CHAPTER 5

FILM ANALYSIS:

THE 1990s

The chapter will highlight some of the major films from both the genres from their thematic, aesthetic, and individualistic point of view. A few films are taken from the decade of the 90s when the Parallel cinema was at its demise in the Hindi cinema and when an era in the Commercial cinema was also changing its popular films due to the modernisation in the attitude of the audience of the country.

It is interesting to notice the difference in the trends that were prevailing in parallel and commercial Hindi cinema. While more harsh and serious topics were being chosen by the parallel cinema, commercial cinema was making blockbuster hits one after the other by showing the same theme of romantic comedies through different storylines and screenplays.

This was a decade of globalisation and many Hollywood movies were easily accessible to the Indian audience through their dubbed versions. A change in the course of Hindi commercial movies was immensely influenced by this globalisation that was prevailing in this decade. Hence, a lot of college romances, including Indra Kumar’s Dil (1990), Sandesh Kohli’s Phool Aur Kaante (1991), Mansoor Khan’s Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar (1992), Abbas Mustan’s Khiladi (1992), David Dhawan’s Shola Aur Shabnam (1992), and Karan Johar’s Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (1998), were setting new trends in the Hindi cinema but with a hint of Hollywood picturisation as well.

As far as the commercial movies in Hindi cinema is concerned, 90s was an era of exotic locations, chiffon sarees, dreamy song sequences, beautiful love stories, and melodious songs with some of the unforgettable playback singers. While the productions techniques were going through a change by adapting new ways of camera handling, editing, and lighting, the stories were becoming more fairy tale-like to please the youth and teenagers.
While the male leads have also undergone a huge change since the inception of the Hindi cinema till the 90s. There was a lot of method acting done by Raj Kapoor and Rajesh Khanna which was later on changed into the style of the angry young man avatar of Amitabh Bachchan. But during the 90s there were more romantic heroes than ever including Amir Khan, Salman Khan, and of course Shahrukh Khan. The feeble female leads became headstrong and decided for themselves of course by keeping in mind the values of the Indian society. The villains were not wigged, cigar smoking men with a punchline after a powerful dialogue, rather in the 90s sometimes the protagonists were themselves the antagonists, like Shahrukh Khan in Baazigar (1993) and Anjaam (1994), and the characters displayed grey shades instead of displaying the black and white traits that were common before the era.

The filmy parents had also undergone a drastic change in the 90s. When there were mothers who used to pray for their child’s wellness and cried in their losses, we got fathers who were more than a friend for their children, like Anupan Kher in Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995), and mothers that took their children’s side for their happiness, like Farida Jalal in Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995).

Parallel cinema, however, was at a decline in the Hindi film industry during this period but was still surviving thanks to some of the directors like Deepa Mehta, Govind Nihalani, and Sai Paranjpye. The commercialisation of Hindi films and the cost of production was on a rise in the 90s and it was adversely affecting the parallel cinema. Popularity of cable television, underworld financing of movies, and piracy were some of the major problems faced by the parallel filmmakers in the Hindi cinema.

Hence, the demise of the parallel cinema was unfortunately seen near the end of the decade with only a few movies that were seen and appreciated by the audience. Many of the parallel movies were even forgotten and not even mentioned when talking about the genre, including Tapan Sinha’s Ek Doctor ki Maut (1990), Sudhir Mishra’s Is Raat ki Subah Nahin (1996), and Sai Paranjpye’s Saaz (1997).

Though the parallel cinema also started to incorporate the actors from the commercial Hindi cinema perhaps to gain popularity that was enough for more audience to get attracted. The trend of including ghazals in the movie was now changed to film songs in the parallel movies as a gimmick. Still all of these new
experiments were not enough to stop the declination of parallel cinema in this decade.

**Film Analysis**

**RUDAALI**

*Rudaali* (1993) was directed by a feminist film director Kalpana Lajmi. The movie was based on a short story written by Mahasweta Devi, a famous Bengali writer. The movie received several critical accolades including the national award for Dimple Kapadia portraying the role of *Sanichari*.

The movie was set in a backdrop of Rajasthan where lower castes women are hired to mourn on the death of higher caste males. Such women were called ‘*rudaali*’. Their main job was to express grief on behalf of the family members who could not publicly show their emotions due to their social status.

The director made use of brown and dark tones in the cinematography. Realistic locations are shown and the language used in the movie have a Rajasthani touch to it. The characters are wearing less or no make-up at all unless it is needed.

The title of the movie was an ironical take on the protagonist. *Sanichari* have been seen the unluckiest person in the village but she never shed a single tear on her miserable life. Her mother had run off just after giving birth to her, her father had died in her childhood, her mother-in-law also succumbed to a long time illness, and later on she lost her husband to cholera. She was left with her only son, *Budhwa* (Raghubir Yadav) who also left her after a rift between *Sanichari* and his prostitute wife *Mungri* (Sushmita Mukherjee).

The movie depicted the struggle of *Sanichari* to live a peaceful live. But poverty being her only fault, she was not able to find happiness for more than a few days every time. The film moved in flashbacks in most of the first half. In the present scene *Sanichari* was old and depressed over her past. A *rudaali* from another village *Bhikni* (Rakhee) was staying at her home because she was a nomad and used to go from one village to another when called due to her profession.
Sanichari told Bhikni about her unfortunate past and came closer to her as she thought her to be her confidante. She had lost everyone in her life and now in such an age she wanted someone to be there with her, hence, she even asked Bhikni to stay with her. Though Bhikni did not stay but in the end Sanichari came to know that Bhikini was actually her mother who had left her years ago.

Sanichari was seen throughout the movie performing her duties sometime as a daughter-in-law, sometime as a wife, and sometime as a mother. She never thought about her own comfort or good. Even when Thakur Lakshman Singh (Raj Babbar) asked her to leave her home and live with him, she was confused because she did not want to leave her home which, even though she did not care much about her husband, she thought was her duty to serve.

She did not care much about her alcoholic husband but she was pretty close to her son. When Budhwa came home with his wife Mungrī who used to be a prostitute, Sanichari feared the reaction of the society. She did not have any personal grudge or hatred for the woman. In a scene where the village pandit and the shopkeeper were looking at the prostitute unaware of her relation with Sanichari, they were laughing and teasing the prostitute. The pandit did not even fear that his position is a sacred one and he must not differentiate amongst the people made by God but still he was having fun with the shopkeeper and passing crude remarks to the woman. When they came to know that the woman was Sanichari’s daughter-in-law, both started accusing her of having a bad conduct and even talked of throwing them out of the society only because she had a prostitute living in her home. This clearly
showed the hypocrisy of a patriarchal mindset. While they were teasing the prostitute they thought it was their right to do so with a filthy woman but when they came to know that someone in the village is sharing their shelter with the same woman they started talking about the traditions and values. Sanichari even defended her son’s noble act by saying, “Maare chhore ne ek ko nark se nikala, ghar diya, ijjat di… maare chore ne jo bhi kiya mard ki tarah seena thok ke kiya.”

She could have also blamed his son in front of the society but she was strong enough to defend him in public by highlighting his noble actions and showing people the mirror by telling them to be coward who could only talk bad about people’s virtuous act as they are unable to do such brave things themselves. However, she scolded her son at home and had a dispute with his wife as well but she did not want to show her problems to people outside her home.

The character of Sanichari was that of a strong woman who bore the burden of bad luck and unhappiness throughout her life. She was unable to cry because she had always seen grief and misery from a close proximity.

It was Bhikni who told her to vent all her frustrations through tears by becoming a rudaali and by crying at someone else’s death. At first Sanichari laughed at the thought as she had never cried but in the end when she came to know that Bhikni was actually her mother who had abandoned her years ago, she could not stop herself from crying after hearing about her death. After the incident, she became a rudaali who used to cry her heart out at others’ funeral to make her heart light and to earn money as well.

FIRE

Deepa Mehta’s Fire (1996) was one of the first Indian movies that dealt with the idea of lesbianism. It not only just touched the subject but treated it in a very sensitive and realistic manner. The movie was mainly about relationships and how two women are tried to find companionship when they are not truly accepted by their husbands.

The film was mainly described as a lesbian film, and after almost two decades the film is still synonymous to the subject of lesbianism though the director was frustrated with this view and said, “lesbianism is just another aspect of the
film... *Fire* is not a film about lesbians,” but it is actually about “the choices we make in life.”

Though it was an Indian movie but was originally released in English language. The movie not only appealed to the Indian audience but was also appreciated on a global level. The poignant portrayal of such complicated relationships is commendable.

The movie revolved around the lives of two women Radha (Shabana Azmi) and Sita (Nandita Das) and their struggle to fit into the lives of their spouses in vain. The movie showed how two females found peace and solace in one another’s company and it rejects the idea of male control over female sexuality. Is depicted how women came together to fulfil their passions not by choice but because of the lack of acknowledgment from their spouses.

There was a scene where Sita said that her mother used to tell her the importance of a woman by saying that “A woman without a husband is like boiled rice, bland, unappetizing, useless.” But instead of agreeing to the statement, Radha unappealingly said, “I like being boiled rice.” Which means she would have liked if she was without a husband rather than with one who did not reciprocate her feelings.

At the occasion of karvachauth when Radha saw how Sita was influenced by the modern mentality and thought fasting for husbands just an old age ritual for the bondage of women she said, “You don’t have to keep the fast if you don’t want.” But Sita laughed at the idea and replied, “You must be joking. My mother would kill me, and biji, she’d never stop ringing the bell.” (Biji, their mother in law, was a mute old woman who used to ring a bell when she wanted to communicate and usually ring it several times when was angry or disagreed with someone.)

This dialogue showed that the customs and traditions that one used to follow in the past have just became meaningless rituals that one has to blindly follow no matter if they want it or not. And in this movie, Sita was keeping the fast because of the societal pressure and not because she cared for her husband. She did not even know the mythological story behind the ritual. It was only after this scene that Radha

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explained to her the importance of this fast and how it came into being in the first place.

The concept of marriage is argued and discussed more than once in the movie. It was a vital aspect of the movie and it showed how women are bound by marriage to do and not to do certain things. The servant Mundu (Ranjit Chowdhry) puts it in a statement in the film, “Once you’re married you’re stuck forever, like glue. Sad but true.” It was basically meant for women who have no choice left after their marriage. They have to work it out somehow. Though there is no such compulsion for the man. He could do whatever he wanted to and could even keep doing what he used to do even before marriage. Like in the case of Jatin (Javed Jaffrey) he was seen having an affair with an Indo-Chinese girl and even after his marriage to Sita he continued having the affair with full knowledge of his family.

The friendship of two sisters in law were meant to be when no one else were paying attention to them. Sita was a 21st century modern girl who followed rituals just for the sake of it and did not hesitate to say what was in her mind while Radha had been accustomed to the routine life for so long that she had suppressed all her feelings until the day Sita accidentally kissed her.

Radha found a new meaning to her life and she was able to prod her voice against her husband as well. It had shown in the movie that Biji was an invalid and only the women of the house were supposed to take care of her. But in one scene when Ashok (Kulbhushan Kharbanda) ordered Radha to feed Biji, she retorted by saying, “Why don’t you feed Biji tonight?” and he reluctantly agreed. Radha was surprised to find the courage to say ‘no’ for once what her husband ordered her to do.
The main reason for Radha’s bold reaction was that she no longer thought herself as a slave to her husband. She could well knew that she had her own identity and she could survive without her husband now.

The movie was a breakthrough in portraying positive female characterisation. The movie in no way promotes lesbianism. It showed how women could find solace in the company of people who could understand them. As the end of the movie suggested that there was an ocean of opportunities for Radha but she was not looking further enough.

There have been some mainstream movies regarding the concept of LGBT but most of them have dealt the subject as a mockery or in a light vein, including Nikhil Advani’s Kal Ho Naa Ho (2003), Tarun Manukhani’s Dostana (2008), and Karan Johar’s Student of the Year (2012). It was Karan Razdan’s Girlfriend (2004) that dealt with lesbianism but it showed a lot of stereotypical portrayals which were not accepted by the society. The movie was a complete failure at the box office as well.

However, it clearly showed that parallel cinema was way ahead of its time in comparison to the commercial cinema when it comes to exploring new subjects and dealing with sensitive issues.

1947 EARTH

Deepa Mehta made a profound movie on the partition of India 1947 Earth (1998) depicting intense emotions and some marvellous acting by the main leads. The story was shown through the eyes of a crippled Parsi girl Lenny (Maia Sethna) and how she perceived the partition where once Hindu, Muslims, and Sikhs were friends but later on became barbaric during the holocaust of partition.

The first half of the movie is simple and showed how Shanta (Nandita Das), a Hindu ayah was enjoying her friendship with two of her Muslim suitors, Dil Navaz (Amir Khan) and Hassan (Rahul Khanna) and how Lenny was trying to figure out what could be the result of the partition as it was the talk of the hour everywhere.

The second half depicted the catastrophic destruction of faith, religion, and humanity as a whole through the actions of people who were once the best of friends. And all of that was witnessed by Lenny whose mind was scarred because of the devastation.
The narration throughout the movie was through the adult voice of Lenny, lend by Shabana Azmi, explaining the confusion and the clarification the mind of a young girl could fathom at that age.

The subject of partition have been shown on the celluloid before through movies like M.S. Sathyu’s *Garam Hawa* (1973), Govind Nihalani’s *Tamas* (1988), and Pamela Rooks’ *Train to Pakistan* (1998) but the storyline and structure of the movie is completely different from the previous partition themed movie.

It gave importance to the female characters of the movie as well. Firstly, the movie was shown through the view point of a girl rather than a phallocentric viewpoint. And secondly, Shanta was depicted as one of the main protagonists in the movie that triggered the animosity between the two friends of the same religious community, Dil Navaz and Hassan.

The director did not take any sides in the movie while depicting the horrific event. She showed how religion began to colour relationships with a blunt but compassionate gaze. The theme of partition was dealt with a humane touch that was sympathetically understandable by the viewers as well.

The movie displayed the human sufferings that was divided in the society not only because of the religious preferences of a person but also because of the gender of a person. It showed how a woman’s body became a territory for the males of the society who act out their aggression on it.

Hence, the movie showed how women’s bodies were used to inflict atrocities on them with a particular kind of violence, i.e., rape, not only to degrade the females but also to humiliate the community to which they belonged. Thus, women were
abandoned by their own community only to be victimised by both parties during the riot.

While Dil Navaz was in love with Shanta, his feelings were not reciprocated by Shanta in the same way. And when he watched Shanta having sex with Hassan, he could not control his angst and fury anymore. Once again the thought of man marking his territory by consummating over a female’s body was predominantly highlighted through his expressions. A woman’s worth has always been seen through the penetration of males on her body and that was the reason why Dil Nawaz handed Shanta, a woman he once loved, to his frenzied people of the community in order to take revenge from her for rejecting his proposal and to teach her a lesson for having a relationship with someone other than him.

The movie showed the ugly reality of the time during the partition through the eyes of a young girl and her surroundings. It also showed how the disastrous calamity was destroying the unity of most of the men around the country was also uniting the women who were sharing the same pain. Lenny’s mother Bunty (Kitu Gidwani) became stronger during the riot, the fallen women in the camp bonded over their shared agony, and Shanta refused to become a victim anymore with the support of other women, including Bunty.

The relationship between Lenny and Shanta was shown as more of a girl and her ayah, it was more intense and emotional one. Hence, when Lenny was tricked into betraying Shanta, she lost faith in herself and was unable to overcome her everlasting guilt.
Bunty’s transformation as a stronger and braver woman was also shown in the movie. When in the initial part of the movie she was seen a simple homemaker who dotes over her daughter, soon after she became a protector and a rescuer throwing the garb of a simple weak woman that was seen at first.

The director magnificently captured the horrific details on the screen not by exactly showing them but by implying them through brief sights and sounds. The use of sound effects and dialogues with the accompaniment of the characters’ expressions were displayed leaving the graphic details to the imagination of the audience for comprehension of the results of the terrible fates of the people, especially women. However, these women were the innocent victims who had nothing to do with the instigation of the riot but they were the most helpless people during the riot.

HAZAAR CHAURASI KI MAA

Govind Nihalani directed the movie Hazaar Chaurasi Ki Maa (1998) that was based on the novel ‘Hajar Churashir Maa’ by famous Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi. The movie dealt with the subject of Naxalites and their ideologies. For the first time in Indian cinema this subject was taken in the Bengali movie Seemabaddha by Satyajit Ray in 1971, which was based on the life of an upper class family during the Naxalite Movement. Commercial Hindi movies took this subject as their core storyline in the early 2000s but the parallel films were way ahead in portraying the important issues prevailing in our society.

It was only during the early 2000s that the commercial Hindi cinema took this subject seriously in their films. Some of the films include Tango Charlie (2005), Hazaaaron Khwahishein Aisi (2005), and Chakravyuh (2012). Thus, parallel cinema has always taken serious subjects as their storylines before any commercial movie.

Nihalani showed in this movie how a mother lost her son during the Naxalite movement and how she struggled to find out the truth behind his death. She was seen to be just another middle aged mother that we see in our daily life but the transformation from a simple homemaker to a rebellious woman was shown in the film.

Sujata (Jaya Bachchan) was living her routine life and trying to balance the family when she got a call in the middle of the night about her son’s death. Brati (Joy
Sengupta) was a free soul who had a rough relationship with his father Dibyanath Chatterjee (Anupan Kher) and his siblings. Sujata was the only one in the family with whom he was emotionally close. After Brati’s death, Sujata went into a slumber as she was shocked with this incident.

The director showed a realistic picture of the relationship of a mother and son where love and care were received and reciprocated equally. Where everyone in the family were ashamed of Brati, Sujata was appalled at their indifferent behaviour. She was his mother and was not ashamed of her son. Though his father and brother immediately started hiding his photos and other belongings so that they could not be related to him in any way but she thought of him as a kind soul who could never harm anyone.

Sujata was not only disturbed but also intrigued to know the truth behind such an incident. She was brave enough to find out the truth about Brati’s death. She went to her son’s friend’s home to know what exactly happened at the night of his death. She later on met Nandini who loved Brati, she told Sujata all about the ‘Naxalbari’, a militant leftist group.

Nandini was brave and full of valour. She loved Brati and his death did not weakened her instead it made her stronger and braver than ever. She was strong enough to recall all what happened to her and narrated all the details to Sujata.

There was a new found courage in Sujata’s behaviour after listening to Nandini. She was fed up with all the lies that were in the form of relationships around her. When she could not take any more she finally vent all her frustrations on her husband, Dibyanath by simply telling her to let her be alone and leave her the way she wanted to live.

She even refused to put sindoor which is considered to be a vital identification mark of married women in Indian culture. When asked why was she being so rebellious in her attitude she said, “Ek din Brati ne mujhse pucha tha ‘Maa, tum ine samay se ine saalon se apna farz kaise nibhaye jaa rahe ho?’ aur maine kaha tha ‘Bachpan me yehi sikhaya gaya hai ab to aadat si pad gayi hai.’ Ghar, ghar, aur yeh ghar. Chauhees ghante ye ghar. Kabhi iske liye kabhi uske liye, kabhi kahin koi naraaz naa ho jaye, koi bura naa maan jaye, koi cheez toot naa jaye, kuch bikhar naa jaye, har pal maine is toote hue ghar ko sambhala hai aur pal-pal kar ke kab meri zindagi
“phisal gai mujhe pata hi nahi chala. Bekar, ekdum bekar. Aur isi me maine Brati ko bhi kho diya, aj hi ke din... ab mai ye sab nahi karungi, mujhse nahi hoga.”

Sujata refusing to put sindoor

This dialogue showed all the pain and agony a woman feels when she is not given the importance and respect in her home. It is important for a woman to give equal status at home but when she is suppressed by her husband and is not taken care of by the other members of the family she becomes mentally weak and melancholic.

The more she learnt about her son and his ideologies, the more she wanted to bring justice to his cause. Despite the fact that Brati’s father, brothers, and sisters were not in favour of him or his lifestyle, Sujata kept her feelings intact and never tried to force them to like or understand Brati. She was inspired from her son’s bravery and in the end though she was a retired woman of more than 60 years of age, she did not tolerate the injustice done in front of her when two goons killed Brati’s friend and tried to escape. She could not fight with them because of her physical condition but she did not leave one of the goons till the other people came to her rescue. This showed her determination to fight against the injustice prevailing in our society.

The movie was being shown through the perspective of a mother and the two most strong characters in the movie were women, one being Sujata and the other being Nandini, who did not break even after getting tortured by the police. Though the journey of Sujata was shown in a detailed way, Nandini’s journey was shown in a brief way. However, it was shown that Nandini did not need a man in her life to feel
complete because she was happy to work for a cause. It showed how free spirited and independent a woman can be if she is determined.

On the other hand, Sujata was different from Nandini because she kept on fighting for the cause at her personal level and tried to cope with her family issues as well. Though she was shown to be a weak woman who was bound with the various responsibilities of a mother and a wife but in the end she broke all the shackles and emerged as an independent woman who was not unhappy for her loss but rather was glad that her son would always be there in her thoughts to inspire and influence her to do good deeds till the end.

**HUM**

Mukul S. Anand’s *Hum* (1991) was one of the most popular films during the early 90s and regarded as one of the best performances by Amitabh Bhachchan who played the role of Tiger/Shekhar in the film. After this movie Bachchan announced his temporary retirement from films, which lasted for about five years.

The movie showed two different stories of two different areas and in the end was knotted together to make a complete film. The first half of the movie dealt with the workers of the docks and their cruel ruler Bakhtawar (Danny Denzongpa). It showed how the workers were treated as slaves and how Tiger extorted money from the workers though not agreeing with this regime.

It basically showed the rifts between Tiger and Bakhtawar with the backdrop of the love story of Tiger and Jumma (Kimi Katkar). The only females who were shown in the first half, who had some kind of an importance in the movie, were the characters of Jumma and that of Tiger’s step mother.

However, both the females were seen as helpless and oppressed but so were most of the male characters in the first half of the movie. Jumma was mostly used as a glamorous object for this part of the film where most of the time the screen was filled with dark coloured docks and men wearing dark blue or black outfits. Jumma was used to provide a brief relief from the dull and dark scenario hovering in the movie. She was the only one who used to wear read coloured gowns and stood out of everyone as a pretty doll.
The famous song “Jumma chumma de de” showed a room filled with males where only a single female, Jumma, was dancing around in stockings and a red dress that was later on torn by the men leaving her with only a small piece of red cloth, that too a wet one, around her.

Thus, Jumma was used in the first half to take the minds off of the audience from the dark story and the regular action sequences of Tiger.

The first half of the movie was cinematographically shown as a nightmare to the audience with dark colours and contours of black and brown scattered everywhere. Thus, the second half of the movie started with a startled Tiger who had woken up from a nightmare.

Hence, the second half of the movie was full of colours and bright light all over depicting the transition of Tiger, who was now referred to as Shekhar, into a dream like reality where he was surrounded by his family’s laughter and comic episodes.

The second half of the movie opened with a song showing the only female in the household, Aarti (Deepa Sahi), who was struggling hard to please everyone in the family by giving breakfast to one, getting flowers for the puja to another, and searching for the clothes for her husband. She was seen as a perfect housewife but
at the end of the sequence she broke down and apologised for not being perfect for them. This was the cue for the family when they started singing a song to cheer Aarti up reminding her of all the good things she had ever done for the family.

Here, though Aarti was seen as a homemaker still she was helped and thought about by everyone in the family. In a scene where the younger brother Vijay (Govinda) was betting in a gambling house for money, he openly announced that with the winning money he would gift her sister-in-law a new pressure cooker. Though the gesture was a small one but it showed the care of a brother-in-law towards his sister in law.

The portrayal of women within the movie differed from the first and second half of the film. While the first half of the film dealt with action and aggressive dialogues where women have only a few dialogues, the second half dealt with a homely picture of family drama where women had a better screen time than the previous part of the movie.

Though despite the fact that in the second half females had more dialogues (and songs) with the males, still the overall portrayal of women were that of the weak, submissive, and dependent persons. While Aarti was dependent upon her husband Kumar (Rajnikant) and his brothers, Shekhar and Vijay, Anita was seen dependent upon her father General Rana Pratap Singh (Kader Khan) as she was not even able to choose her spouse without the consent of her father. This also depicted the fact that even if a girl is educated and belong to a reputed family, she cannot make a choice for marriage for herself though it is her personal matter but the family interference is always apparent in such cases.

**HUM AAPKE HAIN KOUN..!**

While Parallel cinema was booming with new concepts and filmmakers were experimenting with innovative ideas, commercial cinema was trending with family dramas and inculcating morals and values in Indian females. Sooraj Barjatiya’s *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!* (1994) initiated a trend of celebrating family functions with extravaganza around the country.

The movie gave a loose portrayal of women in many ways. Though the two main female leads of the film Pooja (Renuka Shahane) and Nisha (Madhuri Dixit) were
shown as modern girls of today’s age, none were seen studying or professionally involved in a job anywhere. However, both the male leads of the movie Rajesh (Mohnish Bahl) and Prem (Salman Khan) were seen engaged in their family business throughout the movie.

It was also shown that Nisha was studying computers as a subject but she was never seen going to a college/university or trying to pursue any job. Rather she was always seen doing household chores and making halwa for others.

A very homely picture of women was seen in the movie where they were engaged in kitchen and were mostly taking care of the family members or having fun by playing cricket and antakshiri.

In the initial minutes of the movie Pooja was seen interested in painting and pursuing her hobby passionately but after her marriage she was only seen engaged in performing her house work and pleasing the elders. There was no room for her hobby or any other creative interest in her home.

It was also surprising to see that Nisha who was pursuing computers in her college was never seen attending classes or preparing for any kind of a test. While in the movie her father, Prof. Siddharth Choudhury (Anupam Kher), was not able to attend the function meant for their elder daughter’s child due to the exam season on those dates but they readily accepted the invitation to send their younger daughter Nisha to attend the function. There was no mention of any kind of exams or preoccupation of Nisha for her studies anywhere.

Moreover, both of the female leads were seen educationally qualified and well-read but after her wedding, Pooja was never seen involved in her husband’s family business. She was never asked for any opinion nor did she give any kind of advice to her husband regarding the business.
A stereotypical patriarchal environment could be seen in the movie where women are required to attain good education only for the purpose of marriage. They are never given their due regarding their hobbies or passions afterwards. They are not even asked to help or support their husbands in business.

A picture of homely wives who are caring and loving to everyone and who are loved by everyone was depicted in the movie. They were required to stay up late when someone was working late in the office and it was labelled as their love for the person.

However, in the end when Nisha came to know that she was being married off to her dead sister’s husband Rajesh and not Prem, she readily sacrificed her happiness only because to make the elders pleased. And later on when everyone came to know of the truth they were glad to see her sacrificing her happiness saying that this was the way she showed her love towards everyone.

Women are always seen as the ones who are flexible and make marriages work. They are the ones who are supposed to make all kinds of sacrifices and they are not required to demand anything. They are seen to be satisfied with what they receive without any question.

This kind of a mind-set is prevalent in most of the societies in the world and the movie depicted a utopian scenario where women are already tamed and performed their jobs according to the wishes of their families and husbands. Perhaps this was the reason why the movie remained one of the major hits for all these years because it satiates the ego of the patriarchal mind in every way.

**DILWALE DULHANIA LE JAYENGE**

Aditya Chopra’s *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), popularly called DDLJ, was not only a blockbuster hit but was a milestone for all the romantic movies that came afterwards. In *Bollywood's Top 20: Superstars of Indian Cinema*, Namrata Joshi said *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* "reinvented Bollywood romances so decisively that we can neatly divide them into two eras—before *DDLJ* and after *DDLJ*.\(^2\)

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\(^2\) Joshi 2012, pp. 235–236.
It was a simple love story of a young boy and a young girl with a twist that they did not elope when they knew that the girl’s father would not marry them off, rather they fought for their love and tried to persuade him to give consent for the marriage.

One of the common themes of the Indian movies since the pre-independence era was the portrayal of Indian men as the hero and western men as the villain. But this movie showed the opposite by portraying the protagonist, who was an NRI and was influenced by the western culture, Raj (Shahrukh Khan) as the hero who had goodness instilled in him even though he was brought up in a western society, and showed an Indian man, Kuljeet (Parmeent Sethi) as the anti-hero who was brought up in Indian society but was arrogant and haughty.

The movie, however, was a simple love story but somewhere the role of the male lead overshadowed the female protagonist of the movie. As Raj was shown a jovial person who was smart and attractive, Simran (Kajol) was seen as a meek and disciplined girl who had never done anything against her parents’ wishes.

A scene in the movie showed how the two sisters were enjoying dancing on a western song when they heard their father’s footsteps and changed the song to an old Hindi song and pretended to study instead. This showed how the girls were forcefully put into a disciplined life while they had desires to dance freely and enjoy life.

In another scene, Simran was afraid to ask her father, Chaudhary Baldev Singh (Amrish Puri) if she could go on a Europe tour with her friends because her father did not think it was appropriate for girls to travel without the accompaniment of a family member as it was against the traditions and values of an Indian society. But on the other hand Raj was comfortable to tell his plans of vacationing with his friends to his father, Dharamvir Malhotra (Anupam Kher) who in fact encouraged him to live his life to the fullest because he had not. It showed how the upbringing of both the protagonists were paradoxical in nature and the characterisation was, hence, influenced by these scenes where Raj was a carefree and impulsive person but Simran used to think before deciding anything in life.
Another scene depicting a deep conversation between Simran and her mother Lajwanti (Lajjo) Singh (Farida Jalal) showed the patriarchal mind set of the Indian society. In the scene Lajwanti said, “Jab mai chhoti thi na, tere nana mujhe sikhaya karte the ke aurat aur mard me koi antar nahi hai, jo ek ka haq hai wohi dusre ka haq hai. Pura bachpan me is baat ko sach maan kar jeeti rahi, lekin jaise jaise badi hoti gayi samajh me aata gaya ke kitna jhoot hai. Meri padhayi rok di gai isliye ke mere bhaiyon ki padhayi zyada zaruri thi, wo thi meri pehli qurbani. Phir uske baad har mod par kabhi beti ban kr, kabhi behen, to kabhi biwi ban kr apni khushiyon ki bali chadhati gayi. Par jab tu paida hui aur maine pehli baar tujhe apne in hatho me liya tha to apne aap se ek waada kar liya tha maine ke jo mere sath hua wo meri beti ke sath nahi hoga, wo beti, behen, biwi ban kar kadam kadam par apne aap ko kurbana nahi karegi. To kya hua agar wo ladki hai wo zindagi apni marzi se jeeyegi, use apne hisse ki har khushi naseeb hogi. Magar mai ghalat thi Simran, main to ye bhool hi gayi thi ke aurat ko waada karne ka bhi koi haq nahi hai. wo to paida hi isliye hoti hai ke mard ke liye kurbana nahi aur naa hi kabhi dega.”

This dialogue could be well summarised as the crux of the typical patriarchal ideology that existed in our Indian society. Everything related to girls is thought to be unimportant be it education or job but when it comes to boys people think otherwise. This unequal distribution of fulfilling the desires starts from the very beginning of a child’s age. It is only the woman who is supposed to make sacrifices
for the family and be flexible to maintain the equilibrium within a family. The emotional expectations for a woman is always higher than that of the man.

This movie showed how Lajjo was desperate to make Simran’s life better than hers. She tried to explain the ugly truths of life to her in order to make her forget about Raj and compromise with the life her father had planned for her. But then when she came to know about Raj that he had been living with them she asked both of them to elope so that at least her daughter could live the life she had always desired.

It portrayed the love and care of a mother for her children. She wanted her children to live happily on their own terms without any of those restrictions that she had faced herself. But here again she was helpless in front of her husband Chaudhary Baldev Singh as he was not only the head of the family but all the decisions whether important or trivial were have to be passed through him only. Lajjo being the mother had the responsibility of only bringing up her children but all the other decisions whether it is regarding their studies, or the European tour that Simran wanted to go for, or the children’s marriage were to be taken by only their father, Baldev Singh.

Even the end sequence, where Lajjo took Simran to the railway station and wanted her to leave with Raj, showed how a decision that was very important to Simran was taken by her father. He was the one who held Simran’s hands and watched Raj in the eye to judge him if he genuinely loved his daughter. Here again neither Lajjo nor Simran had a say in her personal matter. It was only when he was satisfied that he released Simran and told her “Jee le apni zindagi.”

**BORDER**

J. P. Dutta directed the movie Border in 1997 and it became a huge box office hit. It was a war drama story based on the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971. However, the casualties shown in the movie were highly exaggerated because the filmmaker wanted to emphasise on the fact that wars do no good to humankind and it is only the people who are left behind that are the sufferers. The movie had an ensemble cast that included Rakhee, Sunny Deol, Sunil Shetty, Akshaye Khanna, Tabu, Pooja Bhatt, and Jackie Shroff.
Because of the subject of the movie was related to the war, the involvement of female characters in the movie was of little or no use. The main screenplay dealt with the different lives of the soldiers and how valiantly they fought in the war. Only when the family background of any of the soldier was shown, the females made an appearance. Even the most famous songs of the movie “Sandese aate hain” had only a glimpse of the females of the movie and the whole song was sung and picturised almost entirely on the males of the film.

The movie showed the first helpless female through the character of Kuldeep Singh’s (Sunny Deol) wife Preeti (Tabu). She was desperate for not letting her husband go to the warfront as she was afraid of the outcomes. However, she pleaded but in vain as Kuldeep Singh did not want to step off from the duty that he had assigned for. For him, his country came before family.

The other helpless woman that was shown in the movie was Dharamvir’s (Akshaye Khanna) blind mother (Rakhee). She had already lost her eyesight and her husband to a war and was afraid to lose her son in the name of the country. Dharamvir was engaged to a girl from her village, Kamla (Pooja Bhatt) but when on their engagement day a call of the mobilisation order came for Dharamvir, he immediately left for the border leaving these two women in tears. Though his mother was reluctant to let him go but Kamla was optimistic that she would soon see him once they will defeat the enemy in the war.
Another woman that was shown in the movie was Bharon Singh’s (Sunil Shetty) wife played by Sharbani Mukherjee. She also saw with teary eyes that her husband bid her farewell on their wedding night when he was called back to his post.

All these women that were shown in the movie were to emphasise on the emotional quotient of the movie. The problems that a soldier has in his family could be seen through the way his mother, sister, or wife, in short any woman of his family goes through.

The movie basically deals with war, but the audience could not stay in the cinema hall to watch a three hour war movie which is full of action and fighting. There has to be some songs and a bit of entertainment in the movie to let the audience stay for a while. Hence, the role of the women in the movie not only gives an emotional quotient to it but also provide a romantic angle to the film.

The movie showed these flashbacks of the soldiers for the audience to get them emotionally attached with them so that the filmmaker could emphatically make his point that wars could never do any good to humankind. Even though if one of the parties win the war, the grief for the martyrs would always weigh more than the accolades they get for winning.

Hence, in this movie also the director showed females during short intervals to give the audience a break from all the war drama which could be a bit depressing for them as well. Females in the movie were used as objects of entertainment and the story only consisted of the males in the army and how they struggled to win the war for their country.
The era of 90s was changing trends in the face of Hindi cinema be it for parallel movies or for commercial ones. In these films it is clearly shown how the family set up was changed from rural to urban setting in the parallel films and how middle class families were changed into the upper class families in the commercial films.

Globalisation was setting in India and several new trends emerged because of that. In the movie *Hazaar Chaurasi Ki Maa* the topic of Naxalite was dealt with care and caution while in *Fire* not only lesbianism was shown but also the interdependency of women and how they dealt with it was portrayed in an artistic manner.

Urban culture and modern families were shown in *Hum Aapke Hain Koun!* and *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*. Though such family dramas have always been a part of the Hindi commercial cinema but the thematic aspect and the storyline was fresher than those of the family dramas of the 70s, 80s or before that.

Yet more or less the representation of females in parallel and commercial cinema were different in terms of moral values, personal attributes, costumes, and the role in addressing the social issues being discussed in the films.