

A Study on Portrayal of Male Chauvinism in Indian Cinema and Understanding the Contrary Scenarios

Parthavi Manik Gaikwad¹, Ms. Saurabhi Shetye²

^{1,2}*Department of Multimedia and Mass Communication, Chikitsak Samuha's Patkar- Varde College, University of Mumbai, Mumbai, India*

Abstract: This research explores the portrayal of gender dynamics in Indian cinema, with a specific focus on male chauvinism in films released between 2014 and 2024. Furthermore, the study analyzes selected films to understand how they reflect, reinforce, or challenge societal attitudes toward gender roles. Traditionally, Indian cinema has depicted women in subordinate roles, emphasizing male dominance and patriarchal values. However, a growing body of films now challenges these stereotypes, presenting empowered female characters and male protagonists who support gender equality. By examining both traditional and progressive representations, the research highlights the evolving discourse on gender in Indian cinema. The findings reveal a complex landscape where patriarchal norms persist alongside narratives that contest and subvert them. This study underscores the dual role of cinema as both a mirror and a shaper of societal values, contributing to the broader understanding of gender representation in media and its impact on cultural norms.

Keywords: Gender stereotypes, male chauvinism, Indian cinema, Gender norms, male dominance, patriarchy, Societal Expectations, gender inequality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cinema is often considered as a potent form of communication, reflecting societal realities, acting as a catalyst for cultural transformation, and serving as a repository of historical narratives. Over the decades, Indian cinema has emerged as a multifaceted force, serving as a vital source of information, entertainment, and education for audiences across the country and beyond. Indian cinema has demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability over the years, evolving alongside advancements in technology, changes in socio-political landscapes, and shifting audience preferences. As a central component of Indian popular culture, it offers a vivid reflection of the nation's

aspirations, challenges, and successes. More than just a form of entertainment, Indian Cinema functions as a cultural mirror, depicting the complexities of Indian society. It showcases the country's diverse linguistic, religious, and cultural fabric while also capturing its evolving perspectives on issues such as gender roles, family dynamics, and social justice. This evolution underscores Indian cinema's role in both reflecting and influencing societal values and norms. Overall, Indian cinema not only mirrors societal norms but actively participates in shaping and evolving them.

Over the years, Indian cinema has both reinforced and challenged gender stereotypes. Indian cinema has long played a significant role in shaping and reinforcing gender stereotypes. Historically, films often depicted women in traditional roles that emphasized their domestic duties and secondary status relative to men. Women were commonly portrayed as nurturing, passive, and dependent, adhering to conventional expectations of femininity. In contrast, men were frequently shown as strong protectors, providers, and authoritative figures, reinforcing rigid and binary gender roles.

This research aims to explore the portrayal of male chauvinism in Indian cinema and understand the scenarios that contradict and challenge these portrayals. By analyzing both traditional and progressive representations, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how male chauvinism is depicted and contested within Indian films. It will examine the impact of these portrayals on audience perceptions and societal norms, and track the evolution of gender representations over time. Through a detailed analysis of film content, audience reception, and cultural context, this study will contribute to the broader discourse on gender representation in media. It will offer insights into how

Indian cinema reflects and influences societal attitudes towards gender equality, and how contrary narratives can drive change within the industry and society at large.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recent studies on gender representation in Indian cinema reveal a complex interplay of gender dynamics. An analysis on the film "Animal," highlights its reinforcement of patriarchal ideals and toxic masculinity, while questioning whether contemporary cinema has progressed in its gender portrayals (Chakravorty and Bera, 2024). Moreover, the discussion of the historical trends in Bollywood, notes that despite the emergence of pseudo-progressive films, male domination continues to skew representations, perpetuating sexism and misogyny (Samraat, 2021). In contrast, a shift in masculinity is explored through films starring Ayushmann Khurrana, showcasing more sensitive and emotionally aware male characters that challenge traditional hyper-masculine norms (Mishra et al., 2024). Whereas, Roy (2021) critiques the pervasive 'male gaze' in Indian cinema, emphasizing the misrepresentation of women and the need for a more nuanced portrayal of gender identities. Collectively, these studies underscore the ongoing struggle against male chauvinism and the potential for cinema to influence societal attitudes toward gender roles.

Gender stereotypes persist in Indian cinema, most prominently in Bollywood films. Studies have shown that movie plots often perpetuate societal biases and unreasonable expectations regarding gender roles (Tiwari, 2024). Analysis of films since 1970 reveals pervasive gender bias in character portrayals, occupations, and actions (Madaan et al., 2017). Women are frequently depicted in subservient roles, with limited screen time and lower pay compared to male counterparts (Prakash, 2020). The Bechdel test, adapted for Hindi cinema, demonstrates underrepresentation and misrepresentation of female characters, especially in top-grossing films (Kapoor et al., 2017). While women-centric and parallel cinema offer more balanced portrayals, mainstream Bollywood remains male-centric, exploring themes from a male perspective (Prakash, 2020). However, some recent films have begun to challenge these

stereotypes, indicating a potential shift in the industry (Madaan et al., 2017). Recent studies have explored gender representation in regional Indian cinema, particularly in Marathi and South Indian films. Marathi cinema has evolved to challenge traditional gender norms, with films like "Umbhartha" and "Gharabahr" depicting women crossing patriarchal thresholds (Chandoba Narsing Balande & Balaji Ranganathan, 2024). South Indian cinema, comprising Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, and Tulu industries, has been theorized as a unique entity with distinct gender dimensions both on-screen and within the industry (Kusuma, 2020). Contemporary Indian filmmakers have increasingly used cinema to negotiate gendered spaces, question traditional marriage structures, and explore women's freedom and sexuality. Films like "Ki and Ka" and "The Great Indian Kitchen" exemplify this trend, subverting naturalized gender dictums and encouraging viewers to reorient their thoughts on gender (Swamy D., 2022). Overall, Indian cinema continues to grapple with gender representation issues, reflecting broader societal norms and biases.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a thematic qualitative approach to explore the portrayal of gender dynamics in Indian cinema, specifically focusing on the representation of male chauvinism. The study spans films released between 2014 and 2024, examining how these portrayals reflect and reinforce societal attitudes towards gender roles.

IV. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

- **Film Selection:** A curated list of films from the period 2014-2024 was compiled based on their relevance to the theme of gender dynamics and male chauvinism. These films were chosen for their impact, popularity, and the depth of their portrayal of gender-related issues.
- **Rationale for film selection:** The research primarily examines films that, despite not being widely popular, make significant statements on topics like gender stereotypes and societal norms. Some of these films have sparked controversy and debates, which in turn boosted their popularity. Additionally, a few selected films are well-

known, but audiences often overlook their subtle portrayals of male chauvinism and patriarchy.

- **Analysis Process:** Each film was watched and analyzed in detail, with particular attention to scenes, dialogues, character arcs, and narrative structures that highlight gender dynamics. The analysis was thematic, focusing on recurring motifs, character behaviors, and the underlying messages conveyed about masculinity and male dominance.
- **Observation and Insights:** After the analysis, patterns and common themes were identified. The study observed how male chauvinism is depicted in various contexts—ranging from overt displays of dominance to more subtle forms of patriarchal

control. The research also considered how female characters respond to these portrayals and whether the films challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms.

- **Qualitative Analysis Explanation:** When shortlisting the films, specific criteria were established. Films were selected based on themes such as male chauvinism, patriarchal society, the active and passive agency of female characters, and hyper-masculinity. Conversely, films that depicted an egalitarian mindset in male characters, female characters with individual story arcs, and emotional openness regardless of gender were also included.

V.DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION

The following table portrays an observation of the films shortlisted on the basis of criterias set from 2014 -2024, from bollywood malayalam, telugu and marathi cinemas of India.

CODES	THEMES	DESCRIPTION	OBJECTIVE
Dil Dhadakne Do (2015) (Hindi)	Family Dynamics, Societal Expectations and Personal Freedom	While hosting a shipboard holiday for relatives and friends, a wealthy but dysfunctional family must face the ugly truths under their flawless facade.	Set against the backdrop of a wealthy yet dysfunctional family, the film explores gender inequality and societal expectations within elite circles. It primarily examines the double standards of patriarchy, where maintaining appearances takes precedence over personal fulfillment.
Arjun Reddy (2017) (Telugu)	Romanticization of male-dominance, aggression	Arjun Reddy, a short-tempered house surgeon, gets used to drugs and drinks when his girlfriend is forced to marry another person.	This research focuses on examining how the male protagonist's aggressive and toxic traits in Arjun Reddy are romanticized as expressions of unconditional love, while the female character is depicted as passive with limited agency. The study aims to explore the gender dynamics that excuse male dominance and control in relationships.
Bandishala (2019) (Marathi)	Workplace harassment, corruptions, Women rights	Bandishala is about a female jailer, Madhavi Sawant, who tries to root out corruption in the prison system. However, her honesty and way of working put her at odds with many powerful people, who plot against her.	Though justice is served to Madhavi by the end of the film, it serves as a stark reflection of a male-dominated society. The film not only portrays Madhavi as a strong character but also highlights how she faces hostility and mistreatment in her male-dominated workplace while attempting to expose corruption. Further the film subtly explores how society criticizes and judges women who become victims of sexual assault.
Three of us (2022) (Hindi)	Self-discovery, explorations, relations and life.	When a woman with early-onset dementia visits her hometown with her husband, buried memories and a former love pave a poignant path through her past.	To explore the emotionally supportive and vulnerable roles of Dipankar and Pradeep, particularly in their interactions with Shailaja, and to understand how the film centers on Shailaja as the protagonist.

Varane Avashyamu nd (2020) (Malayalam)	Relationships, Bonds and Personal growth	Neena is a French teacher and single parent to Nikitha, who is obsessed with the concept of arranged marriage. Their lives change when a retired army man and another young man come to stay at their apartment.	To analyze how the film offers individual story arcs to all characters, regardless of gender, and ensures that female characters have their own narratives rather than being relegated to supportive roles, thus maintaining a balanced and equal significance for all characters.
Hampi (2017) (Marathi)	Self discovery, personal growth, healing	When Isha sets out to Hampi to re-discover herself, she meets a myriad of people, including Kabir who helps her find happiness in the little things. Together they go through life-changing events, while their friendship blossoms into something more beautiful.	The film challenges typical gender stereotypes by showcasing contrasting roles of Isha and Kabir. Isha's journey of self-discovery, coupled with Kabir's carefree and emotionally open character, challenges the typical gender roles seen in Indian cinema.

VI.OBSERVATION

Dil Dhadakne Do (2015) directed by Zoya Akhtar, is a family drama that delves into the complexities of relationships, societal expectations, and the gender dynamics within a wealthy, upper-class Indian family. The film uses the backdrop of a luxurious cruise to explore these themes, centering on the Mehra family and their struggles with societal pressures, marriage, and individual identity. The Mehra family, like many wealthy families, are trapped in their own rigid, patriarchal structures. Kamal (Anil Kapoor) controls the family's decisions and disregards the desires of his children, particularly Ayesha, when they conflict with traditional gender roles. The hypocrisy of patriarchy is evident in the way Kamal's infidelity is tolerated, while Ayesha's desire to end her unhappy marriage is viewed as a failure on her part. Ayesha (Priyanka Chopra) is a successful businesswoman who runs her own company. Despite her professional success, she faces constant pressure from her family and society to conform to traditional gender roles, especially in her marriage. Her husband, who is suppressive towards her, Manav (Rahul Bose), expects her to prioritize the household and their relationship over her career. Ayesha's desire for freedom and divorce is seen as a rebellion against the conventional expectations of women, and her family dismisses her personal ambitions in favor of her husband's authority. While Neelam (Shefali Shah) and Kamal Mehra (Anil Kapoor), the parents of Ayesha and Kabir, represent a traditional patriarchal marriage. Kamal has an extramarital affair, though Neelam is aware of it, she remains silent, conforming to societal expectations that women should maintain the facade of a perfect

marriage. *Dil Dhadakne Do* effectively highlights the double standards of patriarchy prevalent in elite Indian society, showcasing how societal expectations shape the lives and choices of its characters. The film presents a stark contrast between the experiences of its male and female characters, revealing the constraints imposed on women like Ayesha and Neelam, who are expected to prioritize family reputation and endure personal sacrifices. Meanwhile, male characters, such as Kamal Mehra, navigate their desires with relative freedom and impunity. Through its nuanced portrayal of these dynamics, the film critiques the hypocrisy of a patriarchal system that demands compliance from women while allowing men to act without consequence.

Arjun Reddy (2017) directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, is a Telugu film that ignited considerable debate over its portrayal of toxic masculinity, gender dynamics, and romantic relationships. The story follows Arjun Reddy, a talented yet troubled medical student whose life unravels following a breakup. Arjun Reddy's character exemplifies toxic masculinity through his anger, aggression, and sense of entitlement. His possessiveness over Preethi, particularly in the early stages of their relationship, mirrors traditional gender roles that position men as dominant figures. He dictates various aspects of her life, from her social interactions to her choices, effectively rendering her submissive and passive. This dynamic reinforces the notion of male control in relationships, where women are expected to conform to the desires of their male partners. Preethi's portrayal as quiet and compliant highlights her lack of agency, as she rarely voices her opinions or makes decisions for herself. Arjun's dominance in their relationship

underscores the broader issue of women's autonomy being suppressed in patriarchal setups. The film also controversially romanticizes Arjun's aggression, framing his violent outbursts and possessiveness as signs of profound love and passion. This narrative blurs the lines between toxic behavior and romantic idealism, sending a troubling message that aggressive, controlling actions are acceptable expressions of male devotion. Arjun's downward spiral following the breakup illustrates the struggle that men, particularly those conforming to traditional notions of masculinity, face when it comes to vulnerability and emotional expression. Rather than seeking emotional support or healing, Arjun turns to self-destructive behaviours, including substance abuse, which is often viewed as a stereotypical coping mechanism for men. This response highlights how societal expectations surrounding masculinity discourage emotional openness, pushing men to react violently or destructively in the face of personal crises.

Bandishala (2019) a Marathi film directed by Milind Lele, delves into the experiences of a female police officer, Madhavi Sawant (played by Mukta Barve), who works in a male-dominated environment and tries to root out corruptions happening in her workspace. The film portrays gender dynamics through her struggles, professional challenges, and how societal norms and patriarchal expectations shape her journey. Madhavi Sawant is a resilient police officer who tries to root out the corrupt administration in the prisons. However, she makes powerful enemies who plot a gang rape against her. The harrowing incident leaves a strong Madhavi, broken. The portrayal of strong, authoritative figures attempting to suppress Madhavi's honesty reflects the discrimination faced by women. Although she ultimately receives justice by the end of the film, throughout her ordeal, she is subjected to societal criticism and judgment. The film subtly conveys male chauvinism through the oppressive behavior of her male colleagues, superiors, and prisoners. The film attempts to bring out the discrimination and crimes against women to the forefront through Madhavi's story.

The film strongly resonates with #MeToo movement. *Bandishala* vividly depicts the oppressive nature of male chauvinism in a professional setting. Madhavi's character is constantly undermined and harassed by her male colleagues and superiors, reflecting the power dynamics that the #MeToo movement seeks to

dismantle. The film portrays the systemic challenges and harassment Madhavi faces, similar to the experiences shared by many women during the #MeToo movement. Much like the survivors who came forward during the #MeToo movement, Madhavi's character embodies resilience and strength. She stands firm against male chauvinism and corruption in a male-dominated professional environment, reflecting the courage of women who speak out against harassment and abuse. *Three of us* (2022) a drama film directed by Avinash Arun. The film explores complex emotions and relationships within the backdrop of a scenic, serene village, and it delves into themes of self-discovery, marital discontent, and the search for meaning in life. As Shailaja begins grappling with the early stages of dementia, she finds herself caught between her past, present, and future. Determined to reconnect with her childhood before her memories fade, she embarks on a journey to revisit her roots. Along the way, Shailaja confronts unresolved questions about a traumatic childhood event, the monotony of her marriage, and the uncertainty of her future. Travelling along the vast Konkan coastline with her husband and childhood love, she gradually moves toward the forgiveness and liberation she has long sought. The film subtly portrays supportive and vulnerable characteristics of the male characters, Dipankar and Pradeep. Besides while interacting with Shailaja, a complex yet strong female character, their portrayal is more empathetic and understanding. These characteristics of Dipankar and Pradeep challenges the traditional gender stereotypes and male masculinity. Each protagonist has its own story arc in the film.

Varane Avashyamund (2020), directed by Anoop Sathyan. The film is a family drama that explores themes of relationships, personal growth, and familial bonds. *Varane Avashyamund* revolves around lives of a single mother, daughter, seeking for an arranged marriage, a military retiree and a young boy living in an apartment complex and how their stories and lives become intertwined. The film not only focuses on the generational aspects but also challenges traditional gender stereotypes. The film portrays both traditional and modern perspectives, reflecting evolving societal norms around relationships, independence, and the roles of men and women. The film portrays a progressive gender dynamics especially from the portrayal of Neena, played by Shobana. A single mother who embodies independence and self-

sufficiency, she has raised her daughter alone, rejecting societal pressure and standing firmly by her choice of getting married or not. Nikhitha's character represents a generation of women who are financially independent and career-oriented but still value cultural traditions like arranged marriages. While Neena represents a more progressive woman, her daughter, Nikhitha, embodies a blend of traditional and modern values which portrays their freedom of choice regardless of any aspect. Coming on to the portrayal of male characters in the films, Varane Avashyamund critiques the definition of male stereotypes and dominance, rather the film shows vulnerable and emotionally rich characteristics of the male characters. Major Unnikrishnan (Suresh Gopi) and Bibeesh (Dulquer Salmaan) breaks the mold of traditional masculinity. Major Unnikrishnan represents an older generation of men, rooted in traditional values. As a retired army officer, he carries the image of a strong, authoritative figure, embodying traits such as discipline and stoicism. However, the film challenges this trope by gradually revealing his emotional depth and vulnerability. Besides, Unnikrishnan's growing relationship with Neena (Shobana) reflects a mature, respectful approach to love. Instead of forcefully asserting dominance or control, he approaches the relationship with patience and understanding. Coming to Dulquer's portrayal as Bibeesh, he represents a more modern, emotionally aware version of masculinity. Unlike the stereotypical male lead who would assert his authority in romantic or familial situations, Bibeesh is depicted as someone who has no need to dominate or control. His character is more focused on personal growth and emotional stability, which contrasts with the more aggressive or possessive male leads commonly seen in cinema. Bibeesh's past, particularly his estrangement from his father, brings out his emotional depth. He is shown grappling with these unresolved feelings, highlighting the importance of emotional openness in men. This dynamic challenges the traditional notion that men should suppress their emotions or be stoic in the face of hardship. Overall, the characters in Varane Avashyamund have their own relevance and story arcs, the film challenges the gender stereotypes and prioritize emotional openness, independence, freedom and personal growth.

Hampi (2017) directed by Prakash Kunte, is a Marathi film that explores self-discovery, friendship, and

personal growth. Set against the serene backdrop of Hampi, the film follows Isha (Sonalee Kulkarni), who is emotionally withdrawn and cynical about life, and Kabir (Lalit Prabhakar), a free-spirited traveller. The film subtly critiques typical gender stereotypes, especially male stereotypes, as it delves into the emotional journeys of its characters, focusing on how personal relationships and societal expectations shape their behaviour. Isha is depicted as a woman who has built emotional barriers around herself due to personal losses and disappointments, challenging the traditional expectation that women should be emotionally expressive. Instead, she internalizes her pain and becomes emotionally distant. In contrast, Kabir is open, carefree, and unafraid to express his emotions, subverting the conventional portrayal of men as emotionally restrained. His willingness to share his feelings reflects a more progressive take on masculinity, where vulnerability is embraced. Together, these characters challenge traditional gender roles, demonstrating that emotional expression is not confined by gender and that both men and women cope with emotions in diverse ways. The interaction between Isha and Kabir does not follow the typical gendered expectations of a romantic film. While there is chemistry between them, the movie does not force them into a conventional romantic relationship. Kabir's character is never shown trying to "fix" Isha, a trope often seen in films where men are portrayed as rescuers or saviors of emotionally troubled women. Instead, Kabir helps her by offering a different perspective on life, but without any pressure or expectations. This presents a more balanced view of relationships, where men and women support each other as equals without falling into traditional gender roles. The film emphasizes the importance of emotional healing, regardless of gender. Both Isha and Kabir are shown as individuals with emotional baggage, but the film does not frame either gender as being more or less capable of handling it. Instead, it suggests that healing is a universal process that everyone must go through, regardless of societal gender roles. The film presents a nuanced take on gender dynamics, focusing on themes of emotional vulnerability, personal growth, and non-conformity to traditional gender roles. The film portrays a modern perspective where both men and women are shown to have emotional depth, independence, and agency.

VII. ANALYSIS

- Portrayal of Male Characters:

Male Chauvinist Films: Characters like Kamal in “Dil Dhadakne Do” and Arjun in “Arjun Reddy” exhibit traits of dominance, control, and aggression. These films often romanticize or excuse such behavior, reinforcing patriarchal norms.

Films Challenging Stereotypes: Characters like those in “Three of Us” and “Varane Avashyamund” are emotionally expressive and supportive. These films challenge traditional masculinity by portraying men who are empathetic and nurturing.

- Portrayal of Female Characters:

Male Chauvinist Films: Female characters like Ayesha in “Dil Dhadakne Do” and Madhavi in “Bandishala” face significant constraints and discrimination. Their struggles highlight the oppressive nature of patriarchal norms.

Films Challenging Stereotypes: Female characters in “Varane Avashyamund” and “Hampi” are strong, independent, and defy societal expectations. These films promote the idea of women as equal partners in relationships and society.

- Themes and Messages:

Male Chauvinist Films: These films often reinforce traditional gender roles and patriarchal control, either by romanticizing male dominance or highlighting the struggles of women within oppressive systems.

Films Challenging Stereotypes: These films promote progressive views on gender dynamics, emphasizing equality, emotional openness, and mutual respect. They challenge traditional norms and encourage a more balanced and equitable approach to gender roles. By comparing these films, we can see a clear spectrum of gender portrayals in Indian cinema. While some films reinforce patriarchal norms, others challenge and subvert these norms, offering more progressive and equitable representations of gender dynamics. This comparison highlights the evolving landscape of gender roles in Indian cinema and the broader societal implications of these portrayals.

The themes and messages of these films also differ significantly. Male chauvinist films often reinforce traditional gender roles and patriarchal control, either by romanticizing male dominance or highlighting the struggles of women within oppressive systems. In contrast, films challenging chauvinism promote

progressive views on gender dynamics, emphasizing equality, emotional openness, and mutual respect. They challenge traditional norms and encourage a more balanced and equitable approach to gender roles.

VIII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To analyze films that portray male chauvinism and those that challenge it, several theoretical frameworks from gender studies, sociology, and film theory can be utilized. These frameworks help in understanding the underlying dynamics, cultural contexts, and societal impacts of these portrayals.

For male chauvinist films, Patriarchy Theory is particularly relevant. This theory examines the social system in which men hold primary power and dominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property. In films like “Arjun Reddy,” this theory helps analyze how male characters exert control over female characters, reinforcing traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms. The romanticization of male dominance and aggression can be critiqued through this lens. Additionally, the concept of Toxic Masculinity, which refers to cultural norms that equate masculinity with control, aggression, and emotional repression, is useful for analyzing films like “Arjun Reddy,” where male aggression and dominance are portrayed as desirable traits. This framework critiques the harmful effects of such portrayals on both men and women. Hegemonic Masculinity, which is the cultural ideal of manhood emphasizing traits like toughness, stoicism, and dominance over women, can be applied to films like “Dil Dhadakne Do” to show how male characters like Kamal embody these traits, enjoying privileges and freedom from consequences, while female characters are constrained by societal expectations.

For films that challenge male chauvinism, Feminist Film Theory is essential. This theory explores how films represent gender, focusing on the ways in which cinema can perpetuate or challenge patriarchal ideologies. It is useful for analyzing films like “Three of Us” and “Varane Avashyamund,” which challenge traditional gender roles by portraying emotionally expressive and supportive male characters, and strong, independent female characters. Intersectionality, which examines how various social identities (e.g., gender, race, class) intersect to create unique modes of

discrimination and privilege, can be applied to films like “Bandishala” to understand how gender intersects with professional hierarchies and power dynamics, highlighting the compounded discrimination faced by women in male-dominated environments.

IX.DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of gender dynamics in Indian cinema, through the lens of both male chauvinist films and those that challenge gender stereotypes, reveals a complex interplay between cultural narratives and societal norms. Indian cinema, as a powerful medium of storytelling, not only reflects societal attitudes but also has the potential to influence and drive social change.

Link to Broader Societal Issues: Indian cinema serves as a mirror to society, capturing the prevailing gender norms and power dynamics. Films like “Arjun Reddy” and “Dil Dhadakne Do” highlight the entrenched patriarchal values and the romanticization of toxic masculinity, which perpetuate gender inequalities. These portrayals reinforce traditional gender roles, where male dominance and female subservience are normalized. Such films can contribute to the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes, influencing the audience’s perceptions and behaviors.

Conversely, films like “Three of Us,” “Varane Avashyamund,” and “Hampi” challenge these traditional norms by presenting progressive narratives. These films depict emotionally expressive and supportive male characters, and strong, independent female characters who defy societal expectations. By showcasing alternative models of gender dynamics, these films promote the idea of equality, mutual respect, and emotional openness. They encourage viewers to question and rethink conventional gender roles, fostering a more inclusive and egalitarian mindset.

Implications for Gender Equality in India: The portrayal of gender dynamics in Indian cinema has significant implications for gender equality in India. Films that challenge patriarchal norms and stereotypes play a crucial role in raising awareness about gender issues and advocating for social change. They provide a platform for marginalized voices and highlight the struggles and triumphs of women and other gender

minorities. By doing so, they contribute to the broader movement for gender equality, inspiring individuals and communities to strive for a more just and equitable society.

Moreover, the impact of these films extends beyond the screen. They influence public discourse, shape cultural attitudes, and can even drive policy changes. For instance, the #MeToo movement in India, which gained momentum partly through the support of the film industry, has led to increased awareness about workplace harassment and the implementation of stricter laws to protect women’s rights. Similarly, films that depict progressive gender roles can inspire real-life changes in behavior and attitudes, promoting greater acceptance of gender diversity and equality.

In the analysed films, gender dynamics reveal a spectrum of traditional and progressive portrayals, often challenging patriarchal norms and stereotypical gender roles. “Dil Dhadakne Do” critiques the hypocrisy of patriarchy within an elite family structure, highlighting how women like Ayesha are constrained by societal expectations, while men, such as Kamal, enjoy freedom from consequence. In contrast, “Arjun Reddy” showcases toxic masculinity, where male dominance and aggression are romanticized, reinforcing traditional patriarchal control over women’s autonomy. “Bandishala” brings to light the oppressive nature of male chauvinism in a male-dominated professional environment, with Madhavi’s resilience standing as a testament to women’s fight for justice and equality in the face of discrimination.

The films “Three of Us,” “Varane Avashyamund,” and “Hampi” offer more progressive takes on gender dynamics, particularly through their portrayals of emotionally expressive, vulnerable male characters. In “Three of Us”, the male characters are supportive and empathetic, challenging traditional masculinity. Similarly, “Varane Avashyamund” subverts male stereotypes by portraying men like Unnikrishnan and Bibeesh as emotionally open and patient, while also presenting strong, independent female characters who defy societal expectations. Finally, “Hampi” showcases a balanced dynamic between Isha and Kabir, where both characters defy conventional gender norms, emphasizing the importance of emotional healing and growth without conforming to traditional male-female power dynamics.

Across these films, we observe a clear shift from

entrenched patriarchal values toward more nuanced, equitable portrayals of men and women. While some films like "Arjun Reddy" perpetuate problematic stereotypes, others like "Varane Avashyamund" and "Hampi" offer refreshing, modern interpretations that prioritize emotional depth, equality, and personal freedom for both genders. Overall, this research highlights the dual role of Indian cinema in both reinforcing and challenging traditional gender roles, particularly focusing on the portrayal of male chauvinism in films from 2014 to 2024. Historically, Indian cinema has upheld patriarchal values by depicting women in subordinate roles and reinforcing male dominance. However, a growing number of films now present empowered female characters and male protagonists who support gender equality, reflecting a shift toward more progressive narratives. This evolving portrayal underscores cinema's complex function as both a mirror of societal norms and a force for cultural change.

The analysis reveals that while patriarchal structures persist in many films, there is a discernible move towards more nuanced and diverse representations of gender. By juxtaposing traditional portrayals with modern, egalitarian perspectives, Indian cinema is contributing to an ongoing discourse on gender dynamics. The study emphasizes the significant role that cinema plays in shaping societal attitudes toward gender, illustrating how media not only reflects existing cultural values but also has the potential to influence and reshape them over time, fostering a broader acceptance of gender equality.

X.FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study offers valuable insights into the portrayal of gender dynamics in Indian cinema, it has certain limitations. The selection of films is not exhaustive and may not represent the entire spectrum of Indian cinema. Future research could broaden the scope by including a more diverse range of films from various regional cinemas and genres. Additionally, incorporating quantitative analysis alongside the qualitative approach could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of these portrayals on audiences. Further exploration is needed to examine the long-term effects of progressive gender portrayals on societal attitudes and behaviors. Research could also investigate the role of digital

media and streaming platforms in shaping contemporary gender narratives. Understanding the intersectionality of gender with other social categories such as caste, class, and sexuality in Indian cinema could offer deeper insights into the complexities of gender dynamics.

REFERENCE

- [1] Chakravorty, N., & Bera, S. (2024). Portrayal and Perception of Male Chauvinism and Gender Superiority in Hindi Cinema: A Case Study of the Film 'Animal'. *Journal of Communication and Management*.
- [2] Samraat, S. (2021). Bollywood's toxic masculinity: The problematic portrayal of men & women in popular Hindi cinema.
- [3] Mishra, S., Deori, M., & Pradhan, P. (2024). CONSTRUCTION OF CONTEMPORARY MASCULINITY IN BOLLYWOOD: A STUDY OF SELECT FILMS STARRING AYUSHMANN KHURRANA. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*.
- [4] Roy, M. (2021). Male Gaze in Indian Cinema: The Presentation of Women in Mainstream Cinema. *Journal of Humanities and Education Development*.
- [5] Tiwari, D.S. (2024). Gender Politics and Stereotypes in Bollywood Films Dhrishyam 1 and 2. *Literary Voice*.
- [6] Madaan, N., Mehta, S., Agrawaal, T.S., Malhotra, V., Aggarwal, A., & Saxena, M. (2017). Analyzing Gender Stereotyping in Bollywood Movies. *ArXiv*, abs/1710.04117.
- [7] Prakash, M. (2020). Women in Indian Cinema. *The International Encyclopedia of Gender, Media, and Communication*.
- [8] Kapoor, H., Bhuptani, P.H., & Agneswaran, A. (2017). The Bechdel in India: gendered depictions in contemporary Hindi cinema. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 26, 212 - 226.
- [9] Narsing Balande, C., & Ranganathan, B. (2024). Crossing the Threshold: Empowering Gender in Marathi Cinema. *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*.