

**Deepa Mehta's Elemental Trilogy and the Depiction of
Indian Culture in Select Filmic Adaptations**

**A
Thesis**

Submitted to



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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitles Deepa Mehta's Elemental Trilogy and The Depiction of Indian Culture in Select Filmic Adaptations submitted for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my original work. All the ideas and references are duly acknowledged. It does not contain any other work for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or institution.

I hereby confirm that I have carefully checked the final version of printed and softcopy of the thesis for the completeness and for the incorporation of all the valuable suggestions of Doctoral Board of the University.

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- 3) The work is original contribution of the candidate.
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Introduction

The introductory part of the thesis brings into the limelight the title of the thesis, the research objectives, the research methodology and the glimpse of the chapters. The present thesis entitled “Deepa Mehta’s Elemental Trilogy and The Depiction of Indian Culture in Select Filmic Adaptations” aims to investigate the reasons, issues, backlash and awakening of the cultural and traditional oppression. The trilogy has its location in India and the history from past to present. The characters in the trilogy are mostly national and there is hardly any foreign character portrayed in the trilogy. However, *Fire* deals with the contemporary issues of postmodern feminism, *Earth* has the focus on nineteen forties and the division of subcontinent into two different countries and *Water* has its focus on the social institutions and deprivation of women especially widows of nineteen thirties of India. All the films deal with the women centric issues such as body, individuality and sexuality. The Indian society gives the resonance to the trilogy as the stories are beautifully crafted and woven together under the India cultural and traditional structure. The present thesis explores the issues and reasons of objectification, materialization of body, gender construction, and suppression of desires, physical violence and sexuality in *Fire*, *Water*, and *Earth* through the lens of Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* and Ti-Grace Atkinson’s *Radical Feminism*.

The objectives of the study are:

- 1) To critically analyze the elemental trilogy of Deepa Mehta against the backdrop of Indian cinema.

- 2) To look at Indian culture as portrayed in elemental trilogy through Indian cinema and the variations made in order to cater to the western gaze.
- 3) To evaluate Deepa Mehta's trilogy with reference to cultural studies.
- 4) To explore the characters of elemental trilogy in relation to the mythology and religion.

In the present thesis, the theory of gender studies and feminism given by Judith Butler and Ti-Grace Atkinson have been applied to the select films in order to achieve the objectives. It has been examined that the theories of gender studies and the feminism are not fresh ideas and concepts, but the different critics and writers have not concentrated much on these theoretical perspectives to analyze the select films of Deepa Mehta. The application of Judith Butler's gender performativity, materiality of the body, gender identity and Ti-Grace Atkinson's radical feminism which traces the reasons of class in the society and the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed.

Ti-Grace Atkinson is a philosopher, author and an American radical feminist whose writings deal with the oppression of women in the society. Inspired by Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* which led her to meet Betty Friedan who along with Atkinson founded the National Organization for Women. According to Ti-Grace Atkinson, society is dominated with the ideology of men and society and men both act as an oppressor which constantly oppress the women. The category of men is itself a society which is an enemy of women individuality and continuously suppresses the other half of the society which are women. There are established institutions in the society to control and subordinate the women and since the society and the men are synonymous to each other, women have always scared to face off

the men. The fear of face off and not seeking the detailed perception of the ideological strategies of men have kept the women subordinated to men which brought the stagnation to the progress of women in the society. While the displeasure amongst the women in the society and to address this displeasure and unhappiness, it states that women in the society make a separate class, but there has never been any casual or political analysis of class in the society. For the political analysis of the society, the affliction and oppression of women have never been taken into consideration. If women have ever tried to solve the problems, they have offered the dilemmas rather than the solutions. Women who supported the traditional feminism, debated and fought for the equality in the society which gave birth to the dilemma because of the reason that women are entirely different from the men in functionality and equality in the society with men would impact the rights of women. It offers equality in treatment in the unequal functionality. The dilemma offers the affliction and oppression of women in the society as the masters persecute the slaves.

Judith Butler is a famous American philosopher and gender theorist who developed the theory of gender and performativity in her notable works *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* which influenced the feminist theory and these notable works are mostly studied in the field of cinema studies to emphasize the gender and performative discourses. Her writings deal with the assumption that the behavior of certain gender is natural as she analyses the fact that the learned behavior and performance of a gender that are associated to the masculinity and femininity are the result of repetition of acts and performances the normative discourse of the society imposes on the human beings. Through her notable works, she develops the

theoretical assumption of cultural offshoot which details the gender as socially constructed. She exhibits that any gendered behavior is the result of constant repetition of actions constituted by speech and performance. There is no underlying essence of the gender which produces the gendered behavior, rather it is the constant series of actions and performances which at certain point develops an illusion that the underlying essence and nature exists

Her assertion is that the identity of an individual is constituted by performances and sex is also socially constructed. In her works, she questions the validity of the gender and the oppression of certain class in the society. She develops her doubt regarding the category of gendered individuality and the conventional political authority which aims at the protection of women interests, she asserts that instead of the destabilization of different categories in the society through the deviation in the behavior of gender which expresses the artificiality of the roles performed by certain genders, the most subversive agent is the gender parody which destabilizes the fakeness of the gender and associations related to sex, gender and sexuality.

Identity formation has always been the central concern in the cultural and traditional literature, however, Judith Butler, a reclaimed revolutionary writer and critic of gender formation and cultural identity, deals with the subjectivity of gender in the society. She criticizes the notions of cultural identity as an agency which is achieved through the input to the environment of the society and tradition, she asserts that cultural identity develops with the repetition of performance in the society and human beings perform the actions in the society which are central to the exertion and pressure of the discourse of normalcy that regulates the society. The

post structural view of Butler on the stem of gender formation and the impact of it on the lives of human beings in the society and culture approaches the interchanging junction and nature of female which offers a critique to the ambiguous sexual orientation of women. To further analyze the ideas of Butler on the modern society, the close observation and examination is encouraged to seek out the underlying forces and devices which create the discourse, a normative discourse to regulate the power, culture and gender socialization in the society. The stand of Butler on the identity formation is widely different as she offers an enigmatic look on the identity formation which is based on the constant repetition of performances and actions. These performances are the actions which human beings in the society, especially men and women express in the society. Furthermore, the gender identity is the purely produced and constructed by the society which is politically active regarding the historical overview on the patriarchal norms and other normative laws of the society. Gender and cultural identity is always constructed and produced by the society which is later shaped through the tradition, culture and regulatory laws of the society that are repeated time and time again. The continuous and constant repetition of actions performed by men and women in the society make them the subjects of identity.

The different critics and writers have assessed the trilogy from different perspectives and opinions, for instance, *Fire* has been studied and assessed from the different positions by different writers such as social and traditional resentment to the Indian social codes and institution where an ample number of women are deprived from their rights (Ebert 2), tearful plea of women self-fortitude which strikes the viewers throughout (Addiego 1), presentation of India in different angles, such as, traditional India, spiritual India and modern India (Keller 1), emerging

relationship between Radha and Sita which strictly disappoints the traditional order of the family and austere moral codes (Stack 1), mixture of western ideology regarding the sexual role playing, social stratum and social cultural and traditional collaboration of Indian cinema which hardly consigns female characters to the sexual objects (Baumgarten 1), a critique to the Indian society under the guise of moral and traditional codes which trap the women into the stigma of patriarchy (Phipps 1), amalgamation of India epic *Ramayana* and Indian mysticism which constantly flow throughout the film (Gelder 1), The realistic approach of the portrayal of class based institutionalized tradition bound relationship between each other which generates a loathing attitude among the viewers regarding the characters (Wijegunasingha 1), critique of patriarchy to identify women images on either side (John and Niranjana 3), representation of cultural commodity that concedes the viewers to absorb the regressive Indian masculinity and female love to each other (Goswami 4), Indian patriarchal behavior towards the Indian woman and their sexuality (Burton 4), suppressed under the oppression of patriarchy (Gairola 5), an illustration to trace out the criticism against the social and cultural hierarchies of Indian society (Benarjee 2), the institution of marriage is faulty due to which repression on sexual identities arise in the society (Aguiar 2), The cultural identity for the lesbians and bisexuals (Davidescu 3), women characters of Indian society who reclaim their cultural identity (Moodley 2).

Earth has been assessed by different writers and critics from the different perspectives, such as intensity of religious hatred and savagery due to the politics of war and religion (Ebert 1), life for life and blood for blood violence (Holden 1), the division on the grounds of the religion which led the bloodshed and mass killings (Gothmann 1), the powerful and horrendous personal experience (Phillips 1),

violence and uprising led by the partition of India in 1947 by the British Empire (Frederic and Brussat 1), is loaded with political, social, cultural and psychological issues (Ansari 1), the second among the most terrible and bloodshed in the world following the holocaust (Verma 1), film adaptation (Bluestone 1), The deepening sadness and horrendous series of incidents with the touch of personal experience (Urban 1), multiple layers of desire in relation to body (Tripathy 145), haunted memories and the partition effects (Barenscoff 6), the portrayal of mass murder, violation and killing (Uraizee 11), transaction of novel into a motion picture (Ghodake 61), character of Lenny on the larger scale (Budde 44), portrayal and representation of nationhood, patriotism and modernity (Lichtner and Bandyopadhyay 439).

In the like manner *Water* has been assessed by different writers and critics from the different perspectives, such as life of Indian woman as conditional on poverty and social denial (Ebert 2), the conflict of the people between their religious faith and self-consciousness (Keller 1), widows of Indian society treated as the second class citizens of the society (Berardnelli 1), *Water* represents the melancholy and mournful phase of Indian history (Stein 1), plight of the widows who are dejected by the society for economic and personal gains (Catsoulis 1), institutionalized suppression and the social deprivation faced by the widows of India (Frederic and Brussat 1), rebel against the social morals and established ways of the society which allow the tradition and culture combined with religion to suppress a particular class in the Indian society (Robinson 1), *Water* serves a rebellion against the social injustice, religious suppression and sexual discrimination and dogmatism (Wijesiriwardena and Zora 1), social stance of India in nineteen thirties (Caldwell

1), inhuman treatment and social outcast of the widows in Indian society (Baumgarten 1), Hindu tradition of disdain, segregation and separation of widows from the society (Johnson 1), artistic concern over the contemporary social issues, particularly the inhuman treatment to the widows and to women as well (Burton 5), *Water* unveils the truth of rigid ancient Indian traditional and religious laws (Elison 3), *Water* uncovers the social deprivation, familial dejection and poverty ridden widows who, due to the inhuman treatment towards them, are forced to live in the ashrams and serve for the prostitution (Kulla 55), Indian social patriarchal context which is of stance that the woman are mere objects of reproduction (Mukherjee 47).

The first chapter of the present thesis is entitled as “Brief Candle” and the second Chapter is entitled as “Historical Roots of the Great Elements fo Human Body” and the further chapters of the thesis are based on the year of making and release of the films. For instance, the film *Fire* is released in 1996 and this film is analyzed in the third chapter, *Earth* is released in 1998 and it is analyzed in the fourth chapter, and *Water* is released in 2005 and it is analyzed in the fifth chapter and finally all the findings and outcome from above discussed chapters are concluded in the last chapter which is entitled as “Conclusion”. The first chapter entitled as “Brief Candle” introduces the emergence of film theory and cinema studies which covers the time to time developments in the cinema studies throughout the world. Then, the chapter details the world cinema in decade wise with special focus on the evolution of Indian cinema. Then, the chapter details the birth of Indian cinema and major changes and shifts which came over the period of time. Then, the chapter details the major filmmakers of Indian cinema, their occupation and their contribution to the Indian parallel cinema. Then, the chapter sheds light on Deepa Mehta as a filmmaker and her contribution to the cinema. The chapter then details

the works of Deepa Mehta from the vantage point of critics and finally, the chapter sheds light on the theorists and their theories applied in the select trilogy.

The second chapter “Historical Roots of the Great Elements of Human Body” brings into the limelight the major religious interpretations regarding the elements inscribed to the human body. The evolution of the human creation and the composition of the human body.

The third chapter *Fire* brings into the limelight the first film *Fire* which gives a brief introduction on the making and release of the film. Then, the chapter introduces the film from the opinion and perspective of different writers and critics. Then, the chapter gives an analysis of the film with the applicability of Judith Butler’s ideas and concepts from *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

The fourth chapter *Earth* brings into the limelight the second film *Earth* which gives a brief introduction on the making and release of the film. Then, the chapter introduces the film from the opinion and perspective of different writers and critics. Then, the chapter gives an analysis of the film with the applicability of Judith Butler’s ideas and concepts from *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*

The fifth chapter *Water* brings into the limelight the third film of the trilogy, *Water* which gives a brief introduction on the making and release of the film. Then, the chapter introduces the film from the opinion and perspective of different writers and critics. Then, the chapter gives an analysis of the film with the applicability of Ti-Grace Atkinson’s ideas and concepts from *Radical Feminism*.

The last segment of the thesis entitled as “Conclusion” which brings into the limelight the accomplishment of the research objectives, the applicability and importance of the study, the contribution of the thesis to the world of literature and to the society as well and the further scope of the study into the field of culture and tradition.

Chapter 1

Brief Candle

Film studies or film theory can best be explained as a set of interpretations and frameworks that have emerged from time to time in order to facilitate a better understanding of films. The effect of films and how they are made, generate meaning in contemporary times. The field of cinema studies is a highly dynamic field of research in which one encounters a number of different theories regarding film or cinema studies to usher in discernment. In other words, film scholars have never affirmed only a single theory into the field of cinema studies. Film theory has been labelled as a self-contained field of inquiry because it has always acquired from the different fields of traditional art, philosophy, and literature and more specifically from linguistic theories, literary theory and socio economic theories.

The combat and confrontation of these diverse theoretical approaches between the theorists resulted into an embellishment of some theories and the abatement of others. This constant fluctuation and wave has pushed cinema studies forward. The lack of a master narrative or master theory in cinema studies is no longer a drawback or weakness. Before the expansion of cinema studies into the departments of various universities, the already existing cinema acers such as Hugo Munsterberg, Bela Balasz, and Rudolf Arnheim etcetera have assigned generously an early structure of cinema and its effects on audience. During the beginning of 1960s, film theory championed a set of standards to understand the medium of cinema in a better way. In relation to raise general questions regarding the role and phenomena of cinema studies, film theorists have always tried their hands to extol the ways films function in the contemporary societies, how they impart meaning and

provide different functionalities and effect on the spectator. Examining of different theoretical questions regarding the medium helps one to understand the phenomena of cinema studies, its functionality, structure and applicability. To put forth the evolution of cinema studies, one may easily argue the beginning of 1960s marked an evolution of film studies.

In the contemporary times, film theory is embedded in larger university departments throughout the world as an academic field of research. The entrenchment of cinema studies into the various university departments inhabited during the beginning of the decade 1960. The research scholars of different fields of humanities, imported the cinema studies into the fields of humanities. The department of humanities had undergone a massive expansion. By the beginning of a new decade, 1970s, film studies had actually taken its roots into the departments of major universities throughout the North America. Thus the acceptance of film studies by the universities as an academic field of study and research brought about an inauguration of fully blown film studies departments in the universities and accreditation of cinema studies as an intellectual and rational acreage of research and study.

By the course of time, film studies in the universities as a separate course escalated very swiftly due to an unmatched wave of cinephilia which has impregnated the stance of American culture. During 1960s, the young generation audience feverishly appreciated the films with different backgrounds and modes. The prime concern of film theorists was to legitimate the cinema as an art and to inquire and identify the features and effects of the cinema. Rudolf Arnheim, a distinguished philosopher, psychologist and film critic who explored the cognitive

basis of an art through his groundbreaking works. Rudolf Arnheim is considered an intellectual figure in cinema studies, and is famously known for his best work *Film as Art* (1957). He restricts his discussion primarily to the silent era when cinema was evolving as a unique entity in the field of visual arts. He argues that photographs and film have something more than mechanical reproductions when analyzed within the framework of photographic process. Furthermore, he discussed a large number of aesthetic choices to alter the image, such as camera placement on the object, camera lens, lighting, camera angle etcetera. His focus was to understand the relationship between art and visual perception. Arnheim writes in his famous work *Film as Art*:

If a mechanical reproduction of reality, made by machine, could be art, then the theory was wrong. In other words it was the precarious encounter of reality and art that teased me into action. I undertook to show in detail how the very properties that make photography and film fall short of perfect reproduction can act as the necessary modes of an artistic medium. (Arnheim 3)

For Rudolf Arnheim, silent films had capacity to transform the ways in which human beings perceive things through black and white photography, camera angles and editing. The film theorists have always made an attempt to examine the ways in which cinema differentiates from other arts. With the passage of time, different theorists have identified this distinction differently.

Jean Epstein, a French filmmaker and film theorist of silent era, famously known for his concept of photogenie which describes the soul of cinema. The concept of photogenie can best be explained as an approach of filmmaking. "I would describe as photogenic any aspect of things, beings or souls whose moral character

is enhanced by filmic reproduction. And any aspect not enhanced by filmic reproduction is not photogenic, plays no part in the art of cinema” (Epstein, 173). Furthermore, Epstein discussed three distinguished features of photogenic which are the revelation of hidden features; transparency, that is to shun away any kind of reflexivity the audience may apprehend; and tragedy, which is fundamentally based on the consistency of the movement.

Jean Epstein stands among the first to transcribe cinema from a theory to practice. It was Epstein who formed what we now call as French Impressionism. In Epstein’s film *Coeur Fidele* English titled as *Faithful Heart* (1923), a melodramatic film extolls the tale of counter romance and is set against the backdrop of Marseille docks. The film is made with an application of point of view shots, close ups and rhythmic editing. Almost every shot of the film is based on an experiment which is to arouse the sense of photogenic. The film accustoms with the notion of realities that enhance the techniques such as editing, close ups, superimpositions etcetera. The experimental techniques of realities balance the film throughout. The use of rhythmic editing to escalate the situation of love triangle and the use of dramatic lighting and camera lens to transfer the message of the film. Large number of attempts outweighs the reality of using natural lights and real world locations. The film with photogenic as an ingredient, servers the reflections to heightened the unknown emotions of romance through distinctive cinematic techniques.

Bela Balazs, a Hungarian film critic, playwright, poet and director famously known for his idea of close ups. For Bela Balazs, close ups were the most important and essential aspect of filmic art which tears it apart from other arts, most importantly from theatre art. Balazs writes that the moving images have the capacity

to bring back the body language and human expressions which have been subdued since long ago by bookish culture. Facial expressions for Bela Balazs are the most essential and personal demonstrations of the human beings, more personal than the words and speech itself. Facial language is rarely possible to be suppressed or controlled. So, the close ups, depicting the facial expressions, is an essential part of the film. Dalle Vacche quotes Balazs in *The visual turn: classical film theory and art history* as:

Every art always deals with human beings. To paraphrase Marx: “the root of all art is man.” When the film close up strips the veil of our imperceptiveness and insensitivity from the hidden little things and shows us the face of the objects, it still shows us man, for what makes objects expressive are the human expressions projected onto them. The objects only reflect pour own selves and this is what distinguishes art from scientific knowledge. When we use face of things, we do what the ancients did in creating gods in man’s image and breathing a human soul into them. The close ups of the film are the creative instruments of this mighty visual anthropomorphism. (qtd. in Vacche 119)

Germaine Dulac, a French filmmaker, best known for her groundbreaking experimental film *The Seashell and The Clergyman* (1928), commonly considered as the first surrealist film which depicts the clergyman fantasizing erotic emotions. Dulac emphasized the audience to create the things as per their spirit. Dulac’s idea of pure cinema was based on the rhythm and the movement. Dulac’s personal approach of filmmaking had been surrealism, impressionism, and abstract cinema.

The use of settings and other essential devices of filmmaking had always been realistic and were relied on pure atmospheric effects.

Sergei Eisenstein, a Russian filmmaker and film theorist, best known for his concept of montage. Eisenstein is often considered the father of montage, which an editing technique to edit the fast paced sequences of the shots in order to transfer the thematic proximity. Montage is an attempt to understand and generate the cinema which rules on the editing. Eisenstein believed that the montage functions as nerve of the cinema as in the human body, and to figure out the nature of montage is to solve all the obstacles and problems of cinema.

The primary focus of the montage is on the series of images which are constituted together to transmit the complex of ideas in order to make an intellectual and ideological power of the film. Eisenstein emphasized to theorize the film editing as a discord of ideas and images. He achieved such a fame in the field of editing that one would always want to put forth his ideas of theory and then to put forward how he puts it into practice. Eisenstein categorizes the theory of montage into five different types which are as: metric montage, rhythmic montage, tonal montage, overtone montage, and intellectual montage. Furthermore, Eisenstein in his famous works such as *Beyond the Shot* (1929), *The Dramaturgy of the Film Form* (1949), and *The Fourth Dimension in Cinema* (1929) emphasized to trace out the abstract concept in the series of images when composed correctly by the filmmaker. He writes in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* as:

The object of the imagery and the law of structure, by which it is represented, can coincide. This would be the simplest of cases, and the compositional problem in such an aspect more or less takes care

of itself. This is the simplest type of structure: “sorrowful sorrows,” “joyful joy,” “a marching march,” etc. In other words: the hero sorrows and in unison with him sorrows nature and lighting, sometimes the composition of the shot, and (more rarely) the rhythm of the montage but most after all, we just add sad music to it. The same thing happens when we handle “joyful joy,” and other similar simplicities. (Eisenstein 151)

Dziga Vertov, a well-known Russian film theorist and documentary filmmaker, famously known for his groundbreaking masterpiece *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), depicts one day of Odessa and Moscow which revolutionized the history of world cinema. Vertov developed the concept of cine eye, which is an editing or the method of montage to fetch out the new ways of interpretation. He was more concerned on the transformation of the viewers’ daily lives in order to change the life itself. According to Dziga Vertov, the concept of cine eye would assist an evolution of contemporary man into more definite form. Vertov described that the camera records not only what is happening but it impels us to penetrate deeply into the visuals. Vertov believed that the films were more romantic due to the overwhelming influence of literature, music, and art which became an obstacle for a man to evolve more higher and furthermore, subdued man’s urge of relationship with machines.

Dziga Vertov’s inner urge was to shun the ways of prerevolutionary filmmaking process in order to adapt the new ways based on the rhythms of machines. Vertov writes in his famous *Kino-Eye: the Writings of Dziga Vertov* as:

I am a kino eye, I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it. Now and forever, I free myself from human immobility, I am in constant motion, I draw near, then away from objects, I crawl under, I climb onto them. I move apace with the muzzle of a galloping horse, I plunge full speed into a crowd. I outstrip running soldiers, I fall on my back, I ascend with an airplane, I plunge and soar together with plunging and soaring bodies. Now, I, a camera, fling myself along their resultant, maneuvering in the chaos of movement, recording movement, starting with movements composed of the most complex combinations. Freed from the rule of sixteen seventeen frames per second, free of the limits of space and time, I put together any given points in the universe no matter where I have recorded them. My path leads to the creation of the fresh perception of the world. I decipher in a new way a world unknown to you. (17)

Andre Bazin, a renowned French filmmaker, film theorist, critic, and the co-founder of the famous French film magazine *Cahiers du Cinema*. Bazin believed in the depiction of objective reality with an emphasis on deep focus, wide shots and consistency on mise en scenes over visual effects. Having been influenced by the personalism, Bazin discussed that the film must represent the director's own vision which later influenced the evolution of auteur theory. Bazin is often considered as the father of auteurism due to his appreciation of films through the vision of an auteur, which is usually meant to be the filmmaker.

Auteur theory gained popularity in America during 1960s through the influential ideas of Andrew Sarris, who constructed the concept of auteur theory. According to Sarris, auteur theory emphasizes that the filmmaker who visualizes all the essential audio and visual aspects of the film, is solely considered the author of the film than that of the script writer. The basic essential visual aspects of the film such as shots, long takes, close ups, camera angles, lighting etcetera bring out the real message of the film rather than the plot construction. Sarris, considers the film-director's oeuvre and stylistic signature and attempts to legitimate the artist who fights against the limitations imposed on him. During 1980s, some new shifts in the field of film studies took place with prime concern over the interaction between film and audience in order to legitimate film as a cultural concern. This new foci, however, intermingled film studies into a giant factory called as cultural studies.

Indian cinema has a long history dated back to the Lumiere brothers. In the 19th century, Lumiere Brothers sent one of their worker namely Marius Sestier to screen their short films to the British audience at the Watson hotel Mumbai (then Bombay). Among the audience was one still photographer of India namely Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatavdekar also known as Save Data, was so influenced by the Lumiere Brothers short film Production that he ordered a camera directly from England for the purpose of film production and shooting in India. Save Data shot his first film "*The Wrestlers*" at the Hanging Garden in Mumbai which depicts a simple recording of a wrestling match and was screened in 1899, still considered as the first motion picture of Indian cinema. The original reel of the film had to assign back to England for further process. The time when "*The Wrestlers*" came back to India after all technical processes, Save Data had bought a projector for the

screening of foreign made films in India to the Indian audience which in turn marked the business career of Bhatavdekar in Indian film production.

The first two decades of 20th century, witnessed an expansion of film making and film going culture. The foreign made short films were screening in Mumbai which ignited the emotions of the audience and compelled them to wait for further upcoming films. As Pamela Hutchinson quotes Kaushik Bhaumik, the Deputy Director of the Cinefan Film Festival in Osian, in *The birth of India's film industry: how the movies came to India*. "The imported films seen during this period provided Indians with a lot of experience of cinema that was crucial to the film production that followed." (1) During the screening of foreign made films in India, a stage magician and photographer namely Dadasaheb Phalke, had Indian Film Industry's amazed moment. Manishita Dass quotes Dadasaheb Phalke in her famous book namely *Outside the lettered city: Cinema, modernity and the public sphere in late colonial India* Dadasaheb Phalke while watching *The Life of The Christ* the feeling he encountered with came out as a written document which became the momentous hallmark in the history of Indian film production:

I must have watched movies in many occasions before with my friend and family, but that Saturday in the Christmas, marked a revolutionary change in my life.... While the life of the Christ was rolling fast before my physical eyes, I was mentally visualizing the Gods, Shri Krishna, Shri Ramachandra and their Gukul and Ayodha. I was gripped by a strange spell. I bought another ticket and watched the movie again. This time I felt my imagination taking the shape on the screen. Could this really happen? Could we the sons of India, ever be able to see Indian images on the screen. ? (qtd. in Dass 2)

In the beginning of the Indian cinema, Dadasaheb Phalke himself crafted in the context of myth. However the desire to put Indian images on the screen for the sons of India resulted into the successful creation of *Raja Harishchandra*. Indian cinema has an unmatched unique identity in the world. Indian film industry has flourishingly navigated from black and white silent movies to the 3D view, but truly it was Dadasaheb Phalke who popularized the Indian audience to the world of movies and cinema.

The first Indian full length feature film *Raja Harishchandara* released in 1913, broke an ice to make a brightening future for Indian Film Industry. After the prosperity and high acclamation of *Raja Harishchandara*, many other filmmakers in India especially in Mumbai (then Bombay) and Madras started their career in filmmaking field. Since it was an era of silent movies, filmmaking and film watching became somehow an order of the day. Indian people started to watch more and more movies. The acceptance of the evolution of cinema in India pushed the Indian film industry forward to set up new production houses. In the meantime madras achieved the fame regarding film activities. All the concerns and activities related to the filmmaking were to be found in Madras which helped to break an ice for other filmmakers in the field, such as Ragupathi Venkiah Naidu, S. S. Vassan, A.V. Meiyappan to set up new production houses in Madras and to make films in Tamil and Telugu.

During the beginning of a new decade, 1920s, a new change came into being. The decade undergone a rapid growth in silent movies. The era is now famously known as the silent era in the history of Indian film industry. During 1920s, the Indian film industry achieved much fame throughout the world. It was only in the

beginning of a new decade 1930s, which revolutionized the Indian film industry technically. 1930s is famous for its remarkable birth of the studio era and the end of silent era. Studio system came into existence to record the original voice of the characters. *Alam Ara* produced by Ardeshir Irani, is considered a groundbreaking mark on the studio era. It is believed that if Dadasaheb Phalke is considered the father of Indian cinema, Ardeshir Irani is considered the father of Indian talkies. The evolution of studio system in Indian film industry transformed the Indian cinema in all perspectives. It was an era of the evolution of studio system throughout the world cinema. The ideology, strategy and chemistry of filmmaking changed all over in world and so in Indian cinema. New challenges came into existence. The actors were needed to be commanding. The looks of the actors, voice and singing skills became the concern of the time. Music became an important part of Indian film industry. Apart from the Indian Hindi cinema which is famously called as Bollywood, 1930s also marked the beginning of talkies in Indian regional cinemas such as south Indian, Telegu and Tamil.

1930s witnessed the rise of music in Indian cinema which later led to the establishment of studios by 1935 in major Indian cities like Mumbai then Bombay, Madras, Calcutta etcetera in order to make filmmaking as an established craft in Indian society. In 1935, New Theatres produced *Devdas* which was directed by an Asamee director and filmmaker Pramathesh Barua. *Devdas* is an adaptation of famous Bengali novel titled as the same name *Devdas*, written by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. The film *Devdas* stars Pramathesh Barua himself to play the role of Devdas, Jamuna Barua to play the role of Paro, and Chandrabati Devi to play the role of Chandramukhi. *Devdas* depicts the classic love story of Devdas and Parvati,

who never get united due to the prevailing class system of the society. The film showcases a crusade against the feudalistic society which divides the people into different class systems in the society. *Devdas* film has brought a radical change onto the overall look of Indian social pictures and Indian society. Apart from the transformation of the novel, from text to celluloid, Barua has artistically developed his own format in order to transfer the verbal message into a pure visual format. The film extolls the tale of Davdas and Parvati. Devdas is born and brought up in a rich family who spends his childhood in his native village with his soulful playmate Parvati. As the time passes by, they develop a special bond between them and slowly and gradually indulge in love.

Devdas's family sends him out of the state for higher education and on his return, he finds Parvati longing for his return back. As the story develops further, the two families indulge in a rift because of the arrogance and status quo which results into the rejection of the marriage proposal of Devdas and Parvati. Devdas tried hard to convince his father but all goes in vein and leaves the house in anger and conveys a message to Parvati, asking her to forget him forever. In the meantime, he indulges into alcoholism and spends most of his time with Chandramukhi. During the course of the time, Parvati marries and behaves like a dutiful housewife but inside her heart she never forgets Devdas. At the end, Devdas dies on fulfilling his promise to visit Parvati's home before he dies.

Devdas became the all-time hit on box office and made Pramathesh Barua a rising star and a successful and promising filmmaker overnight. Furthermore, it developed and ingrained the idea of the cinema of celebration into the cinema of literature and social concern expressed through visual art form.

Moti B. Gidwani, a prominent filmmaker of nineteen thirties, famously known for his films like *Gulam Daku* (1936), *Kisan Kanaya* (1937), *Do Auraten* (1937), *Khazanchi* (1941), *Zamindar* (1942) etcetera. Moti B. Gidwani was born in Karachi and went to Britain to study filmmaking. After his return back, he started to direct the feature films for Imperial and Sagar which pushed him forward to achieve some fame as a successful filmmaker. In 1937, Imperial Pictures produced *Kisan Kanaya* which is regarded as the first Indian indigenous color film. *Kisan Kanaya* marked India's first film made through the process of cine color.

The film portrays the picture of farmers and landlords with deep focus on an unfortunate conditions of the farmers who are being exploited time and time again by the landlords which eventually leads Ram, a poor peasant, to murder Ghani a landlord. The film extolls the tale of social injustice and social division on economic grounds.

Prabhat Film Company produced *Sant Tukaram* in 1936 which was directed by Vishnupant Govind Damle and Sheikh Fattelal. The film *Sant Tukaram* chronicles the life of a famous saint of Bhakti Movement. It is believed that saint Tukaram has taken the Bhakti Movement of Maharashtra into a new horizon and promoted a vision of unity on the basis of class, creed, caste, and gender among the people of India. *Sant Tukaram* is considered to be the first Indian film which received the international fame. The film got a chance to be screened at 1937 Venice Film Festival which captioned the film *Sant Tukaram* as India's first film to be screened at international film festival.

Furthermore, *Sant Tukaram* was labelled as one among the best three films of the world. *Sant Tukaram* had been the biggest hit at box office. It broke all the records of box office and marked India's first film to run continuously for more than a year. The film had greatly affected the people across towns and villages. It appealed all sections of the society because of the message of unity among the people and is considered one among the greatest Indian films. The film also established the beginning of a new saint film genre and remained the most acclaimed and famous film of Prabhat Film Company.

Yaragudipati Varada Rao was a prominent filmmaker, editor and producer, best known for his extraordinary contribution to the Tamil, Telegu and Kannada cinema. He is prominently famous for his film *Vishwa Mohini* (1940), a Telegu romantic film which is set against the backdrop of Indian film world.

The film *Vishwa Mohini* narrates the tale of Mohan Rao who works in a law firm in Madras and eventually deceives his boss to own the company through forbidden criminal actions. Mohan Rao's father Purushothama Rao is the famous and rival businessman of Padmanabham who was the boss of Mohan Rao in law firm. During the course of the time, Mohan Rao's father fixes his marriage with Hemalatha who is a daughter of famous and wealthy Visalakshi. In the meantime, Mohan Rao opposes the marriage and denies to tie his knot with Hemalatha. Pasupathi is a famous filmmaker of the time and a close friend of Mohan Rao. On the sets of a film of Pasupathi, Mohan Rao becomes acquainted with a Viswamohini who is a popular and rising actress of the time. As the time goes on, Mohan Rao falls in love with Viswamohini and secretly develops relationship with her without knowing the fact that she the daughter of Padmanabham, to who Mohan Rao

cheated and became the owner of the company. The plot develops twist and with the course of the time, all the characters become aware about each other. In the meantime, Visalakshi, a wealthy and famous woman loses all of her property and wealth to film production and distribution.

Vishwa Mohini marked the first film made in India which exposes the world of filmmaking and film production to the Indians. In other words, the backdrop of Indian motion pictures was first time filmed and depicted in *Vishwa Mohini* in 1940.

Gudavalli Ramabrahman, a well-known Indian producer, screenwriter, and filmmaker who is famously known for his direction of social problem films such as *Mala Pilla* (1938) and *Raithu Bidda* (1939). *Mala Pilla*, titled in English as *Untouchable Girl* is an Indian social film made in Telegu language. The film portrays the love story of a Brahman boy and a Harijan girl. The film extolls the tale of social distinctions of the caste system. The film demonstrated an expedition against the social exclusions and untouchability which was prevalent in the society of the time. Furthermore, *Mala Pilla* chronicles the ill treatment and discrimination towards Harijans (untouchables) in the village on social, economic and political level. The society is shown as divided into the sections on the ground of caste system. During the course of the time, some people try to end up the division but Brahmans do not support them. The two sections of the society are shown fighting over different issues and in the meantime a Brahman boy falls in love with a Harijan girl and elopes with her because of the social opposition for the their relationship.

Raithu Bidda 1939 is one more social problem film which is made in Telegu language. The film is titled in English as *Farmer of Common Origin*. The film showcases the crusade against the zamindari system prevalent in the British Indian

society which labelled it as a social reformation film. *Raithu Bidda* was banned on the grounds on peasant insurgency among zamindars during British rule. Apart from receiving a censor certificate, *Raithu Bidda* caused a number of demonstrations by the strong zamindar groups of the time.

Raithu Bidda is considered as an influential reformist social drama which depicts the critique against the zamindari system from an eye of the Kissan Sabha agitations in rural A.P. The film reflects the social scenario of the time. The burdensome and damaging policies of landlords in Indian society where a piece of land is considered a means to earn the bread for one's livelihood in major portions of the population.

1940s, has created the history of its own throughout the world. The decade is famous for the intense agitation, bloodshed, existential cry and chaos throughout the world. The first half of the decade created a havoc upon the people due to the World War II and second half of the decade undergone an enormous political social and economic changes. During the middle of the war ravaged and terror-stricken decade Bombay Talkies produced *Kismet* directed by Gyan Mukherjee, starring Ashok Kumar, Mumtaz Shanti and Shah Nawaz, achieved an enormous fame and became the biggest hit among the top blockbuster movies of Indian film industry. The movie showcased some bold themes and issues for the first time in Indian film industry, depicting an anti-hero portrayal with double role and a maiden girl becoming pregnant. The movie was severely criticized on the grounds of its portrayal of evil in a good light. Apart from the criticism it received, the movie broke all the records of box office and became the biggest hit of the time. Indian regional film industries also began to flourish in the same time to make the Tamil and Telegu films. The last

phase of the decade witnesses the expansion of filmmaking in different Indian regional languages. Since the music is believed to be the backbone of Indian film Industry, it came up in new styles, vocal sounds and equipment's. O.P. Nayyar, Shankar Jaikishan, C. Ramachandra, Madan Mohan, Sahil Chaudhary, Naushad and S. D. Burman were some of the music legends and aces who produced soothing, smooth and sweet melodies with their distinct vocal sound and styles.

Nineteen forties also marked the beginning of Indian People's Theatre Association. The IPTA emerged as an art movement to emphasize the realism and cultural integrity among the people of India. The British India, however, witnessed a deep and sorrowful process of classic Indian cultural decline. During the British rule, Indian society began to evolve in new patterns, social relationships began to take new shape and people all over from the social matrix began to emerge in new transformations and conditions. Imperial rule had visible effects on Indian socio culture which led to the beginning of social division among Indian. In order to demonstrate against these rulings and cultural degenerating processes, the people of India gathered into a great mass in relation to develop an upsurge. The writers and artists began to turn away from the old styles and started to take initiatives to accumulate and expose the social traditions, customs and realities in an easily comprehensible language.

During the time of Quit India Movement in 1942, the Indian People's Theatre Association was established as a new emerging cultural movement with the support of writers, artists and working class masses of Indian society. IPTA was formally established in 1943 with an aim of bringing cultural awakening and transforming the social awareness to the Indian people. Some of the pioneer artists

such as Khawaja Ahmad Abbas, Balraj Sahni, Ritwik Ghatak, Prithviraj Kapoor etcetera have formed an artistic group against the backdrop of World War Second, Bengal famine of 1943 which left the millions of people starved to death, and the colonial rule which has deeply uprooted the Indian cultural heritage. The official theatre conference put forth the motive and aim of expressing the cultural dilemma of the time through pure visual art from and to make people apprehend their rights. IPTA produced number of realistic plays and films such as *Nabanna* which is considered the most famous play produced by IPTA and films like *Dharti Ke Laal* etcetera.

Nabanna is a famous Bengali drama based on the Bengal famine of 1943. The play is written by Bijon Bhattacharya. The IPTA's creation of *Nabanna* depicts the plight of the residents the Aminpur village. The play tells the story of the sammadar family, who are fighting for food, starvation, and death due to the destruction of their homes, crops and their possessions. They become so desperate to survive under the circumstances of extreme food shortage that they are compelled by their fate to shift to Calcutta. Their shift from Aminpur to Calcutta for their further survival goes in vein and they return back to their village in order to face the reality of their fate to encounter the crisis. At the time curtains goes off, the dreadful and fearful excitement of the characters and their dialogues are voiced in such a way to intensify the audience's eagerness of watching and hearing the dreadful villagers who are lamenting for their loss by mentioning their oppressors.

The aim of the IPTA to stage the drama was to spread out the news of the economic and human loss due to famine in 1943 Bengal. The famine left millions of people dead out of hunger and starvation and other deadly diseases. IPTA staged the

play *Nabanna* in different parts of India to spread out the dreadful and harassed voice of Bengal. Through the efforts of IPTA, *Nabanna* became famous and achieved a lot of success which ultimately led to the collection of lakhs of rupees.

The cultural movement of IPTA depicted the social realities through the medium of visual art. It brought the social consciousness and awareness among the people to alter the social and political changes in the society. The artists, core members, and representatives of IPTA emphasized a new artistic and aesthetic vision which could establish and develop the bond between audience, artists, and art. IPTA consumed the essential elements of the Indian culture and emphasized to develop the bond with the world culture. IPTA's initiatives and efforts to mark the modern chair singing with the composition of Ravi Shankar's Sare Jaha Se Acha written by Allama Iqbal. Some of the prominent writers and artists such as Anil Biswas, Sahir Ludhianvi, Sahil Choudhary, Prem Dhaman, Binoj Roy etcetera havewritten and composed number of songs in multiple languages.

In 1946, IPTA produced *Dharti Ke Laal*, a social realist film based on the plays of Bijon Bhattacharya. The film was directed by the famous Indian producer, writer, and filmmaker Khawaja Ahmad Abass. The direction of the film *Dharti Ke Laal* also marked the foundation of the realist cinema in India. The film is set against the backdrop of World War Second and the Bengal famine of 1943. *Dharti Ke Laal* is said to be the only film produced by the IPTA, although IPTA supported number of other films but *Dharti Ke Laal* was an official production of IPTA.

Dharti Ke Laal depicts the plight of a Bengali family of Sammadar, his sons and daughters-in-law. During the World War Second, in a pleasing harvest and growing prices, the Sammadar family loses all of their property and possessions.

Ramu, the younger son, along with his family shifts to Calcutta for the sustenance of their further survival. In the meantime, the Sammadar family followed by other devastated families shift to Calcutta to continue their survival. Ramu's wild desperation to find the work and his wife's fall into the prostitution compels the family to move back to their native village where farmers in solidarity with other farmers become unite to face the situation. Despite the plight of a single family who is held up in famine, the film extolls the horrific tale of human destruction and loss of human existence in the time of struggle. The artists and members of IPTA travelled all major parts of India during the time of Bengal famine in order to show stage performance and collection of funds for Bengal famine survivors.

Dharti Ke Laal received the widespread critical acclamation and is considered an essential socio political film to portray social realities and rapidly changing social and economic structure during the World War Second. *Dharti Ke Laal* is highly marked as the first film of social realist cinema or parallel cinema of India.

The movement of social realist cinema or the parallel cinema of India evolved in 1940s which also marks the part of the golden age of Indian cinema. The social realist cinema of India used literature as a high source material to analyze and portray the contemporary Indian society. Early examples of the decade of 1940s of the parallel cinema includes *Dharti Ke Laal* in (1946) and *Neecha Nagar* (1946).

Neecha Nagar is written by Khawaja Ahmad Abass and Hayatullah Ansari and directed by Chetan Anand. The film is believed to be based on Maxim Gorky's play *Lower Depths* which is set against the social divisions of rich and poor. *Neecha*

Nagar is the first Indian film to achieve fame of Cannes Film Festival. Infact it is the first Indian film to win the Palm d'Or for the best film.

Neecha Nagar portrays a village which is caught in an impending doom of the pollution of the water resources. Sarkar, a well-known and famous industrialist of the time makes a plan to switch the polluted water stream through the village in order to clarify the land of huge economic investments. The villagers start a resistance with the help of Balraj and his classmate Maya, daughter of Sarkar, against the dangers of water resource contamination. The film ends up with showing villagers emerge as victorious.

Neecha Nagar stands as a prime example for the treatment of socio economic structure. The use of camera angle, shots, lighting and editing techniques make it one of its own kind. *Neecha Nagar* draws influence from Sergei Eisenstein's montage technique in order to create meaning.

1950s and 1960s have always been considered as the golden age of Indian film production. The emergence of some legends into the field such as Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Bimal Roy, Guru Dutt, Mehboob Khan, Raj Kapoor, and L.V. Prasad have revolutionized the Indian film industry as well as the Indian regional film industry that is South Indian cinema. They have made and produced the Indian classics such as *Mother India*, *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Do Bhega Zameen*, and others. Moreover N.T.Rama Rao, M.G. Ramachandra, Shivaji Ganeshan and some other legends have dominated the South Indian cinema for more than three decades. Moreover, nineteen fifties and sixties witnessed the rise of some intellectual filmmakers who established a new genre of films which could portray the social reality from artistic perspective. Some of the legendary filmmakers are:

Satyajit Ray, born and brought up in Calcutta, in a Bengali family of a great prominence in art and literature. Ray is considered one among the most popular and famous filmmakers of world cinema. He was a prominent filmmaker, writer, composer and graph designer. He is famously known for his humanistic approach towards cinema. Despite his films are made in Bengali language, but they have universal appeal and concern. His films largely deal with the issues of human relationships, human conflicts, and human race. Ray's mastery over the art of storytelling, and grip on the characters and situations made his cinema universally appealing. Ray's films are well controlled and precise in order to arouse emotional response from the audience. Ray's cinematic style was to deal with the sensitivity with total avoidance of melodrama. He is famous for his contribution to the cinema for his subjective concerns which made him to explore the situations and characters. He dealt with subjects and issues which were unknown to Indian cinema and were not regarded as the subjects and themes in Indian cinema. Having been influenced by the Italian neo realism, Ray emphasized characters' social and cultural identity. He was deeply concerned over the issue of common people and successfully brought them on the screen. He made numerous feature films, documentaries and short films. He is famously known for his *The Appu Trilogy* which includes *Pather Panchali*, *Apparjito* and the *World of Appu*.

Pather Panchali (1955) is the directorial debut of the famous Bengali filmmaker Satyajit Ray. It is the first installment of the famous trilogy, *The Appu Trilogy*. It is made in Bengali language and is based on the novel of the same name written by Bibhutibushan Bandyopadhyay. It is one of the famous coming of the age films which is set in the rural Bengal of nineteen twenties. The film narrates the tale

of a rural village family of Bengal, their misery, poverty and struggle in one hand and overall poverty in rural India on another hand. The film focusses on the young Appu, who is growing up in a village of Bengal with his parents, Harihar his father, Sarbajaya his mother, Durga his sister and father's aging cousin who is known as Auntie.

Harihar earns a small amount of money from the job of priest, which is not enough to provide food to his family. One day, Durga steals some fruits from neighbors for Auntie and in return to this act, she receives scolding from her mother and accusation of stealing necklace from neighbors, for that Durga has to pay off by walking out of the house. The young Appu is closely related with Durga and apart from siblings, Durga plays the role of his second mother and constantly takes care of Appu. They share their world together as siblings.

During the course of the time, Harihar moves to the city in order to earn some more money to provide food for the family. On his return from the city, he hears the news about the death of his daughter, Durga which overflows him out of sorrow and grief. At the end of the film, it is shown that Harihar decides to move to the city along with his family members to sustain their further existence.

The film took more than three years to be completed because of the interruptions caused by the funding issue. Ray had to sell his insurance policies and other belongings in order to produce *Pather Panchali*. It is counted one amongst the greatest films of Indian cinema. Critics all over the world have commended the film with accolades for the use of realism and humanitarian qualities. It has been honored with the National Film Award for Best Film in 1955. Apart from Nation Film

Award, *Pather Panchali* has been honored with the Best Human Document Award in 1956 at Cannes Film Festival.

Aparjito (1956) is the second installment of Ray's *Appu Trilogy*. *Aparjito* begins from the moment *Pather Panchali* ends. It extolls the further tale of Harihar's family leaving for Varanasi and chronicles the journey of Appu from a child to an adolescent.

While moving from their native village to the sacred city of Banaras, Appu's father, Harihar makes his living from the job of priest by performing religious rituals and other religious services on the banks of river Ganges in Banaras. With the course of time, Harihar catches some mysterious illness which leads him to die a sudden death. Although the social and economic conditions of the family are broken, Appu is roaming on the streets. Harihar's death impacts the family economically which impels Sarbajaya, Appu's mother, to work as a maid in order to make their further survival possible. One day with the help of their relative, Sarbajaya and Appu happen to move back to their native village to make their living easier. Appu, despite of being Brahmin, is forced to become a priest, but his interest lies in school education where he excels and receives much of attention from teachers. In the meantime, Appu receives an opportunity to continue his further studies in Calcutta. During the course of time, Appu becomes consciously serious about his studies and roams around with his college friends in his leisure time. During the course of time, Appu gets job at a print house and becomes busy with his job. In the meantime, Sarbajaya falls ill day by day and wishes to be with Appu but keeps this wish inside her heart.

Appu's commitment to the job and studies does not permit him to meet his mother very frequently. One day Appu happens to visit to the village to meet his mother but unfortunately he discovers that Sarbajaya is dead. Appu is all alone now and moves back to Kolkata.

Aparjito has been an internationally acclaimed masterpiece of Satyajit Ray to put his fame as a filmmaker on the grounds of international filmmaking by receiving an honoree award of the Golden Lion at Venice Film Festival. Apart from the Golden Lion, it received Golden Gate for the best picture at San Francisco International Film Festival in 1958 along with many other awards throughout the world of cinematic and artistic appreciation.

The World of Appu (1959) is the third installment of Ray's *Appu Trilogy*. The film is an adaptation of a novel by Bibhutibushan Bandopadhyay which chronicles the journey of a Bengali boy namely Appu, from an adolescent to maturity. The film opens up to introduce Appu as a struggler writer, residing in an apartment on Calcutta. Appu's economic conditions are unstable and he constantly fails to pay his apartment rent on due time. His constant failure to pay the rents on time compels Appu to sell some of his belongings in order to meet the demands of landlord. Appu is alone in his life and is struggling to become a writer and seeking a suitable job side by side as well. Pulu, Appu's friend takes Appu to attend a wedding in the village where the groom unexpectedly catches some mental problems and to save the bride for such man, she is left alone, and in order to save her life from further superstitious beliefs, Appu marries to that bride.

The film then shifts to a new segment which extolls the tale of a married couple now, Appu and Aparna. The development of their love life from an initial

stage of strangeness to the stage of love and understanding. This period of Appu's life is shown as gentle and deeply into relationships. In the meantime, the film shifts its mood from happiness to pathos by showing an aftermath of tragedy. Aparna's life come to an end and leaves a son behind. Appu seems devastated to see one more death in the family to be alone once again. He adopts a kind of nomadic life style, filled with grief and hopelessness of life. Appu leaves all responsibilities and becomes heedless to wonder from one place to another. His son, Kajal is taken care by the maternal grandparents. During the course of time, Appu throws away all his writing pieces which he has written over from the years. Pulu finds Kajal growing weird and approaches Appu in order to convince him to come back. And at the end of the film, Appu comes back to his responsibilities and gets united with his son and starts a fresh life once again.

The film is a heart wrenching and cathartic tale of Appu's life. The film has been honored with numerous awards in India as well as in abroad. The film won the National Film Award for the Best Film in 1959 in India and Sutherland Award for Best Original and Imaginative Film in London in 1960. Apart from these awards, it has won several other awards in USA and UK as well.

Bimal Roy was an internationally acclaimed Indian filmmaker whose films are best known for his strong concern over the awakening of social conscience. Born on 12th July, 1909, in a village of Dhaka. After the death of his father, his family suffered from the dire conditions and moved to Calcutta. Roy began to work as a publicity photographer and after that he started his journey as an assistant cameraman in New Theatres Studios. During the passage of time, his interest towards visuals arts has developed more in order to make him capable to work

independently as a cameraman for *Devdas* in 1935. His lighting, shots and composition as a cameraman made him famous to win the accolades from everywhere.

In 1944, Udayer Pathey happen to be the directorial debut of Bimal Roy which broke down the detrimental stereotypical positions against the class discrimination in the society. The film had been a shining masterpiece on the celluloid for the viewers and broke down all the record to create some new ways of the treatment of sophisticated camera work.

By the late 1940s, World War Second and partition of India compelled majority of filmmakers to shift to Mumbai to continue their career in filmmaking. Roy too shifted to Mumbai, then Bombay, in 1950 with his team and started his film career with *Maa* (1952), followed by *Parineeta* (1953), *Do Bhiga Zamin* (1953), *Devdas* (1955), *Madhumati* (1958), and *Sujata* (1959). He is famously known for his groundbreaking works such as *Parineeta* (1953), *Do Bhiga Zamin* (1953), *Madhumati* (1958), and *Sujata* (1959) and *Bandini* (1963).

Parineeta (1953) is an adaptation of a novel with the same name written by Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyoy. Having been influenced by the Italian neorealism, Bimal Roy focused on the socialistic and humanistic concerns. *Parineeta* depicts a glorious love story about the neighbors, their conventions and preventions. It stars Ashok Kumar as Shekhar and Meena Kumari as Lalita.

Shekhar, is a son of a rich Brahmin family, realizes his love for Lalita, who is a young daughter of the neighboring family. Shekhar is acquainted with Lalita since she came to Gurucharan's, her uncle to live with. As a child, Lalita is mostly

shown in Shekhar's house, but with the course of time she is shown as a grown up beautiful lady who serves enough attraction to Shekhar to fall for Lalita.

Naveen, Shekhar's father plans an arranged marriage for Shekhar, for which Shekhar's mother refuses and forces her husband that Shekhar should himself choose a woman for marriage. One day Lalita playfully puts a garland on Shekhar, and in return Shekhar garlands her meaningfully and reveals his love for her. Gursharan is indebted to Navin and has mortgaged his house to Shekhar's father. One day a rich and wealthy young man, named Girin comes and offers an interest free loan to Gursharan which gives birth to a rumor that the family has sold Lalita to Girin. On hearing the news, Shekhar feels deeply hurt and in the meantime accepts his father's will to get married to Chandrya's daughter. At the end, Lalita comes and speaks to Shekhar, but he refuses to listen to her.

It is well structured and beautified with the portrayal of humanistic conditions. The film has been honored with the Filmfare Best Director and Best Actor Award in 1954.

Do Bhiga Zamin (1953), is directed by Bimal Roy, starring Balraj Sahni and Nirupa Roy in main lead actors. The film is inspired by Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* which is considered as a groundbreaking work of an Italian neorealist cinema. Having been influenced by the *Bicycle Thieves*, Roy made *Do Bhiga Zamin* grounded on social reality in order to break into a new trend of cinema, a parallel cinema in relation to set a beginning of Indian neorealist movement.

Do Bhiga Zamin extolls a harsh tale of a farmer, Shambu and his family. Shambu lives with his wife and son in a village which is affected by the famine. The

whole region is captivated by the drought and after a long period of time, it receives the rains which gives an immense happiness to farmers. Shambu owns some two acres of land to make his survival along with his family.

Thakur Harnam Singh, a local landlord plans to establish a factory on his land, but Shambu's land creates problem as his piece of land comes in the middle of the Harnam Singh's land. Shambu is indebted to Harnam Singh and is forced to sell his piece of land in return to clear his debts. In order to save the land, Shambu sells all his belongings and pays sixty five rupees, but he gets shocked when he learns that accountant has pirated his account according to which Shambu has to pay two thirty five rupees to clear his debts. The case enters into the court where Shambu loses and gets three months to pay his debts without fail or his land will be auctioned.

Shambu moves to Calcutta along with Kanaya and receive a harsh welcome. Shambu, with Kanaya struggles to earn money. Shambu pulls rikshaw, works as a coolie but does not earn enough money to pay his debts. In the meantime, his wife meets an accident and is admitted in the hospital and once again Shambu has to sell all his belongings to save her life. Kanaya cannot see his father's deteriorated conditions and steals money, but the time he comes to know about the conditions of his mother, he cuts the stolen money into pieces.

At the end of the film, they go back to the village where their land is auctioned due to the failure to pay the debts on time. Harman Singh owns now Shambu's land and the film ends by showing Shambu and his family moving away from their piece of land which was only source of survival for them.

Do Bhiga Zamin has been honored with the Best Film and Best Director Award at the Filmfare Awards in 1954. It has been honored with the National Film Award and apart from the fame and recognition in India, *Do Bhiga Zamin* made its special presence in 7th Cannes Film Festival in 1954 to win the Prix International and has been nominated for the Grand Prize for Best Film.

Madhumati (1958) is a reincarnation romance film directed by Bimal Roy. The film stars Dilip Kumar as a main lead actor. It is considered one of the best romantic film made in India. The film is based on the idea of reincarnation which later paved a way to other future filmmakers to make films on such themes.

Madhumati is a story about a man who drives in a stormy night to receive his wife and child from railway station. Because of the heavy rains, the road gets blocked and he has to seek refuge in an old house where he discovers a portrait and instantly gets flashbacks as he is somehow acquainted with the mansion. There are other men also in the mansion and they sit together to share stories.

Some years ago, Anand come to the mansion to work as manager and during his job as a manager, he roams around the hills of the vicinity during his leisure time and falls in love with a young and charming lady, Madhumati. Ugra Narayan, employer of Anand is a brutal and cold hearted man. One day, Anand is sent to some other place during his job at the mansion, on his return, he discovers that Madhumati is missing and assumes that Ugra Narayan must have kidnaped her. The moment, he goes to confront him, his men beat him ruthlessly. During the passage of time with continuous flashback, Anand meets a lady who resembles Madhumati and the lady refuses and says she is Madhvi. She comes to know about the past life of Anand and

Madhumati when she realizes that Anand is telling a true story. She finds a portrait of Madhumati hanging on the wall who is resembling Madhvi.

Anand is constantly haunted by the ghost of Madhumati who repeatedly tell Anand that Ugra Narayan killed her. To prove Ugra Narayan guilty, Anand as an artist convinces Madhvi to pose like Madhumati in front of Ugra Narayan and while doing that, Ugra Narayan confesses his crime for which he is arrested.

Madhumati made a record to receive the maximum awards in Filmfare. Apart from *Madhumati's* sweep in the top awards of Filmfare, it received 6th National Award for the Best Film, Best Director and the Best Feature Film in Hindi. Furthermore, *Madhumati* achieved an honor to be India's official entry in Academy Awards for the Best Foreign Language Film.

Sujata (1959) is an adaptation of a Bengali short story by the same name, written by Subodh Ghosh. It is a social problem film which exposes the stigma of caste system in Indian society. The film begins at the house of an engineer Upendranath, who lives with his wife, Charu and their baby. One day they are celebrating the birthday of their baby and in the meantime they receive an orphan baby who belongs to a poor and low caste family of untouchables. The couple agrees on to take the baby with them till they find any foster parents for it. As the time passes by, Upendranath names her Sujata and treats her like her own daughter and Charu on the other side does not consider her one among them. One day Buaji comes to see Rama, baby of Upendranath and Charu, she finds Sujata in the house and the moment she hears the story, she drops Sujata on ground.

During the passage of the time, Sujata grows up as a beautiful lady and a man namely Adhir finds her adorable and loses his heart for her. In the house, Sujata and Rama share their feelings as siblings, they play together and spend time with each other, but Charu does not accept her as her own daughter. At the end of the film, Charu suffers from physical illness, and Sujata donates her blood for Charu's recovery which makes her realize Sujata's dejection in the family.

Sujata is crafted over a sensitive social issue of caste system. It is a prime example of artistic creation to show the harsh journey of those who belong to the lower caste in the Indian society. It is an extremely thought provoking and fire igniting film about the social problem. *Sujata* received an accolades and achieved fame and recognition throughout the world for the portrayal of social problems in such a manner. Critics have praised *Sujata* for its sensitive social concern. It has been honored with the Filmfare Best Film, Best Director, and Best Actress Awards. Apart from fame and recognition in India, it has been honored with the nomination for Golden Palm Award at 1960, Cannes Film Festival.

Bandini (1963) is a Hindi drama, directed and produced by Bimal Roy. It is the last film directed by Roy as a filmmaker which is believed to be the best female centric film. It is based on the novel *Tamasi*, written by a Bengali writer, Charu Chandra Chakraborty. The film opens up in the household of a jail where a lady takes audience to the journey of her past through flashbacks. Kalyani is imprisoned for her crime of poisoning a mentally disabled lady. Kalyani, daughter of a postmaster, who happens to fall in love with a freedom fighter Bikash. He promises her to come back to her but he never turns up. The society where Kalyani lives, taunts Kalyani and compels her to leave the village in order to find Bikash.

Kalyani begins her journey to find Bikash and during this process, she gets a job as a nurse for a mentally abnormal lady who turns out to be the wife of Bikash. In the meantime, Kalyani loses her father in an accident. Kalyani's suffers from frustration and mental torture because of the death of her father on one hand and Bikash's second wife on another hand and out of her frustration and anger, she poisons the lady and kills her.

In the jail, a doctor fall in love with Kalyani but she is already imprisoned in the love of Bikash. At the end of the film, Kalyani finds Bikash on a ship as an ill man and this time she reborns her love to take care of Bikash.

Bandini remained on the top of the list of highest grossing of the year. Critics all over the world have praised the film for its simplicity and the breakdown of the playground for the male heroes. Being a female centric film, *Bandini* swept away all the major awards in the Filmfare by winning Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress, Best Cinematography, Best Sound and Best Story and it has been honored with the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Hindi.

Khawaja Ahmad Abass was born in 1914 in Panipat, Haryana. He achieved his fame as a writer, poet, director and producer and he is famously known for his works in Indian cinema. As a writer, he is best known for the column, *Last Page*, which hold the status of longest running column in India, and the social realistic films like, *Neecha Nagar* (1941), *Dharti ke Laal* (1946) *Awara* (1951), *Shree 420* (1955), *Jagte Raho* (1956), *Mera Naam Joker* (1970) etcetera. As a filmmaker, he is known for his groundbreaking works such as, *Dharti ke Laal* (1946), *Pardesi* (1957), *Shehar Aur Sapna* (1963), *Saat Hindustani* (1969), and *Do Boond Pani* (1972).

Pardesi (1957) marked the first joint venture of India and Russia in filmmaking. Khawaja Ahmad Abass along with Vasili Pronin directed the film in 1957 with the star cast of Oleg Strizhenov, a Russian actor, and Nargis, an Indian actress, in main lead roles. The film is based on *A Journey Beyond the Three Seas* by Afanasy Nikitin. The film is made in Hindi as well as in Russian. It is produced by the Naya Sansar International by Khawaja Ahmad Abass along with the Mosfilm Studios, which is considered one of the greatest and largest Russian film production house.

The film narrates the tale of a Russian traveler, who travels from Russia to India and falls in love with an Indian girl in India. It has been honored with the Filmfare Best Art Direction Award in 1958 and has been nominated for the Golden Palm Award at Cannes Film Festival in 1958.

Shehar Aur Sapna (1963) is another master creation of Khawaja Ahmad Abass as a filmmaker. It is based on his own story *One Thousand Nights on a Bed of Stones* which is about the human efforts and endeavor to surpass the life beyond the pavements. It is set against the backdrop of industrialization and urbanization.

Shehar Aur Sapna depicts a young couple who are wandering in a metropolitan city in order to find a home for living. It is the time when cities are developing swiftly and people dream for the better future sustenance. It has achieved the fame and recognition by winning National Film Award for the Best Feature Film in 1963. Furthermore, *Shehar Aur Sapna* achieved the fame by winning Filmfare Best Supporting Actor with the nomination for Best Film, Best Story, and Best Director in 1964.

Saat Hindustani (1969) narrates the tale of seven Indians who make their collective efforts to free Goa from the colonial rule. It narrates the story of a woman who on her dire health conditions posts an invitation to rebellious compatriots who once joined together and fought for Goa's freedom from colonial rule of Portugal. All compatriots are introduced with their profession. Mahadevan, a Tamilian guy belonging to the lower caste. There was a time when he endorsed Hindi language in Madras, but within the course of time, he develops hatred against the language. Joginder Nath, an ex-army man, is depicted as a disappointed personality. The root cause of his disappointment is the partition of Punjab. He is wailing for the fields which have been ploughed in Punjab in the morning are belonging to Haryana in the evening. Ram Bhagat Sharma is consistently propagating support for Hindi in North East through the medium of his newspaper. Anwar Ali, depicted as a poet, finds Hindi very complicated language and loses his house in Hindi Urdu fight and others.

The film depicts all these people who belong to different culture and social status. These individuals join on one platform and undergo different physical trainings before entering into the mission of freeing Goa from the colonial rule of Portugal. With all the planning and strategies, they successfully free Goa from the burden of colonial rule and host the flags at different seven places in Goa. It has been awarded with the National Film Award.

Do Boond Pani (1972) is made against the backdrop of draught and dearth of water in Rajasthan. The film focuses on the story of Ganga Sing played by Jalal Agha. Ganga Singh is recently married to Gauri, takes his wife to his native village after their marriage. They begin to live together as a family along with Ganga Singh's father and sister. The village is depicted in an unfortunate conditions which

is suffering from the dearth of water and the people of that village have to cross a long distance in order to bring some water for their daily use. The village is in dire conditions and villagers are suffering continuously. In the meantime, Ganga hears that a dam is being constructed somewhere and for the betterment of his family and villagers, Ganga leaves his home and joins the men who construct the dam. The family of Ganga goes through the turmoil of misfortunes with the death of the father and after that with the death of his sister. With the course of time, his wife is being raped and Ganga Singh himself loses his life in the process of dam construction.

Do Boond Pani depicts the social concern during the time of draught in Rajasthan. The film has been praised by the critics throughout the world for the depiction of social concern during the time of need. It has achieved the fame and recognition in India by winning a National Award for the Best Film on National Integration.

Ritwik Ghatak, a well-known Bengali filmmaker and writer, was born in Dhaka, which was then part of India. Like millions of people who have gone through the trauma of the partition, Ghatak too has undergone a psychological stress and trauma as he was forced to migrate from one place to another place. The trauma of partition, horror of displacement, and loss of ethnicity have been some of the recurrent issues in Ritwik Ghatak's works. He is famously known for the depiction of social reality. He joined IPTA in 1950s and started working to create social awareness among the people through the medium of visual arts. His contribution has remained noble for Indian art cinema as he stood totally out from the circle of commercial cinema.

As a filmmaker, Ghatak focused on the human struggle for the sustenance of human existence. He was not only a filmmaker, but also a theorist as he wrote numerous articles and essays on film. In 1970s, Ghatak has been honored with the Padma Shri for Arts by the government of India. He is famously known for his trilogy, including *Meghe Dhaka Tara* or *The Cloud Capped Star* (1960), *Komal Gandhar* (1961), and *Suber Narekha* or *Golden Lining* (1962).

Meghe Dhaka Tara or *The Cloud Capped Star* is a social drama, made in 1960. The story of the film has been adapted from a novel of the same name, written by Shaktipada Rajguru. It is the first part of the *Partition Trilogy* of Ritwik Ghatak.

The film narrates a horrific tale of suffering and burden of Neeta, who is a young, talented and beautiful lady, consistently taking care of her family. Neeta is from East Bengal, belongs to a middle class family who are now living in Calcutta's refugee's residence. Neeta is depicted as a kind and self-sacrificing personality, who is willingly taking care of everyone around her. Her elder brother desires to become a singer and he is depicted as a career oriented guy who is all time busy with his dream of becoming a singer. He hardly spares any time to look after his family which compels Neeta to take all the burden of family feeding on her shoulders. With the course of time, Neeta loses her would be husband along with her job. She is continuously suffering from the tragedies of life. She loses everything she has except her hope to live on. The people around her exploit her in one way or another way and she is consistently taken for granted. She continuously fight against all the battles of living till she falls prey to tuberculosis when weakens her badly. At the end film, Neeta desires to live a little more and her career oriented brother shows a little care for her.

Although the film is made on the grounds of partition of Bengal, but the partition is nowhere explicitly shown in the film. The film exhibits the truth of human sufferings because of partition. The displacement of people from one place to an alien place destroyed them internally. The film achieved the fame and recognition throughout the world of art. Critics have praised the film for depiction of true picture of the people who have suffered socially, economically and physically.

Komal Gandhar is a Bengali drama, which is a second installment of Ghatak's *Partition Trilogy*. The film is also called as *A Soft Note on a Sharp Scale*. The film is a portrayal of Calcutta during the time of 1950s and 1960s, which testifies the suffering for the renounce of art and culture, against the backdrop of partition of Bengal.

The film revolves round two individuals, Anasuya and Brigu. The story of the film is about two different theatre groups. Brigu is a leader of one theatre group and another one is leading by Shanta, aunt of Anasuya, but Anasuya does not participate in Shanta's group as she participates in brigu's theatre group. These two theatre groups come to a conclusion to become one by joining together for the production of the best shows. Their joining is willingly destroyed by Shanta which dwells Anasuya and Brigu in a state of loss and separation.

Suber Narekha or *Golden Lining* is made in 1962 and released in 1965. It is the final offerin of the *Partition Trilogy* of Ritwik Ghatak. *Suber Narekha* is a river which runs through Jharkhand into West Bengal and the name of the film refers to the river of the same name.

The film narrates the story of Ishwar, a refugee from East Pakistan, who travels towards West Bengal along with his sister Sita. Some people abduct a woman from a nearby refugee camp. The abducted woman is forced to leave her son behind and Ishwar takes that baby with him. During the course of time, Ishwar gets a job in a factory and he begins to work there for the survival. As the time passes by, Abhiram falls in love with Sita and to get married they need the approval of Ishwar which he opposes. On the day of her wedding, Sita runs away with Abhiram and they leave Ishwar in desolate conditions. Abhiram and Sita start their life afresh in Calcutta, but they fail to make their living possible. One day Abhiram gets a job of a bus driver and while driving the bus, he kills a girl in an accident and for that people lynched Abhiram on spot. Sita is completely on her own now, she is alone in her life. Her loneliness and economic instability turns her into a whore.

One day, Ishwar decides to visit Calcutta with his old friend and on the way to Calcutta they consume alcohol and end up in a brothel where he faces his own sister, Sita. As she sees her brother, she cuts her throat as she does not want her brother to see her in that job and Ishwar breaks down completely as he realized what has happened. At the end of the film, Ishwar takes their son with him to his home and the film ends up on a serious note of tragedy with the death of both Abhiram and Sita.

Chetan Anand, a famous Indian filmmaker was born in Punjab, in January, 1915. He completed his schooling in Gurukul Kangri, Haridwar. His early education strongly influenced him to carry the Vedic values and pureness of language such as Hindi and Sanskrit.

During his adulthood in the college, Chetan Anand indulged in different activities like poetry, dramatics and writing. After completing his college education, he moved to the City University of London for Indian civil service but could not go to the end. He could not complete his study for Indian civil service because he developed interest in the field of cinema and started studying the cinema and worked for BBC also.

After his return to India, he began to work for All India Radio along with the job of a teacher. During his teaching career, he joined other teachers and founded the dramatic society in the school. He continuously wrote stories and scripts until 1943 when he went out for a trip to Bombay and sold one of his written stories to Kishore Sahu, which led him to meet a famous filmmaker of the time, Phani Mazumdar who later casted him in a film *Rajkumar* in 1944. He started his filmmaking career with an award winning film *Neecha Nagar*. He is famously known for internationally acclaimed films such as *Neecha Nagar* (1946), *Haqeeqat* (1964) and *Kudrat* (1981).

Neecha Nagar is a depiction of Indian social system which later marked the foundation of Indian parallel cinema. The story is about the social divisions of rich and poor. It achieved the fame and recognition throughout the world by becoming India's first film to win Grand Prix at Cannes Film Festival. *Neecha Nagar* is the only film in the history of Indian cinema which has been honored with Palme d'Or award.

Haqeeqat is set against the backdrop of India China war of 1962 which is known as Sino Indian War. *Haqeeqat* founded the trend of making war films in Indian cinema and it is regarded as the mother of war films. The film presents the

scenario of a small group of Indian soldiers who are in a state of war on the borders. This small group is on the hills of Ladakh, and they are considered dead because of war, but fortunately Ladakhi local people and Captain Bahadur Singh save them. Captain Bahadur Singh along with his lady wants to retreat his companions to their posts and for that he holds Chinese army till his last breath and the soldiers too turn into numb. People are being killed and the soldiers are ordered to safeguard the frontiers but unfortunately they find themselves running short of bullets and with no availability of new technical guns. Government is helpless, unable to provide any help to the soldiers at the border fighting for their country.

Haqeeqat has been labelled as one of the best war films ever produced by Indian cinema. It is a representation of Indian China war with all its realities. The film is an artistic amalgamation of history and drama on the canvas of cinema to present the reality of the war in a dramatic mode. *Haqeeqat* allows the history to go with the flow without twisting the reality. The depiction of the government of Indian and its responses and dealings with the soldiers who are willing to sacrifice their lives for their country, proved to be a failure in order to save the national frontier and the lives of the soldiers.

It has been honored with the National Film Award for the Second Best Feature Film in 1965. Apart from the National Award, it has achieved the fame by winning Filmfare Best Art Direction Award.

Kudrat is another masterpiece of Chetan Anand, starring Rajesh Khanna and Heema Malini in main lead roles with the theme of reincarnation. The film tells the story of Chandermukhi, played by Heema Malini and Mohan Kapoor, played by

Rajesh Khanna. The film starts with the depiction of Chandermukhi visiting Shimla hill station first time in her life. Since it's her first visit to Shimla, she feels some strange connections with the place, as if she has visited the place earlier. She is bounded by a strange spell of mysterious connection with the place and her family takes her to Dr. Naresh, a psychiatrist who later develops liking for Chandermukhi and to proceed on, their family indulge in talks for Chandermukhi and Dr. Naresh.

In the meantime, Mohan Kumar, a lawyer, who visits to Shimla to meet Janak Singh, whom he considers his godfather and patron. As the story goes on, it is shown that whenever Chandermukhi and Mohan Kumar happen to meet, Chandermukhi behaves strangely. She begins to have nightmares, and in the meantime, Dr. Naresh learns about the happenings and forces Mohan Kumar to discover the reality which is later revealed in an excursion where Chandermukhi reminds her past life and remembers everything about her previous life. In her past life, her name was Paro and the man she has nightmare of, is her lover is lover. A son of a landlord rapes her and kills her. After understanding the scenario, Dr. Naresh begins to keep himself away from Chandermukhi and Mohan Kumar.

With the course of time, Satto, Madhav's sister unveils the truth by revealing that the villain is Janak Singh and he is responsible for her death. And with the passage of time it is discovered that Janak Singh is responsible for the death of Paro and Madhav. After raping Paro, she curses him to lose something important in his life. Karuna, at the end of the film, burns her home and die while playing piano in one hand and Janak Singh on the other hand receives punishment from the court for his heinous crime.

The film has received the accolades from all over cinematic world. It has been the biggest hit on box office. It has been honored with the Best Female Playback Award at Filmfare along with the Best Story Award and Best Cinematography Award.

Guru Dutt, well known actor and filmmaker of Indian cinema, born in Mysore in 1925. He was the eldest son of his parents. Dutt has completed his early education in Calcutta and after completing his schooling, he joined Uday Shankar India Culture Centre where he learned performing arts and dance. In 1944, Guru Dutt began his career by working as a choreographer in Prabhat Studios where he happened to meet different stars and filmmakers of the time, such as, Dev Anand who helped his way easier to enter into the mainstream Indian cinema.

Guru Dutt received his break into the filmmaking due to Dev Anand's offer to direct a film. He began his filmmaking career with *Baazi* in 1951, starring Dev Anand in main lead actor. It is a crime thriller film which achieved the fame and success and became a trend setter for upcoming crime films. In 1952, Dutt made *Jaal* and in 1953, he made *Baaz*, *Aar Paar* in 1954. In 1957, Dutt made *Pyasa* and in 1959, he made *Kagaz Ke Phool*. These films are considered his masterpieces and are counted among the best films ever produced by Indian cinema. Although *Kagaz Ke Phool* was a flop at box office, but the film received the fame and acclamation for the cinematography. Dutt has invested his soul, energy and money into the film, but it devastated him from his inside and after that he did not direct any film.

Guru Dutt is regarded one of the greatest filmmakers of Indian cinema who was a step ahead of his time. His works are considered the best masterpieces

produced in the golden age of Indian cinema. He is famously known for his capacity to reach out to the common people through artistic and lyrical contents. He is best known for his all-time masterpieces, such as, *Pyasa* (1957), and *Kagaz Ke Phool* (1959).

Pyasa is set in Calcutta. The story of the film revolves around a man called Vijay, who is a struggling poet waiting for his poetry to get published. He experiences a small amount of appreciation for his poetry and even his own family is not willing to support him for his dream of becoming a poet. His writing pieces are being sold by his brother and one day Vijay feels extremely humiliated which compels him to leave his home and roam on the streets. During the course of time, he hears a sweet voice singing his poetry, Vijay follows that voice till the woman falls in love with Vijay.

Mr. Gosh is a famous publisher of the time who receives Vijay's poetry for publication. Meena, Mr. Gosh's wife and Vijay's college time love, who chose money over love and married to Mr. Gosh. Vijay is disappointed with the materialistic perception of the people and roams on the streets. One day he gives his coat to a beggar and suddenly they met an accident in which beggar succumbs his injuries and Vijay receives some injuries. During the time of identification, beggar is identified as Vijay and is considered dead, but when Vijay returns from hospital, Mr. Gosh denies to recognize him and even his brothers sell themselves out to Gosh for the sake of money. Since his identity is denied by everyone, he is sent to a mental asylum as he is declared as a lunatic. Fortunately, Vijay comes out of the mental asylum with the help of his friend. He hears that memorial is being organized on his name, Vijay visits to the place and finds people corrupted. He is fed up with the

hypocrisy of the people and denies his own identity in the public by announcing the death of Vijay and walks on to start a fresh life with Gulabo.

Pyasa is a representation of social attitude towards hypocrisy and materialism. It is made at the time when India has recently achieved freedom from British colonial rule. The social and political system of India was transforming into the major changes. Pt. Nehru's dreams about the nation and the common men struggle are deeply rooted in the film. Hypocrisy and dehumanization is artistically depicted in the film.

Kagaz Ke Phool, another masterpiece of Guru Dutt which is made in 1959. *Kagaz Ke Phool* is considered as the first cinemascope film ever made in Indian cinema. The film narrates the story of a man, Suresh Sinha, played by Guru Dutt himself. Suresh Sinha is a famous filmmaker, receives flashbacks of his past life when people enchanted his name with the name of his films. Suresh belongs to a poor family who with his will power makes the biggest hit in Indian cinema. One day he happens to meet Veena and he develops his feelings for her and soon they both fall in love with each other and get married. Veena gives birth to a baby girl Pammi and with the course of time, Suresh meets Shanti and falls in love with her too. Suresh finds her very attractive and adorable and makes her career in the films. Veena on the other hand develops disliking about the films and wants her baby to be far away from the influence of films and for these reasons, they raise disagreements between themselves and their relationship begins to fall till they get separated.

Pammi stays with her father and one day Veena's father changes the scenario as he takes this matter into the court where the decision goes in favor of Veena and

Suresh is left devastated from his inside. Furthermore, he learns about Shanti has quit film career, he becomes alcoholic. He is unable to focus on his own career of filmmaking which makes him bankrupt and to repay the debts, his entire property has to be auctioned. At the end of the film, the court decides not to allow Shanti to quit as she has to comply with the contract. She is unable to help him because of his ego and in the final scene, Suresh dies on the director's chair while remembering his past in flashbacks.

Although the film was the biggest flop at the box office, but later in 1980s, *Kagaz Ke Phool* began to be regarded as the classic of Indian cinema. It has achieved the fame and recognition throughout the cinematic world on the use of cinematography.

Mehboob Khan was born in a small family in Baroda, in 1907. He was brought up in a favorable environment, but unfortunately, he did not get a chance to get educated formally. His love and passion for the cinema made him to travel from one place to another place. His desire was to be an actor and for that he left his home at early age but could not make it possible. He let his dreams fly over the horizon and left his home once again to bloom his love and passion for the cinema. He kept on struggling till he began his film career by the support of Ardeshir Irani, a famous filmmaker and the father of Indian talkies. Irani offered him the role of an extra in his film and after that he received several offers from other filmmakers to play as an extra. He tried his hand to write scripts but they were rejected till his struggle began to pay off with the beginning of *Al Hilal* or *the Judgement of Allah* (1935). Mehboob Khan kept on making iconic films such as *Deccan Queen* (1936), *Aurat* (1940), *Andaaz* (1949), *Aan* (1952), *Mother India* (1957) and *Son of India* (1962). As a

pioneer filmmaker of Indian cinema, he is famously known for his best masterpieces such as *Aan* (1952), *Mother India* (1957) and *Son of India* (1962).

Aan narrates the story of a maharaja family includes emperor Murad, his brother Shamsheer and his sister Rajshree. Jai Tilak, played by Dilip Kumar, depicted as a guy belongs to a poor family of a village who takes part in a game of taming the horse of Rajshree. After his success, he is provoked to take part in another game and he wins that too. During the passage of the time, Jai Tilak finds Rajshree extremely beautiful and attractive and he eventually develops his feelings for her. He tries very hard to pursue her but her social status and attire blocks her ways to express her love for Jai Tilak. In the meantime, emperor Maharaj announces that Shamsheer is no more a real heir of the empire which boils the blood of Shamsheer and plots to take the kingdom under his control by killing Maharaja prior to the time when he has to visit to England for medical checkup. However, Shamsheer fails to do that as Maharaja makes an escape from Shamsheer's appointee and becomes a servant in disguise in his own kingdom. Nimmi, a poor village girl and a friend of Jai is targeted by Shamsheer. He kidnaps Mangala and tries to assault her sexually and in the meantime, Jai kidnaps Rajshree on the one hand and Mangala drinks poison and dies on the other hand and to take revenge, Jai kills Shamsheer. Jai takes Rajshree to the village to live as a village girl, and the time when Rajshree realizes her true feelings for Jai, Shamsheer comes again to take revenge as he was assumed dead and his death was taken for granted which revealed the fact that Shamsheer did not die at that moment.

Aan has been released as the *Savage Princess* in the United Kingdom and United States. It is the India's first film which is shot in 16mm Technicolor, in fact,

Aan is the first film of Indian cinema which is made in Technicolor. The film received the fame and accolades throughout the globe and has been dubbed and translated in many other languages for overseas distribution. It has smashed the box office and has become the highest grossing film of the time.

Mother India is on the top among the best ever films made by Indian cinema. It narrates the tale of Radha, a young and poverty stricken woman who struggles day and night to sustain the existence of her family. The film starts with Radha, as the mother of the society, nearest to the water canal which is made recently. Radha while opening the canal, she imagines her past time. She remembers her wedding with Shamu and her mother in law's contribution to that marriage with the help of Sukhilal, a famous money lender. Radha endures the hardships of poverty and struggles day and night to earn bread for survival. The conditions of the family turn worse and they cannot repay their loan back to Sukhilal and for that Radha and Shamu have to give three quarters of their crop to Sukhilal as an interest. While working hard in the fields to repay his loans, Shamu gets his arms crushed. He is helpless and faces a lot of humiliation which compels him to leave the house and never to return back. Radha's mother in law dies too and Radha is left alone on her own to deal with the hardships of poverty. Radha, along with her children continuously works in the fields till she gives another birth. Sukhilal offers her freedom from poverty if she marries him, but Radha denies the offer and continuously working hard. Once a storm blows up the village crops and Radha's son dies too. The people of the village start shifting from that village, but Radha urges them to stay and remake once again.

The film then jumps forward by many years to depict Radha living with her children, Birju and Ramu. Since, Birju is irritated by Sukhilal from his early age, and to smash out his frustration, he begins to bother Sulhilal's daughter. At the end of the film, Birju strikes down his furious anger on Sukhilal and his family and on the wedding day of Sukhilal's daughter, Birju comes once again for vengeance and kills Sukhilal and after that abducts his daughter. In the meantime, Radha shoots Birju because of her promise that Birju will not indulge in any criminal act and with this, film comes to an end by showing the opening of recently made water canal flowing red water in the fields.

Mother India is a true representation of India as a nation after independence which alludes a real sense of nation building. Character of Radha is a symbol of power and strength on the one hand and women empowerment on the other hand. Radha reflects the values, principle and courage of being a mother of the society. Her motivation, positive energy and self-sacrifice blooms her in the history of filmmaking.

Mother India received the fame and accolades throughout the globe. It has achieved the fame and recognition in India as well as in the world. It has been honored with numerous awards such as Filmfare Best Actress, Best Film, Best Direction, and apart from these precious awards in India, *Mother India* became an official entry for Academy Awards for the Best Foreign Language Film and was nominated in that category. It also won the National Award for All India Certificate of Merit for Second Best Feature Film in Hindi.

Shyam Benegal is regarded one of the famous filmmakers of Indian cinema. He was born in 1934 in Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh. Benegal completed his

college education from Nizam College of Osmania University, Hyderabad. He has directed more than one thousand commercial and advertising films and more than sixty five documentaries and short films. He is considered one amongst the founders of new cinema or parallel cinema of India. He has achieved fame across the globe in filmmaking and has been honored with multiple honoree awards such as Padma Shri in 1976, Padma Bhushan in 1981 and in 2005, he has been honored with the highest award by the Indian cinema which is Dadasaheb Phalke Award. He is best known for his iconic works such as *Ankur* (1973), *Nishant* (1975), *Manthan* (1976) and *Bhumika* (1976).

Ankur is a social drama, set in Andhra Pradesh. It is the first feature film of Shyam Benegal, made under the category of Indian art cinema. The story of the film revolves around Surya and Lakshmi. It offers a complex plot to understand the human psychology in general and human behavior in particular.

Surya, son of a famous landlord, is told to return back to the village in order to look after the property of their ancestors. After his return to the village, he has to look after the empire as well as to tie his knot with Saroj. Lakshmi is a poor village woman who is married to a deaf and mute man, Kishtiya and they both work for the landlord. Lakshmi dreams of a child of their own to live with. The moment Surya notices Lakshmi, he develops feelings for her and falls in an intimate relationship with Lakshmi. As the time passes by, Lakshmi gets pregnant of Surya's child and Kishtiya thinks it is his child. In the meantime, Kishtiya is caught with stealing the drinks and for that he is beaten ruthlessly. The intimate love relation of Surya and Lakshmi comes to an end when Surya learns that Lakshmi is pregnant of his child and remove this stain from his social identity, he throws her out from his home.

Kishtiya is treated mercilessly and beaten extremely and for his rescue come Lakshmi and curses Surya for all ill treatment and exploitation.

The film is based on a true story which depicts the real incident in a dramatic mode. It offers a critique to the Indian social structure where rich landlord exploit the poor and working class in all aspects. It presents a symbol of rebellion against the India social codes and the behavior of oppressor towards the oppressed.

Nishant or *Night's End* in English is another masterpiece of Shyam Benegal to highlight the social structure of Indian society. It depicts the behavior of wealthy and powerful landlords towards women. The film narrates the tale of a landlord family including Visham, brother of a wealthy and powerful landlord, who would do anything to secure his family and men. Vishaam is a married man and is opposite side of his brother in character. During the course of time, a new school master comes to the village along with his wife, Susheela. Visham finds her attractive and tries to woo her and sends his men to kidnap Susheela. The moment Susheela is abducted, school master's efforts to stop the goons goes in vein and school master realizes the power and influence of landlord when he sees a police officer bows in front of landlord.

Nishant presents power and gender relations in Indian society under the feudalism which merely spares any woman unoppressed. The act of an abduction of school master's wife by the goons of a son of landlord makes school master and the villagers weak to control feudalism. School master's complaint against the heinous crime of Visham reveals the police system and law, which is corrupt and sold out to the wealthy people. It offers a gradual realization about the frightening manifestation

of oppressors which is to be challenges only through collective rebellion. At the end of the film, people come together and create a havoc to bring out the changes in power relations in Indian social structure.

Nishant has been honored with the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Hindi in 1977 and has been nominated for the prestigious award of Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1976.

Manthan is another master creation of Shyam Benegal which is set against the backdrop of White Revolution of India. The film presents the social and economic changes in the Indian society to a large extent. A veterinarian doctor namely, Dr. Rao comes to a village of Gujrat with his team to make a sustainable living of villagers by establishing dairy farms. Dr. Rao along with his team works for setting up a cooperative milk farm, collectively owned and managed by the villagers to make their survival easier. Unfortunately the wealthy businessmen of the village and even the Panchayat feel sadness with the idea of the team. Dr. Rao and his team face different resentments but gradually win the trust and support of the people. With the passage of time and establishment of collective dairy farm, Dr. Rao is being plotted but he succeeds to establish a cooperative milk farm.

Manthan is based on a true story, blended with the drama to empower the positivity of an individual to bring out a significant change in social structure. *Manthan* received fame and recognition throughout the cinematic world. It won the National Film Award for the Best Feature Film in Hindi in 1977 along with the Best Screenplay. Apart from the honor and accolades in India, *Manthan* achieved the status of India's official entry for the Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film.

Bhumika narrates the tale of a woman struggler Usha, who is struggling for her identity, but she is constantly exploited. Usha belongs to the Devdasi family whose grandmother is a successful old traditional singer. Usha is encouraged to utilize her talents by Keshav Dalvi, who take her to the auditions and soon after supporting her to explore herself, he develops feelings for her and marries her. Keshav's attitude is like a controlling agent of Usha which she finds an act of oppression. She gives birth to a baby girl of Keshav and with the passage of time, she falls in love with Ranjan, her costar. She is strong willed and positive energetic woman, but unfortunately being dissatisfied with the relationships, she ends up her relationship with Ranjan.

With the course of the time, she happens to meet Vinayak, a famous and successful businessman. She finds him worthy to be with and decides to settle down with him. Vinayak respects her and she feels that respect, but apart from being respected, she is bounded with the role of a traditional hypocritical housewife. She starts fighting once again for her freedom but she is denied to leave the house once she has accepted the role of a housewife.

Bhumika is a female centered film which presents a critique to the Indian patriarchal social system and questions about the freedom and identity of females in the society. It officially reclaims a permanent space for the females in the society as well as in the cinema. Based on a female protagonist Usha, who discovers herself in unhealthy relationships in a patriarchal social set up where relationships are balanced according to the convenience of men.

Bhumika received the fame and accolades throughout the globe and has been honored with the National Film Award along with the Filmfare Award for Best Film.

It's doubtless to ascertain that under the influence of some Bengali filmmakers like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak and others, Indian cinema turned into the commercial cinema during 1970s. The specific features like songs, dance, family dramas and insignificant plots marked the complete change in Indian cinema. The strategic ways of filmmaking changed all along with other ideas. The changing nature of social norms and economies have largely influenced the movies and the production companies. The entire style of narration changed and enormous changes occurred in characters, narratives, plot structures, content, themes and issues. This was the beginning of Indian commercial cinema which plunged the Indian filmmakers and production companies to undergo into the various changes regarding the ways films were made earlier.

Apart from the existence of commercial cinema in 1970s, the decade also witnessed the evolution of "*Masala Movies*" which certainly became the need of an hour and attracted an innumerable audience with its great entertainment features. On one hand Amitabh Bachan, came into prominence with the fame of *Sholay*, *Deewar*, and *Zanjeer* and on the other hand Dev Anand, Rajesh Khanna, Jitendra, Dharmendra continued to produce one after another hit films. Apart from the angry young men actors, the actresses of the Indian cinema were not far behind. Savtri, Nargis, Waheeda Rehman, Sharmila Tagor, Heema Malini and others became the heartthrobs of the country. The Indian commercial cinema attained much fame among the Indian as well as foreign audience, and in the meantime Indian art cinema

also began to evolve. The 1980s produced an ample number of female filmmakers such as Vijiya Mehta, Aparna Sen, Sai Pranjpye and Mira Nair. During the beginning of the 1990s, a new mingled genre was introduced into the field of Indian cinema. An amalgamation of comedy, romance and thriller entrenched into the realm of Indian mainstream cinema. It was a new upgrade on the shade of 70 mm screen with an elegant technical and digital sound effects that has awaken an international appeal to the Indian cinema.

In the same decade Deepa Mehta, an internationally acclaimed Indian Canadian filmmaker started her journey in Indian cinema. Deepa Mehta is internationally acclaimed transnational filmmaker, producer and screen writer born in 1950 in Amritsar, India. She has achieved much fame due to her courageous and breathtaking films. Her films are famous for the ingredients like visual imageries and emotions which trolled them to play almost at every film festival in the world. Deepa Mehta has received numerous international awards and accolades for her challenging and amazingly astonishing films which narrate the issues of human conflicts, social injustice, religious politics and cultural bonding. She is famously known for her “elemental trilogy” that include *Fire* (1995), *Earth* (1998) and *Water* (2005). The film *Water* was also nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. In her childhood, her family moved to Delhi and her father started working as a film distributor who happened to turn out into a successful businessman. She has been brought up under the environment of movie watching which in return left Deepa Mehta a quality filmmaker. She has completed her school in Dehradun and graduated in Delhi. She has done her post-graduation from Delhi

University in “Philosophy”. Soon after receiving the degree from Delhi University, Deepa Mehta started working on documentary films for GOI.

During the direction of her debut documentary which was about a child bride, Deepa Mehta happened to meet Paul Saltzman, a Canadian filmmaker who took her to Canada. After shifting to Canada from India, Deepa Mehta married to Paul Saltzman in 1973 but unfortunately their marriage didn't turn out to be fruitful and they divorced in 1983. She subsequently remarried to David Hamilton with whom she founded their own production company named as Hamilton Mehta Production Company in 1996. During her initial period in Canada, Deepa Mehta started writing for children's movies and simultaneously started working on other projects such as television documentaries. *A portrait of Louise Tandy Murch* (1974), won a Canadian film award for best documentary and her *Travelling Light* (1986), was nominated for several Genie Awards. Deepa Mehta also worked for television to direct the episodes of *Danger Bay* (84-90), a CBC drama produced by Saltzman and *The Young Indiana Jones* (1992), produced by George Lucas.

Deepa Mehta made her debut full length feature film in 1990 named as “*Sam and Me*” which narrates the tale of an Indian immigrant who happens to become a friend of a Jewish man in Toronto. *Sam and Me* exemplifies her use of visual imagery and elegant emotions. In 1994, Deepa Mehta, was offered to direct *Camila* a Miramax Film, starring with Bridget Fonda and Jessica Tandy. In the subsequent years Mehta started her passionate project which would certainly define her identity as a filmmaker. Jacqueline Levitin, Judith Plessis, and Valerie Raoul write in their book, *Women filmmakers: refocusing* as:

I am not naïve. I know that films are very powerful. But I certainly don't say, I am going to make a film that has a social message; or because I am colored or I am a woman it has to be this way, otherwise it might be misinterpreted! I want to be free to explore anything, even something that doesn't make me look too good. If I want to explore it, it has to come from a place of honesty and not what is expected of me because I happen to be a non-white or a woman. (qtd. in Levitin, Judith Plessis, and Valerie Raoul 290)

The project of elemental trilogy is described by *New York Times* as a “rich, complex exploration of cultural taboos and tensions at play in the society of her native India.” The first film of elemental trilogy is *Fire* made in 1996. Since the day it released, it ignited the fire among the audience. It was a first film ever made in India to be the most focused and concerned throughout the world. The movie extols the tale of two women who develop their loving sexual relationship in Indian socio-cultural context. Following the second film of trilogy named as *Earth* made in 1998. *Earth* is set against the backdrop of colonial rule in India resulted into the partition of British India into India and Pakistan. *Earth* is an adaptation of Bapsi Sidwa's novel *Cracking India* which portrays a group of friends that is assorted to struggle during the time of partition. The film narrates the tale of betrayed friendship and partition of a single nation into two separate nations with bloodshed and massacres which is considered as the largest compelled human migration on earth. The last film of elements trilogy is *Water* made in 2005 set against the marginalized widows and social institutions of 1938 India.

The film *Fire* revolves round a Hindu family residing in Delhi. The family consists of an old aged grandmother (Beji), her two sons namely Jatin (Javed Jaffery) and Ashok (Kulbushan Kharbanda) and their two wives, Radha, Ashok's wife (Shabana Azmi) and Sita, Jatin's wife (Nandita Das) and a male servant Mandu. The family runs a restaurant and earns its livelihood. Besides a family restaurant Jatin runs a video rental shop and Ashok takes care of the restaurant. The wives of the family Radha and Sita also help to sustain their family business by making food in the restaurant. Jatin instead of running video rental shop in a legal way, he turns it into an illegal business by providing porn video CDs to the younger generation of school going children. Jatin, instead of a married man he also maintains extramarital relationship with a Chinese girl Julie, a hairdresser who denies to marry Jatin because he lives in a traditional "joint family". So Jatin ties his knot with Sita only for the sake of his family. Ashok, the elder brother of Jatin, spends much of his earnings on religious preacher and develops a habit of visiting him continuously. Throughout the film Ashok consistently pronounces that visiting to religious Guru would help him to detach from the sensual desires to attain the "truth". Ever since the doctors have revealed that Radha could not conceive child "No eggs in ovaries" (*Fire*), Ashok turns into a brahmachari and makes Radha a mere object to experiment to test his resistance. Radha is always asked to lie beside Ashok on bed to prove the self-control of Ashok and Radha being an epitome of traditional Indian woman always fulfills the demands of Ashok.

Sita, a newly entered bride into the house receives the gesture of denial and deprivation from an inception. She is a young and lovable woman who seems to be modern. She does not fit into an atmosphere of traditional house holding and

somehow she manages to build up her friendship with Radha due to the failure of her relationship with Jatin in the course of time Radha and Sita develop their friendship which turns into a passionate love relationship. Mandu, the male servant of the house always watches porn videos and masturbates in front of Beji who is able to do nothing except ringing her hand bell. With the passage of time Mandu comes to know about the relationship between Radha and Sita and reveals everything to Ashok who in turn spies both the women and finds them on bed indulging into the sexual relationship. Radha tries to explain the situation to Ashok but he is mentally disturbed which dwells them into the oral fight. Radha's saree catches fire accidentally but manages to emerge as victorious and finally leaves the house for Sita.

The film *Earth* is an adaptation of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man* later published as "*Cracking India*," rests on the stance of authenticity on showcasing the partition of India into two different nations, India and Pakistan. The film *Earth 1947* revolves round the major characters represent the major religious sects and social communities, such as Shanta (ayah) played by Nandita Das, Dilnawas (Ice Candy Wala) played by Aamir Khan, Hassan (Masseur or Malishwala) played by Rahul Khanna and Lenny played by Maia Sethna. The narratives of the film are told through an experience of eight year old polio ridden Parsi girl Lenny in the midst of the political, social and religious strain. Lenny is a small child who lives in Lahore before the partition of India. She is enjoying her beautiful terror-stricken childhood with her ayah (Shanta) and her supportive and rich parents. Lenny visits to the Queen's Garden very frequently with ayah who is a beautiful woman belongs to the Hindu religion. Shanta has a charming smile on her face which has a consistency to

supply an eagerness to the men folk. The people Shanta is befriended with are mixture of different religious sects such as Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Regardless of their religion, they are all beautifully enriched in one another's friendship. Lenny has a beautiful world around her which would later turn into terrible experience. Apart from ayah, Dilnawas, Ice candy Wala, a rogue, an anti-hero is actually Lenny's hero.

The film opens up with the rising tensions in India. The first fight, out of frustration, regarding national values happens between Mr. Singh played by Gulshan Grover and Mr. Rogers, a British police official which supplies an experience to Lenny for the first time to encounter a trouble. As the film goes on, the situation gets worse. We as audience witness an angry and frustrated mob on roads. Restlessness increases day by day. People become violent. Lenny's world is cracking but ayah (Shanta) still manages to meet her friends in the garden to have communication. With the passage of time, the film portrays the highest and worst situations between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. People start to kill each other. Hindus and Sikhs kill Muslims and Muslims in retaliation kill both of them, and very soon comes the time when radio news announces the coming of a train from Gurdaspur Punjab. All the characters are trembling with fear and so is Dilnawas who is waiting for his sister to come from Gurdaspur. The moment Dilnawas reaches to the train station to receive his sister, he discovers the train filled with Muslim dead bodies. Men, women and children are butchered in the train even four sacks of the train is filled with the women's breasts which turns the flames into a havoc. The social order turns upside down. Friends turn into enemies, Dilnawas turns into crazy madman who seems bloodthirsty. Shanta visits to Dilnawas with Lenny, they experience the terrible

bloodshed around them. Dilnawas loves Shanta and offers her to marry him, Shanta likes him but she loves Hassan who would later convert into Hindu in order to shift Amritsar with Shanta. On the one hand Shanta embraces the love of Hassan and prepares to shift to Amritsar and on the other hand Dilnawas joins an angry mob to kill Hindus and Sikhs. Hassan is murdered and Shanta manages to hide herself in the house of Lenny's parents. Lenny's family is Parsi who are neutral in the midst of the war torn India. In the end of the film a crowded mob comes to Lenny's home to find if there is any person from other religion. They are searching for Hindu servants along with Shanta, Dilnawas tricks Lenny to make her reveal the hiding address of Shanta. The mob grabs Shanta and takes her with them for her everlasting betrayal.

There are innumerable horrific stories regarding the females in the midst of the war which have unfortunately remained unvoiced due to the fear of dejection from the society. "All the wars are fought on women's body" (Mehta). *Earth* 1947 narrates the tale of Shanta who represents all women folk during the partition, through the lens of Lenny. It is a universal truth that women from every religion have experienced physical and sexual violence, but the patriarchal social code instead of affirming their lives, have rejected them from the society. The patriarchal social setup was so high that the purity of women sexuality has become the question of nationalism. The politics of religion, war and patriarchal social codes have betrayed the lives of women into the larger context. The film portrays the socio-cultural stereotypes which are acquired through cultural codes and setup to shape the lives and living structure of social subjects. Lenny proclaims refugee women as fallen women "Look, fallen women" (*Earth*) indicates unintentional beginning of the consumption of cultural stereotype which is the result of the social, cultural and

patriarchal setup. Lenny asks the boy “is your mother raped” (Earth) foretells the fate of Shanta because she too in later would be raped and become fallen woman.

There is a serene romantic scene in the film which depicts Dilnawas a charming lover who teaches Shanta an art of kite flying. Dilnawas recites, “When it seems difficult let it go and when you feel you have control over it get it closer to have all the control.” (Earth). With the visual imagery used in the film, Dilnawas too seems an eager to have control over Shanta like the object. Women are treated as objects. There is a parallel scene which certifies the control over female body as a patriarchal social product. During the time Dilnawas expresses his love to Shanta, he says, “every human being has an animal, a beast inside him. The people out there have let their beast out to kill each other. If you be with me, the beast which is inside me will be under control.” (Earth). Shanta seems in real trouble now, she undergoes a lot of mental struggle to understand whether Dilnawas offers her or warns her. It is certain that if she rejects his love the beast inside him will create a havoc. Shanta herself represents earth who is to be portioned between Hassan and Dilnawas. The war on Shanta’s body resulted into the death of Hassan as well as the rape and betrayal of Shanta.

The film *Water* is the last segment of her elements trilogy, set against the social and traditional stance of India in 1930s. The film was supposed to shot in Banaras in the year 2000, but Hindu religious fundamentalists and problem mongers have burnt the film sets which caused the delay in shooting. The filmmaker then had to take a long break of years until she was able to shot the film in Sri Lanka instead in India, under the guise of a false name.

The film opens up with beautiful imagery and a bull-ridden carriage depicting a little girl Chuyia, played by (Sarala), chewing sugar cane while going to her dying “husband.” The next day Chuyia’s father comes to wake her up and tells her that her husband died and she is a widow now. They break her bangles off, shave her head and deport her to the widow ashram where she is supposed to live her entire life in seclusion. The ashram is headed by a fat lady called Madhumati, played by (Manorama), famously known as Didi in the ashram. The other widows in the ashram are from a young girl Kalyani (Lisa Ray) to Pitaraji, an old aged woman who frequently talks about the sweets. There is one more namely Shakuntala (Seema Biswas) who seems an angry woman but turns out to be the most protective and chain breaker woman. Chuyia finds a young beautiful girl upstairs living her ostracized life in self-denial. She becomes her friend and acts like her elder sister. One day Kalyani takes Chuyia out to the river Ganges to wash her puppy (Kalu). It escapes and Chuyia chases it and happens to meet Narayan, (John Abraham) a young modern and broadminded student and follower of Gandhi, helps Chuyia to take her back to river Ganges where he encounters a young beautiful widow, Kalyani. She denies to talk to him as she considers it a sin. Narayan then asks his friend Rabindra about the address of widow houses and approaches Kalyani. As the film goes on Narayan becomes aware about the actions of Rabindra’s father to sleep with widows with the help of Gulabi, a eunuch who works for Madhumati as a procurer.

One day Narayan sends a letter to Kalyani and Kalyani being an illiterate, makes it read by Shakuntala. Kalyani then meets Narayan and embraces his love and very soon Madhumati sends Kalyani to one of her customer to share the bed. Gulabi

takes her across the river Ganges to serve the prostitution. The relationship between Narayan and Kalyani gets exposed the ashram and Madhumati cuts the hair of Kalyani and locks her inside the room. Shakuntala asks religious preacher if there is any way out for a widow to live a life of dignity. He tells her the laws of Hindu scripture and some new laws. She frees Kalyani and lets her go to Narayan for her further survival and sustenance. Kalyani while on boat asks Narayan the name of his father, the moment Narayan replies, she makes the boat turn back to the ashram because Narayan's father is one of her customer. Narayan argues with his father but he replies that Brahmans are allowed to sleep with any woman and moreover it is a pride for a widow to sleep with a Brahman. In the meantime Kalyani drowns herself in the river Ganges which leaves Chuyia and Shakuntala in a state of grieve. In the preceding scene religious guru (Kulbushan Kharbanda) informs Shakuntala about a modern man, Gandhi who always listens to his inner conscience. Meanwhile Madhumati tricks Chuyia and sends her with Gulabi and she takes her too across the river Ganges for further prostitution. By the time Shakuntala learns about Chuyia, she chases Gulabi to bring her back but unfortunately very soon she finds Chuyia trembling and traumatized. Shakuntala hears an announcement regarding Gandhi's public speech at railway station. She then takes Chuyia to the railway station and finds Narayan on train, bequeaths Chuyia's responsibilities to Narayan for her better life and survival under the care of Gandhi.

The above mentioned trilogy is analyzed through the lens of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* and Ti-Grace Atkinson's *Radical Feminism*. Ti-Grace Atkinson is a philosopher, author and an American radical

feminist whose writings deal with the oppression of women in the society. Inspired by Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* which led her to meet Betty Friedan who along with Atkinson founded the National Organization for Women. According to Ti-Grace Atkinson, society is dominated with the ideology of men and society and men both act as an oppressor which constantly oppress the women. The category of men is itself a society which is an enemy of women individuality and continuously suppresses the other half of the society which are women. There are established institutions in the society to control and subordinate the women and since the society and the men are synonymous to each other, women have always scared to face off the men. The fear of face off and not seeking the detailed perception of the ideological strategies of men have kept the women subordinated to men which brought the stagnation to the progress of women in the society. While the displeasure amongst the women in the society and to address this displeasure and unhappiness, it states that women in the society make a separate class, but there has never been any casual or political analysis of class in the society. For the political analysis of the society, the affliction and oppression of women have never been taken into consideration. If women have ever tried to solve the problems, they have offered the dilemmas rather than the solutions. Women who supported the traditional feminism, debated and fought for the equality in the society which gave birth to the dilemma because of the reason that women are entirely different from the men in functionality and equality in the society with men would impact the rights of women. It offers equality in treatment in the unequal functionality. The dilemma offers the affliction and oppression of women in the society as the masters persecute the slaves.

Judith Butler is a famous American philosopher and gender theorist who developed the theory of gender and performativity in her notable works *Gender*

Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* which influenced the feminist theory and these notable works are mostly studied in the field of cinema studies to emphasize the gender and performative discourses. Her writings deal with the assumption that the behavior of certain gender is natural as she analyses the fact that the learned behavior and performance of a gender that are associated to the masculinity and femininity are the result of repetition of acts and performances the normative discourse of the society imposes on the human beings. Through her notable works, she develops the theoretical assumption of cultural offshoot which details the gender as socially constructed. She exhibits that any gendered behavior is the result of constant repetition of actions constituted by speech and performance. There is no underlying essence of the gender which produces the gendered behavior, rather it is the constant series of actions and performances which at certain point develops an illusion that the underlying essence and nature exists. Butler writes in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*:

Gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. (Butler 33)

Her assertion is that the identity of an individual is constituted by performances and sex is also socially constructed. In her works, she questions the validity of the gender and the oppression of certain class in the society. She develops

her doubt regarding the category of gendered individuality and the conventional political authority which aims at the protection of women interests, she asserts that instead of the destabilization of different categories in the society through the deviation in the behavior of gender which expresses the artificiality of the roles performed by certain genders, the most subversive agent is the gender parody which destabilizes the fakeness of the gender and associations related to sex, gender and sexuality.

Identity formation has always been the central concern in the cultural and traditional literature, however, Judith Butler, a reclaimed revolutionary writer and critic of gender formation and cultural identity, deals with the subjectivity of gender in the society. She criticizes the notions of cultural identity as an agency which is achieved through the input to the environment of the society and tradition, she asserts that cultural identity develops with the repetition of performance in the society and human beings perform the actions in the society which are central to the exertion and pressure of the discourse of normalcy that regulates the society. The post structural view of Butler on the stem of gender formation and the impact of it on the lives of human beings in the society and culture approaches the interchanging junction and nature of female which offers a critique to the ambiguous sexual orientation of women. To further analyze the ideas of Butler on the modern society, the close observation and examination is encouraged to seek out the underlying forces and devices which create the discourse, a normative discourse to regulate the power, culture and gender socialization in the society. The stand of Butler on the identity formation is widely different as she offers an enigmatic look on the identity formation which is based on the constant repetition of performances and actions.

These performances are the actions which human beings in the society, especially men and women express in the society. Furthermore, the gender identity is the purely produced and constructed by the society which is politically active regarding the historical overview on the patriarchal norms and other normative laws of the society. Butler writes in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* as:

If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of “men” will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that “women” will interpret only female bodies. (10)

Gender and cultural identity is always constructed and produced by the society which is later shaped through the tradition, culture and regulatory laws of the society that are repeated time and time again. The continuous and constant repetition of actions performed by men and women in the society make them the subjects of identity.

Chapter 2

Historical Roots of the Great Elements of Human Body

The elemental trilogy by Deepa Mehta which includes *Fire*, *Earth* and *Water* is made in the Indian social, political and religious context. The first film of elemental trilogy is *Fire* made in 1996. Since the day it released, it ignited the fire among the audience. It was a first film ever made in India to be the most focused and concerned throughout the world. The movie extols the tale of two women who develop their loving sexual relationship in Indian socio-cultural context. Following the second film of trilogy named as *Earth* made in 1998. *Earth* is set against the backdrop of colonial rule in India resulted into the partition of British India into India and Pakistan. *Earth* is an adaptation of Bapsi Sidwa's novel *Cracking India* which portrays a group of friends that is assorted to struggle during the time of partition. The film narrates the tale of betrayed friendship and partition of a single nation into two separate nations with bloodshed and massacres which is considered as the largest compelled human migration on earth. The last film of elements trilogy is *Water* made in 2005 set against the marginalized widows and social institutions of 1938 India.

The trilogy has its location in India and the history from past to present. The characters in the trilogy are mostly national and there is hardly any foreign character portrayed in the trilogy. However, *Fire* deals with the contemporary issues of postmodern feminism, *Earth* has the focus on nineteen forties and the division of subcontinent into two different countries and *Water* has its focus on the social institutions and deprivation of women especially widows of nineteen thirties of

India. All the films deal with the women centric issues such as body, individuality and sexuality. The Indian society gives the resonance to the trilogy as the stories are beautifully crafted and woven together under the India cultural and traditional structure.

The trilogy is named after the five great elements of the creation which are found in the Vedas. The process of the creation of the world and human body as well is discussed in the Hindu scriptures which are Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether. All creations on the face of earth including human beings are created out of these five great elements and after the death of a human being, the body is dissolved into these great elements in order to balance the natural cycle of creation.

One of the five great elements of human body and other creations is earth. Earth is solid and hard and in the human body, it is related to the hard parts such as teeth, bones and nails. It gives the shape and strengthens the human body. The earth can be touched and felt too. However, there exist two different types of earth. The eternal one which has the form of an atom and is nonperishable and the other one is perishable in the form of work at living and nonliving levels. The human body has the symbolic significance of earth in all sense organs which appear the shape of life, but at the same time, these are destructible. However, the atoms and the elements present in it are non-destructible. After the death of a human body, a body is burned or buried and in both cases body is dissolved due to the eternal elements present in it and they acquire the original form once again.

After the element of earth, there is one another element of five great elements which is water. The characteristic qualities of water are fluidity and

liquidity. One of the essential qualities of water is binding. Whenever it is mixed with the dry soil and other things, it helps to shape up the different structures. In the like manner, the human body has the element of water which binds the cells together to form a structure. It has the constructive qualities and it helps a human body to exercise the sense of taste. With the qualities of fluidity and liquidity present in the mouth of a human being in the form of saliva, the taste sense gets the possibility of functionality. Once again the water has the two different characters of perishable and nonperishable. When talking about the water in the shape of an atom, it evaporates from the seas and rivers up to the clouds and falls down once again on the earth in the shape of rain and what we see is the perishable, but at the same time, only the atomic form remains to go back to its original form. The atomic shape of the water only changes the form of work.

Another great element of the creation of human body of and other creations is fire. Fire is characterized by dry, hot and sharp. Different functionalities are performed only by fire. It is due to the presence of air which is a separate entity in the list of elements. Because of the air moves in different directions, it causes friction and whenever there is friction, it creates heat and then fire. The important characteristic of fire is that it generates heat and as per the Hindu scripture, the fire is regarded one among the eight protectors which protects the entire universe. In the scripture, there are different types of fire mentioned and among them the essential ones are the fire of the earth, sky's fire, stomach's fire which regulate the process of digestion and hunger, and the common fire human beings use in the world.

Another great element is the air which is characterized by the movements. It regulates the motion in the universe and directs the movement. It is with the air that

a human body is in the constant movement. There exist two different types of air at the animated levels. The first one is eternal and which is nonperishable as we see the air around us all the time and specifically the human beings breathe in and out constantly. Many at time the human beings witness the storms and other destructive forces of air which are temporary in nature. The atomic shape of the air remains forever and is dissolved into its original form and at the level of work, it is perishable.

Another great element is the ether, which is sky the Akash. It is a space and openness. It is characterized by the eternal feature of sound carrier. It carries the sound whether it is a manmade or the otherwise. As written in the *Thirty Minor Upanishads* as:

The body is a compound of prthivi (earth) and other mahabhutas (primordial elements, as apas or water, agni or fire, vayu or air, and akas). (In the body), that which is hard is (of the essence of) earth; that which is liquid is (of the essence of) water; that which is hot is (of the essence of) fire; that which moves about is (of the essence of) vayu ; that which is perforated is (of the essence of) akas. The ear and others are the jnanendriyas (organs of sense). The ear is of the essence of akas, the skin of the essence of vayu, the eye of the essence of fire, the tongue of the essence of water, and the nose of the essence of earth ; sound, touch, form, taste, and odour being respectively the objects of perception for these organs. These arose respectively out of the primordial elements, beginning with earth. The mouth, the hands, the legs, the organs of excretion and the organs of

generation are the karmendriyas (or organs of action). Their functions are respectively talking, lifting, walking, excretion, and enjoyment. Antahkarana (or the internal organ) is of four kinds manas, buddhi, ahankara, and chitta. Their functions are respectively sankalpa-vikalpa, (or will-thought and doubt), determination, egoism, and memory. The seat of manas is the end of the throat, that of buddhi the face, that of ahankara the heart, and that of chitta the navel. The bone, skin, nadis, nerves, hair, and flesh are of the essence of earth. Phlegm, blood, sukla (or sperm), and sweat are of the essence of water. Hunger, thirst, sloth, delusion, and (desire of) copulation are of the essence of fire. Walking, scratching, opening and closing the gross eyes, etc., are of the essence of vayu. Desire, anger, avarice, delusion, and fear are of the essence of akas. Sound, touch, form, taste, and odor are the properties of earth: sound, touch, form, and taste are the properties of water: sound, touch, and form, are the properties of fire: sound and touch are the properties of vayu: sound alone is the property of akas. (*Thirty Minor Upanishads*)

According to the Hindu mythology, a human being is the microcosm of the world which explicitly reveals that the creation of the human body and the world consists the same elements. All living and nonliving beings on the face of the earth are created from the above mentioned elements. In other words, the celestial body is the mixture of all these great elements. However, the pure indication of these great elements are the different organs of human body and the inner conscience. The inner conscience according to the Hindu mythology acquires in four different forms.

When relating to the doubts and concepts, it is mind and after that it assumes one another shape when there is no doubt at all and this is called the wisdom. In the process of examining and re-examining the subjects' connectivity to the intellect, it is called consciousness and due to the overwhelming feelings of pride and self-praise comes the stage of ego which ultimately bursts out. It is these five great elements which give birth to the inner conscience of human beings as mentioned:

The body is composed of the five (elements); it exists in the five (objects of sense, etc.); it has six supports: it is associated with the six gunas; it has seven dhatus (essential ingredients) and three malas (impurities); it has three yonis (wombs) and is formed of four kinds of food. Why is the body said to be composed of five? Because there are five elements in this body (viz.), prthivi, apas, agni, vayu, and akas. In this body of five elements, what is the prthivi element? What apas? What agni? What vayu? And what akas? Prthivi is said to be that which is hard; apas is said to be that which is liquid; agni is said to be that which is hot; vayu is that which moves; akas is that which is full of holes (or tubes 2). Of these, prthivi is seen in supporting (objects), apas in cohesion, tejas (or agni) in making forms visible, vayu in moving, akas chiefly in avakas a (viz.j giving space). (Then what are the five objects of sense, etc.?) The ear exists in sound, the skin in touch, the eye in forms, the tongue in taste, and the nose in odour. (Then) the mouth (exists) in speech, the hand in lifting, the feet in walking, the anus in excreting, and the genitals in enjoying. (Then) through buddhi, one knows and determines; through manas,

he thinks and fancies; through chitta, he recollects; through ahankara, he feels the idea of I. Thus these perform their respective functions.

(Thirty Minor Upanishads)

In an article, “Understanding personality from *Ayurvedic* perspective for psychological assessment: A case” S. Shilpa and C.G. Venkatesha Murthy write that one of the essential doctrine of *Ayurveda* is that the human beings are the epitome and the miniature of the world that they live in. It is explicit that the creation of human beings and the world as well is the result of the mixture of the great elements used differently at different combinations. The great elements are earth, water, fire, air and ether, with the combination of these five great elements, the universe and the human body along with other creations came into form. The *Ayurveda* affirms that all living and nonliving beings on the earth are the result of the mixture of these five great elements that has the variations in degrees and are specific to each matter and species.

In his article, “Panchtatva, Agriculture, and Sustainability of Life on Earth” Rajendra Prasad writes that it is narrated that the human body is made up of five great elements which are earth, water, fire, air and ether. These five great elements are responsible for preserving the life on the earth. The first element earth has a great contribution towards the making of the human body and his life on in the world. The gravity and magnetic characteristics of earth are responsible for the stability of the objects on the earth, it allows the human beings for agriculture processes which ultimately generates food for the human beings and other species. Earth provides the nutritional diet to the trees and plants in order to grow food for the human creation. It has the capacity to absorb all wastages under its belly and

finally after the death of a human body, if it is buried, earth dissolves the body and turns it into the earth, the dust.

The second element is the water which has an old saying that water is the life and without water life is impossible. Human body contains fifty five to seventy five percent of water. One of the major characteristic feature of water is that it contains oxygen and this is the modern discovery of science. Water, be it a river, lake or the underground, serves for the production of food in agriculture and provides a source of surviving to the human beings and other creatures. Major water bodies such as the seas and oceans evaporate the water and by the process of evaporation, it creates the clouds which later on causes the rain in order to shun the human beings away from drought and dessert.

The third element is the fire which is acquainted to the human creation since ages. Fire is characterized by the source of energy and as per the *Rigveda*, fire is the chief regulator of various religious rituals and ceremonies. Fire is considered as the symbol of purification and in the Hinduism, the major religious rituals are performed with the fire. In the modern times, the discovery of electricity has been the utmost source of energy to the human creation. It is used in lightening, decorating and the process of preparing food and in order to save the spoilage of the food, the refrigeration and the facility of cold storage are only possible with the help of electricity. The food which is grown in the fields is only possible through the process of photosynthesis and in the process of photosynthesis the solar radiations are primarily required. The solar radiations are also responsible for the lighting and heat which is essentially important for the survival of human beings.

The fourth element is the sky or the ether. However, by looking up to the sky one visualizes the objects like sun, stars, clouds and moon. All have their contribution for the preservation of life on the earth. The sun exerts the solar radiations which help the plants and trees to grow food for the humans and animals. In the like manner, clouds cause the rain fall and save the human beings and their land to suffer from the drought.

The fifth great element is the air which has one of the major characteristic feature of providing oxygen to all living things on the earth. Since the modern science claims that the oxygen is produced by the process of photolysis. When plants are watered, they produce oxygen. Apart from this, the air has a unique feature of carrying the sounds and plays a vital role in the formation of clouds which causes the rain fall. Air regulates the movement and keeps the objects and other things in constant motion.

According to Islam, the creation of human beings can best be understood through the methodology given in the Holy Quran. The spark to know the foundational roots of human creation has broaden the ways to find the origin and roots of human body and the best source available in the world are the scared scriptures of different religions. In the like manner, the sacred scripture of Islam, The Holy Quran reveals the fact about the foundational roots and origin of human body in different stages with proper planning and methodology:

It is He Who has created you from dust then from a sperm-drop, then from a leech-like clot; then does he get you out (into the light) as a child: then lets you (grow and) reach your age of full strength; then

lets you become old, - though of you there are some who die before; - and lets you reach a term appointed; in order that you may learn wisdom. (*Quran* 40:67)

It is mentioned in the Holy Quran that Allah has created human beings from the clay, water and soil. It is He who created you from clay and then decreed a term and a specified time [known] to Him; then [still] you are in dispute (*Quran* 6:2). In the Holy Quran, there is a sophisticated discussion about the origin and step wise development of human body. The Quran was revealed in seventh century and it is explicitly mentioned in the Quran and the authentic sayings of Prophet Mohammad peace be upon him that the human body is made up of the components of soil as:

We (Allah) created man from a quintessence of clay. We then placed him as a *nutfah* (drop) in a place of settlement, firmly fixed, then We made the drop into an *alaqah* (*leech like structure*), and then We changed the *alaqah* into a *mudghah* (*chewed like substance*), then We made out of that *mudghah*, *izam* (*skeleton, bones*), then We clothed the bones with *lahm* (*muscles, flesh*) then We caused him to grow and come in being and attain the definitive (*human*) form. So, blessed be God, the best to create. (*Quran* 23:12-14)

There is an appropriate description of the origin and formation of human body in Holy Quran. The beginning of the formation of human body which is mentioned in the Holy Quran is *nutfa* which means a fluid drop and *smshaj* which is mixture. This is the first stage and this description reveals the mixture and concurrence of male and female fluids in order to create the fusion to form the

zygote. It is made up of the fluids and contains the mixture of the secretions of male and female and when these secretions meet with one another, they form the zygote which is the first step for the production of a new human being. After this process is completed, the zygote travels from the fallopian tube to the uterus of the mother and there it embeds itself in the same manner as a seed plants into the soil. It's then implanted and gets all nourishments it needs and gradually develops the different structure and shape.

In the next stage, the differentiation of the cells occur to form the organs and the system. It usually begins from the third week and lasts to the eighth week which is actually a process of fast growth in cells. The process goes through following stages:

Alaqah; starts on the fifteenth day and usually ends on the twenty third to twenty fourth day for the embryo to achieve the leech like shape. There are several meanings of the word alaqah in Arabic among them the most appropriate are the leech, suspended thing and a blood clot. In this stage the process of blood formations takes place in the blood vessels by which the embryo seems the blood clot.

After this comes the mudghah stage which implies any chewed substance. The process of changing from alaqah to mudghah takes twenty four to twenty six days. In this stage, the embryo seems like a chewed matter which has the teeth imprints. One of the meanings of mudghah is a tiny piece of mutton which is of chewable size which is applicable to the size of the embryo which has the length of almost one centimeter. In this stage, it attains the swellings and crumple surface which shapes the embryo into a chewed display.

The next stage is the izam. In Arabic, izam means the bones. In the mudghah stage, the embryo remains there for at least six weeks and during the starting of the seventh week, the skeleton begins to make and with the passage of time, the embryo acquires the shape of a human being with the proper skeleton formation. The formation of the bones occurs in the sequential order and it is this stage of embryo when it acquires the human shape.

The next stage is the lahm stage which is the covering of the bones with mass and it is in the eight week when the differentiation of the muscles begins to take place. There occurs a definite development to the fetus which begins to move for the better positioning of the muscles around the bones to cover properly. In this stage, the embryo acquires the humanistic characteristics and most of the organs of the human body attains the position properly and are elegantly proportioned. In this stage, all the effects are manifested externally on the human body.

According to Christianity, the study of the foundational roots of human beings is grounded on the intricate designs of the God as the creation is made and designed by the lord of all the creations. The anthropology of Christianity is firmly rooted on the Old Testaments for comprehending the origin and roots of the human beings. The Bible understands the human creation as:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and

female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. (*Genesis* 1: 26-28)

It is explicitly revealed that God formed the man with the matter of the natural world. The expression used for the creation is the dust of the ground which proceeds the functionality of the man. It is revealed in the Bible that the formation of man is the sole construction of God who breathed his spirit into him to give him life. However, God himself is not in the human form to inhale the oxygen and exhale the carbon dioxide which is breathed into the man in order to give him a life rather it is the expression used for the comprehension of the act of breathing into him which reveals the creativeness of God for the formation of human beings in whom the God’s breath symbolizes the spirit and life bestowed to the human beings. The life of human beings is the living spirit and human beings are the intricate design of the God. Diagonally, God is linked to the human creation as it is who he infuses his spirit into the man’s form in order to make him the organic whole.

Human beings are made up of the dust and to the dust they have their return. In the Christianity, it is believed that the main component comprising of human body is the dust or the earth or the soil and with the advent of modern scientific research, it is revealed that the human body comprises the same components as present in the earth. “The sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (*Genesis* 3:19). This verse is revealed on Adam and Eve when they eat the fruit from

the tree which was forbidden for them. According to this verse, it is evident that the human creation is made up of the dust and at the same time this verse reminds the human beings their origin and place.

Fire is the first part of an elements trilogy followed by *Earth* (1998) and *Water* (2005). *Fire* is set in Indian cultural and traditional context labelled as the most provocative, breathtaking and groundbreaking work of Deepa Mehta. *Fire* can best be described as a chain breaker of Indian cultural hypocrisy. *Fire* is a film about loneliness. It is a film about hypocrisy of our society today. It is a film about how women do not have choices in a patriarchal set-up.” (Mehta). Most of the scholars and critics have praised *Fire* for its unconventional and bold message through the mainstream Indian cinema, shows not only the homosexuality but also highlights culturally and traditionally imposed restriction on women in suppressed society. *Fire* extols the tale of two women character who happen to be morose and fall for each other for the sustenance of their further survival. The compassionate love between Radha and Sita pushes them forward to a strong decision of surviving together. The relationship between Radha and Sita and their choice to live together rejects the socio-cultural and traditional boundaries and expectations which seems to be tightly enriched in the Indian society. Their decision of exercising the choice rather an extreme choice breaks away their life which was chosen for them by social and cultural norms. Throughout the movie Deepa Mehta portrays Radha and Sita as the challenging resentment to the limitations put on women in the guise of culture and tradition. Throughout the film *Fire* Deepa Mehta constantly draws a parallel narrative from the famous religious epic to showcase the ways in which tradition structures the day to day lives of human beings. One witnesses this parallel from

Ramayana which appears thrice in the film. The choice of parallel narrative from *Ramayana* shows the deliberate decision of Deepa Mehta because of its popularity in Indian mainstream cinema through T.V. serials. The mythical story which appears in the film is about the king Rama who goes through numerous trial to rule over his kingdom. The prime focus of the story is on the seizure of his wife by the king of Lanka Ravan. Rama goes for the mission to rescue Sita and brings her back to his kingdom. Some of the subjects from his kingdom questioned Sita's chastity which leads her go through an ordeal by fire. Sita has to go through the "agnipariksha" from which she emerges as victorious in proving her chastity. In Indian mainstream cinema, Sita holds a position of an ideal chaste woman. In fact it is the same trial by fire "agnipariksha" which Deepa Mehta makes her strong reference in the film. Twice in theatrical performance and once in direct on screen performance, the trial sheds light on the chastity of Indian women. In the end of the film Radha confronts Ashok and tells him that she is leaving him for Sita. Ashok disdains and says "desire brings ruin" (*Fire*). Radha comes on her stance and directly challenges the cultural and traditional boundaries which have weighed her shoulders long back ago. She says to Ashok, "You know without desire I was dead. Without desire there is no point in living, and you know what else.... I desire to live. I desire Sita. I desire her warmth, her compassion, her body, I desire to live again." (*Fire*). In the meantime Radha's clothes catch fire and she too has to go through an ordeal by fire "agnipariksha" to prove her chastity and fortunately she too emerges as victorious and unscathed.

The film *Earth* is an adaptation of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man* later published as "*Cracking India*," rests on the stance of authenticity on showcasing the

partition of India into two different nations, India and Pakistan. The film *Earth 1947* revolves round the major characters represent the major religious sects and social communities, such as Shanta (ayah) played by Nandita Das, Dilnawas (Ice Candy Wala) played by Aamir Khan, Hassan (Masseur or Malishwala) played by Rahul Khanna and Lenny played by Maia Sethna. The narratives of the film are told through an experience of eight year old polio ridden Parsi girl Lenny in the midst of the political, social and religious strain. Lenny is a small child who lives in Lahore before the partition of India. She is enjoying her beautiful terror-stricken childhood with her ayah (Shanta) and her supportive and rich parents. Lenny visits to the Queen's Garden very frequently with ayah who is a beautiful woman belongs to the Hindu religion. Shanta has a charming smile on her face which has a consistency to supply an eagerness to the men folk. The people Shanta is befriended with are mixture of different religious sects such as Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Regardless of their religion, they are all beautifully enriched in one another's friendship. Lenny has a beautiful world around her which would later turn into terrible experience. Apart from ayah, Dilnawas, Ice candy Wala, a rogue, an anti-hero is actually Lenny's hero.

There are innumerable horrific stories regarding the females in the midst of the war which have unfortunately remained unvoiced due to the fear of dejection from the society. "All the wars are fought on women's body" (Mehta). *Earth 1947* narrates the tale of Shanta who represents all women folk during the partition, through the lens of Lenny. It is a universal truth that women from every religion have experienced physical and sexual violence, but the patriarchal social code instead of affirming their lives, have rejected them from the society. The patriarchal

social setup was so high that the purity of women sexuality has become the question of nationalism. The politics of religion, war and patriarchal social codes have betrayed the lives of women into the larger context. The film portrays the socio-cultural stereotypes which are acquired through cultural codes and setup to shape the lives and living structure of social subjects.

The film *Water* is the last segment of her elements trilogy, set against the social and traditional stance of India in 1930s. The film was supposed to shot in Banaras in the year 2000, but Hindu religious fundamentalists and problem mongers have burnt the film sets which caused the delay in shooting. The filmmaker then had to take a long break of years until she was able to shot the film in Sri Lanka instead in India, under the guise of a false name.

The film *Water* showcases a strong resentment against the Indian traditional and religious politics in order to ruin the live of Indian widows. Majority of the characters lead their lives with the stance to follow religious scriptures but fortunately some of them such as Chuyia, Shakuntala and Kalyani take stand to rebel and break the chain of traditional, social and religious exploitation of Indian widows.

Throughout the film water flows as a metaphor. The word represents purity and is of intension to purify the traditional way of exploitation. There is a scene in the film which depicts Shakuntala seeking information regarding the dignified life of widows from the preacher. The preacher says “there are new laws which allow widows to remarry but they do not tell these because of their personal gains.” (Water) Shakuntala dares to take the stand to go against the traditional and religious

boundaries and sets Kalyani free from the lockup to marry Narayan. However, it is very unfortunate to know that because of the social and economic force, Kalyani has to pay the debts by drowning herself into the river Ganges. The film leaves the audience in a state of enquiry that if widows are ostracized, dejected, filthy, and bad omen then why they should serve to the social prostitution institute.

The elemental trilogy of Deepa Mehta is named after the great elements of human body. However, the trilogy includes *Fire*, *Earth* and *Water* which deal with the socio cultural, political and religious matters of Indian society. Furthermore, it is explicit in the trilogy that the patriarchal ideology and masculinity legalize the oppression, domination and violence on the women sexuality. In order to highlight the historical link of the women oppression and domination and at the same time to desist against the oppression, the trilogy discloses the layers of power relations of the masculinity and heteronormative discourse which legalizes the control over women sexuality as a normative cultural practice. However, as the title suggest, the trilogy plays a significant role in the lives of protagonists. The role of fire, earth and water as elements in trilogy is significant as the characters and protagonist of the trilogy are constantly striving for their freedom and resisting against the violation and oppression. There is a detailed discussion given in the chapters about the role of elements specifically fire, water and earth in relation to the human body, it's suffering, struggle and survival for the liberation under the structure of culture and tradition.

Chapter 3

Fire: A Study of Socio Cultural Identity and Gender Performativity

Identity formation has always been the central concern in the cultural and traditional literature, however, Judith Butler, a reclaimed revolutionary writer and critic of gender formation and cultural identity, deals with the subjectivity of gender in the society. She criticizes the notions of cultural identity as an agency which is achieved through the input to the environment of the society and tradition. She asserts that cultural identity develops with the repetition of performance in the society and human beings perform the actions in the society which are central to the exertion and pressure of the discourse of normalcy that regulates the society. The post structural view of Butler on the stem of gender formation and the impact of it on the lives of human beings in the society and culture approaches the interchanging junction and nature of female which offers a critique to the ambiguous sexual orientation of women. To further analyze the ideas of Butler on the modern society, the close observation and examination is encouraged to seek out the underlying forces and devices which create the discourse, a normative discourse to regulate the power, culture and gender socialization in the society. The stand of Butler on the identity formation is widely different as she offers an enigmatic look on the identity formation which is based on the constant repetition of performances and actions. These performances are the actions which human beings in the society, especially men and women express. Furthermore, the gender identity is the purely produced and constructed by the society which is politically active regarding the historical overview on the patriarchal norms and other normative laws of the society.

Gender and cultural identity is always constructed and produced by the society which is later shaped through the tradition, culture and regulatory laws of the society that are repeated time and time again. The continuous and constant repetition of actions performed by men and women in the society make them the subjects of identity.

Stuart Hall's classical essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" is grounded on identity and representation. The issues of identity, culture and tradition are the major concern for anyone seeking freedom from the thread of cultural and identity. Hall talks about two types of cultural identity, the first one he mentions is the essentialist identity which he defines as having the similarities and oneness amid the people. This type of cultural identity as Hall writes, will invoke the activist groups, feminists' etcetera, but can hardly assimilate the agony of colonialism.

The second definition of cultural identity according to Hall is grounded on the appreciation that there are similarities as well as differences among the people within the structure of a culture which actually defines the people what they are. The second definition of Hall asserts the concept of hybridity in the culture which is constantly changing and shifting.

The film opens up in a mustard field where mustard flowers are in bloom. Radha, as a young child is with her parents. Her father smokes a cigarette while her mother narrates her a story about the people who lived on the mountains. Those people had never seen an ocean and one day an old lady of the village told them what you cannot see, you can see. You just have to see without looking, but the young Radha does not understand the deep meaning of this thought and with this the

opening scene ends. The film directly shifts to depict Sita and Jatin, who are newly married and are on honeymoon vacations. Sita is sitting alone in front of the Taj and looking for the love of her life. She suddenly hears that a tour guide is narrating the tale of love between Emperor Shah Jahan and Mumtaaz. Sita felt happy and tries to talk to Jatin, but he reveals his liking for Chinese films.

On their arrival to home, Radha is shown as a responsible and caring housewife who takes care of Beji, the head of the family, and works in the kitchen of the restaurant. Jatin and Sita step in, the whole family welcomes them and Beji signaling the notions about the coming of a baby in the house which Radha failed to give. In the meantime, Sita goes into her room, she wears Jatin's clothes, plays the music and dances in the room which is quite relevant to her character that she is a modern woman. Jatin usually remains out till the late night as he sees a Chinese woman who is working in a parlor.

Ashok, the elder brother of Jatin and the husband of Radha, goes to Swami Ji, a spiritual preacher. Swami Ji constantly educated his disciples about the philosophy of life. He utters that desire light is the love for power, and aspiration light is the power of love. After that he asks them how to expel desire light and for that, Ashok replies, by keeping the objects of desire around you till the desire goes off from mind and body.

In the next scene, Radha and Sita are working in the kitchen, Ashok comes in and see Sita working. He taunts Radha indirectly for not being able to conceive a child and in the meantime, Mandu, the male servant of the house, goes upstairs to see the Beji and plays a porn video on the T.V. and then masturbates in front of Beji, as she is unable to speak.

During the course of time, Sita starts sharing her dreams and wishes with Radha. She reveals that she had seen the Taj, Delhi and now she wants to visit Mumbai as she had never seen an ocean. In the meanwhile, Ashok and Jatin are in the argument about Sita and Julie. Jatin reveals that he still sees Julie and it is not me who said no to Julie, in fact, she denied to marry me as she did not want to stuck in the joint family and become a baby born machine and Ashok ends up at slapping Jatin as he raised his voice against Swami Ji.

Radha and Sita go to the market to buy the vegetables and while buying they are talking to each other. Radha is of perception that cooking good food for the husband is the best way to achieve his love and affection, but on the other hand Sita says what her mother used to tell her that a woman without husband is like boiled rice, appetizing and useless, Radha replies that she likes the plain boil rice and Sita looks at her very sadly.

Radha is asked to lie down next to Ashok on his bed as he has to test his desires and after that she is sent back to her bed. In the meantime, Radha asks Ashok, if I could have children, would you need me the way you need me and Ashok denies, says it might be the fault of his destiny, perhaps it is the sign to seek the universal truth and for that Swami Ji helps him to come closer to that truth. And Radha, so desperately asks him, how it helps me and Ashok replies that by helping your husband you are doing your duty as a wife. Saddened from the life, Radha goes on the roof to inhale some fresh air and in the meantime, Sita comes too and they both share the mute and sad married life to each other. Fed up with sadness and dejection, Sita wants to go back to her mother and Radha consoles her and makes her feel that she is not alone here. While sharing some compassion to each other,

they kiss and Radha feels offended. She is in front of the mirror, remembering the day when she was a young child. Her mother insists her look what have they become, but little Radha replies they look same to me.

Radha feels the need of Ashok and she goes to him on his bed but she receives his back which disappoints Radha from her inner side. Radha is bereaved, looking outside from the window, hoping her life would shine, meanwhile, comes Sita and asks her to oil her hair and after a while, Mandu comes and complaints against Beji that she has spitted on his face.

Jatin constantly sees Julie, he is with her in her parlor and she reveals her future plan to Jatin. She says that she is will be in Hong Kong and if Jatin is a good boy, he would come with me as my manager. Jatin is emotionally invested with Julie and he does not feel anything about Sita.

Sita says that she does not know anything about Karvachauth and asks Radha what women are supposed to do on the day of Karvachauth and after hearing the rulings, Sita replies very astonishingly, isn't it amazing that we are so bound by the culture and tradition and rituals that somebody just have to press our button, there is a button in women which is called tradition. Once it is pressed by the men, they start responding like trained monkeys and Radha hugs her when she realizes that Sita is challenging everything without any fear.

Sita and Jatin are in conversation, Jatin tells her that she does not need to suffer for his long life as he doesn't believe on fasting and all and Sita replies that she has no choice at all because she bound to follow the traditions and culture. On the second side, Radha performs all traditional duties rightly. She touches Ashok's

feet, take his blessings and keeps the fast for his long life. Sita and Radha are playing cards and Sita asks Radha about Karvachouth as she doesn't know anything about this ritual. Radha says that she knows it from Beji as she was the person who transformed this traditional message to Radha and now the message is passing on to Sita. By this, she narrates her the story of the wealthy and good looking king. His wife was extremely beautiful and even gods envied him which made that king proud and one night he was suddenly covered with millions of needles. His wife, being a devoted and loyal, spent a full year to pluck them out and there were only few left in him while a holy man insisted to meet the queen. In the meantime, a maid servant plucked the remaining needles and as the king opened his eyes, he found maid servant and embraced her as he thought she was the person who plucked all the needles from his body. He demoted the queen to the status of maid and promoted the maid to the status of queen. She pleaded and begged in front of the king but the king had made up his mind and the queen ended up by sweeping the floors and the holy man told the queen if she fasts for a whole day from dawn to dusk without consuming a drop of water, the spell will be broken and with this, the king recognized his real wife and embraced her with love and warmth. We fast to prove our loyalty and devotion to our husbands.

What a wimp, I mean the queen and for the king, I think he is a jerk, says Sita to Radha and asks her what she thinks about them and she replies very naively that she doesn't know and moreover, the queen had not many choices. Sita replies that she is fed up of all this tradition and devotion and they do have choices. At the time of breaking fast, Jatin doesn't come home and Radha gives her a glass of water and makes her eat.

Sita goes to the bed, but she doesn't fall asleep. She is awake and feels the need to meet her desires. She enters into Radha's room and wakes her up by kissing on her neck and with this they both indulge into intimacy. They have now become the compassionate lover to each other. They are both dejected by their husbands and they develop compassionate relationship with each other. In the kitchen, they share their bangles and always share the look of hope as they stand for each other. They seem happy from their inner side and they are totally into each other. Mandu has his eye on Radha, it seems as if he is waiting for the right time and he would plunge.

Radha cooks the food for the family, meanwhile Beji denies to eat and Ashok tell Radha make Beji eat and this is the first time Radha answers back. She says why would I, why don't you make Beji eat tonight. She is now inspired by Sita as she too started questioning the traditional duties and household responsibilities. Radha and Sita are now finding space to spend time. Radha starts asking Ashok when he is going to Swami Ji just to confirm they would find some time to spend.

They are on the roof, spending time with each other and whenever they feel need, they fall into an intimacy. Ashok calls Radha, but now onwards, Radha starts ignoring him. She starts to live her own life for the sake of life. She is now breaking the tradition bonds day by day and come closer to the bloom of life. She is once again asked to lie down next to Ashok as he has to test his desires but this time she denies and sleeps on her bed. She leaves Ashok mesmerized. She is changing very swiftly. Radha, first time since she is married, she denies to lie next to Ashok and she reveals Sita's influence on her. She says that Sita is of opinion that the concept of duty is outdated now. In the next bed room, at the same time, Sita denies Jatin to

come closer for coupling. They both turned flipside. They have started to respond back to their controllers.

Jatin rents uncut version of porn videos to the school going children. He has turned his video tape business into a filthy and disgusting way of earning money. While, Jatin is selling the video tapes, Radha and Sita are in kitchen and they have turned the kitchen into the place where they can share their compassion to each other. Radha tells Sita about the spices and their uses on certain occasions. She tells her that black pepper renews energy and that's the reason to give to newly wedded husbands for better performances. They share all fantasies and excitements with each other and Sita asks her what they give to the brides, cardamom, she replies, for the fragrant breath.

Mandu is always seeking time for watching videos on the television. This time, he secretly takes a video cassette from Jatin's shop and goes upstairs and plays it on TV in front of Beji and at the same time provokes Beji against Radha and Sita as they have closed the restaurant earlier and have gone out. Radha and Sita go to the shrine of Nizamudin where they tie the knot for their wish to be together forever and during the conversation of being together forever, they categorize others in pairs. They associate Beji with Mandu, Jatin with Julie, and Ashok with Swami Ji. On their return back, Radha enters into the room and finds Mandu watching porn on the TV in front of Beji and masturbating. Radha feels disgust and pushes away Mandu. She fights with him and instead of feeling sorry, Mandu revels his day schedule as he is completely into the work and there is recreation time for him. He also tells Radha that the relationship between you and Sita is too exposed in front of me, you too become serious as this not good for family name and fame.

Radha wants Ashok to fire Mandu, but Ashok talks to him and he says let him give one another chance. He take both of them to Swami Ji of his assistance overcome of their desires. Radha is sitting on the roof, feeling insecure that Mandu should not tell it to anybody and Sita console her that if he even tries, no one will believe in him. Sita while consoling Radha, she replies that she is naive from all this and it is not about somebody is terrorizing, rather it is about the needs, about the desires.

Mandu, in front of everyone, touches Beji's feet and says sorry to her. Ashok wants his family to forgive Mundu for what he has done. In the bedroom, Jatin reveals officially his love with Julie. He directly says to Sita that he is seeing Julie because she is special, ambitious and beautiful and he is not sure what future hold for him. He gives her a choice of divorce or baby. He says baby would kind of keep her busy and occupied and she might feel happier, and in return, Jatin gets goosebumps when he sees his wife speaks more brilliantly than him. She says him a pompous fool on his face and fights with him.

In the restaurant kitchen, Mandu teases Radha by singing a song of her name and makes her uncomfortable within her own house. On the other side, Jatin tries to approach Sita, but this time he lost his grip on patriarchy. He tells Sita that he will not be back tonight and Sita replies as it doesn't matter for her. After everyone goes in, Mandu reveals his desire for Radha. He pretends as he is the boss of that house. He takes out a photo from his pocket and looks at it. The photo is of family members where everyone's head is marked with cross and Radha's face is marked with heart. His eyes are on Radha and his desires are strong for her.

The most heart wrenching truths are unveiled when Radha and Sita are on bed and sharing their unfortunate conditions. Radha declares in front of Sita that she is barren. The tears are rolling down from her face and she is looking at Sita, tells her that Ashok is of opinion that desire is root of all evil as it distracts one from the god. The only reason to have physical relationship with wife is to have sons who will carry the name of your family. One night, Ashok found the reason to turn the misfortune into an opportunity and he took bow of celibacy. She reveals in front of Sita that whenever Ashok feels his desire for her, he tells her to lie down next to him. He promised her that he will not touch her. The only concern of Ashok is to testify that he is far from any temptation. It has been thirteen years now and they lived like brother and sister for thirteen years. Three years ago Ashok learnt to control the desire, but he still needs to practice it time and time again just to make sure that he has not lost his control over desires. They both are in desolate conditions as they suffer from numerous ways. They have no one to share, no one to hold the hand, they are on their own to each other. They are both weeping and giving a kind of hope to each other to be together forever. They once again fall in intimacy and this time Mandu is seeing from the hole of the door and he goes to Swami Ji just to inform Ashok. He wanted to take a revenge by exposing both of them in front of Ashok. The moment he opens the door, he finds them indulged in an intimacy and he goes out. They decide to walk away from the house now. Radha promises Sita that she would join her as soon as possible but Sita must leave as Radha needs to talk to Ashok one last time.

Radha is once again in the kitchen, making tea and Ashok comes in and asks Radha to come into the bedroom as he needs to test his desires. She denies on the

spot and replies him not to start once again. He insists her, asking her that it is important, but she refuses to go with him to the bedroom. She reveals that she is finished now and she is leaving the house. Ashok loses his control over the patriarchal structure and he tries to control her once again. He says desire brings ruin and I know that and to reply him, Radha outbursts at Ashok and narrates how she was dead without desires. She tells that without desire there is no point of living. Without desire, a person is dead from inside and moreover, she wants to live. In fact, she desires to live. She desire Sita, she discloses openly that she desire her warmth, her love and her body and if you want to control your desires, go and ask Swami Ji to help you, don't come to me for any help. Ashok, after listening to her, bullies her, abuses her and scolds her for such a change in her character. He expects her to touch his feet in order to beg for the forgiveness, but instead of seeking forgiveness, she give lecture to him over the desires. Ashok forcefully goes closer to Radha and kisses her multiple time and yells at her, orders her to touch his feet but she doesn't, he hits her and leaves the room.

Radha is in the kitchen and suddenly her clothes catch fire and she tries to save herself from burning in that fire. She wants to walkaway far from that fire but she does not find any way. Ashok is seeing her clothes are burning, but he doesn't come for her help. He too wishes her to burn in that fire. Ashok takes Beji and leaves that to next room. Radha is left alone once again to stand on her own. She too has to pass fire ordeal and fortunately she comes out unscathed and emerges as victorious. She once again gets the flashbacks of the day when she was in the mustard field with her parents. Whenever she gets the flashback of that day, she is narrating the remaining story of that day. It goes on parallel to the main story of

Radha. At this time, she is chewing her finger nails and is in a deep thought. She is alone, a little distant from her parents and is looking at something mysterious. She closes her eyes and opens them again and her face glows with happiness and smile as if she has seen an ocean now. She has understood the deep philosophical meaning of that thought of looking. She feels the happiness that she can see from the distance. She has been caged in the clouds and they are no more now. Her vision is clear. She can see the ocean now. She smiles and feels free from the burden of bonding. She herself utters while closing her eyes and reopens them with smile that she can see now, she can see now.

She arrives at the Nizamudin shrine where Sita is waiting for her. They both reunite and tie their bond to be together forever to share their compassion, warmth and love. They go far away from the people who dejected them over the years. They share the look to each other just to give a hope to one another that they are not going to be like trained monkeys anymore. No one would press their button of tradition now and they do not have to respond to the traditional values and culture.

Roger Ebert, a well-known writer and film critic, writes that the film *Fire* portrays a social and traditional resentment to the Indian social codes and institution where an ample number of women are deprived from their rights. The women who live under this circle have no rights to go beyond these social and traditional codes. So the filmmaker in response to this social institution which manipulated the rights of women under the disguise of culture and tradition, outbursts her anger into the format of romance, photography and melodrama. The Indian social and cultural context resonates this story. "Their lives have been made empty, pointless and frustrating by husbands who see them as breeding stock or unpaid employees." (2)

Walter Addiego, in a review named as *Fire cool to state of marriage in India*, writes that the film *Fire* depicts a tearful plea of women self-fortitude which strikes the viewers throughout. The aim of the filmmaker of *Fire* is to demystify India under the guise of traditional and cultural codes and it is quite explicit that the filmmaker has achieved her aim with the depiction of Indian tradition and culture. *Fire* is an ordeal which depicts the sisters in law in a quite pervasive relationship which happens because of the circumstances prevailed in the house and society. Their husbands are attuned to somewhere else and they are being dejected all the time. These reckless acts of their husbands compel them to build a warm and compassionate relationship to each other when the social and domestic set up of the family becomes completely unendurable.

The title of the film is inspired by the famous Indian mythological story of Lord Rama, who in *Ramayana*, puts her wife into an ordeal of the flames of fire just to prove her chastity “This bit of mythology too handily prefigures a major element in the film's conclusion” (Addiego 1) and this element of the mythology is quite evident at the end of the film. Furthermore, it is also blended with the fantasies and questions of young Radha, who constantly asking questions to her parents on the day of their family outing.

Louise Keller, a renowned film critic writes that *Fire* portrays an enchanting view of the world of dissimilitude. It presents India in different angles, such as, traditional India, spiritual India and modern India. The mixture of the stories about traditional India along with customs and traditions, modern India which constantly questions and demands an attention, and spiritual India with the presence of religious clerics and folk lore, are all artistically intertwined together. The

representation of an extended family and crave for individual freedom is sensibly unified. “The story canvasses desire - repressed, unfulfilled and satisfied. Radha has curbed her desires; her husband Ashok has taken a vow of celibacy, but tests himself out with her now and then” (Keller 1). The film depicts the repression of desire which compel Radha and Sita to find out the choice. Ashok, who has taken an oath of celibacy, very often tests his desires by lying Radha next to him on the bed. Sita is yearning for her desires, but unfortunately she is dejected every time by Jatin, because he is seeing a Chinese woman. “The story canvasses desire represents unfulfilled and satisfied. Radha has curbed her desire and Sita is opening up her desires and rejected by her husband” (Keller, 1). It depicts the ideology of traditional India about the chastity of woman. It highlights important traditional and cultural issues and compels the viewers to contemplate over them.

Peter stack, in his “Fire has spark but not enough heat”, writes that the film *Fire* ordeals a tale of contemporary middle class India life. It highlights an emerging relationship between Radha and Sita which strictly disappoints the traditional order of the family and austere moral codes. The consistent focus of the film is on the sisters in law, Radha and Sita and their relationship, who are trapped in an ailing marriage. ““Fire” speaks tellingly about individual freedom for women versus social expectations and arranged marriages” (Stack 1). The filmmaker, Deepa Mehta skillfully approaches the issues with taking all the difficulties imposed by traditional and moral codes. Deepa Mehta certainly appeals the female with her blended emotional connections. The film *Fire* stands to speak out about the freedom of a female individual against the expectations of the society. It speaks about the arrange marriages and brings into the limelight to those who cannot give birth and how are

they doomed to be trapped in patriarchal attitude. It photographs the disgrace of patriarchal face.

Marjorie Baumgarten writes that the film *Fire* unveils the melodramatic situation of New Delhi based middle class family under the strict social and traditional boundaries. It portrays the liberation of repressed sisters in law, who confront the social cultural and traditional order of the day. Their audacity shakes the family roots and structure all around and poses a serious threat to the religious and social cultural traditions which shape their lives throughout. “Their defiance uproots the family structure and threatens the religious beliefs that govern their lives” (Baumgarten 1). The film *Fire* is a mixture of western ideology regarding the sexual role playing, social stratum and social cultural and traditional collaboration of Indian cinema which hardly consigns female characters to the sexual objects. The thorough going portrayal of New Delhi based middle class family issues are an eye opener to the inherent impossibility of the dangerous melodrama which can best be traced out through film tradition of the country.

Keith Phipps writes that the film *Fire* represents the Hindu Mythological legendry. Sita, a new woman who enters into the deadwood marriage, finds herself in a dreadful situation of loveless life. Her husband is involved in extra marital affairs which dwells her to indulge into a warm and compassionate love relationship with Radha. “*Fire* openly questions Indian tradition, and it loads the dice in its favor” (Phipps 1). The film explicitly questions India social cultural and traditional moral codes and constantly roars to be in favor. The characters of Radha and Sita are sympathetic in terms of their loneliness and dejection by their husbands. Their love to sustain their further survival always seems impossible. It is designed in such a

way that it generates the debates and questions the tradition bound society. It offers a critique to the Indian society under the guise of moral and traditional codes which trap the women into the stigma of patriarchy. *Fire* openly demands freedom from individual oppression. It loads the voice in favor of oppressed women. There are only two characters in the film who attain the sympathy from audience in the first place. Their relationship is depicted in harmony, blended with romance. Furthermore, the breaking into the new arena makes it richer when depicting the culture and tradition torn in between the colonial and post-colonial bunch.

Lawrence Van Gelder in “Fire’: Celibacy and infidelity in conspiracy” writes that the film *Fire* is a story of dishearten and repressed desires. The loveless terror stricken tradition bound New Delhi family fills its novelty with undemanding contentment. Deepa Mehta skillfully amalgamates India epic *Ramayana* and India mysticism which constantly flow throughout the film. “Mixing references to Indian mysticism and the epic poetry of the *Ramayana* with late-20th-century feminism, teeters unsteadily between sociology and soap opera” (Gelder 1). *Fire* stands as a bold and novel in Indian society. It imparts the feministic messages to the Indian social set up which dates back to the standards of America. Moreover, *Fire* could have been taken more sensitively if the signs of affection had not underlined by the throbbing drums, if the broken and devastated husband of Radha had not collapsed beneath the soda machine which reads crush on the top, and furthermore, if the home had not laid these importance on disparity between the dispossession and desolation which compel the characters.

Piyaseeli Wijegunasingha in “Fire: A film which bears witness to Deepa Mehta’s courage as an artist” writes that the film *Fire* became the prime focus of the

critics all over the world because of an exceptional efforts of Deepa Mehta to portray such an artistic experience which would achieve an admiration throughout the world. Deepa Mehta's portrayal of relationship between Radha and Sita appeals the viewers and achieves a lot of respect and sympathy. Deepa Mehta's artistic creation and potential to turn from a viewer into a sympathetic one even for the relationship which is not permissible in the society. It portrays a loving relationship between two repressed women of the family. Moreover, the grand success of the film lies not in the depiction of the women relationship, rather spiritually filled and contended relationships between human beings.

“Thus Agni endorses a relationship, which, although not traditionally accepted in class society, is honest, aesthetically appealing and spiritually rich against a dishonest, spiritually bankrupt, institutionalised traditional relationship in class society” (Wijegunasingha 1). The realistic approach of the portrayal of class based institutionalized tradition bound relationship between each other which generates a loathing attitude among the viewers regarding the characters. *Fire* appeals surely not for atypical relationship against the typical one, but the gentleness and the pleasure lie in the enlightened and passionate love with gratitude among the human beings. It unveils the brutal attitude of physical and sexual relationships to the women who are trapped in the traditional institution of marriage. The role playing of Jatin and his attitude towards his wife, Sita offers an explicit narrative about the brutal sexual relationship. The male members of the family are far away from the duty of taking care of their mother because they expect their wives to fulfil the ritual of nursing mother in law.

Fredric and Marry Ann Brussat in “A compelling drama set in India about the boundless of desire” write that desires are powerful and energetic enough to move us beyond what we are. Desires incite our devotional appeal as well as romantic feelings. The film *Fire* portrays an enforcing drama of a middle class family. Radha is depicted as a devotional and faithful wife of Ashok. She has calmly endured the pain of being a wife of a man who took an oath of celibacy. She has lived thirteen years of her life in sexual and emotional repression. Radha is quite unhappy with her misfortune of not being able to give birth to a baby and her husband has become opportunistic to take an oath of celibacy.

Jatin is newly married. He enters into the house with a new woman, Sita who lives a life of dejection and oppression. He is seeing a Chinese woman and has no love for Sita. She constantly waits for her love to come, but he does not turn towards him. So, she develops a loving relationship with her sister in law which turns into a passionate love relationship. Ashok’s mother, Beji who is unable to speak because of heart attack, learns about their loving relationship which is eventually witnessed by the male servant of the house, Mandu who later on exposes them to Ashok.

The filmmaker, Deepa Mehta has pictured a passionate film regarding the endlessness of human desires. She has skillfully employed a number of bold moves in order to portray the devastating effect of repression and avoidance. The spiritual ideology of Ashok to attain the truth and traditional beliefs of Beji has cut off both of them from love. The passionate loving relationship between Radha and Sita shook them to their roots and took them beyond themselves.

In “Mirror politics: ‘Fire’ Hindutva and Indian Culture” Mary E. John and Tejaswini Niranjana observe that the film *Fire* offers a critique of patriarchy to

identify women images on either side. It enhances the necessity to understand the female sexuality in patriarchal social set up. *Fire* is a clear representation of patriarchal social rules which are deeply grounded on the suppression of female sexuality. The overall spectrum of this structure covers up all corners of female lives that have become confused under the critical range which constraints to find out the root cause of the suppression of female sexuality. Patriarchy is surely rested on the ideology of controlling female sexuality and to co relate this idea, *Fire* is imprisoned under this ideology in order to fight and seek freedom. It puts forth an argument that booming affirmation of sexual choice is not only important but also a strong condition to survive.

The patriarchal ideology over the control of female sexuality is reduced to the defiance to make sure it's indulgence to simplify the production of liberation to women as free sexual choices. This minimization of female and their body under the patriarchal social control within the Indian culture and tradition is represented by constrains of Radha and Sita under the structure of joint family. On the one hand, the film suffers specifically from a view of patriarchal oppressions and on the other hand, it helps to reproduce the issues on a large scale. As Carol Upadhyia writes that male control over female sexuality is a strong belief in Indian society. This control of male counterpart over the female sexuality is the root cause of all other issue and problems in the Indian society. *Fire* is a direct representation of the call to withdraw the control over female sexuality and social hierarchy.

In her article, "Autophagia and Queer transnationality: Compulsory Heteroimperial Masculinity in Deepa Mehta's *Fire*" Namita Goswami writes that *Fire* presents the ensigns of consumptive modernity through the elements of dance,

music, use of English language in conversation, fast food restaurants along with the proper lack of heteroimperial masculinity. Deepa Mehta presents all male characters as mentally disturbed which is why they have lack of proper masculinity even though they are all surrounded by the proper modernity. This mental disturbance among the male characters in the film grounded the relationship between Radha and Sita.

The female characters especially, Radha and Sita are absorbed as a commodity as they are the victims of mentally disturbed Indian masculinity which seems unchanged even in modern India. They are also absorbed as the queer heroines as their compassion, love and desire challenge the Indian culture tradition and nation as a whole. *Fire* is represented as cultural commodity that concedes the viewers to absorb the regressive Indian masculinity and female love to each other. It presents the detailed analysis of heteroimperial masculinity in some specific ways through the characters and plot. Julie, a Chinese Indian parlor woman who is a licensed western woman as compared to Radha and Sita, who are the epitome of Indian chastity. Julie learnt the American English accent and desires an American man to be with. She denies to marry Jatin because Jatin is not enough to be desired by Julie. She demonstrates a strong desire of western masculinity as she finds India masculinity faulty and pathologic.

It presents an anticipation for heterosexuality allowances through heteroimperial masculinity through the characters of Jatin and Ashok. They both represent the heteroimperial masculine subjects of India and they both fail to reach to the point. Jatin and Ashok fail to control their partners respectively in order to keep them at home. Jatin loses his control on Sita to keep her as his wife and loses

his control on Julie too as she denies to marry him because she desires something else other than Jatin. Similarly, Ashok, a traditional Indian man develops weakness to be the perfect Indian masculine subject as his control over Radha is vanished when Radha take her stand to speak about her life and choice.

In his article, “Fire, Water and Goddess: the Films of Deepa Mehta and Satyajit Ray as Critique of Hindu Patriarchy” David F. Burton writes that *Fire* exemplifies the global process of filmmaking as it showcases a typical Indian patriarchal behavior towards the Indian woman and their sexuality. It has been labelled as the misrepresentation of ideal Indian culture and identity. Ashok is preconditioned towards religious salvation. According to Ashok, women are bound to follow the traditionally prescribed rules as house wives and Jatin is after some other woman and mistreats his own wife Sita. The female characters in the film, particularly, Radha and Sita are held up in a repressive culture and tradition which is purely patriarchal in nature. Radha and Sita develop intimate relationship between themselves and when they are caught in their relationship, they stand as rebellion towards the exertion of culture and tradition over them. They break down all the stereotypical characterization of India women who are caught up under the oppression of patriarchy. They break all the bonds of repressive nature of patriarchal control over their life and sexuality. They are transformed from traditionally dutiful and loyal women to the rule breakers who push themselves to go beyond the structure of culture and tradition in order to be empowered enough to deal with the issues related to identity and sexuality.

The ending of the film is extremely powerful and symbolic in nature. Ashok and Radha indulge in an argument when Ashok finds Radha and Sita on bed. In the

kitchen while Radha is making something on gas stove, the fire catches her clothes and Ashok sees that Radha might lose her life but he does not put any effort to save her from fire. However, Radha manages to save herself from the fire and immediately leaves the house to meet Sita at Nizamudin Shrine. This scene reveals the fire ordeal of Sita in *Ramayana*. Sita has to go through an ordeal of fire to prove her chastity and loyalty and in the same way, Radha too goes through an ordeal of fire to prove her purity and chastity. There is the subversion of symbolism presented in the plot. In *Ramayana*, Sita walks through fire in order to prove her chastity and purity and in the film, Radha goes through an ordeal of fire to challenge the patriarchal culture and tradition which controls the sexual purity of woman in the society. The depiction of female characters such as Radha and Sita and their love to each other is a clear challenge to the patriarchal attitude towards female sexuality.

In his article, “Burning with Shame: Desire and South Asian Patriarchy, from Gayatri Spivak’s ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ to Deepa Mehta’s *Fire*” Rahul Gairola observes that the film *Fire* speaks about the patriarchal codes of Indian society. The socio political, cultural and traditional Hindutva practice of sati moves throughout the film. *Fire* depicts main lead female protagonists as suppressed under the oppression of patriarchy, and subaltern as they are held up within the structure of tradition and culture. They remain unfulfilled from the sides of their husbands. They are seized under the web of traditional household duties which constantly pass all the notions of symbolic womanhood of Indian society. Deepa Mehta produced *Fire* as an example of same sex desires and relationship through the characters of Radha and Sita which somehow empowers them to fight against their rights in order to find out an escape from accepting the patriarchal tradition and socio cultural codes of Indian society.

As the title suggests the symbolism in the India culture, *Fire* is used as a recurring idea again and again to depict the mythical idols of Hinduism under the fold of middle class Indian social life. It is highlighted by employing the technique of parallel narrative of *Ramayana* in which Sita walks on fire to prove her loyalty, purity and chastity. The fire ordeal of *Ramayana* appears three time in the film as parallel narrative. Firstly, it appears when Mandu watches adult videos in front of Beji, an old mute lady, and soon after he relaxes, he quickly switches to the *Ramayana* and plays the scene of Sita walking on fire. Secondly, it appears as a stage performance at Swami Ji's when he enlightens the people with religious and spiritual thoughts and thirdly, it appears in the film when Mandu is sitting with the whole family and seeks forgiveness from Beji as he was caught up doing masturbation in front of Beji by Radha. The consistent use of fire in the film in order to the draw the parallel between the *Ramayana* and the film itself, it to uncover the truth. Furthermore, fire is used in other contexts also to signify the religious and cultural value of fire. It is used at Swami Ji's, it is used during the wedding ceremony of a groom passes through the road, during the puja and of course at the end of the film when Radha and Ashok indulge in the argument and suddenly Radha's clothes catch fire in the kitchen. Deepa Mehta uses the idea of *Ramayana* that the fire ordeal will surely uncover the truth to validate the passionate relationship between Radha and Sita. The characterization of female protagonists, such as Radha and Sita is a clear case of repressed desire depiction which now flourishes for same sex relationship to break an ice to mark the deviation from the bonds of religion, culture and tradition. *Fire* does not present the narrative of the issues that appear during the confrontation of East to the West, rather it presents the

narrative of problems and issues which arise in the culture of postcolonial Indian society that are to be dealt with the freedom of sexual identities. *Fire* asserts India as a premodern space where same sex relationship is possible only through the repression of female sexual desires and through the fractured marriages.

In her article, “Chinese Indians in *Fire*: Refractions of Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Citizenship in Postcolonial India’s Memories of the Sino Indian War” Payal Banerjee puts forth a detailed analysis of Chinese Indian characters such as Julie, a parlor woman and beloved of Jatin and her father. They produce an illustration to trace out the criticism against the social and cultural hierarchies of Indian society. During the war between India and China, Chinese people in Indian society had to encounter with numerous problems and issues related to social displacement, economic instability and other physical violence. Deepa Mehta’s characterization of Chinese Indian characters in the film paves the way to the Chinese Indian people to raise the voice against the ill treatment of Indian social attitude towards Chinese Indian people in the Indian society.

Furthermore, the film presents the critique against the patriarchal social structure of Indian society. *Fire* is labelled as the radical narrative for its treatment to the problems of heterosexuality and female sexual identities in Indian social hierarchy. It presents an open challenge to the patriarchal social codes by the depiction of same sex relationship between Radha and Sita. The characters of female protagonists under the fold of joint family, serve a critique against the heteropatriarchal notions and to the nation as well, deeply rooted in gender ideology through the prominent characters of Hindu mythology to put forward an analysis of national projects which trace out an establishment of heterosexuality and patriarchal

social rules by exerting the control over female sexuality and desires. The intercession of national project under the guise of gender and feminism ideologies, appeals for the ardent devotion from female towards the heterosexual relationship and repressive patriarchal notions. The predominant command of women in Indian society as the holders of sexual, social and familial devotion and purity towards the husbands, society and to the nation is brought back to the memory of female protagonists' loyalty, chastity and purity to their husbands and to the nation through the parallel of *Ramayana*. *Fire* falls into the category of resistance which openly challenges the heteropatriarchy at glance. Furthermore, through the constant reference from the epic *Ramayana*, it strengthens the critique against the patriarchy and tradition due to the relevance in Indian society where women are counted accountable for disciplining the family and the society by assuming the roles of Indian women as ardent, dutiful, loyal and pure to the family as well as society.

In his article, "Arranged Marriage: Cultural regeneration in Transnational South Asian Popular Culture" Marian Aguiar analyses the idea of arrange marriage depicted in the film. He writes that the institution of marriage is faulty due to which repression on sexual identities arise in the society. The institution of marriage and its association with Indian society gives the resonance to the story which turns social and economic elements apparent in the Indian society. The system of arrange marriage is represented as a faulty social and economic product to establish an alternate marriage agency. The postcolonial Indian and diasporic works of feminist stigma highlight the darker side of arrange marriage. *Fire* depicts the system of arrange marriage as a social and economic production deeply grounded on the traditional ideologies which allow the repression of female sexuality at the worst

level. It is presented as an essential critique to the institution of marriage. It depicts an ideological critique which denounces the functionality of the institutionalized arrange marriage agency that empowers the socio economic and patriarchal ideologies within the social structure in one hand, and propagates a liberal discourse which enables women to exercise their power of freedom in the society.

The same critical discourse of institutionalized arrange marriage outlives in the modern literary feminist works. With the advent of new emerging trends of media within the structure of popular culture, an altered type of representation came into being through media and cinema. Media has highlighted the issues with the touch of culture and tradition too encounter the western mainstream projection. Numerous authors and filmmakers from India and abroad have produced the works which represent the institutionalized arrange marriage agency in the society. *Monsoon Wedding*, a Mira Nair produced film depicts an arrange marriage to fill the gaps between fractured family ties because of illegitimate intimacy. Some other films such as *Namestey London*, a Vipul Shah directorial film presented a romantic love story grounded on the arrange marriage. There has happened a paradigm shift about the representation of institutionalized arrange marriage agency which is showcased to fulfill individual pursuits. *Devdas*, a Sanjay Leela Bansali directorial film depicts the agency of arrange marriage to fulfill the socio cultural and personal gains. Freedom of choosing one's partner is submerged under the cultural occupations which allows repression to the large extent.

In his article, "Culture, Sexuality and Politics in Deepa Mehta's *Fire*" Radu A. Davidescu provides a detailed account of the hesitation of Sita to name her relationship with Radha as she states that there is no word in Hindi language which

defines her relationship with Radha. This statement of Sita heightens the curiosity of western audience that lesbianism is not a part of Indian culture as it is purely a western idea. In Indian society, people generally do not discuss on social taboos, even practiced secretly. *Fire* was called off from the theatres during the time of its release against the lesbian relationship between Radha and Sita on screen. The most interesting impression about the outrage is that the Shiv Sena had no objection if the female characters would have been from Muslim community. The character of Sita and Radha are from the dominant Hindu culture. Furthermore, *Fire* highlights the problems of cultural identity arise in the society and the main problem arise when the lesbians are counted as the subjects of the society. The cultural identity for the lesbians and bisexuals have become a challenge to describe in the Indian society on one hand and on the hand, it raised the question that who should be allowed to access and influence this identity. Deepa Mehta depicts this identity in a different manner. However, she refused to label her characters as lesbians, rather she calls them the women of choice. The character of Radha and Sita are presented in a desolate and unruly situation. They are stuck into the mud of culture and tradition. Their marriages are faulty due to which they develop a compassionate relationship with each other. The marriage institution grounded on the patriarchal ideologies has turned out faulty as it only functions for the fulfillment of personal and cultural pursuits.

The further observation is about the cultural screen of the film and its projection into the context of Indian culture as the film is made under the genre of Indian filmmaking which features the tests of one's patience and endurance in love within and outside the joint family. *Fire* is enriched with these ingredients that

conveys the impressions to affirm the conventions for which the defamers are scared to be diminished. Furthermore, *Fire* affirms the Bollywood style of filmmaking, but in reality, it escapes and smashes away from it. In Bollywood style of filmmaking, the depiction of love which is against the grains revolves round the interruptions enraged by the desires and the solutions for those desires against the backdrop of anticolonial heteropatriarchy. Deepa Mehta has made *Fire* deeply rooted on the cultural and traditional expectations in the Indian society which ceases the audience with something accustomed till they feel convenient to burst their convenience with the projections of same sex relationship which does not find roots in Indian culture and tradition.

Subeshini Moodley writes in “Postcolonial Feminisms Speaking through an Accented Cinema: the Construction of Indian Women in the films of Mira Nair and Deepa Mehta” that Deepa Mehta and Mira Nair are well established transnational Indian diasporic filmmakers, who reside outside the Indian continent. They depict the women characters of Indian society who reclaim their cultural identity. They challenge the symbolic representation of women as nationalists in Indian society. There has been a constant recurring idea of the Indian nationalism to recover the identity of Indian women and their roles in the society which is grounded on the long back ago tradition. The Indian women are considered the prime examples of loyalty, chastity and purity strengthened with traditional spirit. If anything new or foreign innovation poses a threat to the above mentioned identity of Indian women, it will be held responsible for the violation of tradition, culture and Indian spirit of nationalism. The same symbolic character of Indian women in the Indian society has led her to dilute her powers to resist against the oppression of patriarchal social

agency. Women are being objectified and have become the models for objectification in patriarchal nationalism. The media and mainstream Indian cinema has established a trend to create and depict the division between the pure and impure women. Thus, the diasporic filmmakers such as Deepa Mehta and Mira Nair reject the notion of the division among women in the society. They produce the characters who resist against the colonization and oppression. They go beyond the frontier of their sexualities in order to resist against the label pasted on them by the society.

The female protagonists, such as Radha and Sita have occupied their bodies and marginal spaces. They begin with the marginality and constantly grow to the point of development. They are exposed in an aura of marginalization and oppression and with the passage of time, they transform. In order to recreate their identity in the society. They continuously fight and struggle against the difficulties and problems posed on them. They constantly meet the unjustified social expectations, culture and tradition has posed on them as house wives, and daughters. There is deeply rooted contemplation for soul searching and it is quite evident at multiple points. Radha and Sita plunge into the courageous mark to denounce the current label on their identities and to create their own flow to establish their own identities to become the subjects of the society.

Radha and Sita go through the constant trials and tribulations to complete their journey of identity. They navigate from being amenable, loyal, chaste and dutiful women who respect the family, cultural and tradition, to the women who mark their new beginning outside the culture and tradition to emerge as empowered and independent subjects of the Indian society. Their transformation comes directly through the recovery of their body and sexuality as they are considered important

facets of women in Indian society which establishes rules and regulations of culture and tradition upon women to make them worthy to be accepted in the society. The actions of these female characters, particularly Radha and Sita, however, disturb the conventions of Indian mainstream cinema and later reproduce the description of the margin on multiple levels. It acts as a platform for characters to demonstrate the resistance against the oppression and at the same time it produces a site of assertion of the resistance for Deepa Mehta. Radha and Sita, as the characters of marginality and oppression, find themselves under the carpet of culture and tradition against which they resist in order to reach to the center. Similarly, Deepa Mehta somehow finds herself under the carpet of marginality between her home and host country and for that she answers back politically.

In an article, “Too Hot to Handle: the Cultural Politics of Fire” Ratna Kapoor writes that in every corner of India, a constant sobbing sound floats in the air which laments over the threat on cultural values and tradition and the betrayer always arises sex and sexuality. *Fire* a Deepa Mehta directorial film, depicts a social life of a middle class joint family. The daughters in law of the family are sexually dejected by their husbands and they develop a compassionate relationship with each other. Their indulgence into intimacy with one another has emerged one another moral attack to Indian culture and tradition. It ignited the spirit of moral protectors of Indian culture who came on the roads and protested against the screening of the film. Although, the film was reviewed by the Censor Board and rereleased it uncut once again, but the people of Hindu right wing including Shiv Sena and Mahila Agadhi disturbed the screening of the film in major cities of India. Their demonstrations,

within the blink, achieved the shape of subversion which created a havoc in ruining public property and cinema houses.

He further observes that to define Indian culture is extremely challenging and debatable and it is no conformity that these challenges and debates have aggravated with the domination of Hindu right wing who consider themselves as the moral protectors of Indian culture. The consistent attacks of depiction of sex and sexuality by the cinema extinguishes the anxiety of threat on Indian culture values, Indian tradition and India as a nation, imposed by the sexuality. Further observations are about the disputation and discussion on the screening of the film on wider platform to fetch out the meaning of Indian cultural values and Indian tradition. Despite, several controversies emerged time and time again on numerous domains, but the responses from the either side including Hindu right wing and feminists and lesbian groups uncover the uncomprehend understanding of the definition of Indian culture. There are two stories which go hand in hand and at the same time, are elemental to each other. These stories are the narration about the film and narration in the film. One narration undergoes for the protection of Indian cultural values and Indian tradition and another one runs on the screen which raises a tension on Indian cultural values and sexuality. To understand the Indian cultural values in true sense, one must revisit the historical pages of Indian culture to comprehend the affiliation between sexuality and culture.

Before the official release of the film, the filmmaker agreed on the content to change the name of one of her protagonist from Sita to Nita, only to avoid the uncooperative attitude of the people on culture. This amendment reveals the anxiety of those who fear that the representation of sexuality could affect the viewers' vision

of distraction from the roots of culture and tradition. Even though, the main lead female protagonists are the creation of main lead character of Hindu mythology, *Ramayana*, who is virtuous, devotional, ardent and pure and represents the loyal and pure womanhood of Indian culture. The status of these specific groups who discussed for and against the screening of the film are restricted to define the Indian culture and tradition. Their view of culture is as good as a static piece in a museum as their view to the Indian culture is stagnant. The debates on the contemporary platforms over the cultural legitimacy and cultural identity reveal that there are similarities as well as differences in the culture as there is same sense of unity among the people, same identity and same historical experience on the one hand and the beliefs of differences and diffusions within the context of culture on the other hand which exemplifies the hybridity of culture within the context of culture. *Fire* depicts the confusion within the culture as it develops the relationship between sisters in law within the middle class joint family of Indian society. Moreover, there is no static space of Indian culture and to put forth this argument is not to violate the existence of Indian culture. The argument is to state that the very production of cultural values and tradition have always been a historical course which is continuously innovating and adapting new beliefs and ideas about the construction of cultural values and cultural identity in the Indian society.

The film *Fire*, written and directed by Deepa Mehta, a transnational Indian Canadian filmmaker, appeared in the Indian society after its official release in the other parts of the world. The film released in 1996 in India and resulted into the outcry among the left wing political groups like Shiv Sena and Mahila Aghadi. The film received the accolades and recognition throughout the world and after its

release in India, people came on the streets to protest against the film as they claimed that the film poses a threat to Indian culture and tradition. The protestors attacked the cinema halls in all major cities in India and had stopped the screening of the film. The Censor Board reviewed the film and rereleased it without any cut. The tickets were sold in black in the major cities of India. After the release of the film, major social groups and activists spoke against the demonstrations and vandalizing the public property. The protestors demonstrated that the film's portrayal of sexual relationship between sisters in law and the very concept of same sex relationship is purely a western idea which finds no roots in Indian culture. Furthermore, the protestors demonstrated that the idea in the film will influence the women in the country to go against the marriage institution. The female characters in the film are corrupted in the idea of modernism and westernize which will make females ineligible to fit in the society.

All these violent incidents and actions were responded back by the social groups, civil rights organizations and other groups who spoke in favor of the screening of the film in cinema halls. The basic issue of the demonstrations were the portrayal of same sex relationship between the sisters in law in the film as the protestors said it is against the Indian cultural and traditional values. It is a conspiracy to contaminate the Indian culture and to destroy the traditional values. The Mahila Agadhi asserted that the impact of same sex relationship will have a dire repercussions as it will break the back bone of Indian cultural and familial tradition. They demonstrated that if all the physical and biological needs of female in the Indian society are fulfilled due to the same sex relationship, the institution of marriage and family will break down. Although, the opposition to the representation

of cinema is not justified nor it limits to the Indian context, but the debate has unveiled the number of contradictions where sexuality, gender and religion bisect to create a new discourse on nationalism and national identity. Print media, such as newspapers and magazines was keenly concerned towards the controversy of *Fire*, whereas the other journalistic narratives were centered on the demonstrations and protests against the film. The multidimensional reception of the film *Fire* in Indian subcontinent is arguably recognized as a space where innumerable discourses were produced on nationalism, national identity, modernity, gender, sexuality and cultural identity. Number of print media articles and public commentaries radicalized the vast understanding of cinematic functionalities due to the portrayal of middle class Indian women on the extreme odds of social and traditional insurgency. The multifaceted responses of the film are to be understood only through the shifts and interventions to the idea which marks the elevation of modern India.

The controversy around the film *Fire* appeared at a historical space due to the representation and reconstruction of middle class Indian women as a specific critic of nationalism, a particular religious nationalism, a Hindu nationalism. The film *Fire* was mostly criticized due to the representation of same sex relationship between Radha and Sita, the sisters in law of the family. The protestors vandalized the public property and destroyed cinema halls, claimed lesbianism is a threat to Indian culture as it does not belong to us. *Fire* is an internationally acclaimed film, released uncut in India by Board of Film Censorship but unfortunately ran only for few weeks because of the storms it ignited among the Indian fundamentalist religious and political groups such as VHP, BJP and RSS who proclaimed the film as obscene and immoral which could posit a serious threat on Indian social and

cultural norms. The Shiv Sena wing of Hindu fundamentalist even demonstrated, staged protests against the film. The workers of these fundamentalist groups have stormed the theaters and staged demonstrations outside the residence of movie stars and posed an open threat to them, burned their posters in public and posed death threats to the writer and director of the film Deepa Mehta. During the demonstration, the film was called to withdraw from the theatres and has gone through another censor review. But fortunately after some time the film was released uncut once again. The commentators of the extremist groups have constantly said that the movie is based on lesbianism. Deepa Mehta in return to all the negative criticism, says in an interview held by Superna Verma as:

Fire is not a film about lesbians. Now they can talk about any aspect of the film. I just don't care... I didn't make *Fire* for the section of audience who cannot understand the film and just talk about the sex; there are audience in India who will understand "*Fire*." India is not a monolithic society. "*Fire*" is about the choices we make in life which may lead to alienation. By the bisexuality theme in the film, I have just shown an extreme choice. (Verma 1)

The film *Fire* won more than fourteen awards throughout the world of cinema. It received the fusion of responses from the critics and other activist groups. Some have showered the praises and admiration to the courage of filmmaker to depict the realistic narrative on the screen while others have unleashed the hailstorms on the film for the depiction of same sex relationship which they claim a western idea and a threat to Indian culture and tradition. The film compels the viewers to draw a deep attention towards the oppressive culture and tradition as well

as the situation and fate of the married women in Indian society. It unveils the truth of being held up in between the culture and life itself. It serves a bird view to the women aspect of being submerged over the desires by the oppression of culture and tradition. It depicts the struggle of Indian women within the confines of arrange marriage and joint family. It presents the distress which brings the contraction among the middle class Indian family to foreground the process of gender issues in the modern India. Although, it is a melodrama, but it presents an awful peep into the social structure and cultural and traditional order in the middle class Indian family. The filmmaker, Deepa Mehta amalgamates the social and cultural flow of the family with the famous Hindu religious epic, Ramayana. The constant references to the epic is to determine the idea that culture and tradition constructs the day to day life of the people in the Indian society.

The representation of women centered narrative in *Fire* challenges the symbolic notions of nationalism and representation and at the same time produces a different discourse in the society. The constant concern of Indian nationalism has always been remaking and reproducing the character and image of women in Indian society and the distribution of role play in the society and family which is grounded on the historical figures and models of long ago past. The woman in the Indian society is a metaphor of purity and chastity as well as the spirit of nationalism. The culture and tradition create the image of the woman in Indian society with the peculiarities of compassion, adherence, adoration, self-sacrifice etcetera. Anything which intimidates or alters this sign of nationalism and womanhood in the Indian society would be held accountable for the demolition of national integrity, spirit, religion, tradition, culture etcetera. The symbolic character of the Indian woman as

assumed from the centuries ago has led the woman to experience the oppression of culture and tradition. She is reduced to her body and the representation of her body appears as the object for the patriarchal dominance and nationalism. The characters in the film, especially the female characters defy all the rules and stand as rebellious against the colonization of culture and tradition. They are dejected by their husbands, their desires are repressed and they are expected to respond as per the rulings of culture and tradition. These female characters, Radha and Sita explore their sexualities by developing a compassionate relationship with each other. They reclaim their identities through the exploration of their sexualities. Their identity is produced and created by the culture and tradition and in order to reclaim their identity, they go beyond the frontier of their sexualities to defy the cultural and traditional oppression. Their bodies speak the language of resistance to the oppression and colonization. However, their bodies are occupied within the space of marginality. Their marginality is initially explored and highlighted only to reveal the process these female protagonist will go through in order to recreate and exceed the frontier.

Stuart Hall's classical essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" is grounded on identity and representation. The issues of identity, culture and tradition are the major concern for anyone seeking freedom from the thread of cultural and identity. Hall talks about two types of cultural identity, the first one he mentions is the essentialist identity which he defines as having the similarities and oneness amid the people. This type of cultural identity as Hall writes, will invoke the activist groups, feminists' etcetera, but can hardly assimilate the agony of colonialism. Hall writes as:

There are at least two different ways of thinking about 'cultural identity'. The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective, 'one true self' hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificial imposed 'selves' which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us as, 'one people', with stable unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. (Hall 223)

The first definition about the cultural identity according to Hall is the position which features the oneness in identity among the people, same shared culture of the people and people as a collective whole has one self under which there are some other selves hiding inside. This is the identity which is shared by all the people in culture as their ancestry and history is the same as collective one self. It is grounded on the everyday experience of the people, especially the historical experience and the unity among the different groups in the society and their belief which they share that defines their oneness. This position is assumed to be stable and unchanged.

The second definition of cultural identity according to Hall is grounded on the appreciation that there are similarities as well as differences among the people within the structure of a culture which actually defines the people what they are as Hall argues:

There is, however, a second, related but different view of cultural identity. This second position recognizes that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute "what we really are"; or rather—since history has intervened—"what we have become". We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about "one experience, one identity", without acknowledging its other side—the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute, precisely, the Caribbean's "uniqueness". Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of "becoming" as well as "being". It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere "recovery" of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (225)

The second definition of Hall asserts the concept of hybridity in the culture which is constantly changing and shifting. With the application of Hall's view on culture, the rereading of Indian culture in relation to the film *Fire* is grounded on the

important cultural identity. The film *Fire* and the fire among the people it ignited must be assessed by the cultural discussions. The film's portrayal of sexual relationship between the daughters in law, the representation of the contradictory cultural myths and concerns and the role of the women within the structure of joint family. The female protagonists, Radha and Sita who are carrying their labelled social and cultural identities on their shoulders and struggling to transcend the boundaries of culture and tradition. They visit to the every expectation of culture and tradition imposes on them as the daughters in law, daughters, wives etcetera. The formation of their course to transform includes a deep contemplation to observe the actions of radha and Sita in defying the label of identity culture has pasted on them. They struggle for the recreation and reconstruction of their cultural identity in order to become the equal subjects of the society and tradition.

Radha and Sita go through the journey which is characterized by the cultural identity. They undergo a journey which transforms them throughout. Initially Radha and Sita are dutiful, ardent, devoted and faithful wives, but with the course of time, the attitude of their husbands and the web of oppressive culture and tradition compels them to come out from these qualities in order to assert their subjectivity. They defy the cultural and traditional rulings imposed on them. Sita questions the Karva Chouth by saying that it is like we are trained monkeys and tradition is the button, when it is pressed, we respond. She argues back to jatni, calls him a fool and denies sharing her bed with him. In the same manner, Radha who has always been an epitome of culture and tradition too ignores Ashok. She is always asked to lie down next to Ashok as he has to test his control on desires. Radha is changed and denies Ashok to lie down next to him. Their changes occur by the reclamation of

their body and sexuality as the body and sexuality of women in the Indian cultural context are the important appearances which make them worthy and acceptable under the social norms and regulations.

Identity formation has always been the central concern in the cultural and traditional literature, however, Judith Butler, a reclaimed revolutionary writer and critic of gender formation and cultural identity, deals with the subjectivity of gender in the society. She criticizes the notions of cultural identity as an agency which is achieved through the input to the environment of the society and tradition. She asserts that cultural identity develops with the repetition of performance in the society and human beings perform the actions in the society which are central to the exertion and pressure of the discourse of normalcy that regulates the society. The post structural view of Butler on the stem of gender formation and the impact of it on the lives of human beings in the society and culture approaches the interchanging junction and nature of female which offers a critique to the ambiguous sexual orientation of women. To further analyze the ideas of Butler on the modern society, the close observation and examination is encouraged to seek out the underlying forces and devices which create the discourse, a normative discourse to regulate the power, culture and gender socialization in the society. The stand of Butler on the identity formation is widely different as she offers an enigmatic look on the identity formation which is based on the constant repetition of performances and actions. These performances are the actions which human beings in the society, especially men and women express. Furthermore, the gender identity is the purely produced and constructed by the society which is politically active regarding the historical

overview on the patriarchal norms and other normative laws of the society. Butler writes in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* as:

If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of “men” will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that “women” will interpret only female bodies. (Butler 10)

Gender and cultural identity is always constructed and produced by the society which is later shaped through the tradition, culture and regulatory laws of the society that are repeated time and time again. The continuous and constant repetition of actions performed by men and women in the society make them the subjects of identity. The representation of cultural and gender identity in the *Fire* is portrayed within the cultural space. The narrative of fire ordeal from the epic *Ramayana* which appears three time in the film, employed to highlight the role of culture and tradition in creating and producing the identities. The narrative is centered on the abduction of the king Rama’s wife, Sita. She is been abducted by the king of Lanka, Ravana. King Rama achieves success in rescue operation and when they return back to the kingdom, the subjects of his kingdom demand the chastity test for Sita and for that Sita has to pass through the fire to testify herself chaste. The metaphor of Sita in the Indian context represents the chastity, loyalty and national spirit. The women in the Indian society are expected to pass through the chastity tests. The religion and

culture are used as devices to conceptualize and mobilize the tradition. The gender and cultural identity of Radha and Sita is constructed by the tradition. They endure the pain of being victims of the culture which is constantly labelling constructed identities on them. While discussing gender and identity, Butler asserts that identity is the result of cultural and traditional formation which has underlying support of masculinity, patriarchy and heterosexuality. The oppressive cultural and structural laws and regulations as well as other operative devices such as patriarchy and women subordination have effects on the psyche of the gender performers. The women might perform these socially admissible identities by defying, repressing and invalidating themselves in order to abstain from the social exclusion. This phenomena is further explained in terms of “masculine signifying economy” which means the women are subordinate to men, the other sex and body oriented whereas men are the existential subjects of the society.

Radha and Sita find themselves under the web of oppressive culture and tradition which regulates their lives and sexuality. Their roles in the society and family as females, daughters, mothers, and daughters in law. In the view of Ashok, women are supposed to perform the role what they are made for. Radha is barren, she has “No eggs in ovaries” (*Fire*) and doctors declared that she cannot conceive a child. On that reason, she is ignored by Ashok as he says that “Desire is root of all evil” (*Fire*) as it distracts one from the god. The only reason to have physical relationship with wife is to have sons who will carry the name of your family. He takes an oath of celibacy and whenever he feels the need of Radha, he makes her lie down next to him to test his control over the desires. In the like manner, Jatin is extremely harsh with Sita on bed. They are forced by the culture and tradition to

perform the actions and duties. The duty of being an ardent and devotional towards husband and family. The metaphorical image of the women in Indian society leads them to oppression and colonization. Their role play in the family and society is controlled and organized by the normative discourse of the society which is rooted on the culture and tradition of men. When Radha asked Ashok that “By lying down next to you helps only you to have control on your desires and how does it help me” (*Fire*) and he replies “By helping your husband, you are performing the duty” (*Fire*). The category of male and female, masculine and feminine produce the assertive social and cultural normative discourse which organizes the power gap between the men and women in the society. The male and female category construction leads us to identify the male as the law maker, the power holder and the female as the other, subordinate and body oriented. The internalization of socially permissible actions, female and other genders perform repeatedly body oriented stylization. This might be through the repressed voice and feelings as Radha once feel the need of Ashok and he turns his back towards her, and through the dress up and other feminine attributes. The constant performance of Radha and Sita under the structure of culture and tradition determines their role plays. They practice the labelled identities, as the culture and tradition has pasted on them to perform their duties as Butler writes:

That the power regimes of heterosexism and phallogocentrism seek to augment themselves through a constant repetition of their logic, their metaphysic, and their naturalized ontologies does not imply that repetition itself ought to be stopped—as if it could be. If repetition is bound to persist as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of

identities, then the crucial question emerges: What kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself? (42)

The idea of masculine signifying economy explores the ways to comprehend the female inheritance of subordination in the society and other positions. To consider the experience of Radha and Sita under the web of oppressive patriarchal culture and tradition, it can be easily argued that the internalization of normative discourse around them on their subordination and otherness has explicit marks on them. They are forced to be socialized for the role play as feminine. Their gender and cultural identity is organized, controlled and formed by the masculine signifying economy which asserts the signification of males and marks off the females. The exposition of female clothing in *Fire* through the character of Sita represents the assertion of alternate sexuality. Sita is the only character who take the steps to come out from the stereotypical characterization of gender and culture. She challenges the roles of feminine character by changing her attire. She changes the clothes, wears jatin's pants and pretends to smoke in a male attire. Furthermore, she dances like men on male oriented songs. On the day of Karva Chouth she utters that "Isn't it amazing to know that there is some button in us which is called tradition and they press that button and we respond as trained monkeys" (*Fire*). She defies the feminine gender attributes. The change of attire from feminine to masculine, Sita becomes the fascinating object for Radha and the narration of this cross dressing is centered on the cancellation of matrimonial heterosexuality. The gendered role play of masculine and feminine fantasies are deployed to establish a new heterosexuality within the space of culture and tradition. The constant denial of rights for Radha and

Sita lead them to build a compassionate relationship with each other and within the course of time they find solace into each other. They are treated as the sex objects and their body becomes the subject for objectification. The harsh treatment of Jatin towards Sita on bed and his continuous unavailability for Sita pushes her to transcend her gendered role play.

The dance sequence of Sita and Radha when Sita wears the male clothes as she comes into the attire of masculine and Radha is wearing the sari. Sita wears Jatin's suit and cap and Mandu is watching through the door and the scene ends up with Mandu's concluding statement of "too much electricity" (*Fire*). Sita is in a masculine attire, wearing male clothes, her physical appearance and overreacted dance steps are evocative of femininity. The consistent performativity as Butler writes, "Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration." (35) The consistent performativity of the gendered role play troubles when Sita denaturalizes the sex by wearing the masculine attire. She deploys the masculinity within her through the clothing and dress up. By deploying the masculinity into the femininity, sex falls under the category of consistent performance through the repetition and ritualization of expressions. The relationship of the body and being the body oriented female is within the space of normative heterosexuality which is destabilized through Sita's actions of presenting herself in the masculine attire. She chooses trousers instead of traditional clothes of femininity and desires Radha instead of Jatin to regain the heterosexuality space within the cultural domesticity as explained by Butler in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* as:

One might be tempted to argue that drag is not related to the ridicule or degradation or appropriation of women: when it is men in drag as women, what we have is the destabilization of gender itself, a destabilization that is denaturalizing and that calls into question the claims of normativity and originality by which gender and sexual oppression sometimes operate. (128)

Domestic space is featured with the residue to regulate the sexuality, gender and identity. From the long distant glorious past, women bodies and socio cultural actions have always been organized within the sphere of domesticity. Furthermore, the domesticity in this context is the home of Radha and Sita which is supposed to be an agent to normalize the tension and eradicate all possibilities to turn out queer personality. However, Radha and Sita are constantly discarded from mobility of desires due to which they trouble the space of domesticity by developing the passionate relationship. *Fire* presents the fractured and repressed desires due to the failure of patriarchal heterosexuality. The relationship between Radha and Sita does not however seek any other sexual identity. They themselves exclaim what they are to each other as Sita utters to Radha. Moreover, there is no fixed frontier of any identity as the subjects, especially the main characters in the film are continuously negotiating the identities and gender role play within the space of culture and domesticity. The discovery of Ashok to see Radha and Sita on bed indulging in an intimacy problematizes the concept of lesbianism as there is no point in the film where Radha and Sita seeking lesbian identity.

Butler's idea of masculine signifying economy is the underlying agent the film which helps in the construction of sexual subjects. The masculine or the male is

the power holder and the feminine or the female is body oriented. *Fire* enables the male characters such as Jatin and Ashok to pursue the desired ambitions. Ashok is allowed to take an oath of celibacy. He pursues the spiritual ambition to seek the truth which he feels Guru Ji helps him for that. In the like manner, Jatin is allowed to have an extra marital affairs with a Chinese Indian woman and make money by selling the pornographic video tapes at his shop. In the contrary to male characters, the female characters such as Radha and Sita are subjected to take the positions at home. They are expected to regain the gendered role play as womanhood given by the culture and tradition. However, the repressed desires of Radha and Sita are flourished due to the constant denial of Ashok and Jatin to their respective wives. Their relationship destabilizes and denaturalizes the gendered role play and body oriented sexualities. It is quite explicit in the film that during the first intimate meeting of Radha and Sita, Sita asks Radha if they have done anything wrong but Radha ignores the question and at the end scene when Ashok learns about the relationship of Radha and Sita, he wants Radha to seek forgiveness by saying her that this is unnatural and a sin in the eyes of men and god. After some while, Radha asserts her choice, indulges in an argument with Ashok and tells him about her relationship with Sita. The moment Sita's clothes catch fire, the film is intertwined with the scene of Sita as a young child in the mustard field with her parents. She realizes that the mystery of her childhood about seeing without looking and seeing the ocean is resolved. Her past is revealed through flashbacks and her decision is intermingled with the innocence of her childhood. Radha as a child in the field is able to see the ocean now and is content with her discovery that she has been looking for since childhood. The scene represents the innocence and piousness of her childhood which influences her for the sexual choice.

The relationship of Radha and Sita is the result of the failure of marriage institution and their desires for each other comes to the light with the faulty heteronormativity. The domestic space within the structure of culture, tradition and family, the socialization of gender role play arise within the space of patriarchal heteronormativity which unleashes the oppression against women. It is quite evident in the film that the parallel narrative of the grand epic *Ramayana* is introduced thrice and at the end of the film, Radha as Sita in the *Ramayana* has to face the trial of fire ordeal. The symbol of Sita as womanhood in Indian society, the women are expected to be pure and loyal. Radha literary face the trial and when she asserts her desires to Ashok, he forces himself to fall upon her and during their fight, her sari catches fire from which she emerges victorious. There is the subversion of the symbolism, in the *Ramayana*, Sita walks on the fire to prove her chastity as the subjects of the kingdom of Rama demands the trial for chastity whereas, Radha faces the trial to assert her choice and prove her chastity that she has not indulged into any impurity.

Fire is grounded on the important cultural identity. The film *Fire* and the fire among the people it ignited must be assessed by the cultural discussions. The film's portrayal of sexual relationship between the daughters in law, the representation of the contradictory cultural myths and concerns and the role of the women within the structure of joint family. The female protagonists, Radha and Sita who are carrying their labelled social and cultural identities on their shoulders and struggling to transcend the boundaries of culture and tradition. They visit to the every expectation of culture and tradition imposes on them as the daughters in law, daughters, wives etcetera. The formation of their course to transform includes a deep contemplation to observe the actions of radha and Sita in defying the label of identity culture has

pasted on them. They struggle for the recreation and reconstruction of their cultural identity in order to become the equal subjects of the society and tradition.

Radha and Sita go through the journey which is characterized by the cultural identity. They undergo a journey which transforms them throughout. Initially Radha and Sita are dutiful, ardent, devoted and faithful wives, but with the course of time, the attitude of their husbands and the web of oppressive culture and tradition compels them to come out from these qualities in order to assert their subjectivity. They defy the cultural and traditional rulings imposed on them. Sita questions the Karva Chouth by saying that it is like we are trained monkeys and tradition is the button, when it is pressed, we respond. She argues back to Jatin, calls him a fool and denies sharing her bed with him. In the same manner, Radha who has always been an epitome of culture and tradition too ignores Ashok. She is always asked to lie down next to Ashok as he has to test his control on desires. Radha is changed and denies Ashok to lie down next to him. Their changes occur by the reclamation of their body and sexuality as the body and sexuality of women in the Indian cultural context are the important appearances which make them worthy and acceptable under the social norms and regulations.

Chapter 4

Earth: A Study of the Contents Incribed to the Materiality of the Body

Invoked by Michael Foucault's idea of power relations, the power inscribed body is well described in terms of power discourse. The power relations are relied and influenced by the people in the society who contribute their share in on the basis of knowledge. Meanings are also determined through the power relations in the society. People who manage on the basis of knowledge in the society, influence the meanings in the society. The body and its materiality is digressive which therefore implies that the body which is materialized, the sexuality inscribed to it, and the areas of restrictions are regularized and materialized through the "Regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce—demarcate, circulate, differentiate—the bodies it controls" (Butler 1).

For Foucault, body is culturally constructed which becomes a site for contestation on which the regimes of power and discourses are inscribed. All the content and aspects a body possess are culturally constructed and constituted and in this sense, it is apparent that the surface body would never be constructed instead it would become an occasional site for the course of construction. Foucault is not clearly producing the idea of the materiality of body rather he asserts that body itself is culturally constructed through discourse and power. The body becomes the site on which all the meanings are contested culturally. The mechanism of the idea of Foucault is explored in his famous work, *Discipline and Punish* where he develops his argument about the body as culturally constructed and as site of contestation.

The materiality of the body, the identity codes which are inscribed on the body in general and Shanta's and Lenny's body in particular, through the lens of Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* as this text is mostly consulted by all scholars working on the body and the materiality inscribed to the body. This book is the representation of Butler's endeavor to broaden her previous concept of gender performativity in order to include other epitomized social identities such as gender, race culture etcetera. In *Bodies that Matter on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, there is no explicit reference towards the physical and mental illness of the body as the words like physical disability or the mental disability does not appear in the book. There are references like the body endure the illness and with the deployment of the concept of deformation, it becomes quite ambiguous whether the statement is for the physically abled bodies or for the textual bodies because the characters she has analyzed in her work persistently talked in terms of their sex, race and gender formation. To investigate the filmic body portrayed in *Earth* through the constructive idea of body by Judith Butler raises the issues such as the aftermath of the application of Butler's concept of body and if there will be any antagonism in the post modernistic perspective of feministic body.

Sex and gender is socially constructed and the normative discourse of the society materialize the bodies through the power dynamics. The social regulatory norms are constantly working in performativity in order to constitute the body as matter. The discourse is in the continuous process for the normalization of body to meet the expectations. Bodies which are outside the normative discourse are prone to misery and are regarded as abjected. The regulatory power discourse of the society does not have any external imposition rather it is an operative element for

the formation of subjects in the society. The bodies which are materialized have the strong effect of the power discourse through which the body gets viability in order to qualify for the life within the structure of culture and tradition.

The current India and Pakistan had once been a British colony for more than two hundred years. The British Empire was strongly rooted in Indian till the rise of Gandhi and others who have started the freedom movement of India. When the movement achieved the goal to free India from British Empire in 1947, unfortunately due to some political benefits and religious politics there started a colossal insurgency between different religious sects such as Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. During the mid of 1947, the British Empire has passed an Act in relation to the freedom of India which resulted into the division of India into two different nations. The Hindu majority remained in India and the Muslims opted Pakistan and within a wink all major religious sects have realized that they have been uprooted and found themselves trapped in troublesome places which marked an inception of colossal insurgency led to the largest immigration ever happened on earth. As Chale Nafus quotes Bapsi Sidhwa stating “Over one million people were killed in India’s division in 1947, Seven million Muslims and five million Hindus and Sikhs were uprooted in the largest and most terrible exchange of population ever known to history” (Nafus, 1).

The film *Earth* is an adaptation of Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel *Ice Candy Man* later published as *Cracking India*, rests on the stance of authenticity on showcasing the partition of India into two different nations, India and Pakistan. The film *Earth 1947* revolves round the major characters represent the major religious sects and social communities, such as Shanta (ayah) played by Nandita Das, Dilnawas (Ice Candy

Wala) played by Aamir Khan, Hassan (Masseur or Malishwala) played by Rahul Khanna and Lenny played by Maia Sethna. The narratives of the film are told through an experience of eight year old polio ridden Parsi girl Lenny in the midst of the political, social and religious strain. Lenny is a small child who lives in Lahore before the partition of India. She is enjoying her beautiful terror-stricken childhood with her ayah (Shanta) and her supportive and rich parents. Lenny visits to the Queen's Garden very frequently with ayah who is a beautiful woman belongs to the Hindu religion. Shanta has a charming smile on her face which has a consistency to supply an eagerness to the men folk. The people Shanta is befriended with are mixture of different religious sects such as Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Regardless of their religion, they are all beautifully enriched in one another's friendship. Lenny has a beautiful world around her which would later turn into terrible experience. Apart from ayah, Dilnawas, Ice candy Wala, a rogue, an anti-hero is actually Lenny's hero

The film begins with a voiceover which is of narrator, Lenny. She is narrating the story after fifty years when she was eight years old. It was March, 1947 when British Empire began to collapse in India and along with the independence of India, there happened the division of India into two countries, India and Pakistan. The people of India and Pakistan from all religious backgrounds have lived the life with communal harmony and one entity for centuries and suddenly with the independence and partition of India and Pakistan, people began to agitate for themselves. The division led by the British has left the scars on subcontinent forever. Voiceover ends and Lenny as an eight year old child is on focus, she is breaks the plate due to which the characters expose. She is living in a Parsee family,

surrounded by number of caretakers. The closest among all is Shanta, Ayah who takes care of Lenny and also serves the family. The film is set in Lahore, 1947. The story is narrated from the perspective of an eight year old child, Lenny. The main characters in the film are: Lenny, the young child and the narrator of the story, Shanta, caretaker of Lenny, Dilnawz, the Ice Candy Wala, which is the hero of Lenny, Hassan, the masseur who makes the oil from different herbs, Imam Din, the cook of the house, Lenny's parents and their other staff, apart from these, there are other friends of Shanta which include Sher Singh, Yousuf etcetera.

Lenny is enjoying a beautiful life with her parents and their loving and caring staff. It is the time of colonial rule in Lahore when India and Pakistan were one country. Shanta, the Ayah of Lenny take Lenny to the nearby garden every day where they meet the friends and enjoy their leisure time. The people in the friend circle are mixed from all religions. Shanta is a Hindu woman, Dilnawaz and Hassan are Muslims, Sher Singh is a Sikh and likewise other members of the friend circle are from the same religious backgrounds. In the park, they meet every day and Lenny is always with Ayah. Shanta supplies a constant eagerness to the male friends including Dilnawaz and Hassan who are looking at her and Dilnawaz is quite a funny person, sometimes he acts like the holy man and sometimes recites the poetry.

The news of independence begins to spread and for Lenny the first encounter to the fight and trouble in her life appears when she hides with Adi under the table. Her parents have invited Mr. Rogers and Mr. Singh and his wife for dinner. They begin to argue on the table and suddenly the argument takes the shape of fight between Mr. Rogers, the Inspector General of Police and Mr. Singh who tells him to

leave India. People in the park start to talk about the independence, some say Nehru, Gandhi and Mountbatten are closely tight to each other and some say who will stand for the other people. Everyone is curious about the situation what will happen to the people. Sikhs are worried about their own destiny and so are Muslims. Sikhs say who is talking for us and Muslims say who is supporting us. The friend circle of Shanta discussing these things and suddenly Shanta says stop talking about Hindu Muslims or I will stop coming to park and she leaves the park. After her, leaves Dilnawaz too and offers Lenny a bicycle ride. Dilnawaz likes Shanta and he invites her to his home. He passes his message to Shanta that it does not matter to be a Hindu or a Muslim, the fact is that we are all equal in the sight of God.

On the kite flying festival, Shanta along with Lenny and Imam Din visit to Dilnawaz where he is preparing to fly a kite. He offers Imam Din to fly one and he denies. Shanta wants to fly a kite and she does not know how to fly it, but Dilnawaz teaches her the kite flying in a wooing manner. He takes her close to him and tells her treat the kite like your lover, when it seems difficulty, woo it and when you get control over it, bring it closer. In the next scene, Lenny's mother teaches her the dance steps and reveals that the ball room dance is the best invention of the British and apart from the dance steps, she discloses to Lenny who Parsee's are. She says that Parsees' are like the sugar which is put into the glass of milk and it makes it sweet and becomes invisible.

Lenny is in the car with her parents, they are talking about the effects of partition and the collapse of all business and suddenly they encounter a mob on the road who walk over the car. They are shouting the slogans and spreading the fear

among the people. They are shouting anti Indian and pro Pakistani slogans. The people around Shanta and her friend circle are talking in the park and Hassan says that everything changes nowadays, even the park has changed. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs have started to live separately and only the people around Shanta are same and in the meantime, Dilnawaz acts like a holy who is a kind of fortune teller and once he is asked by a Sikh to connect the line to your God and ask him what will happen to the Sikhs after partition, suddenly a Muslim man interrupts and tells him to call your guru as it is a private line and after seeing this, Dilnawaz says that God replied that you all will fight like animals after partition.

Lenny goes to her father and tells her that Papoo, daughter of Hari, a Dalit and cleaner of the house of Parsee, is getting married. Lenny's mother tells her husband that they have arranged a bridegroom for her and he is a Christian and he replies that it is better to be a Christian than an untouchable and by the way number of people from his community are converting as it is a good move. Papoo is married to an old man who is short heighted. The time Lenny goes to Papoo to present her a wedding gift, she is asleep and Lenny wakes her up and suddenly the bridegroom comes. After the marriage of Papoo, the friends of Shanta meet in a restaurant and once again the discussion starts about the partition. If it happens what will happen. They all predict the situation, but all have fear in their eyes and all are restless. They are infuriated with the situation growing outside. Their discussion appeared the shape of fight and they start abusing to each other. In the restaurant, it is revealed that they have lived together for centuries and suddenly the independence gifted them the mental agony and disturbance. They friends who spend time with each other are abusing each other. Every one of them become conscious about his faith

and religion as the partition is playing on the basis of religion and culture. Hassan is trying to keep the grip strong among the friends, he tells them if the situations worsens, at least friends should stand by each other and he is expecting every one of them to stand by one another at the time of uprising and stress.

Hassan and Shanta meet and after Hassan leaves for the home, he sees streets full with people. They are wailing, fearful and dreadful. They are taking their luggage with them and leaving the place. The people on the roads include children, men, women and old age people. Hassan is horrific to see the sea of people leaving their houses and roads and streets and full with the people. Mr. Singh along with his wife comes to the Parsee's house and requesting to keep some belongings at their residence as they are leaving Lahore. Mr. Singh reveals that their friends and neighbors left the Lahore for Amritsar and they too are leaving. He is crying and does not want to leave Lahore as it is his birth place. He is furious at the British Empire as they have divided the nation into two parts and handed over to us a happy independence.

Dilnawaz is at railway station waiting for the train to come from Gurdaspur as his sister is coming from Gurdaspur. Train is late by twelve hours and Dilnawaz goes to confirm the status of the train. In the meantime, the train from Gurdaspur comes and all feel happy for the coming of the train. As the train stops at the station, people enter into the train and suddenly people start shouting as they see the train filled with dead bodies of Muslims and number of sacks are filled with the women breasts. Dilnawaz's sister is also in that train and she too is dead. Whilst the friend circle, gripped with a spell of fear, listening the news which says that on the third consecutive day, Gurdaspur city is burning with fear. The situation is extremely

critical and the group discusses the situation and predict the real bloodshed which will happen very soon. Sher Singh is worried as he does not want to leave his native place and go to Amritsar as the group predicts that millions of Hindus from Pakistan and millions of Muslims from Indian will run away from their places. The massacre of Gurdaspur train turns the situation upside down. Shanta along with Lenny and Hassan go to visit Dilnawaz in the midst of the crisis and on the rooftop of his house, Shanta witnesses the real bloodshed. The people on the streets are fighting like animals. They are killing each other. Hindus and Sikhs kill Muslims and Muslims kill them both in retaliation. The serious killing starts and Shanta and Lenny are gripped with fear when Hindus tied and Muslim man to the car and pulled his body parts away and Muslims burnt the Hindu tenement. Hassan wants to help the people on the streets but Dilnawaz is turned into a madman. As Hassan goes down, Dilnawaz proposes Shanta and tells her that we are all beasts. It is not only about the division of Hindu and Muslims, it is about the savagery and the beast which is inside the human beings. Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus are all animals like the lion of the zoo Lenny is scared of. It just lies there in the cage and waits for the lock to open and when the cage is open, it creates havoc, kills everyone it encounters. Shanta is gripped with fear and anxiety, Dilnawaz proposes her for marriage by telling her that if she is with her, the beast which is inside him will be in control, but Shanta denies. She smells his attitude like mob on the streets who are taking revenge on the name of religion and ethnicity.

Soon after they are back to home, Lenny with the help of Adi tears her doll apart in between and has the nightmares, only Shanta understands why Lenny got nightmares because she sees the doll which is torn in between and she reminds the

incident when a Muslim man was tied with cars and pulled away his arms and legs which left a scary experience on Lenny and Shanta. On the birthday of Lenny, she goes with Adi to see the refugees and she says to Adi that Yousuf said they are fallen women. It is revealed that the women have been gang raped and murdered and society tagged them as the fallen women. When Lenny says fallen women, Adi, her cousin corrects her and says raped women and they call a Muslim boy and when he shares his story, he reveals how Hindus came and killed everyone and after they left, the young boy searched his mother and she was naked in the masque and her hair were tied with the roof as she was hanged naked.

Once again the group of friends in talks, Dilnawaz talks about someone Hindu money lender and they have find some nine hundred golden coins at his home and he offers one to Shanta but she denies and after some while, he revels that after the atrocities of Sikhs, it is better that Sher Singh ran away. Hassan is the only person in the group who propels the peace and harmony among the humanity, he endorses the love and compassion but Dilnawaz is furious and accepts that he has thrown the grenades onto the houses of Sikhs and Hindus whom he knows for the life time. He wants a revenge as he says that he wants to kill each one of them against the cut off of breasts of his sisters. Shanta is scared of Dilnawaz's attitude as he is turned into a hungry madman who has the thrust of revenge and bloodshed. The other members of the group share their opinion which reveals that they do not want to leave their homeland and if they are forced, they will convert into Muslims and they have no any other choice when their own friends will kill them.

Shanta is worried now, once she was offered to leave Lahore for Amritsar, she denied, but now she is gripped with fear and she is worried about herself as she

is a Hindu woman. Hassan consoles her and gives her a confidence that he will be with her. In the meantime, they enter into the room and Hassan tells Lenny go to your room for some time. She goes and comes back quickly, she spies Hassan and Shanta from the window pane and inside the room Hassan and Shanta indulge into the intimate scene and Hassan proposes Shanta and tells her that he will convert into Hinduism and they both will leave Lahore for Amritsar. Shanta is contended and Lenny is seeing this fragile relationship between the Hindu and the Muslim and she sees that from another window pane, Dilnawaz too is seeing them. Shanta tells her madam that she is leaving Lahore with Hassan as he is becoming Hindu and they will marry in Amritsar. Madam is happy for Shanta and gives her some clothes and gold. She has packed all his belongings and ready to leave Lahore. She is waiting for Hassan to come and in the meantime, Lenny is with Hari, the Dalit, he cut off his hair and changed his religion and name. He tells to Lenny that his name is Himat Ali and while walking on the road, he finds a sack on the street as he turns it, there he finds the dead body of Hassan. Lenny massages his hands and is shocked to see the death and destruction around her. Her glooming world is burning and people are killing each other like savages.

Himat Ali take Lenny home quickly and suddenly the slogans are heard as the Muslim mob is approaching to the house of Lenny. The mob want all the Hindu men and women staff of the family. The Parsee family is spared because they are neutral and they are not into the politics. They support whosoever comes into the power, but the mob want Hindu men and women who are working there. Imam Din stops the mob and tells them to leave as there is no Hindu here, they ask for Hari and Imam Din replies Hari is converted and is a Muslim now. The mob wants to check

whether he can recite the kalma and whether Hari is circumcised or not. They take off his clothes and check him out and make fun of him. Now they want Moti and Moti too has changed his religion and became a Christian. His name is Mr. David Messiah now. The mob taunts him too and makes fun of him now they want Shanta and Imam Din says she has left the Lahore for Amritsar, they do not believe on Imam Din and forces him to swear on Allah that she has left. Imam Din swears on Allah as he wants to save Shanta from the mob, but suddenly Dilnawaz comes and Lenny goes to him as she is scared of the mob. Dilnawaz tells them to be at ease as he will handle the situation and he tricks Lenny, tells him that he will give him ice cream if she tells him where Ayah is and Lenny reveals that she is inside the house in the mum's bedroom. Dilnawaz tells the mob to grab Shanta, they enter into the house, grab her out, she is shouting and begging for her life, Lenny, Imam Din and all are trying to save Shanta, but the mob has dragged her out and put her on the bullock cart and with this Dilnawaz takes her away with the mob. His greed and desire appeared the face of nationalism and religion which led the destruction of innocence and humanity.

The narrator, Lenny is sitting in the garden and narrating the story of the partition. She reveals that two hundred and fifty five years of rule of British Empire collapsed in 1947 and what is there to show to the world except the partition of India Pakistan. It has been fifty years since she betrayed her Ayah, Shanta. The moment she lost her Ayah, she lost the largest part of her body and world. She has heard people saying that Shanta married Dilnawaz, the Ice Candy Man, and some have said that she has been spotted in the brothel, but she has never seen her again. And

with this the film ends with a note that over more than one million people were murdered during the partition of India and Pakistan. More than seven million Muslims and over five million Sikhs and Hindus were displaced and uprooted from their native land to an alien lands. It was of course the largest and the most terrible population exchange known to the history till date.

Roger Ebert, a famous writer and a film critic writes that the British Empire has granted an independence to India in exigency which dwell Indians into a state of communal hatred and bloodshed and resulted into the partition that has left the people massacred on the roads. Truly one of the largest and horrible human exchange on the face of the earth. In the end of the film we can feel an intensity of religious hatred and savagery due to the politics of war and religion. The film presents the tragedy through the lens of a friend circle which is a group of people including all major religious faiths. The friends circle witness the tragedy and trauma of the partition and friend becoming the enemies within a wink of turmoil. The ending scene portrays an intolerant and ignorant mob finding the people from other religions to kill. “This is the kind of film that makes you question any religion that does not have a basic tenet, the tolerance of other religions. If God allows men to worship him in different forms, who are we to kill them in his name” (Ebert, 1).

Stephen Holden writes in “Earth’: India Torn Apart, as a Child Sees it” that the film *Earth* is a horrific and terrific series of events that has happened during the partition of India into India and Pakistan. At the end of the film, it is seen that the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs who have lived a life of honor with communal harmony for centuries began to kill each other. They are butchering the people on the name of religion and faith. The hatred for the ethnicity and the religious differences have led

the people to act like beasts. Everyone wants revenge, life for life and blood for blood violence began which saw no end till the destruction of the humanity. *Earth* is an adaptation of Bapsi Sidwa's novel *The Cracking India* presents the series of events through the lens of an eight year old child, Lenny, who is a daughter of a Parsee family residing in Lahore before partition. To look at the major and horrific events through the lens of a child has its merits and demerits. The most horrific and tragic event in the film is when the train arrives from Gurdaspur and the moment people enter into the train, they find it filled with Muslim dead bodies. Muslim men, women and children are butchered in the train and some gunnysacks are packed with women breasts. The film is extremely powerful and which reminds one terribly the possibility of the destruction of civilization within a wink. During the time of independence which led the partition of India into two countries, the cycle of violence emerged and people became the hunters in order to kill one another. It is stated that around twelve million people from all major religious backgrounds including Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs have been forced to migrate from their native places to the alien places.

Edward Gothmann, a famous chronicle staff critic writes in "Epic 'Earth' Covers too Much Ground/ Historical Personal and Uneasy Balance" that the time British Empire gave freedom to India, divided it into two different countries which are now India and Pakistan. The majority of Hindu lived in India and the majority of Muslims lived in Pakistan. The division was on the grounds of the religion which led the bloodshed and mass killings. The film *Earth* beautifully and skillfully chronicles the events of 1947, Lahore which is now in Pakistan. Mehta has adapted the film from Bapsi Sidwa's novel, *The Cracking India* portrays India as a land where people from different community backgrounds living together with religious

harmony. Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs are living together as friends and families. The story is narrated through the perspective of an eight year old child, Lenny who is a polio ridden Parse girl residing at Lahore before partition. Lenny belongs to a Parse family who were away from the politics during the time of partition. They were neutral in terms of support which made them safe. As the news of independence and partition is announced, the friends became enemies. They people who have lived in religious harmony for centuries began to collapse. All Hindu, Muslims and Sikhs find themselves trapped. There are number of series and tragic events which represent the hostilities of the country. The first incident happens on the dining table when an angry Sikh fights with the British Police Officer and then the number of incidents happen among them the restaurant scene when the group of friends suddenly turn into the stereotypical spokespersons for the respective religions and places. The other incidents which represent the conflict and horror when a Muslim man is tied to the cars of opposite direction to pull out his legs and arms and the incident of the train which comes from Gurdaspur with the dead bodies and women breasts cut off inside.

Richard Phillips in his review, "One of This Century's Human Tragedies, as Witnessed by a Child" writes that the film *Earth* reflects the powerful and horrendous personal experience. It is the time of 1947 when British Empire collapsed in India and on their return, they divided the country into two different countries of Pakistan and India with the help of Indian National Congress and Muslim League. Due to the division of India into two different countries, more than eleven million people from different parts of India and Pakistan were forced to be uprooted. They were thrown out of their native places by the uprising and religious turmoil. More than one million people have been butchered on the basis of

communalism and religion. The partition is simply described as the worst political calamity on human beings of subcontinent. The incident was so horrific that the horror is still to be felt and has indulged the two countries into the number of conflicts which led them to fight three wars. *Earth* portrays the political and religious catastrophe through the lens of eight year old Lenny who witnesses the series of tragic and horrific events happened during the time of partition. The film is made in a courageous way and humanistic in nature as it has broken the silence of the filmmakers who kept silent on this tragic event. The characters of the film comment from time to time about the partition. They share their opinions and foretell the possibility of future. The comments of the characters are very philosophical and political in nature, there are number of incidents when the characters comment on the situation. Among them the scene which depicts the horror gripped friend circle listening to the news on radio when Nehru is giving the speech about the independence, one of the character comments that these politicians are double standard people as they have given us the independence which is soaked with the blood of our brothers.

Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat in a review “A Mix of Romantic Love, Friendship, Passion, and Political Turmoil that goes Straight to the Heart” write that *Earth* is second instalment of the trilogy by Deepa Mehta which is based on the personal account of Bapsi Sidwa’s *Cracking India*. It portrays the violence and uprising led by the partition of India in 1947 by the British Empire. The series of incidents is narrated through the voice of eight year old child, Lenny, a young Parse girl who is enjoying the affluent life at the residence of Lahore. She belongs to a rich Parse family who were neutral at the time of partition. Lenny’s companion in her childhood is her Ayah who has a beautiful group of people around her. The group is

of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, they enjoy their time at the local garden and live their life in communal harmony. The moment it is declared that Lahore will be the part of Pakistan and the Hindus and Sikhs are forced to vacate from their homeland, the people in the group have developed the indifferences and began to fight. The friend turned into the enemies and the series of killing and murder started on the streets. The atrocities of people upon each other ignited the spark of revenge in them. The film portrays the destruction and devastation of human civilization. Through the lens of Lenny, the deeply rooted and eternal relationship of the people in group collapse within days. The friends have become the enemies and the greed and desire have taken the shape of destruction and devastation.

Zarminae Ansari, a staff writer and film critic writes that the film *Earth* is loaded with political, social, cultural and psychological issues. Centered on the novel, *The Ice Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidwa, narrates the series of holocaust which created the division of subcontinent into India and Pakistan. The film visualizes the horrendous and terrific series of tragedies due to the partition and independence through the lens of a young Parse child, Lenny. The film narrates the horrors of partition and their effects on the life of Lenny. Initially she is enjoying a blessed life in a royal family with loving parents and staff, but her life turns into upside down. She sees her world chaotic and confused which represents the world of millions of people at the time of partition found themselves in the midst of chaos and uprising. Lenny constantly creates the sense to the interruptions in her beautiful and idyllic world. The film has a serene love triangle which is depicted through the lens of Lenny. It is loaded with love, romance, historical events, horrors of partition, suffering of human beings, devastation of civilization, loss of humanity and the

beast which is inside the human beings. Lenny is eight year old child who is always with her loving nanny, Shanta. They visit to the nearest park every day and Shanta has a group of admirers. The group includes the Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus and among them, two men actively trying to woo Shanta. The voyeurism is quite explicit in the film as the two men in the group, Dilnawaz and Hassan seek the voyeuristic gaze onto Shanta and it is through the gaze of Lenny, the intimate scenes between Shanta and Hassan are visualized. Lenny bears the witness to the intimate and tender scenes throughout the film. She witness the tenderness of her mother when she take off her husband's shoes and socks and Lenny witnesses the gaze of seeing Shanta and Hassan in the middle of the park making love. *Earth* is a skillful craft which is woven with the realities and horror of the partition. It has the scope of explaining the wounds and devastation to the entire world.

Suparn Verma in a review namely "Breaking New Ground" discusses the partition narrative which is probably on the second among the most terrible and bloodshed in the world following the holocaust. It has been more than fifty years now since British Empire has collapsed in India and created the division of subcontinent, the wounds and scars are still deep into the human mind. The current relationship between the two countries is somehow determined by the scars of past due to which people still kill one another on the basis of religion and nation. *Earth* is presented as a saga of partition and the aftermath through the perspective of eight year old child who has grown up now and narrating the story of some fifty years ago. Having been adapted from *The Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidwa, *Earth* portrays more than half of the novel as it shuns the rape, mass murder, heart wrenching killings and violence as depicted by Sidwa. Mehta has skillfully etched the

characters on the vast canvas who belong to the different religious communities and at the end of the film, they meet the fate of their lives at each other's hands.

The story is of partition which is presented through the lens of Lenny who lives her life at Lahore with her parents and their staff, among them the nanny, Shanta who takes care of Lenny. Shanta has many admirers and suitors in the group which she has woven tightly by her kindness and beauty. Beneath the gentleness and kind attitude, there is a beast inside the characters which eventually comes out as the situation worsens due to the announcement of independence and partition. Suddenly the whole scenario changes, friends turn into enemies, people start killing each other on the name of religion. Humanity is seen nowhere, the whole continent is burning. The incident of Gurdaspur train leaves Dilnawaz broken and psychologically wounded and after that incident he loses his love too to Hassan which makes him realize that he is a mere beast. The violence and devastation is shown such a way that it reminds the scars of the past and also teaches the lesson to the generations about the history. The readers of Bapsi Sidwa might feel discontentment due to the exclusion of the major part of Lenny's idyllic and innocent world as the film covers only half of the incidents, but it does deliver the message by making the bold statements which compel the world to see the wounds and horrors of partition.

Andrew L. Urban, a famous film critic discusses that the film *Earth* is ardent and devotional in nature in terms of patriotism and nationalism. The deepening sadness and horrendous series of incidents are represented with the touch of personal experience during the time of division and bloodshed. The division created two different nations which has changed the overall socio cultural scenario of the subcontinent. The story is narrated through the point of view of eight year old child,

Lenny. *Earth* is quite a political allegory which represents the partition and bloodshed in 1947 when British Empire gave freedom to India. The freedom led the division of the subcontinent between two different nations, India and Pakistan, but the British Empire is not the only one to blame for the partition as the people from all religious backgrounds such as Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs have their shares equal in creating the chaos and disorder in the society. The barbaric attitude of the people towards one another devastated the humanity and torn the civilization apart on the name of religion and nationalism. The first half of the film reveals the episodes and seems less engaging till the moment horrific series of incidents and events open up. The film provides the serene understanding of the historical events which turns the friends into enemies and lets the beast unleash its wilderness when the tension escalates.

In her article “Transaction from Inscription to Visual: A Study of Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Cracking India* and Deepa Mehta’s *Earth*” Dr. Anjali Tripathy states that Bapsi Sidhwa showcases the multiple layers of desire in relation to body. She portrays an insurgency and women reduced to their body in the midst of the partition, while Deepa Mehta beautifies her film *Earth* with the groundbreaking and outspoken scenes which depict an insurgency against the bodies in the context of nationalism. There is a common intention between the novelist and the filmmaker to portray the violence on and against women’s body due to the politics of war, religion and patriarchy.

Both Sidwa and Mehta have portrayed the partition in a worthwhile manner. The account of Ayah, Shanta is transformed from the subject of the admiration and fascination to the object of physical violence, rape and abduction. “Mehta represents

the eroticization and objectification of Ayah in the adoration of her admirers in the scene of their meeting in Queen's Garden" (Tripathy 145). Sidwa introduces Ayah through Lenny as the subject who draws the grasping gaze from the men whereas Mehta portrays Ayah as the subject of objectification as this objection of Shanta is revealed in the garden scene when Shanta's duppata falls down and the men in the group share the voyeuristic gaze towards Shanta. She becomes the object of fetish for Dil Nawaz, the Ice Candy Wala and Hassan, the masseur. Furthermore, the violence on the body of both men and women is represented in a realistic way. Sidwa portrays Hari as the subject of violence against and on the body when the children and servants of the family trying to uncover his body and Mehta reveals the intensity of the violence on the body by representing Hari at the end scene when he is forced to put off his clothes to see if he is circumcised properly and when he takes off his clothes, the men around him laugh loudly and make fun of him along with the barber who circumcised Hari when he became Muslim. Through the Hari uncover incident, the violence on the body of men during the partition of the subcontinent is represented. The representation of "Violent repercussions on men and women's bodies during the Partition and the multiple and playful forms of desires of the body" (6) is portrayed beyond the canvas of nationalist violence.

In an article "This is Our Holocaust: Deepa Mehta's *Earth* and the question of partition trauma" Dorothy Barenscoth sheds light on the haunted memories and the partition effects portrayed in the film. *Earth 1947* which represents the severe insurgency on the body and a massive experience of terrible memories through the medium of imagery, signs and cinematography. *Earth 1947* portrays varieties of elements to manifest the horror of partition. Deepa Mehta's use of lust visual

imagery, lighting, mise en scene, tight shots and soothing music which perfectly supplies an eager call to the impending doom. There is a scene in the film when Hassan experiences the movement of people in restlessness, leaving their homeland with their belongings. The use of back and forth shot technique portrays the people on roads agitating and the people who are restless, doing nothing but watching the hoard of the dark night which would probably never come to an end. The background soothing music and the technique of the shot perfectly supply a parallel to the Jewish Holocaust when Jews were deported from their native places. Moreover, the film portrays the historical narratives of wounded memories and remembering. "The visual vocabulary of Holocaust imagery taken up in *Earth* tends to posit the film within debates already made about Holocaust films" (Barenscoff 6). The signifier of holocaust is loaded throughout the film which places it under the title of *Schindler's List* of Indian version. *Schindler's List* is famously known for the holocaust subject matter which Jews have experienced and witnessed at the time of mass killing human devastation, perhaps, in the same time the subcontinent has been divided into the two partitions. In the like manner, the film represents the holocaust of the subcontinent in relation to the rape, abduction and bodily violence. The experience of trauma and haunted memories is arranged with a bunch of words to express it on screen with visual language. "The making of Holocaust films since these works operate within a process that attempts to represent what is, in effect, beyond full expression or understanding" (9). The Gurdaspur train arrival scene is extremely pivotal which witnesses the death and devastation at the extreme end. The train is filled with the Muslims dead bodies as they are butchered and murdered. Along with the dead bodies of Muslim men, the breasts of women are cut off and are

in the sacks, the use of sobbing music and shot compels one to seek the attention to the images inside the train. The train symbolizes the death transporter which witnesses the powerful screaming and sobbing sounds, bearing the similarity to the holocaust where the arrival of a train was a signal of death and devastation.

In an article, "Gazing at the Beast: Describing Mass Murder in Deepa Mehta's *Earth* and Terry George's *Hotel Rwanda*" Joya Uraizee discusses the portrayal of mass murder, violation and killing in the film. The comparative study of *Earth* and *Hotel Rwanda* reveals the inner running thread which links them together in the subject matter. *Earth* depicts a Muslim man, Dilnawaz who turns into an objectified being later renders Shanta to an object of passion. The devastation of human civilization and breakdown of friend circle (includes the people from all religions) of the characters in before and after independence and the repercussions of letting the beast (which in inside) go out for hunting in order to create the violation, is presented through two different gazes. The first gaze is shared by Lenny, Shanta and Dilnawaz which leads them to experience the terror of violence. "The first set of looks are those of horror and despair as exchanged between Lenny, Ayah, and Ice Candy man as they watch the gang violence in the streets just before the partition" (Uraizee 11). The second gaze is presented at the end of the film when Dilnawaz comes with a group of people to hunt Shanta. The shared gaze between Dilnawaz and Lenny which decides the fate of Shanta as she is brutally taken for the gang rape and other physical violence. The gaze has horror and betrayal running constantly in between when it is exchanged between Dilnawaz and Lenny. The looks operated in the above mentioned films represent the brutality, horror and mass killing and violence. "In terms of the looks and motifs I have just described, the answer is that,

in *Earth*, the gaze is used to render Ayah as a passive victim or an erotic spectacle in need of our sympathy and compassion” (26). The gaze deployed in the *Earth* is to deliver Shanta as a victim of the eroticization and bodily violence which compels one to share the sympathy and passion with Shanta. The film has a motif to highlight the futility of partition of the subcontinent. *Earth* is made to represent the futility of the political and sectarian war which divided the subcontinent and after the independence soaked with the blood of men, women and children of all religions and ethnicities. The character of Dilnazwa and his personal failures to control his inner beast and the attraction of Shanta and her looks which she supplies to her male suitors at the garden, does not however, promote the war. There are many scenes which depict the violence on the body of Shanta and the end scene is more pivotal which sends Shanta off to fall the prey of brutalization, sexual abuse and abduction.

In her article, “Lenny’s Initiation into Life: Bapsi Sidwa’s *Ice Candy Man* and Deepa Mehta’s *Movie 1947: Earth*” Dr. Sangita T. Ghodake discusses the transaction of novel into a motion picture. “The stories written on the world’s largest massacre due to partition of the Indian subcontinent won the heartthrobs of billions and the most prestigious awards due to the pains and anguish depicted in it. Violence of any kind has proved that there is no gain but only pain received by both the ends” (Ghodake 61). The *Ice Candy Man* presents colonial and post-colonial era of violence, horror and bloodshed with a touch of autobiographical elements, whereas *Earth* portrays a handful amount of betrayal, bloodshed and series of horrendous incidents due to the patriotism and religious indifferences. Both the novel and the film represent the realistic image of the horror and pain due to the division of subcontinent into two different nations. “Bapsi’s selected novel takes us to the world

of letters whereas Deepa takes us to the motion picture of emotions through her movie. Both of them try to portray little cozy world of Lenny that turns into pangs and pains in her adolescence due to some outside circumstances” (62). The role of Lenny in the novel and in the film represents Bapsi Sidwa and through the innocence of the child, the story of violence and mass killings is narrated through the voice of a child. Shanta, the ayah of Lenny, exposes her to the outer world and makes her experience the class consciousness, ethnicity and religious indifferences of the people who let their animal come out and reign onto them. The characters in the novel and the film are realistic in nature as they represent the real incidents and actions. The *Ice Candy Man* represents the joy and happiness for lifetime, but unfortunately the ice melts after a due course of time and turns into the bitter and sour. In the same manner, the film *Earth* as the name suggests represent the natural phenomena which has the capacity to run the world, but as the time passes by, any contamination to it through the incident of partition, bloodshed and mass killings, the angry outburst of the offences due to the beast which is inside human beings, begins the journey from humanism to barbarianism.

In an article, “THE "VALUABLE DEFORMITY": Calipers and the Failed Trope of Postcolonial Debt in Deepa Mehta's "Earth" Robert Budde discusses the character of Lenny on the larger scale. Lenny’s physical disability is a symbol of broken country and broken identities. In the beginning, Lenny breaks the saucer and asks her mother if she can break the country. The scene represents the parallel between the broken saucer, the broken country and Lenny’s disability. The scene compels one to seek the position of the body and symbolic materiality posed on it. “This mise en abime raises questions about the body in the film (the filmic body’s

impossibility, a trick of light), the material inscription, and the codes of identity that confiscate or foreclose on flesh and bone” (Budde 44). Furthermore, Budde explores his discussion by focusing of the use of Lenny as the narrator of the film which evolves the issue of symbolic fusion of the social and geographical politics and Lenny as it emerges an immediate issue because Lenny symbolically signifies the broken parts of the country as she breaks the saucer in the beginning. Secondly, the issue arise the exertion of identity for physical disability for the political and social pursuits. The charming and romanticized rationale which presents the structure and the narration of the film breaks the complexities of the representation of the social, political and religious violence during partition. *Earth* stands as a metaphor for the precolonial and postcolonial positioning of the subcontinent. Lenny’s physical disability is visible on screen which represents the nation requires the cancellation and denial of certain ideologies. “The signifier of Lenny’s body is a palimpsest where the social constructions of disability reveal, erase and re inscribe themselves in the flux of coming into being and the failure of the representational enterprise” (46).

In their article, “Indian Cinema and the Presentist Use of History: Conceptions of “Nationhood” in *Earth* and *Lagaan*” Giacomo Lichtner and Sekhar Bandyopadhyay discuss the portrayal and representation of nationhood, patriotism and modernity in the film. The role of history in the cinema and the relation between the historical events and the film and also the contemporary times when these films have been produced. Cinema has a long tradition of using the history and trace out the beginning to explore it in the context of Indian culture. The use of Lenny as the main narrator, enables the filmmaker to ascertain the aspect which is neutral in the

main conflict. The narrative voice as an innocent child delivers the commitment from the perspective of innocence. Lenny is an innocent child, a Parse belonging to the upper class family and a polio ridden young girl. Lenny's aspect of narration explores the contemporary vision of the history and past and also explores the social, cultural and gender relations in the contemporary society. "*Earth* is a story about human harmony expressed through the desire for fairer gender, social, and religious relations" (Lichtner and Bandyopadhyay 439).

Earth offers a critique to the British Empire as well as the Indian politics and at the same time enhances the relationship between the different religious groups especially the relationship between the two nations, India and Pakistan. The central argument is to highlight the violence, be it physical, social or religious. The concern of violence in the film is more dominant and visible and significantly, this violence has turned into the boundary maker for the reconstituted society. The result of this violence turned up as the rape and abduction, haunted memories, horrendous series of incidents, mass killings and civilization chaos which is portrayed in abundance in the film. "After all, it shows that both Hindus and Muslims perpetrated the same kind of violence on each other, thus necessitating the reconstruction of a new history of violence as a tool for reconciliation" (442). Deepa Mehta has started from the point where the historians have ended. She invented an escape from this vicious circle of communal hatred and social and political violence by screening an amiable society of pre independence. The communal harmony of the people and the friendly environment become the narrative maneuver to depict the people from all faiths and political ideologies have possibility to live together as they lived together for centuries. The city presented in the film is an aspiration and a memory for the past

and the future of the subcontinent as the place does not exist the way it has been portrayed. “*Earth* tackles the issues of gender relations, social structure, religious tolerance, and national identity from a historical perspective but with a presentist purpose” (442).

Adapted from the novel *The Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidwa, *Earth* narrates the tale of partition of the subcontinent which divided the nation into two countries, India and Pakistan. The narrative structure of the film represents the political turmoil and violence due to the division. Deepa Mehta narrates the incidents through the voice of a young Poree girl, Lenny. She is a polio ridden young girl who narrates the story through her perspective. In her narration, Shanta, her ayah is the central character to whom she betrays. The body of Shanta and Lenny become the site for contestation in the social, political and religious scenario. Lenny is physically abled and Shanta too is physically abled body as she is the deformation of male body in the context of the prevailing social and political set up. In the beginning of the film, Lenny breaks a plate and asks to her mother if anyone can break the country. The scene draws a parallel between the broken plate and the broken country and the broken physical order of Lenny as well. She is physically handicapped, her legs are in clips which represents her dependency on others. The opening scene of the film gives birth to an issue about the body depicted in the film. The materiality of the body, the identity codes which are inscribed on the body in general and Shanta’s and Lenny’s body in particular, through the lens of Judith Butler’s *Bodies that Matter on the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* as this text is mostly consulted by all scholars working on the body and the materiality inscribed to the body. This book is the representation of Butler’s endeavor to broaden her previous concept of gender

performativity in order to include other epitomized social identities such as gender, race culture etcetera. In *Bodies that Matter on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, there is no explicit reference towards the physical and mental illness of the body as the words like physical disability or the mental disability does not appear in the book. There are references like the body endure the illness and with the deployment of the concept of deformation, it becomes quite ambiguous whether the statement is for the physically abled bodies or for the textual bodies because the characters she has analyzed in her work persistently talked in terms of their sex, race and gender formation. To investigate the filmic body portrayed in *Earth* through the constructive idea of body by Judith Butler raises the issues such as the aftermath of the application of Butler's concept of body and if there will be any antagonism in the post modernistic perspective of feministic body.

The issue emerges to enquire the values and inscriptions placed on the body of Lenny and Shanta. The polio ridden body of Lenny portrayed in the film has the symbolic reference of dependency of the country to the colonial empire as well as the fluctuating constructive identities such as the disabled, female, parse etcetera which are the shadows of the autobiographical elements of Bapsi Sidwa as has once gone through this which gives birth to Lenny as a narrator in the film. In the day to day happening and the representational pasture, body has become the site for contestation. Susan Bordo, in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, writes about the body as:

The body—what we eat, how we dress, the daily rituals through which we attend to the body—is a medium of culture. The body, as anthropologist Mary Douglas has argued, is a powerful symbolic

form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete language of the body. The body may also operate as a metaphor for culture. (Bordo 165)

In *Earth*, Mehta explores the social and political fields which inscribe to the bodies of Lenny and Shanta. She extends her exploration to portray the community, social, cultural and political disability along with the socially and politically lived experience. The filmic body of Lenny and Shanta are the representational and exist outside their bodies. To quote Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, in which she explores the idea of body's fixity in the society. She writes as:

In this sense, what constitutes the fixity of the body, its contours, its movements, will be fully material, but materiality will be rethought as the effect of power, as power's most productive effect. And there will be no way to understand "gender" as a cultural construct which is imposed upon the surface of matter, understood either as "the body" or its given sex. Rather, once "sex" itself is understood in its normativity, the materiality of the body will not be thinkable apart from the materialization of that regulatory norm. "Sex" is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the "one" becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility. (Butler 2)

Invoked by Michael Foucault's idea of power relations, the power inscribed body is well described in terms of power discourse. The power relations are relied and influenced by the people in the society who contribute their share in on the basis of knowledge. Meanings are also determined through the power relations in the society. People who manage on the basis of knowledge in the society, influence the meanings in the society. The body and its materiality is digressive which therefore implies that the body which is materialized, the sexuality inscribed to it, and the areas of restrictions are regularized and materialized through the "Regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce—demarcate, circulate, differentiate—the bodies it controls" (1).

For Foucault, body is culturally constructed which becomes a site for contestation on which the regimes of power and discourses are inscribed. All the content and aspects a body possess are culturally constructed and constituted and in this sense, it is apparent that the surface body would never be constructed instead it would become an occasional site for the course of construction. Foucault is not clearly producing the idea of the materiality of body rather he asserts that body itself is culturally constructed through discourse and power. The body becomes the site on which all the meanings are contested culturally. The mechanism of the idea of Foucault is explored in his famous work, *Discipline and Punish* where he develops his argument about the body as culturally constructed and as site of contestation.

The body of Lenny symbolically exists as an object. It signifies the canvas where the social and cultural construction of disability is revealed, written, erased and inscribed the values to it within the flux of representation. There is an

implementation of two different surface readings of the body which are in the narrative of the film *Earth*. The symbolic body of Lenny and the autobiographical body which is real in sense. The bodies are confined mutually and on the one way or the other way, one of them is existing as an identity. Lenny as a body in the film continuously performs the evasion of materialization as her body is not an autonomous due to her disability. Her physically abled body places her secondary in the social structure. Her dependency represents the dependency of the country which has recently freed from the colonial rule of British Empire as written by Butler as:

The process of that sedimentation or what we might call *materialization* will be a kind of citationality, the acquisition of being through the citing of power, a citing that establishes an originary complicity with power in the formation of the "I." In this sense, the agency denoted by the perform ativity of "sex" will be directly counter to any notion of a voluntarist subject who exists quite apart from the regulatory norms which she/he opposes. (15)

Furthermore, it has been observed from the ballroom dance scene from the movie when Lenny's mother teaches her ballroom dance and Lenny's mother says that the ballroom dance is the best invention of the British. Their dancing steps are interrupted by Lenny asking her mother whether the Parse's are bum lickens

Lenny: Aunty says that we Parse's are bum likers of English

Mother: so? I don't think we are bum likers. You know, have you seen the lizards in the garden? The ones that change color? The Parse's are little bit like that actually.

Lenny: Lizards?

Mother: no, chameleon. The Parses also take on the color of the people around them. They have to survive. When the Parses came to India thirteen hundred years ago, the Indian Prince would not let the Parses enter to the country. And a wise man sent a gift to him, a bowl of milk with sugar inside and he said we Parses will be like the sugar in the milk. Sweet, but invisible. Understand?

Lenny: yes, we are not bum likers, we are invisible. (*Earth*)

The scene which reveals the myth of Parse's coming to the subcontinent from Persia around thirteen hundred years ago. The mother of Lenny convinces her that the identity of Parse's is invisible, depends upon the people around them. They take on the color of the people who they are with. At the end of the scene, Lenny mother looks at Lenny with dismay. There seems to be a sudden alarming amazement in the looks of Lenny's mother when she completes her utterance to Lenny about their identity. She ends her utterance with the note whether the neutrality of Parse's a wise step or not. She once asks to her husband also about the position of the Parse's and he replies when Swiss can enjoy the position of neutrality why not the Parses. The neutrality of the Parses supply the living strategies or the Parse's are abnegating themselves. The alarming dismay of Lenny's mother reveals that the Parse identity in Lenny is invisible and her disability is mirrored and highlighted. The question arise here is, are they two different bodies, the Body of the Parse and the body of physically abled Lenny? The positionality of the Parse's tease out the symbolic image of Lenny which relates her to the country. Judith Butler

explains the identity categorizing process as the body which evades radically and disturbs the processes of power as it diminishes:

When some set of descriptions is offered to fill out the content of an identity, the result is inevitably fractious. Such inclusionary descriptions produce inadvertently new sites of contest and a host of resistances, disclaimers, and refusals to identify with the terms. As non-referential terms, "women" and "queer" institute provisional identities and, inevitably, a provisional set of exclusions. The descriptivist ideal creates the expectation that a full and final enumeration of features is possible. As a result, it orients identity politics toward a full confession of the contents of any given identity category. When those contents turn out to be illimitable, or limited by a preemptory act of foreclosure, identity politics founders on factionalized disputes over self-definition or on the demand to provide ever more personalized and specified testimonies of self-disclosure that never fully satisfy the ideal under which they labor.

(221)

Furthermore, it has been observed from the scene of Hari becoming Muslim. The conversion of Hari from Hindu to the Muslim identity with the process of circumcision and the recitation of Muslim Kalma is the tactic to shun away from the mutilation, violence, castration and murder. It is evident at the end of the film when mob comes to attack the other bodies and the mob includes Dilnawaz also. They demand all the Hindu staff and when Imam Din stops them, they demand Hari,

Imam Din replies that he has converted and has become a Muslim now. His new name is Himmat Ali now, depicted in the scene as:

Mob: where are the all Hindu, get them here

Imam Din: there are no Hindus here, this is a Parse house

Mob: where is Hari gardener?

Imam Din: looking back, Hari has become a Muslim and now his name is Himmat Ali.

Mob: tell him to recite Kalma

Hari: fearful and restless, recites the Kalma

Mob: let's see if you are a proper Muslim. Take off your pants?

Imam Din: stop it, I give you my word that he has become a Muslim and why won't you ask the barber who has circumcised Hari?

Mob: angrily, there is no barber here. They take off his pants, looking at his circumcision area, great! The barber has done a great job. Laughing at him and his circumcision.

Imam Din: bastards, you are using the religion for your personal gains.

Mob: where is Moti?

One among the staff replies, see he has become a Christian. And Moti replies, yes, my name is Mr. David Messiah.

Mob: making fun of him, saying him a latrine cleaner. (*Earth*)

The conversion of Himmat Ali and going through the requirements of remembering the kalma and getting circumcised produces his resistance to shun away from the historical and political consequences of the partition violence. If he had not become a Muslim, he would have been forced to face the repercussion of displacement, uproot and other physical violence. The mob includes his friends such as Dilnawaz, the mob de familiarize all the social and cultural relation with Hari and turning him Hindu out of the circumstances, the Hindu identity of Hari which has labelled on him since his birth is diminished within a blink. His body is mutilated and he goes through the physical violence. The mob has repressed the identity of Hari and his conversion to Islam allows him to reproduce his place and life in Lahore to survive in the society where his culture and tradition lies. Hari's body falls on the trope of the abjected bodies' domain. The bodies that are prone to misery, dejected and utterly hopeless. Judith Butler explores this idea in her famous work *Bodies that Matter on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, where she examines the domain of abjected bodies and brings out the conditions, both physical and discursive which deliver and cede the bodies worth living. She writes as:

How does that materialization of the norm in bodily formation produce a domain of abjected bodies, a field of deformation, which, in failing to qualify as the fully human, fortifies those regulatory norms? What challenge does that excluded and abjected realm produce to a symbolic hegemony that might force a radical rearticulation of what qualifies as bodies that matter, ways of living that count as "life," lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving? (16)

It is only due to the reason that Hari is able to recite the Kalma in front of the mob and is circumcised in a proper way as required in the religion of Islam, the mob allows him to live and resume his life once again in Lahore. At this moment of violence and betrayal, the circumcision of male organ or the circumcised and uncircumcised male organ has produced a new identity on the body of the other. It abruptly becomes the sign of an identity and to take off the clothes of Hari in front of the mob supplies an assertion to the desired identity that is the masculine identity. The male organ which is shown in the public is to ascertain the masculine identity which runs in the discourse. The ritualization of Himmat Ali's sexual body and male markings on the sexual organ as well as his performativity on the recitation of Muslim Kalma become the signifiers of the Muslim identity which is at the same time a masculine identity. This scene not only dramatizes the physical and bodily relations of the identity, but also produces and reproduces it. The production of new emerging male masculine identity allows one to attain through the process of conversion. The body of Hari is converted, marked and humiliated. He goes through the pain of physical violence and sexual abuse in order to get his body materialized through the process of mutilation and performativity.

This violence and has become the order of the day during partition which refashioned the lives of human beings at the larger context. The aftermath of the partition has an enormous repetition of the incidents and severe happenings such as the forced conversion, castration, circumcision of men to proclaim the masculine Muslim identity. The scene of Hari faces the mob when they take off his clothes, the masculine marginalized identity becomes the site of contestation. There occurs an instability of the masculinity of the marginalized male body that the evidences to authenticate the identity mark is highlighted through Hari.

There are innumerable horrific stories regarding the females in the midst of the war which have unfortunately remained unvoiced due to the fear of dejection from the society. “All the wars are fought on women’s body” (Mehta). *Earth* narrates the tale of Shanta who represents all women folk during the partition, through the lens of Lenny. It is a universal truth that women from every religion have experienced physical and sexual violence, but the patriarchal social code instead of affirming their lives, have rejected them from the society. The patriarchal social setup was so high that the purity of women sexuality has become the question of nationalism. The politics of religion, war and patriarchal social codes have betrayed the lives of women into the larger context. The film portrays the socio cultural stereotypes which are acquired through cultural codes and setup to shape the lives and living structure of social subjects. There is scene of Lenny’s birthday when his cousin Adi comes to wish her. She takes him upstairs to see the refugees.

Lenny: come and see the refugee’s next door, yousuf says that they are fallen women. Look fallen women.

Adi: no, raped

Lenny: what is that?

Adi: I will show you one day

Lenny to a boy from refugee camp: come here

Adi to boy? Was your mother raped?

Boy: when Hindus attacked our village, they killed everyone and I hid under the dead bodies.

Lenny: did they kill your mother?

Boy: yes. Are you Hindu?

Lenny: no, Parsi

Boy: when Hindus left the village, I went out to look for my mother. I find her in a mosque, she tied with her hair to the ceiling fan, and she was naked. (*Earth*)

Lenny proclaims refugee women as fallen women “Look, fallen women” (*Earth*) indicates unintentional beginning of the consumption of cultural stereotype which is the result of the social, cultural and patriarchal setup. They ask the boy “is your mother raped” (*Earth*) foretells the fate of Shanta because she too in later would be raped and become fallen woman.

There is a serene romantic scene in the film which depicts Dilnawas a charming lover who teaches Shanta an art of kite flying. Dilnawas recites, “When it seems difficult let it go and when you feel you have control over it get it closer to have all the control” (*Earth*). With the visual imagery used in the film, Dilnawas too seems an eager to have control over Shanta like the object. Women are treated as objects. There is a parallel scene which certifies the control over female body as a patriarchal social product. During the time Dilnawas expresses his love to Shanta, he says, “every human being has an animal, a beast inside him. The people out there have let their beast out to kill each other. If you be with me, the beast which is inside me will be under control” (*Earth*). Shanta seems in real trouble now, she undergoes a lot of mental struggle to understand whether Dilnawas offers her or warns her. It is certain that if she rejects his love the beast inside him will create a havoc. Shanta herself represents earth who is to be partitioned between Hassan and Dilnawas. The

war on Shanta's body resulted into the death of Hassan as well as the rape and betrayal of Shanta.

At the end of the film when a mob comes to attack the other bodies along with Shanta. Dilnawaz too is in the crowd, he tricks Lenny and makes her reveal where Shanta is. In the mob, a friend of Shanta turns up and demands the presence of Shanta:

Mob: where is Ayah, that nanny?

Imam Din: she has gone to Amritsar

Mob: she has gone nowhere, bring her here

Imam Din: I told you that she has left.

Mob: putting allegations on Iman Din, you are telling a lie. Why are you lying, Imam Din? If it is so then swear on Allah and tell if Shanta has left.

Imam Din: don't take the name of Allah to defile it by your dirty tongue

Mob: then you are not ready to take an oath, liar.

Imam Din: I swear by Allah, she has gone

Dilnawaz comes In front, keeps the men aside and tells to madam it is alright. Don't be scared Lenny baby, I am here. I know what will make Lenny baby happy, an ice cream. Tell me where nanny is? I have come for her. She is here, isn't she? You know I will do anything for her. Where is she?

Lenny: she is inside in mum's bedroom

Dilnawaz to mob: she is hiding inside (*Earth*)

The impact on the sexuality of male and female is illusive in the scene. The Muslim mob demands Shanta and forces Imam Din to take an oath if she has gone away. He deploys his masculine male Muslim identity to save Shanta from the mob by taking an oath that she has truly gone away. In the meantime, Lenny is deceived by Dilnawaz and the moment the frightening mob drags Shanta, they don't ask for the identity like the mob asked for the identity of Hari. They drag her for gang rape and abduction. The scene is highly dramatized to give emphasis on the abduction of Shanta as she is unable to save herself from the frightening mob who have grabbed her for rape and other physical violence. The terrified incident leaves the viewer haunted when the bodily desire have turned into the communalized hatred to impose the sexual violence on the body. The body of Shanta has become the site for objectification and sexual violation:

In this sense, I take issue with Foucault's account of the repressive hypothesis as merely an instance of juridical power, and argue that such an account does not address the ways in which "repression" operates as a modality of productive power. There may be a way to subject psychoanalysis to a Foucaultian redescription even as Foucault himself refused that possibility. This text accepts as a point of departure Foucault's notion that regulatory power produces the subjects it controls, that power is not only imposed externally, but works as the regulatory and normative means by which subjects are formed. (22)

Since the body of Shanta is labelled as the other Hindu body, there occurs the repression on the historicity of Shanta's body which ultimately becomes the object to fulfill one's sexual desires. The body is not characterized biologically as it is culturally constructed in the political rationality where some bodies are not accepted. The bodies of the marginalized people and those who do not contribute to the power discourse of the society are connected to the otherness and their bodies are not materialized.

The receptacle is not simply a figure *for* the excluded, but, taken as a figure, stands for the excluded and thus performs or enacts yet another set of exclusions of all that remains unfigurable under the sign of the feminine—that in the feminine which resists the figure of the nurse receptacle. In other words, taken as a figure, the nurse-receptacle freezes the feminine as that which is necessary for the reproduction of the human, but which itself is not human, and which is in no way to be construed as the formative principle of the human form that is, as it were, produced through it. (42)

Thus, Judith Butler examines the two different versions of development. The first one is that which can be figured and has functionality to reproduce the form and the other one unable to be figured and reproduces alterity instead of form. The concern of Judith Butler is not solely about the female body or the femininity, rather she is emphasizing the materiality of the body in general. It is apparent in her works that she seeks out the examination on the stability of body on opposition to the oppressive body, rather she writes on the liberation of all bodies and their materialization in the society.

Chapter 5

Social Seclusion, Cultural Deprivation and Objectification in *Water*

Widows are considered as the most vulnerable category in the Indian society. When a woman becomes a widow, she loses her social status. With the death of her husband, she too succumbs to social death. She is socially dead and her sexuality is controlled by the patriarchal order of the society. The cultural deprivation and objectification is at the peak for widows. They have to face the social isolation as they are forced to leave their houses to live in a seclusion in order to fend for themselves. Culturally, they are regarded as inauspicious and are not allowed to be the part of any cultural activity as their dress code, food habits and housing changes abruptly.

There is the control over their sexualities and all sexual practices which happen in the society are featured by the patriarchal ideology which results the male sexual violence and objectification against women. *Water* depicts the ways to probe the women oppression and inhuman treatment towards widows due to the established social institutions and Brahminical ideology. It provides a representation of eloquent and mighty traditional and cultural challenge to the established patriarchal and masculine values and institution of oppression, exploitation and subordination of women as well as widows in the society. In the inception, radical feminism began with the rationality and consciousness of the women who aspire to debate on the common issues of women in relation to their body and individuality in the society. The above mentioned debates and discussions gave birth to the idea of gender biasness and gender inequality which exerted the discrimination against the

genders in the society. Due to the reasons of patriarchy which is deeply rooted in the society, the women are treated as the other. They are given as the second class status in the society due to which there occurs a systematic subordination and oppression of women. The men in the society are regarded as the higher and separate class which always seek benefits from the women. The theory and idea of patriarchy is usually described as a set of beliefs and the codes that assert that the men are always benefitted from the subordination of women. Furthermore, the assertion states that the leading and main aspect of patriarchy is the maintenance of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. The oppressor dominates and subordinates the oppressed class in the society to be benefitted. As per the assertions of radical feminism, the men as an established separate class in the society make use of social institutions and other controlling agencies for the continuation of women domination.

According to Ti-Grace Atkinson, society is dominated with the ideology of men and society and men both act as an oppressor which constantly oppresses the women. The category of men is itself a society which is an enemy of women individuality and continuously suppresses the other half of the society which are women. There are established institutions in the society to control and subordinate the women and since the society and the men are synonymous to each other, women have always scared to face off the men. The fear of face off and not seeking the detailed perception of the ideological strategies of men have kept the women subordinated to men which brought the stagnation to the progress of women in the society. While the displeasure amongst the women in the society and to address this displeasure and unhappiness, it states that women in the society make a separate class,

but there has never been any casual or political analysis of class in the society. For the political analysis of the society, the affliction and oppression of women have never been taken into consideration. If women have ever tried to solve the problems, they have offered the dilemmas rather than the solutions. Women who supported the traditional feminism, debated and fought for the equality in the society which gave birth to the dilemma because of the reason that women are entirely different from the men in functionality and equality in the society with men would impact the rights of women. It offers equality in treatment in the unequal functionality. The dilemma offers the affliction and oppression of women in the society as the masters persecute the slaves.

The film begins with the depiction of beautiful imagery, soothing and sad music with a bullock cart carrying some people, among them is a young girl Chuya who is chewing the sugar canes and teasing the old bed ridden man and they cross the river Ganges by boat. In the next day morning, Chuya's father comes to her and wakes her up and tell her that she the person she has married with is no more and she is a widow now. Neither she knows the meaning of widow, nor she knows the person she has married and even she doesn't remember when she was married. The moment her father tells her that she is widow now, she replies for how long. She is taken to the banks of river Ganges where her husband is on the pyre. They break her bangles off, cut her hair and after that shave her head and being deported to the widow ashram where she is supposed to live her entire life in poverty and seclusion.

The widow ashram is headed by a fat lady, Madhumati, she is known as Didi in the ashram. The other widows in the ashram are from a young beautiful and charming Kalyani to an old lady, Buwa. They are all wearing white clothes and the

moment Chuya enters into the ashram, she shouts and cries as she wants to go back home. Madhumati, the head of the ashram makes her calm and tells her that this ashram is her home now and every widow here are sisters. She threatens her that if she doesn't stop crying, she will be thrown in the river and in the meantime Chuya furiously shouts that I don't want to become a widow. She runs and enters into the room where she meets Shakuntala who massages her head and tells her to sit in the sunlight. There she meets one another widow, an old lady who asks her name and tells her that she can call her Buwa. She asks her for Ladu and she narrates that she can only see sweets in the day, night and even in the dreams.

From the upstairs, a lady calls Chuya, the moment she goes up, she sees a beautiful and charming young lady who has a puppy called Kalu. Her name is Kalyani, she too is a widow and she is the only widow in the ashram who has long hair and has kept a puppy secretly. Chuya and Kalyani talking to each other, introducing one another and Chuya is still in a hope to go back home. She says today or tomorrow her parents will come and take her with them. She is told to recite Jai Shri Krishna hundred times a day and one day someone will come and take her with him. She recites Jai Shri Krishna rigorously as she wants to go from the place as soon as possible. In the night, the ladies in the room are weeping and some are coughing and in the meantime Chuya is taken to Shakuntala's place where Buwa narrates her wedding memories and talks about the sweets and the varieties.

In the next day, Kalyani and Chuya goes to the Ganges to wash Kalu and it runs away. Chuya runs after Kalu to find it back, Kalyani shouts her name to come back and suddenly a man stops the puppy and hands over it to Chuya. The name of that man is Narayan, a young educated and broadminded person who is a Gandhi

follower sees Kalyani and finds her adorable. He somehow manages to ask them their address and in the meantime, Gulabi, a transgender and a procurer comes from the window and tells Didi about Gandhi that neither he sleeps with women nor he drinks. Next day, Narayan and Rabinder are talking at the banks of the river and they see a lady in boat who is crossing the river. Rabinder, a friend of Narayan says that she is a whore and she is going to meet her customer, probably my father, but Narayan doesn't believe him, says she doesn't look like whore as she is a widow and Rabinder proclaims that the landlords over here have unnatural concern for these widows. Furthermore, it is revealed from their discussion that Rabinder is deeply inspired by the English and their poetry and Narayan is a Gandhi follower who talks about the passive resistance and joining the congress to liberate India from the British colonial rule.

Pandit Ji encircled by the widows, reciting the Shastra to enlighten the widows at the banks of river Ganges. Chuya is with Shakuntala and while listening to the religious man, she asks Shakuntala the address of the male widow ashram, where male widows reside. It is all because of her innocence as she is naive about all this. In the ashram, only Madhumati eats in a plate, rest are eating on the leaves. Their lives are so harsh that they don't even remember when they became widows. During their childhood, at the age from seven to nine, they all randomly pronounce the time since they have been living a life of poverty and seclusion. Buwa is the oldest lady in the ashram and she always talks about the day when she married to an old man and the sweets she had on that day. She is always drowned in the memories of her past which continuously haunts her.

Shakuntala is the only widow in ashram who reads and she continuously visits to the religious man at the banks of river Ganges to spend time with him, and in their discussion, it is revealed that Shakuntala is struggling a lot to achieve enlightenment and emancipation and at the same time she is unhappy with the harsh treatment of that place to the widows. The religious man constantly boosts her and keeps her active on her hope and in the meantime, Chuya buys some sweets from the sweets shop and gives to Buwa because she is always talking about the sweets. The moment she sees a ladu, she puts it into her mouth and gets flashbacks of her past and wedding day.

Gulabi, a transgender and a procurer of Madhumati always comes from the window of Madhumati and they both try to trick Chuya to expose her. They are talking to each other that Madhumati keeps her promise and if she wishes, she can send Chuya back to her home and at the same time, Gulabi introduces Gandhian philosophy that he believes the people from every caste are equal. Narayan and Rabinder are talking to each other while seeing Gulabi takes a young lady to the landlord and waiting outside the room. In their discussion, Narayan talks in favor of the widows and tells to Rabinder to imagine for some while that if you are married and suddenly your wife dies and whatever you have is snatched away from you. It is extremely desolate condition and harsh treatment towards the widows.

Buwa is coughing and crying, she wants some more sweets to eat as she is always drowned in the memories of her past. She is suffocating and tells them to take me out and the moment they take her out for fresh air, she dies. Madhumati asks for her belongings for the funeral rites, but she has nothing and finally Kalyani pays for her funeral rites as she has saved some coins for her funeral. Chuya meets

Narayan and he gives a letter to Chuya for Kalyani, but Kalyani is illiterate and she cannot read. She goes to Shakuntala and seeks her help to read the letter for her. She asks her suggestion if she should meet Narayan or not, but Shakuntala tells her not to ask me. While meeting Narayan, they discuss about the family and their lives and from their discussion, it is revealed that Kalyani was nine years old when she turned into a widow and she does not know her husband as she never met him. Narayan talks about the change in tradition and culture as he believes the time is changing and so the belief system of the society. First time in the life of Kalyani, she feels love as she is treated as a human being and as a woman. She is happy to meet Narayan and recites his sayings at the ashram.

Next day Narayan takes Kalyani out on the carriage and shows her where English people reside and also proclaims that Kalyani's widowhood doesn't make any difference to them as they too have widows, but not like the Indian widows. Narayan is a follower of Gandhi and he hangs Gandhi Ji's photo on the wall and introduces him in front of his mother that he talks about the freedom.

The love affair of Kalyani is exposed in the ashram and Madhumati goes to Kalyani to confirm if she is getting married. Madhumati bullies her and tells that widows cannot remarry as it is a sin and they fall into an argument where we get to know that Madhumati sends her across the to serve the prostitution only to survive and the way widows live their lives, no one will ever question to it. She cuts her hair and locks her up and announces in the ashram that I have saved you all from the sufferings. Meanwhile, Shakuntala visits to Pandit ji and asks him if there is any way out to lead a life of dignity for the widows. Pandit Ji replies that according to the Shashtra, the religious scripture, there are only three choices for a widow, either

she sets herself ablaze on the pyre of her husband to perform sati, or she lives the life of poverty and seclusion or if family allows, she can remarry with the brother of her dead husband. Pandit Ji also tells her about some new law according to which a widow can remarry and after hearing about the law Shakuntala is shocked. She asks her why don't they know about that law and the Pandit Ji tells her that we don't tell people the things that doesn't profit us, we know, but we don't recognize. For the personal and socio political gains, widows are kept away from this awareness. The moment she comes back to the ashram, she fights with Madhumati and sets kalyani free. She boots her that she should go and live her life in dignity and honor.

Kalyani leaves the ashram for Narayan, accepts his proposal and sit with him on boat to cross the river Ganges. The moment Narayan tells her about his home, she recognizes it that she has visited multiple times to that house to serve the prostitution. She turns the boat back and goes to the ashram again. She is again offered the life of a prostitute, but this time she fed up in serving the people for bread and she goes to the Ganges, washes herself and drowns into the river. Narayan argues with his father and his father tells him that it is the pride of the woman that she sleeps with a Brahmin as Brahmins can sleep with whoever they wish. The moment he comes back to tale Kalyani, he learns that she has committed suicide and at the banks of the river, Shakuntala and Narayan talking about the incident and Shakuntala says that according to Shastra, it is due to greed and illusion. There might be some reason that we are sent here and Narayan tells her that there is only one reason that is to cut off one mouth to eat, four sari's and one bed and nothing else.

After the death of Kalyani, Madhumati gets Chuya ready to exploit her for economic gains. She tricks her that she would send her home back through Gulabi and she knows everything. She is sent to serve the prostitution and the moment she is back with Gulabi, Chuya is traumatized and sexually abused. In the meantime, there is an announcement about the coming of Gandhi Ji and the train will stop only for five minutes. Shakuntala keeps Chuya with her and washes her in the river Ganges and take her to the station where Gandhi Ji is coming. There are thousands of people waiting for Gandhi Ji to come and he tells to the people at the station that for years I have been feeling that God is truth, but today I know that the truth is God. Shakuntala is pleading to everyone in the crowd to provide some help as she wants to send Chuya with Gandhi Ji and liberate her from the cage of social seclusion and poverty. Finally she finds Narayan in the train and give Chuya to him and tells him to send her with Gandhi Ji and save her life from the prostitution and other physical misconduct. With this, the pro Gandhi slogans are shouting and Shakuntala share a deep, long and saddened look towards the camera for long which brings the end of the film.

Roger Ebert, a famous film critic and a renowned writer is of opinion that, the film portrays the life of Indian woman as conditional on poverty and social denial. The two thousand years old religious laws are being used for economic concerns which dwells into a common feeling to throw widows out of the society. The widows are depicted in such a way as if they are mere objects, as if they are no more human beings or social subjects. They have no life as they are useless and burden on the family as well as the society without their husbands. "The film has the

powers to offend and to inspire the questions like, who is offended and why, and what have they to gain, and what do they fear?" (Ebert 2).

Louise Keller, another famous film critic writes that *Water* is a thoughtful, attentive and awakening film as it examines the conflict of the people between their religious faith and self-consciousness in nineteen thirties, India. The film is centered on the widow ashram which is an epitome of sorrow and melancholy. The filmmaker has skillfully used the eminent and exalted imagery to drown the viewer in the bitter social political scenario of the widow ashram where the widows from infants to old age are living with harmony in the social seclusion. The film tells the story of nineteen thirties of India when the Indian society would exclude the widows from the society and they were forced to leave the home to lead a life in seclusion. In the beginning of the film, the viewers are shocked to see an eight year old child going to live a life of social seclusion. The environment she finds in the ashram haunts her and she wants to go back home, but she forced to stay there, shave her head and she finds every woman has shaved head except one beautiful lady, kalyani whom she finds her protector. "Water plays an integral part in the film - it is in the Ganges that the Hindus bathe in order to cleanse themselves of sin. Just as a dog's fleas are washed away, so too are the sins of the world. Water is a powerful statement from an extraordinary filmmaker. This is a film that raises issues rather than resolves them" (Keller 1).

James Berardnelli comments that *Water*, being an end of the trilogy, triggers the sense of remembrance of the epic films of the greatest filmmaker, Satyajit Ray. The film is very thoughtful and evocative as it depicts the widows of Indian society treated as the second class citizens of the society. There had been protests and

demonstration on the making of *Water* for its exploration of humiliation and harsh treatment towards widows. In the Indian tradition of Hinduism, widows have limited choices to exercise. A widow is either allowed to burn herself on the pyre of her husband, or remarriage with the brother her husband only if family approves or live in seclusion and poverty as she is considered responsible for the death of her husband. Since the film portrays the India of nineteen thirties, but the convention has not been altogether demolished from the society and the filmmaker's courage to portray such practice from the critical vantage point costed her a break of more than three years as the protestors have destroyed the film sets. Chuya, as depicted in the film is an eight year old child who is become a widow and is sent to the widow house where she finds Shakuntala and Kalyani as her protectors. *Water*, as the title suggests the symbol of purity which runs throughout the film. There is water everywhere in the film, be it the river Ganges or the constant rain, the film provides a bird view to the traditions and customs of Hinduism and the plight of widows who live their lives in seclusion and poverty. *Water* is overspread with the liquidity and color of modernism as it lifts away all the curtains of bewilderment. However, the women are sent to the widow houses for economic gains also as revealed by one of the character in the film, but the widows depicted in the film have slowly and gradually accepted their fate as the second class citizens and at the same time, Chuya and Kalyani emerge as the rebellious characters who defy to meet the expectations of tradition and social order which ultimately boost the other women to raise their voices against the harsh treatment and law.

The film is suffused with a sense of creeping modernism, as if the curtain of ignorance is slowly lifted. One character remarks that

widows are kept in the ashrams more for economic reasons than for spiritual ones. (One less mouth to feed.) Another states that laws are being enacted which are designed to improve the lot of the widows. Most of the women in the ashram have learned to accept their situation with stoicism. But Kalyani and Chuyia are rebels, and their unwillingness to obey the rules causes others to question the status quo. (Berardnelli 1)

In one of his review, “a spiritually cleansing river runs through it” Ruthe Stein writes that *Water* represents the melancholy and mournful phase of Indian history. As the title suggests, *Water* has metaphorical uses to wash off the soul and the body as well. The water in the film refers to the river Ganges which acts as a foundation to raise this mournful and sorrowful story of India. The film depicts a young girl Chuya who is taken on the bull cart along with her dying husband across the river Ganges. Soon after her husband dies, she is sent into exile and forced to live the life of poverty and seclusion. Her life is thrown into the gutter and during her childhood, she is imprisoned for life time.

Hindu law, remnants of which remain in modern-day India, dictates that widows must live together in ashrams. Swathed in white saris, they atone for sins that somehow brought about the demise of their spouses. By focusing on a youngster, writer-director Deepa Mehta, exposes the illogic of the repressive law. What possible transgressions could Chuyia have committed in her short time on Earth? (Stein 1)

The filmmaker has perfectly crafted the conveyer of the world of widows who are excluded from the society and family. Chuya's first encounter to this harsh and inhuman treatment of the society happens when they break her bangles off, shave her head, make her bald and send her to the lifetime imprisonment. Chuya, being a young child is able to locate the hypocrisy of the society which forces her to enter into the adulthood long before her actual age. The water inside the film *Water* creates the horrific world of restlessness and fear. The Hindu fundamentalists have demonstrated to stop the filming, but the creation and craftsmanship of the filmmaker has vividly left the impressions of modernism in India by depicting the father of the nation, Gandhi Ji teaching to the people of India, assembling them to enlighten them with the teachings of inner conscience to attain the truth. Widows eyes, especially Kalyani's eyes which are never seen with the extravagancies of makeover, serves to the cause of women emancipation long before the country has adopted the concept of women empowerment and women emancipation.

Jeannette Catsoulis, a famous film critic, writes a review called "Under the Heel of Britain and the Thumb of Hindu Law in 'Water'" in which he discusses the plight of the widows who are dejected by the society for economic and personal gains. The film depicts the India of nineteen thirties, centered on the category of women who have become widows and they are thrown out of the society to live their further lives in poverty and in ashram. The only sin they have committed is that they are widows.

"Water" is an exquisite film about the institutionalized oppression of an entire class of women and the way patriarchal imperatives inform religious belief. Serene on the surface yet roiling underneath, the film

neatly parallels the plight of widows under Hindu fundamentalism to that of India under British colonialism. (Catsoulis 1)

In the ashram, there are three main female characters who inspire to stand as a rebellion against the tradition and culture. Shakuntala is the only one who can read and she is all time assisting to a religious man at the banks of river Ganges. Kalyani, a young and beautiful lady is the only one who has hair on her head. She is not shaved as she is serving the prostitution by sharing the bed with the Brahmin landlords. Her prostitution is forced by the domineering character of the ashram, Madhumati, who with the help of a procurer, Gulabi, sends Kalyani across the river Ganges to serve the prostitution. With the coming of an eight year old child widow Chuya, the ashram is put into the havoc. Due to the spirit and enthusiasm of Chuya, Shakuntala is encouraged from her inside to question her devotion to the religious rulings which turns the widows into the poverty ridden social outcasts. Kalyani too steps forward to stand as a rebellion by indulging into the love affair with Narayan. The film constantly shifts from the melodrama to the religious enquiry. The struggle of Narayan and Kalyani is the heart of the film, but the act of braveness and the awakening of Shakuntala stand as the soul of the film. At the end of the film, Shakuntala's bravery to liberate Chuya from the lifetime imprisonment and prostitution offers a resistance against the misinterpreted religious rulings.

Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, in their review "An extraordinary film which depicts the plight of Indian widows and their yearning for liberation" discuss that the film *Water* depicts the India in nineteen thirty eight, set in the holy city of Banaras. The film is grounded on the institutionalized suppression and the social deprivation faced by the widows of India in nineteen thirty eight which is still a

problem in the Indian society because of the thirty three million widows present in the Indian society. According to the Manusmriti, an old Hindu religious scripture, a widow has only three choices, either she put herself on the pyre of her husband to burn herself with him, or she remarry with the brother of her dead husband if allowed by the family or she can choose to live her further life in isolation, exile and social seclusion in poverty and hunger. If a widow chooses to live her life in exile and isolation, she is put into the ashram where she is only allowed to wear white clothes to mourn for the death of her husband and they are sent out to recite religious hymns in order to beg from the people. *Water* highlights the issues of inhuman treatment towards the widows and represents the terrific adversity and affliction done to the human spirit due to the jingoistic and narrow religious rulings and the old religious texts treated as godly and divine. It is astounding and awful to experience the religion used against the rights and dignity of women, particularly widows.

Another critic, Tasha Robinson writes that *Water*, being a controversial film rebels against the social morals and established ways of the society which allow the tradition and culture combined with religion to suppress a particular class in the Indian society. *Water* is grounded on the axiom that if a woman is not faithful to her husband, she will be reborn in the jackal's womb and it is apparent in the film that this restriction of unfaithfulness broadens even after the demise of her husband. During nineteen thirties, a young girl Chuya experiences this social limitation when she becomes widow. Her head is shaved off and she is deported to the widow ashram where she is supposed to live her entire life in poverty and isolation. In the ashram, she enthusiastically inspires the widows to question their fidelity to tradition

and religion and she impertinently depresses and squashes the domineering lady of the ashram who for her personal gains sends Kalyani, the most beautiful lady of the ashram to serve for prostitution. Kalyani accepts her position in the ashram as she is helpless until she meets Narayan, a young broadminded Gandhi follower who speaks in favor of the widows and against the old tradition and culture. According to the religious rulings and the tradition of the society, the relationship between a Brahmin and a widow is socially unacceptable, but the relationship between Narayan and Kalyani goes well.

Water is gorgeously composed and beautifully shot, with a dogged emphasis on water imagery and symbolism, and a luscious sense for color. It's often profoundly beautiful. But its distanced, calculated attempts to draw sympathy, from its wide-eyed child protagonist to its sad-eyed, personality-free lovers to its fairy-tale ending, all blunt the meaning behind that beauty. Elemental theme aside, it could really use a dose of *Fire's* heat. (Robinson 1)

Panini Wijesiriwardena and Parwini Zora discuss in “The Plight of Widows in India” that the film *Water* serves a rebellion against the social injustice, religious suppression and sexual discrimination and dogmatism which probably turned the filmmaker to fall prey to the attacks and demonstrations of Hindu fundamentalists. *Water* highlights the innumerable issues of the Indian society and the suppression of widows. As the title suggests, water is one of the most important and fabulous blessing of the creator to the human creation. There is water everywhere in the film, in the beginning, middle and at the end. The widows are deprived from all the social activities and they are allowed to eat poor diet. The most power striking scene in the

film to represent the deprivation of widows in when Chuya buys sweets and gives to Buwa, she instantly drowns into her past memories and reminds her past life. Shakuntala, the most powerful and prominent character of the film represents the social, traditional and mental conflicts encountering human beings to find solace under the web of religious rulings that are however accountable for the deprivation and suppression of widows. *Water* highlights the underlying economic reasons that led the widows to suffer for lifetime. It highlights the reason as exclaimed by Narayan that the sole reason for the widows sent to the ashrams is to feed one less mouth, save four saris and a bed. The harsh treatment towards the widows is business under the guise of religion and tradition. It is all because of the greed and the money in the society.

Another critic, Thomas Caldwell writes in “River of Life and Death: Women, Religion, Power and Purity in Water” that the film narrates the social stance of India in nineteen thirties through the depiction of three main characters of the film, Chuya, a young innocent child widow, Kalyani, a beautiful widow and Shakuntala. They are all widows and because of the religious and traditional rulings are that widows should live their lives in poverty and seclusion, these three characters along with other widows in the ashram are trapped in the misinterpretation of the religion and conservative thinking of the society. The film highlights the issues of religion being used to suppress the widows for personal, social and economic gains. Women are being treated as the second class citizens, sexually exploited and are being ensured that they are spiritually unclean and filthy. Chuya, the youngest of the protagonist and a widow becomes one when her ailing husband dies and she doesn't even know that she is married to that old man. She is

forcefully deported to the widow ashram to live her entire life in poverty, but she is depicted as the rebellious against the social injustice. The life of Chuya is revealed through the duality of the symbolism of water, either it purifies one or it snatches away one's soul forever. While in the film, the river Ganges is depicted throughout and it is considered a pure river which purifies one from all dirt and filth, but at the same time, Ganges is the only route which leads to the houses of upper class Brahmins who buy widows to share bed with them. Water represents the purity and progression, but in the *Water*, the water represents the social, traditional and institutional which suppresses and destroys the lives of those who are treated as subordinate. After Chuya, Kalyani is the next victim of the Ganges which takes her life. She drowns into the river to give her life when she is given the life of a prostitute. She represents the older version of Chuya. "Kalyani's religious devotion is important to note as being different from the misuse of religious rhetoric that is seen throughout the film. Mehta is not attacking religion in *Water* but critiquing the way it is used for economic and political gain" (Caldwell 1).

Marjorie Baumgarten writes that the film *Water* portrays the inhuman treatment and social outcast of the widows in Indian society. The film narrates the story of nineteen thirties which was quite a colonial period and coincidentally the time when Gandhi, the father of the nation came into the power. The film portrays the image of religious adherences and beliefs that have remain fixed despite the social and political transformations which have occurred during the time.

Mary Ann Johnson writes that in the current century, there are areas and communities in the world where pronouncing a woman as an individual or a human being who deserves her self- determination and freedom, is a crime and certainly,

Indian society of nineteen thirties as depicted in the film is one of such society. *Water* portrays beautifully the Hindu tradition of disdain, segregation and separation of widows from the society. The filmmaker familiarizes us to the world of the women who are socially secluded and dejected as they are spiritually filthy and unclean, through the youngest of the protagonist, Chuya who turns into widow due to the social and cultural rulings as her husband dies and she is forced to live her further life in poverty. In the midst of the injustice and cruelty, the terrific dejection of the widows forces Chuya to enter into the ashram who in the due course of time ignite the hope of living among the widows. *Water* is a female horror film which serves a wide range of canvas to highlight the suppression and human subjugation. The only ray of hope is provided thorough the idealistic follower of Gandhi who speaks in favor of widows and is against any social injustice. Narayan becomes the friends with Chuya and Kalyani and during the course of time, he too is dismayed and disheartened by the traditional and cultural rulings which keeps no escape for his relationship with Kalyani. Such is the injustice and deprivation towards the widows in the society that at the death of Kalyani, Shakuntala exclaims her wish for kalyani to reborn as a man.

In his article, "Fire, Water and the Goddess: The Films of Deepa Mehta and Satyajit Ray as Critiques of Hindu Patriarchy" David F. Burton discusses the *Water* as an artistic concern over the contemporary social issues, particularly the inhuman treatment to the widows and to women as well. Despite the film is set in the colonial period of India in nineteen thirties, but the issues are still prevalent in the society. At the end of the film, a note is shown which reads that as per the census of 2001, there are still thirty four million widows in the Indian society and most of them are still

living in the harsh conditions. They are experiencing the economic and social deprivation because of the cultural and traditional rulings thrown on them. However, there occurred many reformations in the society in order to better the conditions of widows and women in the Indian society. From the past century, the provisions to make the conditions better for the widows and their uplift in the society. *Water* is made in order to continue the process of modernization in the society by shunning the traditional and cultural rulings which allow women and widows to repress their lives. *Water* presents a promise of reformation in the society and speak in favor of the deprived class who are shunned from the social privileges. The reformation and betterment of the conditions are presented through the female protagonists of the film, especially Chuya's transformation from the seizure to liberation. Shakuntala's act of liberating Kalyani and Chuya from the cage of tradition and social deprivation, serves the possibilities of rehabilitation and betterment in the conditions of widows. Through the social transformation from conservative traditionalism to the modernism widened the roads for the happier future to the widows by allowing them to remarry and liberation.

The film reveals that the dominant male Hindu hegemony of the Indian society naturalize and rationalize the inhuman treatment to the widows by addressing to the old Hindu religious scriptures which reads that a widow should suffer till she is alive and those who are chaste and are faithful shall go to the heaven. However, the film *Water* provides an objection to the misinterpreted rulings as the texts itself are produced by the Brahmins. Furthermore, the laws of Manusmriti does include the admonition and encouragement to treat women as individuals with respect and honor. Although, the filmmaker herself endorses the

female characters as charged with positivity to bring about the change in the society for the betterment of social conditions. “Shakuntala begins to question the way that widows are treated and takes action to save Chuyia from the fate of prostitution, Chuyia herself exhibits signs of rebelliousness against the tyranny of Madhumati, and Madhumati’s manipulative and self-serving behavior as a madam is itself her way of asserting her agency within severe social constraints” (Burton 5).

In his article, “Clean Enough for Yuppies to Drink: Deepa Mehta Filters Ganges Water” William Elison argues that the film *Water* unveils the truth of rigid ancient Indian traditional and religious laws which are being enriched into the lives of widows in such a way that their modesty and self-image constructs their seclusion in relation to their eating habits, clothes, toilet, accommodation and other social activities. Their identity is marked through the conspiracy of social and religious codes. “In *Water*, the harsh code of conduct enjoined on widows by Hindu scriptures, which mandates modesty in the image of self-denial (in matters of diet, attire, toilet, and sociality) and of shame (at surviving the husband)” (Elison 3).

Bridget Kulla in “Why Gas “Water” Evaporated? The Controversy over Indian Filmmaker Deepa Mehta” writes that *Water* uncovers the social deprivation, familial dejection and poverty ridden widows who, due to the inhuman treatment towards them, are forced to live in the ashrams and serve for the prostitution. Even though the film narrates the tale of India nineteen thirties, but it is very unfortunate to note that this problem is still prevalent in the India society. In most of the places, young girls are forced to marry the men who are much older than them and in the city of Vrindavan, there are almost sixteen thousand widows who are living in impoverishment. *Water* was planned to be filmed in Varanasi, but after the

protestors demolish the film sets and stopped the filming in India because of the assertion that the script of the film defames the Indian tradition and culture and also questions the religious texts which are thousands of years old. The filmmaker had to stop the shooting and wait for some years to complete the film in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, *Water* unveils the Brahminical patriarchal attitude towards the women in general and widows in particular. It is important to note the film has might to address the audience throughout the world to highlight the issues.

Whatever direction Mehta may be moving in her career, it is important to publicize the outrageous censorship that silenced her. What makes Mehta's films controversial is that they question and expose societal structures and historical events that have been violent and repressive towards women. Film, to a greater extent than many other public mediums, has the potential to reach a diverse international audience. It is important to recognize this censorship as an act of patriarchal control over women's art. (Kulla 52)

Tahun Mukherjee writes in “Deepa Mehta’s film *Water: The Power of the Dialectical Image*” that the film exposes the Indian social patriarchal context which is of stance that the woman are mere objects of reproduction. Their deprivation from the society labels them sexually dead. The social structure to construct the identity is headed by patriarch and to control their sexuality is an ideological concern of this society. The film immensely contributes to the world of cinematic discourse on a serious social concern and artistically enriches the cinematic signs into the social practices which supplies an eager call in exigency for change. *Water* unveils the probes of widows’ actions as they are captivated under the web of tradition and

politics of religion. However, it is apparent in the film that the helplessness of widows' pushes them into the web of society that they are unable to take stand for themselves. The filmmaker has successfully involved the viewers through the construction of mighty images which bare the witness of the oppression of the patriarchy. It has a universal appeal to cater the gaze of the world alarming the inner conscience about the deprivation and neglect of women even after the feminist theories and ideologies which are held accountable for the initiation of social and political attitude towards the equality and rights of women across the globe. "By enabling the silent pain of the Hindu widows to reach out to a wider global audience, Mehta has created a meaningful cinema of participation and a significant and provocative social text" (Mukherjee 47).

Water unveils the fact that the violence against the women in the society in general and widows in particular is grounded in deeply rooted Brahminical ideology and patriarchy. The Indian society is ordered on the basis of caste system and to develop and maintain the power and potency, the ruling agencies have exerted the influence in order to secure and maintain the position in the society. The status of Brahmin in the society allows the exploitation of women in all spheres of life. *Water* portrays the traditional and religious customs of Indian society of deporting the widows to the widow houses to live the life of poverty and social exclusion. The widows are thrown away by the family and the society and are treated as the bad omen in the society. The analytical methodology of this chapter is infused by Ti-Grace Atkinson's *Radical Feminism* which presents an elaborative view of the oppression of women due to the established patriarchy and power hierarchies.

Water depicts the ways to probe the women oppression and inhuman treatment towards widows due to the established social institutions and Brahminical ideology. It provides a representation of eloquent and mighty traditional and cultural challenge to the established patriarchal and masculine values and institution of oppression, exploitation and subordination of women as well as widows in the society. In the inception, radical feminism began with the rationality and consciousness of the women who aspire to debate on the common issues of women in relation to their body and individuality in the society. The above mentioned debates and discussions gave birth to the idea of gender biasness and gender inequality which exerted the discrimination against the genders in the society. Due to the reasons of patriarchy which is deeply rooted in the society, the women are treated as the other. They are given as the second class status in the society due to which there occurs a systematic subordination and oppression of women. The men in the society are regarded as the higher and separate class which always seek benefits from the women. The theory and idea of patriarchy is usually described as a set of beliefs and the codes that assert that the men are always benefitted from the subordination of women. Furthermore, the assertion states that the leading and main aspect of patriarchy is the maintenance of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. The oppressor dominates and subordinates the oppressed class in the society to be benefitted. As per the assertions of radical feminism, the men as an established separate class in the society make use of social institutions and other controlling agencies for the continuation of women domination.

According to Ti-Grace Atkinson, society is dominated with the ideology of men and society and men both act as an oppressor which constantly oppresses the

women. The category of men is itself a society which is an enemy of women individuality and continuously suppresses the other half of the society which are women. There are established institutions in the society to control and subordinate the women and since the society and the men are synonymous to each other, women have always scared to face off the men. The fear of face off and not seeking the detailed perception of the ideological strategies of men have kept the women subordinated to men which brought the stagnation to the progress of women in the society. While the displeasure amongst the women in the society and to address this displeasure and unhappiness, it states that women in the society make a separate class, but there has never been any casual or political analysis of class in the society. For the political analysis of the society, the affliction and oppression of women have never been taken into consideration. If women have ever tried to solve the problems, they have offered the dilemmas rather than the solutions. Women who supported the traditional feminism, debated and fought for the equality in the society which gave birth to the dilemma because of the reason that women are entirely different from the men in functionality and equality in the society with men would impact the rights of women. It offers equality in treatment in the unequal functionality. The dilemma offers the affliction and oppression of women in the society as the masters persecute the slaves.

In the Brahminical patriarchal society, the identity of a woman is controlled by the men of her relative such as the father and the brother at her father's home and then the husband and the son at her husband's home. It is apparent in the film that after the husband expires, wife is forced to leave the house or she has the choice to burn herself alive on the pyre of her dead husband. If she chooses to leave the house, she is put under the harsh social conditions where she has to observe the restraint in

terms of living her life happily. She is forced by the tradition and culture to live the socially ostracized life which begins with her head shaved off, control in eating and white dress code. She is put into the mouth of social death and due to the fact of socially dead, she is biologically dead too. Ti-Grace Atkinson writes in *Radical Feminism*:

Because women have been taught to believe that men have protective feelings towards women (men have protective feelings towards their functions (property) not other human beings!), we women are shocked by these discoveries and ask ourselves why men took and continue to take advantage of us. Some people say that men are naturally, or biologically aggressive. But this leaves us an impasse. If the values of society are power oriented, there is no chance that men would agree to be medicated into an humane state. (Atkinson 5)

After the death of the ailing husband of Chuya, she is sent to the widow house to live her further life in poverty and in harsh conditions. Her identity in the society is controlled by her husband and once her husband is dead, she is put into the traditional vessel to respond. In the beginning, a compelling scene unveils the innocence of Chuya. The conversation between Chuya and her father:

Father: Chuya, do you know the men you are married to?

Chuya: No, papa.

Father: he is no more, and you are a widow now.

Chuya: for how long papa?

Father: no response. (*Water*)

Chuya is deported into the widow ashram and before doing that, she meets the traditional requirements which include breaking off her bangles, shaving off her head and wearing a white dress to be socially ostracized. She is forced to live her further life in social seclusion. The life of a widow is ceased after her husband dies and she is referred as socially dead. Her social life is ceased and she too dies on the spot. As per the Hindu traditional rulings, husband is the half of wife and if husband dies, the half of the woman is dead and she is left with only a half of her life which she is expected to finish either on the pyre of her husband or to live her rest life in poverty and seclusion. Since she is put into the widow house after the death of her husband which signals that she is socially dead, as the main element of reproduction she is declared dead as sexually too. She is socially castrated from all her sexual desires and sexual life as she is regarded as the filthy and disordering agent of the society. The symbolic castration to the women, especially to the widows reveal the status of being unimportant and immaterial bodies. To be away from the social and political domination, castration anxiety occurs to display the fear of being controlled and dominated or made to the mere object by the social institutions and power. Being considered as disordering agent of the society, the society shows no softness towards them as they are not considered as individuals. Becoming a widow is reducing one's self to mere object. Contrary to the marriage ceremonies, rituals and traditional functions which labels a woman a mark on her identity to indulge into the legitimate physical relationship with her counterpart male, the widows are pushed to journey through the traditional rulings which marks the repudiation of widow sexuality. The rulings are apparently traumatic and humiliating which are the breaking off the bangles, shaving the head and a separate dress code to signify a life

of poverty and deprivation. The appalling signs of widows and social dejection signals the symbolic castration of widows along with the dress code of women especially the widows and their food regulations. The traditional and cultural rulings regarding the dress code and food states that a widow should wear a white casual sari which should be bottom less and in terms of their food taste, they should eat the bland veggies and sometimes should deny to eat. The ways widows are treated and ruled in the society as portrayed in the film *Water* signifies the ways men in the patriarchal society control women sexuality as stated by Atkinson:

There is no justification for using any individual as a function of others. Didn't all members of society have the right to decide if they even wanted to reproduce? Because one half of humanity was and still is forced to bear the burden of reproduction at the will of the other half, the first political class is defined not by its sex--sexuality was only relevant originally as a means to reproduction--but by the function of being the container of their reproductive process. (4)

A widow is forced to destroy all the symbols of marriage such as the vermilion and the red dot. Widows are not allowed to wear the vermilion if any widow desires to wear, she is allowed to wear the ashes of her dead husband which would constantly remind her life like nothing more than that ashes. Apart from the marriage symbols, widows are forced to leave behind all their possessions, ornaments and other belongings. The society is figured through the anxiety of female sexuality and the exigency to control it in any possible way. The traditional customs and religious rituals presented in the film provide an attempt to seek out the ideological and socially oriented solutions of the issues inherited in the widowhood

conception or perception in which a widow is physically alive, but she is dead sexually and is considered a worthless being. She has to bear the burden of lifetime shame for being an inauspicious and she is not allowed to attend any social gathering because she is treated as a bad omen and degraded woman who with her inauspiciousness would ruin the happiness of others too.

Furthermore, it has been observed from the scene when Shakuntala, Narayan and Chuya are at the banks of river Ganges after the death of Kalyani and discuss the reasons and life of widows as prescribed by the religious texts and tradition.

Their dialogue begins as:

Shakuntala: according to the religious texts, it is all because of illusion and greed. (Kalyani's death is the result of her desire to live a normal and happy life)

Narayan: Kalyani's death is not because of illusion or greed or by the demons. Why do you believe so much in your reverence?

Shakuntala: I don't know. Why are we sent here? There might be a reason for this.

Narayan: the only reason is to have one less mouth to eat, spare four dresses and to spare a corner in the room. There is no reason at all apart from this. It is all a business under the guise of religion. (*Water*)

From the above scene, it has been observed that there are economic grounds too to dispel widows and treat them as the bad omen and degraded women. The social and traditional rulings are extremely strict regarding the widow possessions and their rights for the residence at home, owning the property of their husbands and

their job. They are snatched their possessions including their ornaments, expelled from their property share and are put into the widow houses where they live their life in a constant reminder that they are half dead and are worthless beings. The social and traditional rulings most often imply the division between human beings on the grounds of gender and identity. They are treated a separate class in the society as stated by Atkinson:

The problem of women is that women are a class. What is meant by that? What is meant by "women" and what is meant by "class"? Does "Women" include all women? Some groups have been driven back from the position of all women to some proposed "special" class such as "poor" women and eventually concentrated more on economic class than sexual class. But if we're interested in women and how women qua women are oppressed, this class must include all women. What separates out a particular individual from other individuals as a "woman"? We recognize it's a sexual separation and that this separation has two aspects, "sociological" and biological". The term for the sociological function is "woman" (wif-man); the term for the biological function is "female" (to suckle); both terms are descriptive of functions in the interests of someone other than the possessor. (3)

There is no source of income for the widows except reciting the religious hymns and begging on streets. Their lives are reduced to mere objects of helplessness, barrenness and destitution. When women are treated respectfully, they make the world of men beautiful. In the Indian society, almost every family in one

way or the other way has someone who has lost her husband. In some families, the grandmother is living without her husband, some families have mothers who are living without their husbands and so on. When these women are treated well, they nourish the family and sprinkle the drops of joy in the family, but because of the traditional and religious occupation, these women are put into the desolate conditions and are forced to beg for their food. According to the Press Information Bureau, Government of India, the census of 2011 states that there are 5.6 crore widows in India and there has been a massive increase among the widows from the 2001 to 2011 census. There are number of reasons which are held accountable for the imbalance of the ratio among the widows. The first and foremost reason might be the fact that women live more than men as the data shows that from 2001 to 2005 the average life span of women records sixty three years and nine months and for the men, it has been recorder that they live for sixty two years and three months. From 2011 to 2015, the average life span of men and women have been carried out once again. As per the data, the average life span of women records sixty nine years and six months and as for as men are concerned, their life span has recorded sixty seven years and three months. The age group perspective of the data shows that there are 0.45% of widows in the India who belong to the age group of ten to nineteen, there are 9% of widows who belong to the age group of twenty to thirty nine, there are 32% of widows in India who belong to the age group of forty to fifty nine and there are 58% of widows in India who belong to the age group of above sixty. Furthermore, it has been recorded that even the constitution has passed the law of Child Marriage Act in 2006, still in India there are almost two lac of child widows.

Widows in some areas still have limited freedom to marry, have insecure property rights, experience social restrictions on living arrangements, have restricted employment opportunities and also lack of social support. There is little understanding of the problems they face and the general schemes are not enough to cater to their problems and improve their condition. Further there is lack of data with regard to their economic conditions for the purpose of identification of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups among widows. (Press Information Bureau- A Ray of Hope for Widows)

Martha Alter Chen in *Perpetual Mourning: Widowhood in Rural India*, observes that widowhood is the most sensational and grave issue in the Indian society, especially the child widows which attracts the attention of most of the people in India and abroad. It is because of the patriarchal ideology and tradition, the religious scriptures are interpreted and applied in the customary ways. According to the traditional and cultural attitude, women are sexually wild and dangerous and this wilderness and control over sexuality can be done only by their counterparts and in this way wives are controlled and regulated by their husbands and when husband dies, she becomes a widow and due to the unavailability of a male for her, society throws her out to fend for herself and lead her life in desolate conditions. Furthermore, she asserts that in India society the system of marriage shows that the husbands are usually older than the wives and since the mortality rate of men are more than the mortality rate of women.

It is apparent in the film that Chuya is married to a person who is much older than her and from the narrative of Buwa, when she reminds her wedding day, it is

seen that she too was wedded with a person who was much older than her. child marriage is one of the major cause for the widows and according to the traditions, if a girl child is unmarried till she reaches to the puberty period, the Brahmins are allowed to practice the polygamy which was one of the major causes of the widowhood in India as the young children were married to the men much older than them as depicted in the film in the case of Chuya and Buwa and men were allowed to marry with number of women. After the death of the husband, a wife is turned into the widow and to escape from the familial and economic issues, she is put into the widow house where she is left to fend for herself. A widow is expected to spend her time in remembering god because she is a sinful and it is because of her sins, her husband died. According to the observation of Chen, child widows are sometimes related to the black magic in some communities in India. "Widows are believed to call on the ghosts of the dead to help them. In one community in central India, only widows are thought to be able to perform black magic" (Chen 234). As depicted in the *Water*, the widows are restricted to eat a quality food. They are living in the poorest conditions and as for as their diet is concerned, they are allowed to eat only veggie to keep their bodies away from the desires. Their bodies should not feel the need of any man and it is the basic tenet of the patriarchy to control the female sexuality. The sexuality of widows is controlled through the Brahminical ideology and patriarchial attitude of the society. "A widow is expected to eat only once a day and only rice- so that her body will become increasingly weak (durbal) and dry (sukhna), thereby reducing her sexual energy and making her less attractive to men. In addition to a modest daily diet, upper-caste widows are expected to observe periodic fasts" (240).

In the film, *Water*, it is portrayed that the major power holders and power structure of the society is in different folds which regularize the victimization of women in general and widows in particular. The first and foremost reason is the patriarchal ideology which allows the priests to interpret the texts in order to subjugate the women in the society. It is evident in the scene when Shakuntala goes to the priest and asks him if there is any dignified way for a widow to live her life happily. The conversation goes like this:

Shakuntala to Pandit Ji: you have read too much of religion. You have read many religious text, why is there such a harsh treatment towards widows?

Priest: according to the religious texts, there are three choices for a widow. Firstly, a widow can perform sati, she can burn herself alive on the funeral pyre of her husband, secondly, she can opt to live a life of poverty and seclusion, and thirdly, she can remarry with the brother of her died husband if family allows. One new law has passed according to which a widow can remarry.

Shakuntala: law? Why don't we know about that law?

Priest: we don't spread anything which doesn't benefit us. We know, but we don't recognize.

Shakuntala: no response, in shock. (*Water*)

According to the traditional and religious rulings, a widow is featured by the categorical, afflicted and awful norms of the society. According to the religious texts, a widow has to burn herself alive on the funeral pyre of her husband as a

customary practice to perform sati. The woman who doesn't perform the sati shall have to tonsure her head, take off all the jewelry, ornaments, leave the house of her husband where she has been living to live in the widow house which is away from the society where she has to fend for herself. She has to sleep on the mat as prevalent in the film, *Water* which depicts the sleeping style of the widows. She is not allowed to wear colored clothes, she has to cook for herself and eat in the poorest conditions. She has to spend her time in the devotion of god to repent for her sins because she is held accountable for the death of her husband.

Secondly, the Brahminical and patriarchal hegemony of upper class Brahmin landlord who with their Brahminical ideology and hypocrisy continue to institutionalize the widows to fulfill their physical needs as stated by Atkinson:

The role of the Oppressor (the male role) is to attempt to resolve his dilemma at the expense of other's by destroying their humanity (appropriating the rationality of the "Oppressed"). The role of the Oppressed (the female-woman role) is to resolve her dilemma by self- destruction (bodily destruction or insanity). Given an Oppressor--the will for power--the natural response for its counterpart, the Oppressed (given any shade of remaining self-consciousness), is Self-annihilation. (7)

After the death of the husband, a woman suffers from physically, culturally, economically and sexually. She is rendered vulnerable for the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. As portrayed in the *Water*, Kalyani is only widow in the ashram whose head is not shaved. She is beautiful and young who crosses the river Ganges with Gulabi to serve for the prostitution. Madhumati, the ruler of the ashram sends

her to the landlords who exploit the widows for their physical needs. It is observed from the scenes of Kalyani crossing the Ganges to meet the customers, the widows are socially and culturally ostracized, their lives are regulated by the males in the society. The death of the husband dwells them into the situation where they have to withdraw their sexuality and reproduction and since the widows are socially dead, their sexuality is controlled by the men in the society and for their physical hunger, they treat them as whores and share bed with them. Their bodies, their sexuality and their identities are controlled by the men and since the society is patriarchal in nature, the Brahmins proudly pronounce that if they share bed with any woman, it is the good luck of that woman that she has slept with a Brahmin. This observation is apparent in the scene when Narayan argues with his father about Kalyani as:

Father: you are aware about the fact now, don't get married, and keep her as your concubine.

Narayan: ashamed of his father, I thought something else about you.

Father: Narayan, Brahmins can share their bed with any woman whoever they desire because it benefits that woman who share her bed with a Brahmin.

Narayan: refers the Ramayana and tells to his father "I have never seen such a disgusting man like you." (*Water*)

This is the additional humiliation widows receive to be exploited by the men. After Kalyani commits suicide, Madhumati tricks Chuya and sends her across the Ganges with Gulabi for sexual assault. Being a child of seven years old, she is not spared from the physical violation and sexual abuse. The human trafficking is at

peak and hardly a woman is spared from the sexual exploitation. From children to the young adult who are still attractive become prey for the sexual exploitation under the web of patriarchy and Brahminical ideology. The patriarchal oppression, their control on the female bodies and sexualities, and restrictions on the food, dress code and the living style of the widows put them into the institution which ultimately reduces them to the mere objects and leaves them on the weakest positions. It is not surprising to state that in a Brahminical patriarchal society, men, especially the upper caste men constantly exert their control over the female sexuality and their body to take the sexual pleasure for the sake of their physical needs. Men continuously argue to have control over the sexuality and body of the females on private as well as social institutions. Men have the rights to violate the women sexually and overall it benefits the woman that she has been used to take the pleasure to satisfy the physical needs. However, it is portrayed in the film that the increasing physical and sexual violation from Kalyani to Chuya, primarily to serve the prostitution and to trick the children to expose them for sexual violation, they are continuously being objectified. Their bodies are treated as the parts of sexual gratification and sexual pleasure. They are reduced to their mere bodies. Since the society is patriarchal in nature, the men constantly buy the bodies of the female to satisfy their hunger on bed. The female bodies are being sold and bought as they are treated as the body parts which have become to satisfy the sexual needs of the men.

Water represents the oppression of women especially of widows in the male dominated patriarchal society which allows the Brahmins to enjoy the privileges of being a patriarch of the society to use the women for the satisfaction of their physical desires. The patriarchal and Brahminical attitude is explicit in film to mark the exertion of cultural and traditional representation which normalizes the male

exploitation of female for the sexual gratifications. The widow houses presented in the film represent the male dominance and male control over the society. The patriarchal order of the society which puts the widows into the separate widow houses by creating a division grounded on the sex and sexuality. “The male …female distinction was the beginning of the role system, wherein some persons function for others. This primary distinction should properly be referred to as the oppressor (male) - Oppressed (female) distinction, the first political distinction. Women were the first political class and the beginning of the class system” (7). The widows are restricted to exercise their feelings, but for the satisfaction of the physical needs of the upper class males, their bodies are sold to them. In the widow house where widows are restricted from almost everything, prostitution is only important evil which they are forced to yield for the sustenance of their survival.

Water begins to state the laws of Manu, a Hindu religious scripture which is two thousand years old. The opening statement of the film is that According to *Manusmriti*, “A widow should be long suffering till death, self-restrained and chaste. A virtuous wife who remains chaste when her husband dies goes to heaven. A woman who is unfaithful to her husband is reborn in the wombs of jackal (156-161). The above statement from the religious scripture demonstrated the status of Indian Hindu society. The scripture is from almost two thousand years ago, but the filmmaker has set the film in nineteen thirties only to demarcate that the condition of woman from the *Manu* till now is unchanged. The film *Water* showcases a strong resentment against the Indian traditional and religious politics in order to ruin the live of Indian widows. Majority of the characters lead their lives with the stance to follow religious scriptures but fortunately some of them such as Chuyia, Shakuntala and Kalyani take stand to rebel and break the chain of traditional, social and

religious exploitation of Indian widows. Nabeela Jameel quotes Deepa Mehta's interview in "Institutional Oppression to Spiritual Awakening: 'Water' and the Journey of its Women" as:

Water can flow or water can be stagnant. I set the film in 1930s, but the people in the film live their lives as it was prescribed by a religious text more than two thousand years ago. Even today people follow these text which is one reason why there continue to be millions of widows. To me that is a kind of stagnant water. I think tradition should not be that rigid. They should flow like replenishing kind of water. (qtd. in Jameel 1)

Chuya, even she is put into the widow ashram to fend for herself and to live her further life in poverty and social seclusion, she is fully energized with the resistance which she demonstrates by using her teeth to free herself from the scaffold of Madhumati. The role of Chuya is extremely inspiring and invokes other characters to question to the authority and social order. She questions to the priest about the male widow houses. The division that men have created in the society on the basis of sex, sexuality and gender, the characters portrayed in the film stand rebellious to destabilize all the social and patriarchal order. There are other significant characters in the film such as Kalyani and Shakuntala who in one way or the other way are inspired by the positivity and resistance of Chuya to question the social and traditional order. Kalyani is the young and beautiful widow who is allowed to keep her hair. In Hindu mythology, Kalyani is the goddess with the name of Lakshmi which is related to the richness of wealth and auspiciousness. The beauty of Kalyani is her wealth and richness which is sold by Madhumati for the

survival of the widows. Shakuntala is the only woman who can read and she continuously reads. She has the critical mind who questions the traditional religious stance. She questions the priest about the religious and traditional status of women in the Indian society and if there is any way out to change the social, cultural and traditional scenario of Indian society which treats women so harshly.

After Kalyani drowns herself in the river Ganges in order to not accepting the role of a whore in the society, she finds drowning into the Ganges is more respectful than to accept the role of ease maker for the men on bed. After her, Chuya is set to cross the river with Gulabi. The river signifies the sorrows and melancholy for the characters because when Chuya first crossed the river, she accepted forcefully the role of a widow whose life is ceased and now she crosses it once again to fall prey of sexual assault and physical violence. Both times, earlier and now, Chuya is forced to be trapped in the grid of social atrocities which turns her as the subject for the bodily violence of patriarchy. The prime significant character of the film, Shakuntala who after seeking the information from the priest about the dignified life of widows, sets Kalyani free from the shackles of tradition and social grid to marry Narayan. Her groundbreaking step to question the order of the tradition and patriarchal division of gender opens up the ways for other women to set themselves free from the shackle of patriarchy and stay away from the bodily violence and sexual abuse. However, it is very unfortunate to know that because of the social and economic force, Kalyani has to pay the debts by drowning herself into the river Ganges. The film leaves the audience in a state of enquiry that if widows are ostracized, dejected, filthy, and bad omen then why they should serve to the social prostitution institute. In the end of the film Shakuntala takes groundbreaking step to free Chuyia from the ashram and says

to Narayan “make sure she would be under Gandhi’s care” (*Water*) Gandhi as a symbol represents the modern world which would definitely bring change in the tradition and culture. Chuyia’s freedom too signifies a strong resentment against the old aged traditions and religious laws which are being manipulated from time to time and transferred into the next generations under the guise of religious faith, but Chuyia from now on would never lead her life in seclusion and deprivation.

Water represents the weaker section of the society and presents the narrative of the subjugated and subordinated section of the India society. It handles the narrative in a sophisticated manner through the sounds and images which compels the viewer to get familiar with the social atrocities, traditional realities and the social mask over the facts. It demarcates the inflammatory social elements and agents which are actively profound and have the capacity to destabilize the prevailing evil and existing attitude of the patriarchy and violence which created the division among the human beings on the grounds of sex and gender. There is the creation of new narratives, the narratives of the weaker and subordinated section who generate the narratives from being to becoming and to reclaiming their bodies, identities and their spaces in the society. Throughout the film, the body is operating on multiple levels to become the subject of the patriarchal violence. The female body acts as the metaphor of resistance and violence as well as the representation of culture. They are the female characters in the film, *Water* who demarcate the insights of expression of social, cultural and traditional atrocities.

Conclusion

Deepa Mehta, an internationally acclaimed Indian Canadian filmmaker started her journey in Indian cinema. Deepa Mehta is internationally acclaimed transnational filmmaker, producer and screen writer born in 1950 in Amritsar, India. She has achieved much fame due to her courageous and breathtaking films. Her films are famous for the ingredients like visual imageries and emotions which trolled them to play almost at every film festival in the world. Deepa Mehta has received numerous international awards and accolades for her challenging and amazingly astonishing films which narrate the issues of human conflicts, social injustice, religious politics and cultural bonding. She is famously known for her Elemental Trilogy that include *Fire* (1995), *Earth* (1998) and *Water* (2005). The first film of elemental trilogy is *Fire* made in 1996. Since the day it released, it ignited the fire among the audience. It was a first film ever made in India to be the most focused and concerned throughout the world. The movie extols the tale of two women who develop their loving sexual relationship in Indian socio-cultural context. Following the second film of trilogy named as *Earth* made in 1998. *Earth* is set against the backdrop of colonial rule in India resulted into the partition of British India into India and Pakistan. *Earth* is an adaptation of Bapsi Sidwa's novel *Cracking India* portrays a group of friends that is assorted to struggle during the time of partition. The film narrates the tale of betrayed friendship and partition of a single nation into two separate nations with bloodshed and massacres, which is considered as the largest compelled human migration on earth. The last film of elements trilogy is *Water* made in 2005, set against the marginalized widows and social institutions of India.

The trilogy has its location in India and the history from past to present. The characters in the trilogy are mostly national and there is hardly any foreign character portrayed in the trilogy. However, *Fire* deals with the contemporary issues of postmodern feminism, *Earth* has the focus on nineteen forties and the division of subcontinent into two different countries and *Water* has its focus on the social institutions and deprivation of women especially widows of nineteen thirties of India. All the films deal with the women centric issues such as body, individuality and sexuality. The Indian society gives the resonance to the trilogy as the stories are beautifully crafted and woven together under the India cultural and traditional structure. The trilogy has received the fame and recognition throughout the world. It has received the mixed response from the viewers and critics. On the one hand, it received extremely strong recognition and appreciation for dealing with such delicate subject matters of the India society and on the other hand, it has received the clamorous criticism which labelled the filmmaker as the disordering agent of national culture and religious sentiments.

In the present thesis, the issues and reasons of objectification, materialization of body, gender construction, and suppression of desires, physical violence and sexuality have been explored in Deepa Mehta's *Fire*, *Water*, and *Earth* through the lens of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* and Ti-Grace Atkinson's *Radical Feminism*. The freshness of the study and the scope for further study and exploration have been explicitly detailed in the present thesis. The researcher has studied the materiality of the body, role of culture and tradition in the construction of gender and identity, controlled sexualities and bodily violence. Furthermore, it is to

suggest for the development of further study that more pertinent lenses and approaches can be applied to explore the new dimensions of culture and tradition which shape the human existence in the society.

However, the boon position of the researcher on the select trilogy which includes *Fire*, *Water*, and *Earth* has been remained distinct from the position and opinion of the different writers and critics. For example, the first film, *Fire* has been studied and assessed from the different positions by different writers such as social and traditional resentment to the Indian social codes and institution where an ample number of women are deprived from their rights (Ebert 2), tearful plea of women self fortitude which strikes the viewers throughout (Addiego 1), presentation of India in different angles, such as, traditional India, spiritual India and modern India (Keller 1), emerging relationship between Radha and Sita which strictly disappoints the traditional order of the family and austere moral codes (Stack 1), mixture of western ideology regarding the sexual role playing, social stratum and social cultural and traditional collaboration of Indian cinema which hardly consigns female characters to the sexual objects (Baumgarten 1), a critique to the Indian society under the guise of moral and traditional codes which trap the women into the stigma of patriarchy (Phipps 1), amalgamation of India epic *Ramayana* and Indian mysticism which constantly flow throughout the film (Gelder 1), The realistic approach of the portrayal of class based institutionalized tradition bound relationship between each other which generates a loathing attitude among the viewers regarding the characters (Wijegunasingha 1), critique of patriarchy to identify women images on either side (John and Niranjana 3), representation of cultural commodity that concedes the viewers to absorb the regressive Indian masculinity and female love to

each other (Goswami 4), Indian patriarchal behavior towards the Indian woman and their sexuality (Burton 4), suppressed under the oppression of patriarchy (Gairola 5), an illustration to trace out the criticism against the social and cultural hierarchies of Indian society (Benarjee 2), the institution of marriage is faulty due to which repression on sexual identities arise in the society (Aguilar 2), The cultural identity for the lesbians and bisexuals (Davidescu 3), women characters of Indian society who reclaim their cultural identity (Moodley 2). The above mentioned critics and writers have assessed the film from different perspectives but none of them have analyzed the film through the lens of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. It has been observed from the researcher's vantage point of view that identity formation has always been the central concern in the cultural and traditional literature, however, Judith Butler, a reclaimed revolutionary writer and critic of gender formation and cultural identity, deals with the subjectivity of gender in the society. She criticizes the notions of cultural identity as an agency which is achieved through the input to the environment of the society and tradition, she asserts that cultural identity develops with the repetition of performance in the society and human beings perform the actions in the society which are central to the exertion and pressure of the discourse of normalcy that regulates the society. The post structural view of Butler on the stem of gender formation and the impact of it on the lives of human beings in the society and culture approaches the interchanging junction and nature of female which offers a critique to the ambiguous sexual orientation of women. To further analyze the ideas of Butler on the modern society, the close observation and examination is encouraged to seek out the underlying forces and devices which create the discourse, a normative discourse to regulate the

power, culture and gender socialization in the society. The stand of Butler on the identity formation is widely different as she offers an enigmatic look on the identity formation which is based on the constant repetition of performances and actions. These performances are the actions which human beings, especially men and women express in the society. Furthermore, the gender identity is the purely produced and constructed by the society which is politically active regarding the historical overview on the patriarchal norms and other normative laws of the society.

Gender and cultural identity is always constructed and produced by the society which is later shaped through the tradition, culture and regulatory laws of the society that are repeated time and time again. The continuous and constant repetition of actions performed by men and women in the society make them the subjects of identity. The representation of cultural and gender identity in the *Fire* is portrayed within the cultural space. The narrative of fire ordeal from the epic *Ramayana* which appears three times in the film, employed to highlight the role of culture and tradition in creating and producing the identities. The narrative is centered on the abduction of the king Rama's wife, Sita. She is abducted by the king of Lanka, Ravana. King Rama achieves success in rescue operation and when they return back to the kingdom, the subjects of his kingdom demand the chastity test for Sita and for that Sita has to pass through the fire to testify herself chaste. The metaphor of Sita in the Indian context represents the chastity, loyalty and national spirit. The women in the Indian society are expected to pass through the chastity tests. The religion and culture are used as devices to conceptualize and mobilize the tradition. The gender and cultural identity of Radha and Sita is constructed by the tradition. They endure the pain of being victims of the culture which is constantly labelling constructed

identities on them. While discussing gender and identity, Butler asserts that identity is the result of cultural and traditional formation which has underlying support of masculinity, patriarchy and heterosexuality. The oppressive cultural and structural laws and regulations as well as other operative devices such as patriarchy and women subordination have effects on the psyche of the gender performers. The women might perform these socially admissible identities by defying, repressing and invalidating themselves in order to abstain from the social exclusion.

The only reason to have physical relationship with wife is to have sons who will carry the name of your family. Ashok takes an oath of celibacy and whenever he feels the need of Radha, he makes her lie down next to him to test his control over the desires. In the like manner, Jatin is extremely harsh with Sita on bed. They are forced by the culture and tradition to perform the actions and duties. The duty of being an ardent and devotional towards husband and family. The metaphorical image of the women in Indian society leads them to oppression and colonization. Their role play in the family and society is controlled and organized by the normative discourse of the society which is rooted on the culture and tradition of men. The category of male and female, masculine and feminine produce the assertive social and cultural normative discourse which organizes the power gap between the men and women in the society. The male and female category construction leads us to identify the male as the law maker, the power holder and the female as the other, subordinate and body oriented. The internalization of socially permissible actions, female and other genders perform repeatedly body oriented stylization.

To consider the experience of Radha and Sita under the web of oppressive patriarchal culture and tradition, it can be easily argued that the internalization of normative discourse around them on their subordination and otherness has explicit marks on them. They are forced to be socialized for the role play as feminine. Their gender and cultural identity is organized, controlled and formed by the masculine signifying economy which asserts the signification of males and marks off the females. The exposition of female clothing in *Fire* through the character of Sita represents the assertion of alternate sexuality. Sita is the only character who take the steps to come out from the stereotypical characterization of gender and culture. She challenges the roles of feminine character by changing her attire. She changes the clothes, wears jatin's pants and pretends to smoke in a male attire. Furthermore, she dances like men on male oriented songs.

The consistent performativity of the gendered role play troubles when Sita denaturalizes the sex by wearing the masculine attire. She deploys the masculinity within her through the clothing and dress up. By deploying the masculinity into the femininity, sex falls under the category of consistent performance through the repetition and ritualization of expressions. The relationship of the body and being the body oriented female is within the space of normative heterosexuality which is destabilized through Sita's actions of presenting herself in the masculine attire. The relationship of Radha and Sita is the result of the failure of marriage institution and their desires for each other come to the light with the faulty heteronormativity. The domestic space within the structure of culture, tradition and family, the socialization of gender role play arise within the space of patriarchal heteronormativity which unleashes the oppression against women.

Butler's idea of masculine signifying economy is the underlying agent the film which helps in the construction of sexual subjects. The masculine or the male is the power holder and the feminine or the female is body oriented. *Fire* enables the male characters such as Jatin and Ashok to pursue the desired ambitions. Ashok is allowed to take an oath of celibacy. He pursues the spiritual ambition to seek the truth which he feels Guru Ji helps him for that. In the like manner, Jatin is allowed to have an extra marital affairs with a Chinese Indian woman and make money by selling the pornographic video tapes at his shop. In the contrary to male characters, the female characters such as Radha and Sita are subjected to take the positions at home. They are expected to regain the gendered role play as womanhood given by the culture and tradition. However, the repressed desires of Radha and Sita are flourished due to the constant denial of Ashok and Jatin to their respective wives. Their relationship destabilizes and denaturalizes the gendered role play and body oriented sexualities.

Furthermore, it has been explored that the film details the process of socialization and subjugation under the rulings of patriarchy and hegemony. The women in the patriarchy are placed at the margins. The relationship of Sita and Radha destroys all the patriarchal constructed roles for women in the society and at the same time, it questions the structure which suppress the female individuality. The resistance against the patriarchy and hegemony arises in the form of female relationship which devastates the traditional norms and constructs a divergent from the socially and traditionally accepted norms for sexual relationship and gender role play.

The second film, *Earth* has been assessed by different writers and critics from the different perspectives, such as intensity of religious hatred and savagery due to the politics of war and religion (Ebert 1), life for life and blood for blood violence (Holden 1), the division on the grounds of the religion which led the bloodshed and mass killings (Gothmann 1), the powerful and horrendous personal experience (Phillips 1), violence and uprising led by the partition of India in 1947 by the British Empire (Frederic and Brussat 1), is loaded with political, social, cultural and psychological issues (Ansari 1), the second among the most terrible and bloodshed in the world following the holocaust (Verma 1), film adaptation (Bluestone 1), The deepening sadness and horrendous series of incidents with the touch of personal experience (Urban 1), multiple layers of desire in relation to body (Tripathy 145), haunted memories and the partition effects (Barenscoot 6), the portrayal of mass murder, violation and killing (Uraizee 11), transaction of novel into a motion picture (Ghodake 61), character of Lenny on the larger scale (Budde 44), portrayal and representation of nationhood, patriotism and modernity (Lichtner and Bandyopadhyay 439). The above mentioned critics and writers have assessed the film from different perspectives but none of them have analyzed the film through the lens of Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*.

It has been observed from the researcher's vantage point of view that the narrative structure of the film represents the political turmoil and violence due to the division. The body of Shanta and Lenny become the site for contestation in the social, political and religious scenario. Lenny is physically abled and Shanta too is physically abled body as she is the deformation of male body in the context of the prevailing social and political set up. The opening scene of the film gives birth to an

issue about the body depicted in the film. The materiality of the body, the identity codes which are inscribed on the body in general and Shanta's and Lenny's body in particular, through the lens of Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* as this text is mostly consulted by all scholars working on the body and the materiality inscribed to the body. This book is the representation of Butler's endeavor to broaden her previous concept of gender performativity in order to include other epitomized social identities such as gender, race culture etcetera. In *Bodies that Matter on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, there is no explicit reference towards the physical and mental illness of the body as the words like physical disability or the mental disability does not appear in the book. There are references like the body endure the illness and with the deployment of the concept of deformation, it becomes quite ambiguous whether the statement is for the physically abled bodies or for the textual bodies because the characters she has analyzed in her work persistently talked in terms of their sex, race and gender formation. To investigate the filmic body portrayed in *Earth* through the constructive idea of body by Judith Butler raises the issues such as the aftermath of the application of Butler's concept of body and if there will be any antagonism in the post modernistic perspective of feministic body.

In *Earth*, Mehta explores the social and political fields which inscribe to the bodies of Lenny and Shanta. She extends her exploration to portray the community, social, cultural and political disability along with the socially and politically lived experience. The filmic body of Lenny and Shanta are the representational and exist outside their bodies. Invoked by the idea of Michael Foucault's idea of power relations, the power inscribed body is well described in terms of power discourse.

The power relations are relied and influenced by the people in the society who contribute their share in on the basis of knowledge. Meanings are also determined through the power relations in the society. People who manage on the basis of knowledge in the society, influence the meanings in the society. The body and its materiality is digressive which therefore implies that the body which is materialized, the sexuality inscribed to it, and the areas of restrictions are regularized and materialized through the practices of regulatory which produce the bodies it rules.

For Foucault, body is culturally constructed which becomes a site for contestation on which the regimes of power and discourses are inscribed. All the content and aspects a body possess are culturally constructed and constituted and in this sense, it is apparent that the surface body would never be constructed instead it would become an occasional site for the course of construction. Foucault is not clearly producing the idea of the materiality of body rather he asserts that body itself is culturally constructed through discourse and power. The body becomes the site on which all the meanings are contested culturally. The mechanism of the idea of Foucault is explored in his famous work, *Discipline and Punish* where he develops his argument about the body as culturally constructed and as site of contestation.

The body of Lenny symbolically exists as an object. It signifies the canvas where the social and cultural construction of disability is revealed, written, erased and inscribed the values to it within the flux of representation. There is an implementation of two different surface readings of the body which are in the narrative of the film *Earth*. The symbolic body of Lenny and the autobiographical body which is real in sense. The bodies are confined mutually and on the one way or the other way, one of them is existing as an identity. Lenny as a body in the film

continuously performs the evasion of materialization as her body is not an autonomous due to her disability. Her physically abled body places her secondary in the social structure.

The conversion of Himmat Ali and going through the requirements of remembering the kalma and getting circumcised produces his resistance to shun away from the historical and political consequences of the partition violence. If he had not become a Muslim, he would have been forced to face the repercussion of displacement, uproot and other physical violence. The mob includes his friends such as Dilnawaz, the mob de familiarize all the social and cultural relation with Hari and turning him Hindu out of the circumstances, the Hindu identity of Hari which has labelled on him since his birth is diminished within a blink. His body is mutilated and he goes through the physical violence. The mob has repressed the identity of Hari and his conversion to Islam allows him to reproduce his place and life in Lahore to survive in the society where his culture and tradition lies. Hari's body falls on the trope of the abjected bodies' domain. The bodies that are prone to misery, dejected and utterly hopeless. Judith Butler explores this idea in her famous work *Bodies that Matter on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, where she examines the domain of abjected bodies and brings out the conditions, both physical and discursive which deliver and cede the bodies worth living.

At this moment of violence and betrayal, the circumcision of male organ or the circumcised and uncircumcised male organ has produced a new identity on the body of the other. It abruptly becomes the sign of an identity and to take off the clothes of Hari in front of the mob supplies an assertion to the desired identity that is the masculine identity. The male organ which is shown in the public is to ascertain

the masculine identity which runs in the discourse. The ritualization of Himmat Ali's sexual body and male markings on the sexual organ as well as his performativity on the recitation of Muslim Kalma become the signifiers of the Muslim identity which is at the same time a masculine identity. This scene not only dramatizes the physical and bodily relations of the identity, but also produces and reproduces it. The production of new emerging male masculine identity allows one to attain through the process of conversion. The body of Hari is converted, marked and humiliated. He goes through the pain of physical violence and sexual abuse in order to get his body materialized through the process of mutilation and performativity.

At the end of the film when a mob comes to attack the other bodies along with Shanta. Dilnawaz too is in the crowd, he tricks Lenny and makes her reveal where Shanta is. In the mob, a friend of Shanta turns up and demands the presence of Shanta. The impact on the sexuality of male and female is illusive in the scene. The Muslim mob demands Shanta and forces Imam Din to take an oath if she has gone away. He deploys his masculine male Muslim identity to save Shanta from the mob by taking an oath that she has truly gone away. In the meantime, Lenny is deceived by Dilnawaz and the moment the frightening mob drags Shanta, they don't ask for the identity like the mob asked for the identity of Hari. They drag her for gang rape and abduction. The scene is highly dramatized to give emphasis on the abduction of Shanta as she is unable to save herself from the frightening mob who have grabbed her for rape and other physical violence. The terrified incident leaves the viewer haunted when the bodily desire have turned into the communalized hatred to impose the sexual violence on the body. The body of Shanta has become the site for objectification and sexual violation.

Since the body of Shanta is labelled as the other Hindu body, there occurs the repression on the historicity of Shanta's body which ultimately becomes the object to fulfill one's sexual desires. The body is not characterized biologically as it is culturally constructed in the political rationality where some bodies are not accepted. The bodies of the marginalized people and those who do not contribute to the power discourse of the society are connected to the otherness and their bodies are not materialized.

Thus, Judith Butler examines the two different versions of development. The first one is that which can be figured and has functionality to reproduce the form and the other one unable to be figured and reproduces alterity instead of form. The concern of Judith Butler is not solely about the female body or the femininity, rather she is emphasizing the materiality of the body in general. It is apparent in her works that she seeks out the examination on the stability of body on opposition to the oppressive body, rather she writes on the liberation of all bodies and their materialization in the society.

The third film, *Water* has been assessed by different writers and critics from the different perspectives, such as life of Indian woman as conditional on poverty and social denial (Ebert 2), the conflict of the people between their religious faith and self-consciousness (Keller 1), widows of Indian society treated as the second class citizens of the society (Berardnelli 1), *Water* represents the melancholy and mournful phase of Indian history (Stein 1), plight of the widows who are dejected by the society for economic and personal gains (Catsoulis 1), institutionalized suppression and the social deprivation faced by the widows of India (Frederic and Brussat 1), rebel against the social morals and established ways of the society which

allow the tradition and culture combined with religion to suppress a particular class in the Indian society (Robinson 1), *Water* serves a rebellion against the social injustice, religious suppression and sexual discrimination and dogmatism (Wijesiriwardena and Zora 1), social stance of India in nineteen thirties (Caldwell 1), inhuman treatment and social outcast of the widows in Indian society (Baumgarten 1), Hindu tradition of disdain, segregation and separation of widows from the society (Johnson 1), artistic concern over the contemporary social issues, particularly the inhuman treatment to the widows and to women as well (Burton 5), *Water* unveils the truth of rigid ancient Indian traditional and religious laws (Elison 3), *Water* uncovers the social deprivation, familial dejection and poverty ridden widows who, due to the inhuman treatment towards them, are forced to live in the ashrams and serve for the prostitution (Kulla 55), Indian social patriarchal context which is of stance that the woman are mere objects of reproduction (Mukherjee 47). The above mentioned critics and writers have assessed the film from different perspectives, but none of them have analyzed the film through the lens of Ti-Grace Atkinson's *Radical Feminism*

Furthermore, it has been observed from the researcher's vantage point of view that the violence against the women in the society in general and widows in particular is grounded in deeply rooted Brahminical ideology and patriarchy. The Indian society is ordered on the basis of caste system and to develop and maintain the power and potency, the ruling agencies have exerted the influence in order to secure and maintain the position in the society. The status of Brahmin in the society allows the exploitation of women in all spheres of life. *Water* portrays the traditional and religious customs of Indian society of deporting the widows to the widow

houses to live the life of poverty and social exclusion. The widows are thrown away by the family and the society and are treated as the bad omen in the society.

Water depicts the ways to probe the women oppression and inhuman treatment towards widows due to the established social institutions and Brahminical ideology. It provides a representation of eloquent and mighty traditional and cultural challenge to the established patriarchal and masculine values and institution of oppression, exploitation and subordination of women as well as widows in the society. In the inception, radical feminism began with the rationality and consciousness of the women who aspire to debate on the common issues of women in relation to their body and individuality in the society. The above mentioned debates and discussions gave birth to the idea of gender biasness and gender inequality which exerted the discrimination against the genders in the society. Due to the reasons of patriarchy which is deeply rooted in the society, the women are treated as the other. They are given as the second class status in the society due to which there occurs a systematic subordination and oppression of women. The men in the society are regarded as the higher and separate class which always seek benefits from the women. The theory and idea of patriarchy is not usually described as a set of beliefs and the codes that assert that the men are always benefitted from the subordination of women. Furthermore, the assertion states that the leading and main aspect of patriarchy is the maintenance of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. The oppressor dominates and subordinates the oppressed class in the society to be benefitted. As per the assertions of radical feminism, the men as an established separate class in the society make use of social

institutions and other controlling agencies for the continuation of women domination.

Society is dominated with the ideology of men and society and men both act as an oppressor which constantly oppresses the women. The category of men is itself a society which is an enemy of women individuality and continuously suppresses the other half of the society which are women. There are established institutions in the society to control and subordinate the women and since the society and the men are synonymous to each other, women have always scared to face off the men. The fear of face off and not seeking the detailed perception of the ideological strategies of men have kept the women subordinated to men which brought the stagnation to the progress of women in the society. While the displeasure amongst the women in the society and to address this displeasure and unhappiness, it states that women in the society make a separate class, but there has never been any casual or political analysis of class in the society. For the political analysis of the society, the affliction and oppression of women have never been taken into consideration.

In the Brahminical patriarchal society, the identity of a woman is controlled by the men of her relative such as the father and the brother at her father's home and then the husband and the son at her husband's home. It is apparent in the film that after the husband expires, wife is forced to leave the house or she has the choice to burn herself alive on the pyre of her dead husband. If she chooses to leave the house, she is put under the harsh social conditions where she has to observe the restraint in terms of living her life happily. She is forced by the tradition and culture to live the socially ostracized life which begins with her head shaved off, control in eating and

white dress code. She is put into the mouth of social death and due to the fact of socially dead, she is biologically dead too.

Since she is put into the widow house after the death of her husband which signals that she is socially dead, as the main element of reproduction she is declared dead as sexually too. She is socially castrated from all her sexual desires and sexual life as she is regarded as the filthy and disordering agent of the society. The symbolic castration to the women, especially to the widows reveal the status of being unimportant and immaterial bodies. To be away from the social and political domination, castration anxiety occurs to display the fear of being controlled and dominated or made to the mere object by the social institutions and power. Being considered as a disordering agent of the society, the society shows no softness towards her as they are not considered as individuals. Becoming a widow is reducing one's self to mere object.

In the film, *Water*, it is portrayed that the major power holders and power structure of the society is in different folds which regularize the victimization of women in general and widows in particular. The first and foremost reason is the patriarchal ideology which allows the priests to interpret the texts in order to subjugate the women in the society. It is evident in the scene when Shakuntala goes to the priest and ask him if there is any dignified way for a widow to live her life happily. Secondly, the Brahminical and patriarchal hegemony of upper class Brahmin landlord who with their Brahminical ideology and hypocrisy continue to institutionalize the widows to fulfill their physical needs. After the death of the husband, a woman suffers from physically, culturally, economically and sexually. She is rendered vulnerable for the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. The widows

are socially and culturally ostracized, their lives are regulated by the males in the society. The death of the husband dwells them into the situation where they have to withdraw their sexuality and reproduction and since the widows are socially dead, their sexuality is controlled by the men in the society and for their physical hunger, they treat them as whores and share bed with them.

The trilogy represents the weaker section of the society and presents the narrative of the subjugated and subordinated section of the India society. It handle the narrative in a sophisticated manner through the sounds and images which compels on the viewer the social atrocities, traditional realities and the social mask over the facts. It demarcates the inflammatory social elements and agents which are actively profound and have the capacity to destabilize the prevailing evil and existing attitude of the patriarchy and violence which created the division among the human beings on the grounds of sex and gender. There is the creation of new narratives, the narratives of the weaker and subordinated section who generate the narratives from being to becoming and to reclaiming their bodies, identities and their spaces in the society. Throughout the film, the body is operating on multiple levels to become the subject of the patriarchal violence. The female body acts as the metaphor of resistance and violence as well as the representation of culture. These are the female characters in the film, *Water* who demarcate the insights of expression of social, cultural and traditional atrocities.

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