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Crossing the Threshold: Empowering Gender in Marathi Cinema

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Abstract

*Cinema, besides being a medium of entertainment, has been used to represent the evils in the society and awaken the masses from their pretentious sleep by mirroring the social realities around. Meeting the requirements of changing time and space, the objectives of cinema in the world has been in the constant process of transformations. The objective of this paper is to presents such transformations that took place through various film movements in world cinema. The paper is intended to discuss how gender as a taboo was present in the earlier cinema in India and how Bollywood came over such social taboos over a period of time. After the initial hurdles, Marathi cinema, coming out of the frames, has contributed in reshaping the traditional conservative ideas leading to social gender norms. The Marathi films on gender make a strong statement, sometimes being within the confines of social moral codes and at times crossing the thresholds of such patriarchal moral codes. The gender resistance leading to the crossing of the male-defined threshold is discussed by analysing two Marathi films i.e. Jabbar Patel's *Umbartha* (1981) and Sanjay Surkar's *Gharabahr* (1999).*

Keywords: Gender in Cinema, Marathi Cinema, Gender Oppression, Gender Resistance, Bollywood, Social Realism in Cinema

An Insight into the World of Cinema

For most of those people who do not take cinema as a medium of artistic expression, it has been just a means of entertainment. But when it is approached from the perspective of art, the content, profound in aesthetics, calls for its minute analysis dismantling the idea of confining cinema to 'just an entertainment'. Cinema, unlike any other art forms such as literature, drawing, painting and sculpturing, is the product of the collective endeavours. Cinema, only a century and a quarter old art form, has gone through a number of transformations all over the world along with the advancement of film making and film movements. What began as an extension of photography in the form of moving images gave birth to the Silent cinema bringing the religious mythological tales on the screen, without the sound but along with the written words known as intertitles or title cards. With the invention of the cinematograph, the Lumiere Brothers started filming in Paris in 1895 and brought their film to India in 1896 (Mujawar: *Maharashtra* 1). The Australian film maker, Charles Tait's *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906) is the first silent feature film in the world and Dadasaheb Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) is the first silent feature film in India (Vasey; Chabria 58; Mujawar: *Maharashtra* 3). The characters on screen began talking with the emergence of talkie cinema imparting the audio-visual pleasure to the audience.

The 'talkie' era in the world began with the American director Alan Crosland's *The Jazz Singer* (1927) (Cohen). After four years, Ardeshir Irani came up with the first talkie film *Alam Ara* (1931) in India (Mujawar: *Maharashtra* 27). With the advancement of film making, the screen in the black and white was turned into colourful cinema. The audio quality was advanced with the Dolby systems in the theatre providing a better cinema experience. Today, with the help of visual effects (VFX), cinema narratives are presented on the screen with the 3D effects.

Cinema, besides being an art form, has been a political tool throughout the world. The filmmakers make a very strong statement through their films on socio-political conditions around them. The cinema objectives too have gone through tremendous transformations all over the world with the Film movements such as German Expressionism, French Impressionism, Soviet Montage, Italian Neo-Realism, French New Wave, Parallel Cinema in India etc. German Expressionism gained momentum during 1920s with its hyper expressive performances and visual distortions in cinema. German Expressionist cinema explored themes around murder, insanity and chaos. The French Impressionism and Soviet Montage brought revolutionary transformations in camera and editing techniques. The Italian cinema, during the mid-1940s and the mid-1950s, saw the emergence of new trend known as Italian Neo-realism. The Neo-realist films were in response to the ideological legacies of fascism and were committed to root out the fascist structures from the social order. Denouncing the horrors of the war, the Neo-realist films "dealt with themes central to the agency of Reconstruction such as poverty, unemployment, shortage of housing, and social strife" which is reflected in Roberto Rossellini's *Roma Città Aperta* (Rome Open City) (1945), and in Vittorio De Sica's *Ladri di Biciclette* (Bicycle Thieves) (1948) (Monticelli). Emerged during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the French New Wave cinema, also known as *Nouvelle Vague*, led by Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Claude Chabrol, and Jean-Pierre Melville, took over the traditional cinematic techniques and preferred non-professional actors, location shooting, natural lightening etc for their films.

Influenced by the Italian Neo-realism and French New Wave cinema, New wave cinema in India alias Parallel Cinema experimented with the cinematic forms emphasising upon the 'social realism' in cinema. Basu Chatterjee's *Sara Akash* (The Whole Sky) (1969), Mani Kaul's *Uski Roti* (1969) contributed to the foundation of the parallel cinema in India. Ketan Mehta, Said Akhtar Mirza, Kumar Sahani, Kundan Shah were some of the directors who were committed to make films with less budget but serious realistic undertones. AdurGopalkrishnan, G. Arvindan in Malayalam and Girish Kasarwalli were instrumental in providing the parallel cinema movements experimenting with newer themes and techniques of film making. The film-makers associated with the parallel cinema such as Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal, Mani Kaul, Govind Nihalani, Ketan Mehta, Saeed Mirza, Budhadev Dasgupta, Gautam Gosh, Aparna Sen and many more brought a revolutionary change in the thematic and cinema content through 'social realism'. They advocated for social change without letting themselves slip into the business of minting money and entertainment through their cinema. The parallel cinema movement is criticized for being "largely as an exclusive 'boys club'" (Sawhney 152). When the new wave of the Parallel cinema movement in India was declining during 1980s, the women film-makers such as Sai Paranjpye, PremaKaranth, Aparna Sen, Kalpana Lajmi, ArunaRaje, Vijaya Mehta and many more came forward with a commitment of bringing out films on the gender problems (Sawhney 152).

Gender in Bollywood Cinema

Women working in cinema was social taboo in India. Well-cultured women were not allowed to go out of the house, work in the play and dance as it was against the patriarchal social codes of that time. There was no women actor in the first full length feature film *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) by Dadasaheb Phalke, as it was a social taboo for a woman to work in the cinema. Paresh Mokashi's 2009 Marathi film *Harish chandrachi Factory* presents the struggles of the film-maker to find a woman and convince her to play the role of Rani Taramati. Ultimately, the role of the queen Taramati was played by a

man. Anantram Karandikar, S. N. Panatkar and V. P. Divekar's short film named Savitri was made in 1911 in which a woman from Ahmadabad, Narmada Mande, played the role of Savitri. She missed to have the recognition of being the first woman to act in Indian Cinema, as the movie was never released on any screen (Mujawar: "Falkenchya Aadhi" 4; Deshpande: "Pauranik Aadarshacha Aagrah" 11). Baburao Painter wanted women to play the role in his film Sairrandhree (1920). He managed to convince the dance performers in tamasha to work in cinema by hiding their original identity and changing their actual names. These precautions could not win over the social norms predominant at that time. As a result, they were excommunicated and out-casted by their caste people (Deshpande: "Pauranik Aadarshacha Aagrah" 11). Phalke, for his second film Bhasmasur Mohini in 1913 managed to have Durgabai and his daughter Kamalabai, who were actually from the Natak Company, to play the women roles. The foreign women were playing the roles of gods and goddess in Indian cinema. Derotha Kingdom played Shakuntala Suchet Singh's Shakuntala (1920), Lina Valentine played Urvashi in Kanjibhai Rathod's Urvashi (1920), Rina De Liguoro played Savitri in J.J. Madan's Savi Savitri (1924) (Mujawar: "Parde Me Rehne Do" 21).

Coming of cinema has largely contributed to the decline of the traditional forms of entertainment known as Tamasha. Cinema, "was able to offer its audience more spectacular entertainment at a much lower cost. Thus, when Marathi cinema drew on Tamasha, it offered an afterlife of sorts to a traditional folk form, which was dying, in part, due to cinema's technological modernity" (Wani: "The Tamasha Film" 283). Most of the lavani dancers in tamasha were from the lower caste background. The Indian mainstream cinema, Bollywood, could not provide the due space to the themes and subjects on 'caste' as it did on the themes and subject on 'gender' in its films. It scarcely dealt with the 'caste narratives' depicting the lives of the people from the lower-castes in India (Yengde; Singh and Abdul Azeez; Wankhede). In order to create the heroism Bollywood drew its themes and subjects, heavily, from the dominant castes and presented to its audience. Women, as a 'social issue', have been present in popular Indian

cinema almost right from the start (Butalia 108). Chandulal Shah's film, Gun Sundari (Why Husbands go Astray) (1924), one of the earliest films dealing with 'women's question', was considered to be the milestone in the rise of the Indian 'social' film (108). There are number of Bollywood films centred around the problems of women and their oppression. Some of the notable films by male directors screening the plights of women and their assertion against the patriarchal social system are Mehboob Khan's Mother India (1957), Abrar Alvi's Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam (1962), Shyam Benegal's Ankur: The Seedling (1974), Bhumiika (1977), Mahesh Bhatt's Arth (1982), Ketan Mehta's Mirch Masala (1987), Meenakshi Sheshadri's Damini (1993), Shekhar Kapoor's Bandit Queen (1994), Prakash Jha's Mrityudand (1997), Mahesh Manjrekar's Astitva (2000), Rajkumar Santoshi's Lajja (2001), Madhur Bhandarkar's Chandni Bar (2001), Fashion (2008), Chandra Prakash Dwivedi's Pinjar (2003), Vikas Bahl's Queen (2014), Pradeep Sarkar's Mardaani (2014), Omung Kumar's Marry Kom (2014), Navdeep Singh's NH10 (2015), Ram Madhavani's Neerja (2016), Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury's Pink (2016), Nitesh Tiwari's Dangal (2016), Suresh Triveni's Tumhari Sulu (2017), Devashish Makhija's Aaji (2017), Ravi Udyawar's Mom (2017), Anubhav Sinha's Thappad (2020), Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Gangubai Kathiawadi (2022) etc. Butalia closely observes what consists of the screen presence or the visibility of women in Hindi cinema and throws a number of introspective questions such as, "What are the sorts of roles women play? How are they projected? Do women film stars serve as models for Indian women? How far do their films reflect social attitudes towards them? How far do they shape such attitudes?" (Butalia 109). Seeking answers to these questions brings to light the film producers' and directors' 'superficial concern with 'women's issues' as they lacked the in-depth understanding of patriarchy interwoven in the codes of morality (108). Hindi cinema has been providing us with the binary-opposite representation of women such as 'good' and 'bad'. Good portrayal of women as 'self-sacrificing', 'pure', 'not questioning men' is largely found in cinema. Modernity is associated with being 'bad' (109). The 'bad' woman is presented mostly

as single or widowed, who follows the westernized lifestyle consisting of wearing short dresses, being independent, aggressive, smoking and drinking alcohol etc. The transformation from being bad to god is portrayed from not only giving up bad habits of smoking and drinking but also covering the body with sari than the short dresses (109). Considering the women's independence and modernity as 'bad' is the reflection of the middle class morality that governs the films. Challenging the traditional roles of Indian woman and presenting her a modern empowered independent entity, the women film-maker started using the cinematic space to express the agonies and the sufferings of women through their women-centric films. Some of the best Bollywood women-centric films by women director are Aparna Sen's *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer* (2002), *The Rapist* (2021), Alankrita Shrivastava's *Turning 30* (2011), *Lipstick Under My Burkha* (2016), Gauri Shinde's *English Vinglish* (2012), *Dear Zindagi* (2016), Meghna Gulzar's *Filhaal* (2002), *Raazi* (2018), *Chhapaak* (2020), Zoya Akhtar's *Luck By Chance* (2009), *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (2011), Ashwini Iyer Tiwari's *Nil Battey Sannata* (2015), *Bareilly Ki Barfi* (2017), Kiran Rao's *Dhobi Ghat* (2010), *Laapataa Ladies* (2024), Leena Yadav's *Parched* (2015), Revathy's *Salaam Venky* (2023), Shonali Bose's *Margarita with a Straw* (2015) *The Sky Is Pink* (2019), Jasmeet K. Reen's *Darlings* (2022) etc.

Gender, Resistance and Crossing the Threshold in Marathi Cinema

Marathi cinema is not behind when it comes to projecting the problems of women in cinema. V. Shantaram's *Kunku* (1937) Bhalaji Pendharkar's *Suunbai* (*The Daughter-in-law*) (1942), R.S. Junnarkar's *Pahili Manglagaur* (1942), Vishram Bedekar's *Pahila Palna* (1942), Bhalaji Pendharkar's *Sasurvas* (1946), and *Paisa Bolto Aahe* (1943) were some of the notable pre-independent Marathi films screening the gender problems in the society. The continuation of the social problems of gender was evident in Govind Ghanekar's *Vanshacha Diva* (1950), P. K. Atre's *Hi Mazi Laxmi* (1951), Datta Dharmadhikari's *Kunkavacha Dhani* (1951) and *Stree Jnma Hi Tuzi Khani* (1952) Madhav Shinde's *Shikleli Bayko* (1959) and *Kanyadan* (1960) Anant

Mane's *Satajnmacha Sobti* (1959), Datta Keshav's *Bhingari* (1977) and *Fatakadi* (1980), Murlidhar Kapdi's *Kadaklakshmi* (1980), Sushil Gajvani's *Mulgi Zali Ho* (1985), Sumitra Bhavne and Sunil Sukthankar's *Doghi* (1995), Chandrakant Kulkarni's *Bindhaast* (1999), Mahesh Majarekar's *Astitva* (*Existence*) (2000) and *Kakspars* (2012), Anand Shishupal's *Devdasi* (2004), Gajendra Ahire's *Sarivar Sari* (2005), Subhash Ghorpade's (*The Indian*) *Murali* (2005), Rajiv Patil's *Jogwa* (*The Awakening*) (2009), Raj Kuber's *Chitra* (2010), Sandeep Navare's *Langar* (2012), Sachin Kundalkar's *Vazandar* (2016), Nagraj Manjule's *Sairat* (2016), Ravi Jadhav's *Nude* (2018), Prasad Oak's *Hirkani* (2019), Milind Lele's *Bandishala* (2019), Hemant Dhome's *Jhimma* (2021), Kedar Shinde's *Baipan Bhari Deva* (2023), Aruna Raje's *Firebrand* (2023). There are very few female directors in Marathi cinema such as Mrinal Kulkarni, Kranti Redkar and Manava Naik, Shrabani Deodhar, Samruddhi Porey, Swapna Waghmare Joshi, Sai Paranjpye, Pratima Joshi, Smita Talwalkar, Sumitra Bhavne, Sushma Shiromani etc. Some of the Marathi films, by female directors, dealing with the everyday problems faced by women in the society are Smita Talwalkar's *Savat Mazi Ladki* (1993), Kanchan Adhikari's *Manini* (2004), Mrunalini Patil's *Manthan: Ek Amrut Pyala* (2006), Sumitra Bhavne's *Gho Mala Asla Hava* (2009), Pratima Joshi's *Aamhi Doghi* (2018), Mrinal Kulkarni's *Ti and Ti* (2019) etc

Marathi cinema has been screening gender problems, sometimes being within the confines of social moral codes and at times crossing the thresholds of such patriarchal moral codes. V. Shantaram's *Kunku* (*Vermilion*) (1937) was the first social talkie film by Prabhat Film Company which later became the foundation of social talkie cinema in Marathi (Nandgaonkar 57). Indian Audience were used to watching films that end with the female protagonist overcoming the misunderstanding and pain of personal and social life despite being the most helpless, trapped in the patriarchal nest, leading a life of unhappiness, being submissive and bearing all the insult and humiliation throughout the movie. Women sacrificing everything for the sake of the family was appreciated. Meena Kumari is known for playing the roles of being the 'Abalanari' (Helpless

woman) in Hindi cinema who is also called as 'The Tragedy Queen'. Going beyond the stereotypical representation of helpless women, some of the Marathi filmmakers were committed to make the strong statements against the gender oppression through their cinema. The art form of cinema is used as a platform to challenge hegemony and resist against any kind of oppression. The oppression and resistance to patriarchy is discussed below in the light of two films, Jabbar Patel's *Umbartha* and Sanjay Surkar's *Gharabahr*.

Based on Shanta Nisal's Marathi novel *Beghar* (Homeless), Jabbar Patel's *Umbartha* (The Threshold) (1981) is a film that exposes the dual nature of the so-called well-cultured society in general and family in particular. It brings to light how the family that flaunts its progressiveness does not allow a woman who has a degree in Social Work to go for doing job outside the four walls of the house. The film emphasises upon the significance of following the passion and aspiration of a woman, detaching the strings attached to her of being a wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law etc. It presents the two-fold fight of the working woman, Sulbha Mahajan (Smita Patil), inside and outside the family. According to Sulbha's mother-in-law who is the chairman herself of various social organisations, a woman working away from her family is not the characteristic of a 'good family'. By going against her family, Sulbha takes up the job as a residential Superintendent of Anath Mahila Ashram (Orphan Women's Ashram). The ashram has girls and women from different parts of Maharashtra who have been the victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, rape etc. The management of the Mahila Ashram is full of elites who are more concerned to maintain their prestige in the society than to actually think of the welfare of the women in the ashram. For the prestigious people outside the Ashram, it is just a dumping ground where the dirt in the society is thrown. Through Sulbha, the movie exposes the corruption that has been taking place under the disguise of the management of the Ashram. False charges are framed against Sulbha and she is pressurised to resign from her job by the management and the outside forces. She is not proven guilty in any of the charges before the One-Man-Commission. Despite not proven guilty, she resigns from her post

and comes back home. She prefers resigning from the job to compromising with the wrongdoings of the Ashram management. Sulbha comes home after a long time and learns from her husband, Subhash who is a lawyer by profession, about his extra marital affair. He asks Sulbha to compromise so that they would live peacefully in their family without making a big deal out of it. A woman who did not compromise with the wrongdoers outside the family did not compromise with the wrongdoers inside the family. She leaves her family with a suitcase in hand. When *Umbartha* was in consideration for National Award in 1980, B. R. Chopra, one of the jury members, opposed this proposal saying that the woman going outside the house cannot be the ideal for Indian women (Deshpande: "Kahi Paramparasharan, Kahi Bandkhor" 77). Thus, the very revolutionary and strong voice of dissent of a married, working woman is presented through this movie (*Umbartha*). Mahesh Bhatt's *Arth* (Meaning) (1982), the husband comes back after an affair but the wife refuses to accept him as husband.

The film presents the difficulties for a woman when she exercises her power of being the public administrator. She turns down the bribe offered by Chanmal Bhandari, the shopkeeper of the saris to the women in the ashram, and ensures the good quality of the saris. She also finds that some of the workers in the ashram have been stealing the property of the ashram and selling back the things that are actually to be given to the women in the ashram. She does not even spare the other woman, Shila Samson, who is involved in illegal works of supplying the women in the ashram to the private parties of the filthy rich persons in the city like Madanseth. Sulbha catches the security person red-handed when he was sending out the girl from the ashram. The elected public representative, who is supposed to be in the service of the people, calls the ashram and asks to send the young girl for a night to his farmhouse. This disgusting demand makes her realise how society sees mahila ashram as a dirty place that caters to their sexual needs.

Every woman who landed in the ashram has been the victim of either domestic violence or sexually abuse. The following women in the ashram – Utpala Joshi, Mukta Gaikwad, Shobha Joshi, Kusum

Shinde, Chima, Champa, Jasvanti, Farida, Mangla, Gulab and Bakul – are from diverse social caste and religious background. When Sulbha encouraged the women in the ashram to share their problems with her so that the solution would be found, she is astonished to listen to their ‘lived experiences’ of oppression. Kusum Shinde is raped by three men when her parents were not at home. This trauma made her mentally unstable. There is another woman in the ashram who is mentally unstable due to the sexual abuse by her husband. Farida, the young woman is married with the old man. She is the fourth wife of the old man who exploits and tortures her. She ran away from him after the torture became unbearable and lands in the ashram. Champa, from Solapur, is a Dalit woman from the Mahar caste. Her husband died of Tuberculosis leaving the eight year son behind. She used to work in the farm of the Jadhav but is not well paid. Jadhav’s driver, Raheman, suggests her to serve the men in the party with sexual favours to earn more money. Raheman also sexually assaults Champa leaving her pregnant. She is caught by the police when she was undergoing the abortion with the help of a woman from the village. Hence, she landed in this mahila ashram. Chima gave birth to a boy who is named Suhas by Sulbha. A woman named Mangla dies in labour pain in the ashram. The lesbian relationship between Gulab and Bakul is acknowledged neither in society nor in mahila ashram. They are put into the prison in the Ashram where they set themselves on fire.

Yashwant Bhalkar’s *Ghe Bharari* (1999) is a film quite similar to *Umbhartha* that unfolds a number of stories of women oppression. Like Sulbha (Sonali Kulkarni) in *Umbhartha*, Vasudha in Sanjay Surkar’s *Gharabahr* (Outside Home) (1999) is a woman who stands against the wrongdoers inside and outside the family. It is a film that exposes the patriarchal mindset of the male politicians towards reservation for women in politics. It acquaints the viewers with the ground reality of the implementations of the constitutional legal measures provided for the encouragement of the political participation of the marginalized sections in the society. The political dominance of the power monger men like Annasaheb Patil and his son Balasaheb could not encourage and tolerate women’s active participation

in the politics. Miss Rane, Miss Nila Gholap are those women who broke out the domestic prison and came out to work; they are threatened and sexually exploited by the college trustee Balasaheb Patil. Miss Rane, a teacher committed suicide when she was tried to rape. Another woman who is victimized in the male-dominated society is Ramabai. She is the Sarpanch (the head of Panchayat) of Nimgaon, who works for banning liquor in the village, is doubly oppressed. Firstly, for being the low caste and secondly, for being the woman. She mentions how the constitutional provision of reservation for women is sabotaged and misused by the people. A woman who is officially the head of the village is not allowed to work in the office. She is abused and threatened of excommunication as she does not hold power in her hand because of her low caste status. Other women in the Panchayat from the Upper caste help their caste-fellows. Ramabai is forced to sign the documents. She is attacked by the goons for her active participation in the decision making as a Sarpanch. Another evidence of the casteist mindset is the murder of the dalit activist, Sameer Shinde, who works for the betterment of the village opposing the hypocrisy and the dominance of the Balasaheb and his father. Not falling prey to the emotional blackmail of her father, Vasudha raises her voice against this act and gets her brother arrested for his crime (Gharabahr).

Vasudha’s father, Annasaheb Patil, has been MLA for twenty five years but now the seat is reserved for female candidate. Vasudha’s family convinces her against her wish to contest the Vidhansabha Election. She wins the election with a great margin. Her brother and father want her to be a mere rubber stamp while they enjoy the political power. Vasudha believes that the mindset and the perception about women need to be changed in the society. And then only women would work freely. She appeals for strict action in this case. When she does not follow the orders given by her brother and father, Vasudha was forced to resign but she straightforwardly refuses it. They mobilized people against their own daughter. At the end of the film, Vasudha leaves her parental house which symbolizes her dissent against the patriarchal family setup that never allowed her to take her decisions on her own.

This leaving the house, crossing the threshold of the house is symbolic to the breaking the cages in which women have been imprisoned for centuries (Gharabahr).

There are many such films in which men, either in the house or in the office, are shown forcing women when the women do not work as per men's wish. But women resist against this system of oppression and mark their resistance. Not Only Mrs. Raut (2003) is a Marathi film written and directed by Gajendra Ahire. It unfolds the exploitation of two different women in two different fields. They become victims of this exploitative nature of man against which they raise their voices. It unveils women exploitation in urban space like Mumbai. Vidya Raut, a widow whose thirteen year old daughter was raped and murdered by her boss in the office, Raghuvir Karkhanis, becomes the victims of this exploitation. Karkhanis manipulates the case and gets clean chit from court. Years later Mrs. Raut murders her boss and confesses her crime. Jogwa (The Awakening) (2009), bagged several national awards, is a film directed by Rajiv Patil. This film is based on Rajan Gavas's novels Chodak and Bhandarbhog and Charuta Sagar's short story "Darshan". Through this film, an attempt is made to present the inhumane practices that have been carried out in the name of tradition. The Jogta and Jogtin custom is questioned in this movie. Suli, an innocent teenage girl and Tayaapaan adult boy, are forced to be in the service of goddess Yellamma by remaining unmarried throughout their life. Tayappa, a young man, as per the Jogta tradition, is also compelled to wear the sari and blouse and be in service of goddess Yellamma suppressing his masculine desires. This film "makes the male body the site of its critique of patriarchy's manipulative mechanisms" (Wani: "Sairat's Transgressive Femininity" 220). Initially, both of them take it to be their fate but gradually they began questioning the customs, traditions imposed on them to live the painful and shameful life. By going against the society and its norms, they dissent against this tradition and decide to get married. This decision was equally attacked by the other members of Jogta and Jogtin sect. Tayappa and Suli together assert for their right to live like any other human beings. Langar (2012) is Marathi film written and directed

by Sandeep Navre. This film is based on the writings of Anil Awachat. This again is an attempt to bring to light the exploitation of women in the name of WaghyaMurli tradition in Maharashtra. Malan, the protagonist of the film is a victim of this tradition. She is forced to marry with a sacred idol at the age of seven and made Murali believing that this deed may bring a good fortune to the family. She has to devote her whole life in the service of god Khandoba. This movie uncovers the fight of a woman against the sexual exploitation of Murlis and a breakaway from this tradition. It is an attack on superstitions and blind faith (Paul).

Conclusion

The Mumbai-based Marathi cinema, though could not come out of the shadow of the Bollywood, has succeeded in creating its unique identity among the different regional film industries in India. When Bollywood is still caught up in the 'formula films' dealing with 'love and romance', Marathi cinema is constantly engaging itself into newer thematic explorations such as gender, class, caste, poverty, education, health, employment, child marriages, dowry problems, religious harmony. Influenced by the progressive, modern, liberal views, cinema is used to mirror the social evils and raise the voice of dissent against any kind of exploitation and oppression through the picturization of Sulbha, Vasudha, Vidya Raut, Suli, Malan and many more strong female characters in Marathi cinema. Education has empowered them to fight back the visible and invisible patriarchal forces.

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