accept the images presented and may react either by rejecting it as not being part of tradition or try to adjust to the new ideas. One such film which evoked extreme reaction was the film ‘Fire’ which dealt with the issue of lesbianism. ‘Fire’ was attacked by the Hindu fundamentalist groups as being anti-Indian (read anti-Hindu) as lesbianism was seen as a western phenomenon and not a part of Indian tradition. Puri in her analysis of the film puts it succinctly when she writes “fire contests the notions of tradition and compliance to it.

Traditions provide the contours to the film through the characters of Biji (mother-in-law) and the elder brother- Ashok. Biji symbolises cultural tradition and its ubiquitous moral force. On the other hand the relationship between the sisters-in-law is viewed as modernity as it deviates from tradition.[23]" The characters of the sisters-in-law who shared a lesbian relationship had to change their names due to violent protests from the fundamentalist group namely the Shiv Sena and the Bajrang Dal. One of the characters was called ‘Sita’ (the perfect woman, see past references). The director had to change the name to a neutral one. Shiv Sena found the movie “anti thetical to Indian cultural to Indian cultural values, that it was a western contamination threatening to destroy Indian culture and Indian family” [24]. The Shiv Sena further felt that the movie made a mockery made of post marriage rituals.

Another film which sparked off a debate was ‘Bandit queen’ based on the true story of a woman, Phoolan Devi. The film was screened at various international festivals and the main concern was the negative image of Indian traditional society that was being projected through the movie. “The film casts cultural traditions as the force that explains the cast and gender oppression. Phoolan devi endures and marks this oppression as peculiarly Indian and different from the west. meanwhile the film continually juxtaposes this tradition with more familiar images that link Indian society with a failed images that link Indian society with a failed attempt to reproduce univer-salistic narratives of democracy and modernity”.[25]

The picture of modernity is that of a failed modernity and harsh, obsolete traditions. The very abstract systems which have been introduced by modernity (see Giddens)- the judicial system, the state exploit her while traditions like child marriage, caste hierarchies ruin her life. Phoolan as a dacoit is dressed up as a man complete with weapons attempts negate her womanhood and desexualise herself as she is continuously pitched against the modern state. The bandit queen comes as the story of a woman wronged by both tradition and modernity. The tradition of child marriage, gender disparity, caste oppression is the cause of her trauma of physical and mental

abuse in the initial years. Later she is harassed by the modern state and its representatives- police and politicians.

Today we are seeing a variety of films being produced catering to a wide range of audience tastes-small budget films, ones which deal with issues like AIDS communal riots etc, big budget films, realistic films. Globalisation as we have discussed has broken down space, time and cultural barriers. The NRI audience in say in USA or Britain is as eager for a certain film as the Indian audience back home especially if it involves popular stars. To cater to the sentimental needs of the global audience we have films full of fun and frolic in the Indian way. The film is peppered with romance, marriage rituals starting with the engagement, authentic Indian clothes and lots of songs. These movies are sans poverty and instead look 'pretty' with exotic homes and jet setting lifestyles. Of course, there is some cause for conflict- could be violation of tradition, class conflict, but nothing looks ugly, even the not so well off wear beautiful clothes and jewellery and are happy. The socialism of earlier films has now been replaced by bourgeois images.

Anne Cieko analyses one such film which did well both in India and abroad .on the transformation of the tomboyish heroine into a traditional girl writes that “when reintroduced the feisty female undergoes a domesticating makeover, as she is transformed from tomboy college girl or mini-skirted flirt into a self sacrificing Sita-esque ideal of domestic goddess. She is again tested to prove her worthiness as prospective wife, mother, daughter.[26] The hero could not love a tomboyish girl who defeated him at basketball but when the same girl comes back as a sari clad as a dance teacher he sees her in a different light and obviously falls in love. Now, of course, she can no longer defeat him at basketball!

Cieko asserts that “films have been recognised in India and abroad as products of a viable industry with profound border crossing and cultural currency. Bollywood films have also associated with global fusion, mass -market trends often feminised commodification of Indian culture”. [27] Eminent sociologist Patricia Uberoi has also analysed two such films that did very good business abroad. According to her films “focused particularly on the relation of the sexes, relations within the family, relations between social classes; popular cinema constructs an ideal moral universe that is intrinsically if not explicitly connected with tradition and nation”. [28]

Several of the films aimed at a global audience may be set abroad. The older generation in such films has intense nationalistic feeling and long for India and try to stick to the Indian way of bringing up of children, teaching them patriotic songs etc. Depending on the plot the children may either be eager learners or rebel as they feel like misfits in the society they live in. Uberoi while analyzing the two films looks at the family, marriage dimension in relation to the modernisation of Indian society and most importantly of the Indians regarding the same issues.

The films look at the concept of arranged marriages where the family, mainly the father, wants to find a truly Indian groom or bride. In one film the daughters of a NRI family listen to English songs which they switch off when the father comes back home. The daughter is confident, feisty and wears western clothes when she is out on a trip. On the other hand she has to marry the groom chosen by the father irrespective of whether she likes him or not. The hero's father is a friendly father with whom the son shares everything. The father asks him to go after the girl of

his dreams. The heroine's father is the opposite, he feels that the daughter has flouted the traditions by falling in love and rushes off to India before further disaster can strike. The mother asks the daughter to forget her love and expresses her helplessness. The dialogues of the mother is an apt description of the situation many women find themselves in. there is a subordination of their desire and do not have the right to even express their anger. They have to marry the guy chosen by the father even though he may be a rogue and may not be the kind of person they want to marry.

The other film analysed by Patricia Uberoi looks at two male characters that have grown up in USA. They represent the two cultures, Western and Indian. The guy with Indian characteristics is obviously the hero while the western one is the villain. The family members settled in USA are shown as cold, pseudo, shallow. The western guy drinks, smokes, has affairs and believes in pre-marital sex which obviously offends the to-be- bride from India. The 'Indian guy' respects women, is romantic, is waiting for his one and true love, and is popular and loved by all. He is seen as a combination of west and east; tradition and modernity. In both the movies "efforts are made to discipline the younger generation by marriage with Indian partners, there is a voyeuristic pre-occupation with feminine virtue in general and virginity in particular and the role of women critiquing patriarchal authority".[29]

According to Uberoi both the films show certain aspects of the Indian kinship systems. There is an idealisation of the patrilineal joint family. Secondly the family itself is shown as a patriarchal system. The father arranges the marriage of his children, especially for the daughters being in love or not plays a secondary role. Thirdly the emphasis in Indian marriages is the two families which will be united after the marriage. So often the emphasis is on the family of the groom or bride rather than the couple in question. In both the films the daughters understand the role of the father in giving away the bride and only hope that their desires get fulfilled.

Most films are fairly accurate about the way arranged marriages take place in India. Most parents have no idea about the kind of husbands their daughters want; nobody asks them. The parents look at the guys' profession and bank balance while the grooms' family goes by the girl's looks. Everything happens at a very superficial role, though today at least the girl gets to talk to the guy before marriage. Broken engagements on the girl's initiative are unheard of. It is not surprising that there are so many empty marriages where the couple sticks together because they are scared to go against the tradition. In India the problem is also of lack of education apart from the stigma attached to divorce. There is no escape for the woman from a dreary, loveless marriage as she cannot earn her own living.

Secondly the presence of children makes the woman think that they need a father however bad he may be. The woman feels guilty if she thinks about herself, she has to think of the parents, her children and stick on to the marriage. Indian parents rarely encourage breaking away from the shackles of a burdensome marriage. The couple should respect each other, love each other and being with each other and today have some intellectual compatibility also.

Sadly it does not happen in this fashion, most parents think money, comfortable lifestyle is all the girl wants and her desiring something more is unreasonable. The rise in number of divorce

cases in India especially by the educated is a pointer of changing times. People do not marry because they want to rather because they have to. The films contain dialogues which are probably reflections of reality, the parents continuously say that the girl is burden they have to bear, and she is has to go off to 'her' house (husbands house) etc. The extravagance shown on screen also has its effects on real life. Increasingly the brides want to duplicate the clothes worn on screen, the same kind of arrangements. So much so that certain North-Indian marriage rituals have found their way in to South Indian marriages all because of the popularity of films showing such details.

Films very rarely show a woman working or studying hard or worried about her future. College was shown as a fun place where the hero and heroine meet each other and fall in love. Women would work because of poverty. They might say they are learning computers but there will no scene showing her using the computers. All course and classes come to an end with marriage as the hero sets everything right in her life. This sets a bad precedent as there are hardly any inspirational movies showing a woman holding her own in say the corporate world or some other profession. She may be seen as a teacher, secretary, and model; sometimes a doctor, lawyer or policewoman. Interestingly a woman who is lawyer is not a practicing one, till her family members are affected and she has to fight for them.

Now we may see woman as a journalist, a famous dress designer. But these kind of films are far and few between. There is a need to show mothers, wives, sisters going to work, making intelligent conversation so that the men who have not been exposed to this kind of life do not view it as something not done or against traditions. Films show the parents asking the son what he wants to do and he may reply he wants to start his business or do MBA on the other hand they see their daughter coming back from college and start discussing her marriage. Sorority is an accepted tradition in films and many women find themselves married to their dead sister's husband just to take care of her kids. The woman is praised for being a true sister and daughter, in short a true woman who sacrifices her happiness for others.

The woman thus continues to function within the narrow confines of tradition. The man on the other hand is shaped by the circumstances he is in; he has a larger role to play and cannot be placed in a watertight compartment. Most of the time the only contact the heroine has with modernity is when she is the victim. She may be a victim of the State, the judicial system or the bureaucracy. The heroine may take revenge for any injustice done - tradition may justify the action while modernity provides the means. Dern'e and Jadwin have pointed out the reactions of men to the western value shown on screen. The men audience feels that the 'excessive' freedom demanded by women is due to the modern system of education. The kind of education women are receiving today is redefining their attitude towards the family and relationships. This is becoming problematic as the men are not able to adjust to these changes.

There is a tendency to look at 'the good old days' as perfect when everybody performed his or her duties as per the norms laid down by tradition. There is a constant fear about the loss of Indian tradition due to imitation of western ideas and emulation of modern ideals; wearing western clothes is associated with loss of one's culture. The audience preferred heroines who retained their Indianess and looked down with contempt at heroines who exposed too much or were excessively modern-"while films create women as the spectacle of male desire filmgoers

often make distinctions between the women they define as legitimate objects of the gaze and those whom they believe to be protected from it . This suggests that the gaze's direction is shaped not just by gender identity but by national identity as well.”[30]

Conclusion

In the tradition- modernity context the image of women in Hindi cinema is inclined to be more traditional. The identification of women with modernity is limited and is within the limits set by tradition, conformity rather than change seems to be the dominant pattern in Hindi cinema. Nevertheless there is a ray of hope. Several young directors are now breaking into new grounds by experimenting with characters and story lines. Widow Remarriage, estrangement are depicted from the emotional point of view of the woman rather than the perspective imposed by tradition, a younger man may fall in love with an older woman, woman is accepted back by the husband after she has an affair (this was unheard of earlier). A healthy trend has started though several more changes have to be made so that modernity in its true essence can make a positive difference to people's lives. Modernity is not only about clothes and lifestyles; it is, what Eisenstadt said, about liberal principles and thought. Cinema can influence the normative structure. Cinema can project the image of a positive modernity, one that compliments traditions relevant to our time. This requires moving away from stereotyped images, which have defined roles of women in the society and establishing new identities. These new identities will help the Indian woman in breaking the shackles of tyrannical, patriarchal, traditions and lead her to freedom of thought, expression and action.

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