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FEATURING FEMININE MEN: CONFIGURING THE NEW MAN HERO IN THE SELECT
BOLLYWOOD FILMS OF NEW MILLENNIUM

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ABSTRACT

Cultural understanding of sexuality is based on the ideas of behavior and attitudes of men and women in a society. Throughout the ages, male body has been cited as aggressive and women's sexuality is seen as a response to that aggressive male desire, which later on described as a natural phenomenon. Therefore, from social to psychology, most of the critics believe that sexuality is a social constructed. Every age has its specific ideology of being a man; like, Masculinity in 3000 B.C. was defined by the valour and courage, Medieval masculinity was essentially based on Christianity and chivalric, Victorian masculine ideology was marked with responsible, well behaved, domestic, protective and breadwinners of family, Modern masculinity is broadly defined by family structure. New man is the product of this modern masculinity. So, Who is this New man? There is no particular history to trace the new man, but it can be assumed that after the World War, when there was no complete man in the western society and women took the place of working men that can be the possible reason of the emergence of new man. Rancho and Liquid are the heroes of the new millennium Bollywood film industry who project and highlight this trend of New Man, which is directly or indirectly influenced by social condition.

Key Words: Sexuality, Masculinity, New Man, Feminine Men, 3 Idiots and Pyar Ka Punchnama

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Gender studies is a matter of debate. Debate in every sense; whether it is about social equality or intellect, even in physical strength. When did it start? Perhaps, after realizing the fact, that the men are different from women. And how we realized it enough to differentiate between the two, that the world is fighting over this fact about the superiority, subjugation and segregation. There are various motifs behind this, but to me the most concrete concept is something like this- at the beginning of the world there was no dissimilation between male and female. Both the genders used to go for hunting. Obviously, they had to hunt the dangerous giant animal. No doubt this task is very difficult for both of them. During their operation of hunting the animal, they realized that females are reducing like anything as they could easily be killed. The only

reason was, the physical strength. Then they decided to stay back in cave to look after the internal needs of the other members of family. The separation began from this stage and still it continues. Therefore, it is necessary to understand sexuality in a broader form to understand the concept of masculinity and its sub category "new man".

Sexuality: A social Construction

"Society is human product and humans are social product"- Herbert

With the development of feminist, movement sexuality remains at the center of debate; whether it is natural or socially constructed. Sexuality is based on biology or choice debate. The concept is complex. Before deciding sexuality as a social construction or not, one needs to understand the core concept of social construction and how it affects the gender studies. Social construction is one of the fundamental ideologies of social studies which refers to the meaning which generates through action, reaction or interaction of human beings. It is based on shared ideas of various human needs such as language, colour, food habits, symbols, spirituality etc. in other words, social construction is not natural or inherited or revealed, not even constant rather it made up by human being. Neither it is intuition which exists after the birth itself but adopted from other human beings. Social construction can be deconstructed and reconstructed, which changes with time and place. Now the question is whether sexuality is a social product? Feminist movement started with the claim that 'sex' and 'gender' cannot be merged. Sex is different from gender. Sex refers to the biological difference while gender to the behaviours, attitudes, identity; i.e. masculine and feminine. Foucault's conception of sexuality lies on that sex is something which is controlled with power and knowledge, has greater relationship with power and knowledge. He discards "juridico-discursive" that power always repress and restricts. Power is as productive as it is repressive which is omnipresent even in the form of 'panoptican'. There are four major directions of sexuality according to Foucault which is directly or indirectly connected to power; sexuality of children, women, married couple and perverse. Through these four directions the power the power generates and spreads in the society. So, sexuality according to Foucault generates from the society itself. Even John Locke is of the view that a child's brain is as a *tabula rasa* or blank state. Brian will acquire the things which he sees around him, then only he can differentiate the known from the unknown. Therefore, social surroundings play the role to form one; identity, which based on discourse. Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) provides the same concept that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" The famous statement by Simon de Beauvoir proves that feminism is not the formation of biological or psychological difference but rather a socially constructed form. Cultural understanding of sexuality is based on the ideas of behavior and attitudes of men and women in a society. Sexuality is structured by political and social motto and attach in major ways to connect with power around class, race and especially gender. The debate of sexuality roles around the active, passive role of male and female. Masculinity is considered to be the active part of society which is believed because of the role of penetration, as penetration symbolized male power and submission to the penetration is passive. But the question is here whether the penetrated person is female or male itself. If it is the male who is playing the role of passive after penetrated that how the sexuality will be formed. Earlier, Athenians never prohibited the love affair and sexual relationship between adult male. Does it mean that at that time there was no such gender problem in the society? Throughout the ages, male body has been cited as aggressive and women's sexuality is seen as a response to that aggressive male desire, which later on described as a natural phenomenon. Therefore, from social to psychology, most of the critics believe that sexuality is a social constructed.

Masculinity and the New Man

Now let us discuss the concept of masculinity and its modern approach of new man. In a simple way masculinity can be viewed as the opposite or the counter part of femininity. But a critical approach of masculinity shows a different story altogether. It is not exactly the counter part of femininity rather a socially constructed form of behavior, attitudes, presentation depending upon the biological features. Manliness or manhood is not something which the man is born with rather after birth through the action and reaction, attachment and detachment, known and unknown one achieves it. "Gender identities are formed from birth

as children are moulded into socially-approved patterns of masculinity and femininity. But, while early childhood is undoubtedly a crucial period in the formation of gender identities, masculinities and femininities are being created and recreated throughout the lifecycle: confirmed, negotiated and modified on a daily basis" (Jackson 201). Therefore, masculinity is a theory like feminism deals with the status of men in a particular society. It questions the power relation of masculinity in a given context. The study of masculinity theory is always relational with women, gay, tough guy etc. Masculinity study is a new field of study which emerged in 1970. It came into existence with reference to the men's right. But the new man is slightly different from this traditional image and conviction of man. Every age has its specific ideology of being a man; like, Masculinity in 3000 B.C. was defined by the valour and courage, Medieval masculinity was essentially based on Christianity and chivalric, Victorian masculine ideology was marked with responsible, well behaved, domestic, protective and breadwinners of family, Modern masculinity is broadly defined by family structure. New man is the product of this modern masculinity. So, Who is this New man? There is no particular history to trace the new man, but it can be assumed that after the World War, when there was no complete man in the western society and women took the place of working men that can be the possible reason of the emergence of new man. new man is completely different from the features the traditional man bear till the world wars. Earlier man used to be they symbol of aggressive, sexually callous, brave, intelligent, fighter, just exactly the opposite of the women characters, who considered themselves as inferior, weak, emotional, not courageous etc. But the perception of the world towards the men and women started taking changes only after when realization took place that the men cannot go for work, and he is not only the person who can earn bread to family. This concept of new man has been fueled after the feminist movement in 1980s, when women started their journey to demand for equal rights. New man is highly affected by the feminist movement. Like women, new man is more sensitive and emotional. He does not feel shy when he talks about his inner feelings and fear. Moreover, he expresses his inner feelings with emotion which the modern society can easily accept and listen to it. New man engages himself to any womanly activity like cooking, to look after baby, fashion, arts etc. For new man, only providing food is not enough but he has the greater role to his family; to give shelter, to give luxurious life, he is much more emotionally attached with his family. He is not aggressive and most often he bothers about his appearance like any woman does. Therefore, the macho man is not only acceptable as masculine symbol but new man has itself a self-defined masculinity.

Rancho and Liquid: The New Men on the Screen

Rancho and Liquid are the famous two characters from the very popular two blockbusters *3 Idiots* and *PyarKaPunchnama* respectively. *3 Idiots* is a coming of age comedy, released in 2009, directed by Raj Kumar Hirani. It is one of the most appreciated films in the whole Indian history of cinema. The circumstances and condition which have been highlighted in the film is different. Rancho, a very talented engineering student of Imperial College of Engineering, has immense interest in robotics, and invents in his spare time. Rancho regularly faces the wrath of the college's director, Dr. Viru Sahastra buddhe, known as "Virus", when he gives creative and unorthodox answers in class. He lives by the philosophy that one should pursue excellence, as when it is achieved, success follows. Rancho is one of the burning examples of New man. The hardcore masculinity is something to be aggressive, sexually callous, dominant, brave etc. But a critical observation of the character shows that he is neither aggressive nor sexually callous. He is not even dominant. He is not angry with anyone in the campus. Virus, the director of ICE used to threat him like anything, insult him all the time. Still he is happy enough to tackle all the situations which he faced. One night Pia, the heroine of the film comes to him to give the key of her father's office to help him to steal the question paper. Then she wants to kiss him, but Rancho, stops her and escape from the room. His face blushed like any girl blush in shy. There are other incidents too which prove his emotional weakness which strikingly contrast with the men. Rancho is too much emotional. His tears shed in the crucial moments with his friends. For the first time, when Joy died, he silently protested and cried in the rain. He cried for him although he was never attached with him. Even, when his friends successfully cracked the interview for getting a job, he shed tears in happiness, which signaled his soft feminine heart. Moreover, Rancho bears all the qualities of a new man. He is caring, sensitive, non-aggressive,

emotional and shy. It has been discussed earlier, that the feminist movement fueled the notion of new man. Due to the lack of complete man in a particular society, the youth developed a shy attitude which prone them not to face the society. After World Wars, the young generation came under the shade of poverty as the society was under threat of unemployment. Rancho, a seeker of knowledge, has faith on his knowledge which will definitely lead him to a successful world. His dedication and perception towards knowledge most often prevent him to come close to any girl. That is why, he feels shy before Pia, and never dominates her. Even, at the last scene Pia slaps him, he does not even protests. The new man can only tolerate that. Peter Jackson, one of the major critics of masculinity studies speaks about the formation of identity, "Gender identities are formed from birth as children are moulded into socially-approved patterns of masculinity and femininity. But, while early childhood is undoubtedly a crucial period in the formation of gender identities, masculinities and femininities are being created and recreated throughout the lifecycle: confirmed, negotiated and modified on a daily basis" (Jackson 201). Therefore, it is the childhood experience and environment which leaves a greater impression on one's mind. Rancho's childhood experience can be categorized as a very delicate and surrounded by loneliness which is probably the concrete reason to make him new man.

Liquid, exceptionally shy and meek (especially before the girls) character in the film *PyarKaPunchnama*(2011), has a different story to be projected as a new man hero. Frustration, one of the favorable seeds to be watered by the postmodern socio-cultural environment which forms the New man, is very much visible in Liquid. Even his complexion and expression is just like any normal woman. He is much aware of his appearance. Liquid is despondence because of his professional as well as personal life. He does not like his job, as he thinks he is being extremely exploited by his boss. On the other hand, the girl Charu who met with him at his office used to use him in every way. Intentionally, Charu drags Liquid in her personal life, exploiting him emotionally to get every possible help. Liquid is not bold and macho like Chaudhury, the friend of Liquid. He is easily convinced by Charu's false tears. Generally, male considers the female as emotional fool. This is the traditional attitude towards the women. But the reverse happens with Liquid. He gets emotionally involved with Charu, even after realizing that Charu is merely using his emotion. Traditional attitude of man is quite direct and straight forward; they say and do things without any hesitation. But, Liquid is the new man. He does not hold the ability to act like the hardcore masculinists. He feels shy to propose the girl, he will talk everything beside love but not about the love. Every steps, he is brutally insulted by Charu still he works and comes to her. The writer Mark Simpson believes, "if there was a real actual living 'new man' in the 1980s it was probably Morrissey- and a big part of his appeal back then to a generation of young men and women was precisely his willingness to go against Dad-ish gender norms and express emotion and 'feminine' qualities". Through this statement the emphasis was on sensitivity as a reaction against traditional stoicism. The objectification of Liquid's sensitivity is highly affected by feminine attitudes. He has the time to accompany Charu to beauty parlour. There he can wait a couple of hours for Charu to come out. He goes for marketing that too to buy womanly beauty products. Why he does so or act like a pet dog? The most interesting thing is that even after realizing, Liquid will never get Charu, not even her minimum affection for him, he blindly follows her. In one interesting scene, Chaudhury justifies this relationship of Charu and Liquid in a very practical way-

"This is what happens with girls in long distance relationships. They have boy friends who live far away. They always need someone's support. They do not disclose anything to their boyfriends, at the same time they also give ample importance to the so-called friend and then create scenes. And then, either they will break up with boyfriends and friends become boyfriends or friends will be in trouble with his love and emotion. It does not make any difference to them. They always have an option. Liquid is a fool, an emotional meek fool."

So this statement is enough to project the mindset of the character Liquid. He is not only feminine in his attitude but the sentiments which he bears in completely anti-masculine, where he just blindly follows his emotion without realizing the reality of one's need.

Conclusion

Film is a cultural artifacts created, presented and distributed by cultures. Technically, film is designed to capture and debunk the physical reality through the reality of camera, a bunch of *ideological state apparatus*, which acts from the outside and it served the values of state. It is used to *interpellate* those individual who are overwhelmed like the other institutions present in the society; like education, family, news, business etc. and thus, reproduce capitalists' relation of production. Hence, a film can be interpreted as a mode of economic infrastructure which is directly based on ideological superstructure. Films are the mirror of society, it not just reflects the reality of ideological society rather it affects the population through the ambiance of creation and recreation of certain sociological artifacts. Why film industries throughout the world have become a mode of economic production? Why it has become so popular? There are diverse reasons for the popularity of film but the most acceptable cause is the acceptability in almost all classes of society. Consequently, it falls under the category of popular culture that can attract the mass. Human life is full of problems. The problem is sometimes the outcome of some social or sometimes the psychological which is directly or indirectly influenced by socio cultural scenario. There are certain things in social life like politics, religion, beliefs, culture, tradition, faith etc. which divide people. What makes us unite is popular culture. Popular culture stands in such a position in human life that people from all strata accepts it. How does it affect? When we talk about Superman, Batman or some famous movies it gives pleasure to note that irrespective of all religions, caste, creed, political boundary, geographical location we tend to enjoy, read or watch. So, popular culture brings us together, it makes us smile together. Film is a mode of popular culture and has a great appeal in the mindset of the people irrespective of all divisions, which can well be understood with special reference to the socio-cultural and historical ideology. Therefore, it can be sum up that the new millennium of Bollywood films go with the transformation of the society. It is not about Rancho and Liquid but a complete shift of heroes in terms of their attitudes and behaviours. They are not prone to be a hardcore masculinist, they do not want to be like that. They ignore the Dad-ish attitude and formed a completely new self-defined nature of masculine outlook, which can easily be saturated with feminine sentiment. The films which projected this image of new image of man, have beautifully captured the essence of socio-cultural scenario.

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