

# Gender and Sexuality : The overlap as seen in Media and Cinema today

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## Abstract

It is a common belief that realism is not dominant in Indian Cinema today. Andre Bazin, one of the greatest realist critics, mentioned that one of the basic criteria for a film to be realistic is that it must locate its characters and action in a determinate social and historical setting, Bazin on the other hand, while elaborating on the use of convention within the cinema, mentions that such use may be made, where it is up to the director to decide how and what aspect of reality he intends to present.

Women's issues are central to every society, primarily because they go on to define all human relationships and social constructs and Cinema as a medium, more than literature or political debate cuts across all social, religious, economic, class and caste boundaries to appeal to human minds. Media in the form of commercial sponsorship, like advertisement, and Hindi Cinema, in corresponding to India's emerging socio-economic power has a major responsibility in representing the reality and deviate from stereotypes. Unfortunately, it confirms to commodification of women to a large extent. Considered to be the fourth pillar of the state, is the custodian of human rights of minorities, socially and economically backward and downtrodden people in society (Media and Law, 2006), it has not delivered appropriately in addressing the marginalized, the women in their representation within the spectrum of patriarchy, resulting in her pitiable, self-sacrificing visage.

However, in the last two-three decades, the transgression is evinced; for example, in the recent film *Gangubai of Kathiawada* (2022) that is a real saga of a prostitute whose life is presented in the film to showcase an unusual woman's power and strength. It comes close on heels to *Pink* (2016) the film that created an edge by emphasizing on women's right to consent, the issue is taken up with women in a city trying to equate their position with men. In the latter 2022 film, interestingly, prostitutes' right to consent is undertaken. Besides, the film quite effectively undertakes the situation of *hijra*, as the film tends to critique Gender Binary and the social prejudice it has evinced from the very beginning, and makes us think of their status today.

Another film, *Badhai Do*, (also released in 2022) is a film that intersects gender and sexuality as it takes love of same sex who according to stereotypical notion feel guilty and hence conceal their sexuality from everyone. Three film directors, at length undertake the subject of both sexes and enable the protagonists to counter societal and family pressure, and attempt to break the stereotype and accept the truth themselves, while making the society internalize it as "normal".

**KEYWORDS:** realist, cinema, marginalized, commodification, patriarchy, Prostitute, transgression, *Pink*, Gender Binary, normal.

### Introduction: Media And Woman Gender

Advertisement is one of the major media that affects our daily life consciously and unconsciously.<sup>i</sup>

Author Pooja Chalthey in the chapter, “**Portrayal of women in advertising**”, (July 2018, researchgate) examines the dispute on the issue that whether advertisements depict what is prevalent in the society or the society tends to embrace in itself what is portrayed in the advertisements and other media. She undertakes this issue owing to the great socio-cultural change in the society especially in the context of role and social position of women, where more and more women are pursuing careers of their choice that has led to their changing role in family structure, even having negative attitude towards sex roles and stereotypes. Or the change in advertising still conform to some traditional notions about women and their role in society?

Advertisements are largely paid/sponsored messages, intended to inform or influence people who receive them. To impress/ lure the consumers the advertisers use different taglines, storylines to touch upon specific emotions so as to goad them to purchase the product.

Media is generally seen capitalizing on stereotypical notion of masculinity and femininity if one takes up example of advertisements, used as commercials sponsoring the television programmes, be it news channel or TV serials. From time immemorial woman’s image of housewife,

ideal mother and ideal wife have been used, be it of detergents or cleansing bar.

She avers that with the increase in women employment,

**Representation of women in advertisements has considerably shifted from the housewife-centric ads to the career woman ads. But female models are increasingly shown in the ads to sell products that may or may not be directly related to them. (Kang, 2002)**

The men vests ‘Dixcy Scot’ features the young actor Varun Dhawan while Akshay kumar advertises ‘Dollar’ undergarments; the obvious idea is to lure men with their fit, toned body which is shown to get validation by the woman in the ad. In fact, all ads on men, be it vest or body spray exhibit known male face in showbiz; the result is commercial gain through stereotyping male gender through it and stereotyping female through objectification.

The objectification of woman really calls attention and reveals her encountering disability, no doubt. It appears that Sex as an emotion, is successfully employed by advertisers in promoting jeans, perfumes, alcohol, watches, cars etc. Women’s stereotypical image as housewife, good daughter-in-law or a good mother still continue.

The critic argues that though the latest ads on health drinks, detergent cakes, soaps, medicines, motorbike ads are there yet they show very independent women, modern women, perhaps super women, for example,

this ad that grew popular where Actor Priyanka Chopra seen as woman icon fits perfectly into the 2010 advertisement of two-wheeler, “Hero Honda”, where she appears saying,

**Why should men have all the fun?**

### **Advertisements On Gender Parity**

However, few advertisements in the last five years however, can be seen as depicting women in progressive light. As a result, the advertising agency has to essentially conform to gender parity; example is the advertisement of Genelia D’Souza whose real life wealthy husband, Riteish Deshmukh joins the act of cleaning utensils with ‘Prill’ liquid detergent.

Another advertisement on FM channel comes with popular Gujarati term, “Rasode” implying Rasoi, Indian kitchen from a TV serial showcasing a traditional household. The advertisement is of “Kohlu bail sarson ka tail”, and the tagline of the advertisement comes as “Rasode main kaun rahta hai, Rasode main mard kyon nahi?

There is no doubt that women in the male dominated society are still far behind in the Gender competition, despite women having moved up in life in various sectors. But one can discern some difference in the image that advertising has brought in the last few years.

In a web link,

**10 Historic Ads That Moved Culture Forward For Women- The Ad Council** (<https://www.adcouncil.org>, Emily Kostic,11

**March, 2021 (Impact) claims that**

**through the technology they use, the partnerships they develop and the creative approach they take to telling new stories, advertisers have the unique ability to propel culture forward.**

The article depicts 10 ads to portray women in a positive, empowering, multifaceted way making progress, that are perhaps more visible than, for example,

**Share the load- P&G India** (2016) with English subtitles, that showcases

**a father as he watches the chore imbalance that exists in his adult daughter’s home and wonders about the role he may have played in perpetuating the gender stereotypes that are now her day- to- day.**

He realizes it is time to correct the imbalance done with his wife that set the precedence, he decides to take a step ahead by helping his daughter with at least the laundry.

Several ads on Indian Television in the last 2-3 years showcase young, simple, educated daughter explaining to her father how he should not share OTP with an outsider.

Banking sector has been largely responsible in attempting to break the stereotype, for instance the most recent one on the husband eager to show his wife the name plate outside the house carrying her name alone, at which she asks what will they answer their friends, he replies they will appreciate that the person who took loan for the house certainly deserves it; he is

sure that they will rather follow the example.

Advertisement of Chemists like “Met life” too attempts to break stereotype when the husband provides his wife with hot water bag in the middle of night, acting on the doctor’s immediate advice.

Advertising sector has incorporated some ads that tend to show the new India, ads showing ‘Iodex’ pain balm for decades has done it by alluding to the woman in domestic space being neglected while the sensitive father-in-law or the husband respond by suggesting/ or applying it. But this alone will not do much to assuage woman’s loneliness and exclusion from the male-centric society.

### Sexuality

I used to feel bad about being body-shamed:  
Yami<sup>ii</sup>

Indian actor, Yami Gautam in a newspaper article says,

“I want to tell aspiring actors that they should never fall for such (Body-shaming) comments. Keep honing your skills until you reach your goal.”

Yami, who hails from Chandigarh had to face her share of criticism for her looks when she was new to the industry, but that didn’t shake her morale. She says that they commented on her nose or dimple and that she is pretty but looks ordinary. But at no point such discouragement never pushed her to a point of where she thought,

‘Okay, let me change this about my face or body.’

She gives a revealing fact as especially in the glamour industry, retaining one’s composure is quite difficult. Her message is that it is essential to support each other and accept people as they are.

Similar example is of a very successful actor, Vidya Balan, in “Uncondition yourself” with Namita Thapar on YouTube, episode 13 where she admits how she hated herself as she was a fat girl. It took her a lot of time, going through trying several work outs only to finally reject unsolicited advice and accepted her body weight. Now she feels healthy as she has accepted, she says, ‘it does not change the person you are.’

In the ordinary life women face far more anxiety and stress owing to looks; while the girls to be married are put on display facing humiliation of being “judged”, the matrimonial advertisements remain unchanged with the demand for not just fair but “milky white complexion’.

Media unquestionably plays an active role in promoting body shaming through a number of advertisements for promoting fairness for both genders, its ‘Fair and Lovely’ for women and ‘Fair and Handsome’ for men. While Bollywood heroes with their five or six packs make men insecure and ashamed of their bodies, the masochistic men/actors displayed in the advertisements of men vests tend to enhance youths’ level of stress in their efforts to

be like them.

### History Of Female Subjugation

In the chapter "Signs and Signification" authors Jill Marshal and Angela Wendy in the book, *The Language of Television: Intertext*, examines the fact that Advertising tends to use stereotypical images of people metonymically, for example James Bond would order his trademark martini, 'shaken not stirred', the drink there becomes metonymy for glamorous lifestyle and class image. Similarly, one can see Indian advertisements of 'Pan Pasand' featuring actor, Ajay Devgun, who gets joined by Shahrukh Khan too.

Strangely, the much-read criticism by critics Gilbert and Gubar in *Madwoman in the Attic* regarding the torturous road taken by marriageable girls in 18th and 19th century for looking attractive that led them to 'Anorexia' and 'hysteria' still continues, perhaps in small measure and in particular sectors. This scenario needs attention: a society induced complexity and insecurity that makes such youths weak in mind.

Undeniably, at the bottom of Female Sexuality have been norms rampant, the age-old gender bias from the ancient times as early as Helen's or Sita's times, when woman chastity alone was the determinant of a woman of respect. It is quite intriguing that for a married woman there were and still seem the question of being chaste or unchaste. It is this very prejudice that has since then set the stage for women to be "judged", what Helen of Troy herself said when she used the word "slut" for herself in

*Iliad*. From Helen to Hester Prynne, the female protagonist of *Scarlett Letter*, there is no end to punishment and humiliation as they dared to defy the womanly code of conduct.

It furthermore brings the subject of women becoming the victim of rape, molestation and acid attacks that bruise their heart, mind and soul, worst of all, it makes them suffer from a permanent injury on heart and soul: the fear of feeling unsafe on road and elsewhere in society.

History well reveals how woman's entity and likeness to sexuality was only through motherhood. In the chapter **Woman: from the Imperfect Male to the Incommensurate Female** suggests how the ancient, medieval, and early modern theories of gender emphasized on the one-sex model, when gender essentially implied male that underpinned a social order based on patriarchy and<sup>iii</sup>

**a political ordering in which authority rests with men, producing laws and relations of authority in which women and underage males suffer legal, economic and social disabilities.**

Modernity came with two-sex model, in the eighteenth century when things changed dramatically. Social contract theories thrown up by the Enlightenment; the radical politics of America and French revolutions brought in development of free trade practices in commerce and industry and a new division of labour, eventually leading to creation of class society.

All such factors led to liberalism in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that acted to destabilize and ultimately overthrow the old order; it further led to a new gender order as liberalism promised equality between men and women. But this prospect was difficult to be tolerated as woman essentially implied

a biological entity, a sexed body, a gender identity

that derived ideas from what roles were appropriate for women.

The critic explains that as women were aligned with morality and religion: men represented corruption and materialism, thus women became the custodian of social values, while men indulged in values generally subversive of a civilized order. He points to intriguing fact that:

On the other hand, women were also identified with nature-wild, unruly, yet to be explored and mastered; whereas men belonged to culture-controlled, systematic, symbolic of achievement and order.

Evinced principally as emblem of femininity or female nature, women were exclusively identified by their sexual functions, it set two possible images for women: that of revered wife and mother, and that of despised prostitute. Such prejudiced notion of women as a gender is a common phenomenon that tends to problematize woman's situation, why women are to label between the two extremes, moral or immoral, pure or a prostitute. In the film or TV serials, women are often judged for

their morality and at any given point their character can be stained, humiliated, the male in contrast does not fear to get his character stained.

### Media ( Tv) And Woman Gender

TV soaps that emerged in the 80s alongside the introduction of commercial sponsorship, were strategized to

integrate family stories with market economy and the states' programmes of welfare"<sup>iv</sup>

resulted in audiences' multiple identification with the serial's characters and sub-plots that go on multiplying as they get involved while negotiating the underlying moral process.

TV serials especially subscribe to this very image of the pure or impure woman while she is made to go through the fate of mythical Sita and the audience patiently watch and relate to her sufferings, weep with her and wait for the time she exonerates herself from the sin.

The space that TV has begun to occupy in the homes, irrespective of class, sex or gender distinction is undoubtedly different and unlike watching a film that involves audience's choice as they pay for it and the images come artificially through electronic medium. TV comes across as objective medium, representing reality because of entering the homes of all. One can always recall TV serials in 90s like *Kyunki Saas bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* and *Ghar Ghar ki Kahani* becoming extremely popular and discussion over the storyline would often take place even between women of

different classes as the story of 'Bahu' and question of right and wrong became matter of concern for even a poor woman undergoing misery, exploitation or humiliation.

Another key element that became indispensable in such family saga was the continuous war between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. Sudhir Kakar, the well-known psychoanalyst provides an interesting analysis of this stereotypical perennial, feud that still features in the serials even now, 3 to 4 decades even after the emergence of modernized, educated women.

The author explains,<sup>y</sup>

although the clichéd relationship between an overweening mother-in-law and a silently suffering daughter-in-law is a bitter reality for many young women, the changes that are taking place in the power structure of the educated middle class have made many a mother-in-law view herself as a loser across the board. She feels bitter and shortchanged that although she suffered under the whims and moods of older family members when she was a young bride, now, when it is her turn to reap the fruits of being the family matriarch, she can neither take the respect of her better educated daughter-in-law or the loyalty of her son for granted.

This antagonism is no doubt the staple of many women's folk song and widely watched TV soaps, Kakar argues, it is seldom realized by that the "wicked" mother-in-law is but an agent of the Indian, traditional family, where the parent-son and filial bonds are more central

than the husband-wife tie (fulcrum of western modern family), the new bride thus constitutes a very real threat to the unity of larger family.

Such subjects no doubt have reigned successively on TV soap for the last 5 decades and the inevitable reason is that the audiences' liking is being tailored to ensure consumer satisfaction.

Yet, what looks more convincing about such melodrama to build up around the antagonism is reinforcing women confirming to "male defined response patterns". Rivalry of the two women as they try to outsmart the other by scheming, end up in demeaning the women universally.

One quite interesting and **positive advertisement** that counters it is one emphasizing on women bonding that is so emboldening and empowering; this is an advertisement of 'Amazon Prime Video',

a woman in her bridal attire is sitting in a pensive mood when her friend comes to her, she embraces her; lifting up her spirits and says to her,

Ex hote rahte Hain, boyfriends can continue becoming Ex/es, but friends will not".

The message is quite strong; a woman's sense of identity need not be dependent on her relationship with her "ex" nor with her husband she is going to marry.

This is certainly a tall claim as for a majority of women: their happiness must conform to the men's idea of happiness that essentially

emanates from a societal structure that they are a part of and Television can do little to mitigate or alter this male defined response pattern, that constitutes familial pattern, which for majority of its audience caters to a very traditional middle class taste and expectations.

Television no doubt is an everyday domestic need none can dispense with, yet its flip side cannot be ignored.

Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer's account of production-line culture (1977) argues that because demand is dispersed and supply centralized, television operates via an administrative logic. Television manipulates audience from the economic apex of production and even if one would suggest individual consciousness to counter its influence, that consciousness too has been customized to the requirements of economical media production.

Thus, television is one more industrial process subordinated to dominant economic forces within society that are always seeking efficient standardization. Be it the question of TV serials or advertisements, woman image is appropriated to this economic force, hence no matter what she stands for, extreme care is taken to show her advertising the beauty and costume brands that she puts on, that tends to make even the most realistic details or content unreal. While the TV serials cannot dispense with villains, they cannot ignore demonizing the woman through the witch or the "Naagin" trope.

Yet, television in every home is not a fad, it is a reality. Despite the flaws and limitations, TV

does bring in some good messages through brand Ambassadors who promote noble, good ideas through good messages. One distinguishing advertisement that is difficult to ignore is the advertisement of Lux that featured strangely Shahrukh Khan, a male for beauty soap; such ad definitely blurs the Gender distinction and becomes a pointer to influence many such ideas that can help to mitigate the gender bias that accentuate women's disability.

### **Gender And Sexuality In Two Recent Films, *Gangubai Of Kathiawada And Badhai Do* (2022 Films)**

Cinema, compared to Television has had a more impending, historically a larger-than-life appeal, and for the inevitable short duration content that audiences can relate to. Though Cinema too has dovetailed around commodification of women, in the last two decades one can discern certain filmmakers transgressing the limited agency of Gender, as a whole.

*Gangubai of Kathiawada*, and *Badhai Do*, represent two diversely opposite societies, both marginalized have been selected to showcase the apathy of patriarchy towards woman (fallen) gender, Gay homosexuals and lesbians, so as to show how the visages of chastity and lack of chastity can become interchangeable.

Talking about film, *The Dirty Picture*, and *Kahaani*, author Vijaya Singh recommends use of picaresque and fairy tale as devices used to show the two films dealing with issues of female empowerment and representation. The

picaresque, as one knows is about a rogue character from lower strata of society, who is on a quest to find oneself.<sup>vi</sup>

The film *Gangubai of Kathiawada* (2022 released) by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, based on,

**S. Husain Zaidi and Jane Borges' hard hitting book *Mafia Queens of Mumbai*, chronicles Ganga's rise to power and fame from a demure small-town girl in Gujarat to the undisputed Queen of Kamathipura in Mumbai. (TOI, Ronak Kotecha, Updated May 13, 2022, 10.32 AM IST)**

**Review: Women invitingly standing at the doorstep of a kotha (brothel) in the bustling by lanes of South Mumbai's infamous red-light area Kamathipura, is a scene that is real, tragic and dramatic. Director Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film set entirely against this gritty backdrop of Mumbai tells the story of many a young woman, who were sold off to brothels for a few hundreds, solely through the eyes of its protagonist Gangubai (Alia Bhatt).**

The film from comes as a commendable attempt on director's part to undertake a subject of doubly marginalized woman, Gangubai of Kathiawada, who is pushed into the profession while a minor, for being sold for 500 rupees. Though reluctant, she adjusts, and despite seeing her life fraught with challenges, opponents and a social stigma, she fights, and the audience gets to see her liaison with the city's underbelly and her political rise.

The film brings to the fore some poignant truths about the lives of sex-workers and raises

some hard-hitting questions which target patriarchy's hypocrisy and callousness that is revealed in the society's disrespect and humiliation faced by those very women they visit to satisfy their carnal desire but treat them as dirt publicly. Through this film Bhansali has tried to sensitize the people towards the apathy and hatred they show to those, because of whom prostitution thrives. He has successfully unearthed the hypocrisy of the men and paid reverence to this illustrious Prostitute who took up this bold step to provide respect and dignity to her profession,

and the prostitutes, who

This film comes a little after the film *Pink* ( ) came up with the subject of

**blatant prejudices of previous times, biased attitude towards the 'second sex', subtle and polished echoes of deeply-ingrained masculinity and patriarchy have been the hallmarks of the so called postmodern era too,** says writer Subhashree Mukherjee in the chapter "The Positivity of NO and Varied Shades of *Pink*".<sup>vii</sup> The film takes up woman's condition in a metropolitan city and critiques the hypocrisy and indifference of society towards them buried under crippling patriarchy and misogyny. What sets the film apart is the emphasis laid on woman's consent in every action, it evinces assertion on right to bodily integrity, the basic fundamental right of a woman that women since a long time has been ignored.

While the film *Pink* can be greatly recognized for making this breakthrough for women's

integrity and respect, the achievement of the former film discussed, *Gangubai of Kathiawada* deserves greater attention and reverence as the director, Bhansali has certainly picked up a subject that blurs the lines between respected and marginalized; as Gangubai insisted that prostitution should also be treated like a job that gives the employees right to take leave or say **NO** to a client when one is not inclined to give services.

The most crucial moment comes when she says in her speech in the climax scene of the film that because of them many of the wives of “respectable homes” need to be grateful to them as those husbands are ultimately returning to their respective homes, or else, she warns, the society will become a “jungle”; lawlessness will prevail.

In addition, the film also makes the case of *hijra* quite conspicuous; Razia, a transgender or a eunuch contests presidential elections against Gangubai, Gangubai wins but Razia’s defeat poses question of the marginality of a transgender who contests but gets defeated by Gangubai owing to a third gender; in this regard, Sonia Jayant in her paper, ‘Eunuchs establish identity through Indian narratives’, writes,<sup>viii</sup>

**Eunuchs are a unique social group who face multiple obstacles in societies across the globe primarily due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. Transgender has been pushed to the margin over the years. Its rather a grey area of the society as this group is misinterpreted.....**

The film beyond doubt depicts subalterns as Gangubais and Razias and calls to attention their marginal existence.

The film, *Baddhai Do* (2022) produced by Jungle Pictures, revolves around the story of a couple in lavender marriage, it comes out with a path-breaking storyline built emphasizing on accepting Love not between heterosexual lovers but between lesbians and homosexuals and treat them as normal. The Director has bravely taken up a moot and a burning issue surrounding a subject that deserves attention, and discussion. The male protagonist Rajkumar Rao and female protagonist Bhumi Pednekar are to resist the anger and biases of society as they cannot openly uphold it.

The film ran in theatres just after the recent lifting of Covid pandemic and audience appreciated it. Its reception at the international level has been really overwhelming which confirms the fact that other sections of Gender are receiving acceptance, LGBT communities are legalized officially but the real acceptance has to come from people. The film’s initiative is commendable and on the social platform such films are certainly going to awaken people and sensitize them towards different Genders.

Recently, this film was screened at the 13<sup>th</sup> Kashish Mumbai International Queer Film Festival, which concluded on June 12, 2022, where central protagonist of the film, Rajkumar Rao who plays the role of Shardul said (TOI, Delhi Times)<sup>ix</sup>

**Festivals like Kashish are much needed today. I’m so glad that more and more films being**

made on the LGBTQIA +community, because we need more voices. There are many like Shardul (his character in *Badhai Do*) who are scared of coming out because of the circumstances they face, societal pressure and family pressure.....

The actor adds,<sup>x</sup>

Sometimes, people have preconceived notions that why is a straight guy playing a gay character. I am glad that people from the community who saw the film, loved it. I have met so many people who saw the film and told me that nobody could have played it better than Bhumi (Pednekar) and me.

Reputed author Devdutt Pattanaik, known as a Mythologist, in his book *Shikhandi, And Other Queer Tales They Don't Tell You*, avers, Hindu Mythology makes constant references to queerness, the idea that questions notions of maleness and femaleness, about stories of men who become women and vice versa or men who create children without children and vice versa and<sup>xi</sup>

of creatures who are neither this, nor that, but a little both, like the *makra*, or the *yali*. There are also many words in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Tamil such as *Kilba*, *napumsaka*, *mukhabhaga*, *sanda*, *panda*, *pandaka*, *pedi* that suggest a long familiarity with queer thought and behavior.

He informs readers that queer stories are to be found in Viking, Egyptian, Mesopotamian and mythology and many others and even about the advent of the idea of Patriarchy that was

invented merely to depict superiority of men over women. In fact, our epic *Mahabharata*, refers to a time when there was no concept of marriage, until it became important to establish fatherhood which reinforced ownership and fidelity of women and further the ideas of inheritance and Property.

He remarks after discussing at great length that the celebration of queer ideas in Hindu stories, symbols and rituals appear in stark contrast to the ignorance and rigidity that we see in Indian society. Some blame the British, some Muslims or Buddhist *vihara* and the Hindu *matha* traditions which favoured *yoga* over *bhoga*.

The disconcerting revelation is even after we achieved our political freedom in the twentieth century, the founding fathers of the Indian Republic gave rights to men and women but not to queer people.

Hindi cinema for a long time has depicted gay characters as laughing stock, such as in the film *Kal Ho Na Ho*, the maid servant, Kanta Bai suspecting the two actors, Shahrukh and Saif Ali as gay, shudders at the thought of their being partners.

This is a glaring fact that gay characters have rarely been portrayed in Hindi films realistically and with sensitivity but Shardul in this film, *Badhai Ho* looks very real and believable, and so does the female protagonist, portrayed by Bhumi Pednekar. The film comically presents the two trying to work out a relationship together through marriage, pretending to their families that they were straight. But acting out does not go a long way

as the middle class concern for fruit of a marriage (a prospective pregnancy) complicates the plot until the two are face to face with the reality of accepting the reality themselves, and internalize; finally announce to the families, the society that they are different and “not abnormal”.

What makes *Badhai Ho* a landmark achievement is it goes few steps further as it allows the protagonists to accept wholeheartedly the truth of their sexuality, which comes very gradually as breaking stereotypes is always difficult.

### Conclusion

Films corresponding to female voice and consciousness are large in number and so are the advertisements, TV serials, some reality shows too may be studied and discussed.

Regarding advertisements that have been chosen, majority deal with objectification of women and it is a truth that in many ways is difficult to eradicate; for as long as biased socio-cultural views are rampant, complete change is not possible. But definitely, with people realizing the different forms of disability, marginalization of women, LGBT or Dalits can reduce. That is why advertisements that point out to emergence of progressive society have also been chosen; like it is said, “if you want change, first be the change”.

Education has altered society in many ways, especially the women are far ahead of what they were believed to be till the 20<sup>th</sup> century;

history, economy definitely has given way to societal changes and changes in outlook as far as Gender or other marginalized sectors is concerned, it is a tough battle but one cannot lose hope.

Both the films, *Gangubai of Kathiawada* (2022) and *Badhai Do* (2022) undertake Gender and sexuality which point to women and transgenders from the margins, who assert their sense of identity and garner respect which is a basic Human Right and every human being deserves to overcome.

Both the films are emblematic of demand for Human Rights. *Gangubai's* story and her demands asking for customary living rights for sex workers perhaps stand significant in the 2022 and later scenario as the Supreme Court has recently recommended a guideline where the police or the central force has got no right to harass or arrest I a brothel is in case raided for running unlawfully, there is a demand of sex workers getting protection and dignity; in fact the film getting National Award this year tells the whole story of the people acknowledgement across sections of society.

Similarly,

In recent times, certain Hindi films have dealt with same- sex men and women such as *Raincoat*, *Fire*, *Aligarh*, and many more; even *Lakshmi Bomb*, made quite recently quite admirably highlights the transgenders, hence taking *Razia's* pathetic marginality, in *Gangubai....* film, the story goes back several

years, to one made in contemporary times, inevitably, forces us to examine, question and address the Gender binary today. At the same time, it is important that we relate their existence to our mythologies that have always been significant in our epics, and make endeavours to give the subalterns their rightful place and dignity. The message is clear but for the society to accept it is an uphill task. Different mediums like films, TV commercials or serials can always convey messages that are important to enlarge people's vision and sensibilities, concerning gender and sexuality.

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<sup>viii</sup> Jayant, Sonia, **Eunuchs establish identity through Indian narratives**, quoted by Aninnya Sarkar and Dr. Indrani Singh Rai, in **Suppression and Subjugation yet Daring and Dynamic: Representation of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Gangubai Kathiawadi as a Gendered Subaltern**,

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<sup>ix</sup> Sen. S. Debrati, **People Told Me That Badhai Do gave them the strength to come out of their families;**

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<sup>x</sup> Sen.S.Debrati, *ibid*, pp10

<sup>xi</sup> Pattanaik, Devdutt, **The Discovery or Invention of Queerness**, *Shikhandi, And Other Queer Tales They Don't Tell You*, Penguin Random House India, 2014, 9-36.