Conclusion

This thesis engaged with the representation of masculinity in contemporary Hindi cinema from a feminist point of view. One way of putting the question is how feminist movements influence the representation of masculinity itself. I have already argued that the relationship between feminist movements and representation of masculinity may not be direct. Contemporary Hindi cinema may not engage with feminist politics consciously. Within the contemporary socio-cultural field feminist demands have now acquired some traction, whether as lifestyle choices or as shaping influence on policy. These demands have an effect in contemporary cultural field which may be considered to be the result of feminist interventions. Whether the male hegemony remains unaffected in spite of such feminist interventions. My proposition is that the representations of masculinities in Hindi cinema in a way appropriates the feminist demands. The heterogeneity of contemporary cultural trope easily appropriates different forms of masculinity in its ambit. Here I have categorized some of these representations according to different stylistic patterns. For example the image of the romantic male of contemporary romantic comedy is one among many representations of contemporary masculinities. This particular form of masculinity explores the consumerist culture of the upper class household. The question of class, caste, community hardly features in these films. Rather the question of tradition, family values and a homogenous notion of India plays an important role in these films. These images of masculinity can be juxtaposed with the image of marginal masculinity within urban socio-cultural field. These marginal masculinities are entangled with the class, caste and gender hierarchies of our society. For example ‘tapori’ films deploy this kind of masculinity which is not the image of sophisticated global Indian but a lower class urban youth with low cultural capital. Another category of masculinity can be the male figure of contemporary buddy films. Contemporary buddy films explore the masculinities which concentrate on male bonding. The homosocial bonding of contemporary buddy films mostly engage with the question of sexuality which is not the earlier form of the man meets a woman kind of romance but more complex terrain of desire complicated due to rise of divorce, women’s emancipation and other lifestyle choices, and the reactionary terrain of homophobia. Another form of masculinity which challenges the stereotypical notion of macho and virile men is the representation of the feminine male who played the so-called feminine role. These images apparently challenge the gender norm by breaking the gender role itself. This image of feminine male can be juxtaposed with the image where the male figure appears as a superman. Here the technologically crafted male
body and its appearance has less resemblance within earlier forms of virile male body of Hindi cinema. Rather it has its legacy in James Bond kind of Hollywood style super hero. What is interesting is that the effeminate masculinity and the superman kind of masculinity both are possible within the same social matrix of globalization. This categorization of masculinities should be considered as one of the many possibilities of categorization within the field of representation.

Here my concern is, how the conventional masculinities are juxtaposed with newer kinds of masculinities. Thus within contemporary cultural field old and new forms of masculinity coexist. Here the difference between old and new form of masculinities are not simply a chronological difference but represent different values altogether. The conventional male role is based on male female binary but the newer image of masculinity seems to be a result of feminist intervention that challenges the male hegemony. They problematize conventional male role and seems to be more egalitarian. Two types of masculinities may be oppositional or contradictory but coexist within the scopic field. Thus the trope of assemblage seems to be productive to understand such coexistence. Here the newer form of masculinity may be incorporated but their radical edge has been nullified. What I want to point out is that this coexistence of different types of masculinity does not challenge the male hegemony embedded within mainstream cinema. In this thesis I have tried to explore this male hegemony from a feminist point of view. My reading of male gaze through the Lacanian trope is productive here. The notion of Lacanian trope actually exposes maleness embedded within the image of the new men. It explores the characteristic of hegemonic masculinity within the field of contemporary Hindi cinema. Thus the question is how masculine dominations are feasible within a social order that appropriates feminist interventions.

Contemporary Hindi cinema is the context within which both hegemonic and alternative masculinities are played out. These images are momentary and always transitional. So it becomes difficult to formulate what contemporary Hindi cinema actually proposes. The question is whether the change within the field of Hindi cinema is a real ideological shift. It appears to me now that this change is a rhetorical gesture to keep a heteronormative social matrix intact. After reading certain forms of masculinities, I sense that contemporary Hindi cinema is hardly in a position to challenge the hegemonic notion of masculinity. Whereas feminism has its goal in the breaking the binaries of masculinity and femininity, contemporary Hindi cinema recreates new notions of this binary within the context of
contemporary capitalism. These notions sometimes appear to be radical at the surface level but a deeper insight might give us a picture of “neo traditionalism”. We may argue by using the feminist rhetoric that Hindi cinema actually brings difficulty to the gender politics itself. Within contemporary cultural field men have to express themselves in terms of women and women have to express herself in the terms of men. Such expressions are necessary for the hetero-normative patriarchy to function. Thus the new images of men in Hindi cinema seem to be not a manifestation of fluid gender identity but an appropriation of feminism and queer movement to keep the heteronormative social-matrix intact.

Mainstream seems to be aware that the hegemonic institution of heterosexual marriage is under threat. To combat the threat of losing hegemony, women must return to order but not in any obviously oppressive way. New liberated women have to be juxtaposed with more submissive and emasculated men in a mutually understanding conjugality. Thus the Hindi cinema is enthusiastic about creating a new version of nuclear family where the hierarchy is apparently reduced through changes in attitude. My interest in masculinity is embedded within the recent shift in women’s studies which encourages micro studies based on women’s everyday location. These studies, which acknowledge women’s everyday transactions within patriarchy are based on their dependence upon the men in the day to day experiential level. Even within patriarchy women do have apparent and real securities and insecurities. Thus women’s studies cannot afford to ignore men’s participatory role and formation of masculinity within the mainstream. Earlier feminist critics have been vociferous regarding the Hindi cinema’s depiction of the woman’s body. Objectification of women’s bodies for the promotion of narrative cinema was the area of contention. Though these kinds of images still circulate, different types of images are also visible now. These ‘different type’ of images are appropriation of feminist demands into the mainstream by Hindi cinema. In response to feminist critics and realizing the purchasing power of new women, Hindi cinema now depicts women as active agents. Hindi cinema’s strategy to shift the commerce from women’s body to women’s desire is the locale where images of new emasculated men gain currency. As far as my understanding goes, the images of new men are not merely targeted at men but also to new women. Within mainstream, feminism has become associated with good life and it has also become a lifestyle choice for educated, ‘liberated’ women. The long and diverse history of feminist movements is being erased by a handful of women reaching the corporate boardroom. The way feminism is being appropriated within mainstream has become a new
threat to feminist movement.16 Within contemporary Hindi cinema conventional gender roles are complicated. If today’s women are ‘sexually desirable homemakers’ and the ‘consuming subjects’, then can our men lag far behind? Today’s men cannot afford to be an authoritative patriarch at home. We must consider contemporary women’s success in the public sphere is due to feminism. Following their success a section of men become successful in public life by incorporating the private. Successful public men of contemporary era cannot be like the patriarchs of an earlier epoch. The new man must incorporate the feminine attribute within his own ambit. The new man has to be more soft and docile to match the aspiration of the new women. How am I supposed to read these images? As an indicator of new trends, a faithful reflection of lived realities or a process of effective normalization of a much more conflicting situation? One thing I want to remind here, that these new images of men and women reflect the aspiration of a certain class. These new images are representative of upwardly mobile middle class and not a reflection of the lower strata of our society.

The question is whether the new masculinity reflects a shift at the level of ideology. I would argue that the new masculinity is not constructed as a break from the older belief system of categorization. The new men who explore their softer side can be read as a new packaging of older patriarchy. This change is at the level of fashion. As Jean Baudrillard explains “It seems the modernity sets up linear time of technical progress, production and history, and simultaneously a cyclical time of fashion. This only seems to be a contradiction, since the fact, modernity is never a radical rupture. Tradition is no longer the pre-eminence of the old over new: it is unaware of either- modernity itself invents both at once, at a single stroke, it is always and at the same time ‘neo’ and ‘retro’- modern and anachronistic. The dialectic of rupture very quickly becomes the dynamics of the amalgam and recycling” (Baudrillard: 1993, pp89-90). Then the ‘neo’ and ‘retro’ as various forms of fashion are hardly distinctive at the level of value. Actually without any break from earlier era of cultural representation, hyper masculine and ‘alternative’ images are widely explored within Hindi cinema. Masculine practices only change rotationally like any other kinds of embodiments of the fashion industry, but cultural connotation of masculinity hardly changes. As Fredric Jameson says, “I must limit myself to the suggestion that radical breaks between periods do not

16 My reading may appear simplistic. To complicate such notion of co-option, I quote Mary E John “One often hears of the ‘Co-option’ of the women’s movement by other forces such as Hindu Right, the state or certain NGOs. This gives one the impression that women’s movement had a “pure” beginning of its own, which only subsequently, that is to say, at some later stage, came to be taken over by different, contrary influence.”(John: 2001, p103)
generally involve complete change of content but rather the restructuring of a certain number of elements already given: features that in an earlier period or system were subordinate now become dominant and features that had been dominant again become secondary" (Jameson: 2001, pp1972-1973).

Culture comprises intertextuality, through interrelationships between various texts and contexts. Hindi cinema as a cultural device works through various contradictory textualities. As we come across the constantly shifting images within Hindi cinema, it becomes increasingly difficult to conclude what the Hindi cinema is actually preaching. But I feel Hindi cinema is not in a position to challenge the over-arching model of hegemonic masculinity. Rather it preserves its popularity by appropriating radical elements. According to Stuart Ewen this alternative culture “has been reduced to the status of commodity. Whatever significance or value the expression may have had in the context of its earlier development, the value was now outweighed by its exchange value, its ability to make something marketably “hip”" (Ewen: 1998, p1082). The idiom of alternative with its opposing definitions clashes with the mainstream value. Any alternative culture creates an initial break from earlier forms but then it is adapted as life-stylization. This is what is identified as ‘bricolage’ (Hebdige: 1998, p1073). A radical movement becomes popular only by getting appropriated by the main stream culture and ultimately losing the radical element. But why does the mainstream appropriate radical elements? Is it because the radical elements have a broad based support? Then the image of a ‘sensitive’ male must have been a broad based demand. I have already said that representation of new men actually address women as the consumer of such images. This kind of market driven solution for women’s everyday insecurities may be seen as the women’s movement’s failure to reach out to ordinary women. The signs I consider feminist intervention within mainstream cinema can also be read as a failure of women’s movement. But I will not consider the women’s movements either as success or as failure. Such consideration will presuppose that women’s movement is over and we can judge its relevance within our social reality. For me, women’s movement is an ongoing process and the argument that we live in a post feminist era seems to be a myth.

I would now argue that in this thesis my preoccupation is not limited to the representation of masculinity but also engages with the wider socio-cultural aspect. Here I must say I have tried to explore various dynamics of masculinity within mainstream cinema and male hegemony in general. It is obvious that I would engage with the issue of feminist movements
as I consider this project from a feminist perspective. Here the text relates to feminist politics and ideology in two ways. Firstly, how the text engages with feminist demands within the contemporary socio-cultural field and how my reading is shaped by feminist praxis. Thus the relation between men’s movement and feminism is important. Further how feminist film studies understand sexual difference is addressed here. Here I have engaged with a feminist politics that does not consider male-female binary as its grounding principle. Rather it considers sexual difference which is multiple and polymorphous. Further I have redrawn the subject-object relation within mainstream cinema. The notion of Lacanian gaze problematizes the conventional pattern of subject-object but does not challenge the male bias within the scopic field. Here Lacanian gaze exposes the male gaze embedded within the representation of new men. Moreover I consider male figure not as a subject of gaze but also an object of gaze. But such objectification of male figure also does not disturb the notion of male gaze. I have also engaged with a dialogue between the representation of masculinity in Hindi cinema and the discourse of Indian film studies. Finally I have explored how contemporary globalization is addressed within contemporary intellectual field. Here film texts as a cultural products interact with the socio-economic pull of globalization.

I would now sum up what I have explored in the already said chapters. In the first part of the first chapter addressed the relationship between feminism and men’s movement. Here the question is whether men can be feminist. Thus it does not address the representation of masculinity directly. Rather it provides the ground to understand masculinity as it engages with feminist politics. Here I argue that feminism is politically productive to understand masculinity itself. In the second section I engaged with the issue of sexual difference as addressed within feminist film studies. Within patriarchy the male/female difference is premised on a binary which privilege the male at the cost of female. Feminism on the other hand problematizes such binary. I have distinguished two types of feminism. Feminism of equality may depend on sex/gender binary but the feminism of difference does not follow such sex/gender distinction. Feminism of equality considers sex as a biological and gender as a cultural attribute of the body. Moreover cultural construct of gender can be problematized but the biological aspect is beyond such construction. Within the second type of feminism the difference between each and every sexually marked body is crucial. Following this form of feminism we can challenge the notion of sexual difference as explored by patriarchy. Thus the second part of the first chapter address the question of sexual difference within feminist
film studies which is productive to understand masculinity within scopic field. It establishes masculinity as a relational term which should not be privileged at the cost of femininity.

Second chapter is more inclined to understand the male hegemony within mainstream cinema. The notion of gaze seems to be crucial here. Within conventional film theory the gaze is male which objectifies female image as a spectacle. I have argued that this is an example of gaze which Michel Foucault explores in *Discipline and Punish*. Whereas Lacanian understanding of the term gaze is different. Thus in this chapter I engage with Lacanian formula of gaze which is different from panoptic gaze. The question seems to be why should I engage with such a notion of gaze? What is its relevance for my project? Do Lacanian gaze explore something crucial for feminist understanding of masculinity? I would argue that this form of gaze problematizes the usual pattern of subject-object relation. I would see how this notion of gaze redraws such binary. Reading of the particular Hindi film *Darr* (Yash Chopra:1993) may be productive here. But in the end I would expose that this notion of gaze also does not challenge the male bias within the film text. The next section addresses how the male image can be a spectacle within scopic field. Thus this section also problematizes the subject-object binary. I have already explored Laura Mulvey’s (Mulvey: 1999) understanding of spectatorship within the second half of first chapter. I have argued that the notion of sexual difference is crucial for her to understand the spectatorship. According to Mulvey the transcendental viewing subject of the cinema is male. She thus exposes the male bias within spectatorship. What is relevant here is that Mulvey considers men as the subject of gaze (gaze in conventional sense) and female as objects who can be reduced to spectacle. Within mainstream cinema this may be the general pattern but we can also explore men as a spectacle. Following Steve Neale (Neale: 1983) we may propose that men can be objects thus reduced to spectacle within mainstream cinema. Here I explored a certain genre of Hollywood cinema which engaged with men as a spectacle. I ended this chapter through a reading of the film *Bodyguard* (Siddique: 2011) and exposed that men can be spectacle within mainstream Hindi cinema also. But such a reading does not challenge the male bias within the film text. To be precise men can be spectacular objects but that does not challenge the hierarchy of men as subjects over the female. These two sections contribute to the overall argument that male bias is embedded within our scopic field which cannot be challenged by mere change in subject-object relation.
Third chapter engages with actual reading of three Hindi films. These three films are *Vicky Donor* (Sircar: 2012), *Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi* (Chopra: 2008) and *Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na* (Tyrewala: 2008). These films explore the co-existence of different forms of masculinities. These films explore the co-existence of different forms of masculinity within a single character. To be precise, these films explore a male character who is traditional and contemporary at the same time. Such co-existence within a single character is essential to keep the hetero-normative social matrix intact. This is the point I put forward in this thesis.

The overview of Hindi cinema is productive here. The reading of masculinities are an extension of the tradition-modernity binary which is prevalent within the discourse of Hindi cinema itself. Reading of these films opens up a dialogue with the discourse of Film Studies in India in general. To be precise, such reading explores and extends the existing discourse of Film Studies in India. The assemblage between tradition and modern is one of the specificities of Film Studies in India. Here modernity and tradition are not contradictory but coexists as two distinct trends within the modernizing project. Modernity in general produces a certain form of tradition which is apparently opposite of modern but they actually co-constitute each other. In this thesis I explore such coexistence within the representation of masculinities. Thus the focus of this chapter is on how the tropes of tradition and modernity produce a masculinity which is indigenous and contemporary. The overview of Film Studies in India I explored in the beginning of this chapter should not be considered as a mere background to my understanding of contemporary masculinity but the force-field where such a representation can be feasible. Within the field of Film Studies in India the contribution of Madhava Prasad (Prasad: 1997) is crucial. For my project his understanding of formal subsumption is important. Formal subsumption indicates a negotiation between modern and feudal offshoot at the ideological plane. According to him this form may apparently subordinate to capital but the political power is shared by the rural elite and the bourgeoisie. He further proposes the term “feudal family romance” to mainstream Hindi melodrama. Such melodrama usually revolves around the feudal family setup. This feudal family romance is an assemblage of various parts-the story, music and dance, fighting, comedy etc. Here we must consider mainstream Hindi cinema as a form of heterogeneous manufacture which is constituted by such assemblage process. Anustup Basu (Basu: 2010) explores the process of assemblage through a co-existence of the old and the new. Such process of assemblage does not resume the old but adjusts with new situation. Thus both Prasad and Basu argue for a co-existence of modern and tradition. Prasad explores such co-
existence within the domain of “feudal family romance” whereas Basu is concerned with assemblage as explored within the contemporary manifestation of Hindi cinema.

The last chapter explores the interaction between cultural tropes and the socio-economic dimension of globalization. This chapter engages with two issues. First, how culture is addressed within contemporary intellectual field and secondly, how representation of masculinity explores the intersection between culture and socio-economic aspect of globalization. The first section explores the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of contemporary era which is the theoretical mooring of this chapter. In the second section I would go through a close reading of two films Dil Chahta Hai (Akhtar: 2001) and Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara (Akhtar: 2010).

To be precise, I had engage with the contemporary globalization through cultural tropes. Though both culture and economy is crucial for the contemporary order, culture appears as the logic of late capitalism (Jameson: 1984). Thus it is important to map out how culture is addressed within contemporary intellectual field. The work of Fredric Jameson is relevant to understand the postmodern cultural field as a manifestation of contemporary capitalism. I have engaged with his formulation and also juxtaposed other writings on contemporary cultural tropes. For example Slavoj Zizek (Zizek: 1997) considers culture as a trope to understand contemporary globalization. According to him postmodernism is an apparent feature of contemporary social order which has a real socio-symbolic value for him. Thus in this chapter I explored the postmodern force field and laid out its relevance to understand my research question. Within contemporary capital the cultural field is heterogeneous. Jameson celebrates such heterogeneity and considers contemporary capitalism as both good and bad for humanity at the same time. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Spivak: 1999) problematizes such understanding of capital. If one romanticizes the contemporary capitalism one cannot fight the wrong side of capitalism. Spivak argues that the change in aesthetics that Jameson proposes is a chronological change and not a conceptual change. Here she is for a postmodern culture which works through both economy and culture. Though the economy is embedded within culture. Further I engaged with Judith Butler (Butler: 1998) and Raymond Williams (Williams: 1980) to understand the contemporary manifestation of culture within the intellectual field. Butler critiques the orthodox Marxists who consider ‘culture’ as irrelevant for any Marxist project. She argues that the new social movements must not be considered as ‘merely cultural’. According to her these social movements should be part of
political economy. For example she draws our attention to the queer movement which is apparently considered a cultural movement. On the other hand Williams proposes the dominant culture in any society is the values and practice of ruling class. But the alternative meanings and practices are also the part of dominant culture. They may expose internal contradiction but will not challenge the dominant culture itself. At the same time the dominant culture changes as it incorporates residual and emergent culture within its ambit.

In the second section I would like to explore how both Dil Chahta Hai (Akhtar: 2001) and Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara (Akhtar: 2010) interacts with the trope of globalization. Both of them are buddy movies and explore male bonding. Moreover they represent the world of upper class youths and their global aspirations. My question is how the new form of masculinity is evolving through the socio-economic pull of contemporary globalization. Here I must problematize the newness of such masculinity. Such new masculinity may be possible due to globalization but they do not propose any break at the level of ideology. The close reading of these two films will explore the interaction between the representation of masculinity in Hindi cinema and the trope of globalization.

Now I would consider what the further possibilities of this kind of research are. One area that I have not touched directly in this thesis is the question of state and market within contemporary globalization. The dialogue between feminist politics and the new heteronormative social matrix can be an effective discursive engagement at a time when state and market both seems to have become less obviously male dominant. In my project globalization is explored through the cultural trope. The crucial characteristic of today’s globalization is its dependence to the communicational revolution. This concept of communication which depends on digital mechanism and plastic monetary transaction, acquired a cultural dimension. In this thesis I have tried to understand this cultural dimension. Here my aim is to look at how this communicational form of globalization produces cultural meaning. Moreover, I am interested in how the tropes of culture and economy negotiate within postmodern cultural field. These broad theoretical concerns to some extent overlook the South Asian specificity. Here I have addressed the negotiation between both global and local cultural pull. Such negotiation appears as the context for our understanding of contemporary masculinity. Thus how the Indian nation- state and market address the issue of culture within post liberalized economic boom is not addressed here. We can argue that the state and market both have incorporated the notion of masculinity which is produced through
a dialogue with feminist praxis. At the current juncture, demand raised for gender equality is a very much visible rhetoric of the welfare state and consumer friendly market. Thus the state and capitalist market both appropriate feminism but remain opposed towards any radical politics. Within Indian context globalization is a result of 80’s liberalization, which is a definite break from Nehruvian state lead restrictive growth. It is starkly different in a sense that the new middle class has acquired greater spending power. Such effect of liberalization is feasible in Hindi cinema from mid 90’s. Moreover I have not engaged with the negotiation between nation-state and the supra national bodies within the field of globalization. Here I must say globalization works through transnational economic and political forces which operate beyond the territorial boundary of nation-state. Thus the role of the state is less vibrant in such form of globalization. Supra national bodies like UNO, WHO become decisive role players. From this point of view, globalization constitutes the hegemony of the west and third world nation state has limited say in such situation. In this thesis I have engaged with the cultural trope of globalization and its negotiation with economy in a more abstract level. Thus the empirical specificity of globalization within South Asian context has not been addressed adequately. Here I have dealt with the coexistence of modernity and tradition within the discourse of Film Studies in India and also within the textual reading of Hindi cinema. I argue how tradition is a modern invention in general. The way in which postcolonial studies has addressed such modernizing tropes is not directly addressed here except for a reading of *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

This research could have taken another form if I had engaged with the actual viewer. An ethnographic survey among male viewers would explore how representation of masculinity in Hindi cinema is received by actual male viewers. Their engagement with these images would expose the actual effect of such images within our everyday reality. But my reading in this thesis is limited to the level of the making of the representation. How the masculinity of the actual viewers are shaped by the image they consume is not considered here. Such reading could have added further dynamics to our understanding of contemporary masculinity.

This thesis does not propose any tall claim. It argues that the feminist movements do have an effect in the representation of masculinity in contemporary Hindi cinema. This effect may not be a conscious attempt on the part of film maker. Rather the feminist demands made explicit within the contemporary social field interact with the film text and cast it in the
context of these demands. The image of new gender sensitive men may be an indirect result of feminist movements. But these images are juxtaposed with the image of conventional masculinity and does not challenge the reactionary core embedded in mainstream cinema. It exposes the male hegemony inherent within contemporary Hindi cinema. What I found is that hegemonic masculinity is contested and re-enacted within Hindi cinema. This is a kind of ongoing negotiation within Hindi cinema, made possible by the demands feminism poses. Further I have argued that the cultural dynamics of globalization work through contradictory pull. The logic of consumer capitalism plays out through this notion of cultural difference. Here I argue that my reading of the heterogeneous representation of masculinity in contemporary Hindi cinema resists to form a closure. I further propose that popularization of any radical movement ultimately may become a fashion statement which lays claim to a myth of change. Thus new images of masculinities within Hindi cinema does not challenge the male hegemony embedded within scopic field. This thesis tries to understand the nature of such male hegemony. Such understanding is a political act in itself and opens up the possibility for further egalitarian moves.