Caste Representation as a Tool of Elimination: Identifying unbridled Caste-Fetishism of Indian Media through the comparative case studies of M M Kalburgi and Rohith Vemula

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Representation, if assessed in Foucauldian perspective that calls for the production of knowledge in discursive space, that refers to the historical context for the development and understanding of the meaning; identifies abnormal man, dangerous man and several different anomalous category, (Bannet102) as propounded by Professor John Fiske; purportedly creating social boxes for ensuring oppression and discrimination (Fiske 53). Society in this manner, through relentless categorization, objectifies identities on the basis of caste, gender, race, normalcy, sensibility, conformity, uniformity and consumption, to inflict maximum discipline on them and to eradicate any 'monstrous' activities that can doubt the political, social or cultural serenity, expected out of normalized social agents. The socio-political categories thus availing and having maximum access to the power, gradually, outcast the 'others' and use them, both for maximizing the production value and for gaining their consent in favour of continuous suppression through reserving their numbers of participation in the mainstream course of actions.

Bearing incessant reiteration of their congenital, precisely cultural identity, they let themselves ritually marked with it; allowing the ceremonies of exclusion through either of the means of reservation or right-based agitation; favouring the judiciously-determined numbered berths, seemingly secured to cure imbecility, partially; for that any otherwise interpretation is obliterated and if not, then at least regulated. In such conditional obligation to identify any being out of its marked ceremonial identity, preferably representational category, happens to be the sternest task to perform, as the media along with the state machineries technically encapsulate and resurface the space to which it compulsively belongs, reaping out the immediate benefit, in terms of political or other gains.

This paper intends to point out at the representative caste system in India taking the comparison of both of the state sponsored assassination of Kalburgi and Rohith Vemula and the category of the consequential outrage in the media, to locate the intention of the power in discriminating even the subversive voices in the lines of caste. It locates the manufacturing of the mark 'Dalit PhD Scholar' with the name of Vemula and the subsequent preparation of his identity approval, through different forms of interrogation, investigation and continuous examination of the slain student leader, as if his caste identity validates his dissidence. It digs into the details of the case as emerged in the media and tries to explore the political necessity of representation through caste that mitigates the vehemence of dissent and substitutes the perennial disgruntlement with caste; for sustainability of its suppressive and propagative instruments.

August 30, 2015, some miscreants guised as students knocked the doors of a veteran literate- his wife, unsuspicious and clueless about the probable massacre allowed them to enter- the goons entered the room where Hindu rituals used to get shot at gun point- certainly the

bullets took a Volta face- the Kannada Erudite breathed his last within moments leaving behind his injunctions stymieing the growth of fundamentalist Hindu sycophants. M.M Kalburgi, the name which has been avowed several times in the recent context of emerging religio-political intolerance, had to put an end to his journey against social menaces, nevertheless, without revealing his caste identity that could have booked him with sympathy, homogenous caste-based solidarity and perhaps, in behest of its media-propagators, with ceremonial caste-consciousness, precisely false-empathy emboldening further negligence and elimination.

Had anybody asked which caste did he belong to? Had his 'VeershaivaLingayat' identity come to the light in midst of the threats he had been encountered with during his 'inciting' speeches against Hindu customs and ritualism? Kalburgi's notions in favour of 12th century 'Vachana' literature that critically opposed and confronted the caste-based society rather took the centre stage of discussions. His assassination further evoked the oppressive and thwarting despotic ideations of the Hindu rabid vowed to scythe down any non-conformist identity. Relentless support in favour of Dr. Ananthmurthy's criticism to the idol worshipping put him into the box of non-compliance which inevitably received the barbs of Hindu fanatics.

The consequential reactions from pan-India intelligentsia though condemned the Government for its reluctance and expressed their fear over the growing socio-political intolerance; the caste discrimination had never been referred to. Rather, any reference to his Lingayat identity would have mitigated the vehemence of the incident. Nevertheless, for time being, if the root cause of the gruesome lynching could be apprehended in terms of the caste-based oppression, the reference to Basava's ideology would definitely be upheld. Kalburgi was even the promulgator of such theosophical

reflex that confronted the basis of Hinduism unravelling several opportunities to the Political authorities to treat his lynching as an outcome of caste-discrimination. As the Lingayat community in no sense belonged to the traditional 'antyaja' (Antyaja literally means 'the last-born'; in the traditional Hindu Caste System it generally refers to the 'untouchable'- the lowest rung of the social ladder) the prominence of caste-based valuation of the assassination perhaps failed to find political berth in the competition of getting electoral benefit out of it.

January 17, 2016- he left the space vacant for the people who are yet to confront the ideological atrocities of rituals and taboos- he made it clear that no Government has the authority to enforce the choice of food- he got himself waded into the debates of the judicial killing of unidentified and mistaken identities- he craved to unravel the clandestine faces of riot-mongers- he tried to propagate Christopher Hitchens' message that 'God Is Not Great'- stunningly, he found himself tied within the realm of controversy of which he was the sturdiest disparager.

Rohith Vemula, the expelled PhD Scholar of University of Hyderabad in a sudden morning became a Dalit student devoid of his rights to be in the same plane with the higher caste associations. The media and the political parties across the ideological line took the bid to establish his Dalit identity surmounting rather overruling his contributions in the movement against the Hindu fundamentalists. The reasons for his expulsion as divulged with the time, in no means, were related to his caste entity rather his actions against the taboos of the Hinduism paved the way of the political fray between Ambedkar Students' Association and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student wing of ruling BJP. His decision to oppose sudden hanging of Yakoob Memon along with his colleagues of ASA awarded him with the tag of anti-nationalist. It irked even the leadership of BJP and

subsequently the ABVP provoked ASA to get into direct physical confrontation.

As the organization arranged 'Beef Mela' and even organized the public screening of Nakul Shawney's controversial documentary '*Muzzafarnagar Baaqi Hai*' (The 136-minute long sprawling documentary revisits the communal riots that broke out in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli in Uttar Pradesh in August and September 2013, preceding the famous BJP victory of 2014), the attacks got sharpened. The mundane provocation from ABVP's leaders acted as an impetus behind the political skirmish among the two leading organizations of the University and smacked off the flows of political intolerance trickling from Amit Shah's deprecating propaganda. A committee had been formed to hold the defaulters culpable of ruining the educational environ of the varsity. However, the reports denied charging anyone for such offense and the situation was found to be far away from being tampered with the supra-political motive of the central leadership.

The Union Minister Bandaru Dattatreya in this context appeared as the major motivator of further chaos and addressing the HRD Minister Smriti Irani wrote, "This could be visualised from the fact that when Yakub Memon was hanged, a dominant students union, that is Ambedkar Students Union had held protests against the execution. When Shushil Kumar, president, ABVP, protested against this, he was manhandled and as a result he was admitted in hospital. What is more tragic is that the university administration has become a mute spectator to such events."[1] Even endorsing the fact he termed the ASA leaders as 'Anti-social' and claimed the immediate action from the authority.

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1   "Read Minister Bandaru Dattatreya's Letter To Smriti Irani On Hyderabad
     University". NDTV. 19 January, 2016. Web. 12 July 2016.
     http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/read-minister-bandaru-dattatreyas-letter-to-smriti-
     irani-on-hyderabad-university-1267471

Consequently, the University following the instructions of the central leadership deployed an investigating committee and announced the expulsion of five ASA members. Not only Rohith, even Prashant, the former President of the Students' Union was named among the expelled students. The ASA members started protesting outside the University and screeched for the freedom of speech and expression. They ardently claimed the immediate action from the authority to revoke the punishment and accused the ruling party's student organization for impeding their campus freedom. In such circumstances, no reference to their Dalit identity had ever been evoked- none had ever mentioned the fact that they were being reinforced to leave the campus and the hostel due to their caste. The situation took the fresh turn with Vemula committing suicide.

The PhD scholar and the ASA leader certainly turned out to be a Dalit scholar. The espouser of the thoughts of Hitchens, who throughout his life condemned any religious practice, posthumously had to bow down in front of the representative identity which he had not even shown during his admission to the varsity. The reports from the Police clarified the fact that Vemula had been selected on the basis of merit and no reservation even paved his way toward his academic excellence. However, even if it was shown, it should have never searched, approved or investigated, as his death, as per the letter he wrote, had rarely any reference to his caste-based identity, through which his media representation was enshrined and gradually cultivated.

Nevertheless, the media came to the fore to discover his caste identity, in a bid to attach the political relevance to the issue. Rahul Gandhi jumped into the well of controversy and visiting the University commented that the actions of the Government transpired their anti-Dalit stance. Bahujan Samajwadi Party, the self-proclaimed messiah of Dalit community sent their delegations and

claimed the immediate revocation of the expulsion notice against the rest of the four students.

The HRD minister Smriti Irani on whose instructions perhaps the University was being reinforced to take the despicable decision of expelling the students, added further boilers to the brewing situation that his Dalit entity should not be considered as the reason for his death. The visit of the chairperson of the National Commission for the Minorities even reinforced the similar narration of caste discrimination. The consequence was apprehensive- Police started working on to excavate his caste identity to frame charges against the accuser- the political parties started upholding his caste for ensuring the vote bank- the professors belonged to SC community in the University resigned from the administrative posts to maintain their relevance in such political symposium- some even were trying to find out the entity of Rohith's father who had left his mother long days ago- the student communities across the country went on screaming for equal rights and justice to Dalit community- the newer statistical data appearedto establish the dreadful condition of these people- moreover the country started brewing to book the persons accused of caste discrimination.

In these brewing political tensions, perhaps, the objectives of Vemula have been forgotten. He never tried to prove his Dalit identity and the organization he belonged to hardly expanded in the Varsity through accommodating only Dalit people. ASA though had commenced on its journey after the stirs regarding Mondal Commission and claimed equality for the students of Dalit community in mid 90s; their stance got changed throughout the last decade. In 2011-12, when ASA triumphed over the election with the support of SFI, they had won over the confidence of the common students not only of the Dalit community.

The transformation of Vemula from a PhD scholar to a Dalit student bears on the intention of the power-structure to put each and every agitator into some box for categorizing the levels of oppression. In the midst of intricate discussions over the caste-battling the original narrative of Rohith's fight had been lost.

The reference to Kalburgi's identity in the initiation of the paper at this juncture seems to be relevant enough as none had questioned his caste when he was brutally lynched. His notions and the philosophy had been discussed and the condemnation of the political intolerance gained momentum. Rohith in his suicide note alleged none for his death and his last letter reflected his scepticism toward the society. The cynical view of Rohith could have been found from his very statement that love is second handed. The departure of human enterprise from the nature made him felt that the people were not ought to suffer much, had there been no cultural obligation to life. His last verses, however, were standing in the verge of absolute loss.

Both of the cases as referred to, clearly indicate the differences of media representations and verify the fact that the absolute commodification of caste identity plays the major role behind exclusion of ground narrations leading the path toward production of meta-narratives and consequentially social myths. Second order signified of the signifier Vemula, abysmally reduces it to 'Dalit identity' that negates the significance of his philosophy and actions. The persisting conflicts between the castes, during such representations are being technically taken into consideration for ensuing further repercussions from the political classes, for deceiving the culpability of the state and obviously for producing easy-to-read substances that have the capacity to delegitimize any alternative uproar. Referring to Clifford Geertz's coinage 'experience-distant' concept(Geertz,57-58), the cultural perception of caste in Indian context though could be comprehensively

understood, the formation of posthumous caste imposition over the subject reflects the 'experience-near' attitude of media, that calls for an immediate reaction from the society, on which the stigmatizing intensity of sensitivity or caste-fetishism unavoidably depends. The term caste, thus, itself adds the sense of traditional socio-cultural oppression to the identity and furthers the growth of sympathetic ground which otherwise could have been encountered with the political verses of religion and could have discarded the casteist outrage, that it is expected to emanate.

The elimination of representative caste identity for the development of class struggle thus appears as the immediate way toward the radical emancipation of people against the political orthodoxy, desisting their participation. The conclusive note to this understanding requires the year-old comments of E.M.S. Namboodiripad to be resurfaced for igniting the immediate struggle against the narratives of caste-based recognition overruling their ideological identity and class consciousness-

"One has to realize that the building of India on modern democratic and secular lines requires an uncompromising struggle against the caste-based Hindu society and its culture. There is no question of secular democracy, not to speak of socialism, unless the very citadel of India's 'age old' civilization and culture – the division of society into a hierarchy of castes – is broken. In other words, the struggle for radical democracy and socialism cannot be separated from the struggle against caste society."[2]

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Cinema, Modernity, Politics of Resistance - Representation of a Possible Society

Soumya Suvra Das

Introduction

My art is a weapon in the struggle for my people's freedom and for the freedom of all people.

- Paul Robeson

Any form of art may be considered as political, as art, like politics, tries to question and the status-quo and transform society. In the recent years with the boom in the media sector, television and media and film industry in particular, has been involved into a cat fight over profit making than ever. In this regard, the concept of airtime, channel rights, worldwide distribution of films has become valuable as each and every second and slot is counted for money. The ferocious competition for audiences between the broadcasters and distributors means that the end credits must be shortened and at the same time various promotions and advertisements have to be shown to make the audience adhere to the television set or return back to the film theatre and treat cinema as a production franchisee. So the demand and manipulation of television air time has been of utmost significance and stakes have become higher as it is scarce in nature. So it stands that time has become scarce, but this scarcity is manufactured not by the audience, but the privatized corporate organizations.

Once there was a time when we could not cope with the scarcities of resources which were once imposed on us by nature. But with the

advent of modernity along with capital that made technology and progress possible to an extent, promised us that the scarcity that we have been suffering throughout our history is about to be resolved. So the modern media, under the strict control of the iron fists of capitalism, puts an abstract value to almost everything, in this case it is time, just like labour in general. Discussions, works and academic works of Marxist scholars reveal this clear yet hidden scenario of the workings of the media and film institutions. It exposes the inherent contradiction and relations of production that it has within its functioning. Media practices and structures, under the one-dimensional production of knowledge and consciousness under capitalism comes in direct microscopic scrutiny not only in terms of academic works, but also comes in the shape of cinematic representations, acting as a resistant force against the coercive, hegemonic and often neo-imperialistic culture. Cinema has been a medium which incorporates the elements which capitalism invests its existence upon: labour, technology and capital which brings about a certain product, the product being an aesthetic one. At the centre of this debate is a possible oxymoron - cinema reiterates the ethics of capitalism in terms of capital and labour on one hand and becoming a resonating part of mass culture, and on the other hand its ideological contradictions with capitalism through its ability to represent images and sound to create a synesthetic effect.

Cinematic Representation – A Problematic Approach

Representation in a modern world is a mysterious thing indeed. Timothy Mitchel argues,

> If the presence of modernity occurs only as representation,
> this representing is not a phenomenon limited to the
> deliberate methods of making meaning on which accounts

of the modern and the postmodern tend to focus, such as the modern novel, news reporting, museum displays, mass media, or the organization of medical, statistical, and other forms of official knowledge.

Cinema has been both dismissed and eulogised by the world of academia as something dangerous, a form of low-art, hegemonic or an art-form that has unfathomable ability to move people and thereby positing a social change. Cinematic representation comes in five layers – moving image (an extension of still image), graphics, music, noise and dialogues, and hence is often considered to be the most influential medium of communication. Not only for the content it represents or the form in which it comes in terms of unravelling the narrative, the politics of representation of cinema lies in the very fact that it is synesthetic in nature – image, since Renaissance we have known the primacy of the image and its politics of representing the world in terms of realism, and sound that can have enchanting effect on our emotions. Cinema has already been argued as the best form of storytelling process since the evolution of Realism in the form of the novel. Cinematic representation, best envisaged by the Classical Hollywood Cinema, had already adopted this form of storytelling process – a process nurtured by voyeurism or the Peeping Tom effect. As Andre Bazin pointed out in *What Is Cinema*, cinema is the art that has led human society closest to preserving memory and human essence – the mummification of human existence that has transfigured itself through painting, photography and has reached the ultimate destination of capturing reality - through cinema. If Bazin considers this to be one of the best achievements of human society, it can also be argued to be one of the best traps that the industrial world under the iron claw of capitalism has created ever. Key questions arose when the art form of cinema was realised as not a mere representation of moving pictures, but as a tool that can mobilise

people, inculcate ideological stances, break the silence and passivity and emancipate a dream of social change.

These questions, arguments and counter-arguments were beginning to be foregrounded after the Russian Revolution in 1919 when the likes of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovchenko, Kuleshov and Vertov started experimenting in cinematic techniques and ideological 'fists' and for the first time in thirty years of cinema's birth, it began to be taken as something serious and something that has more than entertainment at its disposal. We have to understand the fact that as music, literature, international politics, society and science cannot be limited to a functional aspect that is only to be dealt by the professionals in the respective fields, cinema in the same way was more than an art form and was discussed as a major part of our culture – more significantly as cinema is almost an oxymoron – a capital and labour intensive art more than any other that becomes the part of the culture industry (Hollywood, Hindi Popular Cinema as a couple of instances), and at the same time it can be a resistant art-form that comes as a critique of the bourgeoisie and even become an anecdote of social and political revolution (Latin American Cinema of the 1960s, Post-colonial African cinema, Soviet Constructivist and Montage, Third Cinema to name a few other than some Auteur films of Godard, Ghatak, Antonioni and others).

The key questions that flooded the scholarly articles and discussions were to explore the relationship between cinema and society –the effect of cinema on the audience when cinema was integrated as an important part of the capitalist culture industries[1], the nature of relation between film aesthetics and reproduction of the capitalist social order, revelation of the inherent contradictions of the capitalist

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1 Mike Wayne ed., Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective, Pluto Press, London, 2005.

society through cinema, or for that matter how cinema displaces, suppresses and marginalize class. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's seminal work of *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* in 1944 tells something that makes us think what cinema's nature really is. The essay discusses about cinema's integration into the capitalist industrial production and consumption and contemplates what film and the common masses share: the labour power of the masses are utilized by the industry for reaping financial profit, while film replays what has been done to the masses during their time of labour.[2] Adorno was one of the pioneering thinkers of the Frankfurt School, a Neo-Marxist Critical School of Thinking whose concern were to explore the changing nexus of the world in relation to art, ideology and the very politics of representation in its historical context. But Adorno had been the harshest critic of cinema from its outset and the ideological base on which I developed – modernity and capitalism.

> The logic of the principle of expression implies the moment of its negation, a negative form of truth that changes love into an inflexible power of protest.[3]

Nicole Brenez delves deep into Adorno's thoughts about cinema and music. For Adorno, cinema became an emblematic representation of how an art form can become a commodified cultural product representing a means of confiscation, a mode of corruption, a simulacrum and a sort of a formal joke.[4] Cinema, for its inception from the techniques of recording, has its primary goal as reproduction organized into an industry and hence, as Adorno puts it, becomes a powerful instrument of domination, propaganda and falsification.

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2 Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, Dialectics of Enlightenment, 1944.
3 Theodor Adorno, Prisms, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, MIT Press, 1981, Cambridge
4 Nicole Brenez, 'T.W.Adorno: Cinema in spite of Itself – but Cinema all the same', trans. Olivier Delers and Ross Chambers, Cultural Studies Review, Volume 13, Number 1, March 2007.

What Adorno spoke about is resonated in Toby Miller's essay 'Hollywood, Cultural Policy Citadel' where he is mentions two dominating film industry models in the world – the first one is the *laissez-faire* (Bollywood, Hong Kong) and *primus inter pares* (Hollywood). The second is *dirigisme* (Western and Southern Europe). In this light, cinema is strictly a mode of economics – the first models generated from the ethics of neo-classical economics where state intervention is prohibited, based on market-model and putting primacy on ideology of pleasure before the nation and stress on export. On the other hand, the second type of model is based on intervention by the state which includes training, funding and distribution, based on mixed-economy model and putting primacy on the ideology of nation before pleasure and stress on import substitution.[5] These are nothing but 'policing' culture and people in a more political and historical way. As Marx pointed out that it is not possible to create a moral power only on the basis of paragraphs of law, these cultural policies revolving cinema was and is a necessity. Scholar and thinker Jacques Donzelot remarks that these policies regarding a cultural phenomenon like cinema are methods for the development of the population quality and in process to strengthen a nation.[6] Representation of culture is also seen as a material improvement of the urban life and the middle-class thought and to indoctrinate the working class to value the nation and avoid industrial strife and class-struggle.[7] It reminds of us of what Mike Wayne's proposition that

> The struggle for moral and intellectual leadership in the sphere of culture is the struggle for hegemony. But it is a

5 Mike Wayne ed., Hollywood, Cultural Policy Citadel, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective, Pluto Press, London, 2005
6 Jacques Donzelot, The Policing of Families, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1979),
7 David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, Culture and the State (New York: Routledge, 1998),

struggle and Gramsci's originality lies in his recognition that cultural domination is never simply a top-down process of imposition. Gramsci understood hegemony as a force field of contestation between different groups; a dialogue even, but crucially not a dialogue between equals because capital and the capitalist state have awesomely more resources at their disposal to shape the agenda and implement policies and practical changes.[8]

The policies reflected in the careful cultural reproduction of the most dominant film industry in the world - the Hollywood not only in terms of its business owing to which a lot of indigenous film industries struggle to survive, but also in terms of setting the trend in conventional film making process and its content. A number of Hollywood films have covertly and even blatantly have been representing the ideals of US foreign policy and the great American Dream. A number of films starting from the World War II themes have been strategically representing the US point of view not as their own, but as a universal one. The most prolific instance may be drawn from the film Independence Day where the US President is giving a speech saying that the American soldiers must strive to prove that 4th of July is not only the day of American independence but independence day of the entire world. Even if it is not taken seriously, it may be taken as a Freudian slip which is repeated time and again in various films. A little instance may be given from the film Castaway where an almost insignificant sequence of the film shows that a group of people are taking off a portrait of Lenin from a building while the camera keeps on tracking to show the protagonist deliver a courier parcel in a Russian town. But films like Forrest Gump, Rambo Part II and III, Saving Private Ryan and many more have a hegemonizing

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8 Mike Wayne ed., Marxism, Film and Film Studies, Understanding Film
   Marxist Perspective, Pluto Press, London, 2005

effect on the audience. Representative figure of American individualism is reflected in Forrest Gump and various images from the film is advocated by American society, which can be testified from the scene that Gump is endowed of congress badge. Narratives become strategies to spread the ideas of dominance and portray other contesting ideologies and trends as antagonistic and morally corrupt – the portrayal of the figure in Forrest Gump in the get up of the conventional image of Che Guevara who is representing the student movement, a reminiscent of the anti-establish movement of the 70s generation is not only in bad taste but also the character is portrayed as morally and ethically corrupt. Saving Private Ryan creates a strange kind of American individualism promoting the "White Man's Burden" of saving one of the fellow soldiers at the cost of an entire battalion. Although this White Man's Burden is different from what Kipling had to say in the context of colonialism, but this film promotes an American humanism, a kind of humanism that involves war, sacrifice and freedom in the same cauldron, which Wayne terms as the leadership in the sphere of cultural struggle and hegemony.

Benjamin, Brecht and Cinematic Representation

It is true that the cultural logic of capitalism is a dominant one and has a hegemonic presence in the world through its representation in films and Adorno's criticism of the art form can be argued to be legitimate in the present day global nexus of neo-liberalism. But Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin represents a different response when it comes to locating cinema in the milieu of cultural representations especially in relation to capitalist modernity. There is no contradiction between the views of Adorno on one hand and those of Benjamin and Brecht on the other that mass media is subordinated to capital and world market, but the laters' views saw hope in cinema as a form of resistance. In terms of ideological domination, all the scholars agree

that cinema is just a mere cultural and aesthetic representation of the capitalist modernity, but for Benjamin and technological and artistic potential of this art form can negate the very ideals on which it is created. Technology for the modern mechanical reproduction implied the participation of masses in the cultural life in their own terms. The reverential awe, which Benjamin calls aura, that ontological coded essence into the reception of the traditional art, is being replaced by those which are mechanically reproduced.[9] These mechanically reproduced art forms are closer to people than the traditional ones; they are to be felt close enough in the everyday spaces and rhythms of the city along with its technological form. Both Benjamin and Brecht embraced this potential of cinema that sought to bring about an unprecedented and unforeseeable change in our perception (Benjamin developed his theory of optical unconscious and Brecht developed his defamiliarisation strategy or the alienation effect). In this regard Wayne describes a sequence from Aranofsky's Requiem for a Dream which he perceives as a grand representation of '… an Adornosque view of television and a Benjaminian/Brechtian view of film as a vehicle of critique."[10] Of both media and our capitalist society:

> Sara, strung out onprescription appetite-suppressant drugs, settles down to watch her favourite quiz show, which she hopes one day to be on. She imagines herself in the show as a contestant, her electronic image (and ego ideal) a slimmer, more beautiful version of her real self. But thenboth her electronic self and the typically smarmy quiz-show host rematerialise in her own working-class apartment, and what seems intimate and comfortable

9   Walter Benjamin, Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, Illuminations, Schocken Books, New York, 1968.
10   Mike Wayne ed., Marxism, Film and Film Studies, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective, Pluto Press, London, 2005

suddenly becomes intrusive. Sara's ego ideal and the compere begin laughing at the decor while she struggles toexplain and justify herself. The quiz-show audience in turn begin to laugh at her while suddenly her home is turned into a television studio set, with people removing her furniture, while cameras, lights and microphones are brought in. As chorus girls dance threateningly around her chair, Sara's electronic self-smooches with the compere. It is a brilliant fantasy sequence, a Benjamin-like optical beam illuminating the contempt in which mass culture holds its consumers, a very Brechtian-like revelation, through defamiliarisation, of the threat and social violence lurking beneath television's technology and seductive razzmatazz aesthetics, and a painful glimpse into the vortex of hidden self-loathing and aching lack of fulfilment which underpins the fantasies promoted by the culture industry.[11]

The above sequence breaks the hegemonic presence of the media and its naturalized presence in our life with a jarring representation of a crude reality of modern times. The alienating effect that the audience is bound to experience here throws them into reconsideration of what is representation and what is real. The formal aspect of cinema reiterates what Herbert Marcuse in his One Dimensional Man had said about art, "The truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality (i.e., of those who have established it) to define what is real … The aesthetic transformation becomes a vehicle of recognition and indictment."[12]

11   ibid
12   Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of
       Advanced Industrial Society, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964

Representation, Resistance and Revolution

Out of all the modern art-forms, it was film which accommodated and represented the revolutionary visions as well as the revolutionary spirit of social movements. Cinema imbued the spirit of the revolutionary process and treated the hegemonic representations of the art form in an adverse way, in a way that would challenge the status-quo of the capitalist regimes and mainstream conformist ideologies of class and the way common people are made to perceive reality. This was possible not for the mere fact that the filmmakers believed in the process of revolution, but cinema as an art form had the formal freedom to throw itself into experimentation and debate. Two major revolutions that shaped a major part of world politics – the Soviet Revolution of 1917 and Cuban Revolution of 1959 – saw a rise in new cinematic representations. Not always echoing the views of the revolutionaries, these post-revolution films, although very different from each other, had a claim that cinema had a critical role in "…the promotion of a revolutionary political culture".[13] Film became a form of aesthetic resistance to the politically and socially detrimental conditions and became a vehicle of ideological dialogue with the common mass.

Michael Chanan describes cinema as more than entertainment and a means of propaganda – it was an aspiration of authentic art form of the twentieth century which bred a new magnet of contemporary artists.[14] This was the period of time when cinema realised that the art of montage or editing can be taken to a different aesthetic, graphic and ideological level and the very essence of representation would undergo a qualitative change. Inspired from Kabuki theatre and Hieroglyphs, and realizing the philosophy of the Hegelian dialectics

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13   Mike Wayne ed., Cinemas in Revolution: 1920s Russia, 1960s Cuba,
      Understanding Film Marxist Perspective, Pluto Press, London, 2005

14   ibid

which was reshaped brilliantly by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels into dialectical materialism, Eisenstein, Vertov and other great Soviet pioneers of cinema proved that cinema is more than a spectacle or a story – it can be a statement that can breathe the aspiration, dreams and revolutionary ideas of the people and defy the imposed naturalization of class difference. By the end of the Cuban revolution in 1969, Julio Garcia Espinosa wrote a manifesto called 'Towards an Imperfect Cinema', dealt with the art form again, but was starkly different from the Russian formalists. Cuban cinema realised that it should be more than an ideological foregrounding of the filmmakers – rather, it should be a dialogue between certain materialist and philosophical ideas that the society and the individual has to offer, especially in the post-revolution days. Liberation of consciousness became a constant theme for a number of films, but no propagandist or nationalist zeal were ever reflected. The 60s Cuban cinema, like Tomas Alea's Memories of Underdevelopment underpinned the state of a bourgeois pro-revolutionary middleclass man – class, sexuality, individual ideals and social hypocrisy transgressed barriers of political camps to touch the inner most abyss of human sensibilities. It was only in the post Cuban revolution days that the Latin American film makers and intellectuals devised and theorized the ideas of first cinema (mainstream industrially produced films like Hindi Popular Cinema and Hollywood), second cinema (auteur films, art cinema which were mostly independent or outside the mainstream film industry) and third cinema, which has a close relation to the Latin American revolutionary cinema, imperfect cinema and guerrilla cinema, a kind of film making that involves risk, political conviction and is taken as a grand concoction of aesthetics and politics.

Mavericks, Consciousness, Politics and Auteurs

To continueour discussion of guerrilla cinema or cinema of

revolution, it is imperative to refer to Jean Luc Godard, his writings on cinema and his films. In 1950, in an article called 'Towards a Political Cinema' published in Gazette du Cinema, Godard contemplated the prospect of revolutionary cinema through certain filmic strategies in terms of its representation. He drew upon Marx's phenomenal work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) and art critic Harold Rosenberg's '*The Resurrected Romans*' (1948), to show the potential of cinematic gestures that often represent unconscious repetition and mimesis, through their insinuation to history and culture to gather significant meaning through their spontaneity and passion. In the article Godard compares the structure of a political film with concepts of signification and the linguistic sign. Godard's concern is based on the semiotic analysis of the image to the referent, where the meaning of the cinematic shot is differential rather than innate. What Godard tries to write in his article and even in his films is the question of sign – an attempt to dislocate it from its referent. This is where cinematic expression and questions of signification has a direct relation to historical materialism. Karl Marx observed a stark contrast between the proletariat revolution and bourgeois revolution in terms of their relation to the past – it has been observed that the bourgeois revolution would borrow signs from the past in terms of its imagery and language. This parodied revolutionary trend is distinct from what Marx called the social revolution of the nineteenth century. This revolution, this proletariat revolution does not feel necessary to repeat the past or to aestheticize politics to hide its political content. Social revolution, for Marx, unlike the bourgeois revolution is self-critical, reflective where the past is abandoned, no recourse to myth is performed. This spirit of social revolution, as Godard and others point out, is reflected where the image I independent from its referent implying a modernist disjuncture of the signifier and the signified,

creating a time and space of its own. Auteur cinema, a form of second cinema, as a part of avant-garde film movement has been representing the politics of signification as a political work. Godard often explored the arbitrariness of the sign as a process of cinematic representation which in terms come 'political modernism'[15]. Concerned with contemporary world politics, Godard's films are more significant their dislocation and disassembly of the bourgeois art and mode of expression that make them political.

> While keeping in mind the difference between the linguistic sign and analogical representations, Godard's film seems capable of dislocating the sign, it typically separates images from the sound track; the narration of a voiceover will be unrelated to the accompanying image the spectator sees: words – in the form of slogans, titles, posters and captions – criticize, interpret and transform images.[16]

Godard's films are political. Jeremy Spencer talks about Godard's British Sounds (1969) analysed the contemporary British capitalism, begins by reconsidering a line from the Manifesto of the Communist Party – 'In a word, the bourgeoisie creates a world in its image.

Comrades! We must destroy that image! …Sometimes the class struggle is also the struggle of one image against another image, of one sound against another sound… in a film, this struggle is between images and sounds'. Political films, like Godard's, Ghatak's, Latin American Cinema and many others consciously blur the line of distinction between realities with reflections – they put confusion within the filmic image. While bourgeois films try to showcase the reflection of reality, Godard's concern is to excavate and find out the

15   Jeremy Spencer, Politics and Aesthetics within Godard's Cinema,
     Marxism and Film Activism: Screening Alternative Worlds, Berghahn
     Books, New York, Oxford, 2015
16   ibid

reality of that reflection. Resonating Adorno's points, Godard opined that cinema as the most 'economically and culturally enslaved art form, and imperialistic nature is somehow intricately exhibited in cinematic aesthetics. So, making film for Godard is an 'aesthetic struggle'.

Conclusion

 Marxism and cinema has another factor common to each other – the courage to envisage as well as envision a future in terms of Utopia - an aspiration of a society where conscience and ideal human conditions will reign over capitalist interests and inequality bred from it. Cinema is illusion, and to a lot of people, so as the socialist dream. It should be noted that Marx himself did not rely on the concept of Utopia, as he thought that utopic thought might represent a divergence from the revolutionary materiality and would embark people on imaginary satisfactions.[17] Marx's always stressed on the practical aspect of thought in order to resist the capitalist machinery. But later neo-Marxists like Marcuse and Jameson believed that the conditions of existence and the state of capitalism has changed. To them, it is rather the practical thinking of the capitalist system that gives it the strength to transfigure and transform its own opposition into its own image. As Jameson puts, much contrary to what Marx had to say, that it is the utopia that "…keeps alive the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one."[18] Walter Benjamin in his seminal work of *The Arcade Project* feels that however utopian the political significance of a film be, a time will come when films which are closer to them will win people's hearts. He acknowledges that fact that finding an art form that would encompass the best conscience in

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17   Adam Roberts, Frederic Jameson, Routledge, London,
      New Work, 2000.
18   ibid

the world.[19] In the *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon speaks on political education – the openness of the mind, its awakening, and nurturing of intelligence. Politically educating the mass does not mean that they will be made conscious through political speeches and information, but it is make a relentless effort to teach the masses passionately that "…everything depends on them."[20] Political consciousness reverberates the power of the masses to resist to the atrocities hurled at them. Cinema becomes a vehicle and a medium of prevocational thoughts, a stream of audio-visual consciousness that empowers the mass to negate as well to navigate into the depths of modern life.

19   Walter Benjamin, The Arcade Project, Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 1999.

20   Frantz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, Grove Press, New York, 1963.

On Political Representation of Women In India

Debanjana Chakravarti

Political representation is the basis of all modern democratic governments as the practice of direct democracy is a virtual impossibility in the context of the huge population of the various nation states. Having said this, it becomes imperative to explain the idea of political representation. According to Alifio Mastropaolo, "representation is a means to portray, to describe, to narrate and duplicate- to make present something that is and cannot be so. Hence the very word representation is problematic" (Mastropaolo in Badie et. al., 2011, p. 2274). Therefore it is all the more difficult to specify as to what political representation is. Political representation exists so that those governed can govern indirectly(ibid., p. 2273). It is also described as an institutionalized system of communication between the governing and the governed. Contrary to this idea, for Hans Kelsen and Joseph A Schumpeter, the idea of representation is nothing more than a 'fiction'. Kelsen believes that the idea of representation merely plays a legitimising role as it convinces those governed that they are governing. Whereas, Schumpeter, accuses it to be damaging as electoral mechanisms are opportunistic rather than aimed at the collective good (ibid., p. 2274).

That the issue of political representation would be significant in India is quite understandable. In the context of political empowerment of women in the 90's, also as women constitute almost half the population of India, the issue of representation of women in Indian politics becomes imperative. If we understand representation as an institutionalized relationship between the governing and the

governed, the idea of participation also becomes relevant in this context. Does representation enhance political participation? Is political participation confined to voting? Is it getting elected to the various legislative bodies? Does it mean occupying seats of authority and governance? Does it affect policy decisions which in turn would lead to the development of the community and thus empower women? Or is it all of these put together? This paper would attempt to relate all these questions to the issue of political representation of women in India.

The 'Pure Theory of Representation' rejects pluralism and denotes the population as a whole. According to this theory there is an 'impure' or pragmatic theory as well. This theory accepts the existence of particular interests. It also expects the convergence of the particular and the whole at a definite stage through various interactions, negotiations etc. (ibid., pp. 2276-2278).The latter theory is more acceptable in the sense that it at least tries to achieve what the former cannot. The political representation of the Indian women is a subject that can be theorised with the help of this Impure Theory of Representation. Thus, the interactions and negotiations that the 'Impure Theory of Representation' refers to, signify all forms of political participation. Politically it is no longer confined to the mere exercise of the right to franchise. It is much broader than that. According to Ambarish Mukhopadhyay, political participation is a process including all those actions and interactions that are directly or indirectly related with policy making or decision making for the society. Modern democracies are all representative democracies. These representative democracies require an institutional framework for it to run (Mukhopadhaya in Chakraborty, 2013). And without the participation of people in these institutional frameworks democracy remains a myth. In fact the extent of people's participation determines how representative a government is.

The framers of the constitution of India did not leave any stone unturned to guarantee an equal representative status for its women citizens in terms of the political rights. This equal representative status was earned by the Indian Women with their long and active participation in the political process of the nationalist struggle.

The socio-religious reform movements of the 19th century helped the Indian women enter the public space and thus provided the impetus to the very significant role they played in the anti colonial nationalist struggle against the mighty British Empire. In the initial years they remained passive participants providing moral and material supports under the veils and subsequently as active comrades. Swarna Kumari Debi was one of the two delegates elected from Bengal in the Congress session in 1890. A large number of women participated in the Swadeshi and Boycott Movements of 1905. They demonstrated, faced lathi charges and picketed shops selling foreign goods. In 1917 Annie Besant demanded voting rights for the women. It was Gandhiji who involved them successfully in the mass movements of Non Cooperation in1920's and Civil Disobedience in the 1930's.The All India Women's Conference was formed in 1926. Sarojini Naidu was the first elected woman President of the Indian National Congress. The women also served as revolutionary terrorists and participated in armed struggle against the colonial masters. In short we can say that the participation of women in the politics of the pre independence era was significant. Unfortunately as observed by Leela Kasturi and Veena Majumder in their article entitled ''Women and Indian nationalism'', important works on Indian Nationalism fail to give due cognisance to the contributions of the Indian women in the anti imperialist struggle against the mighty British empire and also do not analyse the significance attached by their participation in shaping the movement as a mass movement (Kasturi & Majumder, 2016). Therefore earning equal representative political status at the dawn of

the independent nation was no mean achievement for the Indian women. Today we have 11% women representation in the Lok Sabha and 10.7% representation in the Rajya Sabha. India ranks 108th out of 188 countries in terms of its women representation in the national parliament according to a study conducted by Inter Parliamentary Union. The IPU is an international organization of Parliaments that works for the establishment of representative democracies all over the world. The legislative representation of women at the national level is sparse keeping in mind the percentage of women population of the country. Those who come into prominence do so because of familial links. Women making into the ministerial ranks are abysmally low. It is only a few women that we have seen in the course of evolution of independent India who have been appointed as cabinet ministers. We should also note here that the women who are chosen as ministers are deliberately assigned such portfolios as women and child development etc. Parties fail to offer tickets to women as candidates for elections as they doubt their ability to win seats.

The number of women representatives has certainly increased at the grass root level in the post 73rd amendment phase. Today there are about 3 million women representatives in the Panchayats. However questions still remain regarding their decision making powers within the councils. A study in West Bengal and Rajasthan by the Institute of Management Studies (Calcutta) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that where women Panchayat members were active, there were robust programmes on water irrigation and infrastructure. The study conclusively states that in Panchayats where women were present there were more community beneficial projects than in the panchayats where they were absent. The initiative also states that in Panchayats with female presidents, the participation of women in the larger council rose to 3% in one year.

This could perhaps be attributed to the fact that women members could perhaps signify new hopes and possibilities not only for the women but the broader community as a whole as representatives.

The factors which impede women's participation and thus their representation in politics are varied and many. They are social, cultural, economic, geographic and political and others. Our patriarchal familial set ups keep women away from political commitments. The triple role of a mother, wife and a political representative becomes too much of a pressure to handle. They are unable or prevented from taking independent decisions affecting their lives. Lack of access to resources place the women at disadvantageous positions with regard to any form of competition with the men folk in the political arena. Even women who earn their own livelihood have no control over their earnings. The political parties in their turn prefer men over women and thus further seal the hopes of generating funds for the female contestants. Often patriarchal values prevent their exposure to public lives. The increasing criminalization of politics, use of violence and the fear of malice also keep women away. Often the geographical locations of the constituencies the representatives represent do not enable them to meet up to the demands of the electorate. The question of mobility acts as a deterrent factor. Besides, absence of such facilities as day care centres to take care of their children, compel women not to even think of a career in public life. Their varied roles keep them within the four walls of their houses and keep them away from politics which is indeed very demanding in nature. Prevalence of large scale illiteracy amongst women prevents them from keeping themselves informed. They are unaware of their rights and also are unable to master the art of governance as it requires adequate skills. The political parties while offering tickets to female candidates are mostly unwilling and at times when they are agreeable, it is because of male patronage. Not

having a significant number of them in the political institutions make it difficult for women to push their agendas. Women are comparatively less active and articulate. However if they are articulate they are deliberately marginalised by the powerful groups in those institutions by a policy of exclusion. Elected women representatives do not have an organised mass, women's collectives or NGO's and an informed and politically conscious women's constituency to support them. Women are normally denied positions of power. For those few who occupy them do so by being in charge of soft portfolios which are nothing but extensions of the typical stereotyped image of theirs. These portfolios do not attract enough resources to encourage women's development and thus relegate it to the background.

Studies on women's participation in Parliament show that, "women participate more actively in women's issues-health, welfare, atrocities against women, crimes like dowry and violation of human rights. In issues of defence, finance, politics etc. their participation is relatively limited" (ICRW & UN Women, 2012). Development dialogue, in a study carried out in four districts of West Bengal on 50 gram panchayat women members, asked women to describe their contribution to community development. Most of the women "claimed to have an active role in maintenance of roads, tube well construction and maintenance of school building, drainage system and water supply. Some of them had tried sincerely to work towards women's empowerment by taking initiatives in providing loans to rural women. Protesting against injustices like divorce, child marriage and molestations and helping villagers in general" (Sen, 2013).Such revelations in fact act as deterrents for the success of women candidates in the coming years when they seek mandate from the people. They seem to be representing particularistic interests emphasized by the Impure Theory of Representation. The remaining

40% were not involved and the reasons given were male resistance prevented their active participation, not allowing them to work in the Gram Panchayats. The various political parties have meagre representation of women within party decision making structures. Number of women representatives in public and other institutions as trade unions, cooperatives, mahila mandals, and other such registered bodies are also significantly low. Such exposures as these, can give women sufficient organisational experience, which in turn can boost up their confidence. It is also to be noted that the quality of roles they play in a few collectives are mostly in hospitality and office maintenance service.

To bring a greater number of women representatives into the realm of politics in India and to turn them into effective participants we need to provide them with education and training support in the art of governance. We need to sensitize the gender issue amongst the male population. Political parties need to exhibit greater sincerity in including women members within the party structures and equipping them with leadership qualities. It is absolutely imperative that spreading of literacy amongst women be undertaken at a large scale so as to equip them with independent abilities. The introduction of quota system amongst parties would also perhaps force them to give cognisance to women. In this regard we need to mention the example of Sweden where the quota system amongst the parties has done wonders in involving more women in the art of governance. We all know that the women's reservation bill is yet to be passed by the Lok Sabha, thus bringing into light the very question of sincerity of the various political parties to the cause of women's empowerment. In 2009, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, India, signed an agreement with Unifem, now UN Women, South Asia Regional Office to initiate a three-year programme entitled 'Promoting Women's Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia'. The

programme aims to empower elected women representatives in local governance to make public policy and resource allocation patterns responsive to women's human rights. The programme covers 5 countries of South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan). In India, the programme is co-owned by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India. The programme has been designed with the spirit to capture the specific issues and challenges with regard to women's political empowerment that each country experiences. This is a demand driven programme that seeks to understand and address issues of women's participation in local governance from the grassroots perspective. Generation of a body of knowledge on women's political leadership and governance in India and South Asia is one of the key outcomes of the programme (SARSWP, 2013). A few years back a three week certificate programme on political leadership was organised by IIM Bangalore along with Centre for Policy Research New Delhi. This programme aimed at building professional leaders by training them and equipping them with sufficient awareness in the related subject (IIMB & CSR Initiative, www.iimb.ernet.In/node/

The Indian political system largely proves the fact that the women's participation remains confined to that of extending their right to franchise. Beyond that they appear to be nonexistent keeping in mind their population strength. They are underrepresented and thus their participation is also quite low. As they are underrepresented their interests and demands also remain unfulfilled. With respect to India we can say that the act of representation do not even perform a legitimising role allowing its women citizens to be under the impression that they are governing. On the contrary it is Schumpeter who is proved right when he says that electoral mechanisms are opportunistic. In this case only catering to the patriarchal system of society and adversely affecting the idea of collective good of both

men and women alike.

Alifio Mastropaolo talks of the difficulties of representation. He repurposes the idea of direct democracy as a complement to promote greater participation of citizens in decision making. He proposes the idea of governance. Governance is a merger of representation and participation where the stake holders negotiate, and interact to get their interests served (Mastropaolo in Badie et. al., op. cit., p. 2285). Could this be a good alternative to include the women of India to be an equal constituent element of the Indian political system? But to do this again we need to tread along a difficult terrain of our indigenous socio cultural perspective.

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The Representation of Women in Postfeminist Discourse and its Link to Empowerment

Neeparanya Guha

'Postfeminism', which developed in the late twentieth century, is a concept which is celebrated by some and disliked by others (Genz and Brabon 2009: 1). It is a term used to refer to the cultural climate as well as young women since 1982 (Showden 2009: 168). In the 1980s, the media started labeling teenage girls and women in their twenties as the 'postfeminist' generation (Aronson 2033: 904). Postfeminism emerged in a number of academic, political and cultural contexts, from feminist analysis to media and popular journalism, neo-liberal discourse and postmodern theories (Genz and Brabon 2009: 1). The term postfeminism is sometimes used synonymously with terms and phrases such as backlash, new feminism, Girl Power, do-me feminism and third wave feminism (*ibid*). Postfeminist discourse views women as autonomous, empowered agents but such claims have been challenged by various scholars. According to Kumar and Varghese, empowerment implies the transition from a state of enforced powerlessness to that of power (Kumar and Varghese, 2005: 55). This chapter explores the representation of women within the postfeminism context and its link to empowerment.

Similar to the definition of feminism, which is categorized into different forms, it is not easy to provide a specific definition of postfeminism. Based on content analysis, Hall and Rodriguez in their analysis of postfeminism, identified that there has been a drastic reduction in the support for women's movement because some women : are becoming increasingly antifeminist; believe the

movement to be irrelevant; have adopted a "no, but …" version of feminism (2003: 878). The "no, but…" version of feminism is described by Ouellette as women being "reluctant to define themselves with the feminist label, but they approve of and indeed demand equal pay, economic independence, sexual freedom, and reproductive choice" (Cited in Hall and Rodriguez 2003: 879).

Further, postfeminists can be understood as a group of libertarian or individualistic feminists who strive towards the removal of state control from the personal sphere (Showden 2009: 169). Prominent postfeminists include Camille Paglia, Cathy Young and Rene Denfeld. On the cultural level, they act towards reviving traditional femininity and denounce the "victim feminism" of second wave feminism. According to the postfeminists, feminism has overemphasized on the victimization of women. They are of the opinion that women as a unit possess significant social power. The concept of "victim feminism" and "power feminism" was developed by Naomi Wolf in her book *Fire with Fire* (*ibid*169- 172). According to her, victim feminism" "Urges women to identify with powerlessness even at the expense of taking responsibility for the power they do possess" (Wolf 1993: 148). Power feminism is depicted as a pro-sex, individualistic version of feminism which asserts that women have the capacity for self-definition which they need to exploit (Genz and Brabon 2009:64). Second wave feminism's emphasis on women's victimization as a unifying political feature is viewed as outdated and disempowering. The postfeminists argue that it should be replaced with the empowering power feminism (*ibid*). The question remains, does women living a postfeminist life actually empowered?

In the early 1990s, the creation of postfeminism as a social category is highlighted by three stories published in the *Time: Onward Woman!, The Road to Equality* and *The War against Feminism* (Hall and Rodriguez 2003: 879). The cover story of *The War against*

Feminism stated that "in popular culture, in politics- and among ordinary women- a backlash has hit the women's movement." (Cited in Hall and Rodriguez 2003: 879). Postfeminism is equated with a media-driven and anti-feminist backlash which involves the disapproval of feminist goals (Genz and Brabon 2009: 51). The concept of backlash had been dealt extensively by Susan Faludi in her book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. Backlash is seen to be propagated by the media which regards feminism responsible for a number of female troubles and illnesses, from depression to infertility and depicts feminism as "women's worst enemy" Critics argued that the media-driven anti-feminist backlash strived to reverse the achievements of the feminist movement (*ibid* 51-53). According to Faludi, the backlash is a "preemptive strike" for stopping women in reaching full equality (Faludi 1991: XX). The backlash argument consists of the assertion that every time feminism accelerated, a whole set of repressive social, political, ideological and economic forces worked together to constrain it (Coppock et a.l 1995: 6). According to Faludi, 'Just when record number of younger women were supporting feminist goals in the mid-1980s…and a majority of all women were calling themselves feminists, the media declared that "post-feminism" was the new story- complete with a younger generation who supposedly reviled the women's movement' (Cited in Genz and Brabon 2009: 55). She believes that "post-feminism is the backlash. Any movement or philosophy which defines itself as post whatever came before is bound to be reactive. In most cases it is also reactionary" (Cited in *ibid* 16).

When it comes to the definition of postfeminism, Rosalind Gill also observes that there is little consensus regarding its definition, ranging from it representing a epistemological de-linking with second wave feminism to a shift to third wave feminism and depicting backlash (Gill 2007: 147). According to her, postfeminism can be

comprehended as a distinct sensibility consisting of certain themes which are interrelated. These are: "femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; an emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and self-discipline; a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; and a resurgence of ideas about natural sex difference" (*ibid*).

- Femininity as a bodily property – Postfeminist media culture is characterized by its excessive preoccupation with the female body. Femininity is understood as a bodily property instead of a psychological, structural or social one. The media equates a woman's primary source of identity to the possession of a 'sexy body' while avoiding the caring and nurturing characteristics of women as the key to femininity. The body of women is portrayed not only as their source of power but also as something which requires constant surveillance, discipline and monitoring for fitting into shallow judgments of attractiveness (*ibid* 149).

- From objectification to subjectification – Women are not directly objectified but presented as active sexual subjects who opt to portray themselves in an apparent objectified way as it matches their liberated interests. Gill describes it to be a deeper or higher type of exploitation as power is not forced upon from outside but acts in construction of female subjectivity. Women are called to create a certain kind of self attached with agency only on the condition that they construct themselves as a subject close to male fantasy. For Gill, this implies that "sexual objectification can be (re)presented not as something done to women by some men, but as the freely chosen wish of active, confident, assertive female subjects" (*ibid* 151-153). Recently, there have been widespread debates regarding celebrity Kim Kardashian West's naked selfie which is posted on a social networking site. Journalist Piers Morgan's reaction to it is the statement that "Feminism is now

dead" (Harper's BAZAAR 2016). In her interview with magazine Harper's BAZAAR, American actress and political activist Jane Fonda said, "One of the problems that feminism is trying to address is the objectification of women as sex objects, so I think posting a nude picture of yourself doesn't exactly help that. I think it plays into the objectification of women" (*ibid*).

- Discipline and self-surveillance – Postfeminist media culture is characterized by the stress upon self-monitoring, self-surveillance and self-discipline (Gill 2007: 155). Gill describes that from sending a text message to choosing a drink, not a single part of a woman's life is detached from the need to work on oneself and self-survey. Not only the body, but also the self is required to be under constant surveillance (*ibid* 155- 156).

- Individualism and empowerment – Postfemninist discourses consist of the notion that the practices of women are chosen freely by them, presenting them as empowered, autonomous agents, free from power imbalances and inequalities. Notions such as 'pleasing oneself' and 'being oneself' are important features of postfeminist sensibility' It avoids important questions such as how the ideals of beauty internalized by women are socially-constructed (*ibid* 153- 154).

- Makeover paradigm – Postfeminist media culture is characterized by a makeover paradigm which requires women to believe that their life is either flawed or lacking in some form and that it is open to transformation and reinvention by listening to relationship, lifestyle or design experts and by adopting appropriate and modified consumption patterns (*ibid* 156).

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1 Hookup – Sexual experience with a friend, an acquaintance or a stranger. (Grello et al. 2006:255; Paul et al. 2000:76; Lovejoy 2012:1) It is a sexual relationship devoid of romance, in which the partners do not refer to each other as girlfriend or boyfriend. (Grello et al. 2006:255)

Resurgence of notions about sex difference – Postfeminist media culture is characterized by the resurgence of notions of natural sex difference, which is visible in all forms of media from advertisement to newspapers, popular fiction and talk shows. Gill argues that such discourses act to "(re-) eroticize power relations between men and women". Not only it portrays such difference as sexy but also it can be utilized in strengthening existing inequalities by describing them as inevitable and pleasurable. (*ibid* 158-159). Bulter in her study of hookup1 culture in colleges equates the above mentioned characteristics of postfeminism to the characteristics of hookup culture which act together in hiding existing and even new types of inequalities (2013 XII).

Postfeminism is often used synonymously with 'new feminism' which provides a celebratory and optimistic image of an assertive and confident lot of women who report of success and achievement in both the private and public sector (Genz and Brabon 2009: 64).

However, it has also been asserted that postfeminism cannot be called "new feminism' as it involves the threat of backlash and not something pioneering and revolutionary while new feminism refers to a form of feminism which is distinct from and beyond the older version of feminism (*ibid* 65). New Feminism can be equated with other versions of individual agency found in the late twentieth-century which in Giddens words encourage subjects to involve in "reflexive project of the self" and "forge their identities beyond/outside established social categories" (Cited in *ibid* 66, *ibid* 66). Critics are of the opinion that new feminism lacks political seriousness and while emphasizing on celebrating female power, it might work to reject female vulnerability and victimization (*ibid* 68).

Postfeminism is also equated with the concept of 'Girl Power' which was promoted by a group of female singers named Spice Girls in the 1990s (Genz and Brabon 2009: 76). It involves a combination of female individualism and independence with an open display of

sexuality/femininity (*ibid* 77). To become 'Girlie' is to assert that traditional systems of heterosexual power relations are pleasurable rather than degrading and women should celebrate feminine sexuality (Showden 2009: 176). Girlies are of the opinion that they can compete alongside men and gain equality without giving up feminine attributes and that their assertiveness and empowerment are linked to feminine identities (Genz and Brabon 2009: 77). In Girlie discourse, agency and emancipation are often linked to the ability to purchase and to consumer culture and women's agentive powers are linked to consumption of goods and services associated with sexuality/femininity. Although Girlies believe that they are free to create their identities and appearances, critics argue that their choices are narrow as "the Girlie look is similar to…patriarchal ideals of feminine beauty". According to Gill, 'sexual objectification can be presented not as something done to women by some men, but as the freely chosen wish of active…female subjects" It is argued that the popularity of Girl Power can be attributed to its absence of threat to the existing social structure and its commoditizing and individualizing effects that undermine feminist politics (*ibid* 79-80).

'Do-me feminism' is also often used synonymously with postfeminism. It views sexual freedom as essential for female emancipation and independence (Genz and Brabon 2009: 91). It initially appeared in men's magazine in the 1990s. The do-me feminists make use of their sexuality and physical appearance in order to attain professional and personal goals and to obtain control over their lives. They want to disassociate themselves from anti-sex feminist positions by celebrating sexuality and feminine adornment. "The increasing sexualization of female representations in popular culture" has been criticized by Ariel Levy by using terms such as 'raunch culture' and 'female chauvinistic pigs'. Raunch culture refers to a highly sexualized culture which propagates discourses about sexuality and representations of sex across a wide range of mass media (*ibid* 91-101). It involves reemploying of old gender

norms (Burkett and Hamilton 2012: 816). Levy describes female chauvinistic pigs as "women who make sex objects of other women" and of themselves (Levy 2005:4). Helford criticized the notion of feminine/sexual empowerment as being a "new arrangement of an old song" that acts in mobilizing women's femininity and sexuality in the service of the status quo and patriarchal agenda (Cited in Genz and Brabon 2009:97). According to Janet Lee, this empowered sexy/feminine woman can be comprehended as a media persona which is created for being together with patriarchy (*ibid*). Many feminist scholars hold the view that contemporary sexual relations continue to be defined by ideals which are male-privileging and are limited by hidden pressures in such a way that make young women's sexual freedom very difficult to enact (Burkett and Hamilton 2012: 816). According to Burkett and Hamilton, despite the depictions of assertive and sexually free women, statistics in Australia revealed that women in the age group 16-25 are most prone to sexual violence. It has also been found that coerced and unwanted sexual activities are quite commonly faced by women and are often normalized within heterosexual relations (*ibid*).

'Third-wave feminism', a phrase coined by Rebecca Walker is discernibly informed by postfeminism, especially in its power feminism optimism and girlie aesthetic (Showden 2009: 178-179). However, the third-wave feminists believe postfeminism to be a patriarchal/conservative discourse while third-wave feminism is defined as an emerging political movement which has strong affiliations to the theory and activism of second-wave feminism (Genz and Brabon 2009: 156). At the same time, third-wave feminism and postfeminism share the similarity of challenging the anti-feminine stance of second-wave feminism (*ibid* 161).

Postfeminist discourse celebrates femininity/sexuality and represents women as autonomous and empowered in a postfeminist era. Even though women's progress in the current era cannot be

denied, such an understanding should be taken with a grain of salt. Scholars argue that patriarchal forces operate implicitly to preserve gender inequality, sometimes employing newer forms of mechanisms to ensure its persistence and to promote women's disempowerment. Postfeminism has been understood by many as such a mechanism. According to Elizabeth Douvan, "the privilege associated with male gender will not disappear any time soon" (Cited in Benkert 1996: 214). In both the developed and the developing countries, the influence of the patriarchal forces remains quite discernable. In most cases, women within a postfeminist culture cannot be equated to empowered individuals because of the continuing influence of patriarchal forces and ideals over their lives. In the beginning of the chapter, empowerment was linked to the transition from a state of enforced powerlessness to that of power. In most situations, women continue to remain powerless both within and outside a postfeminist context, with patriarchal forces monitoring their lives and hence cannot be understood as fully empowered individuals. This chapter explored the postfeminist discourse and the representation on women within the postfeminist context along with the discussion of terms and phrases used synonymously with postfeminism.

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