CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION:

A SOCIOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH POPULAR CINEMA
...Oh, it is the dawn of eternity
And the raising of the curtain on the true Age of Man

Man,
This gigantic enigma.
Says one,
"Man, the unknown";
Says another,
"Man, a contradiction";
And another,
"Man, who betrays himself";
And yet another,
"Man, the dramatic."

Wise yet foolish, foolish yet wise;
Noble yet mean, mean yet noble;
Enchanted by beauty, yet unable to break free of ugliness;
Aspiring to be good, yet not innocent of evil;
Seeming weak but strong;
Seeming strong but weak;
In order to be himself, he betrays himself;
In his search for freedom, he is bound by the yokes of others;
And, though pronouncing the word "peace",
He unceasingly breeds violence and war.

(Ikeda, 1999)

Let me confess: being a “man” and working on the area of masculinity is not easy. The above verses from a collection of poetry titled “Songs of Victory” by a Buddhist poet, Daisaku Ikeda seem to point out the inner and outer contradictions involved. But the challenge/the journey in itself is emancipatory.

Any research endeavour is basically a journey – an adventure. I wish to add: a voyage of self-discovery. In this research pursuit, I wish to examine how popular Hindi films project images of masculinity. The reason for doing a work of this kind is
that, as gender studies have enlightened us, masculinity or femininity is culturally constructed and divergent forms of socialisation & cultural practices contribute to the process of existing gender constructs. We also know that popular Hindi films have occupied a significant place in the cultural landscape of contemporary India. As sociologists of culture would argue, popular Hindi films as an integral component of mass culture tend to symbolise the common/average aspirations, anxieties, hopes, and dreams of the larger society. That is why, sociologically speaking, it is a challenging venture to examine the role played by popular Hindi films in the construction of masculinity. In order to give a concrete direction and focus to my proposed research project, I have selected six Hindi films from 1950s onwards – the films, which were great commercial successes, acquired popularity throughout the country and in a way were more or less acceptable to the entire family. Apart from the textual/ideological analysis of these films, I have also studied the responses of film directors, actors, actresses, music composers, scriptwriters and others involved in the industry. My purpose is to examine the complex relationship between popular Hindi cinema as a mass cultural product and the social structure and cultural practices prevalent in our society. In fact, it is this relationship – with its complexities and ambiguities that have enabled me to examine the representation of masculinity in these films and to see whether there is a singular hegemonic form of masculinity or whether there are multiple and complex forms of masculinities that are represented in these films.

This entire study, in my quest, require a rigorous socio-historical imagination because with the changing shapes of Indian society, forms of masculinity have also undergone changes. No wonder a Raj Kapoor’s masculinity in the early 50s and 60s are strikingly different from Amitabh Bachchan’s masculinity in the 70s which in a way is also different from Aamir Khan’s or Shah Rukh Khan’s images/versions represented in the 90s. The study therefore emerges out of a creative inter-mix between sociology of cinema and gender studies.

[1]

Need To Study Cinema

Satyajit Ray (1976, 19) remarked that one of the most significant phenomena of our time has been the development of cinema from a turn-of-the century
mechanical toy into one of the most potent and versatile art forms. In the immense complexity of its creative process, it combines in various measures the functions of poetry, music, painting, drama, architecture and a host of other arts, major and minor. It also combines the cold logic of science with the subtlest abstractions of the human imagination. Cinema is basically the expression of a concept or concepts in aesthetic terms.

All forms of art including films reflect the society in which they exist and from which they emerge. Cinema holds a mirror up to ‘nature’, which is a complex word, a concept that includes human nature, of relationship, events caused by the actions of man, by the very nature of the world and of all that is in it. Films grow out of the society to which they belong, and in a way naturally reflect what society wants to see. As soon as a thinking, feeling person is present – viewing the film – that person’s experience is brought to bear on the film’s images, sounds, and narratives. The viewer’s experience is itself informed by the culture in which he or she lives. A person’s beliefs, understandings, and values are all activated within the context of film viewing. That is the time for the people who created the film as well as they are also a major part of the text. Their beliefs, their understanding of what a film should or should not be, the economic constraints that allow them to say and do only so much in any given film – these become textualised (Ghose, 2002, 1-3). Walter Benjamin wrote that film is unique among the arts because of the fact that it is not unique. Film is without ‘aura’. Film seems to have no origin; it is there, whole and complete, ready for our enjoyment or the enjoyment of anyone else with the price of admission. All these make it the most social and communal of the arts. Film addresses the world, pierces through the realities of daily life like a surgeon’s knife and by opening perceptions of the ordinary to the many, holds the possibility of engaging an audience in a social and cultural discourse, a mass engagement of the imagination unlike any other art form (Kolker, 1998).

For formal and aesthetic discourse, film matters for its artistic merits. In this, it shares a concern with newspaper and magazine film reviewing, even if this common cause is sometimes obscured by antagonism of both journalists and academics towards one another. Film-as-art discourses argue, or assume, that film is intrinsically worth studying. If they lean on wider discourse of art, of aesthetics or sometimes
erotics, this is only because film itself is an art and therefore valuable in terms of art. There is no appeal to something outside film art. Social-ideological arguments, on the other hand, do make such an appeal. One kind of social argument sees film as the exemplary or symptomatic art form of the category 'modernity'. Film modernity may be located first in its industrial character. Cameras and projectors are machines. Films are endlessly reproducible, as in all mass commodity production. The modernity of film at the level of production and consumption has been seen as of a piece with film form. The camera’s mechanical reproduction creates a new, perhaps rather strange relationship between image and reality, just as the experience of modernity is said to distance people from nature and an immediately graspable, localised social reality.

The history of film studies, as of any other discipline, makes clear that there are many different ways of deciding what it is one attends to, and how one attends to it, when one studies something. In principle, there could be film studies based upon the science and techniques of film, its physics and chemistry, the practices and possibilities of the camera and other apparatus of filmmaking. Yet these have not constituted a discrete branch of film studies, nor even very often been seen as indispensable to the study of a film. The reason for the absence, or at any rate extreme marginalisation, of scientific and technical discourses in film studies is not so much this epistemological mismatch as those discourses' perceived value in relation to what matters about film. 

It is a concern with the politics of film that has underpinned the emergence of what we may call a cultural studies perspective in recent years. Its central proposition is that culture of all kinds produces, reproduces, and/or legitimises forms of thought and feeling in society and that the well-being of people in society is crucially affected and shaped by this. Dyer (1998, 3-10) remarks that Film studies should include physics and chemistry, technology, aesthetics, psychology (of some sort), the sociology of organisations and consumption, empirical study of producers and audiences, textual study of films themselves, and no doubt much else that we cannot envisage. The aesthetics and culture cannot stand in opposition. The aesthetic dimension of a film never exists apart from how it is conceptualised, how it is socially practised, how it is perceived; it never exists floating free of historical and cultural aspects particularity. Equally, the cultural study of film must always understand that it
is studying film, which has its own specificity, its own pleasures, its own way of doing things that cannot be reduced to ideological formulations or what people (producers, audiences) think and feel about it.

The development of film studies and its establishment within the academy precedes that of cultural studies, but over the last two decades there have been close parallels between the two intellectual and analytical projects. Both traditions commenced during the 1950s and 1960s in most Western countries. Both share a common interest in the textual analysis of popular forms and in the history of the cultural and industrial systems, which produce these forms. While one might have expected the parallels between the cultural studies and that of film studies to have encouraged some convergence of the two traditions, for most of the period they were in vigorous disputation (Turner 1998, 195-200). Where cultural studies may still have something to offer film studies is in the area of audience research. For cultural studies, the late 1980s were dominated by what came to be called ‘audience studies’. Film studies, for its part, has something to offer cultural studies in that it has managed to provide criticism that is socially and culturally informed but which still maintains some notions of value that can help explain what it is (beyond ideology, that is) that attracts audiences over and over again to particular texts. In this context, now let us very briefly discuss two approaches used to analyse films – namely, film semiotics and that of psychoanalysis.

Just as words are the building blocks for speech, tones for music colours and shapes for painting, image and sound are the basic units for a ‘language’ of cinema. Although the elements of this approach are implicit in the formalist thought of Einstein, it is only recently that this view has begun to dominate discussions on film. This view forms part of what is known as semiology or semiotics. Film semiotics maintain that film is like a language, treating it as a text that conveys its message through audio-visual information. Film is a processed record of such information. The message implies an emitter (the filmmaker) and a receiver (the spectator or audience). In its final form, a film could be called a ‘semiotic’ record.

The primary meaning present in a film is the narrative itself. Apart from the primary meaning, there is also a secondary meaning present in film. This is the
‘treatment’ or style in film and results from the action of the film director. Film art form also expresses human subjectivity, which can have a political, psych ideological and metaphysical meaning and are encountered within the consc as plausible definitions of reality. The aesthetic message in a film is an reality, which cannot be expressed by technical or scientific signs. Roland calls it a third level of signification and a meaning that is obtuse. A semiotic based on an axio-aesthetics of film (which relates film to culture as par understanding of a film) seems an appropriate model for the study of film, e: Indian film. To get at the message in the Indian film, we need a semiotics the fundamental socio-cultural semantic structures with narrative expression in both its narrative semantics and its narrative syntax – three factors that pro final text (Valicha, 1998, 9-20).

Psychoanalysis as a discourse and the cinema were formed at the en nineteenth century. They share a common historical, social and cultural bac shaped by the forces of modernity. Theorists commonly explore how psycho: with its emphasis on the importance of desire in the life of the individ influenced the cinema. But the reverse is also true – cinema may well have in psychoanalysis. Creed (1998, 77) refers briefly to aspects of post-colonial, qu-body theory to demonstrate that film theory, in its current use of psychoanal: become more selective and nuanced. While no one would suggest a ret: totalising approach of the 1970s, it would be misleading to argue that the app: of psychoanalysis to cinema is a thing of the past.

The absorption of the twentieth century medium of cinema, be developed in industrially advanced countries, into India’s classical and folk presents enormous problems. Yet the breakdown of folk culture, the ris uneducated industrial working class coming into money, of middlemen who the government spending, the increasing outward conformity of the nouveaux ric pseudo-western pattern, the increased mixing between men and women – all created the need for an entertainment formula that can cater to an incr common set of denominations. The Hindi (i.e. all-India) film formula not onl to these denominators, but also helps to create and consolidate them, giving it certain terms of reference for its cultural adjustment (Das Gupta\(^3\), 1981, 3).
In India, two kinds of cinema are quite distinct from each other. The Hindi film is described as a glamour film, a factory film, a mass film, an entertainment film, a status quo film, a commercial film, a formula film, traditional film and popular film. The other cinema is called the ‘parallel’ cinema, serious cinema, art cinema, modern cinema and even new wave cinema. The popular film is different from the serious film on account of its being very much a consumer-oriented product. It treats its audience as an object whose hidden desires it seeks to satisfy. At a deeper level, the popular Hindi film seems to point to certain structures of meaning that have a socio-cultural significance and relate directly to the Indian consciousness (Valicha, 1988, 28-32).

[II]
Recent Sociological Interest In Popular Cinema

Hindi commercial cinema is usually considered a purely escapist fare – a view that has strengthened prejudices against the genre to the point where it has been neglected not only by the intellectuals, who deem it trivial, but also by serious film critics. Implicit in such a view is the belief that these films are not only kitsch, devoid of any aesthetic value, but that they are fully divorced from reality, existing in a fantasy land created by themselves. They are at best exotic products of another world, patronised by people of inferior intellectual capabilities.

This condescension of elite critics and the resolute indifference of the academic community are slowly coming to an end (Kazmi, 1998, 12). In a country like India, where more than one-third of the population live below the poverty line, where nearly half the population is non-literate, cinema is the cheapest, the most accessible and effective medium of mass communication and image building. Psychologists, folk-locusts, structural linguists, for long cocooned in their disciplinary orthodoxies, are now being forced to come out and take note of this ‘strange’ and ‘curious’ medium. A large part of the Indian consciousness is shaped through these films. ‘Now that we are more secure in the consensus that the mainstream Hindi film is to Indian art what the urban marriage band is to Indian music, says Ashis Nandy, ‘perhaps we can turn our attention to what society’s biggest and most influential
mythmaker seeks to communicate about the problems of living in this corner of the globe.' (Nandy, 1980, 89-96).

From the discussions undertaken so far it is clear that the popular Indian film is no longer a stepchild of the contemporary social sciences (Nandy, 1998, 2, 14). Nandy points the urban slum as the single metaphorical locus of the Hindi film. There is in both of them the same stress on lower-middle-class sensibilities and on the informal, not-terribly-tacit theories of politics and society the class uses and the same ability to shock the haute bourgeoisie with the directness, vigour and crudity of these theories. That is why the popular film ideally has to have everything — from the classical to the folk, from the sublime to the ridiculous, and from the terribly modern to the incorrigibly traditional, from the plots within plots that never get resolved to the cameo roles and stereotypical characters that never get developed. An average, ‘normal’, Bombay film has to be, to the extent possible, everything to everyone. It has to cut across the myriad ethnicities and lifestyle of India and even of the world that impinges on India. Bombay cinema strikes a curious compromise between tradition and modernity.

Ashis Nandy, in an article in 1995, described popular (Hindi-Urdu) cinema as being ‘a slum’s eye view of Indian politics’. ‘Both the cinema and the slum in India show the same impassioned negotiation with everyday survival, the same mix of the comic and the tragic….’ (Singh, 2003, 12). As early as 1980, Krishen (1980) edited the special issue of India International Centre Quarterly on Indian Popular Cinema: Myth, Meaning and Metaphor. Kakar’s (1989, 26) approach to popular cinema is to think of film as a collective fantasy, a group daydream. In a way, cinema is a primary vehicle for shared fantasies of a vast number of people living on the Indian subcontinent who are both culturally and psychologically linked. The reason lies in the realm of cultural psychology rather than in the domain of socio-economic conditions. The Indian ego is flexible enough to regress temporarily to childhood modes without feeling threatened or engulfed. Hindi films seem to provide this regressive haven for a vast number of our people. By providing such a common fund of reference and fantasy, popular movies try to satisfy, often unwittingly, the basic emotional needs of a people or a nation. Unless the dreams, myths and fantasies are properly analysed and understood in the right context, the latent meaning of the
movies are very likely to be lost sight of. That is why social scientists of today are in favour of studying cinema as a prism that reflects dominant psychological concerns, certainly at the conscious concerns of millions of men and women who constitute a faithful or devoted clientele (Kakar, 1980, 12).

Valicha (1988) emphasises the fact that the key to understanding cinema lies in understanding the culture it is derived from - for which purpose one must understand the cultural meaning attached to and contained in cinematic codes and signs. It is an axio-aesthetics of the Indian cinema concerned with the total hermeneutic functioning of Indian cinema, with the relation of cinema to society, culture and the weltanschawing, with what makes for cinematic meaning in a cultural sense. For Vasudev (1995), contradictions abound in Indian cinema as much as they do in India. And like the country, the cinema absorbs them all, offering a pot-pouri that has its own passionate adherents. To be able to grasp this cinema an awareness of deeply entrenched values, traditions, contemporary events in this complex and multi-faceted society is essential. From the glitziest of entertainment to the sparsest of intellectual abstraction, from lavish spectacle to minimalist poetry, issues of gender, of politics, of poverty and plenty, India's cinema encompasses them all. Prasad (1998) presents Indian cinema as an institution firmly rooted in contemporary society, shaped by and shaping the political ideological terrain of independent India. The problems posed by Indian cinema for film theory and new formulations on questions such as the relation between cinema and capitalism, the state as a factor in cinematic narration, and sexual relations as a site of ideological inscription are explored. The unifying theme in Vasudevan's (2000, 2) work, which connects Rajadhyaksha, Kaali, Pandian, Srinivas, Biswas, Gopalan, Prasad, Mazumdar, Niranjana and Dhareshwar, derives from the current drive to understand the political implications of Indian popular cinema. But how exactly does one approach the politics of a cultural product such as film with some specificity? Film study has begun to feel the need to define a coherent domain in terms of archival resources: the films themselves; documents on cinema production, distribution and exhibition; information about the cinema's personnel at various levels; the geography of cinema in society, both its urban geography as well as the geography of itinerant cinema. The research agenda should include a historical knowledge of technologies and techniques, and a history of
perceptions about cinema. We would also have to stay alert to the cultural histories of advertising, radio, recording and television industries as they intersect with the history of cinema. Mishra (2002) addresses the ‘intelligibility’ of the form of commercial Hindi cinema. He takes up for discussion, as mediating forms and principles of this cinema, the great epics that have defined the Hindu way of life and its moral universe, particularly dwelling on the \textit{Ramayana} with its themes of banishment and genealogical purity, and the overriding principles of \textit{dharma} and \textit{tapas} or renunciation.\textsuperscript{4} One can also point out some of the recent articles by Ghosh (2002), Gopinath (2000), Rao (2000) and Kavi (2000) which emphasise the analysis of the representation of masculinities in popular Hindi films through the alternative sexuality angle.\textsuperscript{5}

In contemporary Indian sociology, cinema lends itself to many theorisations but whether it is seen as the ‘secret politics of our desires’ or as ‘a historical construct’, the power of cinema in reflecting and shaping too – the many aspects of Indianness is enormous. No doubt Indians take cinema with all its exaggerations, oddities and absurdities seriously. Cinema has really embodied popular culture itself: ‘the popular film is lowbrow modernising India in all its complexity, sophistry, naiveté and vulgarity. Studying popular cinema is studying Indian modernity at its rawest, its crudities laid bare by the fate of traditions in the contemporary life of arts. Above all, it is studying caricatures of ourselves – social and political analysis negotiating the country’s past and present located not only at the centre, studying others, as we like to see ourselves, but at the peripheries, standing as spectators, looking at others studying themselves as us.’ For, both the nation and its cinema are like that only.

My present humble research endeavour is born out of this rich intellectual history. In no way denying or defying the intellectual lineage, I wish to state that the present work retains its uniqueness in terms of its varied inter-disciplinary fervour. It incorporates the domains of sociological imagination in inter-face with the areas of cultural studies, film studies, social psychology, anthropological ethnographic tradition and gender studies especially the emerging men’s studies/masculinity studies. In a way, its point of departure is its distinct focus on the projection and
representation of the images of masculinity or rather masculinities in popular Hindi cinema from the 1950s onwards.

III

Sociological Need To Study Masculinity In Popular Cinema

Any serious study of popular cinema in India must first acknowledge its multidimensional structure. No mass medium is simply a sum total of all the actions it portrays or the messages it beams through these actions; it includes layers of meanings superimposed on one another, all of which contribute to its effect. In fact, some of the hidden messages may be more important than the overt ones, since such hidden messages often escape the controls of consciousness; they can less perceptibly sink into the spectator’s mind.

Moreover, any serious writing on film has operated on the diametrically opposite principle that theory is inescapable and that far from being an intruder, it is always already there. In watching a film the spectator is not merely a passive receptacle imbibing its meaning, but is engaged in a succession of interpretations, which depend on a whole set of background beliefs and without which the film would not make any sense. On the basis of such beliefs – or theories, whether formalised or not – the spectator sees faces, telephones, desert landscapes rather than patches of colour; ascribes motives to characters; judges certain actions as good and others as bad; decides that this film is realistic and that one is not and so on. The apparently simple act of spectating thus involves theories of representation, of human nature, morality, nature of reality, conditions for human happiness, etc. Similarly, some filmmakers, may be less conscious of a set of theories underlying the production of a film. For the critic, or for anyone engaged in a discussion of cinema, judgements also involve theories. For example, the suggestion that the increase in muggings can be traced to the increased incidence of violence in films involves at least a theory of signification (how meaning is produced), and one of subjectivity (how spectators are affected by texts). Given this inescapability, film theorists have argued that the underlying assumptions and beliefs of audiences, filmmakers and critics should be rendered explicit rather than left implicit and uncivilised. Indeed, those claiming to
stand outside the domain of theory are simply unaware of the theory they are using, thus binding themselves to alternatives.

In this backdrop, one wishes to situate the present research endeavour. The major aspect of my research is to have an interpretative understanding of popular Hindi cinema – with special reference to the select films I have chosen for my project. This interpretative understanding would involve seeing cinema as a text having sociological connotation, situating it in specific time and history relating it to the broader socio-political currents existing in the society, understanding the critical creative relationship between visual images and actually existing realities, practicality of human existence and narratives in the form of colours, visuals and music. I would concentrate in its interpretative study on the representation of masculinity, how male characters – heroes, villains or others – perceive their self-identities, their forms of socialisation, the way they grow up, their relationship with family kinship ties particularly the parents and above all the way they see women – as sisters, as mothers, as wives, as girlfriends, as vamps and the way they relate to them as saviours, protectors, destroyers or equal friends. It is this rigorous, interpretative understanding characterised by a fairly developed sociological skill to understand the explicit and implicit ideologies of a text that would give a distinctive identity to the research project, specially in its endeavour to see the representation of masculinity.

As I have already mentioned what gives my thesis a distinctive identity is that it seeks to study the representation of masculinity in popular Hindi cinema. There are three reasons why the study of masculinity in popular Hindi cinema is worth examining and sociologically relevant. First, a look at the genealogy of Hindi films would suggest that right from its inception it is heavily male-dominated. This male-domination can be seen in terms of the gender identity of the directors and producers of the films as well as the primacy of the male characters or heroes. This led to marginalisation of feminine voices for the reduction of women into either symbols of maternity or mere ornaments providing support to the dominant male character. It is therefore important to examine how in a such male-dominated medium of art, masculinities have been represented.
Second, popular cinema is a very important cultural medium that produces images, generates stereotypes and leads the younger generation to see role models. It is in this sense that cinema's popular culture has its definite impact on the internalisation of gender identities. Cinema often tells what it means to be masculine (e.g. A hero with courage, stamina and romance) or what it means to be an all-sacrificing mother or a heroine being perpetually loyal to the hero. In other words, the constant bombardment of images that popular cinema produces needs to be studied in order to get a sociological sense for the construction of gender identity. There is no way one can negate it as merely superstructural. It has a substantial role to play in the formation of and legitimisation of our beliefs and identities.

Third, popular cinema as a dynamic, vibrant, cultural medium also undergoes changes in terms of narratives, representation of gender and ideologies. As society transforms and alters, new politics emerge and the notion of gender identities becomes a contested domain. We see how instead of one uniform brand of masculinity or femininity, multiple and contesting articulations of gender identities emerge. What is interesting about popular cinema is that despite its melodrama it articulates the aspirations of the changing times. That is why we see the transformation from Raj Kapoor in the 50s to Bachchan in the 70s to Shah Rukh Khan in the 90s. Sociologically it is important to make sense of this changing masculinity in the context of the changing socio-political reality in India.

[IV]

Methodology

The present study, as is obvious, is a product of an inter-face between the sociology of cinema and gender studies. It is a work in the tradition of qualitative/interpretative social science. To begin with, the sources involved in the work are the existing writings: books, research papers, popular articles, film reviews, and other materials in film magazine, as well as writings on culture and gender studies – theoretical and specific contributions to Indian society. It is not a comparative study. Instead, it is an attempt at interpretative understanding of diverse forms of masculinity in popular Hindi cinema produced at different junctures of contemporary Indian history.
It can be noted in this context that textual analysis is an important methodological tool as far as this research is concerned. In a way, one would concentrate on textual analysis of the six films selected for this research. This would mean reading the six films as basic texts of analysis of research and deriving meaning out of the subtle nuances of the shot and plot of the respective films.

Moreover, interpretation as a mode of enquiry is critical. In a way, methodologically speaking, this is basically a work of interpretative understanding. This research at the essence and core has the element of interpretation which the researcher himself wants to admit and proceed further as a mode of basic enquiry and which may be subject to subjective biases which one needs to be aware about. The engagement between the researcher and the object of study is very intense and involved. So in a way, the researcher is aware of this methodological dilemma and has chosen to be an ‘insider’ as well as an ‘outsider’ to this research endeavour.

A major thrust of my thesis is an attempt to interpret the select films. In other words, interpretation as a method acquires primary importance in the thesis. Interpretation, as a sociologist would argue, is needed because the social world is filled with meanings and symbols that need to be understood rather than categorised as a theme existing out there. Unlike the positivistic method that seeks to study social reality as a thing, interpretative method gives due importance to subjective meanings and human reflexivity. Now cinema as a text is a domain of meanings which are being articulated through narratives, music, images and characterisation. As a researcher, I need to understand these meanings and construct how masculinity is being projected. This form of understanding because of its very nature cannot have the positivistic claim of ‘objectivity’ and ‘certainty’. Instead it is a creative process of perpetual exploration of meanings. This however does not mean that my interpretative methodology is merely subjective in nature. The fact is that I wish to relate cinema as a text to the social context, its hard politico-economic reality. This process of relating cinema to the socio-political context would possibly provide solid sociological foundations to construct my knowledge. This interpretative method and the study of socio-political context has been further enhanced by my field-work through which I met people engaged in the film industry, interacted with them,
interviewed them, and also by my constant negotiation with the already existing body of knowledge on cinema.

At this point I need to mention the meaning of 'popular'. One way of defining it is to distinguish it from classical/elite culture. It can be argued that classical/elite culture is 'high' culture having a rigorous training, history and sustained/produced by a select elite for the consumption of a privileged class. It remained limited to those having 'cultural capital'. Take for instance, classical Hindustani music or Bharatnatyam as a classical dance form. Both have an extremely elaborated form of training and rigour that makes its access limited to a certain section of society. Folk culture is different from classical culture in the sense that it has a smell of the 'local'. It is being produced, consumed by local people symbolising local histories, mythologies and aspirations. India, for instance, is being known for multiple folk traditions and culture widespread in diverse localities and regions.

But the way I am using popular culture in my thesis, let it be stated clearly, is different from both classical and folk. So when I say popular cinema, what I mean is that it is definitely different from high classical art like Bharatnatyam or Hindustani classical music or some award-winning film from parallel cinema. The reason is that far from being limited to a select class having a cultural capital, it enters everywhere from the slums in Mumbai to the middle class colony in Kolkata, from student hostels in Delhi to the army cantonment in Aizol. Furthermore, in terms of creation unlike classical art form it is much less 'pure' in the sense that it is more loose, diffused and possibly experimental. But it is also different from folk because it does not necessarily have a local flavour symbolising local aspirations and mythologies. Instead it is modern in the sense that a culture industry produces, distributes and sells it. It is the culture that is being produced and consumed by a large audience. In that sense it is a manufactured modern culture. So popular cinema is not like the Ramlila programme that one can see in an Indian village where there is no distinction between the entertainer and the consumer. Instead popular cinema is more like a technological spectacle produced by the culture industry disseminated throughout the huge social universe and consumed by a large diverse heterogeneous audience. The six films I have chosen are popular in this specific sense. These films do not remain limited to a select few. Watching or enjoying these films does not require a specialised cultural
skill that one needs to learn, say, Bharatnatyam. These films are also not limited to
the local community or the ethnic tribal group. These films transcend the localities
and in a way become ‘common’ valid for everyone and these are also a commercial
venture produced by the culture industry for large-scale consumption. At this
juncture, I wish to make another important point. The fact that these are popular films
does not by any means negate their sociological importance because popular culture
itself is a domain in which we see the production of stereotypes, the articulation of
collective fantasies and anxieties and possibly an effective tool for constructing
identities.

The six films that have been chosen for rigorous textual / interpretative
understanding give a distinctive identity to the present research project. An attempt
has been made to select representative popular commercially successful films. One
wishes to clearly state the rationale behind choosing these six select films. The films,
which have been selected for this research, are:

1. *Shree 420* from the 1950s
2. *Junglee* from the 1960s
3. *Kati Patang* from the 1970s
4. *Deewar*
5. *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* from the 1980s

Box-office success is the main criteria here. But there have been countless hits in the
Hindi filmdom from 1950s onwards. Why these six films? All the films selected
have been great commercial success stories throughout the country apart from being
immensely popular and all-time favourites and have had a degree of acceptability to
all the family members covering the range. In a way, for a meaningful research
endeavour, one has to focus and streamline somewhere. The decision which came
about was to select one film per decade from 1950s onwards. The exception has been
1970 where the research had to concede two films which are defining representative
of two actors who in the same decade had very different projections of masculinity.
In the cross references, other films and actors apart from the ones selected would be
discussed no doubt. Each of the six films selected and their main actors are stars of
the respective decades and also had a timeless impact on the Indian psyche in terms of
their projected masculinity constructs both on and off-screen. There is no denying the fact that there have been other actors who also commanded mass appeal and fan following, following their star persona in the psyche of the masses of that specific decade along with the six main actors from the six select films I have selected for analysis. For example, during the 1950s, there were three main male stars – Raj Kapoor, Dev Anand and Dilip Kumar. One felt that the film Shree 420 symbolised to a great extent the pangs of masculinity dilemma in the backdrop of the nascent independence of the Nehruvian era. Shammi Kapoor very typically represented the swinging 60s with his film Junglee. The 70s saw two superstars reigning the screen space – Rajesh Khanna and Amitabh Bachchan with their representative Katipatang and Deewaar respectively. 80s and 90s saw the emergence of the three Khans – Aamir, Shah Rukh and Salman. One also cannot deny the appeal of the masculinity projection by Govinda whose appeal can be a part of a serious, in-depth ethnographic study of popular mass culture. Here we decided to select Aamir’s Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak for the 80s and Shah Rukh’s Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge for the 90s for our analysis.

Apart from the select Hindi films, I have also studied select people in the film industry- actors, actresses, script writers, directors and music composers. I prepared an open-ended interview schedule and took detailed interviews of them. They need not necessarily be directly involved in the production of the films that I have chosen to study, nevertheless a study of this group of people helped me to understand the complex and dynamic relationship between their identities as professionals (i.e. actors, actresses, directors, script writers, music composers, etc.) and cultural beliefs and practices particularly in reference to gender questions and how they shape their professional engagement. Because these are the people who are producing these products having such a significant impact on the masses. A worthwhile sociological project requires an understanding of the relationship between the producers and the product – the way they produce, whether it is a merely professional, market-driven endeavour or whether in producing these products their cultural beliefs and practices, do play some role. I would therefore study select people in the film industry, interview them, collect their life histories and try to understand the meanings they
attach to these products, the way they look at gender stereotypes and perceive the audience. In other words, it would be a study of the sociology of the producers.

[V]

Field Experiences

This section is based on field experiences and interviews of the people connected with the film industry. It incorporates responses of film directors, actors, actresses, music composers, script writers and others involved in the industry in order to understand the insider's point of view regarding themselves especially what they had to say of their own products which we as audience consume. I had prepared an open-ended interview schedule and took detailed interviews. Those interviewed were not necessarily directly involved in the production of the films that I have chosen to study. Nevertheless a study of this group of people has helped me to understand the complex and dynamic relationship between their identities as professionals (i.e. actors, actresses, directors, script writers, music composers, etc.) and cultural beliefs and practices particularly in reference to gender questions. My field experiences were based in Pune and Mumbai. The Pune stay was spread across my experiences in the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), and the National Film Archive of India (NFAI). The intention of going and staying in the FTII hostel was thought of as strategic in order to be part of the process through which they go through their professional training. One must also remember that only some time before my visit there was a massive fire in the Institute where some of the original archival material was housed. So the loss was great and painful. The Registrar, Prof Suresh Chabria was gracious enough to allow me to stay in the Institute hostel itself.

The initial response from the students bordered on apprehension but was not entirely unfriendly. Some of them became quite friendly especially those from the senior-most batches. They started discussing their work and their views on film making. But not many seemed too enthusiastic to talk about Bollywood and the popular film genre. One had to really convince them. Some even made fun of the whole concept. Meanwhile one incident happened. One of my letters found its way into the FTII hostel notice board. Some one opened the envelope and put the letter for view of everyone and with a comment accompanying the letter. The letter
incidentally was from my father who was feeling proud that his son had found an opportunity to be part of the FTII student fraternity in letter and spirit for a few days. It was shocking to me initially and took me a while to recover. When I went back to my room, it was double locked by some one with a small red chit proclaiming “destined to die”. I was amused and concerned nonetheless because I do no know the reason for the fatwa they imposed on me. Again after breaking the lock with the help of the caretaker I went inside the room, to discover later that someone had locked it from outside. One had to bang the door too hard for others to come and open it from outside. In the consecutive day, one found some burnt negatives of the archival fire outside the door of my room.

One should not think that the FTII hostel and campus seem haunted but a reality check would point to the deep sense of insecurity which seem to grip the psyche of most of the students. In a way it even points to the masculinity construct of the aspiring people to the film industry in some capacity or the other. One mentions this incident not out of malice but as a kind of pointer to the masculinity construct in terms of the socialisation process through which the aspiring people of the industry go through. One heard stories of some of the drop-outs. Sometimes the pressure to deliver and the creative frustration finds its safety valves in various ways like heavy addiction of many kinds which may be a kind of escape route and diversion. Later on in their lives as film makers of popular film genre the ramification comes in the form of escapist fare seen or reflected in their work.

Initially while in the Institute, I managed to interview the renowned mind on Indian films, P.K. Nair (courtesy Haimanti Banerji who is connected with research in NFAI). P.K. Nair is a sea of knowledge who encouraged and blessed my research venture and tried to point out that the adoption of the Rasa theory as a kind of tool for the ensuing research rather than simply the semiotic technique of research would be more effective and fruitful.

One also ended up interviewing Prof. Suresh Chabria, who happens to be the Registrar as well as the Film Appreciation faculty of FTII. Despite his hectic schedule, he did find time for my interview. He also encouraged me a lot and focussed on the importance of the study of the film noir aspect of cinema technique
and also about the deconstruction ideas regarding the mythification of the heroes. One must also mention the help extended by the NFAI staff in terms of materials and press clippings.

My Mumbai field experience began on a very eventful note (one can even call it ‘filmic’!) which set the pace and mood for the whole stay. On the very first evening of my Mumbai stint, I was looking for a book-shop where I could buy a Film Directory containing addresses and phone numbers of people connected with the film industry. A young person befriended me in the Churchgate station and offered to accompany me to a book store nearby. I started discussing my research topic with him and in the process started to show me parts of the city which we were passing by as we walked along. Suddenly he took me to a dark football ground (which later I got to know was Cooperage Foot Ball Ground in M.K. Road) in the pretext of showing me the significance of the complex. Then in true popular Hindi film style asked for all the money and my new mobile phone (which incidentally I had acquired just two days prior to my trip as a methodological tool for my field work). On my refusal, he started beating me brutally – pinning me to the ground and pressing my neck with his feet, smashing off my spectacles, tearing off my T-shirt, clogging my senses by putting mud and sand on my ears, eyes, nose and mouth. I was somehow saved from this hyper masculine assault (in very graphic popular Hindi film style and techniques) by another man, Mr. Deepak, football coach and physical trainer of that ground. I had to convince him by showing my Identity Card as I was bleeding all over and could hardly move. In a way, my facial geography changed forever and made me more determined about my research endeavour. The rider and lesson of the whole episode, which made me immobile for a few days (the wounds and injuries were quite serious), is that it set me on a thinking and reflective mode. I understood in my search for the representation of masculinity or rather masculinities in popular Hindi cinema, especially my effort to unravel the insiders’ perspective on the same, that the city of Bombay or rather Mumbai, has a very significant and substantial ‘role’ and ‘part’ in the whole script and narrative of my research. Mumbai, the city, the ‘metro’ city, the ‘dream’ city, the ‘financial/business capital’ of India, has a definitive presence in all the popular Hindi films overtly or covertly which a serious onlooker and researcher on popular Hindi cinema cannot afford to miss especially if one is
delving in the arena of masculinity dimension in the popular film genre. It is no less important than concentrating on the leading male protagonists in all the successful popular Hindi films while focussing on the question of masculinity constructs in these films.

Another enriching field experience during my Mumbai stint, which was in sharp contrast to the black and bleak incident just mentioned in the previous paragraph, was a chance meeting and interaction with the fishermen community of Worli, Mumbai. I was dragged to their celebrations two nights prior to the Holi by another friend. On the first night, the celebrations involved an unbounded, unrestricted, free dance party in the streets of their locality defying the police ban. The crowd frenzy was seen to be believed and which many a time defied the so-called societal norms of propriety and was a pointer to the wild, free, unbounded celebration of masculinity also as part of the Mumbai city discourse and subsequent projection in the popular film genre. In the second night, they offer puja and prayers for the boats. In a way, they decorate their boats and invite people inside the boats. Subsequently, many a time they used to take me to the sea in their boats and used to feed me fishes, especially lobsters, after boiling them inside the boats and with their own hands. Their loving and caring nature along with their bold bravado with their boats in the unbounded sea offered a rare, unique mix in their masculinity construct which was quite fascinating for me to study and appreciate and was also a major driving force for me throughout the field work in Mumbai. There unbounded, free, uncomplicated spirit also symbolise the Mumbai city which has a distinct presence in the masculinity construct of popular Hindi cinema. In a way, the Arabian sea (especially the coloured water after holi) along with these fisher men acted as a healer and motivator to my, many a time injured and bruised (due to idiosyncratic tantrums of some stars either refusing or delaying interviews) soul and spirit throughout my field work.

While in Mumbai, after the initial failure to connect with people from the industry, one did end up meeting and talking to many of the people connected with the industry. The list is long but one needs to mention it in this occasion: Javed Akhtar, Shyam Benegal, Shammi Kapoor, Anu Malik, Naseeruddin Shah, Sonu Nigam, Alka Yagnik, Nirupa Roy, Anupam Kher, Randhir Kapoor, Rishikesh Mukherjee, A.K. Hangal, Mita Vashist, Subodh Mukherjee, Basu Chatterjee, Gulzar,

It is not really possible to delve into all the interviews which were many one-to-one / face-to-face and some were conducted over the phone. Even the interviews which one could not do were pointers to the focus on the insiders’ construction of masculinity. The first interview which started off the Mumbai interview experiences was that of Javed Akhtar who also seemed to be a great thinking and reflective mind on films. He pointed out his experiences in terms of the efforts and turbulences which go in the writing of the scripts. Especially when he narrated his part of the process which went to create Sholay and Deewaar. He dispelled many myths about the central character of Deewaar being modelled on Haji Mastan. He even expressed the deep psychological reasoning for both Salim and him losing their mothers at a very early age which perhaps points to the strong image of the mother figure in the film Deewaar.

Shyam Benegal was of a professorial disposition with a wide knowledge base. One can feel how he has kept touch with reality when he explained the most convenient and reasonable way of reaching him without any tantrums. The most important thing he mentioned was about the archetype of Devdas which has haunted and lived on in the persona of the Hindi film hero till the time Bachchan started dominating the scenario from the 70s onwards with its lack of adult sexuality and its desires.

Shammi Kapoor again was very gracious in terms of his disposition and the way he carries himself. One can feel the warmth and the abounded joy and happiness he exuberates even now. He made me sit in a room with the latest computer screen and offered his time to speak to me. The house and the drawing room was evident of the graciousness and grandeur of the Kapoor Khandan. He explained that the happiness they shared in the sets especially during the shooting of Junglee, explaining the total lack of any pretensions on his part to essay his ‘yahoo’ persona. The manner in which he explained some of the singing and dancing genres to me by performing
live in front of me. This is an example of his uninhibited self which in many senses is a pointer to the masculinity construct he projected on the big screen as well.

Anu Malik called in one of his recording schedules and he was very busy. He did find time to speak to me and at times even sing to me to explain the nuances of film music. He mentioned that Amitabh Bachchan could carry off any kind of song that was given to him to provide lip service to. Malik even got me introduced to Sonu Nigam and Alka Yagnik. They spoke about their experiences with playback singing and the industry at large.

Naseeruddin Shah is someone I could catch only after one of his very successful theatre performances at the Centre for Performing Arts. He was enthusiastic to respond to some of the questions about his stint as a theatre person but the moment I mentioned I am working on popular Hindi films, his tone changed. He mentioned categorically that he is not interested to talk about popular Hindi films. In fact he was telling me why I am wasting my time with such a topic on popular cinema and his time as well. One tends to remember his film *Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Aata Hain* and the real creative artist’s anger as well and its ramification in terms of the masculinity construct.

Randhir Kapoor was another person who was full of enthusiasm and encouragement about the whole topic of research. In a way he was very forthcoming in terms of his personal observations about the Kapoor clan, especially his views on Raj Kapoor was very interesting. He mentioned that for Raj, films were his oxygen to live. In a way, he breathed cinema and dreamt cinema till the very end. He dispelled the myth that Kapoors do not allow their women to work in films. He mentioned that so far the situations have been such that circumstances and their personal wishes came in the way of accepting roles. But when it came to the matter of Karishma and Kareena joining films, there was never any hiccups from any part of the family. In fact he was full of praise for his daughters with Karishma getting accolades due to her reinvention of her own self.

Mita Vashist was very forthcoming regarding her viewpoints about the superstars of yesteryears and also about her experiences of working with the reigning
stars of today. A point which was recurring in her conversation about male stars is that she would consider a hero to be with the right attribute of masculinity if she could think about walking beside him at the sunset of her life and someone who would age gracefully carrying that same charm of masculinity adding to his evergreen appeal.

Om Puri had called me for interviewing him in one of his shooting schedules for a film called *Dhoop*. Speaking in between giving shots he narrated the fact that he does commercial cinema for the money part of his existence but frankly cannot relate to any of them and would prefer staying away from the genre as far as possible and would prefer doing meaningful roles rather than doing 'mindless stuff'. But he did mention that films like *Ardha Satya* does have its feet in both the art and commercial genre of film making.

Reema Lagoo is a person who appeared so different in person compared to her elderly motherly disposition in films. In a way she seemed to be an epitome of today's working mother who is very graceful and generous. It was one of my longest interviews conducted with any star so far and it proved to be very insightful. She pointed to the "insecurity angle" dominating the industry psyche especially what comes about during the big film parties in a way reflective of the spirit of the film *Party* by Govind Nihalini. Many of the myths that film folk evoke do not appear to be true after I had interacted with her. In a way she seemed to be more of a theatre person than a film one.

The renowned film critic, Maithili Rao also gave a very long interview pointing to several nuances in the film industry. One of the many interesting points she came up with was the viewpoint that today's generation of filmmakers have to cater to a bisexual gaze rather than simply the male gaze. Very graciously she got me introduced to Gulzar from her phone itself who is another very respected person in the film industry.

Santosh Siwan and Sanjay Leela Bhansali were two people who had come over to the FTII to conduct workshops on cinematography and editing. Attending many of their sessions was an experience in itself and pointed out the hazards of being
a participant observer in the field. But the uneasiness and reluctance on the part of the existing students of FTII was very evident.

Mohan Agashe, interestingly, is a psychiatrist by profession and an actor by vocation. But initially he was not very forthcoming in terms of his viewpoints on the industry at large. He was having reservations expressing his views on the psychic disposition of the industry as a whole. He evaded the question by pointing out that he had not given such a deep thought to that whole issue. His reservation is quite understandable and in a way even point out the underlying masculinity construct in his psyche as well.

Anupam Kher was trying to point out that for my kind of work and the research topic would need me to consult the heroes of the genre of Sunny Deol or Sunil Shetty, that is, the action film heroes and not character artists like him.

Nirupa Roy was also very reluctant to speak on the subject pointing out that she had already expressed her views on various occasions. In a way her uneasiness is much in unison with the kind of mother figure disposition she specialises on-screen as well.

Both Rishikesh Mukherjee and A. K. Hangal were not well when I was in Mumbai. So they could not meet in person but spoke over the phone. Hangal expressed that he is tired of giving interviews and now he wants a complete break. Subodh Mukherjee was not well as well to express his viewpoints in person. He wanted his works to speak for themselves. Basu Chatterjee was in an insulting best in his disposition pointing out that he does not belong to the popular film genre and chose not to speak. Vijay Tendulkar was also not well during my Mumbai stint.

Anand Patwardhan was busy with his shooting schedules for his forthcoming documentary but did express his viewpoints on masculinity in terms of his political viewpoints on the same subject. Amol Palekar also spoke over the phone due to lack of time and his shooting schedules. Prakash Jha was away shooting but after he came back to Mumbai, he did speak over the phone.
Ashoke Rane, Sudhir Nadgaonkar and Haimanti Banerji did speak on many academic dimensions of the topic. Rane expressed his viewpoint on the importance of love in the story line of most Bollywood flicks. Nadgaonkar explained the complex and complicated dynamics of the Bombay film industry which he has gathered as part of his experience of organising film festivals in Mumbai. Banerji gave two very interesting observations. One, on the changing audience (especially in terms of age and socio-economic status) of popular Hindi cinema which perhaps even determined the age of particular leading stars especially leading superstars of that specific time from the 1950s onwards. The other point was about the build-up of the Amitabh persona starting from the low angle shots which always highlighted his tall, lanky frame, in a way, towering over everyone. Another is the way, his subtle, subdued, raw sex-appeal has been exhibited through various camera movements and the way he has been thoughtfully placed in the frame in most of his commercially successful films. And lastly, the typical Allahabad gossip about his lineage and his convincing portrayal of the anti-hero, the other.

I also wish to mention about two people – both of whom individually tried their best to see that I got to interview Kajol and Amrish Puri. In a way, my mobile phone ditched me when connection could not be established with me due to mobile network problem and advanced pregnant Kajol was graciously waiting for me to express her views. I wish to salute and acknowledge her spirit and commitment to serious academic research on popular Hindi cinema. Amrish Puri’s very hectic busy shooting schedule did not permit him to give me time.

During the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) held in Delhi, I did manage to interview Mani Ratnam, Revathy, Meghna Gulzar and Konkana Sen Sharma. Mani Ratnam spoke about the portrayals of the ‘terrorist’ in popular films and the dimension it is adding to the ‘anti-hero’ discourse. He hinted at this phenomenon in the light of the masculinity construct in popular films. Revathy spoke about the search for the sensitive man which she wished to bring in her directorial ventures in the popular film mode. Meghna Gulzar spoke about her efforts to see the complexities of the ‘new man’ and his self-doubts and inner-contradictions in her debut directorial venture Filhaal. In her autobiography she recalled her father and her socialisation both in terms of her growing up as a human being and also as a film
maker. Konkona Sen Sharma spoke about her experience working on her award-winning *Mr & Mrs Iyer* and especially the vulnerable soft masculinity construct of her fellow male protagonist in the same movie. She also spoke about her socialisation in the film mould at the behest of her illustrious lineage of her grandfather, Chidananda Das Gupta and mother, Aparna Sen.

Even sincere efforts at times fail or rather flop like countless popular Hindi films which get released week after week (though one may counteract by remarking and questioning the sincerity dimension behind the making of such films) due to circumstantial happenings. Same happened to me during my field-work in Mumbai. I missed out interviewing four superstars – Rajesh Khanna, Amitabh Bachchan, Aamir Khan and Shah Rukh Khan – which could have proved crucial for my research. Each of them were away from Mumbai at that time due to various reasons. Rajesh Khanna was away due to his busy political engagements. Amitabh Bachchan along with his wife Jaya Bachchan was away in France to attend a retrospective of old Bachchan films. Aamir Khan was away in America working on his physique for essaying the role of Mangal Pandey in the forthcoming film *The Rising*. Shah Rukh Khan was, unfortunately, was away in England for his back operation which eventually got operated successfully. I need to mention that I really disturbed all their office staff for appointments till the very end of my stay but eventually realised that fate had played an unfortunate cruel game with me.

[VI]

Structure Of The Thesis

Apart from introduction and conclusion, the thesis is divided into three substantial chapters.

In the span of the first chapter which would be roughly a theoretical chapter on the question of Masculinity and Culture, I would first deal with the concept of sex and gender putting the debate in place and also placing masculinity as a cultural and social construct. Then I would try to situate the study of masculinity or rather the men’s studies discourse in the realm of gender studies and sociology of knowledge stating what triggered its birth and importance. I would concentrate on the different
theoretical approaches to the study of masculinity. Next would come the Indian context and a brief construction vis-à-vis the cultural symbols in religious texts, epics and Puranas. Further on, the important focus would be to closely look at the various archetypes prevalent in the purview of Hindu Culture and Masculinity, namely, that of Krishna, Shiva and Rama. I would end this chapter with the question of rethinking the masculinity construction posing alternative traditions like redefinition of masculinity as proposed by the Mystic Tradition, the Bhakti Cult and the Gandhian discourse.

The second chapter would begin with a brief history of Hindi cinema followed by a discussion on the rules of grammar and normative codes which perhaps guide the popular Hindi cinema. Next I focus on the question whether Hindi cinema is basically a male-dominated medium. Then I would reflect on the notion of ‘hero’ and the popular perception surrounding this mythical proposition. Here I would look at popular aspirations, popular press, film magazines, especially gossip columns and folk-lores on Hindi Cinema. I would end this chapter by discussing how the insiders themselves see the construction of masculinity in popular Hindi cinema based on interviews.

In the third substantial chapter, I would concentrate on being rigorous in terms of the textual analysis of each of the six select films, namely Shree 420 from the 50s, Junglee from the 60s, Kati Patang and Deewaar from the 70s, Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak from the 80s and Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge from the 90s. The analysis would include first the detailed filmography of each of the films. Next there would be enumeration of the narrative/story of the films. I would then analyse the portrayal of the dominant male character in these films. In a way, the specificity of the dominant male character in terms of network of relationships, engagements, and activities with his mother, heroine, sister, father, brother, villain, his ways of handling life and his life-style as a whole would be examined and interpreted. I would be looking at each of the six films with a central focus: what kind of masculinity is being represented in the film. Towards the end of the chapter, I would come up with a comparative analysis on different modes of masculinities projected in these select films and analyse the differences and similarities keeping a sociological look at the transformation of our own society.
Finally, in the concluding chapter, I would briefly state the findings of each chapter and put forth the arguments and distinct contributions of the thesis. Masculinities, as we shall see, rather than one single water-tight compartmentalised hegemonic masculinity construction, with its universality and diversities is being represented in popular Hindi cinema. And these representations are sociologically worth examining. I would end my discussion by pointing out new emerging areas of research in relevant related fields by analysing contemporary trends as seen through recent publications and print media.

Notes

1 Satyajit Ray, apart from his brilliance in the craft of film-making, also wrote on cinema. He was one of the first film makers to write extensively on the craft. Ray also gave premium to the acceptability of his films among the cinegoers and was not just satisfied with festival circuit praises alone. He was instrumental in seriously looking at popular cinema as a sociological document.

2 For analysing the discourse of film studies, one can refer to Vasudevan (1995).

3 Chidananda Das Gupta along with Satyajit Ray has been one of the early pioneers to delve deep into the academic discourse on films. He is one of the pioneers to seriously think and conceive of a film culture in India with the formation of film societies and one of the first to seriously look at the popular genre of films.

4 In this context, one can refer to some more works as well. Vasudev and Lenglet (1983) remark: it appears that in India the cinema, too, is larger than life; the film world is very much a universe of super-productions and super-impositions. India's films have to be interpreted through what they implicate of the arcanum of the collective subconscious, as much at the level of a tenacious cultural heritage as of individual or collective fantasies. Masud (1987) undertakes a voyage to examine and illuminate the cultural and ideological assumptions of Indian popular cinema with its inherent repetitions of recurrent themes. Themes which in fact contain the roots both of Indian popular cinema and the Indian psyche. For Das Gupta (1991), the cinema is a battleground of ideas. He seeks to progress towards on intellectual awareness of our popular cinema and to define a conceptual framework within which to situate this awareness. Dissanayake and Sahai (1992) examine the highly popular film, Sholay, in relation to three themes: the place of the film in the evolution of popular Indian cinema, the concept of evil that is central to the film and the diverse ways in which viewers derived pleasure and significance from the filmic text. Chatterji (1998) delves into the rather delicate subject of feminist film criticism with the framework of Indian popular cinema. For Kazmi (1999), cinema does not exist in a sublime state of innocence, untouched by the world. It also has a political content, conscious or unconscious, hidden or overt. There is a dialectical relationship between cinema and society. While the structural compulsions of society produce a particular kind of cinema, cinema in turn either legitimates or subverts the hegemonic discourse of that society. In Dwyer and Pinney's (2001) work, the essays attempt to explore the relationship between pleasure and consumption and constructions pertaining to the state and nation in India. In a way, the wider concern is an attempt on the part of scholars to integrate cultural studies with discourses on the political economy of the subcontinent. Rao (2002) remarks that perhaps the secret of the success of Hindi films is its ability to be all things to all people. For Joshi (2002), cinema in India has evolved as a parallel culture. Its uniqueness lies in its form, its manner of telling a story, its way of building up tensions in the narrative and the fashion in which they are released.
In a way they project the emerging queer intellectual discourse in the arena of film studies, gender studies and cultural studies in India. Due to constraints of the range of the present study, here one would very briefly point out about four articles in this context.

Sohini Ghosh notes: The arrival of this homoerotic and ambivalent discourse has reopened older texts for newer readings. One reason Bombay cinema has had a special attraction for queer subcultures is its privileging of romantic love as the most important of all emotions. This passionate engagement with love has been articulated not so much through plot as through song and dance sequences. Explicit depictions of homosexual love have been absent from popular cinema except in minor subplots or comic relief. But Bombay cinema has a continuous tradition of framing narratives with the love of two friends. These buddy films can be read as evocative of homoerotic love, suggested through overlapping boundaries between love and friendship.

Gayatri Gopinath demonstrates through numerous examples taken from four identifiable Hindi film subgenres queer themes which, though nontransgressive in their native Indian context, acquire subversive value and serve as queer points of identification when viewed from a non-nationalist bias. Watching particular films with this “queer diasporic viewing proactive,” sex/gender play which is normative (yet still coded) in the land of the films’ production can be reclaimed as queer through the differently subjective lens of transnational spectatorship, a lens removed from patriarchy, sexism, and homophobia. This particularly becomes apparent in the Bollywood dance sequence – the frequent site of Hindi sex/gender play – whose coded queer desires are much easier to de-code (or re-code) when in the diaspora.

R. Raj Rao uses Amitabh Bachchan, perennial idol of the Hollywood screen, as a point of departure for ruminations on the construction of male friendship and male love within both Indian cinema and its primarily male audience (which, in a sense, represents in turn Hindi culture at large). Using translations of songs from Amitabh’s films interlaced with my own personal experiences, we see how homosexuality thrives in covert yet recognised places in Indian culture, and how subtle forms of homosexuality are actually engendered under the auspices of normative patriarchal culture.

Ashok Rao Kavi notes: Beneath the surface of the Bollywood cinema is a percolating gay culture trying to break free, waiting for the moment to emerge from subtext into text. For now, in what we might now call a period of transition, the Bollywood hero has been (particularly in the past three decades) the focus of increased homoeroticisation, with his body becoming a spectacle at every turn. Unfortunately, what has facilitated this is a veiled (and sometimes not-so-veiled) form of misogyny, in which the heroine’s role is minimised such that, rather than another filmic character falling in love with the hero, the audience itself is invited to see the macho (and perhaps narcissistic) hero as unattached and therefore available for homoerotic desire.

Though I have not been able to use the Rasa theory to analyse popular Hindi cinema medium as proposed by P.K. Nair, but none the less a brief review or rather an introduction to the Rasa theory as propounded in Bharata Muni’s Naatyashastra (Chapter 6) would be perhaps useful as a pointer to future research. The highlights are as follows:

**Rasa: (The Raptures)** – There are eight Rasa (Raptures) in the theatrical act: Shringaara (Love), Haasya (Humour), Karuna (Pathos), Raudra (Wrath), Veera (Chivalry), Bhayaanaka (Fear), Beebhatsa (Abhorrence) and Adbhuta (Wonder).

No dramatic identification proceeds without Rasa. During a performance, Rasa is produced by a combination of the Vibhaava (Susceptive Sentiments), Anubhaava (Imitating Sentiments) and Vyabhicharee Bhaava (Mutable Sentiments).

Rasa imparts blissful joy with a combination of Abhinaya (Histrionic Representation) and Sthaayee Bhaava (Permanent Sentiments). Since it is felt in the form of ecstasy, it is called the Naatya Rasa (Theatrical Rapture).
There can be no Rasa without Bhaava (Sentiment) and no Bhaava without Rasa. Therefore histrionics, they attain perfection only when they complement each other.

The four primary Rasas are Love, Wrath, Chivalry and Abhorrence. Later on, Humour evolved from Love, Pathos from Wrath, Wonder from Chivalry and Fear from Abhorrence. Being an imitation of Love, it is known as Humour and the after-effects of Wrath are known as Pathos. The deeds of Chivalry caused Wonder and the sight of Abhorrence led to fear.

The Colours of Rasa. The colour of Love is azure, of Humour white, of Pathos grey and of Wrath red. The colour of Chivalry is pinkish, of Fear black, of abhorrence blue and of Wonder yellow.

Shringaara Rasa – The Rapture of Love. The Rasa of Love is pure with the pious soul. The Rasa being noble and magnificent is expressed by means of affection between the male and female of active age. It has two forms: sambhoga which means union and Vipralambha which means separation.

The Union arises from determinants like the soothing effect of seasons, the enjoyment of garlands, unguents, ornaments, company of the beloved person and objects, by worthy use of chambers, walking in a garden, enjoying and seeing the beloved, hearing sweet words, playing and dallying with the companion.

Separation is another form of love. In the Code of Courtesans, ten conditions of separation have been mentioned. Separation is related to eagerness and anxiety.

Haasya Rasa – The Rapture of Humour. This Rasa creates laughter by wearing unusual ornaments, uncouth behaviour, words, dresses and strange movements of body. Hence, it is called the Rasa of Humour.

Karuna Rasa – The Rapture of Pathos. This Rasa is produced by means of noticing the death of a beloved one or hearing unpleasant words and so on.

Raudra Rasa – The Rapture of Wrath. This Rasa is produced by fight, striking, cutting, mutilation and piercing in encounter, tumult of battle and the like.

Veera Rasa – The Rapture of Chivalry. This Rasa is produced by means of energy, perseverance, optimism, absence of surprise, presence of mind and such similar conditions of the mind.

Bhayaanaka Rasa – The Rapture of Fear. This Rasa is produced by distorted sounds, noticing scenes of gnomes and horrible beings, of warriors going to the battlefield, forest or a lonely house, offending one’s superiors like a teacher or a king, etc.

Beebhatsa Rasa – The Rapture of Abhorrence. This Rasa is produced by means of a distasteful sight, taste, smell, touch, sound, etc.

Adbhuta Rasa – The Rapture of Wonder. This Rasa is produced by means of exaggerated, and surprising meaning of speech, skill and craft or amazing deeds.
We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men

Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless......

......Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;
......Remember us – if at all – not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men.
The stuffed men.

... Let me also wear
Such deliberate disguises....

......This is the dead land
This is cactus land....

......The eyes are not here
There are no eyes here
In this hollow valley....

......In this last of meeting places
We grope together
And avoid speech....

......Sightless, unless
The eyes reappear.....

......The hope only
Of empty men.

......Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion And the act
Falls the shadow.

......Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the shadow....
Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the Shadow......

(Eliot1, 1992, 1974, 89-92)

The above verses from T.S. Eliot give a serious, sombre, self-critical, self-reflective, self-contradictory flavour to the beginning of the first chapter of the research. The domain of this chapter is mostly theoretical and can be broadly divided into The Theoretical Perspective and The Indian Context. The Theoretical Perspective includes discussions on the concept and debate regarding sex and gender and putting forth the concept of masculinity as social/cultural construct and also the performative angle; situating the masculinity discourse in the realm of gender studies and sociology of knowledge; development dimension triggering the study of masculinity; different theoretical approaches to the study of masculinity; complex trajectory of masculinity. The second part of this chapter, namely, The Indian Context includes a brief psychosocial discovery of the Indian masculinity construction vis-à-vis the cultural symbols; three main archetypes of Hindu Culture and masculinity, namely that of Krishna, Shiva and Rama; new dimensions to the masculinity discourse like redefinitions of masculinity as proposed by the Mystic Tradition, the Bhakti Cult, and the Gandhian discourse; and looking at challenges ahead.