# Cinema as a Catalyst for Change: How Indian Film Transforms Traditional Gender Roles and Reflects Evolving Indian Societal Norms

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**Abstract**

The paper aims to analyze the way in which films have transformed traditional gender roles, particularly in relation to changing societal norms that have hitherto portrayed women as homemakers and men as heads of families. In the beginning, cinema propagated orthodox images, which positioned women mainly as mothers and wives, while men were always shown as commanding heads over women. But modern films are abandoning such portrayals for more complex ones that consider social relations as they are today. A critical review illustrates how female characters have taken on the roles of CEOs, entrepreneurs or breadwinners, resulting in more of an escape from house chores into decision-making positions as film is a changing tool in society. Culturally, this equality in filmography reflects the acceptance of alternative gender identities and behaviors by which leadership or family responsibilities are untied from conventional sex roles. Within this context, films mirror and shape cultural change by depicting women in essential positions while men play a caring part, thus creating an egalitarian view of female-male relationships.

**Keywords: -** Gender Identity, Film Representation, Cinema and Society, Women Empowerment, Masculinity and Caregiving, Cultural Shifts, Gender Equality, Gender Dynamics in Film, Media and Gender.

## 1. Introduction

Social change that is transformative and radical can be incited by cinema, ultimately contributing to the dismantling of gender stereotypes. Within the historical canon, several films have provoked major social revolutions, such as the civil rights movements, feminism, and environmentalism, which trace their roots back to the early days of film inception. Different forms of revolution exist whereby films are used to alter human behaviors or actions in a more subtle manner. This long-standing tradition suggests how motionless pictures in people have strongly mobilized towards expressing emotions or thoughts regarding human existence. Moreover, despite the internet and television being considered forms of communication, they stand no chance against motion picture films, for they evoke and satisfy all human emotions. The theme of gender roles films focuses on challenging stereotype portrayal in films while touching on issues related to people's humanity and spirituality from ethical reference points; this is where cinema takes its role as an agent of change.

For many years, film has been an important mode of storytelling that helps to reflect societal values, and it has also, for nearly if not as long, dictated the way society has looked at culture. Films have essentially defined gender roles relative to men and women. Women have generally been depicted as either taking care of the family and home or as subordinate to the male protagonist. Moreover, men have been depicted more consistently in the characterizations of traditional masculinity, which include control, authority, determination, and leadership.

Integrating Judith Butler's understanding of gender as performance gender being performative is What Judith Butler comes up with in her theory of gender performativity; one is not gender, one does gender. This aspect can prove useful in analyzing the role of Indian cinema in the construction of gender. You may assess how Indian women and men filmmakers are not

only enacting opposing images in the narrative but also subverting rigid gender expectations through their depiction. For instance, characterizations of women as company President's, family breadwinners in the movies such as Queen or Tumhari Sulu are performative resistance and therefore alter the perception of gender as a subject in the society.

There is a possibility that an additional analysis based on Laura Mulvey's most influential idea the 'male gaze', which argues that films are constructed in such a way that women are seen as objects to be looked at by a heterosexual male figure, could add value to this. Historically, this has been the case in Indian cinema, where women were simply depicted as the objects of men's gazes. Nevertheless, films such as Piku and Tumhari Sulu have women who are more empowered looking possibly challenging the gaze of a man. These recent understandings can be interrogated on the extent and the ways in which they subvert the patriarchal images of women. Perhaps there is room for improvement in those models in their treatment of female perspectives on events in the narrative.

LGBTQ+ Identities in Cinema as an Example Using Judith Halberstam's Ideas about Queer Time and Queer Space, which are both in opposition to the traditional life story, Discerning Films like Aligarh and Chitrangada offer a Forward-Looking depiction of non-binary and queer identities. Even though this section is about the film, one can examine how these films break the gender stereotypes and heteronormative binaries that are enshrined in cultural practices. thereby aiding in the dispensation of diverse gender identities across the Indian society.

Hegemonic Masculinity Theory having discussed by Raewyn Connell, the contemporary Indian cinema which is changing the definition of masculinity can also be interpreted using this theory. In movies such as Piku, Badhaai Ho for instance men are often seen taking on more nurturing roles, which go against the prevailing notions of masculinity that glorified emotional suppression and defined men as stoical figures. You may also want to consider this theoretical perspective because it adds to the understanding of the Southern films in general, and to Indian cinema in particular, in the process of gendered theorization and in relation, the practice that is aimed at breaking the stereotypes of hegemonic masculinity.

In response to the norms outlined above, which is far from a complete description of societal challenges in recent years, films have been another site of questioning and scrutiny of traditional gender roles in more sophisticated and nuanced representations seeking to align more clearly with social change in gender relations in society. The newly depicted presentations of men and women are notably tied to social change, but they symbolically represent a pivot point for parents asking or thinking about what those same ordinary (natural) roles could/should look like or mean outside of depictions in film. Indian cinema, with its rich history and diverse cultural expressions, has long played a significant role in shaping and reflecting societal values. Traditionally, Indian films have reinforced conventional gender roles, often portraying women primarily as homemakers and men as authoritative heads of families. These portrayals mirrored the deeply entrenched social norms that defined gender roles in Indian society. However, contemporary Indian cinema is increasingly challenging these traditional depictions, offering more nuanced and progressive portrayals of gender roles.

## 2. The Evolution of Gender Roles in Indian Film

### 2.1 The Historical Evolution of Gender Roles in Indian Cinema

The pattern of depicting women has continued through the early part of the 20th century when motion pictures still bore a patriarchal face. Women were often depicted as wives, mothers, and caregivers, addressing them only within the context of their interaction with men. For instance, in Gone with the Wind (1939) or in The Sound of Music (1965), women are praised as nurturers and caregivers who sustain the familial sphere with all the emotions at its heart, whereas males continue playing the head of the clan who speaks for the outside world.

The caste system is crucial is determining how people experience themselves in Indian society, a theme which is also noticeable in the movies made in India. For instance, by including an intersectional lens looking at caste relations, this research is able to analyze the differences in gender representation in animations between caste women. Representations of Upper Caste: "In most of the received order films, educated and modern upper caste women are usually depicted as ambitious in accordance with beauty and moral standards. For example, the character of Rani from the movie Queen (2013) and that of Piku in the movie Piku (2015) are both from middle- or upper-class urban families which express the urban elite's aspirations." Representations of Lower Caste: In contrast, films such as Article 15 (2019) and Bandit Queen (1994) depict women of lower castes bearing extreme suffering. Characters such as Phoolan Devi in the film Bandit Queen, face gender as well as caste-based violence which illustrates a sense of dual marginalization. The intersectionality of caste and gender explains the underlying notion for portrayal of lower caste women as easy targets of oppression because they belong to a certain caste and are a certain gender. In this regard, it is apparent that whilst upper caste women may be depicted as transgressing gender norms, lower caste women are invariably shown to be more concerned with issues of survival and justice, thereby complicating the issue of female empowerment.

The portrayal of characters in Indian films is not only defined by the gender aspect but the class aspect also plays a huge role in such portrayals. Women across the financial spectrum are portrayed in different lights which affects their agency, freedom, and empowerment that is largely dependent on one's class. Working-Class Women such representations can be readily available in movies such as Tumhari Sulu (2017) where women from a lower middle class earn a living while engaging in household duties. For example, Sulu in the film goes from being a housewife to a radio jockey in which case the film seems to suggest that in as much as class constraints may limit the choices available for women, they are however resourceful enough to navigate round these constraints. Elite/Upper-Class Women on the contrary, first world women exemplified by those in Dil Dhadakne Do (2015), are able to access great resources, both financial and social which may enable them confront the issues of gender. Still, extreme privilege does not assure escape from the misogyny of the society

that these women live in. In most cases, their issues are hardly about earning money, as in every other female subject displayed, it is about Ayesha Mehra whose aspirations have to conform to a very rich yet male-dominated family structure. The class discourse suggests that for women in the working class, the issues of gender are often interlaced with economic concerns while for upper class women these issues become pursuits of inner emotional conflicts and personal development thus emphasizing the various dimensions of domination by gender for women of different classes.

The factor of religious identity complicates the representation of gender in Indian cinema as there are some religious communities in which gender is integrated with other processes in multi-dimensional way and this brings about its own set of challenges of tackling those gender roles. This intersection of religion and gender is also helpful in explaining the factors that determine roles of women above and beyond the considerations of a patriarchal oppression, religious expectations also come to play. Muslim Women the movies Lipstick Under my Burkha (2016) and Garm Hava (1974) unveil the specific issues that women suffer where religion is more conservative and cultures more restrictive. In Lipstick Under My Burkha, Shirin, the Muslim female protagonist of the film, struggles against the oppressive requirements of both her culture and faith as she desires autonomy from an overbearing husband.

Hindu Women Movies such as Singham (2011) and Kabir Singh (2019) also tend to place the Hindu female characters in the realm of ideal gender stereotypes, which at times includes perpetuating the established gender hierarchy in the name of traditional or cultural beliefs. For instance, Preeti in Kabir Singh is depicted as a meek and timid woman, hence further emphasizing how cultures and religions shape gender representations in popular cinema. Most crucially, this overlapping of gender and religious spheres is very vital in ascertaining how women's identification with a particular religion constrains or enhances her freedom and her position in the society, including the performance of gender which may be different depending on the particular religion.

There is rich content in Indian cinema especially in the regional context there exists different cultures that embrace different concept about gender. Looking at gender in the country and how it intersects with the cultural identities of that country helps to appreciate better the different levels of gender construction across the regions. South Indian Cinema like Tamil and Telugu cinema still tends to portray women in conservative perspectives as cultural practices in many regions of South India happen to be still very traditional. There is a film Aramm (2017), where for instance Nayanthara is unafraid to break the stereotypical female roles of women in the south of India who readily become District collectors with district interfering…saying otherwise.

North Indian Cinema: On the other hand, the Mumbai-based Bollywood has a rather free-handed approach towards women, making them appear in upbeat, fashionable yet functional snags. There are films like Kahaani (2012) and Dear Zindagi (2016) in which growing trends of North Indian cinema expose independent urban women but not without clearing their personal and career challenges, while these women belong to the scope of the film socializing. In this way, as opposed to other cinemas, which may also produce rigid female stereotypes, regional cinema encompasses elements of femininity that prevail in a certain region of India as well as progressive images of women within the same scope that, region and gender respectively influence the images which cultures produce.

Caste, class, religion and region among others are intersectional identities that have aided in improving the understanding and examination of gender representation as portrayed in Indian films. These experiences shows that these identities of different level of oppression or empowerment in different ways, but rather, inform each blend creating a unique history of individual woman. In Bandit Queen, a lower-caste, working-class female character Phoolan Devi is perceived and mistreated in a completely different manner than an upper-caste, upper-class female character named Rani in queen. In the same vein, in the instance of Lipstick Under My Burkha, a Muslim woman in a democratic society faces challenges in harmonizing her desire and pleasure within the confines of religion. These layers create complexity in the gender narrative and underlines the concern of the expressions of gender in Indian cinema, that is, how various social identities combine to and create different gender representations in Indian films. while looking on gender representation in Indian cinema through an intersectional lens enhances the comprehension of how caste, class, religion, and regional identities influence gender roles. This approach goes further than the male-female divide since it also considers a range of experiences among women in various societies, which helps to appreciate the multiple identities that inform and shape filmic gender portrayals. In this view, Indian movies, as a medium, will well represent the adaptations of an Indian society's gender discourses, which are often uneven and varied, across all stratifications. Thus, such an approach will offer an improved and deeper understanding of gender issues pertaining to Indian cinema.

However, with the increasing popularity of movements for gender equality, more and more opportunities for women to flourish emerged at an unprecedented speed in the second half of the twentieth century. One such example would be the feminist movement, which took place during the 1960s and 70s and brought about new perspectives on the position of women in modern society. This is evident in films such as Norma Rae (1979) and 9 to 5 (1980), in which strong women who broke stereotypes and conventions emerged and made progress in society. These films paved the way for broader portrayals of gender and women within narratives, including those that position them in ways and powers that were seen then as men's privilege.

Traditionally, Indian cinema has portrayed women in limited domains—as obedient wives, loving mothers, or selfless daughters. Movies made from the early 20th to the mid-20th centuries, such as Mother India (1957) and Chupke Chupke (1975), praised women in these traditional spheres as men were framed as the decision-makers and earners in family and society. Men were instead represented as leaders in the household and someone whom men would want to emulate. The traditional acceptance of the female role reflected a society where men were expected to be the breadwinners and leaders while women adhered to their role as caretakers of family and home.

## 2.2 Shifts in Representation: Women in Leadership, From Homemakers to CEOs

Modern cinema has experienced one of its most monumental changes in how women are represented in leadership roles. The past few decades have witnessed portrayals of women in advertising, corporate, and political realms in which male characters historically dominated their respective fields, almost as the norm. In the films The Devil Wears Prada (2006) and Hidden Figures (2016), we see women portraying formal authority, leading organizations, or contributing to society as people of value while examining the impact that gender identity has on social relationships. At least in America, women lived by historical domesticity and passivity. More often than not, these more recent portrayals of women are not just to show changing norms but also to motivate the audience. Portraying women in leading significant roles normalizes that women can and should lead for real. Breaking down barriers for women is essential, in part because it gives young girls role models of powerful women motivated to occupy positions of power.

Engaging with Global Contexts Gender Portrayal in Indian Cinema and its Relation to Global Cinematic Trends. The examination of how gender representation is done in Indian cinema is helpful, but it is recommended to place those remarks into a broader perspective. Over the years, the cinema all over the world has witnessed great changes in the representations of gender roles; owing to the rise of the global movements that have criticized the traditional representations of both women and men and instead called for better and more complex representations of the two genders. This allows analyzing Indian films within the context of the global tendencies in cinema, and finding out whether the cause of changing gender relations in films turned out to be Indian films or were its films in the orbit of towards changing gender relations. In the last twenty years, there has been a remarkable change in how gender roles are allocated in countries all over the world and in almost all genres of film too, with a lot of focus given to the depiction of women as tough and independent characters, and opposing the existing social systems. Movements such as #MeToo or Times Up, and especially in California played an important role in the fight against gender discrimination and sexual abuse as well as the so-called women problem – the lack of representation of women, both on camera and even more so behind it. Such development has brought about not only films, which are in itself subversive of the accepted gender relations, but more importantly, those with women's self-determination and empowerment subjects.

Changes in Hollywood's Discourse it is not a coincidence that the booming popularity of Wonder Woman (2017), Black Panther (2018) and Little Women (2019) is part of the global phenomenon of the triumph of the female fighters who break the confines of femininity. This phenomenon can also be observed in other films, for example The Hunger Games (2012) or Frozen (2013), where domestic heroines are brave, active and are not "only" defined by their relationships with men. Film in Italy outside schooled European films, as in the case of Portrait of a Lady on Fire (2019) or Toni Erdmann (2016), feminine subjectivity is expressed in elaborated ways, including an unchained woman. Within these films, figures exhibit emotionality, depth, purpose, and combatant women in the patriarchal society but tend to more so complex, oppositional gender dynamics. Film in Korea and Film in Africa Gender representation has also improved with films out of South Korea, China and Africa in general. Films like The Handmaiden (2016) and Nafas (2001) showcase the lead actress who assumes roles that defy societal expectations from her respective cultures. In Nigerian film, popularly known as Nollywood, especially through Nollywood, has seen a similar trend, portraying women as assertive individuals who often take control of their destinies, in films like The Wedding Party (2016). This is as towards these worldwide trends, Indian cinema has developed in some aspects in a similar manner, while in a number of other aspects it has deviated largely from those trends.

Simultaneous Changes with the passage of time and in keeping with the international trends, Indian cinema has started to depict healthy and liberated women characters. While films like Queen (2013), Tumhari Sulu (2017), and Lipstick Under My Burkha (2016) feature women who are nonconformists and refuse to accept the roles that are prescribed for them. These films are in line with the international trend of women's empowerment that especially focuses on narratives of women in control of her own life, often in the face of oppression.

Women, Male, and Cinema of the Extreme on the contrary, male-centric mainstream Bollywood often maintains high-class gender stereotypes, particularly in typical commercial films. Films like Kabir Singh (2019) and Dabangg (2010) project hyper masculinity wherein the hero is domineering, violent, and protective thereby marginalizing women in the process. This is ironic because while such portrayals, dubbed toxic masculinity, are becoming hard to find, and different models of men are being explored, the opposite trend prevails in this region. Cinema and Feminist Movements the new feminist wave has swept Hollywood as well as European cinema, and this has created a different landscape where more women are at the helm of affairs, such as directing, writing or producing. In Indian cinema, more female filmmakers have been oriented to bring such changes like Zoya Akhtar (Gully Boy, Dil Dhadakne Do) and Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari (Bareilly Ki Barfi, Panga) but still, the industry has a shortfall concerning women in the film production process. Current estimates suggest that even more women than this are active in the creative and decision contexts in film industries around the world.

Indian cinema has indeed progressed in some aspects, in particular the representation of genders in the films. However, the boldness of these transformations remains very relative. On the one hand, Indian cinema in some aspects is catching up with the trends set by the rest of the world, particularly through the portrayal of a certain urban, contemporary middle-class woman who defies the patriarchal normative order. Yet there are many examples of Indian films looking at the construction and portrayal of gender rather differently, especially considering the role of not only gender but also of caste, class, religion, and geography which are often absent from the majority of Western films. Pioneering Aspects films like Thappad (2020), Soni (2018) has also dealt with the issues within the Indian society like domestic violence and women in families with respect to marriage. These films avoid the Hollywood or European cinema narratives and subvert them by dealing with oppression that is culturally produced and exists only within the boundaries of Indian society which is patriarchal in nature.

This means that Indian cinema offers vew that can contribute to the global discourses in gender owing to the presence of contours that are rare in other countries. Global Influence by Indian Cinema has also, Jose, Carlos and Salma contend exposed itself to the global trends of cinema. For example, in the film Veere Di Wedding (2018), which is about female bonding and independence, the influence of the female character of western cinema can be seen, reminiscent of the movie Sex and the City (2008). Even films equated to such cultures, if they are Indian in their premises, would most likely depict modern urban women in the West more than in their own country.

Because of the universal gender ideology, Indian cinema effectively incorporates and demonstrates the discrimination aspects of different cultures. Rather than being focused on individualism like in most western films, Indian films show gender evolution in a more of a familial and communal as a whole aspect. It provides a different point of view on the global feminist movement, depicting women's strategies in coping with the all-encompassing gender system in a context where relations and social order are very much family-related. Moreover, the depiction of rural lower caste women in Bandit Queen (1994) and Article 15 (2019) especially addresses the concerns of intersectional oppression which is less explored in the world cinema. Such films unearth the issues of gender, caste, and class in relation to each other in ways that add to the conversations of the world how these different tensions transcend gender.

The representations of the male gender in Indian cinema has also relative global benchmarks. Though the cinema of tolerating or changing the male genocide has for some time penetrated the Asian region, for the most part Indian films are still based on the idealistic and heroic image of manhood. In the recent past however, some films have been produced such as Dil Dhadakne Do (2015) and Kapoor & Sons (2016) which dissect men in a quite complex way revealing their weaknesses and emotional conflicts which are in tandem with the global trends that seek to reduce the burden of masculinity. Through a greater examination of the global contexts, the article is able to demonstrate that Indian cinema has certain elements that are in consonance with the global trends in gender representations or at variance from this global approach as well. Though many Indian films often begin to showcase empowered and multi-dimensional women of the west, who had up to then, by virtue of this particular ideology, been living in the oppression of traditional femininity, such films are still embedded to quite an extent in the local cultural ideology which adds enriching content to the global discussions on gender. Almost all facets of Indian cinema, especially with the cinematic treatment of intersectional diversity, render information that is nolens volens different from the global gender and film discourse.

In recent decades, Indian cinema has begun to disrupt many of these stereotypical representations, providing a reflection of and influence upon changing societal values. Modern films increasingly depict women with leadership qualities like women as CEOs, women entrepreneurs, women in the workplace, and women in politics. Women will be represented and empowered in films like Queen (2013) and Tumhari Sulu (2017), where women become independent characters who step out of their traditional roles in the household to build careers and personal power.

This is valuable because a picture of Indian women as successful and accomplished professionals and public leaders could potentially normalize and reshape public opinion about women's changing roles in society. If Indian women in film can establish new roles or normalize the idea of accomplishment for women in these fields — despite being portrayed, it still signals a willingness to potentially stimulate change — and thus, women's movements are expanding beyond the domestic.

## 2.3 Redefining Masculinity: Men as Caregivers and Nurturers

Movies have also reconstructed masculinity, representing men in roles as nurturers and caregivers, similarly to the changing representation of women. Traditionally, masculinity in Hollywood films was defined by stoicism, strength, and emotional distance, with the ideals that caregiving and emotional labor were the duties of women. More recently, the characterizations of men in films have begun to destroy that stereotype.

Films like The Pursuit of Happyness (2006) and Marriage Story (2019) show male characters as loving and engaged fathers, breaking away from the stereotype of men as emotionally distant wage earners. The narratives encourage readers to think about masculinity in terms of empathy, caregiving, and emotional vulnerability. We can create masculine identities without reinforcing cultural beliefs that caring and upbringing are not masculine traits. Each film broadens what it means to be a man and engages the audience in a wider understanding of masculine gender roles.

The change in how ladies are depicted, and masculinity have been redefined in Indian cinema by showing men also playing the nurturing roles along with their fatherly ones. Old Indian films presented men as emotionally detached beings who only provided for the family. In contrast, new movies show them as loving fathers, caring partners and gentle people.

As an illustration, indelible characters like Shakespear did in Piku (2015) and Badhaai Ho(2018), where men do the caregiving and are depicted to be emotionally responsive, generalize male character presentation emphasizing the provider aspect, thereby still promoting supportive shared family responsibilities. The more comprehensive representation of manhood helps create a wider definition of gender roles by highlighting its intricacies that enable men to both supply and nurture within the household.

## 2.4 Cinema as a Tool for Cultural Change: The Rise of Diverse Gender Representations

The cinema serves more than just as a mirror of society; it actively influences communities. Gender roles are represented in film, and this affects the ways in which people think, behave and perceive gender. More movies seem to disregard the conventional ideas of masculinity and femininity as they become part of a bigger movement towards gender balance. A lot of the time, cinema is used as a cultural vehicle to fight against stereotypes and stimulate progressive thoughts The films that portray women in leadership positions or men as primary caregivers help to erase any abnormal mindsets regarding the traditional behavior patterns depicted by these genders on screen. In the course of time, such characters expose many

viewers to new paradigms that shatter norms about people's roles in society, enabling actors to get equal paychecks for their performances, whether male or female, all being created equal before God. Thus, films provide an opportunity for equal opportunity among all members of society by breaking down boundaries set by static roles assigned to males and females.

LGBTQ+ Representation in Modern Indian Cinema as a Queer Theoretical Approach, In the past few decades a notable shift in presenting the depiction of LGBTQ+ characters in Indian cinema has undergone a remarkable change from being ignored and stereotyped to relatively more complex and realistic characterizations. Nevertheless, that evolution is still in its infancy, and once again, a complex analysis of a number of films proves that LGBTQ+ identities are often perpetually pushed aside or confined to stereotypes. Engaging with queer theory in a more meaningful way may help to contextualize those seeming contradictions, dealing with the question whether such images contribute to a positive normalization of gay and lesbian identities, or are focused on reproducing social prejudices.

In the evolution of Indian cinema, there was hardly any saturation with an LGBTQ character or if portrayed they were comical stereotypes. For instance, in the film Dostana (2008), gay men characters were included purely for the sake of funny moments and were portrayed in an exaggerated, camp and effeminate way that did not contribute to the film's message. The same goes for Kal Ho Naa Ho (2003) which used humorous subplots where the comic relief relied on a character's sexual orientation being mistakenly understood by other characters. Such images were consistent with heteronormativity which considered homosexuality and other LGBTQ+ identities to be abnormal or 'other', straying far away from the social norm and hence skimming off the peripheries of both society and of cinema. In that sense, these notions served to consolidate existing social attitudes and created images that made mockery of or belittled non heterosexual identities thereby restricting comprehension of LGBT concepts in the society.

The Portraying of LGBTQ+ Community in the Contemporary Indian Cinema, the Indian film industry has improved considerably regarding the dignified and realistic portrayal of LGBTQ+ characters. Such films as Aligarh (2016), Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan (2020), and Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga (2019) show the increasing acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities, seeking to portray them positively and in a comprehensive way rather than reduced to mere jokes or stereotypes. Aligarh (2016): One of the most, if not the most, is Aligarh in its attempt to represent LGBTQ+. Aligarh is based on the real life of a homosexual professor who was shunned for his sexual preference. This film takes on the issue of identity, in terms of its acceptance, as a matter of basic human rights. The film centers on the struggle against discrimination focusing on the dignity and preservation of existence rather than advocacy. The character is complex and multifaceted presented with care, unlike the stereotypes associated with older versions, and the focus of the film is on the character rather than the society.

Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan (2020) movie's pivotal moment is when the viewers get to see on screen a gay couple as the protagonists of a romantic comedy, and these two leads are facing their families' disapproval. It is a very funny movie; nonetheless, various issues are addressed, such as the society's intolerance to different sexual orientation and the family's expectations, helping the cause of tolerating such relationships in the Indian context. This is true in relation to the wider contextual phenomena of the inclusion of LGBTQ themes in comedies about romance, bearing in mind film such as Love, Simon (2018). Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga (2019): This film denotes the first ever lesbian love story made in mainstream Bollywood, although it is set within the conservative range of family entertainment. It turns the clash of sexes and sexual orientation on its head by stereotyping no one and, most importantly, advocates the cause of LGBTQ acceptance in the Indian social construct.

Gender and Sexuality in Film studies, too, benefits from more nuanced storytelling of LGBTQ+ characters, and therefore, aids in deconstructing existing stereotypes in the society. One term that is frequently used in queer studies is, heteronormativity. Put simply, it is the view that there is a normal state of being – that being heterosexual, ignoring all other existing sexual orientations, is ascribed to every living being. Movies such as Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan and Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga are resistant to such stereotypical and heteronormative attitudes as male and females are casted as actors aided by a storyline. But, while these films are encouraging, they do continue to primarily feature upper-middle-class urban members of the LGBTQ+ community that do not offer their views on some experiences of queering that are not limited to the notions of class or caste and ruralism. For example, Judith Butler whose work is also grounded in queer theory argues that gender and sexuality are performative and must be resisted because they are only a part of the representation producing the structural change that may raise new oppressive images above old ones. In This is primarily because cinema in India is focused on the urban middle class, and fails to address the complexities of queer issues that cannot be collapsed to just include middleclass.

Influence of Intersectionality on Queer identities and the Problem of Marginalization this concept of intersectionality in literary work and how this concept applies to the representation of LGBTQ individuals in Indian cinema. It refers to the overlapping 'social identities' (such as gender, caste, class, and sexuality) that contribute to the system of domination. Members of the lower caste, rural population, or minority religions that identify as queer experience the worst kinds of oppression in concentric circles, often invisible in popular cinema.

There is some Unity and Disunity in representation of the LGBTQ+ Community Affects Society. There is no denying the effect of the increasing number of LGBTQ+ characters in Indian films, it has been beneficial in terms of the social aspect. Because, the use of such queer identities in the mainstream motion picture assists in modifying the already existing attitudes and promotes tolerance. This is, for instance, in the case where movies such as Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan depict LGBTQ+ members in such a way that their audiences hurry towards them and understand those users even if they are not interested in the LGBTQ+ matter.

A closer look at the Development of LGBTQ+ Representation in Indian Cinema and Beyond shows that there are still several steps that should be taken before these portrayals are entirely liberated from the clichés that quite often bind them. More often still, creative producers and writer still simply draw cartoons instead of developing real characters out of LGBTQ people Complete characterization, including balancing both positive and negative traits with the majority of LGBTQ people does not fam easily with transcending stereotypes. This applies more especially on transgenders, who more often than not are perfect images either of yardstick bitter rivals or pathetic helpless dolls as evidenced in Sadak (1991) and Laxmii (2020) which sadly reaffirm the existing derogative concealment of the transgender community. If Hindi cinema is to play any serious role in normalizing the queer identity, then stereotypes of this nature need to be cast off by the filmmakers and it is imperative that they begin to konw the queer people and portray them as real people with real stories to tell. This change would not be out of place as it is becoming the norm in the films produced today, where for example, Moonlight (2016) and Portrait of a Lady on Fire (2019) present characters who are queer in a dignified and complete manner such that their sexual orientation and gender identity do not become the defining aspects of who they are.

In the final analysis, contemporary Bollywood films such as Mardani represent the LGBTQ+ community and people affected by it rather well yet still finds it difficult to escape stereotypes and represent the complex queer realities inclusive of all intersecting identities. Indian cinema can embrace the queer theoretical orientation that resists heteronormativity and works towards the acceptance of gender identities that are not gender binary, by the increasing of the spectrum of LGBTQ+ characters included in, and beyond, the predominately upper class and cosmopolitan plots of Indian cinema. Moreover, while Indian cinema is maturing in its depiction of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, there is also a pressing need for enhancements in the quality and quantity of non-binary and transgender femininity representation. Within the advances made by global cinema, Indian creatives are part of the progress towards the representation of the varied experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals in India and beyond through film.

Not simply motion pictures, Aligarh (2015) and Chitrangada (2012) have been used as tools for social change. Their themes regarding LGBTQ+ concerns and fluidity in gender status not only break societal shyness but also encourage an open-mindedness toward different ways of living that embrace all sexualities. The broader representation of gender identities in Indian cinema goes beyond just trying to be inclusive. It means contributing to a larger cultural revolution for accepting, recognizing and celebrating diversity. These cinematic stories inform how society thinks and acts around these issues – they are instruments of transformation.

## 2.5 The Rise of Diverse Gender Identities: Cinema as a Reflection and Shaper of Cultural Change

One important thing that has changed in gender roles is that there are now many different gender identities represented in movies. Consequently, film narratives are being focused on non-binary people besides transgenders and individuals whose genders are not fixed among others. The Danish Girl (2015) and A Fantastic Woman (2017), for instance, bring these stories and characters into the limelight of modern films promoting acceptance and visibility for those who never obey normative standards of gender identification.

Such representations serve to build empathy and understanding among all genders hence it is important to normalize the experiences of transgenderism as well as non-binary existence. Besides, these accounts and characters must be made visible by popular cinema because it's on this basis our community would come to accept gender as something fluid that differs from person to person rather than something fixed or designated by society.

The effectiveness of movies as a source of telling or relaying stories cannot be overemphasized. It reflects the beliefs and values of the society and influences them as well. Among other functions of cinema, its contribution to the depiction of gender dynamics in films is one of significance, since it mostly reproduces the existing social norms, but also functions as instigator of change. In order to assess the effect of cinema on the social construction of gender divisions thoroughly, it is necessary to understand the cases when the images of gender stereotypes in films caused the change of public opinion regarding gender roles. This is possible by studying the visibility, attention and response to the film, as well as any studies that measure or note changes in how society perceives gender roles. The role of cinema mirrors and shapes the patterns of the society within which it is consumed. The cinema has been regarded as a reflection of society which shows the existing beliefs and principles. But the cinema also acts as a designer at times by turning the norms upside down and showing things from a different light. How gender roles are represented in films is relevant that as they can uphold the traditional gender expectations or tell the stories that are more balanced and do not have rigidly defined roles. This is one of the reasons why the issue of gender, from all social dimensions that cinema addresses, can be best understood through the issue of cinema as a reflection and a catalyst of change.

The Bollywood movie Queen (2014) directed by Vikas Bahl is a remarkable work providing a case for the study of social consequences of cinema on gender. The film follows Rani, a woman who decides to go on a honeymoon alone to Europe after her fiancée cancels the wedding. In the course of her trip, Rani's character grows, and she becomes more self-assured, braver, and more conscious about herself, which goes against the norms about Indian women especially that their identity is only complete when married.

The film was well received by audiences and reported earnings of more than ₹100 crore worldwide. The movie struck a chord particularly among young women as most of them saw Rani as their role model. The success of the film provoked debates and discussions about women's independence, self-empowerment and the idea that there is life beyond marriage. Talking to the media, many of the audience stated that the movie inspired them to go out and respect their independence, take solo trips or even work in jobs that were not confined to the roles of women.

There was a notable reception of this film in feminist circles due to its depiction of a woman who successfully negotiates all the limitations imposed on her by the society. Several awards were won by the film including Best Actress award for Kangana Ranaut in the National Awards which raised even more the discussion about women in Indian films.

As per the sociological research carried out after the release of Queen, the overall attitudes of the society towards women's liberation have changed mildly. According to a survey done in 2015 by the Indian Journal of Gender Studies, there was a noticeable increase in the young women who wished to travel alone or achieve particular aspirations.

The Case of Mother India and Tumhari Sulu is another aspect where social changes through cinema can be analyzed through the perspective of gender norms over a period of time. Vedke Kinoshita Mother India, which was released in 1957, idealized the self-sacrificing mother as someone who suffers for her kin who comes from the post colonized Indian society dominated by men. The central character Radha is an ideal woman who has all the positive qualities of devotion, self-sacrifice and courage. Although it was a well-made film and even its makers think of it with respect when it comes to the Indian cinema history, it still endorsed the still prevalent notion of women being dominantly caretakers and nurturers in the society. On the other hand, relatable films such as, Tumhari Sulu (2017) present women who want to have both, a successful career and personal life, thus refuting the age-old stereotypes. In Tumhari Sulu, the lead character, Sulu, is a homemaker, who also works as a radio jockey during odd hours. Sulu's choice of this bold profession, in the face of societal imposition of austere domesticity on females, presents a progressive narrative of women agency and empowerment.

Social significance like Tumhari Sulu and Queen are examples of new movies in the Indian entertainment business that are heavily female-centered and strive to eliminate traditional gender stereotypes. The profitable achievements of these cinematographic productions point out that the viewers are more and more ready for and appreciate narratives about women who do not conform to the restrictions imposed by society. As a consequence, women are portrayed as being able to juggle careers with family duties, which tallies with the modern-day expectations of a good number of women in India.

Physical Education and Its Impact on Gender Inequality Through Media in The Society Numerous scholars have attempted to assess the extent to which the screen affects as society's perception of women and men. For instance, findings from a study conducted by the Centre for Media Studies (CMS) in 2019 indicate that films with progressive gender representation alter the audience's attitude towards them, particularly, young audiences. As stated in this research, viewing films that encourage a reversal of classic gender roles has more positive effects regarding acceptance of gender equality in individuals in the younger demographic age groups, most especially, urban cities that have greater access to such films. Likewise, an article from the International Journal of Social Sciences (2020) highlighted that women who saw films such as Dangal (2016) and Chak De! India (2007) that portrayed women's sports felt they could break barriers and were more likely to take up unconventional professions. It was especially strong towards the young women where the majority stated that these films motivated them to go against the gendered social norms in their careers.

In India the box office performance of films that defy conventional gender roles also indicates their influence on society. Such, for instance, is the case of Dangal, the movie which focuses on a father changing his daughters into world champions in wrestling who shattered box office lines and became one of the most commercially successful Indian films in history. The depiction of powerful female sports players subverted expectations of women in sports, and the film's success showed the appetite for such films that are not centered on gender-based stereotypes.

The FICCI-EY report on the India media and entertainment industry released in 2017 stated that women-centric and progressive films were no longer perceived as risky investments. This shift also implies that audiences are not merely tolerant of such content, but even in fact demonstrate a craving for it, and gender relations narratives in the films have become dynamic, which speaks to the societal effect of film. 'the changed dynamics of gender relations in the films'.

Cinema's repercussions on social constructs of gender are not limited to the Indian context alone. Movies like Wonder Woman (2017) and Black Panther (2018) released over the years, have had similar effects globally in antagonizing the notions of gender and race within the western cinematic contexts. The narrative in which women of color or women with diverse backgrounds tend to do well within the film industry has led to discussions on inclusivity and equal representation in the film industries in and out of La La Land. This is especially when examining the impact of Indian films in comparison to other film industries. It is very clear – cinelanguage geography impacts the gender roles within a society.

It may be emphasized that cinema and its effects on perception of sexual roles is a vast issue with a lot of dimensions. Movies such as Queen, Dangal, Tumhari Sulu and etc., do not only show awareness of changing proportions of gender roles, but also encourage the process of changing these proportions by presenting stories that seek to turn such expectations around. In looking at the box office returns and critical reception or sociological studies of the same, it is apparent that even in the cinema, societies are built and such societies encourage action beyond the cinema, especially towards women as we see and witness a fight for equality. With the evolution of films and the development and acceptance of a variety of gender's experiences, cinema as an art will never be useful only in entertaining but in certain agendas that hope for a better society.

The Indian film industry depicts and instigates a cultural transition. The evolution of men's and women's roles in movies is a reflection of the broader cultural movement towards gender equality and acceptance. As they are moving away from the usual stereotypes, films are presenting different portrayals of sexual orientation but also serve to clarify what people think about it. More importantly, Indian Films have helped demolish age-old conceptions about gender by representing women and men in more diverse ways that can support a system based on equality for one to view and comprehend sexual identity. The extent to which movies can change our views on societal consciousness or man and the emergence of new conventions indicate that culturally expressive films are key agents for societal progress.

## 3. Method

The research seeks to examine in depth a qualitative content analysis method of examining the transformation of gender roles in Indian cinema historically in an extended timeline. Films that have been selected for the analysis are done so on the basis of certain criteria, which are aimed at making sure that there is relevance and representation of various decades in the depiction of gender. It selected some Indian films across decades, and began from the early twentieth century to contemporary films. Selected films were Mother India (1957), Chupke Chupke (1975), Queen (2013), Tumhari Sulu (2017), Piku (2015), Badhaai Ho (2018), Aligarh (2015), and Chitrangada (2012), among others as their signification is not just a commentary on traditional gender roles but a mapping of on-screen both a contextual perspective and an illustration of gender-role changes over time.

In terms of the Evolution of Indian Cinema and Gender – Milestone Films. Mother India (1957) and Chupke Chupke (1975) were chosen to depict the typical gender roles and societal relations of the mid-20th century.

Cultural Significance of Films that have contributed to the wider social understanding of a particular gender through polemics or through the debates within the culture. Aligarh (2015) and Chitrangada (2012) concerning their themes about LGBT issues, much of which is still debated in India today regarding the both issues of gender equity and sexuality.

Commercial Box Office and Critical Praise on those motion pictures which were able to take commercial success or were recognized as critically acclaimed and reaching a wider audience and cultural effect because of it. Case in point, Queen (2013) and Piku (2015) were included for they were both box office triumphs as well as lauded for their enhanced images of women and men in non-stereotypical roles.

Gender Diversity among the films that were chosen also encompass a range of genders and gender roles, from the most customary male and female roles, to non-binary, as well as transgender characters. This includes, for example, Tumhari Sulu (2017) where the supine woman is shown as a housewife whose life alters completely and ventures into the workforce and Badhaai Ho's (2018) engagement with masculinity in care giving which is presented in a less rigid manner.

To make the study more illuminating, it has also comparative elements with the international films especially Hollywood and other Asian films to show how gender roles are changing in Indian films. This comparison deepens the understanding of the issue by looking at the cultural particularities, as well as the overall patterns, of gender portrayals.

In Hollywood Cinema there are many Indian films such as Queen and Tumhari Sulu that show women taking the lead and in the working class as it was the case with the films The Devil Wears Prada (2006) and Hidden Figures (2016). This has been instrumental in showing the two industries are influenced by feminism and even the modern social constructions of the roles of men and women.

Other Asian Cinema in this respect, The Handmaiden (2016) can be situated within the South or Japanese cinemas in a gender and sexuality discriminated representation, in comparison to India's Aligarh and Chitrangada, which also resisted the conventional gender binaries. Through this, the study presents the genders of the Indian films as distinct from those of the Asian films in their regional attributes.

The chosen films are likewise examined in the manner of a timeline to understand better the changes that have occurred with the representation of different sexes in Indian cinema. This linear approach is essential in putting into context how Indian films at various times in history mirror and influence views towards masculinity and femininity. For instance:

The 1950s through to the 1970s there were movies like Mother India and Chupke Chupke, which placed women as primary caretakers and housewives, which showed the country embraced extreme patriarchy during these times. The 2000s onwards: Recent films such as Piku and Badhaai Ho have begun showing more complex and balanced aspects among the genders indicating that society has evolved and embraced non-binary people. This timeline showcases the evolution of gender representations in Indian cinema with respect to the external social changes, all in line with the international campaigns for gender mainstreaming and diversity.

Qualitative content analysis of Indian cinema has its own parameters for selection of data, based on factors such as historical significance, social significance, box office collection, and criticism. The research draws from findings of Hollywood and other Asian cinemas, and does not only explain how portrayal of the female gender in Indian cinema has evolved, but also projects this in a more global scope, thus strengthening the arguments made. This qualitative research paradigm ensures that the research study of the development of gender stereotypes is culturally specific, and culturally transcendental- thus demonstrating the capability of cinema as social engineering.

Women featured in leading or authoritative roles such as female characters transitioning from housewives to CEOs, entrepreneurs, and politicians. The growth of new masculine identities so men may be featured as caregivers or nurturers counteracting traditional masculine identifiers emphasizing non-aggressive displays of caregiving or nurturing behaviors. Different representations of gender roles particularly represented by films that challenge the norms of binary genders' representation including representations of LGBTQ+ identity inquiries thus promoting vague tears of genders.

The designs of the research include drawing from film critiques, studies, and feminist theories as a way of deriving some cultural diversity modal portrayal existing in such films. This method will allow the desired data to analyze whether gender roles portrayal in films impact social change.

## 4. Results

The scrutiny indicates that Indian cinema nowadays presents gender beautifully as it has changed demographically over the years. Among the major findings are:

An Increasing Participation of Women in Leadership Roles: In Queen and Tumhari Sulu films, one can see how women have transformed from being housewives to entrepreneurs. The movies show women as liberated beings who are working

hard in offices by showing their independence, self-confidence and ability to hold leadership positions. This is in agreement with what is happening in the real world where some Indian societies have witnessed an upsurge of female leaders who are no longer confined at home.

Redefining Masculinity: In this era, Piku and Badhaai Ho present men in taking care of their children while they have always been placed on a distance basis from them throughout history. Such movies indicate a type of manhood which is broader than before where tenderness is emphasized together with family responsibilities among men who display emotional weakness in addition to other diverse activities. The new images not only embrace the breaking down of traditional gender role boundaries for nurturing fathers but also promote a more inclusive definition of manhood that incorporates emotions with care giving.

Different Gender Identities: Aligarh movie and Chitrangada are some movies that discuss LGBTQ themes bringing non-binary gender identities and queer films to the forefront.

## 5. Discussion

Traditionally, elaborated Indian films have shown extreme patriarchal societies where men took decisions while women acted just as housewives. On the contrary, modern movies portray women in politically significant positions and fathers are now caregivers hence there is a larger change in the culture.

Women's portrayal in leadership positions such as businesswomen, family heads or CEOs is not only important for filmic reasons but also works on a larger societal scale. In disappearing happily home environments where women used to suffer; their strength can be seen throughout when they occupy powerful roles on screen thereby exposing outdated sexist male egoism and social paradigms. This type of representation must empower women, motivate children and youth alike against narratives about gender.

Moreover, masculine perspectives could equally involve reinventing manhood within Indian cinema through projecting various emotions including tenderness. For instance, Malkani (2014) states that men should be acknowledged as caretakers thus dismantling harmful stereotypes associated with fatherhood that have persisted within traditional movie themes.

Movies involving LGBTQ+ themes that demonstrate the diverse representation of gender identities are much more intricate than those in India. In these contexts, movies can be said to bring about a deconstruction of gender and its binaries by adopting gender identity concepts that resonate with fluidity and multiplicity. The existence of non-binary individuals and trans characters in movies shown to the general audience challenges various identities and contributes to their eventual acceptance as well as the right to live a life far from what is commonly accepted as 'normal'.

According to the findings further indicate Indian cinema has emerged as strong agent of cultural change among other things. It is expected that films will contribute to social transformation of gender roles by challenging gender stereotypes and promoting narrative inclusion. Over time, such transformations could go even further as this institution continues to develop and change itself.

## 6. Conclusion

Cinema in India for long has been a crucial portrayal of social morals, but it has also resulted into active shapers of cultural beliefs. The portrayals of sex roles in Indian movies keep changing with the advancement in this country's society. Greater cultural transformation is reflected by increased women leadership roles, redefined manhood and presentations showing transgender people as well as others who do not belong to the binary gender category. Breaking away from conventional ideals alongside portrayals depicting all forms of inclusiveness in the Indian film industry make a significant input into a more just and advanced version of gender for the globe at large.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors, Mr. JERALD J KOCHERRY and DR. ASGHAR ALI ANSARI, reiterate that there are no conflicts of interest about the content or findings presented in this paper. The analysis and conclusions drawn from the study are based purely on academic research, with no external influence from any individual or organization. No financial, personal, or professional affiliations have influenced the preparation or outcome of this study, ensuring its trustworthiness and the authors' transparency.

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