

Men Meet Market: Bollywood Public(ity) and the Male Body

Addendum submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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I. Literature Review

1. What is your primary argument in the thesis?

Ans: In this thesis, I argue that cinema has made the most prominent impact on the way people have developed their lifestyle. Be it through the presentation of the film poster, teaser, promotional video or the associated marketing of a film, the audience has been under a huge impact of the actors and actresses who have performed in cinema. To narrow down the argument, I have taken the area of Hindi cinema and have presented in my work, a range of influences on it. I have started from the posters and their presentation in the single screen theatres. I have examined the ‘hero-worship’ of the actors by their fans in these cinema halls and the problems faced by the proprietors in keeping the essence of the single screen cinema hall in the times when people see the multiplex being the best place to visit. The thesis then traces the role played by the introduction of OTT as a film viewing platform, where the audience no longer has to limit themselves to time bound screenings of cinema. I have also included two other industries that are affected by cinema to a large extent: food and fitness.

The title “Men meet market: Bollywood, Publicity and the Film Poster” was my attempt to make the thesis a testimony to the perspective of looking at the market where men are presented as the most popular commodity. The commodification is associated closely with a God-complex of the hero that enables fans to visualise the persona of the hero as larger than life and therefore results in making cinema more than just a mode of entertainment.

2. What is the relationship of the argument to the literature review? Which fields/ traditions it joins with and breaks from? What argument and questions lead the reader to the literature review? Why the lack of conversation between the different books reviewed in the literature review?

Ans: The literature review was aimed at the investigation of the texts and journals already in place regarding the influence of cinema . In the review, I have also included the aspects of masculinity studies as well as the influence of cultural studies and gender studies as part of the study of commercial Hindi film and its market . The books and resources used are mostly contributing to a better understanding of the mind of the audience consuming the films made in the Hindi Film industry. The chronological development of different kinds of presentation of the lead actor on screen has been mostly visually observed. How this influences the film enthusiast is a very vital part of the observation and visual analysis. For example, in the review of the text *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) in which Guy Debord has analysed the concept of language of the spectacle consisting of signs of the dominant system of production, I wanted to trace the reason for this spectacle being associated with a form of art and entertainment. The contribution of the book may not be directly related to the chapters, but it does contribute to the overall understanding of the role that spectacle plays implicitly when the body of the actor is projected to the audience as an object of desire.

The thesis is an attempt to study masculinity and its popular presentation in the print media. It joins three traditions in the academic field of the Social Sciences and the Humanities: Masculinity Studies in conversation with Cultural Studies and Film Studies. It also reflects upon the presentation of media in different fields of business such as gymnasiums and food shops, where the public exposure to popular notions of masculinity is maximum. The thesis explores the limitations and possibilities of Cultural Studies and tries to look at cinema as a vital contributing factor to the way in which the masses perceive masculinity. The literature review aims to look at the concepts in the field of cinema as a genre of study. It does not limit itself to cinema but also engages with the concepts of gender and popular culture.

Since the scope of the work aims at looking at cinema, masculinity and cultural studies, from a critical perspective. This makes the literature review lack a continuity of presentation. The review of literature does not stop at books and journals but extends itself to cinema and posters too. This again attempts to bridge the gap between the forms of text and the literature review practically continues into the conclusion, passing through the chapters as and when required. Even though this is not the conventional mode of structuring the literature review, practically, the field work too becomes an extension of the notion of reading gender identities as well as presentation of masculinity and the body, as is initially done by Judith Butler in the Preface to *Bodies that Matter* (1993), which is a part of my Literature Review.

II. Methodology and Field Work

1. Lack of mention of methodology

Ans: The methodology used in these interviews have been varied. Some of the interviews were in person, while some were over the phone. Some were hardly like an interview initially while some others were conducted over small interactions and meetings. My respondents have been uncomfortable at times, because social hierarchy was vital in their comfort of being interviewed. In this process, I have come across some interesting aspects of the fieldwork that has been a part of my work. The interviews also form a qualitative enquiry about the working lives of the people working closely with the industry. The surveys (conducted at multiple levels of social classes) in my research methodology are useful in a better understanding of the functioning of the industry.

My initial approach was to conduct the qualitative research and with time the methodology shaped itself. The changing trends in the industry and the subsequent reactions of the people working on the peripheries of the industry were related, as my fieldwork demonstrated. It was interesting to study these trends and developments. The data collection for the research was primarily through interviews. However, when I began to research the OTT platforms, I started working with a thick description of the changing face of fragile masculinity represented in films and web series that are being released there. The overall analysis in the thesis is mostly based on evidence and interaction. Sometimes different methodologies have come together in the analysis in certain chapters. Thus, to sum up, the thesis has the following methodology:

a. Data collection through field study, interviews (both structured and conversationally informational, examination of archival material and digitally recorded and published texts.

- b. Data was identified, processed and analysed through multiple modes of qualitative analysis. These included snowball sampling in conjunction with a constant comparative method in order to achieve a greater understanding of the data collected.
- c. Immersion methodology, which is common in anthropological and sociological research, has also been used, albeit in a minor way. The whole research work has drawn upon an objective and thematic foundation.
- d. Thick description and comparative analysis of film and web series texts.
- e. Preliminary visual analysis of posters and publicity material.

2. Field sites of Kolkata

Primarily, Kolkata was selected as a metropolitan city that could suffice as a ground for random sampling. It was noted that the field selected had a variety of poster makers who worked for the Hindi film industry and have never shifted base to Mumbai, which is seen as the seat of major operations of the Hindi film industry. The initial plan of extending the field to Mumbai was jeopardised due to the pandemic and the eventual lack of access to the people of the city of Mumbai. Some of the prospective interviews failed and the sites remained that of the local interviewees.

3. Does not offer the method of reading images.

Ans: It is a major omission indeed to not incorporate plates of photographs of the posters mentioned in the thesis. This will be done in the final viva in the form of a PowerPoint presentation and as suggested by the examiner, it will be a part of the thesis if and when it is published in the form of a book. The objectification thus primarily being sexual, the aim of

the publicity houses becomes very specific, 'the object of desire being presented as bait for attracting audiences'. While talking of the objectification we also have to keep in mind the fact that the eyes on the poster are not necessarily of those who see a body on the poster essentially desiring it. The poster attracts eyes of the self-objectifying mass as well, who would idealise the body and hence look forward towards attaining the 'body'. Designating the body as a goal and in the process taking decisions about drastic diet control and practically starving themselves into getting into the 'perfect shape' and thereafter hating their own bodies and being dissatisfied about the body, no matter how healthy they be.

The differently-abled person has more to lose here. In the market for the perfect body, an already dysfunctional body has to be permanently marginalised. Hence the villain in the popular film narrative becomes one who is disabled at some point and hence he seeks revenge from the possessor of the perfect body, the hero. The heroine here becomes much desired since her body is claimed both by the villain and the hero as the site where this heteronormative power politics plays out. Thus, the game of bodies and associated identities are much like a tug of war between the two men while their aggressions loom over the woman in question. This is also a notion that Laura Mulvey illustrates in the celebrated essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) talks about. Mulvey illustrates the importance of spectatorship in cinema. The treatment of the villainous body is sometimes taken as a target for the hero to achieve during the reel time of the movie, in order to win back the woman and prove his supremacy.

Overall, my temporary plan had been to analyse the role of film posters in the presentation of the male body in mainstream Hindi movies, but eventually as I delved into the arena of publicity and tried to look more closely at the posters, what I came across was the intertwined axes of other modes of publicity that reached out to the public more than posters

in contemporary urban India. I have discussed the problem about the objectification and gaze 'of the society, on the society'. Therefore, I dealt with the concepts of culture, objectification, body, masculinity, gender roles, subversion and stereotyping in relation to popular forms of visual publicity for mainstream films. I have been focusing primarily on the concepts behind film posters but have also worked on commercials and clippings that are a part of the marketing strategy of a film. This included the role of the 'public' in the publicity material and analyses of how the 'need' of the audience is addressed in the realm of publicity.

I have investigated some vital allied industries of mainstream Hindi film while working on this thesis. My research included the fitness industry, food industry, poster makers and cinema hall owners. Other than these, I have covered case studies on films screened on OTT and exclusive OTT content. The wide range of the Hindi film industry's popular reach has made this thesis an effort in presenting an account of the vast influence this industry has on the people of my nation.

I have looked at my research from the perspective of a masculinity studies scholar who wanted to follow the changes in the popular film industry closely and understand the ways in which human emotions function for a fan. Allied industries and their socio-economic influence on each other were also very important parts of this study. The most interesting part of the research was the fieldwork, where I had the chance to interact with so many people from different fields and expertise. However, human interaction has been a boon as well as a bane. The challenges that Covid-19 posed to a researcher were largely unnoticed because there were more pressing issues that had an impact on the human race during that difficult time. However, for a researcher in cultural studies, it is difficult to limit their thought to the topic chosen initially for research. My work took a turn: I started revisiting the same fields and talking to the people I met before the pandemic. Their worlds had been affected too. The impact of the pandemic on the entertainment industry has been crucial. Spectatorship shifted

ground to the new OTT platforms and people became reluctant to go to the theatre. This had a huge impact on the economic aspect of the film industry. This was a setback but was better than a complete showdown for the industry. I went on to analyse the difference in the approach of the cinema hall owners after OTT added to their already pandemic-affected business. These perspectives presented a shift from my original conception and made me devote a chapter on the trends of OTT productions. The thesis has been a learning experience that shall be continued long after the work is completed. The thesis was planned in 2015. By the time I submitted it, the film industry had turned into an updated version of itself. The chapters have been aimed to accommodate the changes and updates from time to time. The literature review and methodology have added inputs from time to time. The thesis has room for further addendums and certain aspect of the methodology has been directly contributing to the advancements seen in these updates. For example, the propagation of the OTT as a medium of film making and appreciation has been a trend associated with the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. The contribution of films to the society is multifaceted and it is not possible to include it in a thesis. I look forward to work further with the different perspectives that are yet unexplored in this thesis.