

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the last decade of the 20th century, popular Hindi cinema grew considerably in stature, style and reach. It was a period of creative and commercial activity that was as frenetic and eventful as any other in the annals of filmmaking in Mumbai. Hindi films conquered several new frontiers in geographical and market terms. Quite a few of these releases also managed to push the boundaries of Bollywood's typically flamboyant, color-spangled, exaggerated and kitschy narrative idiom. The contemporary Hindi films are carefully packaged and branded product in which every little visual and physical detail, from the components that make up the backdrop to the attire and accessories of the stars. Contemporary Hindi films have evolved through ages. From romance to realism to comedy to action; it has traversed a long path.

Before an intriguing figure of Bombay cinema was the westernized vamp, a nightclub cabaret dancer who was pitted against the female protagonist in many films. The vamp occupied a hyper sexualized yet illicit space. The concept of male gaze (Laura Mulvey, 1946) was always there in Hindi cinema. In a film, Mulvey (1946) mentions there are three kind of gaze. First the view point of the camera or the way camera follows the characters, second is the look of the audience and thirdly the gaze of the characters within the film. Her contention was that the look of the characters within the film subordinates the other looks and it essentially follows the existing socially gendered practice where women play a subordinate role and are essentially the sources of voyeuristic pleasure. In her own words (1989):

“In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness”.

Gaze is a psychoanalytical term brought into popular usage by Jacques Lacan (1968) to describe the anxious state that comes with the awareness that one can be viewed. The psychological effect, Lacan (1968) argues, is that the subject loses some sense of autonomy upon realizing that he or she is a visible object. This concept is bound with his theory of the mirror stage, in which a child encountering a mirror realizes that he or she has an external appearance. Lacan suggests that this gaze effect can similarly be produced by any conceivable object such as a chair or a television screen. This is not to say that the object behaves optically as a mirror; instead it means that the awareness of any object can induce an awareness of also being an object. In the essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", Laura Mulvey introduced the concept of the "male gaze" as a feature of power asymmetry. The concept has been strongly influential on feminist film theory and media studies.

With the unleashing of a neo-liberal economy and free market cultural model by the turn of the century, the popular Hindi cinema began to exhibit a few notable changing trends. Soumya Mukherjee argues "a radicalization or inversion of the power equation in the dominant discourse of representation has taken place. With the advent of post-modernity and the concept of sex for sale, eroticized male body has appeared in the realm of representation. Laura Mulvey would not have thought of this kind of sexed representation of the masculine where the male character not only engender narcissistic identification but is also becomes an erotic spectacle or a fetished object. Since the emergence of the Bourgeois capitalism in the seventeenth century, the history of gender representation is the history of men looking at women. Recent gender representations, in advertisements and cinema, have complicated the stereotypical male subject and female object".

The argument of gaze and spectatorship "took as its axis a desire to identify a pleasure that was specific to cinema, which is the eroticism and cultural conventions surrounding the look" (Mulvey, 1989). So when the gaze and spectatorship are used to analyze the

Indian cinema it is assumed that the eroticism and cultural conventions surrounding the look in India are similar to the culture where these concepts have emerged from. However what if they are different? For instance, it is very common sight to see people staring at something or somebody. People stare if one looks beautiful or ugly, if someone has a new car, if someone is a foreigner or a stranger etc. Whereas this kind of looking (staring) is absent and is considered offensive in the west which saw the emergence of classical film theory.

In film, the male gaze occurs when the audience is put into the perspective of a heterosexual man. A scene may linger on the curves of a woman's body, for instance. Mulvey argues that in mainstream cinema, the male gaze typically takes precedence over the female gaze.

The development of feminist film theory was influenced by second wave feminism and the development of women's studies within the academy. Feminist scholars began taking cues from the new theories arising from these movements to analyzing film. Initial attempts in the United States in the early 1970s were generally based on sociological theory and focused on the function of women characters in particular film narratives or genres and of stereotypes as a reflection of a society's view of women. Works such as Marjorie Rosen's *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies, and the American Dream* (1973) and Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies* (1974) analyze how the women portrayed in film related to the broader historical context, the stereotypes depicted, the extent to which the women were shown as active or passive, and the amount of screen time given to women.

With the beginning of the spreading of a neo-liberalist socio-economic order, Hindi cinema made an entry into the realm of the projection of postmodernist trend. Postmodernism is considered to be a tendency in contemporary culture characterized by the problem of objective truth and inherent suspicion towards global cultural narrative

or meta-narrative. It involves the belief that many, if not all, apparent realities are only social constructs, as they are subject to change inherent to time and place. It emphasizes the role of language, power relations, and motivations; in particular it attacks the use of sharp classifications such as male versus female, straight versus gay, white versus black, and imperial versus colonial. Rather, it holds realities to be plural and relative, and dependent on who the interested parties are and what their interests consist of. It attempts to problematise modernist overconfidence, by drawing into sharp contrast the difference between how confident speakers are of their positions versus how confident they need to be to serve their supposed purposes.

Postmodernism has influenced many cultural fields, including religion, literary criticism, sociology, linguistics, architecture, anthropology, visual arts, and music. Cinema is also trying to bridge the gap between the social differences of male and female. Since ancient days cinema always had the concept of male gaze, but contemporary cinema is getting inspired by various feminist theories and is trying its best to generate the concept of female gaze.

1.1. Body, Practical Beauty and Funtional Eroticism

Aesthetically human body has always worked as a wooing element for the film viewers or for the appreciators of any given art, and is the most important subject or object provided by nature which captures the thought process of human mind to correlate with any situation in the present era.

In the consumer package, there is one object finer, more precious and more dazzling than any other- and even more laden with connotations, in spite of the fact that encapsulates them all. That object is the body. Its rediscovery, in a spirit of physical and

sexual liberation, after a millennial of Puritanism; its omnipresence in contemporary world like advertising, fashion and mass culture; the hygienic, dietetic, therapeutic, cult which surrounds it, the obsession with youth, elegance, virility/femininity, treatments and regimes, and the sacrificial practices attaching to it all bear witness to the fact that the body has today become an object of salvation. It has literally taken over that moral and ideological function from the soul.

J. Baudrillard (1998) explains that we have only one body and it has to be saved. “There is a relentless effort to convince people they had no bodies (though they were never really convinced); today there is a relentless effort to convince them of their bodies. Baudrillard questions, “Is not the body the most obvious of things?” He answers, it is a cultural fact. In any culture whatsoever the mode of organization of the relation to the body reflects the mode of organization of the relation to the things and of social relations. If you talk about the capitalist society the general status of private property also applies to the body, the way people operate socially with it and the mental representation we have about it.

Practical Beauty

In the long process of sacralization of the body as exponential value, of the functional body – that is to say, the body which is no longer “flesh” as in the religious conceptions, or work power as in industrial logic, but is taken up again in its materiality (or its visible ideality) as narcissistic cult object or element of social ritual and tactics – beauty and eroticism are two major leitmotifs.

Baudrillard (1998) elaborates ‘value’ of the beauty of body, “the ethics of beauty, which is the very ethics of fashion, may be defined as the reduction of all concrete values, the ‘use-values’ of the body(energetic, gestural, sexual) – to a single functional

‘exchange-value’, which itself alone, in its abstraction, and capsulate the idea of the glorious, fulfilled body, the idea of desire and pleasure, and of course thereby also denies and forgets them in their reality and in the end simply peters out into an exchange of signs. For beauty is nothing more than sign material being exchanged. It functions as sign-value”. Baudrillard further explains that why we can state that the beauty imperative is one of the modalities of the functional imperative, this being valid for objects as much as it is for women and men, the beautician every woman has become being the counterpart of the designer and stylist in the business sphere.

They are inseparable and the two together institute this new ethics of the relation to the body. Though valid for both men and women, they are, nevertheless, differentiated into feminine and masculine poles. The two opposing models—the basic elements of which are largely interchangeable – might be termed phryneism and athleticism. Still, the feminine model has a kind of priority: it is this model which, to some extent, functions as a template of this new ethics.

For women beauty has become an absolute religious imperative. Being beautiful is no longer an effect of nature or a supplement of moral qualities. It is the basic, imperative quality of those who take the same care of their faces and figures as they do of their souls. It is a sign, at the level of the body that one is the member of elect, just as success is such a sign in business. And, indeed, in their respective magazines, beauty and success are accorded the same mystical foundation: for women, it is sensitivity, exploring and evoking “from the inside” all the parts of the body; for the entrepreneur, it is the adequate intuition of all the possibilities of the market.

A sign of election and salvation: the Protestant ethic is not far away here. And it is true that beauty is such an absolute imperative only because it is a form of capital. Movies in general have often been seen as portraying certain roles for men and women and establishing the existence of a male gaze.

Functional Eroticism

Neighboring beauty, sexuality ubiquitously orientates the ‘rediscovery’ and consumption of the body today. The beauty imperative, which is an imperative of turning the body to advantage by way of narcissistic reinvestment, involves the erotic as sexual foil. To distinguish the erotic as a generalized dimension of exchange in our societies from sexuality properly so called. We have to distinguish the erotic body substrate of the exchanged signs of desire—from the body as site of fantasy and abode of desire. In the drive/body, the fantasy/body, the individual structure of desire predominates. In the ‘eroticized’ body, it is the social function of exchange which predominates. In this sense, the erotic imperative—which, like courtesy or so many other social ritual, is mediated by an instrumental code of science—is merely (like the aesthetic imperative in beauty) a variant or metaphor of the functional imperative.

Baudrillard (1998) objectifies the modern body by stating “it is ‘hot’ with that same heat, that same warmth one finds in modern furniture: it is an ‘atmosphere’ heat.” It no longer comes from intimacy and sensuality, but from calculated sexual signification. Sensuality is heat. This sexuality, for its part is hot and cold like the play of warm and cold colors in a ‘functional’ interior. It has the same ‘whiteness’ as the enveloping forms of ‘stylized’, ‘dressed—up’ modern objects. But it is also not ‘frigidity’, as has been suggested, since frigidity still implies a sexual resonance of a violation. The fashion model is not frigid: it is an abstraction.

The style model’s body is no longer an object or desire, but a functional object, a forum of signs in which fashion and the erotic are mingled. It is no longer a synthesis of gestures, even if fashion photography puts all its artistry into re-creating gesture and naturalness by a process of simulation. It is no longer, a body, but a shape.

This is where all modern censors are misled (or are content to be misled): the fact is that in advertising and fashion naked bodies (both women's and men's) refuse the status of flesh, of sex, of finality of desire, instrumentalizing rather the fragmented parts of the body in gigantic process of sublimation, of denying the body in its very evocation.

Just as the erotic is never in desire but in signs, so the functional beauty of the fashion models is never in their expressions but in their 'figures'. Irregularity or ugliness would bring out a meaning again: they are excluded. For beauty here is wholly in abstraction, in emptiness, in aesthetic absence and transparency. These disembodiments are ultimately encapsulated in the gaze. These fascinating/fascinated, sunken eyes, this objectless gaze – both over signification of desire and total absence of desire—are beautiful in their empty erection, in the exaltation of their censorship. That is their functionality.

Medusa eyes, eyes themselves turned to stone, pure signs. Thus, all along the unveiled, exalted body, in these spectacular eyes, eyes ringed by fashion, not by pleasure, it is the very meaning of the body, the truth of the body which vanishes in a hypothetical process. It is to the extent that the body – particularly the female body and, most particularly, the body of that absolute model, the fashion mannequin – constitutes itself as an object that is the equivalent to the other sexless and functional objects purveyed in advertising.

1.2. Body Strategy and Evolution of Sexual Difference

A long desacralization and secularization in favor of the body has run through the whole of the western era: the values of the body have been subversive values, sources of the most acute ideological contradiction. But how do matters stand today when these

values are largely uncontested and have gained acceptance as a new ethic (there is much to be said on this subject: we are now, rather, in a phase in which the puritan and hedonist ideologies are concertinaed, their themes intermingling at every level)? We can see that the body today, apparently triumphant, instead of still constituting a living, contradictory force, a force for ‘demystification’, has quite simply taken over from the soul as mythic instance, as dogma and as salvation scheme. Its ‘discovery’, which for many centuries represented a critique of the sacred, a call for greater freedom, truth and emancipation – in short a battling for humanity, against God – today occurs as an act of resacralization.

The cult of the body no longer stands in contradiction to the cult of the soul: it is the successor to that cult and heir to its ideological function. As Norman O. Brown says in *Life against Death*: ‘we must not be misled by the flat antinomy of the sacred and the secular, and interpret as “secularization” what is only a metamorphosis of the sacred.’

The material evidence of the ‘liberated’ body (though, as we have seen, liberated as sign/object and censored in its subversive truth as desire, not only in athletic activity and hygiene, but also in eroticism) must not be allowed to deceive us here: it merely expresses the supplanting of an outdated ideology – that of the soul, which is inadequate for a developed productivist system and incapable now of ensuring ideological integration – by a more functional modern ideology which, in all essentials, preserves the individualistic value system and the social structures connected with it.

And it even reinforces these, establishing them on an almost permanent basis, since it substitutes for the transcendence of the soul the total immanence, the spontaneous self – evidence of the body. Now, that self-evidence is false evidence.

The body as instituted by modern mythology is no more material than the soul. Like the soul, it is an idea, or, rather – since the term idea does not mean much—it is

hypostasized part-object, a double privileged and invested as such. It has become, as the soul was in its time, the privileged substrate of objectification—the guiding myth of an ethic of consumption.

Evolution of Sexual Difference

From a Darwinian (1872) point of view the human mind is as much a product of evolution as is the rest of the body. The mind is, after all, a product of the brain. From this perspective many human emotions, cognitions and behavioral dispositions are adaptations: features that were retained in the course of evolution because they helped individuals to survive and reproduce, as a result of which they became more prevalent within the population.

Specific statistical psychosexual differences between the sexes are fully to be expected, as both sexes encountered partially different problems of survival and reproduction in the environment in which they evolved. The Darwinian perspective (1872) need not conflict with other perspectives, as the human brain was designed to think, to learn and to construct cultures.

Seen through an evolutionary lens, the existence of the male gaze and the relative absence of a comparable female gaze reflect evolved basic male and female sexual psychologies. On this view modern media do not impose arbitrary standards of beauty and behavior on women and men, as is often assumed. Rather, they exploit the evolved psychologies of the sexes, manufacturing products that tap into typically male and female interests and dispositions, such as (male-oriented) porn and (female-oriented) romance novels. What are the characteristics of these psychologies, and why did they evolve?

When we take a look at the rest of the animal world, we see that sexual difference abounds. In mammals particularly, males are usually larger and more inclined to dominance competitions. They compete among themselves for sexual access to females. Females are usually more sexually choosy: they prefer to mate with the strongest, most dominant, most brightly feathered, or otherwise most conspicuous individuals. Through their mate preferences they influence which male characteristics will be represented more frequently in subsequent generations.

If females refuse to mate with the smaller or subordinate males, male genes for a smaller size or for non-competitiveness will eventually be selected away. This process of selection caused by reproductive competition is called sexual selection. The mate choices consistently exerted by the members of one sex on the members of the other sex will cause the sexes to diverge.

But why are females usually--but not always--the more choosy sex, and why do they have these highly specific preferences? Why are males usually willing to mate with any female that comes along? Charles Darwin (1872) states:

The answer is parental investment: the amount of time and energy males and females invest in offspring. In humans and other mammals male parental investment tends to be less than female parental investment. For a female mammal the minimum amount of time and energy needed to produce offspring is quite large, due to gestation and lactation. A male, however, in principle can father offspring with hardly any investment at all: all he needs is one act of copulation. In the course of evolution this set the stage for differential mating preferences and strategies. Due to her limited egg production and the long periods of gestation and lactation, a female mammal's potential number of offspring is limited. If she mated indiscriminately, she would have had less healthy and surviving offspring than females who chose to mate with the most healthy or most parentally investing males. It is the latter females whose preferences and strategies would make it into subsequent generations. Indeed, many features preferred by females, such as the exuberance of the peacock's tail, have been found to be indicators of health and genetic quality, or to benefit the survival of her offspring in other ways. For males it was different: they had little to lose and much to gain from

seizing every mating opportunity that presented itself, and from competing for sexual access to choosy females along the lines that females had set. The more they followed this strategy, the greater the odds that their traits and behavioral inclinations would eventually become typical of the males of the species.

Parental investment is the key to the puzzle of sexual difference. What counts is not being male or female, but the relative amount of parental investment. In some species of birds and frogs parental investment is reversed, because it is the males who incubate the eggs. As predicted by the theory, these species exhibit ‘reversed sex roles’: males are more sexually discriminating, whereas females are larger, more competing for sex, and more aggressive.

In humans the situation gets more complicated. Due to the heavy male investment in offspring, which is itself the evolutionary result of the extreme vulnerability of human infants, human males can be expected to be choosy as well when it comes to long-term relationships. This means that the dynamics of human mating will involve female-female competition and male choice, in addition to male-male competition and female choice. Men will try to best their rivals in the characteristics most keenly desired by the opposite sex, and women will do the same. Due to our evolutionary history, what both sexes typically desire, and the sexual strategies they use, will differ to some extent. I now turn to those differences that uncover the nature of the male gaze.

1.3. Body, Sexism and Indian Cinema

Cinema is meant and believed to entertain, to take the viewer to a world that is starkly different from the real one, a world which provides escape from the daily grind of life. Cinema is a popular media of mass consumption which plays a key role in moulding opinions, constructing images and reinforcing dominant cultural values.

The issues of media, identity and gender are being discussed all over today. They have become integral to the discipline of media studies. The reason is the popularity and diversity of media as a source of mass consumption and its influence on constructing ideas and generating debate. The media scene in India has expanded in the recent times as there is a plethora of media choices available to the audiences.

Cinema is one of the most preferable choices. Cinema structures and systems have also undergone a sea change with privatization and globalization. Huge corporations with their own profit motives own production houses. Cinema has been able to transcend borders and look at issues more holistically rather than in the context of nationalism. Hence, these developments are bound to affect the manner in which media scrutinizes and covers any issue – gender being an important one. Women are also major consumers of mass media and thus the way they are represented in media coverage is a major concern for the feminist discipline. Several international forums have recognized the ramifications of such a transformed media environment on women access to media, their role in the media structure and the presentation of their perspective in media coverage.

Similarly, as the clamor for equality grows louder the issue is how the male presence in cinema and media as a whole is changing. The way women were objectified on screen for men viewing pleasure, are men being objectified for the pleasure of women.

Sexism and Indian Cinema

Since the past decade or so, however, the industry has witnessed more rumblings of discontent in the MTV generation as even the transparent sarees, tight dresses and short skirts do not satisfy them: some point to a \$73 million loss in the Bollywood industry (Creekmur and Sidel, 2007, P. 49) as evidence of the need for a Radical Bollywood (49). Accordingly, since 2003, a series of films like *Jism* (2003), *Murder*

(2004), Aitraaz (2004), Khwahish (2004), Kurbaan (2009), of a kind mainstream Bollywood has never seen before, has begun to dot the Indian cinematic landscape. Like never before, these movies include close-ups of long kisses, partial nudity, and discussions about sex, sexual desire and birth control, all taboo in Indian cinema.

The unapologetically lusty woman, already accepted and endorsed by advertising, is gathering steam in Bollywood as well. With no intention of bathing, he upturns a pot of water over his broad chest. Soon, a trail of droplets illuminates strategic points of his tapering torso. He is now an invitation, delivered with just the kind of fixed gaze, macho stance and suppressed smile that speak of illicit access to a woman's secrets. She readily responds by sniffing his chest. In this dream sequence from Aiyaa, actor Prithviraj's character is the object of desire - an inverted equation for Bollywood. This not only meant wearing chokers, earrings and armbands but also folding up lungis to dangerously high levels.

In the heroine's dreams, this man does not appear with a sweater around his shoulders or a guitar in his hand but in flowing garments that somehow do justice to his butt. Aiyaa is Bollywood's somewhat delayed acknowledgement of the fact that women, too, have eyes and that lust isn't the exclusive, legitimate copyright of men.

In Dostana, when John Abraham pulled down his yellow underwear, as if he was preparing for a booster shot, there were whistles inside multiplexes; Ranbir Kapoor too famously made many girls press the DVD pause button at the precise moment he dropped the towel in Saawariya. More recently, Akshay Kumar and John Abraham stripped and danced around poles in bachelorette parties to beat the recession in Desi Boyz.

But the realization seems to have arrived a bit late in Bollywood. The world of advertising spoke to its female target audience's hormones much earlier, especially with the bevy of deodorant commercials.

“In the West, it was women and gay men in advertising and photography who turned our collective gaze on to the male body and its sundry appendages,” says theatre personality Mahabanoo Mody Kotwal, director of the Indian version of *“The Vagina Monologues”*, citing the early Marky Mark Calvin Klein underwear ads or the current staple of female and gay male desire, Beckham, in his chaddis all over the place.

1.4. Gaze, Male Gaze and Female Gaze

The term gaze was popularized in 1970s which was used in film theories and later the media theorists refer it to the way people gaze at an image. The concept of gaze in analyzing visual culture is understood in a way in which audience view the people presented.

The gaze concept became popular with the increased discussion on postmodern philosophy and was first discussed by 1960s French intellectuals, namely Michel Foucault's and Jacques Lacan. The concept is extended in the framework of feminist theory, where it can deal with how men look at women, how women look at themselves and other women, and the effects surrounding this. Many forms of gaze can be identified in photographic, filmic or television texts.

According to Michael Watson (1970), focusing on the other person's eyes is sharp gaze, focusing about the other person's head and face is clear gaze and having the other person within the field of vision, but not focusing on his head or face is peripheral gaze.

The psychological effect, according to Lacan is that the subject loses a degree of autonomy upon realizing that he or she is a visible object. The concept is bound with his theory of the mirror stage, in which a child encountering a mirror realizes that he or she has an external appearance.

Lacan suggests that this gaze effect can similarly be produced by any conceivable object such as a chair or a television screen. This is not to say that the object behaves optically as a mirror; instead it means that the awareness of any object can induce an awareness of also being an object.

So, gaze actually means to look steadily, attentively and with fixed concentration. In the context of films we will mostly talk about the spectators' gaze who is the viewers and their gaze will be at the person or the object in the text which they are viewing.

Taking about angles of the gaze, the common one is the front or the oblique angle where the subject is in front of the viewer or parallel. This comes under the category of horizontal angles in technical video language. Similarly the high angles are interpreted as making the subject look small and insignificant, and low angles are known to make the subject look powerful and superior. After discussing the forms of gaze in cinema, talking about the look of the camera in detail, the look of the camera is the gaze which is created by the photographer or the film maker. With the gaze the film maker tend to build up a certain relationship in the text.

The relationship varies according to the kind of shot that has been taken. In a long shot the photographer hardly focuses on one subject as there is more than one subject to focus upon. In the mid shot looking at the person in the picture, if he/she is not looking at the camera, it looks as if the person doesn't know the viewer. But in the close up shot the lady is looking at you. You then build up a personal relationship with the lady. The various kinds of shot give a different meaning when gazed upon. When it comes to gaze

there is certain relationship with the person in a text and the viewer. In relation to camerawork there are different kinds of shots and meanings.

Thus gaze is the way people are looked at which in cinema is created by the filmmaker with a purpose or intended meaning which should be interpreted accordingly by the viewers.

Male Gaze

Feminist and activist Laura Mulvey in her essay “Visual pleasure and narrative cinema” which was published in 1975, said that in cinema women are represented as objects of gaze because the control of the camera is decided by assuming that the heterosexual men are the default target audience for most of the film genres. The concept was accepted by many when it was written as that time the most of the Hollywood protagonists were male and talking about the Hindi cinema the concept still exists as the watchers are mostly believed to be men and women are watched at even with the increased number of films targeted towards women featuring female protagonists. Though the term was introduced as the part of film theory, it is also used in critiques of television, advertisements, photographs and paintings.

The post-modern feminist movement always debated the inequality which existed in the society and talking about cinema the objectifying of women as sex objects was revolted by feminists and activists. The term male gaze was referred as by many critics while describing the gender differences which were visible in cinema by representation of female body as object of voyeuristic pleasure for men. Male gaze simply means how men look at women. The look can be decent or indecent. In some societies women welcome male gaze like models and actress have no problem with the male gaze as they know the purpose of the filmmaker.

According to Sigmund Freud (1913), the term “scopophilia” means the pleasure of looking or the love of looking at something. The term refers to the predominantly male gaze of the cinema which enjoys objectifying women into mere objects to be looked at. The most pleasurable looking is looking at the human form or the human face. John Berger (1972) said that men look at women, women watch themselves being looked at which determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves.

When a woman is walking down the street, she self-consciously watches herself walking down the street, and modifies her behavior for an imaginary ideal. In public situations, women define themselves as being constantly viewed and judged, in a way men don't have to. So the way women are watched at and a voyeuristic pleasure is derived by men who are considered as the target audience, can men also be watched at considering women as the target audience and can there be a similar concept of female gaze, the researcher thought.

Female Gaze

There is no such term as female gaze which was used by activists or feminists pre dominantly, but the contemporary film critics and scholars who believe that the cinema making techniques are changing and the makers do not anymore have a presumed target viewers and all are equally important, raised questions that there might be a concept of female gaze emerging in modern cinema.

The female gaze is similar to the male gaze. It deals with how women look at men. Their objectifications of men are done through advertisements and teenage magazines.

Woman would be objectifying the man to the subject of their desires and pleasures of looking.

Tim Teeman in his article “How Women Really See Men: A Survey of “*The Female Gaze*’ in Art” writes about a ‘female gaze’ exhibition at Cheim & Read where a group of female artists interrogate men and masculinity with their art. Teeman said that in the initial part of the exhibition, what is notable is how unsexy or unconfidently the men appear. According to him, if the male gaze fetishized and sexualized women, the men are captured much more matter-of-factly. According to many teachers when they teach or discuss male gaze, students keep asking if there is any female gaze.

Celia N Bardwelljones (2008) said in one of her article that she feels that female gaze (looking at men in an objective way) is another instance of the male gaze, given that male bodies are depicted as strong and powerful rather than a subordinated object. So with various views on the term the concept of female gaze is still not clear and the confusion still prevails about the existence of such a concept in cinema.

1.5. Objectives, Research Questions and Scope of Study

Women are always projected as an object of visual pleasure in Hindi cinema from the initial ages. Cinema as a whole has seen a lot of changes in almost all the fields. Female body exposure always worked as a formula for commercial film makers to hook the male audience, and this study is expected to find out the reaction of female audience when they see male bare body.

Hindi cinema provides the grand narrative of Indianness. The film goes in urban India and essentially the multiplex audience happen to have a sense of being a part of the global audience.

The researcher has an intense curiosity to understand the politics of making bare body male a part of conscious narrative construction and the discourse of the male sexuality that is created in the minds of urban young women. The sudden outburst of bare body males in contemporary Hindi films is capable of giving birth to intense possibilities arising out of the possible multiple interpretations in the minds of the viewers. The conscious construction of an alternative narrative to the idea of male gaze which is essentially a theoretical construction and a fallout of conceiving a film text as a reflection of gender inequality in a capitalist society provides a room for exploring the possibilities of the existence of a female gaze or the beginning of a theoretical position in relation with the position of emancipated new woman which is again a social construction.

Ferdinand de Saussure (1966, p. 68) had argued, “*one characteristic of the symbol is that it is never wholly arbitrary; it is not empty, for there is the rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and signified*”. If the male body is assumed to be a signifier, then their existence in films cannot be considered as completely arbitrary. The problematization of male gaze in relation to the emerging discourse on male sexuality and the recognition and exploitation of voyeuristic pleasure that a woman is allowed to derive in commodified society essentially gives birth to the possibilities of constructing an idea of female gaze and the research gap on the issue has prompted the researcher to explore the possibilities of an emerging idea of a female gaze within a hetero-normative ideational position.

Objectives

The objectives of this research are to understand:

1. The existence of a female gaze if there is any.
2. The exposure of male body and the changing contours of gender practice
3. The importance of pleasure of viewing
4. The patterns of diversion from fashioning the text as a prototype of societal gender inequality

Research Questions

Following six are the research questions framed for this critical-analytical study to find out the answers for above objectives.

1. What are the factors responsible for emergence of female gaze?
2. What are the commercial dynamics for exposing male body?
3. What is the relationship of masculinity with exposure of male body in Hindi Films?
4. What is exactly meant by metro sexuality according to the audience?
5. What are the possible changes to theory of male gaze?
6. What is the relationship between male body exposure and postmodernist feminist movement?

Scope of the Study

The women body in Hindi cinema is mostly projected as an object of viewing pleasure for the men spectators and Laura Mulvey (1975) came up with the concept of male gaze which states that the women representation in film is mainly to provide voyeuristic pleasure to the male spectators. With the changing style and techniques in filmmaking the contemporary Hindi cinema also showcases male bare body these days.

The post-modernist feminist movement always criticized the inequality which existed in the society between men and women and the projection of women in the cinema used to be questioned as according to theorists filmmakers used to objectify women just to provide voyeuristic pleasure to the male spectators.

This research is to study if the contemporary Hindi film makers are using male body exposure to provide voyeuristic pleasure to the female spectators and if there is any emergence of female gaze like the male gaze.

This research will not only find an answer to the long debates of gender inequality in the society especially through cinema but also discover the reasons behind the frequent use of male body exposure in contemporary Hindi cinema.

1.6. Social Significance of the Study

Since ages women are always projected as sex objects in cinema and many theorists and activists have always raised this concern that there is gender difference in the society which is a major social issue. The theorists of the 70s came up with the

concept of male gaze which said that women are looked at as an object by male spectators and the male audience was taken as the only default audience.

This study has a social significance as it tries to study if the Hindi filmmakers also equally provide ingredients of viewing pleasure to the female spectators like the male spectators have been receiving since ages.

The post-modernist feminist movement also debated the inequality which always existed in the society, so this study is inclined to discover if the inequality is getting decreased or eradicated with modern style and techniques of filmmaking.

Talking about inequality since ages men are always taken as the dominant sex in the society and in Hindi cinema too women are objectified, the makers use female bare body to woo the male audience.

This study tries to see that like male spectators what all are the expectation of female spectators and what is the use of male bare body, do the female spectators also require voyeuristic pleasure of viewing like male audience or they are happy with good acting skill.

The study will explore dimensions in which the female spectators could be understood better and their needs and wants will be analyzed according to the respective social environment.