

MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP IN MADHUR BHANDARKAR'S FILM CHANDANI BAR

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Abstract:

Movie is the mirror of society which clearly reflects what is going on in the society. Madhur Bhandarkar, a famous realistic film-director's award winning movie Chandni Bar is also such a realistic movie which portrays the bizarre and gritty life of Mumbai beer bar dancing girls, their struggle for survival and underworld. Under the Shlok Films banner the movie is released in 2001. He is a master to portray vividly the corruption, changing morality and violence in Indian society. The horrible reality of man-woman, live-in, extra-marital and gay relationships and prostitution is always his favourite theme in changing Indian scenario. Yet there is another aspect of the movie, that is, woman's life is the perception of men in India. The concept that woman is inferior to man was universally accepted by the people in medieval times. The movie has female protagonist who narrates her story from her childhood as a helpless woman who succumbs to pressures of the society. The movie explores the darker side of the Mumbai life and is slightly heavy and depression in its narrative, much or less flamboyant and more realistic in sensibility than a typical Bollywood film.

Key Words: *Man-Woman relationship, realistic, bizarre, changing morality.*

The protagonist of movie *Chandani Bar* Mumtaz migrates to Mumbai with her lone survived uncle after she loses her parents and her town in UP is destroyed in communal riots. Young Mumtaz has difficult time adjusting to a place where jobs seem scarce and life is cheap. She accepts the job of beer bar girl against her wish for her survival, happily marries a short tempered gangster, begets children, becomes widow after his massacre, and again joins the bar for her children's better career but now waitress due to her over age and even accepts prostitution and let her daughter to become a bar girl to bribe the corrupted police officer for the rescue of her son from police custody. The movie ends on the note on her helpless final submission to circumstances when her son murders two boys who molested him at jail as his revenge on the same path of his father.

As the theme of man-woman relationship is not new to the movies, it is as old as the first Indian feature film *Raja Harishchandra*. This theme is quite popular and fresh for Indian Cinema since ages. Madhur Bhandarkar presented it with minute details changing moral values in rapid modifying Indian society. As the movie is female orientated, Mumtaz's relationship with Potya Sawant is more important segment of the movie. Being a frequent visitor of the bar, Potya is already engaged in a physical relationship with another bar girl Shabana. While observing the dancing bar girls he says, "I am sick off the same tired faces". At once Mumtaz (a fresh face) is get spotted by him in *Chandni Bar*. Getting attracted towards her he enters the private room of the bar on an excuse to meet Shabana. Being not habituated by the bar's bold atmosphere shy Mumtaz once again becomes successful to increase his carnal desires for her. Shabana takes him off in privacy for their usual lusty meetings; Potya comes to know that money minded Shabana is not supporting him in their physical proximity but keen to getting money from him which instigate him to get Mumtaz by hook or crook. Mumtaz impressed him a lot in their first meeting but Mumtaz is not attracted by him and considers him like any other customers.

In their second meeting *Mumtaz* again attracts *Potya* (as he is looking for her) much as she is busy with other customer, seeking money from him, bearing his lusty touches and gaze who irritates short tempered *Potya*. He vents his anger upon the customer and beats him, all the bar people including bar owner *Anna* are afraid of the *Bhai* like *Potya* so nobody oppose him. All the bar-girl including *Mumtaz* run to their room, *Potya* enters boldly the room and being unable to wait anymore directly makes an indecent proposal like any other bar girl. She is stunned by such proposal for first time and she leaves him unanswered which is rejection mostly which annoys him. Humiliated *Potya* threatens her pimp and forces him to make her available for him. *Mumtaz* is forced by his uncle and *Iqbal*, she comes to know that *Potya* is dangerous and can spoil her future. She makes compromise and accepts its inevitability. She meets him in a lodge but unable to adjust with him she responds him like a dead body in their physical proximity which annoys him. He comes to know that she is not habituated and money minded like any other bar girl but shy and simple girl forced into this profession. He leaves her and pays her which she denies; he takes more interest in her and wants to know her past. He stabs her uncle for being molested her and forced her into this profession for their survival. The very next moment he put forth two substitutes for her to go back and to marry him. She is not able to go back so chose another substitute which avails her opportunity to the life of stability, status and happiness moreover her permanent good bye to the suffocated profession of bar girl.

Her marital life with *Potya* begins: he loves her lot but being a patriarchal male dominates her and not provides equal plane necessary for a healthy man-woman relationship. *Potya* shows his true colors by abandoning his family leaving them to fend for themselves. Surrounded by his criminal friends and twenty four hours underworld career *Potya* naturally neglects her. They are bound spiritually but circumstances spoil their private life. He remains busy with outside gritty world while she sticks up with household duties and rearing children. She observes that *Potya* is arrogant with his friends and she concerns about him but keeps mum suitable to her nature. Though being his wife her status remained too much lower because *Potya* is her savoir who has brought her back from the slimy world of bar and prostitution. Their planes always remain imbalanced. Male always enjoy superior status in marital relationship in a patriarchal society, Simone-de-Beauvoir aptly observes, "marriage is a destiny traditionally offered to women by society". Woman in reality is essentially a subservient partner in marriage. In a way marriage for her is a trap which negates her rights to individuality, independence and self-realization. Usually in the institution of marriage a woman is reduced as an object of decoration, possession and man's sexual gratification. It turns out to be an institution of oppression for her in various forms rather than her protection for which it was primarily instituted. The same happens with *Mumtaz* after her marriage. She is caught in no win situation. Finding no other solution she concentrates on the better future of her son *Abhay* and daughter *Payal* and weaves her own world around their bringing up. A rift in their conjugal life starts and negligence form both speeds the gap widening them apart. *Potya* casually comes home and uses his home like lodging-boarding. No doubt he loves his family who occasionally takes them to functions and even proudly introduces them to their friends but at the same time he is promoted in his career which leads him to become busy with outside world. In her narration she agrees his drawbacks, "he can never control his anger, initiates into an illegal act without thinking for himself, her and his family". It stuns her when he runs to kill a police messenger mercilessly leaving her back. Like any other Indian girl she had cherished a dream of stable life which fate had heartlessly snatched away from her at an early stage of her life. But her destiny plans another disaster for her now, police kill *Potya* in a fake encounter due to the murder of their messenger for being rude, dashing and thoughtless. She musters up her courage and prepares herself for another ordeal of her life. Man-woman relationship ends with the death of her husband.

The movie depicts her relationship with another wealthy *Sheth* but it has only commercial purpose for her and satiates carnal desires for the male. It lasts only for single night. Man-woman relationship of *Mumtaz* and *Potya* triggers male domination in marital relationship worldwide in general and Indian

society in particular. An important factor to consider *Potya's* overreaching maleness is his socialization as a male child. As he is the representative of typical Indian society and its patriarchal system, one has to focus upon the development of male psyche in Indian society. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia defines gender roles:

The male ethos is war, domination, competition, scarcity, control etc. for the purpose of having the power to choose and enforce the survival of their seed. Within the context of the patriarchal system, women are reduced to sexual toys and caretakers of children (www.wikipedia.com)

From the early stage of his childhood the male child is nurtured often with extra care; he is offered all possible avenues like good schooling, good food, good dressing and expensive toys. On the other hand, the female child is made aware of her subjugation and painful existence at every stage. The parents impart gender discrimination from their childhood. Though the movie does not depict *Mumtaz's* early childhood but the society and her uncle trains her to shrink from male domination to be meek and submissive. She is constantly reminded of the worthlessness of her sex. As Shubha Tiwari puts it:

Social stereotypes about gender roles are stronger than we can imagine them to be. One can present hundreds of examples. A gift of male kid- electric train, and for female child- a doll (quoted in Bala (ed):2001:71)

The parents impart the gender discrimination from their childhood. *Mumtaz* keeps mum at every stage when she observes short tempered *Potya* is going out of control and even comes to know its evil effects. She contracts herself suitable to her nature and diverts herself towards her children. Conversely, *Potya* enjoys everything outside home neglecting his wife and household duties, the male chivalry specially observed in world of gangsters as it the only qualification needed for such type of 'job'. He remains outside of the irresponsibly for whole night let her waiting and be anxious about him. The male traditional mindset makes them think that they are born to control weaker sex. Male sex is superior and female sex inferior. As *Urvashi Sinha* and *Gur Pyari Jandial* comment:

The husband is expected to be authoritarian figure whose will should always dominate the life of a wife. The wife should regard him as her master and should serve faithfully. Thus the traditional concept of superior husband and subordinate wife had been the guideline of Hindu marriage (quoted in Mohan(ed):2004:130).

The same attitude is responsible for crack or rift in man-woman relationship observed in the movie. Never the less she has no objection for her husband and she leads happy life of being a wife rather than a bar-girl. He once again leaves her penniless widow by his thoughtless behavior for gnawing by society.

The movie has portrayed another man-woman relationship that is *Deepa Pande*, *Mumtaz's* friend from bar and her husband *Gokul*, a rickshaw driver. Once again a male domination is observed but as compared to above here he imparts a total negativity in his domination. She is a victim of his atrocities, being money minded he sends her to bar to dance and even forces for prostitution. Being his wife for four years *Deepa* naturally wants to be a mother of her legitimate child but he never cares her feelings and forces her to sleep with his customer even when she is pregnant. He already aborted her for three times for money. His atrocities heightens when he kills her in his intoxication leaving her wish unfulfilled of being a mother. She was so passionate to be a mother of her husband that she never quits him and tolerates his heartless beating every night, continues as a bar dancer where she seek refuge and prostitute and dances to his tune. *Mumtaz* says in her narrations, "her wish becomes her sad demise". He thinks technically and mercilessly while *Deepa* is quite emotional. Man-woman relationship between them is estranged and is marred by male chauvinism.

The other girls of *Chandni Bar* are victims of male domination as well. *Puspa* is cheated by her lover *Azahar*, he lends money from her to settle in his business and marry with another girl by cheating her. *Pushpa* is also called to satiate carnal desires of police officer *Gaikwad*. *Shabnam Shaikh* is cheated by

Potya. Meena is sold off by her parents to the bar-owner. *Farida* is deceived and sold by her husband to a customer on the first night of their marriage and fled away to Dubai leaving her at bar. Every bar-girl is a different painful story of male-domination. Man-woman relationship of these bar girls apart from their customers is declined by male oppression. On the other hand, their relationship with their customer becomes foundation which badly affects their relationship with their lovers, husbands or boyfriends. The relationship is mostly on the physical level. The relationship is that of user and used. Lack of normal support system and creations of new substitution is needed. They lead their lives for survival, *Deepa* observes, "All male are equal may he sit in office or bar, they only take undue advantage of woman's helplessness". Her further dialogue is quite suggestive "this is a male dominion". Thus man-woman relationship in this movie is marred by male supremacy and woman's submissiveness.

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