CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Films are mere reflection of the society so much so that sometimes they can even influence the public opinion or can mould the viewpoint of the public of the society. Films are one of the important tools of mass communication. In India, when the films came into being, they were either devotional or morally influential. People used to teach the society and implant the good morals and ethics in them.

“Bollywood” is a term created by the English language press in India in the late 1970s. It has now become the dominant global term to refer to the prolific and box-office oriented Hindi language film industry that is located in Bombay (now known as Mumbai). Cinema in India encompasses a great deal more diversity and has a longer history than the Bombay film industry. Even as a British colony, India was the third largest producer of films in the world.

India’s first fiction film was ‘Raja Harishchandra’ in 1914 by Dhundiraj Govind Phalke (also known as Dadasaheb Phalke) who is considered to be the pioneer of Indian cinema. Though, unlike the popular belief that it was the first movie of Indian cinema, it has to be made clear that it was just the first fiction film of India. India had had a thriving nascent film industry since 1896 mainly on the periphery of a vast and well-entrenched theatre industry, including in particular the famous Parsee theatre and commercial theatrical troupes in its main presidency cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and many other cities like Lucknow and Lahore.

This first feature film had a great influence on the society and made way for more such movies. Growth of movies began by creating different genres in them. Comedy, tragedy, romantic, mythological, historical are only some of the genres developed by the makers of the Indian films. Imaginative growth took place by creating different plots and stories in the films.

However, sound and music came into Indian cinema much later in 1931 with the release of Indian first talking film on 14th March, Alam Ara, at the Majestic Theatre.
in Bombay (now Mumbai). The movie was promoted as an “all talking, all singing, all dancing film”. The movie had seven songs in it and director Ardeshir Irani established song and dance as staples of Indian cinema with this movie.

With the arrival of sound in the movie, the percentage of foreign films being screened in India dropped tremendously within a decade to less than 10 percent. Film industries in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Lahore, and Pune started growing hastily even without state supports.

But with the advent of sound came a new complication into the filmmaking process, regarding the language of the film. India being a nation of several languages, the filmmakers were perplexed as to in which language they should make their movies. Bombay itself was a polyglot city and it was not an easy decision to be made. Hindi was the only language that offered the largest markets because most of the population spoke one or the other version of it. But there was still some confusion regarding which version of Hindi be used in the movies as even Hindi language was spoken differently in different regions. Finally filmmakers decided to use Hindustani as their main language of the film, which was a mixture of Hindi and Urdu spoken at that period of time. This language was mainly associated to the bazaars that was a lingua franca across the northern and central regions of the country.

Another complication was for the filmmakers to find such actors who could be able to speak this language and could also be able to sing. It was evident at this time that the Anglo-oriental women and the wrestlers who were dominating the cinema of the early period were no longer applicable.

The connection between Indian films and literary works can be seen from the initial stage of the cinema. And it is still evident from many films taking their main themes or plots from any classic book or scriptures. Ramayana and Mahabharata are the two epic classics that are still being used as an inspiration for several Indian films. Dada Sahab Phalke’s “Raja Harishchandra” was the earliest example of such a case that was based on a legend included in the Mahabharata. This film started a trend of epic-derived movies for the Indian audience.
Then there was another genre that was neglected for quite some time, which was that of the historical. Literature plays a major role in the contribution of several historical movies. However, many famous historical films are not exactly based upon the historical evidences. One of such examples is “Mughal-e-Azam” (1960) by K. Asif. However this movie was based on an earlier film “Anarkali” (1953) by Nandlal Jaswantlal that is said to be a remake of yet another earlier film regarding the same theme. And all of these so-called historical films can be traced back to an Urdu play of 1922 by Intiaz Ali Taj named “Anarkali”. This new version of the historical epic became successful and it eliminated the real evidences of the history from the minds of the audiences.

There has been an ongoing debate on the connection between the cinema and the construction of the national history. The connection between the two, however, cannot be seen clearly as many movies are either inspired or directly based on literature that is not historically proven. We can ignore the sources and can easily point out many salient features of such literary piece of works as typical for the period of the movie.

**Women in Films**

At first, only men used to act in the films, not unlike the theatre where men used to enact the roles of the females, in movies also men played the part of the females. Only a handful of women used to act in Indian movies, and those who were, considered to be disrespectful and impious. Though the first female film director dates back to 1926, where Fatima Begum established Fatima Films, which later on in 1928 became Victoria - Fatima Films, and started making films. She had started her career in the Urdu theatre and shifted to the silent films. In 1926 she directed the film *Bulbul-e-Paristan* and became the first female director of Indian cinema.

During the earliest years of cinema when Dada Sahab Phalke was starting to make films, he was unable to find women to act. Most of the women were unwilling to act because of a stigma associated with the film industry. Also, singing and dancing was closely identified with that of prostitutes and courtesans which means that it was not something done within a decent society. The image of movies used to violate the ruling norms and ethics of the female modesty. Although most of the prostitutes
were also against acting in films as this could mean to disclose their occupation to the public.

Hence, for his first film, Raja Harishchandra, Phalke casted a young man to play the role of Queen Taramati. This was not something new to the audience as in many folklore around the country the role of females were played by male actors. Phalke casted his own family members frequently in his movies to solve this problem of casting unwilling female actors. Women started acting in Indian films by the 1920s when most of the actors were either British or European having Indian parentage, being Christian or Jews, who were commonly called Anglo-Indians. Their hybrid ethnic and cultural heritage was a positive point for them to be casted in films as they were already segregated from the crowd of the normal Indian society and, therefore, were less constrained regarding respectability.

In the initial years of the 19th century people opposed to make their way into the theatre as a profession especially if they belong to the educated middle class. Women’s involvement was also taboo, both as actors and as spectators as well. This level of morality and modernity was undoubtedly gendered. Certain dominant literary and cultural values of that period also condemned some women as the ‘other’, which includes the prostitutes, theatre artists, midwives, and Dalit women. Such actions were closely linked to control the women’s sexuality and to moralist reformist endeavours.

An essay by Lata Singh, “Foregrounding Actresses’ Question”, showed how theatre women were seen as the antithesis of the idealised women that clearly reflected the moralist anxiousness of the reformers. The cultural domain and participation in the theatre of such women were marked as lewd and they were considered as a threat to domesticity because they broke the distinctions between the private and the public domains. Lata Singh argued in her essay that these women have to be seen as workers and their work has to be linked to the issues of livelihood.

Slowly and gradually glamour was added to the world of movies but only on the female part. More women started to make their career in the film industry, not only as actors but also as singers and dancers. But the industry maintained to be male-dominated. The high posts and ranks in the industry were only for the males. Male-
oriented subjects were the basis of almost all the stories of the films. There were only a handful of female-oriented movies in the early 1900s.

Though the focus did not shift from the males to the females, but female actors also started to be seen in major and powerful roles in the late 1900s. Females were recognised as one of the important figures of this industry. Gradually more females started making their career in this field.

The colonial and post-colonial India has always been seen as having a gendered history for most of the feminist historiographers.

In their quest for non-elite viewpoint to comprehend historical processes, many subaltern historians have made an imprint on gender historiography of colonial India. They point to the intimidating trait of modernity and explained that the vital question with respect to women in the 19th century was not what women need rather how to modernise them, and this contained other intimidating characteristics. Several authors in their works have shown how existing disparities between men and women were not only intensified but also unavoidably systematised in the colonial period. In the meantime, subaltern historians have had an edgy relationship with feminist historiographies.

Gradually education among the women, increasing exposure through political participation in the public domain, which was before then considered to be a solely male domain, created insecurities for the patriarchal society. The traditional distinction of gendered spaces was becoming unsound and unacceptable to many. Lately, the vital responsibility for the feminist historians, either for gender studies or for feminist scholars, was to show the history where women are also visible.

**Emergence of a New Genre**

After the collapse of the major film studios like Bombay Talkies, Prabhat, and New Theatres, a new speculative climate of the industry emerged to make more profit by driving larger audience into the cinema halls. By the 1950s the Indian Film industry reformulated genre and audience appeal. It resulted in the encouragement of the sensational attractions of action, speculation and dance into the social film. The
industry induced these attractions mainly to lure the mass audience. Hence, a large number of the films produced in the 1950s are called ‘socials’.

It was during the 1950s that a new wave of film making started in the Bengal cinema. It was named as the New Wave Cinema Movement. This movement was started around the same time when the world saw the emergence of the Japanese New Wave and the French New Wave. The movies under this are known as ‘parallel’ or ‘art’ movies. This revival is a vital chapter in the history of Indian cinema. There is no real theory behind this movement. It was just a reflection of various objectives that were somewhat missing or highly underrated in the films of that era. These included a perspective which was largely humanistic and realistic in its manner of portrayal. They also adopted a linear type narrative and a carefree psychological representation of the characters. They wanted to establish a realistic picture of the social and political systems of the society. It was basically a breakaway from the idealism of the post-independence India. The use of the song and dance was also avoided unless the story requires it or it can be integrated in the narrative.

Initially these movies were shocking for the conservative audience because of the straightforwardness of the sexual representation in many of these movies. Unlike the commercial films where such portrayal were only suggestive and sometimes touching the obscenity mark. Except for a few films, these traits of the films belonging to this genre were seemingly unpleasant for the general audience who wanted to watch movies for entertainment as an excuse for a getaway from their daily routine life.

This wave influenced the Hindi movies as well. Though there is no particular year in which we could point out the first parallel film in the Hindi cinema, but it was this wave of ‘New Cinema’ that came into the limelight in the Hindi films during the 1970s. The earliest examples can be Chetan Anand’s Neecha Nagar (1946), a social realist film that even won the Grand Prize at the first Cannes Film Festival. There have been many earlier films that combined features of both commercial and parallel films; an example of such a film is Bimal Roy’s Do Bigha Zameen (1953). The film won the International Prize at the 1954 Cannes Film Festival.
However, during 1955, Indian film industry that was vigorous and productive for the past few years gained worldwide attention through the Bengali films made by Satyajit Ray, including *Pather Panchali* (1955), *Aparajito* (1956), and *Apur Sansar* (1959). All these movies came under this new emerged genre of filmmaking.

Urban critics widely appreciated movies such as *Ankur* (1974), *Nishant* (1975), and *Manthan* (1976) as being great examples for the Indian “new movement” or “parallel cinema”. These movies rejected the age old clichés of the popular cinema being shorter in length, with little or no dance or song in the movies, and having a very realistic approach to the theme of the film. It also focussed on the social issues of the society through the lens of progressive leftist politics. There is another name given to such movies, “middle cinema”. Supposedly these movies were seen to be located between the mass market entertainment films and the non-commercial experimental or avant-garde movies. However, their target audience were primarily the educated urban middle class people of the country.

The evidently decline of this rejuvenating movement in the final years of the 1980s showed the lasting preference of the masses for the big budgeted melodramatic and larger than life movies. Even the popular filmmakers like Shyam Benegal had to turn toward more accessible and marketable films in order to please the audiences which had been a subject of many critical analysis.

**Women and the New Wave Cinema**

However, in the 70s when the *New Wave* paved way for the parallel movies in Hindi cinema, several directors tried their hand on this realistic art form. Mani Kaul’s films such as *Uski Roti* (1971), *Ashadh ka ek Din* (1972), and *Duvidha* (1974) are some of the earliest examples during the boom of the parallel movies in Hindi cinema.

Surprisingly the female actors have primary and important roles in most of the parallel films as compared to the commercial films where the camera seldom shifts its focus from the male actors. Many parallel films are female oriented and those which are male oriented have vital roles for the females in the movie. In the parallel films the females are not treated as an object rather they are treated as the subject
unlike the commercial films where females are used as mere mannequins who are mainly required for the glamour in the film.

In parallel cinema women have always had an equal opportunity to portray their roles along with their male counterparts. Sometimes even the male actors are overshadowed by the female ones. The movie *Arth* is one of those movies where the female actors are given major roles. Here the two famous women of the parallel cinema, i.e., Smita Patil and Shabana Azmi, were put against the then famous actor of the same cinema, i.e., Kulbhushan Kharbanda. Both the women were so convincing in their roles that the audience could hardly find the need of the male actor in the movie.

Indian films are always seen to be offering something positively different from Hollywood celluloid perhaps because it always has its own vast distribution markets. Throughout its long history, Indian cinema has evolved as a form which has resisted the cultural imperialism of Hollywood. But this does not mean that it has not been influenced by Hollywood. The Indian film kind has undergone a perpetual change and there has been both inspiration and assimilation from Hollywood and other cinemas, but Indian cinema has remained remarkably distinctive in terms of the theme and structure of the films.

**Women and Commercial Cinema**

Cinema is a medium of entertainment that reflects socio-cultural practices, customs and based on different ideologies. Hindi cinema or Bollywood is a male dominant industry that produces hundreds of films every year. Most of the films project gender-based social issues in which women are represented from a male viewpoint. Such projections vary from one genre to the other as in commercial Hindi cinema and the parallel cinema. The present study will attempt to study different feministic approaches that go in filmmaking in these two distinct genres. Patriarchal values are some of the leading considerations that play dominant role in representation of women in these two genres of Hindi cinema.

This research will compare the roles of females in the commercial and the parallel films and how are they projecting them. The study will also focus on the importance
of female actors in the parallel films and how the female actors having the same characters in the commercial films are not given much importance.

Today, cinema structures and systems have changed because of heavy commercialisation, privatisation and globalisation. Hindi film industry is abundant with private investors or producers from the corporate world who influence the filmmaking process as well. Huge corporations with their own profit motives own media houses. These developments are bound to affect the manner in which media scrutinises and covers any issue – gender being an important one. Hindi commercial cinema holds popular appeal whereas art or parallel cinema engages with social issues, middle cinema and regional language cinema. Popular cinema and popular culture are intertwined. They derive inspiration from each other. Films are believed to be the opium of the Indian masses as people depend on this medium to help them escape to a world of fantasy. In a very explicit way, cinema shapes the cultural, social and political values of people of this country. While, the other forms of cinema are also important when it comes to the representation of women, drawing a comparative study between the commercial cinema and the parallel cinema is the focus of this study.

The historical background of the Indian cinema will be discussed. In particular the history of the Hindi commercial cinema and the Hindi parallel cinema will be discussed. Indian cinema is the world’s biggest film industry which includes films in various languages like Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Malayalam, Telegu and Tamil, etc. From all of this, the research will focus mainly on the Hindi cinema.

Also this research will show how the potential of women in the field of cinema is sometimes overshadowed purposely by the patriarchy revolving around us. Females are not less than males anywhere and in any field be it cinema and films for that matter. This research will focus mainly on the female characters that are portrayed in the Hindi commercial cinema in juxtaposition to the same characters portrayed differently in the Hindi parallel cinema. This study wants to show how women are merely projected as objects in the commercial cinema and how they are given meaningful and sensible roles in the same industry’s other genre, i.e., the parallel cinema.
For decades Hindi cinema has been male dominated. Themes are used to be explored from the male audience’s point of view and female actors are considered secondary to the male actors. Her role is used to chart out in the context of any male character that is central to the story line—be it hero, villain, father or an elderly male figure. She is devoid of any independent existence. This kind of straight jacketing limits the women’s role to provide glamour, relief, respite and entertainment. And these patriarchal values have been institutionalised in films like *Dahej* (1950), *Gauri* (1968), *Devi* (1970), *Biwi ho to Aisi* (1988), *Pati Parmeshwar* (1988) which depicted women as passive, submissive wives as perfect figures and martyrs for their own families.

Film scholar and author Shoma Chatterji says, “Women in Hindi cinema have been decorative objects. Each phase of Hindi cinema had its own representation of women, but they were confined largely to the traditional, patriarchal framework of the Indian society. The ordinary woman has hardly been visible in Hindi cinema.” It has commonly been in the action-packed movies of Akshay Kumar, Sunny Deol and Sunil Shetty, the actress was abruptly placed in the romantic track as a distraction for the viewer from monotonous bouts of violence. So, the moot question is how real were the women characters in the movies? This is something to debate about because values, ideals, principles; morals have dominated the framework in which these films are placed.

Hindi cinema has been essentially male-centric, leaving little space for the female counterparts to evolve and grow as versatile performers. As now we have been seeing increasing numbers of movies creating bold and beautiful of Bollywood. In the past too, we’ve had actresses portraying strong characters who fight the shackles of their social milieu and the very first film is *Mother India* released in 1957. Considered as one of the finest classics of Indian cinema, the movie looks at the struggle of a rural woman in India, who fights all odds to raise her two sons. The portrayal of the late actress Nargis Dutt is of a loving and brave mother, who struggles to raise her family alone and in the end, saying true to her cause, she kills her evil son to save a woman’s honour.

It has been years since in the world of Bollywood the ideal woman is seen as a suffering and devoted wife, also known to be *pativrata*, whose duty is to serve her
husband and his family. It does not matter if she has to put up with the humiliation at their hands because that is her sole duty and a sacred obligation as well. Such humiliation, servility, and slavery of a woman in her spouse’s home, that is her sasural, was considered as a praiseworthy act for an ideal Indian woman. The viewers watch such movies and share these cultural behaviours to the women in their community. They look at these projections as empowering for women.

The ethics and culture of India is shown and legitimised through the way a woman is portrayed in the Indian movies. In the early Indian films, the ideal Indian woman was always represented through the point of view of the heroine, the hero’s mother or sister and was a typical Hindu woman who never did anything against the wishes of the hero. But the vamp (female villain) used to be an Anglo-Indian or westernised woman, mostly a sexually promiscuous woman who was just the opposite of the innocent heroine. The vamp was also shown as an outsider to the Indian norms and traditions.

India has a history of colonialism and that is why when the films of the 1960s or 1970s showed vamps as Anglo-Indians the filmmakers were using the act of defiance and were asserting their cultural superiority over the other western cultures. It was a voluntary act by the writers and the filmmakers of that time.

**Women and Present Hindi Cinema**

Women in Indian cinema are born with certain assumptions ranging from cult movies to celluloid blockbusters like *Sholay* to more recent *Fashion* that employ themselves as in severe gender issues. They are portrayed either as damsels in distress or demented feminists or simple belly-shaking glam dolls whose sole ambition is to attract the attention of the male gender. In many Indian films it is a common trend to insert ‘item numbers’ which bear no rational connection to the film in anyways, but with an assumption that the film is easily associated. Sometimes the one song ends up making a mark for the film, such as ‘Munni’ from *Dabangg*, ‘Chikni Chameli’ of Agneepath or ‘Fevicol’ of *Dabangg 2*.

In order to present the modernity among women, Indian filmmakers have parachuted on an idea that the display of dancing girls in ‘minimum’ clothes is real expression
of freedom. On a lighter note, our elder generation, earlier exposed to the “sensuous” Helen, is now face-to-face with the more “fatal” Bipasha Basu. But the Hindi cinema became male-dominated through the nineties and even now, to an extent, with the item song culture. The really big films — those which cross the coveted rupees one billion mark at the box office — objectify women.”

In the present day, the typical Indian woman, item number and individualism share an almost symbiotic relationship. These three ingredients have become the major part of Indian cinema. The stereotypical portrayal of women, which ruled Indian films till a very recent time, has been witnessing a remarkable change – be it the blood thirsty Priyanka from 7 Khoon Maaf, or no nonsense journalist Rani in No One Killed Jessica or Parineeti Chopra as the rebellious lover from Ishaqzaade, each of their characters stood apart from the conventional women and none of them had qualms about it.

Actresses like Vidya Balan (Paa, Dirty Picture, Kahani, Ishqiya) and Konkona Sen Sharma (Page 3, Life in a Metro, Mr. and Mrs. Iyer) have led this change of direction, who have appeared in strong and independent roles which for the time being shifted the camera’s focus from the women’s body to her identity as an individual.

**Growth of Parallel Cinema**

However, as discussed earlier, parallel cinema was a film movement in Indian cinema that originated in Bengal in the 1950s as an alternative to the mainstream commercial Indian cinema, represented especially by popular Hindi cinema. It began as a precursor of the Indian New Wave the next decade. The movement was initially led by Bengali cinema and produced internationally acclaimed filmmakers such as Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak, Tapan Sinha and others. It is known for its serious content, realism and naturalism, with a keen eye on the socio-political climate of the times, and for the rejection of the dance-and-song numbers that are typical of mainstream commercial cinema.

The Parallel Cinema movement began to take shape from the late 1940s to the 1960s which is considered the ‘Golden Age’ of Indian cinema. In the 1960s, the Indian
government began financing independent art films based on Indian themes. By the early 1990s, the rising costs involved in film production and the commercialisation of the films had a negative impact on the parallel cinema. The fact that investment returns cannot be guaranteed made art films less popular amongst filmmakers. Political and economic turmoil, television and piracy proved to be fatal threat to parallel cinema, as it declined.

There may be various reasons for such a difference in the same industry and this study will delve into the depth of those reasons through feministic theories and film theories. Not all the feministic theories or the film theories will be dealt with in this study. Only the relevant theories will be taken into account while analysing the study and its contents.

This research work is planned to do a comparative study of the gender-based considerations that go in filmmaking in two distinct genres of Hindi cinema i.e., commercial cinema and parallel cinema and thereby the study the comparison of these two genres of the Hindi cinema. It will focus on the projection of female characters portrayed on screen and how the portrayal of the same character is different in both the genres. If a female actor acts well, the character has to be praised and recognised. But most of the times the male actor took away all the accolades from the female actor who is not given strong or powerful dialogues in the same scene. Though the female actor may still be recognised but will always be overshadowed by her male counterpart. Why such biasness in the commercial cinema? And why such freedom of portrayal of women characters in the parallel cinema? This question needs to dig some concrete answer which lies in some form of patriarchal considerations of male film producers.

This study will also analyse the content in terms of various movies selected from the commercial as well as the parallel Hindi cinema. The research will be done by comparing the female characters portrayed differently in both these genres in detail. The content will be chosen randomly and the analysis will be done precisely.

Comparing the same characters of some female actors in these two genres is the main aspect of this thesis. To delve into the depth of the difference of the same
characterisation of the commercial and the parallel cinema and to extract the main reason behind such a big difference is what this thesis is all about.

For instance, the character of Supriya Pathak in *Bazaar* (1982) was that of an obedient daughter who was forced to get married to the person she did not love. The similar character was played by Rakhee in *Kabhi Kabhi* (1976) who was forced to leave her beloved and marry someone else. But the portrayal of both the women in the same condition was quite different. When in *Bazaar* Supriya Pathak met her beloved for the last time, she had no such dialogues to deliver rather a song was played in the background and both the lovers bid farewell only with their expressions. Here both the lovers were given equal attention while projecting this melancholic situation. Whereas, in *Kabhi Kabhi* when Rakhee had her last meeting with her lover, she was silent and her lover, played by Amitabh Bachchan, was given all the dialogues. The focus in that scene shifted to the lover rather than to the female character. Though both of the characters were going through a tough time but we can only sense the pain of the male character here. This shows how male characters are given more importance in the commercial cinema while in the parallel cinema both the characters are given equal importance.

There is not much done in this particular field of study. Either there is content about the commercial Hindi cinema or there is the material available for the parallel Hindi cinema. But there is no such comparison and when it comes to the potential of women in both the genres, there is almost no such research or study done. Related studies are done to show the potential of women in commercial cinema or how the female characters are moulded in the Hindi films.

This study is being done to add to the existing content of both of these genres of the Hindi cinema which can be in a later stage be useful to the future scholars and analysts. It will be helpful for the people to read the comparison of the female portrayal and their diverse styles in the Hindi cinema.

This study will also refer to all the available books and journals which deal with the same subject of this research. The review of all those literature will be dealt in this study to throw some more light on this subject.
Chapter Division of the Thesis

When the structure and the organisation of this research is concerned, it has to be taken into account that this study contains six chapters overall. All chapters pertaining to the core objective of the research will give a complete view on the female portrayal in the Hindi cinema and how in the same film industry there can be differences in the projection of females in two different genres.

The introductory chapter provides the context and a brief history which is vital to understand the remainder of the research work. It briefly explains the history of filmmaking in India from its origins.

The second chapter deals with the definition of both the genres of the Hindi cinema, i.e., the commercial and the parallel cinema. The historical background of these cinemas is further been discussed in detail. The present scenario of the Hindi cinema is explained and the review of the available secondary literature is discussed.

The third chapter deals with the finding of the relation between the relevant feminist theories concerned with the study, whether it is liberal, socialist, or radical. The viewpoints of each theory will be taken into account and how they are relevant in this particular study is discussed.

The analysis of the selected films is done in the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters. Eight films from each decade, four from each genre, post 1980s till 2000s is being analysed. The content selected in this chapter is random and the films are taken from the commercial as well as the parallel Hindi cinema both. It will also have the interpretation of the whole content of this research. This chapter which deals with the content analysis is further being discussed in terms of interpretation. How the content is interpreted and what is derived from the analysis is discussed in this chapter in a detailed way.

The parallel movies came into the Hindi cinema during the 1970s and during the 80s it was at its peak. The 90s saw a decline in the parallel cinema and during the 2000s there was a resurgence in this genre in the Hindi cinema. Hence, the three major decades for the parallel cinema has been chosen for this study. Also, to make the
young readers apprehend the content more closely, by choosing movies from the 80s till the 2000s will make them relate the movies in a better way than to choose movies from a later decade.

The seventh and the final chapter is that of conclusions and suggestions, which means that the conclusions will be drawn from the overall research. The content analysis and its interpretations are further discussed by drawing the conclusion of the whole study. The main objective of the research is emphasised and conclusions will be drawn from the whole study.

There is a number of research methodologies used in various researches. But in this particular research paper content analysis will be used as the main research methodology. In content analysis the properties of the content are systematically identified and then analysed. In this thesis, randomly selected films of some selected directors will be analysed in terms of gender based biasness. We will analyse the factors of such biasness in commercial cinema. We will also observe and analyse why the other genre is devoid of such biasness. We will gather the main reason of shadowing the potential of the female characters in the commercial cinema.

In commercial cinema, whenever a woman is shown, she is shown satisfying men’s desires and is portrayed as raw material for producing and rearing children. The girls, who are shown in the barest possible outfits until they are married, are denied to have ‘say’ while choosing their life partners. The parents, the custodian of traditions, do that job for them. After getting married these women are mindlessly loaded with the weight of bangles, ornaments, and conventional clothes. Such a turnaround, while artistically displayed on screen, thins the morale of the girls who want to be the captains of their own boats.

In this research we will focus on the characters portrayed by women in commercial and parallel cinema and how those characters are different in both the genres. We will also see in what respect the characters have been differentiated. The reasons of such difference will be extracted with examples and proof and they will be analysed accordingly. The characters may be as small as that of a maid or as powerful as that of a mother. This research will have an account of all those nuances of the characters that has been portrayed on screen to enhance or overshadow a woman’s role.
Women always had the potential to act well on screen and stand tall with their male counterparts. There are cases when their potential is not completely shown to the world in order to boast the patriarchy that has always been omnipotent in our society in each and every sphere of the life. This thesis will dwell deep inside the hidden potentials of the women of this particular sphere of life, i.e., Hindi cinema, and will hopefully come out having a solid proof that women have been and will always be equal to men when it comes to acting and portrayal of a powerful character.

**Feminism and Cinema**

Women subordination is an old age practice since the patriarchal society came into being. Male domination over their female counterparts is sometimes not even looked upon as an issue in many places of the world. But still when women continued to be subjugated through generations, they finally decided to raise their voices against such oppression. They wanted to free themselves from the shackles of such bondage. This voice that women raised against female exploitation has been given the name of ‘Feminism’. Feminists simply want to uplift the position of females in this male-dominating society.

The traces of feministic actions are not only limited to a particular field. We can now see feminism in almost all the spheres of life. People are demanding equal rights for women and are trying to make an egalitarian society. These people are not only females but many of them are males as well. Many people have this illusion of believing the common myth that feminists can only be females and there is no place for any males. They even believe that feminists are basically male-haters and they want to make a matriarchal society.

However, this is not only wrong but absolutely impossible as well. No feminist wants any of these. Feminists simply demand equal rights for all and want that both males and females share equal burden in private and public spheres. Making an egalitarian society is the main objective of feminism.

Women have always played important roles in the society but they have never given their due respect. Most of the societies are dominated by men and controlled by them. Only in a handful of the progressive societies, women have the decision-making power. This exercise of the decision-making by women was not started in a
day; it took a lot of effort and a lot of time. It has been a continuous process to assert the equal rights for women by many women and some men as well. This process wanted to bring about a change in the society and it was termed as ‘Feminism’. Men have been repressing the female rights for too long when finally some women stood up against the old age customs. Feminism was started for the equality of men and women. It was a movement started for the social, political, and economic equality of everyone. Equality is, basically, a balance between a male and a female with the intention of liberating the individual. Feminism is a human rights movement. It is about proclaiming equal rights for every human being, men or women. It wanted to spread egalitarianism around the globe. The feminist scholars have divided the study of feminism into different waves based on the beliefs and ideologies pursued by the women in a particular time period.

The year 1972 was an important year for the women’s film movement and the development of the feminist film theory and practice. In the month of August, in conjugation with the Edinburgh Film Festival, a women’s event was held for the very first time. Fortunately for all the women, it proved to be a successful one. This, however, encouraged many and in the early 1973, Claire Johnston organised a season of women’s cinema at the National Film Theatre in London.

Feminist film making was encouraged by many but it was always surrounded by the clouds of political debates. It was inevitable for the development of a film theory. At that early phase, feminist film theory was mainly concerned with the representation of women in relation to the dominance of the male power structure within the patriarchal society. Many women, especially from the academic background, helped in the development, but it was perhaps Laura Mulvey and Claire Johnston who are said to be the progenitors of the feminist film theory. Both were actively involved in the development of this theory and wrote seminal articles which had huge impact on the study.

One of the earliest articles on feminist film theory and practice is Claire Johnston’s “Women’s Cinema as Counter-cinema” (1973). Johnston argues that women are stereotyped in films since the days of silent cinema. She challenged such a narrow depiction of females. Women are often seen as an extension of male vision and Johnston criticises such roles saying, “It is probably true to say that despite the
enormous emphasis placed on woman as spectacle in the cinema, woman as woman is largely absent.” ¹

Johnston wanted filmmakers to break through the earlier norms and change the ruling ideology. She stressed her point in diverting from the conventions and use films as a political tool as well as for entertainment. She spoke about the importance of developing a film practice that questions and challenges main stream dominant cinema and its patriarchal basis. She used a term ‘counter-cinema movement’ which will be linked to avant-garde and left wing films.

**First wave of feminism**

The first wave of feminism is said to be between 1860s and 1920s.² During this period, women started to make their voices heard at the various educational institutions. It helped in spreading feminist knowledge to students who were both male as well as female. The first wave of feminism mainly focused on the equal rights of the women. The demand for right to vote has been made during this wave. Mary Wollstonecraft spoke about the importance of social equality among women in her work ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Woman’. She is regarded as the mother of British feminism. Then the first American feminist against the phallocentric society was Margaret Fuller who wrote ‘Woman in the Nineteenth Century’ in 1845. Thereafter many others initiated the feminist consciousness in writing such as, Rebecca West, Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, John Stuart Mill, and Olive Schruners. However, some of the prominent feminist spokespersons in the United States were Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Their efforts made a huge change in the American constitution and in the 1920 an amendment was made which granted women the right to cast their votes. A huge change also took place when the right to practice birth control was granted in the America.

**Second wave of Feminism**

After the positive results of the first wave, the second wave of feminism gained momentum in the 1960s. Women now started to emphasise on their right to

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¹ Johnston 1973: 214
² Mukherjee, Debashree; Feminism: Theories and Impact, 2008, Icfai Books
education and their right to choose career apart from being just homemakers. The second wave of feminism was more focused on the equal rights in the sphere of employment and education for women. Feminists wanted to end the discrimination of women in these fields. In 1973, the United States Supreme Court passed a decision declaring that abortion is legal to be practiced by women in all the 50 states of the country. This made the women take control of their reproductive rights.

**Third wave of Feminism**

The third wave is the result of the misgivings of the second wave and continues up to the present day. Many believe that the third wave only brought to light the obstacles that the second wave had discussed earlier but many others are of the opinion that the third wave promoted the vital points put on the fore by the previous waves. In the early nineties women became more confident in their skin and demanded solutions for the various obstacles faced by them in that era. This wave criticised the media for an unfair projection of women and the inequality in treatment at the workplace. The third wave emphasised on the equal status of women at workplace and that of the homemakers. Feminists argued that initiatives must be taken for the working mothers to balance both home and workplace in a pleasant way. However, the third wave lacked a goal which was prominent in the previous two waves of feminism.

The third wave erupted as a reaction to the misgivings of the second wave and did not have a particular direction to go. Hence, many critics provide a coinage to this wave as the ‘Second Wave, Part Two’. It was more like the conflict between the senior feminists and the junior feminists with no definite destination to reach.

When an Australian woman, Su, was interviewed for the 1996 anthology ‘DIY Feminism’, she said, “[Feminists are] just women who don’t want to be treated like shit.”

Feminism wants a person to be whoever one is – but with a political consciousness. As bell hooks has offered a definition in her book ‘Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre’, she says, “Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.” This definition in no way implies that men are the enemy. Rather it puts sexist actions and thoughts as the main root of the problem. Hence, to understand feminism it is vital to understand sexism. It does not matter if the sexist actions are
perpetuated by men, women, child, or adult. One has to be free of all such actions and treat everyone equal regardless of their gender. Therefore, feminism is not a term used just by the females but it concerns the whole of our society and in a broader view, the world.

Simon deBeavoir’s *Le Deuxieme Sexe* (The Second Sex), in 1949, rebelliously asked the patriarchal world about the status and role of a woman in such a society. Most of the early feminists wrote passionately in advocacy for a world uncoloured by gender discrimination and stereotypes. The early feminists were working in the anti-racist and anti-classist settings to raise the common issue of sexism. Mass media helped them along in their quest to raise pertinent issues of rights -- about freedom to have abortion, freedom of sexuality, freedom to live as a lesbian, to challenge rape and domestic violence and above all to demand equity at the workplace as ‘equal pay for equal work’.

As the movement progressed, it was seen that anti-male was not the feminist consciousness anymore. Larger issues came to light and broader views were discussed. All this while, communication was the key for the feminists to take their points across, to argue against injustice and to make people see reason in their arguments. Different communicators used different writing styles to drive home their points. Many appealed to the elite, and some could make a mark on the general populace.

The general notion of feminism in the minds of most people remains one of a movement started by a bunch of angry women who wanted to be like men. That feminists hate men is an absurd though popular belief. hooks clearly believes that feminists are not born, they are made. She often emphasised the fact that being born a woman does not make someone a feminist. One has to believe in the feminist politics through choice and action. Feminism is a movement to end sexist oppression and not only women but also there are many men who believe in the movement.

In the year 1848, the revolution of feminism arose in the United States. The first Women’s Rights Convention was held near New York which resulted in the “Declaration of Women’s Independence” and it asserted that “the woman is man’s
equal – was intended to be so by the creator – and the highest good of the race demanded that she should be recognised as such.’’

Time and again females have shown their potential in various fields be it, science and technology, management, media, literature, arts, or any other for that matter. Women have created a niche for themselves but still have to fight and struggle for their equal rights. The Third World countries face this challenge in a more serious way than the developed countries like the United States or the United Kingdom. Though, the developed countries may also have a similar problem but it may not be on such a high level as compared to the other part of the world.

In this thesis, there is an attempt to bring about a realisation as to how much talented are the woman in the field of cinema. This research not only highlights the talent or potential of the women but also underlines the fact that even in Hindi cinema there is a genre where the subjugation of women is still prominent.

This research will compare the two main genres of the Hindi cinema, i.e., the commercial and the parallel cinema. It will show how a woman is portrayed in both the genres. It will point out the differences between the similar characters in both the genres and will question the reason behind such a difference.

The basic issue of feminism, which is ‘equal pay for equal work’, will also be taken into consideration in the backdrop. But the main concern of the thesis will remain that the women in cinema are overshadowed by the men in the same field. And if there is no valid reason for this overshadowing then why there is this inequality in an era which is referred to as ‘modern’ and ‘developed’ by the historians?

**History of Indian Cinema**

The pioneers of Indian cinema were the Lumiere brothers from France. In 1896, they had shown a series of six motion pictures in Bombay. This was an inspiration to many potential filmmakers and in 1897, Save Dada made two short films. In 1913, Dada Saheb Phalke, who is considered to be the father of Indian cinema, made the first feature length silent film *Raja Harishchandra*. Whereas in 1931, Ardeshir Irani

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3 Dixit, 1992, p7
made the first Indian talking film Alam Ara. Afterwards in 1937, Irani even made the first colour film in Hindi, Kisan Kanya. But the colour did not become a popular feature until the late 1950s. At this time, sublime romantic musicals and melodramas were the principle categories in the cinema.

Various genres emerged when the talkies came into being. People had started off by making mythological films but later on romantic, comedy, tragedy, family drama, thriller; all such genres were introduced in the Hindi cinema.

After India’s independence, the Indian film industry grew tremendously and the period from 1940s to 1960s is regarded by the film historians as the “Golden Age” of the Hindi cinema. Filmmakers like Guru Dutt and Raj Kapoor contributed to the cinema and some epic movies were made during the era. Many films have a backdrop of the freedom struggle or the face of India after the independence. Social evils like unemployment and crime were prominent in many of the movies.

In the late 1960s to the early 1970s the movies were mainly romantic and action oriented. During the mid-1970s the movies dealt with gangsters, bandits, and smugglers. The famous duo script writer ‘Salim-Javed’ penned a new character in his films, the one with the ‘angry young man’. The Shehanshah of Bollywood, Amitabh Bachchan, became a superstar with his roles as the angry unemployed youth who was mostly brought up without a father and, hence, went on to the wrong way which eventually either brought him his downfall or resulted in the enlightenment of the purpose of life which was to be righteous and honest.

It was during the 1970s that the New Wave Cinema movement came to the Hindi cinema from the Bengali cinema. Many prominent filmmakers made parallel or artistic films in Hindi cinema like Shyam Benegal, Govind Nihalani, Mahesh Bhatt, Mira Nair, and Ketan Mehta.

The late 1980s and early 1990s again saw the Hindi cinema as the abode to the romantic and family-centric films. The new generation stars and the three ‘Khans’ of Bollywood came into the limelight around the early 1990s. However, the end of the decade showed the resurgence of Parallel cinema in the Hindi cinema. It marked the entry the new performers in arthouse and independent films out of which some were
commercially successful while some were only critically acclaimed. Some of such movies are *Shiva* (1991), *Satya* (1998), *Shool* (1999),

Today Indian cinema has become a global enterprise along with the Hollywood and the Chinese film industries. In terms of annual film output it was being reported during the 2010 that India ranks first followed by the Nigerian cinema, Hollywood, and China. Indian films are screened in over 90 countries all over the world.

The Indian media is representing a changing consciousness when it comes to the Indian middle class since the early twentieth century. From the colonial to the post-colonial times, the Indian media has not only represented this class consciousness but also has fashioned it accordingly. The Indian cinema and its history can be seen defining the bourgeois nation in different ways in a variety of contexts. First there was the anti-colonialism then came the nation building followed by a planned development. When seen in the contemporary context it has been moved on to the globalisation. All of this has been an interestingly enriching experience for the journey of the bourgeoisie in India. Most of the Indian media is now owned by the capitalists and controlled by the bourgeois.

It was in the nineteenth century that as a progressive and developmental vehicle the liberal capitalist interpretations of the early modern enlightenment became an integral part when it comes to the consciousness of this class. And it was the first half of the twentieth century that the Hindi cinema became an effective medium of the bourgeois hegemony in India.

It would not be right to say that the infusion of bourgeois social engineering into Hindi cinema was preordained, it could be asserted that it was the popular commercial Hindi cinema that finally serves the interest of the truly patriarchal Indian dominating class.

The writer Kiran Nagarkar remarked a few decades ago that cinema has become the opium for the masses in the independent India. Undoubtedly this cannot be ignored as it has some truth in it but there is something else that has happened since Indian cinema has started its journey into the lives of the masses. From a long time back, the Indian cinema and television, both have blended politics and culture with this
opium and the audience is inhaling it from a long time now that they have become accustomed to it.

Commercial Hindi cinema provides an intriguing record of Indian history and political issues. In Hindi cinema, the portrayal of our country is seen as a mythical community, one big happy family of heterogeneous groups, but this image falls under the burden of its own disagreements. The country is embedded with contradictions regarding gender, class, and religious communities. All of these disturb the patriotic portrayal in Hindi movies to unmask a different history every time. Metaphorically we can see that if a woman is looked upon as the idealised nation, there is always an ideal male hero that will rescue the nation from the inevitable risks.

**Parallel Cinema**

The 1950s saw the emergence of the Parallel cinema in Hindi movies but it was only later on in the 1970s that the movement was fully recognised and appreciated. The movement was led by the Bengali cinema and it started gaining prominence in the Hindi cinema. Some of the earliest Hindi movies in this movement were Chetan Anand’s *Neecha Nagar* (1946) and Bimal Roy’s *Do Bigha Zameen* (1953).

Some of the prominent directors that have made huge contributions to the parallel cinema in India and have won global acclaim as well as are Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Buddhadeb Dasgupta, G. Aravindan, Aparna Sen, Shaji N. Karun, and Girish Kasaravalli. There have been some other filmmakers who have found success overseas. Some of them are Shekhar Kapur, Mira Nair, and Deepa Mehta.

There are certain traits of parallel cinema that are distinct in this genre and separate this genre from the commercial cinema. The parallel cinema is much more realistic with believable situations and characters than in the commercial cinema. There is no glamour in this cinema with colourful attires and huge houses with decorative rooms. The movies in this genre are set up mainly at the real locations and not at any studio. Many parallel movies do not even have any song and dance sequence, and those that do have only a few songs. Parallel movies are concerned more on the
lower class of the society and deals with the social issues and evils prevailing in the society.

A qualitative revival of the Indian cinema was much needed during the 1970s and this need was one of the various reasons why some filmmakers started innovation through the cinema in the form of ‘art films’. In that particular period, popular Hindi cinema was dominating the nation and was appreciated by the masses. But it has its negative points as well, people living abroad were not accepting the same formula applied in almost all the Hindi and regional films. Though this was a time when Indian film industry (including the regional film industries) became the biggest film industry in the world, overtaking even Japan.

But gradually the intellectuals were becoming bored of the similar plots and themes of the movies. This was a time when some filmmakers decided to make a much needed change in the industry by experimenting with their works as they felt that filmmaking is an art form that could be dealt with a lot a different ways. Hence, they rejected the age old formulae of making films and dug out new and innovative ideas in terms of story and treatment of the movies.

Many critics were biased towards the commercial cinema and condemn the parallel cinema arguing on the basis of their financial failure and low popular appeal. They were also sure that popular cinema is the one upholding the essence of the culture of the country.

The historians of Indian cinema believed that the official year for the beginning of the “New Indian Cinema” was the year 1969. They did not apply it only to the directors but also to many of the actors as well like Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, Smita Patil, and the technicians and cinematographers too including Malayalee cameraman Venu, Kannadiga Ramachandra and KK Mahajan who worked for the Hindi cinema and worked with Mani Kaul and Kumar Shahani.

However, Aruna Vasudev wrote in her book, ‘The New Indian Cinema’ that “paradoxically, this new movement was born of a government decision and not from the impetus of filmmakers rebelling against the existing popular cinema.” Although this government aid was only helpful for realistic themes which was preferred by
most of the auteur filmmakers who were either of Leftist or Marxist temperament. This financial help given from the government was not enough but still as Vasudev had written, “the prizes and awards won by these small budget films led to the feeling that only ‘small’ was ‘artistic’.”

This bizarre approach that artistic films are only made on a low budget concerning social themes and the more depressing, the better, made the audience judge this ‘New Cinema’ with a particular viewpoint. Style and aesthetics were side lined when it comes to the parallel movies. Only the themes and plots were analysed. Only serious subjects were dealt in the movies obstructing other creative ideas to barge in. these movies were meant for a cause by treating a situation in a particular way but they rarely reached to a place beyond portraying the reality.

In a way, Parallel Cinema have made a huge change in terms of cinematic expression. It introduced reality based themes and plots that deals with the social issues of the nation. It made the Indian audience discover their various diversities in terms of culture, linguistic, or physical ways of life. The protagonist were ordinary men and women who accost several uneasy situations but confronted them with dignity and bravery. Unlike the commercial cinema where the heroes were seen dealing with the toughest of situation in an unbelievable way. This new genre of cinema gave an opportunity to the auteur directors to explore the aesthetics of the Indian cinema innovatively.

But during the late 1990s the parallel cinema saw a huge decline in terms of production of films and viewership of those films. In the year 1997 alone there were almost 800 films out of which only 50 films could be termed as parallel movies. Many parallel cinema directors made appeals to the government to create a distribution network for their movies as the national network, Doordarshan, was being indifferent in broadcasting these films. Also censorship were imposed whenever these movies were shown on television which was a cause of trouble for these filmmakers.

There were many other factors during this period when parallel films were no longer in the limelight. One of those reasons was that movies were now made on new and untouched themes in a commercial way. Plots were dealing with families that were
urban middle class and were much more educated as well. Another major reason was the technological outburst in the form of satellite or cable channels all over the country. The growing number of films increased the competition and many filmmakers started making films with serious issues on a grand scale of commercially run cinema, for instance Mani Ratnam’s *Bombay* (1995).

This was a time when parallel cinema came to a deadlock and all it needed was a new generation of innovators to make a resurgence of this art form that was dealt very differently from the commercial cinema that had been ruling the country for so long.

**Hindi Film Industry**

Indian film industry is one of the prolific film industries of the world and surprisingly it was initiated by a pair of foreigners, the Lumiere brothers. In 1896, the French brothers showed the moving pictures for the first time to an enthusiastic audience in Bombay (now Mumbai). These films were a huge success which led to the screening of films by James B. Stewart and Ted Hughes.

Though in 1897, Save Dada made two short films but it is Dada Saheb Phalke who is considered to be the father of Indian cinema. He had made the first feature length silent film in 1913, *Raja Harishchandra*. Afterwards in 1931, Ardeshir Irani made India’s first talking film, *Alam Ara*.

With the end of the silent era and the beginning of the talkies, the main theme of the movies was based on mythological texts. Films were started to be made in not only Hindi but also other regional languages like Tamil, Telugu, and Bengali. During the 1930s, word had spread around the globe about the vibrant film industry in India. Many foreigners landed upon Bombay shores to participate in the industry.

One of the many foreigners was Mary Evans. She was a young Australian girl who was good in doing stunts. She could easily lift a man and throw him across the room. She wore masks and used a whip at times. Her name was changed to Nadia and was popularly known as Fearless Nadia. Although, she unable to talk in India’s native
language, her career spanned from 1930s to 1959. The press and critics did not appreciate her work but the audience could not get enough of her fabulous stunts.

During 1940, a teenager from Baghdad arrived in Bombay following the footsteps of Nadia. Her name was Florence Esekiel but she was given the screen name of Nadira. She played the main lead against the then heartthrob, Dilip Kumar. Afterwards her sarcastic smile and bold attitude gave her the roles of a female villain, often called as a ‘vamp’. Later on she started doing motherly roles and one of her last performances was in Ismail Merchant’s *Cotton Mary*.

There were other male foreigners who left a mark on the Hindi film industry. One of them was Bob Christo who was an Australian. He specialized in villainous roles.

Then there was another actor, Tom Alter, who was raised in Mussourie, India. He was fluent in Hindi and Urdu but used to play roles of a foreigner who could not speak the Indian language.

There was a Franco-Burmese refuge, Helen, who broke all norms in the Hindi film industry and gave sexuality a new direction. There was a time when no film was made without a song with Helen. She used to do a dance item in many films or ‘item numbers’ as they call them today. Though she always stayed within the code of decency and wore body stockings all the times. She even did a few serious roles in her career.

After the independence, mythological and historical themes were replaced by social themes. These themes were focused more on the lower classes and the evil prevailing in the Indian society. Slowly and gradually a new wave of film makers came to the fore such as Bimal Roy and Satyajit Ray. In the 1960s, India’s New Wave cinema was founded which was inspired by the social and cinematic changes in the US and Europe. Though the Indian audience wanted to be entertained by the cinema rather than be preached by it, still there were some elite classes who not only appreciated such films that were the outcome of this new wave but also tried to make their efforts to increase the number of such art.
In the present cinematic scenario, there are people who are trying to make Indian cinema a more real one and making slightly different kinds of films that were usually seen earlier. Some of those filmmakers are Anurag Kashyap, Anand Gandhi, and Rajat Kapoor.

Today Indian cinema is at a very favourable position. With the help of new technology and vibrant creativity, Indian cinema is growing and crossing the borders to get appreciation throughout the world. There are several movies that are being exhibited and shown in various international film festivals. Indian movies are being recognised and appreciated by everyone around the globe. It was in 2013 that the Indian film industry celebrated its 100th year being one of the world’s most prolific film industries.

In one of his articles in ‘Film Comment’, David Chute said, “Bollywood cinema’s peak achievements, like those of Hong Kong, devote immense amounts of creative energy, ingenuity, and highly evolved craftsmanship to the life-affirming task of delivering intense pleasure to the largest possible audience. But while Hong Kong cinema works by radical compression, Bollywood operates by expanding in all directions.”

Cinema everywhere is different in its own term. The culture and society influence the cinema in a huge way. The term "culture" can actually mean several different things. If we look it as the broad anthropological sense, it describes to be a "way of life," embodied in social relations, processes, and material objects. The cuisine and dining of a particular society contains all three aspects. But if we look into it as a much narrower and more traditional sense, it describes the intellectual and artistic activities and products: the domain of a Ministry of Culture. We use this term as a broad concept that reflects our concern with considering media arts within a strongly social understanding. In Marxist terms, this analysis of culture and society is one that recognizes the realm of production and the realm of reproduction, base and superstructure, the economic and the cultural.

When we study the culture and society in this context, we observe the national culture as a stratified phenomenon, which is usually in a state of active contention with imperialist imperatives. When we look at it as a case in India, a pre-existing
culture was eroded by the penetration of British values, particularly in the national bourgeoisie. Whereas in other cases, for instance in Cuba, the native culture was totally destroyed with the establishment of a colonial slave society under the Spanish control, which later on in the 20th century was followed by the U.S. economic and political domination of the nation until its revolution. Hence, with this understanding it is vital to analyse the contradictions and resistance taking place in the culture under colonial and neo-colonial domination. In most of the Third World countries, there can be found various kinds of cultures. Somewhere there are simultaneous presence of a traditional agrarian folk culture, and somewhere an artisanal and often urbanized popular culture. There is presence of a highly commercialized and often imported mass culture at some places, and sometimes an active resistance or a revolutionary culture.

When we look at it from this perspective, we can understand a long development of cultural resistance, taking place before and after national liberation in various forms including media. We can notice its further development in the new society and how that in turn affected the cinematic experience. It is more useful to look at cinema and films in relation to the other art forms of communication as well. We can take the example of Jean Franco’s The Modern Culture of Latin America: Society and the Artist which shows a brilliant discussion about the themes and forms of Latin American literature. It also provides an excellent way of understanding the art of films of that region.

Culture is not only different from one place to another but it is also constantly changing. Many a times we are sceptical of the elite notions of culture that do not conform to the culture of the masses. It is not possible to label one culture as good and other as bad. Simply because majority is following certain norms, we cannot say that majority is always right. Culture domination is also another point that has to be taken into consideration. Foreign culture domination is a common thing happening in most of the Third World countries. But we must analyse the cultural domination as well as the culture appropriation which may describe how the people receive, understand, and use that which is available to them. As we have seen several Hollywood movies related to Tarzan with a totally distorted view of Africa but once a South African student said that he and his countrymen knew that it could not be
Africa because the foliage was all wrong and the people in that movie did not look like Africans at all. They thought that the place where Tarzan lived has to be somewhere in the United States.

To understand any national cinema, it is very important to understand the entire communication system of the country. One cannot generalise or categorise the Third World cinema in one way without giving a complete view of the context. Especially when now in the present scenario there is a dramatic expansion of video production in many areas. We need to have a very good understanding of the different media, that is, print, television, radio, film, data transmission, etc. However, various small nations do not have a fully developed film industry due to the lack of capitalisation required, but still there are several other countries, like India, that not only have a huge film industry but it is also popular in all parts of the globe. There are some nations, on the other hand, that may be significant in radio production which works as a vehicle for national culture. There is also a cultural mix in many of those countries. Several Third World countries have music and dance as a significant part of their national culture for economic, historical, and cultural reasons rather than having books or magazines that require literacy for comprehension.

Cinema is basically a mode of expression developed by the West and dependent on the Western technology as well. Hollywood movies have been one of the earliest carriers of Western culture into the Third World. In India also, our media and movies are hugely influenced by the Western culture. However, the concept of national cinema may appear differently in different societies. A national cinema in a monolingual country like Cuba will be having a different meaning than a national cinema in India that has 16 officially recognised languages and around 300 dialects. Even the function of the cinema is different in different nations depending upon the country’s stage of development. Here also if we see the cinemas of Cuba and India, we can notice how dynamic both film industries are where Cuban cinema has an internationally recognised critical cinema and Indian cinema has a large capitalist sector and an innovative stet-funded “New Wave” cinema that attempted to break free from the traditions of the commercial cinema in both form and content.
Difference between Commercial and Parallel Cinema

The main purpose of the cinema was to entertain and to educate the masses. Gradually it became a commercialised medium for people to earn money through making films. The commercial cinema is also known as the mainstream cinema. This kind of cinema is produced with a commercial aspect associated with it. In simple words commercial cinema is a business oriented cinema made for the mass in general. Mainly, all the movies that run in the theatres and shown on the television are the commercial movies. Commercial movies mostly work on a same formula and the structure of the movies is similar to make it a success.

Parallel movies are often known as the art films. These are unique, exclusive, unconventional, and have a signature style of the director or the team. Unlike the commercial movies, parallel films do not have similar themes or settings. They are diverse in terms of plots, themes, and subjects. They are mainly concerned about the social issues and evils related to the society.

In India, commercial cinema is the most popular form of cinema. Ever since its inception, Indian commercial movies have a huge fan following. Gradually the viewership increases and now Indian commercial films, especially Hindi films, are seen in almost all parts of the world.

In India, films are made not only in Hindi language but in several other regional languages as well. But Hindi film industry is still a much prolific industry when compared to other regional film industries in India.

Some general conventions of the commercial films in India are that the movies are quite long in length, approximately three hours, with an interval. Also one of the important features of the Indian commercial film is its dance and song sequences. The commercial films give a lot of thought to the songs of the movies. The songs are choreographed by professional dancers and sung by professional playback singers whereas lip-synced by the dancing actors. The music of the songs is also given by music directors and lyrics are penned by the lyricists. The Indian popular cinema is a mix of sentiments and melodrama. There are various genres of the popular cinema be it romance, comedy, drama, thriller, action, or suspense. Some of the movies are a
mix of many genres and are labelled as a full entertainment package or, in Indian term, a *masala* movie.

Parallel cinema often refers to the offbeat movies which have strong influences of social realism and Indian theatre. The existing social realities and complexities of relationships are usually side-lined in the commercial cinema unlike the parallel movies where the movies are mostly based on such dark and sombre themes.

In India, commercial and parallel movies differ from each other in terms of genre, theme, audience involvement, subject, cast, and tempo. Commercial movies keep their consumers conform to the dominant ideology to maintain the status quo. Parallel movies have diverse themes and unusual plots when it comes to the treatment and the form of their stories.

The new wave movement was started by a bunch of filmmakers who refuse to follow the rules of the mainstream commercial cinema and wanted to work outside the commercial structures of Bombay and other regional cinemas. Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, and Ritwik Ghatak were the three Bengali directors who were ignored by the Hindi commercial film industry for a long time. But these filmmakers were perhaps the first ‘New Indian Cinema’ directors.

**Theories and Films**

There are several feminist theories but in this theory we will focus only a few of them. We will see how these feminist theories are relevant in the films, especially Hindi films. The main feminist theories that are selected for this thesis are radical theory, Marxist theory, socialist theory, and liberal theory.

On the same note, we have chosen a few film theories and will apply in the Hindi films. Those film theories are feminist theory, auteur theory, and psychoanalysis film theory.

**Feminism Theories**

Liberal feminism was one of the earliest kinds of feminism. It was started during the first wave of feminism. The earliest demand of the liberal feminists was that of suffrage, franchise, and right to vote. They wanted women to gain education, to have
job opportunities, and to take part in the political system of the society by being an active participant. They believe that God has created men and women equally, hence, both must have equal rights in all the spheres of life. In a few words, liberal feminists want to free women from the bondage of performing gender roles. Whatever privileges a man enjoys, the same must be given to a woman without getting discriminated on the any basis, especially on the basis of sex.

As the name suggests, radical feminists were quite radical in nature. They challenge everything and everyone in the name of discrimination. They were the first to introduce the terms ‘gender’ and ‘patriarchy’. They condemn patriarchy and explain the need to show respect towards individual feelings and sentiments without discriminating on the basis of sex alone. According to radical feminism, women’s oppression was the main issue behind all other kinds of oppressions. Radical feminists want to end women oppression to make a better and healthier society for the human beings. Radical feminists want to imbibe the thought of change in women. This will help in paving the way for equality amongst women all over the world.

Marxist feminism is a branch of Feminism that mainly focuses on the investigation and explanation of the ways in which women subordination takes place through system of capitalism and private property. The Marxist Feminism explains that the current capitalist economy do not appreciate or compensate women’s labour. One of the earliest works in this field was that of Friedrich Engels when he published ‘The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State’ in 1884. It deals with the issues of class, women subjugation and private property. According to Engels, patriarchy created a capitalistic society where women have very less or sometimes even no share at all. Because of no property of her own, she has to be dependent upon the male pillars of her family which in return results in her subordination. Many Marxist feminists argue that female oppression originated from being forced into the private sphere. They proposed that conditions of women could improve only if their work was recognised and valued in the public sphere. Charlotte Perkins Gilman was a socialist writer who worked on this issue and wanted to end women subordination by influencing people to appreciate female housework and promoted his message in academic and public domains.
In the Socialist feminism, the points that have been left out in the Radical and Marxist feminist theories were being dealt. According to the socialist feminists, the root cause of women subjugation lies deep within the societal rules and norms. The social structure is responsible for this distinction amongst men and women. It approves certain tenets of Marxist feminism and believes that the economy of the society cultivates class distinctions that in return allow a particular class or classes of people to overpower and dominate over others. This domination of one class over the others generates corruption in the society.

**Film Theories**

We will observe how these feminist theories are applied in the Hindi films. However, apart from these feminist theories, we have some important film theories as well. Some of them are Feminist, Auteur, Marxism, and Psychoanalysis Film Theories.

Film studies is an academic discipline where we use film theories to explore the essence of a cinema. Film theories are used for conceptualizing frameworks to understand a particular film’s relationship to reality or other arts, to individual viewers, and to society at large. Many people interchange the term film theory with film criticism or film history. Though these three are quite similar to each other still they are not to be confused by being the same thing.

Auteur film theory explains that the director is the author of the film and the film reflects his personal creative vision. The word ‘auteur’ is a French word for ‘author’. Many parallel films are said to be following this trend of being the creative vision of the director himself. The director is without any doubt the creator of the film but many times during the production of the film, the director’s vision is blurred or mixed up with other points of views. Hence, all the films cannot be clubbed under this division. A director brings a movie to life by expressing his own personal views and thoughts to it and by using different other methods of production like lighting, camerawork, cinematography, and editing. He uses all these techniques to add to his vision.
The second wave of feminism and the development of women’s studies influenced in the development of feminist film theory. The feminist scholars started analysing films from a feministic point of view. They analysed how women have been portrayed in films and how much screen time is given to the women in the movies. Initial attempts were started in the early 1970s in the United States where the focus was given to the roles of the female characters in a particular film and the treatment of the character.

Laura Mulvey was a British feminist film theorist and is best known for her essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’. The essay was written in 1973 and was published in 1975 in a British film theory journal Screen. Her essay was influential for the feminist film theorists to look into the films and the women in those films in a new perspective. The essay explained how one person seek pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object. A women’s image is something that requires male gaze which is the demand of a film. The essay was influenced by many theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan.

Psychoanalytical film theory analyses films from the perspective of psychoanalysis and is influenced by the works of Jacques Lacan. Earlier the critics of psychoanalysis focused on extracting the hidden meaning behind screen images and unmasking the meaning that were implied rather than described. Later on they considered film as a representation of fantasy. In the early 1970s after the work of Laura Mulvey, the critics explored many other aspects related to the ‘gaze’ in the cinema identifying the viewer’s perspective with the camera vision.

Marxist film theory is said to be one of the oldest forms of film theory. There were many filmmakers who heighten the class consciousness and promote Marxist ideas. Many Soviet filmmakers including Sergei Eisenstein expressed ideas of Marxism through their films. The concept of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie can be seen in many films highlighting the ideas of Marxism. The themes and plots of the films were also showing the economic exploitation of people from a lower class. Gradually the development of Marxist film theory moved on from these precise beginnings and later on it was viewed in a much wider way to refer to any power relationships or structures within a moving image text.
The vital objectives of this thesis are to study two distinct genres of Hindi cinema, that is, commercial and parallel cinema and to study gender-based considerations in Hindi cinema. It is also important to draw a comparative analysis of distinct representation of women in commercial and parallel Hindi cinema.

This study will be relevant as it will, firstly and primarily, contribute to the existing knowledge. Secondly, the comparison will show the potential of women in both the genres, especially in the parallel cinema. It will show the different dimensions of women. It will throw light on the fact that women can excel in every field, including Hindi cinema.

The basic research questions that will be answered in this thesis include the parameters of success of women characters in commercial and parallel cinema. It will observe whether representation of women in commercial cinema is a result of gender-based discrimination and whether portraying women in parallel cinema is devoid of such gender bias.

The hypothesis of this thesis is that women have potential in all the fields, including cinema, but it is shown only in the Parallel movies. Commercial movies portray women as secondary actors. Following this hypothesis, the study will focus on the portrayal of women in Hindi cinema and particularly comparing the two main genres of Hindi cinema comprising commercial and parallel cinema.

In India, the vastness of the movie watchers shows the overwhelming presence of a vibrant film culture. Indian movies are popular all over the world as Indians and Hindi speaking public are scattered all around the globe. Non-native speakers on the other hand appreciate the vivacious song and dance sequences in the films full of colourful choreography. Many people in the film industry attribute its success to the “techno folk” form that combines the Indian folk traditions with Western cinematic technology.

**Era of Crossover Films**

The contemporary period of globalization made its presence felt in India in the 1990s. An important part was played by the movies made around that period. From
the themes, plots, and stories of the movies to the clothes the actors wear and the way they behave had a great impact on the Indian audience. The parallel cinema during that period was declining and only a handful of movies can be recognised from that genre. However, there were still some filmmakers who continued to make meaningful and out-of-the-league Hindi movies that can be considered as parallel ones.

But this period had seen the dawn of another genre in the Hindi film industry and it was called the “Crossover” movie. A crossover movie had actors from the Indian film industry with the dialogues in English language. It was actually an English language Indian film. It was basically meant for the elite class and for those Indians who lived abroad. It had a desi flavour to it with a Hollywood styled movie. It was more like a movie where we can experience the “East meets West” kind of a flavour.

International productions with Indian themes together made Indian crossover movies. It started with Merchant Ivory Productions when they made *The Householder* in 1963. It had an Indian setting, an Indian story, and an Indian cast, including Shashi Kapoor, Leela Naidu and Durga Khote. But the movie was in English language. It gave way to many more such ventures but it took a while before Indian directors commercially took up making films in English language.

Aparna Sen had made a movie *36 Chowringhee Lane* (1981) during the peak of the Parallel cinema movement. The movie gained critical acclaim and the genre began to become an entity in itself. Dev Benegal’s *English, August* (1994) gave a big push to this new genre and was accepted by a huge audience especially of the urban class by becoming first hit of its kind that drew an audience of 20 million.

The 1990s saw the emergence of such movies which paved way for other directors like Nagesh Kukunoor, Gurinder Chadha, and Mira Nair to make several such crossover movies. Some of the famous crossover movies are *Hyderabad Blues* (1998), *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer* (2002), *15, Park Avenue* (2005), *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), and *Parzania* (2007). These movies were a blend of both Hollywood movies and Indian films. Some of them even had songs in them just like an Indian film whereas most of them had only background score to go
with them. These films were made on Indian themes for international acclaim. These movies showed the genre new ways of both creativity and commercial profit.

Though the theme and plot of the movie was either like a commercial film or a parallel one but the language and the treatment of the movie was a bit different from the Hindi films. Some movies were made on a set-up of a commercial film like Bend it Like Beckham (2002) and Hollywood Bollywood (2002) while some movies had the aesthetics and aura of a parallel film like The Mistress of Spices (2005) and Being Cyrus (2006).

Still we cannot merge this genre with any of the previous ones first of all due to the language used here and also because the treatment of the crossover movies were neither Indian nor Hollywood style. It was a mixture of both to attract the audiences of both – Hindi film viewers and Hollywood film viewers.

Like any other genre of movies, the crossover movies helped bring out a number of new artists in the world of films. It includes a new breed of directors who were ready to experiment with language and creative ideas like Aparna Sen, Deepa Mehta, Kaizad Gustad, Rituporno Ghosh, and Homi Adajania. Then there were various actors who emerged from this new genre and many of them later on moved to the commercial films as well. Some of these actors are Konkona Sen Sharma, Rahul Bose, Rahul Khanna, and Lisa Ray.

It is during this period that another genre emerged in the Hindi film industry, that of the “off-beat” films. There have been a number of films during the early 2000s which we can include to this latest genre of films. As the production quality of the films perked up, so came the new age filmmakers with better and improved cinematic quality and digitalization facilities in the Hindi cinema.

Actor and director Rajat Kapoor had made several of such films including Raghu Romeo (2003), Mithya (2007), Fatso (2012), and Ankhon Dekhi (2014). Then there was another actor/director of the same calibre, Saurabh Shukla, who made some off-beat movies like Raat Gayi Baat Gayi (2009), Pappu Can’t Dance Saala (2011), and I M 24 (2012). Anurag Kashyap, Dibakar Banerjee, and Vikramaditya Motwane
contribute a lot to these films by making interesting entertainer that also have a message in them.

These movies also gave break to a huge number of actors and also made way for some of the existing actors who were otherwise underrated in the commercial movies. These actors include Rajat Kapoor, Ranvir Shourie, Vinay Pathak, Neha Dhupia, Sanjay Mishra, Vijay Raaz, Brijendra Kala, Mannu Rishi, and Gul Panag.

These off beat movies were in Hindi language and deals with the problems of an average Indian, not unlike the parallel films. The movies are light hearted with serious issues dealt in a playful way. These movies are more realistic than those of the commercial ones. Some critics say that these are a branch of parallel films. They say the resurgence of parallel films have begun with the emergence of these movies. Films like Anurag Kashyap’s Black Friday (2004), Nagesh Kukunoor’s Dor (2006), Kiran Rao’s Dhobi Ghat (2011), and Ritesh Batra’s The Lunchbox (2013) have almost all the traits that parallel movies used to have.

These movies were not commercially promoted but still have made a space for themselves in this flourishing film industry. New age realism and reality based themes are vital in these films. They sometimes blend the realism with the commercialism. They are being said to be reviving the parallel cinema and generating interest from the current audience that demands change from the old age genre of Hindi cinema.

In a way we can say that these filmmakers did not hesitate to try some new recipe in the old kitchen and the best part was that the customers are appreciating the dish that they prepared. There has been demand of such films as they are not only critically appreciated but also internationally accepted by screening several of such films in various international film festivals. The audience is hopeful that these movies will keep the torch flaming for the parallel films which will continue to thrive.

However, this study will only focus on the female actors portrayed in the commercial as well as the parallel films in the Hindi cinema. But a background of the history of the Indian film industry plays a pivotal role in understanding this
research work. It is very important to note the highs and the lows of the Hindi film and the way it has evolved from one form to another.

This study is not only meant to add to the already existing knowledge of the film studies but also to put forth a personal viewpoint, which may be similar to some of the scholars of film studies, that shows how the portrayal of women in Hindi cinema differ and what are the reasons behind such differences.

Although females are portrayed in all the genres of the cinema in different ways, including the crossover and off-beat movies, but the main emphasis of this study will be only to study the two main genres of the Hindi film industry and pin point the basic differences in the representations of females in those movies.