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Chamola, Deeksha

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## India of the 1970s and Gulzar's Construction of Gender: *Aandhi* as a Case for Indian Women

DEEKSHA CHAMOLA  
SNDT Women's University, India

This paper examines the social construction of gender by Gulzar in the film *Aandhi* and maps it with the cultural and socio-political changes that took place in the country during that era. *Aandhi*<sup>1</sup> is the first Hindi film that narrates the dilemma of a modern woman politician – a space largely occupied by men. Gulzar went against the norms of film making in the seventies and directed a film based on woman politician which broke certain gender stereotypes. Aarti, the female protagonist in the film, wishes to have everything in life at her whims and fancies. She is a non-conformist. She challenges the norms set by society and refuses to become a sandwich between her father's selfish ambitions and husband's patriarchal needs.

Keywords: *Aandhi*, gender, Gulzar, India cinema, Hindi cinema

*"I was asked that you understand women so well that is why you make films on them, I said I don't understand them that is why I make films on women to know them better" — Gulzar*

Filmmaker Gulzar made a hugely popular film '*Aandhi*' that was released in February 1975 at a time when Indian society underwent historical changes. Congress was in power, and late Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India.

### Indian Women in 1970s

'Indira is India, India is Indira' declared Dev Kant Baroaah (Outlook India, 1997, para. 1). Albeit India had women face in front but what was the condition of the rest of Indira's of India. According to reports published by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) on the status of women, in 1971, only 18.4 percent of women could read and write whereas 39.5 percent of males could read and write. Women were confined to unskilled labor. ICSSR studies suggested that 'society has failed to frame new norms and institutions to enable women to fulfill the multiple roles expected of them in India today' (Guha, 2008, p. 471). The upper caste, English literate families had let their girls join professions such as medicine, education, bureaucracy, and even science research (Guha, 2008, p. 472). However, in villages, there was a steep rise in dowry cases. On the other front, Indian women actively participated in many social movements during this decade such as *Chipko* movement, Women's Liberation movement, *Shahada* movement, *Dalit* Panther movement, United Women's Anti-Price Rise Front (Somaaya, Kothari, & Madangarli, 2012).

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Correspondence to: Deeksha Chamola, SNDT Women's University, Juhu Road, Daulat Nagar, Santacruz West, Mumbai, Maharashtra – 400 049, India.

In Hindi cinema, women were active in front of the camera, whereas their presence behind the camera was negligible. In conversation with Nasreen Munni Kabir, Gulzar said fewer women working behind the camera in cinema – ‘it was not the era for women to work behind the camera. Even the idea of women acting in films initially frowned upon by society. Women started working as technicians in films ten years after the establishment of Film and Television Institute at Pune (Kabir, 2012).

### **Hindi Cinema in the 1970s**

Cinema of the 1970s would be remembered for a plethora of milestones, but one pivotal milestone for which 1970s should be credited is the beginning of the non-commercial school of cinema. There were four schools of cinema, according to Bhaumik (2016), which were popular in the 1970s. The first school belonged to religious, miraculous, mythological cinema such as *Jai Santoshi Ma* and *Shirdi Ki Sai Baba*—these were a huge success. Mainstream ‘masala’ cinema belonged to the second school. These films were shot at grand sets and scenic locations with a good budget and popular stars. Action, songs, drama, love, humor were common ingredients of this school. The third school took commercial stars and songs from mainstream cinema and aesthetic values from art cinema. Films such as *Aanad*, *Parichay*, *Rajanigandha*, *Grah Parvesh* were some popular films of this genre. This school can be termed as middle-of-the-road cinema. Art films belonged to the fourth film school, which were produced for the love of cinema and storytelling. The plot of art films is deep and serious not meant for masses. Films such as *Ankur*, *Aashand ka Ek Din*, *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* etc ...were popular art films of the 1970s.

### **Women in Hindi Cinema in the 1970s**

There were four types of women in Hindi cinema in the 1970s; the first ones were the combination of traditional and contemporary values. Sharmila Tagore, Hema Malini, Rekha, Rakhi they were a modern version of actresses in fifties and sixties. The second category belonged to the glamorous actresses who were not only modern in their appearance and style, but the kind of role they performed had western influence. Zeenat Aman, Parveen Babi, Mumtaj were poster girls of this era. The third category comprised the girl-next-door actresses - who were natural, clad in a cotton *sari*, sans make-up. They brought a sense of realism to Hindi cinema. Jaya Bhaduri, Vidya Sinha, Zarina Wahab, Rameshwari were the actresses that connected heart-to-heart with common Indian women. The fourth category was of the art film actresses, who started a parallel cinema movement in the country (Khan, 2017). The trio of Shabana Azmi, Smita Patil, and Deepti Naval emerged as feminist actresses of 1970s and 1980s. They did not only perform in women-oriented films, but when offered regular roles of mother, wife, lover, mistress...second to the male actor, they added a different dimension to the role.

According to Berger (1975, p. 47), ‘Men act, women appear. Men look at women; women watch themselves being looked at.’ Mainstream Hindi cinema in the 1970s had started glamorizing women role, for them women in film was an object of decoration. Her role used to glorify the male actor’s character and space. Whereas, in other genres like middle-of-the-road (Middle) cinema and art cinema, she was assigned meaningful roles. Middle and art cinema had fetched many actresses’ national awards and recognition. Shabana Azmi has been the most awarded actress in this category. Two of Gulzar’s leading women Sharmila Tagore for *Mausam* (1975) and Tabu for *Maachis* (1996) have received national awards.

Women in 1970s were portrayed as ideal wife, ideal mother, ideal daughter/daughter-in-law, vamp, item girl, but there were hardly any independent, working women. According to Chatterji S. A. (1998, p. 90), Gulzar's *Kitaab* (1977) and Bhimsain's *Dooriyan* (1979) represented that if women's profession is not as per the accepted 'occupation roles delineated for married women,' this could harm their marriage."This happened in that period, and generally, the films which were made at that time did not have anything for female actors. I did not want to make a statement out of working women portrayal in my films that was normal for me as part of society," said Gulzar (Gulzar, 2019). In 1970s, according to Somaaya et al. (2012), other roles that grab attention towards female actors -'Different kind of Wife' in *Abhiman* (1973), *Aap Ki Kasam* (1974), *Phagun* (1973) and *Aandhi*; 'The Performers' in *Abhinetri* (1970), *Bhumika* (1977); 'The Impure' ones in *Chetna* (1970), *Dastak* (1970); 'Causing or Cursing Insanity?' in *Khilona* (1970) and *Lal Patthar* (1971); 'The Action Heroines' in *Paraya Dhan* (1971) and *Seeta Aur Geeta* (1972); 'The Rebels' in *Khushboo* (1975); and *Meera* (1979).

As per the role, the costume of actresses varied a lot. The modern and glamorous heroines bought western clothes with deep cuts and short ironed hair in fashion. On the other hand, Indian wear such as *saris*<sup>2</sup> and *salwar kameez* were still worn in films wherein actresses performed middle-class roles. Working women in films settled for western as well as Indian wear depending upon which class of society they belonged to. Gone were days of fully clad women in a sari like Meena Kumari in the sixties. Even the *sari* that was worn on screen in the 1970s was draped not to hide the skin. Films like *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* (1971) and *Purab and Pashchim* (1970) portrayed societal disapproval of the sartorial style of the leading ladies. According to a report by IBM and two Delhi based institutions, films with a female as lead were 11.5 percent between 2015 to 2017 and in the 1970s it was approximately 7 percent (Bhattacharya, 2017).

In 1975, the United Nations declared it as 'International Year of the Woman' as well as 'International decade of women.' A plethora of women outfits mushroomed across the country. Protest marches organized in various cities made women issues a national debate (Somaaya et al., 2012). This paper examines the release of the film in the times when women got morale-boosting with the iron lady of Indian politics making all other male politicians smaller than her. The film portrayed a strong woman politician's personal and public life and met with success on the box office while other parameters like education, occupation, health were not in favor of Indian women. *Aandhi* in 1975 portrayed an ambitious women politician and her relationship with her husband. This paper explores the social construction of gender about the film and locates it within the larger discourse of socio-political and cultural change that India witnessed at that time. The research method deployed for the study is textual analysis theory. The film is examined on various parameters of gender construction – family, fertility, education, behavior, labour, etc ...The scene, dialogue, character, visual presentation of films are considered as various units of analysis. Along with the film, the script of the film was also scrutinized. Personal interview with Gulzar was conducted to provide insights about the film and the director's vision behind the portrayal of women in his films.

### **Story: *Aandhi***

*Aandhi* though, is a film set-up around an election campaign is primarily a film about the relationship between husband and wife. How their love is lost and found in their respective purposes of life. *Aandhi* opens with election canvassing in full swing. Campaigners of both political parties rallying in open jeeps draped with political banners.

Chandrasen (Om Shivpuri) leader of opposition accuses the party in power of not doing anything in the past five years. In the next scene, Aarti Devi (Suchitra Sen) enters the frame wearing her trademark handloom *sari* and glares on her head. She cuts her party members straight to the point, indicating that she is serious. After paying heed to suggestions from her party members, Aarti Devi joins the political action in Bhopal. Her estranged husband JK (Sanjeev Kumar) happens to be the manager of the Hotel from where she plans to run her election campaign. Aarti and JK start meeting each other in his house for dinners. The narrative goes in flashback many times and captures the sweet and sour relationship between Aarti and JK. Aarti marries JK against her father's wishes and leaves him for her political ambition. In the present narrative, opposition party decides to target Aarti Devi by publishing her pictures with JK in the newspaper to malign her image. Disgruntled Aarti Devi seeks justice from the public in her heart-wrenching climax speech. She wins the election but once again has to leave her family.

### *Aandhi* and the Indian Politics

*Aandhi* was released in February 1975 only to be banned after 20 weeks. It was reported that *Aandhi* is based on the life of Indira Gandhi. 'A poster in South India declared, "See your Prime Minister on screen." An advertisement in a Delhi daily called the film "the story of a great woman political leader in post-Independence India" (Salam, 2013, para.1). According to Salam (2013), decision to ban film partly came because of opposition party leaders had shown occasional drinking and smoking scenes of the Aarti Devi in Gujarat during their assembly elections campaign to defame Indira Gandhi. She banned the film and ordered to reshoot certain scenes. The film was already declared a hit before it got ban but its producer J. Om Prakash was very keen on to add and delete the scenes so that it fit the bill of the government in power. To get the film cleared from Government, Gulzar inserted a scene where Aarti Devi stands in front of Indira Gandhi's photo frame and says she is my ideal. By the time, *Aandhi* was given clearance by Congress government, Janta Party had won elections, and *Aandhi* was premiered on a state-run television channel.

Rumors that *Aandhi* was based on Indira Gandhi's life and her relationship with her husband found a base in the way Aarti Devi was portrayed in the film. Her appearance was quite similar to Indira Gandhi (Chatterji, 2015). The white streak in her hair, her *khadi* and handloom *saris*, her big dial watch, her body language, her gestures, and her manners reminded people of Indira. Even the role of his father in the film found closeness to reality. Moreover, Gulzar has always refuted any such resemblance. In an interview with V. Gangadhar (2001), Gulzar voiced, I looked at it as the first film on a modern Indian politician. We wanted a model and Indira Gandhi, and to a lesser extent, Tarkeshwari Sinha fitted the bill. Indira Gandhi was only a model for the lead role, I repeat, "*Aandhi*" had nothing to do with her personal life.' Albeit, According to Kamleshwar (on whose novel film was based as per the film credit),<sup>3</sup> Aarti Devi's character was based on Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur, and not Indira Gandhi. He said he had witnessed Maharani Gayatri Devi during one of her election campaigns and the idea of the story came to him at that time only (Chatterji, 2015).

### Physical Presentation—Aarti Devi and Aarti

In her introductory scene, Aarti Devi is shown climbing down the stairs establishing her persona and position. She is clad in a *khadi sari* with full sleeves blouse<sup>4</sup>; her glares are on her head along with a *pallu*<sup>5</sup>. She walks firmly towards her party office to meet her male

party members. 'She wears beautiful white *saris* that span the entire traditional handicrafts of India. She wears long-sleeved, high neck blouses, carries herself in an erect posture defined by the dignity that character demands' (Chatterji, 2015, p. 162). Her personality switches between personal (Aarti) and public spheres (Aarti Devi), her firm walk changes to casual and her facial expressions are soft in the personal frame. 'Finer Nuances of facial expressions are captured in mid-close-ups, and mid-long shots, contrary to the use of huge close-ups Suchitra Sen's Bengali films are known for, add both depth and perspective to her performance' (Chatterji, 2015, p. 166). Aarti's portrayal is domesticated at home with her hair kept loose or braided. When at work, her hair is neatly tied in a bun. She wears jewelry and a *bindi* when not at work. At home, she wears chiffon and silk *saris* and for work *khadi* or handloom *saris*. Even in one of the scenes in the film, JK saw her picking a *khadi sari* from her wardrobe to change. He exclaims – *Khadi Sari!* Where are you off to? Is it another of those meetings with your father? Chatterji further adds that in 1970s looks were not of great importance in films as they are today. The white streak in Aarti Devi's hair added more class and dignity to her character. It reflected how the look for a character influence the performance and add beauty to it. Also, how particular was Gulzar about the presentation and feel of his characters? On the contrary, Gulzar said, "it was not exactly a white streak, we had put some whitener and rest media has exploited it" (Gulzar, 2019).

## Gender Construction of Woman Politician

### Family

'The very entry of a married woman into politics involves a renegotiation of duties and responsibilities among family members, even in countries as culturally disparate as Australia and Malaysia' (Chatterji, 2015, p. 165). 'Aarti Devi, an ambitious woman, does not want to become a pendulum between these two men and wants liberation from the power crazy father and a possessive husband' (Singh, 2013, p. 74).

When she announces her decision of marrying JK to her father, he thrashes her and criticizes her decision of quitting a lucrative career and settling down so early. Rather than an unconventional or progressive father, he is portrayed by Gulzar as an ambitious and selfish politician who would use his daughter as a pawn to expand his business. In another scene with her father Aarti Devi refutes her father's ambitions and says– 'I wanted to enter politics to serve the country, not to further your business...and if I am quitting, it is to settle into a family of my own...' (Gulzar, 2014, p. 83).

Aarti longs for a family, and she quits her career and settles down with her husband. Later in two years of her married life, the family became the unsettling part for her. She starts to feel caged in the family that she once longed for. In one of the scene, a dissatisfied Aarti with JK's profession tells him that – 'you may be content with yourself, I feel suffocated... in this...well!' (Gulzar, 2014, p. 115). After she left her husband's house, her father is conspicuously missing from the script. What it possibly implies is that Aarti Devi chose to tread her path and decided against becoming her father's business plan. Aarti leaves her family - husband and two years old daughter for her ambition. It indicates that a woman cannot have it all. Alternatively, it can be inferred that successful women will have a broken family. On the other hand, Shoma A. Chatterji (2015) contradicts, Aarti Devi's ambition is not drawn from within but is derived from her father who wishes to pass on his mantle to his daughter.

In the case of women who join politics because their emotional family relations, Shoma Chatterji (2015) asserts that initially, their family forms the support. In most instances, the family pushes women for their benefit. Nevertheless, when she climbs up the ladder and attain a certain position that very family structure collapses. When women politician takes larger than life role through their electoral popularity and perseverance, their families feel threatened by their new found fame and power. However, in Gulzar's *Aandhi*, JK initially opposed Aarti's political interest and paved the way to patriarchy. In one of the scenes where JK returns home disgruntled over his name being part of some committee. He asks Aarti to come over on his side to talk, to which she replies you can also come to my side. He replies - 'Don't try to become my husband...' he snarled, 'you're my wife... behave like one. Understood?' (Gulzar, 2014, p. 114).

However, later in the film, when Aarti Devi wishes to return home a transformed JK tells her – 'Aarti ...it is very good that you are coming back home. But don't return because you lost the election. Your defeat can never be my victory'. (Gulzar M., 2018, p. 138). At the end of the film, JK lends that family support to Aarti that she longed for. According to Gulzar – "the husband who says, you are a wife, stay in your place, who are you working for? He is not thinking of her status; he is too conservative, traditional. So, as a viewer, you'll appreciate a change in his character and his positives only when you've seen his regressive side" (Bashir, 2019, p. 112).

### *The Role, Qualities, and Behaviour*

Aarti has two defined roles in the film – Aarti and Aarti Devi. She is Aarti in her sphere and Aarti Devi in the public sphere. This transition determines her qualities and behavior too. Aarti's role before she got married was of a highly educated daughter who used to assist her father in his work. After she got married to JK, she did household chores along with some infrequent visits for her father's work. When she leaves JK's house, her role is confined to the service of the nation as Aarti Devi – the politician. In the 1970s, there were very few women in the political sphere, and it was for the first time a woman was being portrayed as a modern politician in a Hindi film. Therefore, Aarti Devi's portrayal was carved on a few such women that later on became a stereotype in Hindi cinema.

She is mischievous, full of life with a great sense of humor and presence of mind. Her qualities lie in her intelligence, values, and principles. Aarti is not a regular obedient and sincere Indian woman. She rebelled with her father to marry JK and then later rebelled with JK to pursue her career. Her non-conformist nature is her quality as women in those times were unknown to have a voice of their own. Besides this, she is an honest politician who does not believe in any manipulation. She has joined politics to serve the nation not to dig her pockets deep. In one of the scenes when Lalulalji tells her that, Agarwal (businessman and rival politician) wishes to step down in election and wants to meet her. She asks him – 'You're not up to one of your shenanigans, are you? Keep in mind, Lallu Lal Ji. I abhor lies. And deception can never conquer reality' (Gulzar, 2014, p. 124).

Aarti Devi the politician is smart and is master of manipulating a situation in her favor. In one of the scene, public started throwing stones at the political cavalcade and in-between Aarti Devi gets injured, later in the press interview, a press reporter questioned her – will you blame public for the same? She replied – 'if the public hated me, then one lakh people would not have gathered in this scorching heat to attend the meeting!...' (Gulzar, 2014, p. 57). Aarti Devi is a fighter; she does not give in easily. Even when she is accused of having an affair with JK, and her political aid Gurusaran advises her to leave the place; she refuses to run away like a coward. She faces the situation even at the risk of quitting politics forever.

Aarti's behavior too varies with her role between personal and professional spheres. Overall, she has been portrayed as a very ambitious but stubborn and impulsive woman. In one of the scene when Aarti rushes to her car and speedily drove without informing anyone, JK says almost to himself – 'She hasn't changed a bit...the anger, the temperament, that impulsive nature...it's all still the same.' Initially, Aarti, in her marriage, behaves like a good homemaker who used to take care of her house and her husband. However, later, her behavior changes when her mobility comes under threat. She starts questioning JK and even wants him to do something else of his own and take help of his father. In one of the scene, JK warns Aarti of trying to be his husband. Society has categorized the behavior of men and women if they do not follow the guidelines; they have to pay a heavy price.

### *Education and Resources*

Aarti is a confident and ambitious woman because of her education. She has a point of view and does not shy away from giving people her piece of mind. Her father K. Bose had sent her to Oxford to study law; he wished her to join politics so that his business flourishes. He was unhappy with her decision of leaving her career and settling down. Even after two years into the marriage when she comes to her father and discusses her husband's disagreement with her working, he says –

'This is why I had said that it wasn't time for you to get married. It was your time to work hard, to make something of yourself. But you were going crazy for him then! My God! What a waste of talent! I got you to study law, become a barrister and you threw all that hard work and education down the drain! You had such a promising future before you...and you squandered it away all for a damned waiter!' (Gulzar, 2014, p. 110).

Education helped to sustain Aarti after her separation from JK. Besides education, her prime resource was her father and his flourished business. If her father was not such a wealthy person, it is unlikely that she would have made it to Oxford on her own. Financial support from the beginning in life helps a woman to explore more and exposes her to brighter opportunities. Her father served all this to Aarti on a platter. Since she never had to compromise on basic needs of her life; it became suffocating for her to compromise after marriage. At one point in her marriage, her husband's social status also ashamed her. As she was used to her father's eminence and comforts, she asks JK to do something else instead of working in the hotel. As other ladies in Women's Council are wives of high ranking officials...and this clash triggers the hornets' nest.

JK never could become a rich resource in her life. After listening to Aarti's complain about his job, he tells her if being his wife is embarrassing for her; she is free to go back to her rich father. First time when JK mentions this, she fumes and burst out at Binda *kaka* (her household aid from her father's house), but when he mentions this again to her she tells him, 'I would have gone early if my father's reputation was not at stake.' This breaks JK's heart... It reflects that for Aarti, her father's status was more important than JK's love.

### *Sexuality and Fertility*

Aarti's wish and planning to have a baby in the film is not shown, but the fact that she is happy and excited with the news of pregnancy itself is an indicator of her willingness to start her family. There are no scenes to suggest that her husband forced her; at that point



in the film, it was natural for her to expect a child. However, fertility did hamper her mobility; it got difficult for her to balance work and home with an infant in hand. When she leaves JK's house, she leaves her daughter Manu too and never asks for her custody. This reflects that Aarti very well knew the consequences of taking her daughter along. She would have to bear the responsibility of her, which would again restrict her mobility.

Aarti is exhibited as a woman of high moral values and great character. She is shown as a Gandhian follower who idolizes Indira Gandhi too. Even after leaving her family for her ambition, she is never depicted as a woman who would wish to have a relationship with another man. In the first meeting scene of Aarti and JK, she is in an inebriated state and asks JK at the front desk for a room in his hotel. Next day, she clarifies that a man had mischievously mixed alcohol in her Coca-Cola. Since she never used to pay heed to such men, one of them tried to teach her a lesson. In another scene, her political aid Lallu Lal Ji manipulated the situation and arranged a meeting between Aarti Devi and her political rival and businessman Agarwal in the hotel. When Agarwal sees Aarti Devi- 'he liked what he saw. Lalluji, this woman still looks delectable!' (Gulzar, 2014, p. 127). Aarti Devi was elegantly dressed in a white silk sari and was discussing a file with her party members. There was nothing about her that would invite such remarks. Agarwal further added – 'I'll gladly step down...if she's willing to lie down' (Gulzar, 2018, p. 127).

Arti Devi is in a dominant position, Gulzar has created a captivating aura around her, and her demeanor is contagious. Despite that, Agarwal dares to ogle at her and pass lewd remarks. It indicates that the power and position of woman do not alter the male gaze towards her. In another instance, traces of sexuality are visible when Aarti Devi's late night rendezvous with her husband are questioned. A photographer (Chanderasen's man) captures their rendezvous and provides fodder to Chandersen's new launched newspaper – *Zamana*. Aarti Devi's pictures were all over the city; the outside walls of the hotel were also painted with posters of both of them. 'The public's fury spread like wildfire diligently fanned by Chandrasen's faithful. Angry mobs chanted spiteful slogans: 'Shame on you Aarti Devi!' 'Woe betide you Aarti Devi!' Effigies of Aarti Devi were set alight across the city:' (Gulzar, 2014, p. 105). This reflects that when a woman is stronger than the man, and there is no resort left for the man to defeat that woman, than such character assassination gimmick comes handy. On the other hand, it also depicts that a woman's sexuality and mobility is determined by the society. If she meets men other than her husband, she is fired with questions and her dignity comes under threat.

### *Liberation*

Aarti before marriage has the liberty to do whatever she wishes to do. When she got married to JK even then, she used to visit her father to assist in his work. However, she is also shown doing domestic work, which was not so before marriage. During a courtship scene, JK asks her what will happen to her politics after marriage to which she replies - you do the politics. Then he further asks – then what will you do, she replies- 'I will chop onions in the kitchen, I will bore you, I will make your life miserable...Oh, I'll do it all' (Gulzar, 2014, p. 81). Her mobility is hampered partially when she got married, but since she was busy enjoying her newly married days, her mobility never became a cause of disagreement between Aarti and JK. When she became a mother, it got difficult for her to leave her daughter and go to work. In a scene, JK questions her mobility and tells her to take care of baby and home. He re-emphasizes on the fact that he does not like her political inclination. Her mobility post-maternity becomes a cause of disagreement and later separation between Aarti and JK.

Aarti's election symbol is a bird in flight that connotes liberation and freedom from all physical, social, and emotional bonds of life. That is what Aarti did; she liberated herself from all those ties and dedicated her life in the service of the nation. However, when her integrity and character were questioned during the election campaign, she wished to return to her family as she felt betrayed and discontented. Even in the last scene of the film, Aarti is shown taking the helicopter and flying high in the sky. It symbolizes her new liberation, where her husband supports her decision to continue what she had started. It connotes climbing up the ladder and moving ahead in her career.

### *Labour and Respect*

Aarti after her marriage is shown performing all sorts of household jobs, for instance, cooking, serving tea, knitting, embroidery etc....However, she is not shown doing any such job before marriage and even after she leaves JK. JK was never shown performing any other household job even when Aarti had left him, his servant Binda *Kaka* used to take care of the house. However, JK must have raised her daughter, but no such scene in the films depicts the same. Though politics is mainly a man's field even until now, Aarti Devi is well equipped with resources to break the division of labor and enter the men's arena. She is shown surrounded by men many times in the film, but her aura is intimidating to seasoned politicians too.

The respect she got at her husband's house is like any other homemaker. JK is wary of her political inclination and hates politics. All he wishes for is a sweet, simple, sincere wife who appreciates his poetry and who should not use her brains beyond that. He does not even value her education and objects working for her father. On the other hand, her father, though he has his vested interest, values her education and her talent. He always wishes Aarti to achieve success in life.

Moreover, when she announces to her father that she wishes to marry JK, he said 'I am very disappointed in you, my dear...You just want to be one of these millions and millions of of...creatures! I had such aspirations for you...wanted to see you at the peak of it all...But now in your hurry to get married...' Aarti never receives the same respect at her husband's house nor is JK able to provide her satisfaction from his job as an assistant manager at the hotel. In one of the scene when Aarti is infuriated with JK, Binda *Kaka* tries to reason with Aarti, she protested and said – 'He is my husband...not my boss. I'm not a servant in his home that he can throw me out if I don't obey his wishes!' (Gulzar, 2014, p. 113). This scene reflects Aarti's strong mindedness and her no-nonsense attitude in general.

### **Conclusion**

Women's portrayal in films has always been a question of debate and discussion. "Within the domain of Indian cinema, the notion of male gaze and spectatorship has ever since assisted in passive display of female bodies, fetishism, voyeurism, and the successful subordination of the female to the male gaze" (Kaur & Sharma, 2017). Who shapes her image? Writer, lyricist, director, producer, cinematographer, choreographer, editor etc.... All come from different backgrounds and value systems but largely are influenced by the patriarchal set up they grew up in, and that is reflected in their films too. As the number of women working behind the camera is less, her narrative in front of the camera will be from the male's lens. Film shapes society and society acts as a mirror to films. They both are

interdependent. For instance, a film like *Queen* (2014) forces society to ponder on woman behavior and norms, on the other hand, a film like *Bandit Queen* (1994) is a reflection what a society can do to a lower caste woman.

*Aandhi* is a coming of an age film which did set not only new standards of women representation in films but also raised the bar of film theme, film story-telling, film direction, film songs, and film music. It is not a regular Hindi masala film, which happily ends. It leaves many questions on the future of Aarti and JK's relationship. The script analysis of film refers that Aarti and JK once again lost; however, visual analysis of film refers that there is still hope. *Aandhi* runs on a non-linear narrative and is a multi-layered film, and so is Aarti's character and portrayal by Gulzar. Aarti wanted the best of both the worlds – professional and family. All she wanted was support from her husband. She gets it only at the end of the film- from the stage, when she lashes out at the opposition party for assassinating her character. JK comes and stands behind her; she tells JK - 'Good that you came to my rescue here today and gave me my strength back' (Gulzar, 2014, p. 135). On the contrary, Gulzar gives a new interpretation to the climax of the film – was Aarti Devi being honest or was she as a politician deploying a trick, as she knew things are not in her favor? This duality is the beauty of her character and the beauty of a good story. (Bashir, 2019) And that is the hallmark of a good filmmaker.

*Aandhi* is the first film on a modern Indian woman politician. It was the time when a woman like Indira Gandhi was at the helm of affairs of the nation. Her personality had transformed from a '*gungi gudiya*' (dumb doll) to a dictator who was unstoppable and intimidating. And for once, when she was challenged, she declared an emergency and took India by storm (*Aandhi*). Albeit Indira was successful professionally, but her personal life suffered, she never happily stayed with her husband – Feroze Gandhi. Her biographer Katherine Frank (2007) mentions, in 1949 Indira had a miscarriage with her third child, 'at this time Indira's hierarchy of commitments probably ran, from the top, like this: Nehru, then her children, then Feroze and finally herself.' According to Frank, if Indira and Feroze had their third baby, her priorities would have been different and might have saved their marriage. But wouldn't India have lost a good leader then? It was the question of priority that brought *Aandhi* in the lives of Aarti and JK. And the *Aandhi* still continues in the lives of many women.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Aandhi is Hindi word which means storm

<sup>2</sup>It is a five to nine yards long cloth draped by South Asian women over skirt called petticoat with a blouse

<sup>3</sup>According to Gulzar, script of *Aandhi* was written first by him and later senior writer Kamleshwar wrote the novel – *Kaali Aandhi* based on the script.

<sup>4</sup>A short top worn with sari

<sup>5</sup>The last part of a sari that can be left hanging through shoulder or can cover head. Indian women used to cover their head in public.

<sup>6</sup>A vermilion or decorative mark in middle of the forehead is worn especially by Hindu women.

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**Deeksha Chamola** (Ph.D., IGNOU, New Delhi, 2017) is a post-doctoral fellow at SNTD Women's University, Mumbai. Her areas of interest are films, gender, advertising, public relations, and social media.