

## **A Critical Analysis of Gazes in Indian Cinema**

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Indian cinema is the reflection of Indian society and it shows the reality of Indian culture. They are connected and reflect each other when we talk about the scenario of Indian society. In Indian culture, we normally talk about the gazes presented in Indian cinema. Basically only one gaze is more prominent in Indian cinema or even in Indian culture that is the male gaze and from that point of view each and everything of Indian culture is determined. Before cinema, we had literature the same as we have cinema nowadays. There are basically two gazes in Indian cinema, the first one is the male gaze and the second one is the female gaze. As we know that India is a patriarchal society, so is the Indian cinema. In Indian cinema, we see the male in a movie is more prominent than the female counterpart. And this is because the filmmakers are the professionals; they will not produce anything that will cause them financial losses.

The term "male gaze" is a concept coined by feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey in her influential 1975 essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." The male gaze refers to the way in which visual media, such as films and advertisements, are often created from a heterosexual male perspective, objectifying women as passive objects of desire. According to Mulvey, mainstream media tends to present women as objects to be looked at, catering to the presumed heterosexual male viewer. This gaze often involves the camera positioning the viewer as a male observer who gazes upon female characters who are typically presented as sexualized objects. This objectification can perpetuate gender stereotypes and reinforce power imbalances between men and women.

In Indian cinema women are portrayed as the timid ones or secondary to the male counterpart and by this process we maintain the cultural values of Indian society but the problem with this is that the cultural values are so deeply rooted in each and every wake of our life that even children from their childhood learn to imitate those roles that will make them fitted to the cultural system of Indian society.

Feminist therapists emphasize that societal gender-role expectations profoundly influence a person's identity from the moment of birth and become deeply ingrained in adult personality. Because gender politics are embedded in the fabric of American society, they influence how we see ourselves as girls and boys and as women and men throughout the course of our lives. Prochaska and Norcross (2010) point out that gender-role expectations tend to generate a false sense of self and force women to accept stereotyped gender roles. "women are expected to be a lady, to never swear, hit or get angry. They should strive to please men and, above all, never offend or best a man" (p. 379)... Feminist therapists remind us that traditional gender stereotypes of women are still prevalent in cultures throughout the world. They teach their clients that uncritical acceptance of traditional roles can greatly restrict their range freedom. Today many women and men are resisting being so narrowly defined (Corey 335-336).

Male counterparts are so strong that they define the female costumes, dialogues, even their behaviours that means a woman is a product of the male ideology. She has nothing to do with her own feelings and emotions, in various movies we see that the main Hero is the leading protagonist of the movie; he is doing various leading roles in the movie such as making an aim and try to achieve that, try to remove the obstacles to achieve that and ultimately give glimpses of the culture that it is patriarchal society. But the problem with the feminist critics is that this is the half representation of the human being that the female counterpart is not given the equal opportunity in Indian cinema or in Indian culture. She is thought to be a symbol of beauty nothing more than that; she is not thought to be a leading character, intellectual one or as a leader. She is represented as a body of beautiful lady and in various movies we came across such symbols of female or woman in Indian cinema.

A very good example of subordination of women to men can be seen in the concept of Rage. This is a very essential part of Indian cinema as we see that rage is a concept that is associated only with the male

protagonist, not with the female. In a very few movies, we see that rage is connected with the female characters. In the latest we can see the rage concept is much highlighted in the movie *Animal*, where we see that the leading protagonist is so much revengeful that the leading heroine is just like a foil to the main hero. She has nothing to do with her own. Women are mostly presented as a foil to the leading characters in each and every movie and we can see it as a practice all over the world, not only in Indian cinema. Women are portrayed as a beautiful body and they are objectified as such. Now we can see how women are portrayed in popular Bollywood item songs:

The majority of Bollywood movies include songs that are categorised as “item songs”. These songs have women as central figures around whom the songs are choreographed. The women are shown wearing skimpy clothes with camera angles focusing on specific body parts, thus objectifying them.

While the word “item” means an object or inventory, in Bollywood, these item songs often compare the girl to various objects addressing her as “Patakha”, “Phuljhari”, “Tandoori Murgi”, etc. We can take some songs for analysis. The songs below are all about how well Bollywood does to bring down the social status of women.

Jalebi Bai (Double Dhamaal), Munni Badnaam (Dabangg), Fevicol se (Dabangg 2), Pinky (Zanjeer), Mera Naam Mary (Brothers), Do Dhaari Talwar (Mere brother ki Dulhan) are just some examples.

“Fevicol se” from the movie “Dabangg 2” (2012), directed by Arbaaz Khan, featuring Kareena Kapoor Khan, Salman Khan and Arbaaz Khan, and written by Wajid Ali. The lyrics of the song are,

*“Haye main to kab se hun se ready taiyyar,*

*Pataa le saiyyan missed call se, oh no!”*

*“Main to tandoori murgihuyaar,*

*Gatka le saiyyan alcohol se ok!”* (youthkiawaaz).

The lyrics have profoundly materialistic metaphors that compare women to the barbecued chicken better enjoyed with alcohol. Movies show the patriarchal mind set of the society. Heroines are just the beautiful and sexy bodies and nothing else. India is a patriarchal society. So does the Indian film industry. ‘Kabir Singh’, thinks slapping each other is true love.

But now we see a little change in the perception of the society about women.

Now a day, we see movies based on the heroine-centred. We see a lot of women are joining the film industry as directors, producers, actresses, etc. Film directors like Zoya Akhtar, Gauri Shinde, Meghna Gulzar, and Reema Kagti redefined Indian cinema with powerful on-screen characters.

The female gaze can be seen in various movies. We can analyse the *Thappad* and the *Pagglait* movie on the female gaze’s point of view.

Amrita is happy with her life in the movie “*Thappad*”. She lives with her loving husband and enjoys a comfortable lifestyle. However, everything changes when her husband slaps her at a party. This incident leads Amrita to file for divorce and compels us to ponder about the dignity of the woman. In the movie, Amrita and her husband engage in a battle of accusations, each trying to prove oneself right. The film also sheds light on the dilemma faced by women in our society when deciding whether to continue a relationship after experiencing humiliation. Taapsee Pannu’s character, Amrita, constantly questions herself and her choices, wondering if she is making the right decision. As the story unfolds, Amrita’s courage and strength inspire other women, including her maid who has also suffered from domestic violence. These women begin to question their own worth within their families and society, refusing to succumb to societal pressures and standing up against violence. Amrita and Vikram initially lead happy marriage life, with Vikram working in a leading company and Amrita engaging herself at home. But things take a turn when Vikram’s promotion falls through, and he is faced with the prospect of working under his junior in the London office. In a fit of anger, Vikram slaps Amrita during a party, deeply hurting her. After this incident, Amrita decides to leave their home and seek refuge at her parents’ place, eventually taking the matter to court. In the end, Amrita and her husband proceed with the divorce. Her husband realizes the gravity of his actions and expresses remorse, quitting his job as he cannot imagine a life without her. He requests her to visit him as a friend.

Now we can see the other one – *Pagglait*. It is the story about a young lady Sandhya and her struggle to find her identity. Sandhya is a widow and her husband died after five months of marriage. Her husband was Astik. Astik’s parents Usha and Shivendra are deeply saddened by the sudden loss of their elder son who was the only financial supporter to the family. They suffer even more when relatives come to the house and cause confusion. In the middle of a house full of grieving relatives, Sandhya yawns at the social media condolences and copy-paste comments made for Astik. Her attitude leaves some confused and others bewildered. A relative thinks that she is traumatised after the death of her husband. When Sandhya’s best friend Nazia comes to support her, Sandhya admits to her that she doesn’t feel anything about losing him. She says that she just wants to eat golgappe and drink Pepsi. At the same time, Astik’s younger brother Alok arranges the necessary burial by the river. Sandhya and Astik have never been a very close couple for the past few months. While looking for Astik’s

documents for the bank claim, Sandhya finds the picture of a girl in the cupboard. Sandhya feels anger towards her dead husband, believing that he is cheating on her. When Astik's colleagues come to condole with him, she finds the girl Aakanksha in the picture. Sandhya took her in a room and just want to know about her relationship with Astik. Aakanksha says that she and Astik were deeply in love since college and both worked in the same company. But he never cheated on his wife and they were together until Astik married Sandhya. They could not marry because her parents were not ready to their relationship. Sandhya was not ready to believe this. But they grow closer when she tries to find out more about Astik from Aakanksha. Meanwhile, the family members came to know about the insurance policy of Astik about 50 lakh and the sole nominee of the amount was her wife Sandhya. The family even tries to change the nominee of the insurance policy but in vain. So they took the another venue to get the money. Shivendra and Usha try to overcome the family's proposal that Sandhya marry Astik's paternal cousin, Tarun's son Aditya, who is unemployed and unable to finance his hotel business. Sandhya asks Aditya why he wants to marry her. He says that he is in love with her which touches her heart and she accepts the proposal. This angers her parents and Alok, who is also in love with her. Even on the 13th day of the funeral, Aditya leaves in a hurry. Her parents tell everyone that Sandhya told them that she is pregnant with Astik's child. Aditya's sister Aditi reveals that Sandhya lied about her pregnancy to test Aditya's love for her. Now she leaves the money of insurance to her in-laws. Now she just wants to be herself, independent and free from the constraints of the society: she leaves the house after the tervi ritual of her husband.

Sandhya, meanwhile, is ready to begin a new life with a new job in a new city. Even after being a topper in her M.A. class, her family never let her settle for a job. She shares how since childhood, the main focus of her parents was to marry her off, without any concern for her independence. Seeing Aakanksha working a job, she becomes motivated to work, and become financially independent. She realises that if she had stayed back, she could never live her own life; because in a patriarchal society, other people make decisions for women (Wiki, Pagglait).

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