

***Seeing like a Feminist: Representations of Societal Realities in Women-centric  
Bollywood Films***

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**Abstract**

One of the most notable contemporary trends in Indian cinema, the genre of women oriented films seen through a feminist lens, has gained both critical acclaim and sensitive audience reception for its experimentations with form and cinematic representations of societal realities, especially women's realities in its subject matter. The proposed paper is based on readings of such women centric, gender sensitive Bollywood films like *Tarpan*, *Matrubhoomi* or *The Dirty Picture* that foreground the harsh realities of life faced by women in the contemporary patriarchal Indian society, a society still plagued by evils like female foeticide/infanticide, gender imbalance, dowry deaths, child marriage, bride buying, rape, prostitution, casteism or communalism, issues that are glossed over, negated, distorted or denied representation to preserve the entertaining, escapist nature of the melodramatic, indeed addictive, panacea that the high-on-star-quotient mainstream Bollywood films, the so-called 'masala' movies, offer to the lay Indian masses. It would also focus on new age cinemas like *Paheli* or *English Vinglish*, that, though apparently following the mainstream conventions nevertheless deal with the different complex choices that life throws up before women, choices that force the women to break out from the stereotypical representation of women and embrace new complex choices in life. The active agency attributed to women in these films humanize the 'fantastic' *filmi* representations of women as either exemplarily good or baser than the basest—the eternal feminine, or the power hungry sex siren and present the psychosocial complexities that in reality inform the lives of real and/or reel women.

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One of the most notable contemporary trends in Indian cinema, the genre of women oriented cinema seen through a feminist lens and structured around pressing and sensitive gender issues, has gained both critical acclaim and sensitive audience reception. Films like *Tarpan* (The Absolution) have the potential to posit an alternative to traditional Bollywood films as they try to make depictions of women more true-to-life in narrative cinema.

### **The Well of Memories: Tarpan**

*Tarpan* (1995) by K Bikram Singh can be counted as a pioneering effort to showcase, in an innovative cinematic genre, the evils of a caste and class based gender discriminatory patriarchal society. Persisting gender inequalities in a reigning patriarchy, existing cultural beliefs and practices permeate into almost every aspect of the women's social and cultural environment and value systems. *Tarpan* presents the quest for a mythical well of memories, with supposed medicinal and restorative properties hidden in its waters, that needs to be cleansed, all its filth, accumulated over ages, needs to be removed so that the life giving, restorative, magical water spouts forth—it is this fresh water that can prove rejuvenative for a strange malady that plagues all seven year old girls in a particular village in Rajasthan who live emaciated lives and die long, lingering and painful deaths. Forgotten and abandoned, the well remains hidden, lost to the villagers. The only clue to the now forgotten Jogia well can be found in a crude mural preserved by an old woman which depicts horrifying scenes of gendered violence. The mural is dominated by a well in which women and children are being thrown ruthlessly by demonic creatures. A long and hidden tunnel into the past where perhaps ghosts of the village past reside, the Jogia well is not in any specific time or place. In the process of cleaning this well—the Jogiya Kuya—that memories of class, caste, sexual, physical and psychological exploitation and domestic abuse are resuscitated and sincere confessions to the crimes are needed to condone the deeds. In this process *Tarpan* in a way employs the process of re-memory deployed by Toni Morrison in *Beloved* (1987). To 're-member' forcefully 'disremembered' apparently forgotten traumatic events through the very act of the person's re-memory not only acknowledges the trauma but also validates the pain suffered by countless victims of oppressions and discriminations. As the long repressed memories resurface, the present is haunted by an irrevocable past; and as the sinners confess, an absolution as well as an ablution take place as it were — reminding the audience of a true tarpan, the ritual worship appeasing the memories of dead ancestors, and life is restored and regenerated. Seen as a pioneering feminist film, *Tarpan* makes use of a gendered subject matter, a non-linear story line and a distinct theatrical form that puts the performative aspect to the fore that brings out the surreal, representational nature of cinema as performance and therefore challenges mainstream ideological expectations along with basic codes and conventions of cinematic representation, and therefore creates an alienating effect of distancing or estranging the audience. Deploying the strategy of a mythic quest of a father for a regenerative water that would rejuvenate his daughter by restoring her health, *Tarpan* presents a series of inter-related narratives in the form of four stories which initially appear as individual incidents of personal conflicts between members of different communities, classes and castes that eventually merge into a single narrative of a gendered communal holocaust perpetrated by the uppercaste landlords over the lower caste minions, the disremembered memories of which need to be absolved before life can be restored to the hapless girl children of the community.

## **The Birth of a New Nation: *Matrubhoomi***

It is a belief wide spread in India that the birth of the girl child is the outcome of a *shraap* or curse from the gods. The dominant religions as well as the kinship structure prevalent here lays great value on reproduction in general and sons in particular; girls are considered a lifelong liability as they carry off a large part of the family's assets as dowry at the time of their marriage gnawing at the family's economic well being. The condition of women in India, where some parts of it notorious for rampant female foeticide and infanticide when newly born girls are smothered in a tub of milk to evade the associated sin or *paap* and resultantly a terribly skewed sex ratio, can be well gauzed through the countless reports of gender discriminations that make the headlines daily. Fighting gender disparity is a big challenge in India with its socially sanctioned traditions of dowry and dowry-deaths, its complacent permissiveness of wife beating and domestic abuse in the form of wife swapping, forced polygamy/polyandry and child-marriage in some communities. The social crisis faced by the eleven states in India with an alarmingly adverse sex ratio that has created a terrible scarcity of girls, resulting in the revival of some traditional evil social customs, like inbreeding, wife swapping, bride bazaar, wife renting/buying, prostitution to name only a few, points to the grim reality facing Indian women. inspired by a magazine report about a village in Gujarat, which had no women, Manish Jha's debut feature, *Matrubhoomi: A Nation Without Women* (2003), portrays one of the grimmest realities of present day India, rampant female foeticide, an atrocious crime that has been complacently sanctioned, even actively condoned as part of traditional Indian ethos since time immemorial. *Matrubhoomi* presents a futuristic dystopia, offering a view of the near future when the nation would face a grim reality without women as it sanctions almost a selective genocide as hundreds of girl children die in the nation everyday simply because they are girls. "The first emotion that hits anybody watching *Matrubhoomi* is shock," writes a reviewer from a leading Indian daily. "Shame follows. And, ultimately, one feels drained. It is a numbing experience. Jha's vision of a nation without women is bleak. It is a world where a father sells off his daughter, where a father-in-law sleeps with his daughter-in-law and where brothers conspire to kill the sibling who is closest to their collective wife."<sup>1</sup> Set in a nondescript village somewhere in a futuristic rural northern India, *Matrubhoomi* explores in a brutal and hard hitting manner, an age when the patriarchal set-up has forced women to become nearly extinct as a result of the gory practice of female infanticide. Populated exclusively by brutish men, the dark world of the small village reduces to a violent barbaric state and the near extinction of women results in the dehumanisation of the sex-starved men, young and old, who indulge in group pornographic sleaze, bestiality, homosexuality and violence. Without women, the society degenerates, emotionally and psychologically, grows gross and debilitates cluttered as it is with horrendous and grotesque perversions like cross dressing and lewd dance performances. The frightening visions that the Jogia Kuya throws up in Tarpan gets a grimmer dimension as it is invested with a chilling black humour in Jha's film through the depiction of gut-wrenching violence, repeated rapes and utter barbarianism. Rooted in reality, Jha's *Matrubhoomi* is created intentionally as an exaggerated, horrifying fantasy to promote awareness among the people of this horrendous social malady and the plight of the girl-child in India. It reads almost like a parody, a dark, mocking re-enactment of the great Indian epic Mahabharata, where a father buys a wife for his five sons by paying five lacs and five cows as bride price from the father of the bride and demands his conjugal rights over her body to get his

money's worth, where a father gets rich by the monetary compensation given for the father-in-law's sexual rights over his daughter-in-law and all vestiges of normalcy and ethics vanish into thin air as brothers kill brothers, the wife is chained to a post in the cowshed without food and water just to be used as an object of sexual release for her five husbands and the village men alike and men kill each other over the rights of the body of the last surviving woman and the paternity of her 'son'. "This is the vision of India's future woman: The tale of Kalki, a metaphoric Draupadi who inhabits a rural India somewhere around 2050... A caste-war ensues, killing nearly all as Kalki gives birth to a girl. The Mahabharata reference gives way to the forecast of Vishnu's incarnation, Kalki, bringing an end to Kalyug."<sup>2</sup> writes another reviewer in an article in the Times of India. In the spectral village, after the carnage when all men kill each other for the possession of one woman and the supposed paternity of her yet-to-be born 'son', the last surviving woman Kalki frees herself from bondage and gives birth to a girl in a deserted house and acknowledges her birth with a smile as the newly born daughter thrashes her tiny legs up in the air and makes her presence felt through her lusty cries. Though critics have allegedly labelled Jha's vision as 'bleak', a feminist reading would envision a positive ending to the film, signifying the birth of a new nation—a nation born out of strife, pain and humiliation, built on the bodies of the brutish men, a nation cleansed as it were by the blood of the warring, armed, degenerate men. The only 'man' alive, so to say is the young boy, a servant and presumably lower class and lower caste, a sympathetic soul to the hardships of Kalki, and a prospective mate for Kalki's new born daughter in a nation where women would be free from patriarchal atrocities. The birth of Kalki's daughter, a triumphant girl-child, is literally the beginning of an indigenous matriarchal world, a Matrubhoomi, the land of mothers, in the true sense. From a nation without woman, a patriarchal dystopia, the narrative of Jha's film travels towards a nation of women, without violence, without blood bath, without rape, dowry or foeticide envisioning a feminist utopia as it were, sustained by love, care and compassion for each other.

### **A Riddle of Choice: *Paheli***

*Paheli* (2005) by Amol Palekar is a re-telling of a folktale named *Duvidha* as retold by Vijaydan Detha. It is the story of a woman who is left by her husband and is visited by a ghost who is in love with her. Lachchi is a young woman who, fed on stories of idyllic relationships of Laxmi and Narayan, that last a lifetime, dreams of marriage and a husband who loves her. In her aspiration, Lachchi is like Everywoman, and like everywoman she has dreams of an idyllic marriage night yet her husband Kishenlal, a true businessman who leaves her the morning after their marriage for five long years to hone his business skills. He goes abroad early morning leaving the marriage unconsummated, true to the dictates of his father and Lachchi's dreams, nurtured so lovingly from childhood, get shattered by the utter indifference that Kishenlal shows towards her presence in the room with him. He is more interested in the tallying of accounts of marriage in his accounts than making idyllic live to his newly-wed wife. True to the doppelganger motif of a ghostly double so common in folktales, a ghost soon arrives, in the form of her husband and presents himself before Lachchi as her lover. Though a ghost, his honest nature comes out sharply as he tells Lachchi the truth about himself at the outset and offers the choice to her. This is the first time anyone has asked her choice and Lachchi chooses the ghostly lover knowing full well that he is neither a human nor her husband. She makes a conscious choice and affirms her right to a desirous self that has been

summarily negated by her husband when he abandoned her. Paheli, in addressing the issue of a woman's right to choice as well as a human self with human desires, boldly broaches a tabooed subject in the context of a patriarchal India with its venerated conservative notions of chastity and self sacrifice in women. The film interrogates the notion of marriage and companionship as well as love in arranged marriages to foreground the subtle gendered issues at work. Paheli becomes a feminist text as it spotlights a women's choice over her own life and deals with issues of self and agency in that context. The dilemma or riddle of choice that Lachchi is faced with does away with the very notions of chastity inculcated in women in the patriarchal traditions from time immemorial as well as the stereotypes of a perfect wife as she ponders her choice—whether she wants to live her own life, pining away in austerity for an indifferent husband who leaves her of his own free will the morning after her marriage and goes away to prosper in business in far away foreign lands for five years or spend her life in a loving mutuality and bask in the happiness of reciprocated love with a form changing, shape-shifting ghost who loves her, respects her choice and cares for her family. The ghost Kishenlal is all that the living Kishenlal is not. The real life Kishenlal has acted as a husband in control of his wife's destiny—leaving his newly married wife alone in what was still a strange and unfamiliar home for her, not wanting to consummate their marriage thus taking away her right to sexual desire, shattering her dreams, abandoning her under the pretext of business and, by implication, not being honest with her about his motives before marriage. His announcement that he is going to leave her for five years on her wedding night stuns her and shows the stereotypical male mentality of taking women for granted as an object to be possessed and used or discarded at will. On the other hand the ghostly double is a representation of all of Lachchi's desires— he is a sensitive lover, a prankster, a magician, a person who acknowledges her desires and reciprocates her emotions — all the qualities that Lachchi longed for in a husband. Instead of self-sacrifice and martyrdom, Lachchi thus opts for a fulfilling and passionate union, a reciprocal relationship with the ghost, and in the new age fairytale that Palekar weaves, she is reunited with her ghostly lover even after the real life Kishenlal returns and establishes himself as her husband. Lachchi's bold decision and empowering choice, as well as the 'fairytale' ending resulting in female sexual autonomy is a social statement that is rare in Bollywood cinema, if found at all. In order to eschew realism and present a different worldview, Palekar in Paheli uses the ghost and the different animal or bird forms that he takes as well as the puppets from Rajasthan, who are a veritable presence throughout the film. The feminist overtones in Paheli can be seen in the interventions in the story by the puppets who act as narrators, mediators between the supernatural and the real world as well as the chorus who discuss the social and moral implications of Lachchi's choice with an unmatched sagacity. Though Lachchi and Kishenlal are shown during the end credits as puppets in the hand of fate, it is the choice that Lachchi exercises over her own life, opting for a life of fulfilment with the ghost who not only loves and cares for her but also helps bring back the family honour and consequently, becomes the cause for the return of Kishenlal's brother, and, as a result, love and happiness back to her sister-in-law, bringing joy and love to Lachchi, the family as well as to the whole village by digging a pond of fresh water in the deserts of Rajasthan, that makes her an empowered woman and Paheli a feminist text. It is the ghost who literally works miracles and charms everyone by his gaiety and loving nature while the real Kishenlal fails miserably both as husband and as a businessman. Even at the end the ghost surrenders to Lachchi's name and the wise old shepherd successfully bottles up

Lachchi's lover, the ghostly double of Kishenlal and solves the riddle. Interestingly the union of Lachchi and the ghost culminates in Lachchi giving birth to a daughter, Looni Ma and it is the name Looni Ma that becomes the code word proving the identity of the ghost when he comes back to Lachchi in the body of her husband Kishenlal. 'Looni Ma' therefore works like a well beloved shared secret as their mutual relationship, a signifier for mutuality and reciprocity hidden from the view of others. It is like the river Luni, that mythically flows beneath the surface of the earth, ever flowing, life giving yet hidden from view, known only to the initiated. This regenerative stream of love born out of the union of two kindred souls—one human the other a spirit, thus become emblematic of the whole world, the material and the spiritual, the natural and the supernatural, the normal and the paranormal, the real and the surreal. This confluence is notably manifested through the girl child, born out of love and conscious choice, and thus she becomes an agentive self from birth.

### **Vamp or Victim: *The Dirty Picture***

*The Dirty Picture* (2011) by Milan Luthria, writes Taran Adarsh in a perceptive review, "draws inspiration from the struggling female actors in the 80s, whose insurmountable and indomitable spirit made them emerge triumphant and create a distinctive space for themselves in the male-dominated industry. .... *The Dirty Picture* not only draws attention to the life of a sex goddess, but also makes us responsive of the catastrophe behind the facade.... It's an exceptional portrayal of an ordinary person's rise from scratch to extraordinary heights and her subsequent fall."<sup>3</sup> Set in the 1980s, the controversial film is a fictionalised biopic of the life and times of the much sought after sensuous South Indian actress Silk Smitha, and her contemporaries like Nylon Nalini and Disco Shanti, all of whom were noted for the overtly erotic nature of their roles and who had become the rage for the male audience yet all of whom led turbulent lives and died lonely deaths, mostly opting for suicides to end their lives—women who have been victimised as seductive vamps, the sex sirens designated by the patriarchal film industry. "What peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman" writes Simone de Beauvoir in her revolutionary *The Second Sex*, "is that she - a free and autonomous being like all human creatures - nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other."<sup>4</sup> The male world has distorted the woman to serve the needs of its culture and has seen the woman only as it chose to see her – defining the woman for its own purposes. In the male dominated culture, a woman has thus become a myth as it were. "She is an idol, a servant, the source of life, a power of darkness; she is the elemental silence of truth, she is artifice, gossip and falsehood; she is healing presence and sorceress; she is man's prey, his downfall, she is everything he is not and that he longs for"<sup>5</sup>. She is at once Eve and Virgin Mary - at once evil and good - "through her is made unceasingly the passage from hope to frustration, from hate to love, from good to evil, from evil to good."<sup>6</sup> The male world is a scene of betrayal for these victimised women as the world that had lured them on with promises of fame, wealth and companionship, love and stardom, is the world responsible for their downfall. That Silk was lured by the promise of love and mutual reciprocity only to be let down repeatedly by both her lovers and the male dominated film industry that used her is succinctly portrayed in the choice of the bindi and the red sari that Silk wears as she prepares for her suicide—the wish for marriage as the red sari symbolised remained unfulfilled for these women as a dialogue in the film re-iterates 'women like you can't be taken home...yes but they can be taken to bed'. Extremely ambitious small town girl

Reshma desperately tries to make a mark as an actress. She is a sensuous dancer in desperate search for a foothold in the film industry and she finds it in Selva Ganesh, the producer, who rechristens her as Silk and she calls him Keeradas “justifying that keede hi toh banate hain silk (worms produce silk). That smart and symbolic line pretty much sums up the bigger picture behind the dirty picture.”<sup>7</sup> opines Gaurav Malani, of TNN in his review of *The Dirty Picture*. “The supposedly decent and respectable society is the one that makes a Silk out of Reshma and sex-symbol out of Silk.... The barefaced demeanour of the film candidly highlights the exploits of the industry and the unapologetic attitude of its female protagonist.”<sup>8</sup> The film foregrounds the almost heroic struggle of a woman to achieve her dreams of stardom, and her ultimate fall when discarded by the very men who had used her as a tool to reach their personal goals. The double standards of the society where a woman is either a heroine, the too good to be true and gullible Devi or a vamp, a sex siren baring her body, to be used to titillate and seduce the predominantly male spectatorship so as to increase the box office success rates and keep the cash tinkling at the counter, the rampant sexual exploitation of women in the film industry all come out succinctly in the film. It is best exemplified in the long speech by Silk at the award ceremony where she vents her anger at the double standards of the male dominated film industry that only uses but also abuses women and women’s body to achieve their own selfish gains and self aggrandisement. These vamps are created by the male industry but treated as a ‘dirty secret’—“the secret of the night that no one bares in the day”, how a patriarchal society compels the aspiring woman artist to compromise her dignity by forcing her to make ‘dirty pictures’ yet then ostracize her by labelling her as ‘vulgar, ghatiya (low down), sexy, dirty’, and put the burden of guilt and grossness on the women—how a woman who wants to make her name as an actress is forced by the conniving agents of the male world to become a victim and lose her identity. A scathing speech by Silk succinctly brings out the double standards of the patriarchal society and the male dominated, gender discriminatory film industry that exploits women at will : “To make your own film take off, you’ve used me like a boarding pass, yet I’m the vulgar one. It is you who have forced me to dance yet none has observed my hard work and determination. They were all watching something else. And I’m the low down vamp. I’m the debased sex siren...apart from me every one of you are respectable here... you make films on sex, sell them, watch them yourselves, make others watch them too, even give awards for them yet you are afraid to acknowledge them.” Silk’s indomitable spirit comes out as she says : “You keep on wearing your respectability like this, and I would go on taking off my clothes. I will go on making my Dirty Pictures, and make people watch my dirty pictures.” The concepts of vulgarity and respectability are thus interrogated to spotlight the ways of discrimination against women who are sexploited and victimized as the vulgar ‘bazaari’ women— the ‘eternal vamps’ of the film industry while the men who use them come out respectable as heroes.

The *Dirty Picture*, the story of ‘a lone woman, seeking sustenance in a man's world’ with only ‘her rock hard confidence to carry her through’ in an exploitative world that transforms ‘Reshma into Silk, a storm that refused to be quelled’ is a ‘seminal work to be discussed in feminist discourses’ writes the famed reviewer Nikhat Kazmi of TOI.<sup>9</sup> “Determined to take on the industry single-handedly and carve a niche for herself as a sex symbol in a hypocritical world, Silk was the steroid shot that sent the world in a tizzy. Journalists and holier-than-thou art film makers like Abraham...hysterical women's groups and the ubiquitous moral police branded her

the scum of the earth...[yet] One dirty picture followed another and name, fame and success peaked to unimaginable heights for our girl from nowhere who unabashedly lived out her dreams.”<sup>10</sup> But the problem lay “in the duplicity of a world which was hungering for sex, but was ashamed to acknowledge this primordial need. So that, serenading Silk was okay in the darkness of the auditorium or behind closed bedroom doors. But accepting her as part of the social pecking order was taboo, for Silk, in a sick society, was a synonym for dirt.”<sup>11</sup> By sheer grit and determination, Silk had reached the top but she ultimately dies a forlorn death battling rejection, the censure of the moral custodians and the double standards of society that had used and discarded her ruthlessly for its own gains. The Dirty Picture portrays women as powerful by revolving round an audacious, intensely motivated protagonist who remained ‘unapologetic about her life till the very end’<sup>12</sup>, but it also ‘brings out the inner turmoil and pathos of her character’<sup>13</sup>—her struggles with fame, fortune, alcohol, the deceit and infidelity of the duplicitous male world and the rejection meted out to her by the patriarchal society that created her.

### **Feminine, Feminist, Female: *English Vinglish***

Written and directed by Gauri Shinde, *English Vinglish* (2012) is a transformational journey of Shashi in her quest for self-respect. The narrative revolves around a housewife who runs a home business of making and selling laddoos and who enrolls in an English-speaking course to put an end to the mockery and derision of her husband and daughter for her lack of English skills, and gradually gains a new respect for her own self in the process. Taken for granted by her husband and daughter who treat her with disrespect and mock her weak English on numerous occasions, Shashi feels emotionally devastated, shaky, fragile and constantly insecure with feelings of rejection traumatizing her; though for Sagar, her young son, she is beloved as she is, and her supportive mother-in-law encourages her in all her ventures. She goes to New York alone to attend a wedding where she has a traumatic experience at a local coffee shop while ordering coffee due to her poor English. She is resourceful enough to secretly enrol in a conversational English class that offers to teach the language in four weeks, showing her determination to overcome any odds at an unfamiliar city by herself. As a promising and committed student and a gifted confectioner, Shashi emerges self-confident, earning everyone’s love and respect. Her class mate Laurent, a soft-spoken French chef, develops a bond with Shashi; Shashi reciprocates the feeling but chooses to return to her family thanking Laurent for making her see herself in a new light. In her determination to overcome this insecurity and master the language, Shashi slowly begins to discover herself. Shashi transforms herself with steely resolve becoming a self-assured and confident woman, but tempered with compassion and dignity. As Shashi gains confidence as a student in an alien city, freely going about, mixing with her motley group of classmates, she creates for herself a world and an identity of her own apart from her family. This identity formation is boosted by the admiration she feels for herself in Laurent’s eyes, an admiration and desire that she had always wanted to see in her husband but lacked. She herself feels attracted to the French man, and this recognition of her own self and its many-sidedness makes Shashi a New Woman as it were. She travels from a feminine self—a hesitant and always insecure self that tried to please everybody in her family, was always submissive and self-sacrificing, modeled on the patriarchal precepts of the perfect wife and mother, to a feminist self that defies her sister’s sympathetic advice for spending the time cooped up at home and tries hard to

conquer a language that had always eluded her, to a female self, to use Elaine Showalter's terms<sup>14</sup> while reading a Bollywood film, where she had not only mastered the colonizer's tongue but also has found a new self, confident, charismatic, conscious of her choices in life, agentive and aware of herself as a desirous woman in her own right. The toast Sashi raises in perfect English to the newly-wed couple at the wedding ceremony in front of her full family, who had once derided and disrespected her, for her hesitant, non-English ways so to say, says volumes about their colonial mentality. It is Sashi's former tormentors who remain colonized all their lives under the oppressive weight of English, as the master's tongue, while their ever hesitant, ever insecure gauche wife and mother, casts off her colonial shackles in the airplane as she returns home, when she asks for a Hindi newspaper from the air hostess in perfect English, gaining the first flicker of admiration from her husband's eyes. For Shashi, English is not so 'important' anymore and it acquires a nonsensical diminutive tag 'Vinglish', she had mastered it and travelled beyond its closures to create a new identity for herself in which English was merely a tool, an aid in her self-attainment. Composed and confident Sashi has found a new, full life as an entrepreneur; she has gained the power to exercise her choice in life—to come home to India, her language, her culture and to her family. Thus Gauri Shinde's English Vinglish, taking inspiration from the real lives and experiences of countless Indian housewives and attesting to their determination to better their lives, truly attains, through its protagonist Sashi, the New Woman, the stature of a very contemporary film of the post colonial times with a strong feminist perspective.

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### **Filmography:**

Tarpan (1995)

Producer: NFDC | Director: K. Bikram Singh | Screenplay and dialogue: K. Bikram Singh | Cast: Revathi, Meeta Vasisht, Om Puri, Manohar Singh | Release: 1995

Matrubhoomi (2003)

Producer: Punkej Kharabanda, Patrick Sobelman, Nicolas Blanc | Director: Manish Jha | Screenplay and dialogue: Manish Jha | Cast: Tulip Joshi, Sudhir Pandey, Sushant Singh, Aditya Shrivastav, Piyush Mishra, Pankaj Jha, Sanjay Kumar | Release: 2003

Paheli (2005)

Producer: Red Chillies Entertainment| Director: Amol Palekar | Screenplay and Dialogue: Sandhya Gokhale | Cast: Shah Rukh Khan, Suniel Shetty, Rani Mukherjee, Juhi Chawla, Amitabh Bachchan | Release: 2005

The Dirty Picture (2011)

Producer: Shobha Kapoor and Ekta Kapoor | Director: Milan Luthria| Screenplay and dialogue: Rajat Arora | Cast: Vidya Balan, Naseeruddin Shah, Emraan Hashmi, Tusshar Kapoor, Anju Mahendroo | Release: 2011

English Vinglish (2012)

Producer: Sunil Lulla, R. Balki, R. K. Damani and Rakesh Jhunjhunwala | Director: Gauri Shinde| Screenplay and dialogue: Gauri Shinde| Cast: Sridevi, Adil Hussain,

Mehdi Nebbou, Priya Anand, Shivansh Kotia, Navika Kotia, Sulabha Deshpande,  
Sujata Kumar, Rajiv Rabindranathan, Sumit Vyas, Ruth Aguilar, Maria Romano,  
Cory Hibbs, Damien Thompson |Release: 2012