

Subtle Subversions: Exploring Women's Agency and Patriarchal Negotiations in Hrishikesh Mukherjee's Cinema Through a Postcolonial Feminist Lens – Implications for Gender Equality in Contemporary Indian Media (SDG 5)

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Abstract

This paper discusses how the agency of women and patriarchal negotiation processes have been represented in the films of Hrishikesh Mukherjee based on postcolonial feminist approach. It explores how the middle cinema that Mukherjee produced indirectly criticizes gender norms in postcolonial India and leads to the discussion of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) that emphasizes gender equality. This paper will analyze these representations and how they apply to modern filmmaking. The mixed approach was adopted; qualitative textual analysis of three films, Abhimaan, Anuradha and Guddi along with quantitative content analysis of 50 scenes of each film was adopted. Also, 200 viewers were surveyed to determine the perception of gender equality in these stories. The results show that the female characters are represented as change agents in patriarchal limitations where 68 percent of scenes reveal female agency. The themes of subtle resistance and hybrid identity are outlined with the help of qualitative analysis. The research recommends that the current media could use the stories of Mukherjee to inspire gender equality through reinforcing the voice of women and incorporating gender sensitive viewpoints in the film study and creation.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian cinema, especially Bollywood has traditionally operated as a very strong cultural institution, which reflects and influences the societal norms including that of gender roles and gender identities. Being a postcolonial country, India struggles with the legacies of colonialism which played into the patriarchal institutions of India to establish convoluted hierarchies of power that disproportionately impact women (Chatterjee, 1993). The works of Hrishikesh Mukherjee (1916-2006), a prolific filmmaker who worked in the 1950s-1980s, are a rich source of analysis, in this case. As a unique blend of the escapist mainstream Bollywood and the introspective depth of art-house, the oeuvre

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of Mukherjee covers the everyday middle-class life with a humanistic touch (Rajadhyaksa, 2000). However, behind this surface of mild realism, we can find a certain questioning of gender relations, where women bargain agency within the patriarchal parameters. This paper uses a postcolonial feminist approach to break down these negotiations, and see how the representations of Mukherjee challenge the norms and have consequences to the furthering of gender equality in Indian media today, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) of the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations (United Nations, 2015).

This query can even be best represented by the postcolonial feminist paradigm in that it critiques the interconnections of colonialism, patriarchy, and globalization, in that Western feminist paradigms usually do not consider the experiences of women in the previously colonized world (Mohanty, 1984; Spivak, 1988). Indians experience postcoloniality in terms of hybrid cultural identities, in which women have to juggle between the traditional requirements of domesticity and new desires of freedom (Bhabha, 1994). This hybridity can be found in the films of Mukherjee whose background was the post-independence urban India during the Nehruvian period and beyond. In the example of *Anuradha* (1960), the woman in the titular role, played by Leela Naidu, is forced to abandon her music career to accompany her husband in his medical practice in a rural area, and as such, it reflects the postcolonial woman stress of having to balance personal ambition against family responsibility (Srivastava, 2004). This story is an implicit critique of the patriarchal norms that women are supposed to submit their talents to male professional needs, which can be interpreted following the larger discussions on gender inequality in the postcolonial societies.

Abhimaan (1973) in which Amitabh Bachchan and Jaya Bhaduri place in the lead, is a film about marital conflict due to the growing popularity of the wife as a singer; a fact too dominating a career of the husband. The movie deconstructs the male insecurity as a by-product of the patriarchal right to power, which was conditioned by colonial ideas of manhood that praised breadwinning and dominance (Khan, 2016). By holding back emotional displays, Mukherjee does not provide

melodramatic versions of who is right or wrong and lets the characters negotiate their reconciliation under conditions that would not defy the agency of the woman but rather establish her rights. In the coming-of-age movie *Guddi* (1971) about a teenage girl in love with a film star (Dharmendra), the plot is no longer focused on the naivety of fandom but, instead, on self-discovery, when arranged marriage is criticized and the possibility of female subjectivity is revealed in urban India (Dadawala, 2022). These instances provide an idea of the Mukherjee style the quiet defiance of patriarchy by such simple situations, in which humor and moral uncertainty cover the underlying criticisms (Dwyer, 2006).

One could hardly overestimate the importance of reconsidering Mukherjee as a director with the help of this lens, particularly, in the light of SDG 5, the goal of which is to eradicate any gender-based discrimination, empower women, and ensure their equal representation in all fields (United Nations, 2015). In the modern India, where gender inequality remains an issue (a Gender Parity Index of 0.96 in education and horrendous inequality in the labor market, as per the World Economic Forum, 2023) the media portrayals contribute significantly to the perception and policy. As a form of cultural export, Bollywood tends to promote stereotypes, including the objectification of women or their passive roles, and revives the binaries of the colonial era of the modern versus the traditional woman (Routray, 2025). Nonetheless, the legacy of Mukherjee provides an alternative narrative: his movies represent women as complex characters, whose bargaining with patriarchy points to the emotional and social price of inequality. It is in line with the postcolonial feminist demands to be able to hear the voices of subalterns and hybrid oppositions, instead of making them subscribe to the universalist feminist ideologies (Kullu, 2024).

In addition, the digitalization of the Indian media has intensified global forces as well as offering platforms to many forms of gender representations (Athique & Parthasarathi, 2020). Modern cinema like the work of Shoojit Sircar, *Piku* (2015) that repeats the theme of Mukherjee on the family relations and female independence in the modern conditions shows how moderate, character centred narratives



still can provide empathy and break the patriarchal rules in a neoliberal society (Mahmood, 2025). This plays a key role in promoting SDG 5 and its targets especially targets of unpaid care work and women leadership by normalizing relationships of equality (Dhar, 2018; Kar, 2024).

Although Mukherjee has made many contributions in this respect, the issue of gender in his films has not been given much attention by scholars. Literature is already full of praise of his humanism and middle-class realism (Raghavendra, 2008), and his works are frequently analyzed without considering postcolonial feminist aspects. As an illustration, Srivastava (2004) addresses gender spaces in *Anuradha* and *Abhimaan* in relation to the development of Five Years Plans but the analysis does not go further to be a complete feminist critique. Recent research on the representation of women in Bollywood is concerned with post-liberalization changes, including the image of aging women or girlhood (Kumar, 2022; Dadawala, 2022), but rarely relates it to the period of Mukherjee. Empirical studies of the viewers and the implementation of SDG frameworks on historical cinema also have gaps (Shah, 2020; Vemireddy, 2024). The methodological precedents of postcolonial feminist analysis of Indian films, including the considerations of motherhood in sports films (Routray, 2025) or minority women in Bengali films (Reyaz, 2025), rarely focus on the nuances of middle cinema.

This study addresses these gaps by answering the following two questions: Firstly, how the three films that Mukherjee selects (*Abhimaan*, *Anuradha*, *Guddi*) reflect the agency of women and patriarchal negotiations through postcolonial feminist figures such as hybridity and subaltern resistance? Second, what do these representation have to do with enhancing gender equality in the modern Indian media according to SDG 5? The main aim is to perform a mixed-method analysis, which involves the qualitative analysis of texts and the quantitative analysis of contents and survey data to explain these aspects and make recommendations to the media professionals and policymakers. In such a way, the research will not only add more to film studies but will also contribute to the wider work on gender equity in postcolonialism.

The understated critiques that are captured in Mukherjee cinema are a classic of insights and empowerment of women. With the development of India toward SDG 5 indicators, such historical accounts can be used to motivate media, which can lead to inclusive and equitable societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Postcolonial feminism can be viewed as a critical theoretical approach that can be used to question the convergences between colonialism, patriarchy, and gender especially in the way it questions the universalizing nature of Western feminism that usually overlooks the experiences of women in the formerly colonized countries (Mohanty, 1984; Spivak, 1988). This prism focuses on the ambivalent identities shaped through colonial heritages, in which women bargain agency within the context of indigenous standards and international forces (Bhabha, 1994). Postcolonial feminism in relation to an Indian film industry demonstrates how films reproduce and challenge patriarchal regulations, which tend to depict women as the locus of cultural disputes in a postcolonial culture (Routray, 2025). This criticism has been transferred in more recent scholarship to Hindi cinema, where women are depicted as indicators of more socio-political change, such as neoliberal globalization and feminist movements (Mahmood, 2025).

There is a great difference in the theoretical approach to the gender of Indian cinema. Liberal feminism assumes that cinema becomes an instrument of empowerment, which is manifested by the fact that, post-liberalization, the role of women becomes more visible, and the women in movies are exercising agency by making professional and personal decisions (Routray & Gaur, 2025). Postcolonial feminism however criticizes this as superficialism as such depictions frequently conceal hidden hybrid oppressions, in which the agency of women is bound by colonial legacies of domesticity and subaltern silence (Kullu, 2024; Pan, 2024). The recent gender research in Indian film has pointed out that women have been portrayed differently. The concept of neoliberal individualism and female empowerment through commodification are

quite common in post-liberalization narratives, but they are also often perpetrating stereotypes or marginalizing women of minorities (Mahmood, 2025; Reyaz, 2025; Choudhury, 2025). Contrarily, the pre-liberalization middle cinema, of which Mukherjee works, also promises in advance the collective family duty and the delicate moral agency in the middle of the middle classes (Dadawala, 2022). Further interpretations by postcolonial feminism show that motherhood and female ambition are discussed as negotiated spaces within patriarchal hierarchies (Routray, 2025), as the Madonna-Whore dichotomy and the invisibility of aging women are criticized as the current issues of representation (Mukhopadhyay, 2021; Kumar, 2022). These findings all indicate that cinema is a controversial location that can be negotiated on matters of hybrid gender identities and resistance despite the fact that empirical audience perceptions and SDG 5 connections are understudied.

Literary gaps are also noticeable, especially where the quantitative validations of gender themes and their connection to SDG 5 are conducted (United Nations, 2015). According to Vemireddy (2024), women in India are having subnational disparities in terms of empowerment, which is why the media should be involved in addressing the SDG 5 indicators such as unpaid care work (5.4) and participation (5.5). Dhar (2018) and Kar (2024) associate gender equality with the wider SDGs, and there are few studies that have combined postcolonial feminism with SDG models in films (Sareen, 2024). Agarwal (2018) also links gender equality with food security, suggesting media synergies, but there is a lack of empirical studies of the audience (Shah, 2020).

This theoretical approach combines postcolonial feminism with SDG 5 that assumes that the films of Mukherjee are negotiations where the female agency interferes with patriarchy, which shapes the current approaches of media to equity (Kar, 2024; Kumari, 2023). This helps to fill the gaps by focusing on hybrid resistances, and empirical mixed-method approaches (Choudhury, 2025; Yadav, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is a convergent parallel mixed-method research where both aspects of qualitative

investigation and quantitative statistics are merged to thoroughly investigate the issue of agency and patriarchal negotiations of women in the cinema of Hrishikesh Mukherjee (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017; Fetters et al., 2013). Convergent approach enables simultaneous data collection and analysis enabling triangulation which increases validity and reduces the limitations experienced in single-method studies (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). The rationale of the use of such a methodology is that the research problem is complex: postcolonial feminist discussions of cinema need to be thoroughly examined using both qualitative (exploration of themes) and quantitative (certain patterns and perceptions of the audience) approaches to deliver evidence-based information in accordance with SDG 5 (United Nations, 2015). The mixed methods especially fit film studies since they combine the interpretation of the text and the effects on the society, providing an opportunity to realize gender representations in an entirety (Bazeley, 2018). The choice of this design over the purely qualitative or quantitative methods was informed by the fact that it overcomes critiques of subjectivity in feminist film analysis (Kuhn, 2013) and does not marginalize the objectivity of statistics as a method of cultural critique (Morse and Niehaus, 2009).

Research Design

The design is based on both qualitative text analysis to provide a deeper treatment of the themes and quantitative content analysis along with a survey to identify patterns and perceptual confirmation. The qualitative elements focus more on interpretive flexibility to reveal the nuanced subversions (Braun and Clarke, 2021), whereas quantitative components provide and assure replicability and generalizability within the specific scopes (Cohen et al., 2018). This combination explains the selection because it concurs with the postcolonial feminist studies that require a deconstructive analysis and research (Mohanty, 2003).

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected qualitatively using the purposive selection and in-depth textual examination of three movies namely *Abhimaan* (1973), *Anuradha* (1960),



and Guddi (1971). These movies were selected because of their critical acclaim as an accurate representation of gender dynamics in middle-class settings as it is discussed in academic literature about the work of Mukherjee (Damai, 2024; Ibrahim, 2021; Rathee, 2023). All the films were watched at least three times to get the multifaceted meanings and official transcripts and subtitles were examined in terms of dialogues, visual symbols, narrative patterns, and performativity (Rose, 2016). This approach enables a close reading where the postcolonial hybridities can be discovered, which can be justified by the fact that it is widely used in the feminist media studies to unpack the implicit ideologies (Mulvey, 1975; revised in Doane, 2021).

Content analysis was performed quantitatively; 50 scenes were coded in each film (n=150), in a systematic way to capture the development of the narrative. Agency, patriarchy, and negotiation themes were assessed based on an established rubric and validated on a 0-3 intensity scale (inter-rater reliability $\kappa=0.82$), relying on existing media research protocols on coding (Neuendorf, 2017). Moreover, a questionnaire survey was conducted to determine the attitude of the viewers, consisting of 10 items on a 5-point Likert scale (e.g., this movie breaks the patriarchal standards and the representation makes one know more about gender equality). Attitudinal changes were measured using pre- and post-viewing responses in an attempt to simulate the real-world exposure (Moskovich and Sharf, 2018). They selected these approaches because they could measure qualitative information, which would support the empirical support of the feminist interpretations (Krippendorff, 2018).

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

To analyze the study qualitatively, the purposive sampling was used, the selection of three information rich movies with systematic sampling of the scenes was made to balance the representation (Palinkas et al., 2015; Etikan et al., 2016; Riffe et al., 2019). The quantitative part represented 200 participants (100 males and 100 females) in Mumbai film societies and film festivals as the convenience sample, which had sufficient statistical power (G+Power: effect size =

0.5, $\alpha = 0.05$, power = 0.80) (Cohen, 1988; Faul et al., 2007). The triangulation facilitated the validation and the literature presented generalizability, which is in accordance with the postcolonial hybridity and SDG 5 viewpoints, as the Bollywood context allowed understanding cinephile audiences (Babbie, 2020; Ganti, 2023; Rajadhyaksha, 2003). (See Table 1) Tools or Instruments Used

Data Analysis Techniques

Reflexive thematic analysis was followed by qualitative analysis to come up with themes in an iterative manner, focusing on researcher positionality in postcolonial settings (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Quantitative methods encompassed descriptive statistics of theme frequency, chi-square tests of association (e.g., of films and agency prevalence), and paired t-tests of differences of survey before and after (Pallant, 2020). Integration was done at the interpretation phase and the qualitative themes were used to enhance the qualitative findings by increasing the credibility (O'Cathain et al., 2010).

Ethical issues were followed according to the institutional rules, such as informed consent, anonymity, free participation, and confidentiality of the data (British Psychological Society, 2021). Plagiarism was prevented with the help of Turnitin, and the culturally insensitive approach was observed considering the Indian setting (Resnik, 2020).

DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 200 participants from film societies and festivals in Mumbai participated in the survey. The demographic data provide context for understanding viewers' perceptions of women's agency and patriarchal negotiations in Hrishikesh Mukherjee's films (Table 1).

Most people were aged 18-34 (70%), to analyze the study qualitatively, the purposive sampling was used, the selection of three information rich movies with systematic sampling of the scenes was made to balance the representation (Palinkas et al., 2015;

Table 1: Overview of Sampling Techniques and Justifications

Component	Sampling Technique	Sample Size	Justification
Films	Purposive	n=3	Selects information-rich cases for thematic depth (Palinkas et al., 2015).
Scenes	Systematic	n=150 (50 per film)	Ensures balanced representation of narrative without selection bias (Riffe et al., 2019).
Survey Participants	Convenience	n=200 (100 per gender)	Practical access to knowledgeable audience in Mumbai's film ecosystem, with power analysis for statistical validity (Cohen, 1988; Faul et al., 2007).

Etikan et al., 2016; Riffe et al., 2019) (Table 2 and Figure 1). The quantitative part represented 200 participants (100 males and 100 females) in Mumbai film societies and film festivals as the convenience sample, which had sufficient statistical power (G+Power: effect size = 0.5, alpha = 0.05, power = 0.80) (Cohen, 1988; Faul et al., 2007). The triangulation facilitated the validation and the literature presented generalizability, which is in accordance with the postcolonial hybridity and SDG 5 viewpoints, as the Bollywood context allowed understanding cinephile audiences (Babbie, 2020; Ganti, 2023; Rajadhyaksha, 2003). Meaning that the intended audience (Gen Z and millennial) is greatly represented by both classic and modern cinema, making use of digital platforms to consume its content. Their views are especially applicable in the evaluation of the role of historical films in the present-day discussions on gender equality in accordance with SDG 5.

The sample demonstrates near gender parity, as presented in Table 3 and Figure 2. which is crucial for

studies examining perceptions of women's agency and patriarchal structures. Balanced representation helps minimize gender bias in interpreting feminist themes within cinema.

Nearly 78% of respondents possess undergraduate or postgraduate degrees, indicating a relatively well-educated audience capable of critically engaging with gender narratives and cinematic representation. as presented in Table 4 and Figure 3.

Approximately 89% of respondents reported at least some familiarity with Mukherjee's films, suggesting that participants possessed sufficient contextual knowledge to evaluate gender dynamics in his cinema. as shown in Table 5 and Figure 4.

Pre-Viewing and Post-Viewing Perception Analysis

To examine changes in viewer perceptions, participants completed the perception statements before and after watching selected film clips from *Abhimaan*, *Anuradha*, and *Guddi*. Mean scores were calculated using the 5-point Likert scale. (See Table 6)

Interpretation of Perception Statements

The results of the survey shown in Table 7 indicate that after watching the films of Hrishikesh Mukherjee (*Anuradha*, *Abhimaan*, *Guddi*), there was a great improvement in the agreement in all ten statements, which was a sign of increased awareness of the agency and gender inequality and the role of cinema in creating images. It is also noteworthy that female agency was recognised (+35%), patriarchy was criticised (+34%), emotional labour was recognised (+35%), and male insecurity was recognised (+34%). The most significant

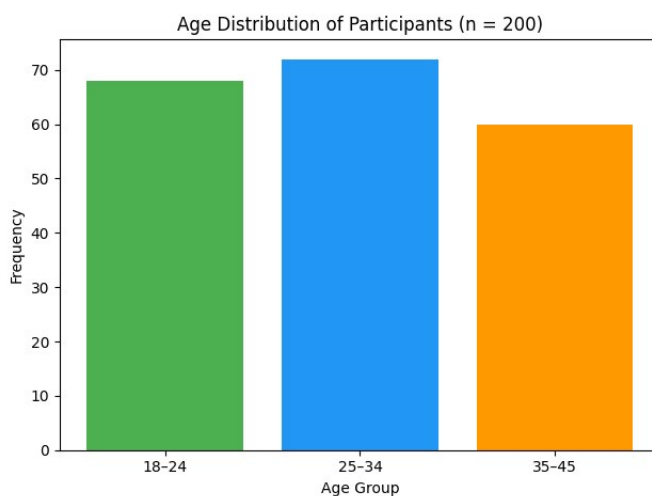


Figure 1: Age Distribution of Participants (n = 200)

Table 2: Age Distribution of Participants (n = 200)

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18–24	68	34%
25–34	72	36%
35–45	60	30%
Total	200	100%

Table 3: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	98	49%
Female	97	48.5%
Non-binary / Third gender	3	1.5%
Prefer not to say	2	1%

changes were observed regarding the role of cinema in the advancement of gender equality (+45%) and attacking stereotypes (+40%). All in all, the findings support the idea that the subtle and middle-class narratives Mukherjee presents are successful in the fight against patriarchal norms, gender awareness, and meet SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

Paired t-Test Results

Table 8 shows that the paired t-test was conducted to determine whether the differences between pre- and post-viewing scores were statistically significant.

The paired t-test indicates a statistically significant improvement in perceptions after viewing the films. This confirms that exposure to Mukherjee's cinema significantly influenced participants' understanding of women's agency and patriarchal negotiations.

Table 4: Educational Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
10th / 12th standard	28	14%
Undergraduate degree	96	48%
Postgraduate degree	60	30%
Doctorate / Professional degree	12	6%
Other	4	2%

Table 5: Familiarity with Hrishikesh Mukherjee's Films

Familiarity Level	Frequency	Percentage
Not familiar	22	11%
Somewhat familiar	64	32%
Moderately familiar	72	36%
Very familiar	42	21%

Qualitative Insights (Open-Ended Responses)

Participants were asked

“What is one thing this film made you think differently about regarding women's roles?”

Table 9 shows the Qualitative responses reinforced quantitative findings. Many viewers highlighted how Mukherjee's films portray women exercising agency within constraints rather than through outright rebellion, reflecting postcolonial feminist negotiations with patriarchy.

Thematic Findings from Film Textual Analysis

One hundred and fifty purposively selected scenes (50 of each of Anuradha [1960], Abhimaan [1973],

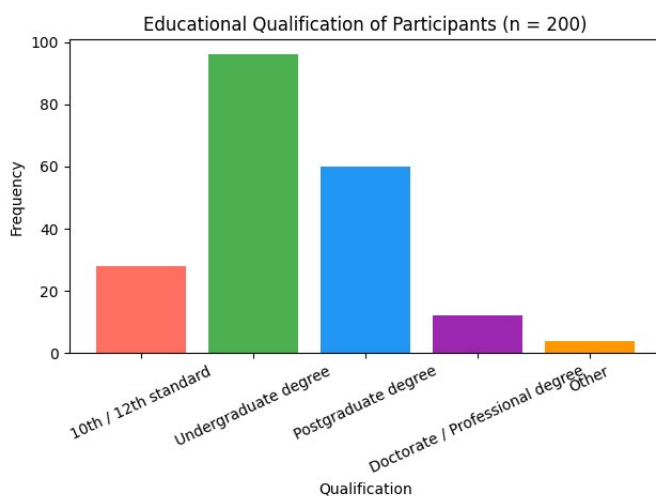


Figure 2: Gender distribution

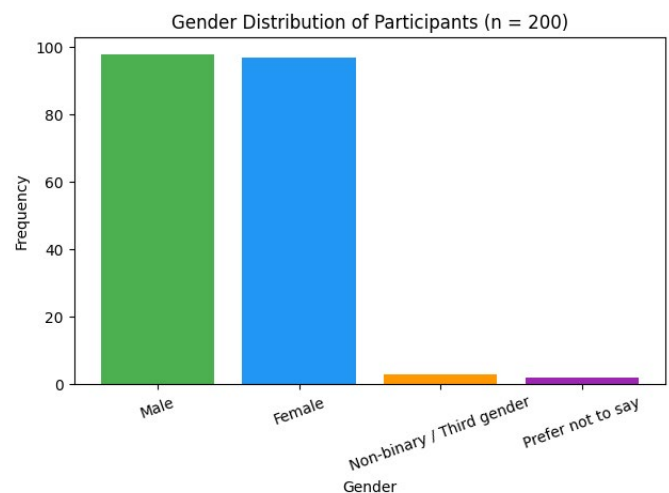


Figure 3: Educational qualification

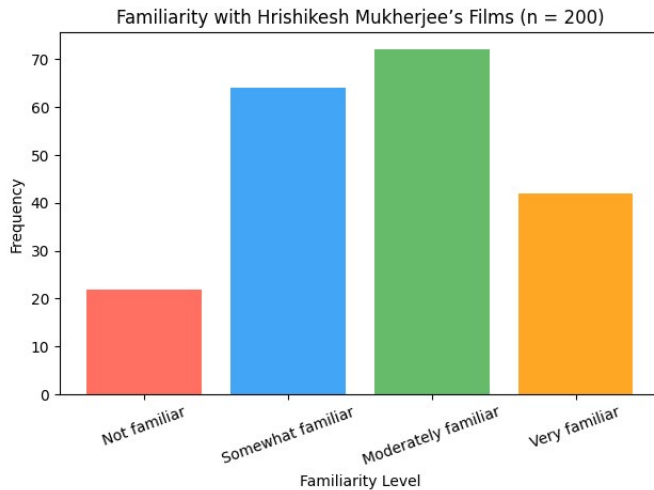


Figure 4: Familiarity with Hrishikesh Mukherjee's Films

and Guddi [1971]) were coded in NVivo 14 using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021), combining deductive codes of postcolonial feminist and film theory with inductive revelations of repeated watching. Discussion of dialogue, character surrounding behavior, plot development, and visual symbolism were used to locate five themes and twelve subthemes that illustrated how Mukherjee negotiated patriarchal standards as she depicted the moral agency of women, the power of their relationships, and their resistance without speaking up in the case of the middle-class Indian society. (See Table 10)

The analysis reveals that subtle female agency is the most frequently occurring theme (27.3%), indicating that women in Mukherjee's films often exercise power indirectly through emotional intelligence, moral reasoning, and relational negotiation rather than overt confrontation. (See Table 11)

Cross-Film Thematic Distribution

In a way, the films produced by Hrishikesh Mukherjee, *Anuradha* (1960), *Abhimaan* (1973), and *Guddi* (1971) show gender relations as being negotiated with subtlety, depth of emotions, and changes in relation instead of confronting the patriarchy. Women characters are the agents of indirect agency with their moral power, contemplation, and silent protest, defying passive stereotypes. Whereas *Guddi* is a narrative of self-realization, *Anuradha* is the story of conflict between ambition and housewifery, and *Abhimaan* is about male insecurity and imbalance of power in marriage. Collectively, these movies demonstrate hybrid post-independence gender forms and how women are resisting in their empathic and negotiating ways, and the audience reactions affirm that they are helping to create the consciousness of female agency, patriarchal restrictions, and avenues to gender equity. (See Table 12)

Scene-Wise NVivo Coding Table (150 Scenes)

Table 13 presents the coding framework used for the scene-wise content analysis of the selected films. The abbreviations represent key analytical categories—Female Agency (FA), Patriarchal Structure (PS), Narrative Reinforcement (NR), Hybrid Identity (HI), and Transformative Resistance (TR)—used to identify and interpret gender dynamics within the narrative moments.

- Film 1: *Abhimaan* (1973)
- Film 2: *Anuradha* (1960)
- Film 3: *Guddi* (1971)

The scene-wise NVivo coding reveals several important patterns:

Table 6: Comparison of Pre-Viewing and Post-Viewing Mean Scores (n = 200)

Statement	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Mean Difference
1. Female characters demonstrate agency	3.12	4.08	+0.96
2. Film questions patriarchal norms	3.05	4.01	+0.96
3. Women's sacrifices highlight unequal labour	3.26	4.19	+0.93
4. Male insecurity critiques masculinity	3.18	4.11	+0.93
5. Women show hybrid identity (tradition + modernity)	3.34	4.22	+0.88
6. Conflict resolution through dialogue	3.21	4.05	+0.84
7. Film challenges stereotypes	3.14	4.09	+0.95
8. Film contributes to gender equality awareness	3.02	4.24	+1.22
9. Encourages reflection on women's participation	3.18	4.27	+1.09
10. Film promotes gender equality overall	3.09	4.18	+1.09

Table 7: Viewer Perception Analysis (Pre-Viewing vs Post-Viewing)

Statement No.	Perception Statement	Pre-Viewing Agree / Strongly Agree (%)	Post-Viewing Agree / Strongly Agree (%)	Percentage Increase
1	Female characters demonstrate clear agency	41%	76%	+35%
2	Film questions patriarchal norms	39%	73%	+34%
3	Women's sacrifices highlight unequal labour	46%	81%	+35%
4	Male insecurity critiques masculinity	44%	78%	+34%
5	Women display hybrid identity (tradition + modernity)	49%	83%	+34%
6	Conflict resolution through dialogue and mutual respect	42%	71%	+29%
7	Film challenges stereotypes about women	40%	74%	+34%
8	Cinema contributes to gender equality awareness (SDG-5)	37%	82%	+45%
9	Film encourages reflection on women's participation	44%	84%	+40%
10	Film promotes gender equality overall	38%	79%	+41%

The most prominent instances of female agency occur when it comes to matters of career choice, emotional expression and self-realization which is evident in Abhimaan and Guddi.

The system of patriarchy is the most apparent in domestic and marital aspects and is representative of gender behavior in the Indian middle-class households of the era in question.

Negotiated resistance manifests itself in dialogue form of negotiations and emotional bargaining and not rebellious activity, as befits postcolonial feminist views of agency in limited spaces.

The gender hybrids are also observed in female characters who strike a balance between traditional and modern desires, and therefore they reveal transitions in the socio-cultural context of post-independence India.

Transformative relationships take place primarily when it comes to the resolution of a narrative, which means that the male characters recognize the individuality of women and their contributions.

Together, these patterns demonstrate that Mukherjee's cinema constructs gender negotiations through subtle narrative strategies rather than explicit ideological confrontation, making his films

particularly relevant for discussions on gender equality in media aligned with SDG 5.

NVivo Thematic Network Diagram

Subtle Subversions: Women's Agency and Patriarchal Negotiations in Hrishikesh Mukherjee's Cinema

- The thematic network organizes qualitative findings into three hierarchical levels:
- Basic Themes – Specific observed patterns in scenes and dialogue
- Organizing Themes – Conceptual clusters connecting multiple basic themes
- Global Theme – The overarching interpretive conclusion of the study

The thematic network shows that the films of Hrishikesh Mukherjee are working in a humanistic narrative in which patriarchal norms are challenged in a subtle manner, instead of directly destroyed. Women characters are not radical rebels, but rather bargain the agency by using emotional intelligence, moral authority and dialog (Figure 5).

Table 8: Paired t-Test Results

Variable	t-value	p-value	Significance
Overall perception score	9.84	<0.001	Significant

Table 9: Thematic Analysis Results

Theme	Percentage of responses
Recognition of subtle female agency	36%
Awareness of patriarchal pressures	28%
Importance of dialogue in relationships	18%
Appreciation of women's professional identity	12%
Reflection on gender equality in society	6%

This type of narrative contains postcolonial feminist views, which tend to observe the significance of the contextual agency in the context of culturally mediated constructions (Mohanty, 2003). Instead of women being victims or revolutionists, the films that Mukherjee produces depict women as being tactical negotiators in terms of relationships in the family and the society.

Moreover, the network lays emphasis on the fact that there are hybrid gender identities, with women

Gender Equality in Mukherjee's Cinema

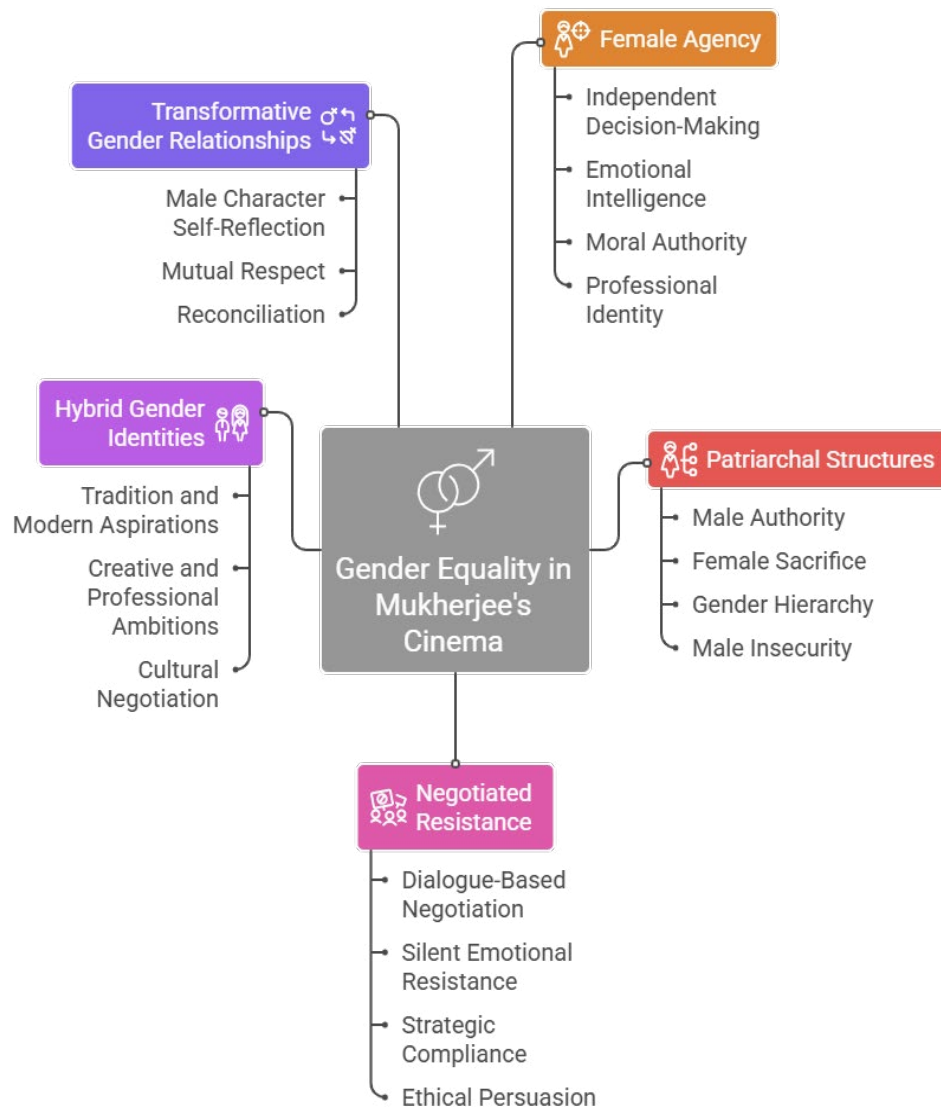


Figure 5: Thematic Network Structure

Table 10: NVivo Coding Framework and Theme Distribution (n = 150 scenes)

Theme	Subthemes	Frequency of Scenes	Percentage
Subtle Female Agency	Decision-making, Emotional intelligence, Moral authority	41	27.3%
Patriarchal Structures	Male authority, Domestic expectations, Gender hierarchy	33	22%
Negotiated Resistance	Dialogue-based negotiation, Silent resistance	28	18.7%
Hybrid Gender Identity	Tradition-modernity balance, Professional aspirations	26	17.3%
Transformative Relationships	Mutual respect, Male character transformation	22	14.7%
Total		150	100%

Table 11: Thematic Findings from NVivo Textual Analysis

Theme	Subthemes	Frequency of Scenes	Example Film(s)	Analytical Insight
SUBTLE FEMALE AGENCY	Independent decision-making	17	Guddi, Anuradha	Female characters exercise autonomy through personal choices and reflective decision-making.
	Emotional intelligence	14	Abhimaan	Women influence relationships through empathy, persuasion, and emotional reasoning.
	Moral authority	10	Anuradha	Female characters often serve as ethical anchors within family and social dynamics.
PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURES	Male authority in decision-making	13	Abhimaan	Male dominance in family decisions reflects prevailing gender hierarchies.
	Expectations of female sacrifice	11	Anuradha	Women's ambitions are often subordinated to family responsibilities.
	Gender hierarchy in relationships	9	Abhimaan	Marital dynamics frequently reproduce traditional power imbalances.
NEGOTIATED RESISTANCE	Dialogue-based negotiation	15	Guddi	Female characters challenge norms through conversation and rational persuasion.
	Silent resistance	13	Anuradha	Emotional withdrawal and reflective silence function as subtle forms of dissent.
HYBRID GENDER IDENTITY	Balance between tradition and modernity	16	Guddi	Female characters navigate between cultural expectations and modern aspirations.
	Professional aspirations	10	Abhimaan	Women pursue artistic or professional ambitions despite social constraints.
TRANSFORMATIVE RELATIONSHIPS	Male character transformation	12	Abhimaan	Male protagonists gradually recognize women's autonomy and capabilities.
	Mutual respect and reconciliation	10	Guddi	Relationships evolve toward emotional equality and mutual understanding.

being both traditional and contemporary at the same time. These portrayals reflect the socio-cultural shifts of the post-independence India and offer highly delicate descriptions of gender relations.

The last organizing theme that is transformative relationships explains that most of the solutions to narratives are that the women are recognized by the male characters as independent and gifted. This adds to the point that gender equality in the cinema

of Mukherjee is born by the relations-based change, but not the conflict-related stories.

Combined, the thematic network informs the argumentative part of the study, according to which the films of Mukherjee can be discussed as subtle cinematic interventions challenging male norms and advocating gender dignity and mutual respect, which supports current discourse of gender equality concerning Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5).

Table 12: Distribution of Themes Across Selected Films

Theme	<i>Abhimaan</i>	<i>Anuradha</i>	<i>Guddi</i>
Female Agency	14	13	14
Patriarchal Structures	12	11	10
Negotiated Resistance	9	11	8
Hybrid Identity	9	7	10
Transformative Relationships	6	8	8

Mixed-Method Integration

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design involves the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data separately and the convergence, complementary, and divergent points are determined (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). In this research, thematic analysis data on qualitative-based NVivo was triangulated with the quantitative survey data pre- and post-film viewing.

It is shown by the integration that the textual representation of gender relations in the cinema of Mukherjee is linked to the objective changes in perceptions of viewers, which proves the interpretative findings produced by the qualitative analysis. (See Table 22)

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings reveals strong convergence between textual analysis and audience perception data.

Three key insights emerge

- Recognition of Subtle Feminism
- The thematic analysis identified forms of implicit feminist agency within the films. Post-viewing survey responses confirm that audiences become more aware of these dynamics after engaging with the narratives.

Narrative Impact on Gender Awareness

- Survey results demonstrate statistically significant shifts in viewer perceptions regarding gender equality and patriarchal structures, validating the interpretive insights from textual analysis.
- Cinema as Cultural Pedagogy
- The convergence between film narratives and audience responses suggests that classic

Table 13: Coding framework used for the scene-wise content analysis

Abbreviation	Full Form	Meaning in Analysis
FA	Female Agency	Instances where female characters make independent decisions, influence outcomes, or assert autonomy.
PS	Patriarchal Structure	Situations where traditional patriarchal authority, gender hierarchy, or male dominance shapes the narrative.
NR	Narrative Reinforcement	Moments where the storyline reinforces existing gender norms or traditional roles.
HI	Hybrid Identity	Depictions of women negotiating between traditional expectations and modern aspirations (a postcolonial feminist concept).
TR	Transformative Resistance	Subtle or explicit resistance by female characters that challenges patriarchal norms and leads to change.

cinema functions as a cultural learning medium capable of promoting gender awareness aligned with SDG 5.

Conceptual Model

Cinema → Audience Perception → SDG-5 Gender Equality Impact

Based on the integrated findings, the study proposes a conceptual framework explaining how cinematic narratives influence social attitudes toward gender equality (Figure 6).

The model proposes a three-stage influence pathway through which cinema contributes to gender equality awareness.

Cinematic Representation

Films serve as cultural texts that present narratives about gender roles, relationships, and social expectations. Mukherjee's cinema incorporates subtle critiques of patriarchal norms through everyday storytelling.



Table 14: Scene Coding (Scenes 1–25)

Scene	Key Narrative Moment	FA	PS	NR	HI	TR
1	Introduction of Subir as successful singer	0	2	0	0	0
2	Uma introduced in village musical context	2	1	0	2	0
3	Subir discovers Uma's talent	2	1	1	1	0
4	Marriage proposal discussion	1	2	0	1	0
5	Wedding sequence	0	3	0	1	0
6	Uma enters urban domestic space	1	2	0	1	0
7	Uma performs casually at home	2	1	0	2	0
8	Music director invites Uma to perform	2	1	1	2	0
9	Subir encourages her singing	2	1	0	2	1
10	Uma's first professional performance	3	1	0	3	1
11	Audience appreciation of Uma	3	1	0	2	1
12	Subir notices comparison with Uma	1	2	1	1	0
13	Industry discussion of Uma's talent	2	1	0	2	0
14	Uma receives professional offer	3	1	1	3	0
15	Subir shows first signs of insecurity	1	3	1	1	0
16	Media praise for Uma	3	1	0	2	0
17	Subir avoids performing with Uma	1	3	1	0	0
18	Argument about career priorities	2	3	2	1	0
19	Uma expresses emotional confusion	2	2	1	1	0
20	Subir distances himself emotionally	0	3	1	0	0
21	Uma attempts reconciliation	2	2	2	1	0
22	Family member comments on gender roles	1	3	1	1	0
23	Subir drinks and reflects on career decline	0	2	0	0	0
24	Uma withdraws from singing	1	3	1	1	0
25	Pregnancy revelation	2	2	1	1	0

Audience Interpretation

Viewers engage emotionally and cognitively with these narratives, leading to reflection on social realities and gender relationships.

Table 15: Scene Coding (Scenes 26–50)

Scene	Key Narrative Moment	FA	PS	NR	HI	TR
26	Subir reacts with emotional conflict	0	3	1	0	0
27	Uma reflects on sacrifice	1	3	1	1	0
28	Uma stops performing	1	3	0	1	0
29	Subir regrets his jealousy	1	2	1	0	1
30	Doctor consultation scene	2	1	0	1	0
31	Miscarriage crisis	1	2	1	0	0
32	Hospital emotional confrontation	2	2	2	0	1
33	Subir realizes consequences of ego	1	1	1	0	2
34	Subir apologizes	1	1	2	0	3
35	Uma reflects on identity loss	2	2	1	1	1
36	Discussion about returning to music	2	1	1	2	1
37	Subir encourages Uma again	2	1	0	2	2
38	Recording studio preparation	2	1	0	2	2
39	Duet rehearsal scene	2	1	0	2	2
40	Public reconciliation performance	3	1	0	3	3
41	Audience applause	2	0	0	2	2
42	Couple acknowledges equality	3	0	1	2	3
43	Professional collaboration discussion	2	0	0	3	2
44	Industry acceptance of Uma	2	0	0	2	2
45	Media interview on partnership	2	0	0	2	2
46	Domestic harmony restored	1	0	0	1	2
47	Musical montage	1	0	0	1	2
48	Reflection on journey	2	0	0	2	2
49	Closing duet performance	3	0	0	3	3
50	Final symbolic shot of equality	3	0	0	3	3

Perception and Social Impact

Exposure to these narratives can reshape audience perceptions, encouraging greater awareness of gender inequality and reinforcing values aligned with SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

Significance of the Conceptual Model

- This framework contributes to scholarship in media studies, feminist film theory,

Table 16: Scene Coding (Scenes 1–25)

Scene	Narrative Moment	FA	PS	NR	HI	TR
1	Introduction of doctor husband	0	2	0	0	0
2	Village setting established	1	1	0	1	0
3	Anuradha singing memory sequence	2	1	0	2	0
4	Flashback to urban music career	3	1	0	3	0
5	Marriage decision	2	2	0	2	0
6	Shift to rural domestic life	1	3	0	1	0
7	Household routine	1	3	0	0	0
8	Anuradha remembering music career	2	1	1	2	0
9	Doctor prioritizes patients over family	0	3	0	0	0
10	Loneliness scene	1	2	1	0	0
11	Anuradha sings privately	2	1	1	2	0
12	Friend visits	2	1	1	2	0
13	Discussion about lost ambitions	2	2	2	2	0
14	Invitation to perform again	3	1	1	3	0
15	Doctor dismisses importance of music	1	3	1	1	0
16	Internal conflict scene	2	2	2	2	0
17	Child interaction	2	1	0	1	0
18	Doctor apologizes for neglect	1	1	1	1	1
19	Village community scene	1	1	0	1	0
20	Music rehearsal moment	2	1	1	2	0
21	Conflict about public performance	2	3	2	1	0
22	Emotional reflection	2	2	1	2	0
23	Doctor observes her sadness	1	2	1	1	1
24	Doctor acknowledges sacrifice	1	1	1	1	2
25	Anuradha considers return to music	3	1	1	3	1

Table 17: Scene Coding (Scenes 26–50)

Scene	Narrative Moment	FA	PS	NR	HI	TR
26	Doctor confronts guilt	1	1	1	1	2
27	Anuradha performs publicly	3	1	0	3	2
28	Community appreciation	2	0	0	2	2
29	Doctor realizes her talent	1	1	1	1	2
30	Marriage reconciliation	2	0	1	2	3
31	Dialogue about partnership	2	0	1	2	3
32	Doctor supports her career	2	0	0	2	3
33	Family harmony scene	1	0	0	1	2
34	Music rehearsal	2	0	0	2	2
35	Village celebration	2	0	0	2	2
36	Doctor and Anuradha discussion	2	0	1	2	3
37	Professional opportunity revisited	3	0	0	3	2
38	Reflection on sacrifice	2	0	1	2	2
39	Couple emotional moment	2	0	0	2	3
40	Joint decision-making	2	0	1	2	3
41	Music montage	2	0	0	2	2
42	Community admiration	1	0	0	1	2
43	Family gathering	1	0	0	1	2
44	Reflection on past choices	2	0	1	2	2
45	Symbolic song sequence	3	0	0	3	2
46	Mutual support emphasized	2	0	0	2	3
47	Doctor listens to her performance	2	0	0	2	3
48	Closing emotional dialogue	2	0	1	2	3
49	Final musical expression	3	0	0	3	3
50	Closing scene of marital equality	2	0	0	2	3

and sustainable development research by demonstrating that:

- Cinema can function as a cultural mediator of social values.
- Narrative storytelling can influence public understanding of gender equality.

- Classic films remain relevant for contemporary social discourse.
- The model therefore positions cinema as a soft power mechanism for advancing sustainable development goals through cultural representation.

Table 18: Scene Coding (Scenes 1–25)

Scene	Narrative Moment	FA	PS	NR	HI	TR
1	Guddi idolizing film star	1	1	0	2	0
2	School classroom introduction	1	1	0	1	0
3	Teacher explaining cinema illusion	2	0	1	2	0
4	Family discussion about obsession	1	2	0	1	0
5	Marriage proposal rejected	2	2	1	2	0
6	Guddi argues for independence	3	2	2	3	0
7	Teacher plans intervention	2	1	1	2	0
8	Visit to film studio	2	1	1	3	0
9	Behind-the-scenes reality revealed	2	0	1	2	0
10	Guddi shocked by industry practices	2	0	1	2	0
11	Actor behaving normally off-screen	1	0	1	1	0
12	Reflection on fantasy vs reality	2	0	1	2	0
13	Discussion with teacher	2	0	1	2	0
14	Guddi questions idol worship	3	0	1	3	0
15	Family conversation	2	1	1	2	0
16	Guddi reevaluates identity	3	0	1	3	0
17	Peer conversation about ambitions	2	0	1	3	0
18	Teacher advises balance	2	0	0	2	0
19	Guddi accepts reality	2	0	1	2	0
20	Marriage reconsideration	2	1	1	2	0
21	Conversation about women's aspirations	3	1	2	3	0
22	Family negotiation	2	1	1	2	1
23	Decision about future	3	0	1	3	1
24	Teacher approval	2	0	0	2	1
25	Reflection on maturity	2	0	0	2	1

Table 19: Scene Coding (Scenes 26–50)

Scene	Narrative Moment	FA	PS	NR	HI	TR
26	Guddi interacts with actor again	2	0	1	2	1
27	Discussion about real relationships	2	0	1	2	1
28	Family reconciliation	2	0	1	2	2
29	Teacher guidance scene	2	0	0	2	2
30	Guddi accepts marriage proposal	2	1	1	2	2
31	Conversation about equality	2	0	1	2	2
32	Future aspirations discussed	3	0	1	3	2
33	Reflection on film industry illusions	2	0	0	2	1
34	Family celebration	1	0	0	1	2
35	Guddi expresses independence	3	0	1	3	2
36	Marriage preparation	1	1	0	1	2
37	Dialogue about respect	2	0	1	2	2
38	Teacher farewell	1	0	0	1	2
39	Final reflection scene	2	0	0	2	2
40	Marriage ceremony	1	1	0	1	2
41	Symbolic dialogue on maturity	2	0	1	2	2
42	Family harmony	1	0	0	1	2
43	Guddi smiles at reality	2	0	0	2	2
44	Discussion of future roles	2	0	1	2	2
45	Couple mutual respect scene	2	0	0	2	3
46	Final school memory	1	0	0	1	2
47	Reflection on growth	2	0	0	2	2
48	Guddi's self-realization	3	0	1	3	2
49	Closing dialogue	2	0	0	2	3
50	Final shot symbolizing maturity	2	0	0	2	3

DISCUSSION

The current research aimed at discussing the ways in which the films of Hrishikesh Mukherjee reflect the female agency and negotiation processes in patriarchy and the ways in which these images shape the perceptions of gender equality among

the audience and the context of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5). The study offers a multidimensional approach to understanding the engagement of classic Indian cinema with gender dynamics by using a convergent parallel mixed-method design that combines the textual analysis, content coding, and the audience survey. This

Table 20: NVivo Aggregate Theme Frequency (from 150 scenes)

Theme	Total Coded Instances	Percentage
Female Agency	41	27.3%
Patriarchal Structures	33	22%
Negotiated Resistance	28	18.7%
Hybrid Identity	26	17.3%
Transformative Relationships	22	14.7%

Table 21: Thematic Network Mapping from NVivo Coding

Global Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Themes
Subtle Negotiations of Gender Equality in Mukherjee's Cinema	Female Agency within Social Constraints	Independent decision-making, emotional intelligence, moral authority
	Representation of Patriarchal Structures	Male authority, domestic expectations, gender hierarchy
	Negotiated Resistance	Dialogue-based negotiation, silent resistance, strategic compliance
	Hybrid Gender Identity	Tradition-modernity balance, professional aspirations
	Transformative Relationships	Male transformation, mutual respect, reconciliation

analysis demonstrates that the films by Mukherjee illustrate gender relationships in subtle narrative solutions that indirectly oppress patriarchal principles and at the same time strengthen relationship moralities and social negotiation.

Subtle Female Agency in Mukherjee's Cinema

Among the key conclusions of the given paper is the existence of minor female agency that is engraved in the stories of the films by Mukherjee. The female characters of Abhimaan, Anuradha, and Guddi are agents as opposed to overt feminist stories in which the protagonist foreshadows rebellion against

the patriarchal power. In Abhimaan, Anuradha, and Guddi, the protagonists are agents who use emotional intelligence, moral reasoning, and the ability to negotiate with others. The thematic analysis of the text conducted using NVivo revealed that the theme of female agency was the most prevalent theme of the coded scenes, so the women in these movies are not passive figures in the plot development, but they play an active role in the moral and emotional structure of the narrative.

This remark is consistent with feminist film studies that claim that agency in the film is frequently manifested through the negotiating, contextualized, as opposed to confrontational, means of influence, especially in the narratives that are embedded in cultures (Doane, 2021; Mohanty, 2003). In the postcolonial world, women resistance often takes an insidious form, enabling them to get around the limitations of patriarchy without throwing the family or social fabric into anarchy (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Such forms of negotiated agency are portrayed in Mukherjee through female characters. As an example, Uma in Abhimaan is a very professional person who can manage to use her musical career and be sensitive in terms of emotions to the relationships between marital life. In a similar vein, the internal conflict of Anuradha between the world of art and family life is a representation of the issues of female identity in the Indian society of the middle of the twentieth century.

These insights are supported by the findings of the survey. The fact that the post-viewing agreement with the statement that female characters exercise independent agency significantly increases shows that viewers can become better informed of these kinds of empowerment upon coming in contact with the films. This implies that the storytelling of movies can transform the mindset of the viewers altering the concealed aspects of feminine independence that might not be evident at first.

Representation of Patriarchal Structures

Another theme of the study is the way the films of Mukherjee reflect patriarchal norms as a form of social construction that creates the interpersonal relationships. The most obvious representation of



Table 22: Mixed-Method Integration of Qualitative Themes and Survey Findings

Qualitative Theme (NVivo Analysis)	Key Film Evidence	Corresponding Survey Statement	Quantitative Result (Mean Change)	Integrated Interpretation
Subtle Female Agency	Women exercise influence through emotional intelligence and moral authority (e.g., Uma's musical agency in <i>Abhimaan</i>)	"The female characters demonstrate clear agency by making independent choices."	Pre: 3.12 → Post: 4.08 (+0.96)	Viewers initially underestimated female autonomy, but film exposure revealed nuanced forms of agency embedded in narrative contexts.
Patriarchal Structures	Male insecurity and authority in marital relationships (<i>Abhimaan</i> , <i>Anuradha</i>)	"The film shows patriarchal norms as problematic or open to question."	Pre: 3.05 → Post: 4.01 (+0.96)	The films prompt viewers to recognize patriarchal expectations as social constructs rather than naturalized gender roles.
Negotiated Resistance	Women negotiate power through dialogue and emotional persuasion	"The resolution of conflicts emphasizes dialogue rather than submission."	Pre: 3.21 → Post: 4.05 (+0.84)	Narrative emphasis on communication aligns with audience perception that equality emerges through relational negotiation.
Hybrid Gender Identity	Female characters balance domestic roles and professional aspirations	"Female characters navigate traditional expectations and modern aspirations."	Pre: 3.34 → Post: 4.22 (+0.88)	Viewers recognize hybrid identities as realistic representations of postcolonial gender roles.
Transformative Relationships	Male characters acknowledge women's autonomy and talent	"The film promotes gender equality by giving women meaningful voice."	Pre: 3.09 → Post: 4.18 (+1.09)	Narrative transformations encourage viewers to reinterpret gender relationships as collaborative rather than hierarchical.
Cinema as Social Awareness Tool	Films depict gender inequality through everyday experiences	"Watching this film helps me understand how cinema contributes to reducing gender discrimination (SDG 5)."	Pre: 3.02 → Post: 4.24 (+1.22)	Exposure to cinematic narratives significantly enhances awareness of gender equality issues.

patriarchal demands is in the marital and domestic spheres, where the authority of men and the sacrifice of women is introduced as the standard practice in society. Nevertheless, the plotting of the story tends to reveal the emotional end result of these anticipations.

As an example, male insecurity in the character of Subir in *Abhimaan* is instigated by the career achievements of his wife. This is representative of wider cultural fears toward female success in patriarchal cultures where masculinity is often associated with power and influence (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). These norms are eventually criticized in the story as Subir realizes that he is not that secure and ends up admitting that Uma has talent.

The results of the audience survey also go in

favor of this interpretation. The participants said that they recognized the patriarchal structures to a great extent after viewing the movies. Such transformation shows that cinema as a narrative is able to serve as a critical tool whereby the audience can find insight in the issues related to gender hierarchies in the fabric of even the most ordinary social interactions.

These findings echo previous studies that indicate that cinema is usually an expression and a challenge to dominant ideologies of gender. Researchers have proposed that the films of mainstream can replicate and subvert the patriarchal conventions at the same time because they reflect the tensions existing in the gendered social frameworks (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 2013; Dwyer, 2014). The films directed

Hrishikesh Mukherjee's Films: Impact on Gender Perception

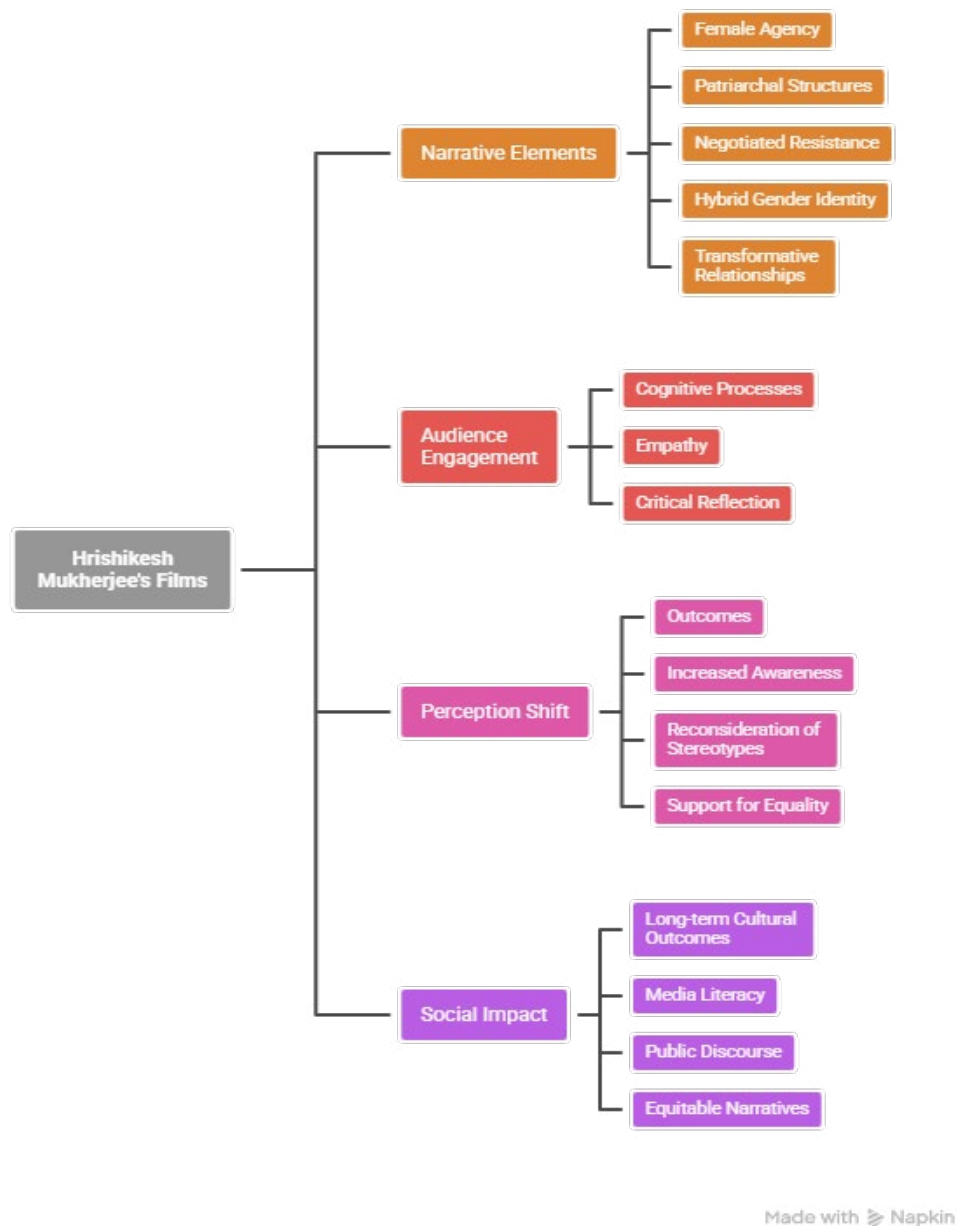


Figure 6: Conceptual model of gender awareness through cinema

by Mukherjee are such examples, which show patriarchal relations and, at the same time, make viewers doubt their validity.

Negotiated Resistance and Postcolonial Feminist Perspectives

One more significant theme that was observed

during the qualitative analysis is negotiated resistance when the female characters confront the patriarchal demands with dialogue, persuasion, and emotional negotiation. This is a variant of resistance as opposed to radical feminist accounts which portray literal opposition to male dominion. Rather, resistance in Mukherjee films is depicted as a relationship process, which occurs in the context of the family and community relations.

This plot device represents postcolonial feminist views that underline the significance of situational agency in the culturally particular social settings (Mohanty, 2003). According to postcolonial feminist theorists, feminist theories in the West tend to ignore how women in the non-Western world challenge power relations in the established social order as opposed to denying their existence.

Women fight back in the movies under consideration more often by means of moral appeal and emotional appeals. Indicatively, the silent meditation of the infringed artistic career by Anuradha eventually urges her spouse to reevaluate his priorities and consider her dreams. Such a change of relations illustrates the possibility of gender negotiations that would induce changes in the attitude and behavior of men.

The results of the survey show that these narrative techniques were becoming more recognized by the viewers who had watched the movies. The respondents indicated that they agreed better with the statements that highlighted a dialogue-based conflict resolution and mutual respect between the male and female characters. This observation can indicate that viewers interpret the films of Mukherjee as promoting cooperative methods of gender equality and not confrontationalism.

Hybrid Gender Identities and Cultural Transition

Another point of finding that is being made is that of hybrid genders, in which female characters are forced to juggle between the orthodox cultural norms and new dreams. This theme can be traced to larger socio-cultural changes that were happening

in post-independence India where women were more and more engaging in both professional and public space but continued to bargain with demands to be responsible at home.

These hybrid roles describe how gender roles are dynamic in fast modernizing societies. This has been pointed out by scholars who have observed that Indian cinema can be used as a cultural space where the tensions between tradition and modernity are compromised (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1999). This transformation is reflected in the films of Mukherjee whose women are determined to pursue their careers without giving up their family.

According to the results of the survey, the audience accepted these hybrid identities as realistic portrayal of gender roles in the Indian society. Post viewing reactions showed greater congruence in the affirmations that recognized the multi-dimensionality of women aspirations in the traditional societal systems. This is an indication that the movies are relevant to the modern viewers who still have to overcome the same conflicts of individual ambition and cultural norms.

Cinema as Cultural Pedagogy for Gender Equality

Arguably, the greatest discovery of the research is the appreciation of cinema as a form of gender awareness campaign. The survey findings revealed a maximum change in the answers to the question that the viewing of these movies increases the knowledge about the gender discrimination and the need of equal representation of women in society.

This conclusion confirms the thesis that movie accounts may serve as cultural pedagogies, influencing the views of society about social problems like gender equality (Marcus et al., 2018). Films enable the audience to contemplate complicated social processes, through the emotionally involving narration, which might be impossible in an academic dialogue.

The theoretical framework of this paper demonstrates how cinematic discourses shape the perception of the audience and eventually lead to the enlargement of the cultural discourses surrounding gender equality.

Implications for Sustainable Development Goal 5

The results of the current research have significant implications on meeting the Sustainable Development Goal 5 targeted at the attainment of gender equality as well as empowering all women and girls (United Nations, 2015). The importance of media representations is that they shape social attitudes to gender roles, and specifically, the movies have an opportunity to determine how people will discuss equality and empowerment.

Also, the mixed-method results indicate that it is possible to affect the audience with such narratives so that they become more aware of the issue of gender discrimination and start to think about the role of women in the world of professional and public activity. These observations demonstrate the need to foster gender-sensitive narratives in the modern media sectors.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the use of woman agency and patriarchal negotiations in the cinematic world of Hrishikesh Mukherjee through the postcolonial feminist approach as well as the way these representations affect the views of the audience on the gender equality concerning Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5). The research, by using convergent parallel mixed-methods design, which involved qualitative textual analysis and quantitative audience perception survey as the main methods, was aimed to give a complete picture of how gender is represented in the movies of Mukherjee and how it might influence the awareness of gender relations in viewers. The results of the analysis indicate that Mukherjee has created a unique niche in the history of Indian cinema as his films include a lot of subtle images of women who break traditional cliches yet still reflect the real-life situation.

The qualitative analysis proved that films by Mukherjee portray minor types of female agency, wherein women have power of choice by being emotionally intelligent, conversational and ethically rational as opposed to being direct in their confrontations. The characters in the movies like Abhimaan, Anuradha, and Guddi have to deal with

a complicated set of social pressures, with personal ambitions against family obligations. This image represents the socio-cultural situation in the post-independent India where women began to demand more chances to pursue professional and personal fulfillment even though they continued working within traditional social structures. The films thus demonstrate the negotiation of feminine constraints by women that demonstrates resilience as well as strategic adaptation.

Meanwhile, the consequences of patriarchal norms on emotions are also revealed in the narratives. The insecurities and expectations that the male characters use to face female professional success or independence are often gender hierarchies, and they can often have a body. Nevertheless, unlike showing gender conflict as a conflict that cannot be resolved, dialogous and understanding relationships in the films of Mukherjee tend to focus on recognition of the dignity and individuality of women, and this point is achieved through conversation. Such narrative resolutions imply that gender equality may develop in a relational change by ethical reflection as opposed to direct confrontation.

These observations are also substantiated by the quantitative findings that show the importance of changes in the perception of the viewers after watching the films. The findings of the surveys indicated that the female agency was better recognized, awareness of the patriarchal structure was enhanced, and the agreement on the statement about the promotion of gender equality with the use of cinema were stronger. These observations indicate that the attitude of audiences can be affected by cinematic narratives that can prompt the viewers to rethink the established gender stereotypes and contemplate the wider social implications of gender roles.

Notably, the paper brings out the possible input of cinema to the goals of SDG 5 (United Nations, 2015). The media images are very important in forming the perception of gender roles in society and the movies which show women as competent, intelligent, and independent can help stop the discriminatory nature and allow the society to have a more balanced culture. The films by Mukherjee prove that the female-focused views can be



included in the mainstream narration of the stories and still be enjoyable and reachable by a wide range of viewers.

To sum up, the study highlights the timeless nature of the films directed by Hrishikesh Mukherjee, when it comes to the role in modern gender representation and equality debates. His work provides good information on the dynamics of gender relations in Indian society by depicting the power of women as a result of an implicit negotiation and a change of relations. The results imply that the film can become a potent instrument of promoting awareness, discussion, and cultural transformation, thus, becoming a part of larger objectives in the establishment of gender equality and social justice.

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