

Exploring Language and Identity in the Bollywood movie *Laapataa*

Ladies (Lost Ladies)

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Abstract:

Bollywood movies often adhere to patriarchal gender roles, but some significant films envision an alternative world that seeks to redefine these roles. This study aims to re-think the traditional notion of gender, focusing on the roles of language and identity in the film *Laapataa Ladies* (2024). In movies, we see reflections of our society where women are represented as "other", docile, submissive, and weak, and men as the main lead, strong, and powerful. The conventional language often fails to represent female consciousness and does not necessarily advocate for women's empowerment. The film beautifully depicts the female consciousness. Its use of language projects the intricacies of female's issues and desires. This study explores alternate representations of both genders beyond patriarchal norms. It looks into the world where men and women can explore their identities and act against patriarchal dominance. This article also delves into the portrayal of gender, power, identity, and language to analyze the patriarchal power structure. It looks into the question of whether language is gendered and whether it is any feminist language. It will examine the language used by the characters in the film and will try to explore if language has any power to give agency to the marginal people. It will also examine if language use can challenge patriarchal norms, redefine gender roles, help empower women, and depict unconventional portrayals of men. Additionally, it emphasizes the strong bond of sisterhood among the female characters throughout the movie. By synthesizing these diverse perspectives, this study examines how redefining language, identity, and gender

roles in the film can create new hopes for an alternative future free from dominance and hegemonic power structures.

Keywords: Bollywood Cinema, Language, Gender, Identity, Male Gaze, New Gender Roles, Patriarchal Dominance

Mainstream cinema often perpetuates and reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Masculinity is primarily defined as muscle power and physical aggression. These mainstream films mainly focus on pleasing the male gaze, sidelining meaningful storytelling, giving women stereotypical roles, and often emphasizing male supremacy. It's rare to see films that represent female perspectives and challenge gender norms. Female identity is frequently misrepresented and ignored. Conventional cinema influences the formation of gender identity, crafting representations of traditional gender roles and cultivating patriarchal gender stereotypes through specific cultural symbols. Similarly, this study examines how gender identities are constructed and propagated through the lens of Hindi cinema.

Although Bollywood movies often adhere to patriarchal gender roles, some significant films envision an alternative view that seeks to redefine these roles. In mainstream films, we see reflections of our society where women are represented as "other", docile, submissive, and weak, whereas men are the main lead, strong, and powerful. This article explores alternate representations of both genders and their roles beyond patriarchal norms. It looks into the world where men and women can explore their identities and act without patriarchal dominance. The new cinema movement of the 1970s and 80s endeavored to explore women's subjectivity and their roles in family and society. Early in this era, female solid characters emerged, while the later years saw a deeper and more thorough engagement with contentious issues. This period was essential in paving the way for the significant shifts in narrative and agency that would define the portrayal of women in Bollywood in the new millennium.

Though we see specific changes happening since the 1980s, most Bollywood romances have primarily depicted male desire, often leaving women without agency. Item songs in Bollywood usually feature scantily-clad women dancing to suggestive lyrics while

men gaze lustfully at them. These songs contribute to the problematic notion that catcalling and sexual harassment are acceptable. While some Bollywood films have attempted to address feminism, the focus on commercial success has led to the rise of faux-feministic movies.

As the women's movement gained prominence in India, concentrating on women's oppression, representations, and the fight for an egalitarian society, a group of women filmmakers brought women's issues from the margins to the forefront of discourse. They emphasized women's representation and introduced a new perspective on women's identity, providing an alternative to the male gaze to highlight female subjectivity. Filmmakers like Aparna Sen, Sai Paranjpye, Vijaya Mehta, Aruna Raje, and Kalpana Lajmi created numerous movies featuring sensitive portrayals of female protagonists in search of identity.

Indian Bollywood cinema, despite its growing inclusion of women-centered narratives, largely remains male-dominated in its structure and storytelling. While female protagonists have gained visibility in recent years, the deeper issue of feminist language—language that explicitly challenges patriarchal norms, promotes gender equality and asserts women's autonomy—remains largely absent. Women-centered films often prioritize personal growth or emotional journeys without confronting the conventional nature of gender inequality. This article looks into the question of whether language is gendered and whether there is any feminist language? This study will analyze the language used by the characters in the film and will try to explore if the language has any power to give agency to marginal people. It will also examine if language use can challenge patriarchal norms, redefine gender roles help empower women, and depict unconventional portrayals of men.

A shift in female character portrayals, camera focus, and language is essential, as strong women in roles challenge dominant gender norms, fostering narratives that dismantle patriarchal frameworks in cinema. *Laapataa Ladies*, Kiran Rao's second directorial venture (co-produced with Aamir Khan and Jyoti Deshpande), garners widespread acclaim as a seminal film for women's rights in India. This paper explores the evolving portrayals of women in contemporary times, highlighting a shift toward female protagonists who assert their autonomy and embrace their desires, breaking free from patriarchal structures. These characters are no longer defined by male validation or support

but instead embody their own empowered narratives, reflecting deeper feminist concerns around agency, self-expression, and the reclamation of identity. The film humorously addresses social issues through the story of two young brides accidentally swapped during a train journey. It has resonated deeply with audiences and critics alike, marking it a significant and impactful piece in contemporary Indian cinema. This study aims to re-think the traditional notion of gender, focusing on the roles of language and identity in the film *Laapataa Ladies* (2024).

Written by Sneha Desai and based on a novella by Biplab Goswami, Kiran Rao's film *Laapataa Ladies* (2024) is optimistic without being naive, assertive without being loud, and crowd-pleasing without compromising its integrity for a 'happy ending'. Deepak (Sparsh Shrivastava) and Phool Kumari (Nitanshi Goel) have just married in Nirmal Pradesh, like countless others. The story is set in the year 2001. Phool is instructed to walk with a veil over her head. Upon boarding their assigned train compartment, they find two other newlywed couples already seated, almost identically dressed. Arriving at his station late in the evening, Deepak wakes up groggily and urges Phool to quickly get down. Chaos ensues when Deepak and his family realize he has mistakenly brought home one of the other nearly identical brides from the train compartment. Pushpa (Pratibha Ranta) is far from as timid as Phool. Meanwhile, Phool awakens at a station further down the line, horrified to find herself alone without Deepak. She struggles to recall the name of Deepak's village or even the station where she boarded.

This study delves into the portrayal of gender, power, identity, and language to analyze the patriarchal power structure. It highlights the female protagonists' quests for identities, highlighting their intense, fearful, and sensible qualities. Female identity emerges from female consciousness, which seeks to understand what defines a woman. Prescribed roles, cultural norms, and traditions shape this identity. However, these constructs can be challenged and deconstructed when women become aware of their true selves. In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler argues that viewing construction as a one-time act rather than an ongoing process reduces constructivism to mere determinism, stripping away human agency and flexibility. The concept that female identity is a process highlights its dynamic and adaptability. This fluidity is evident in how women's writing frequently defies the conventional boundaries of the male literary canon. (Butler)

At first, we will not find any strong female characters, but as the film progresses, we will observe strength and resistance in the female characters. In terms of Phool Kumari's character, we find a gradual development. Her actions, thoughts, words, and choices show her growth throughout the story. At the movie's beginning, Phool is represented as a shy, docile woman ready to begin a new life after getting married. Her representation in the film's beginning is like an average newly married woman who is all set to go to her husband's house. Phool's character has no individuality. She readily accepted her husband's identity as her own. Phool fits very quickly into the character of an ideal village woman, which perfectly goes with the patriarchal norms of a married woman. As she leaves her parental house with her husband after marriage, she is instructed to keep the 'ghoonghat' veil, which symbolically and metaphorically signifies the restriction placed on women's identities, "Ekbaar ghunghat le liye toh aage nahi neeche dekh k chalna seekho." (00. 03.31, Laapataa Ladies) (Once you wear veil learn to look down while walking)

The film focuses on the problematic aspects of wearing a veil as Phool is inadvertently exchanged with Jaya, another newlywed, due to the obscurity created by their veils. Here, confusion arises because of the veil covering their faces. However, this age-old custom of the veil questions women's agency and whether they have any rights. Do they have the choice to wear or not to wear the veil, going against their customs? Do they have their identity without men? Or they will continue to remain just as the 'Other' of their counterparts. Simone de Beauvoir's declaration, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the *Other*" (Beauvoir 6), underscores the importance of selfhood. Being the *other* means being a non-subject and non-agent. Women's selfhood has been denied by laws, customs, and cultural stereotypes, identifying them as inferior to men or their direct opposite.

This denigration has persisted throughout history, based on perceived differences from men. In most cases, the veil is a metaphorical and symbolical representation of women's repressed identity. In her book *Reinventing Womanhood*, Carolyn Heilbrun argues that successful women often identify with male traits, but it is problematic for a woman to derive her identity from a man. She asserts that women never fully develop their own self-identity because they don't experience identity crises, yet they still have an

identity to lose. According to Heilbrun, becoming a wife often requires women to give up their sense of self. (Heilbrun) In Indian households, it's common for women to avoid using their husbands' names as a sign of respect. Remarkably, Phool only knows her husband's name because it was written on her henna. This incident shows women lacking confidence, agency, and voice in a traditional societal setup.

However, as the plot progresses, the film takes a different turn when the exchange of brides is revealed. Despite Phool, Deepak brings Phuspa home. The two brides are strikingly different in their demeanor. Pushpa, whose real name is Jaya, arouses suspicion from a police officer, Shyam Manohar, who trails her closely. Meanwhile, Phool, disoriented and stranded at a railway station, befriends a few vendors at a food stall. Much like characters in an Imtiaz Ali film, it is precisely when the two brides are adrift in this vast and unwelcoming world that they embark on a journey of self-discovery. This search leads to the discovery of their repressed voice.

Jaya is presented as contrary to Phool's character in the film. She is educated and wants to continue her higher studies. In the film, her character reflects a keen knowledge of agriculture and boldly inquires if she might make a friendship with Phool's mother-in-law (Geeta Agrawal). Despite appearing to have an agenda, Jaya subtly initiates a quiet upheaval within the household. In contrast, Phool, who prides herself on being a "bhale ghar ki ladki" (a girl from a 'respectable' family), encounters Manju Maai (Chhaya Kadam) to realize her ignorance. Initially, Manju Maai scolds her for her excessive propriety—Phool refrains from mentioning Deepak's name, adhering to traditional norms of a dutiful bride—but soon offers her employment.

This article also delves into the portrayal of gender, power, identity, and language to analyze the patriarchal power structure in this film. Language, as a cultural product, acknowledges sexual differences, necessitating a disruption of male-dominated language that upholds patriarchal supremacy. Irigaray advocates for the necessity to comprehend female sexuality from a woman's perspective, the crucial role of a young girl's initial bond with her mother, and the potential to create a language that can express the identities formed through relationships between women. Irigaray, while agreeing with Lacan that subjectivity is achieved through entering language and culture, critically examines how

language is structured to marginalize women by denying them active subject positions. She argues that the existing linguistic framework is inherently exclusionary and that simply integrating women into this framework does not resolve the issue. Instead, Irigaray advocates for a fundamental transformation of language itself, proposing the creation of multiple subject positions to ensure that women's subjectivity is recognized and validated within the cultural domain. (Irigaray)

Julia Kristeva argues that language and culture establish order by separating from and repressing maternal authority, which resurfaces in religious rituals, literature, and art. She views art as the sublimation of repressed maternal relationships. Male artists can access the maternal realm or semiotic without risking their social standing, whereas female artists, already precariously positioned due to their identification with the abjected body, face more significant risks. Consequently, men can be more experimental in their work without being deemed frivolous. (Kristeva)

Gilbert and Gubar analyze the relationship between sexual difference and the symbolic contract by examining the mother's primary role and a tradition of female writing. They challenge the notion that the feminine is absent from the common language, showing how both psychological and historical perspectives reflect the significant influence of women in shaping language and culture. "The female subject is not necessarily alienated from the words she writes and speaks" (Gilbert and Gubar: 515) Despite extensive efforts ranging from empirical linguistics to intuitive poetics, the term "a woman's sentence," coined by Virginia Woolf, remains inadequately defined. At the opposite end of the spectrum, some esteemed feminist writers attempt to depict the concept of a "woman's language" through poetic approaches. Gilbert and Gubar describe these efforts as "immoderately mystical." They reference Luce Irigaray, who characterizes women's language as continuously evolving and self-embracing while shedding words to avoid becoming fixed or static.

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir influences women to assert their presence by embracing and expressing their unique perspectives. She emphasizes that in a male-dominated society, women, by their lived experiences have an intimate understanding of what it means to be feminine. She also urges women to use this knowledge to articulate

their own stories and experiences, claiming their place in a world that often overlooks them. (16). In this context, Helen Cixous says:

A woman must write herself, must write about women, and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. A woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and history by her movement (Cixous: 245).

Showalter argues that contemporary languages bear the marks of their patriarchal roots, suggesting the need for a language with unique linguistic, grammatical, and syntactical characteristics to express women's perspectives adequately. Showalter advocates for women's access to "free use of language". She states that the denial of accessing language to women leads to silencing women's voices, which subverts their consciousness. Thus, she emphasizes that a primary goal of feminist criticism should be to ensure women have better language access, enabling them to express themselves more clearly and giving them agency. She also advocates for addressing the existing lexical gaps and encourages a deeper engagement with women's writing. This involves understanding the explicit content and paying close attention to what remains unspoken. Thus, Showalter argues that contemporary languages bear the marks of their patriarchal roots. She advocates the need for a language with unique linguistic, grammatical, and syntactical characteristics to express women's perspectives adequately.

The traditional language often fails to represent female consciousness and does not necessarily advocate for women's empowerment. The film beautifully depicts the female consciousness. Its use of language projects the intricacies of female's issues and desires. The Phool Kumari's dialogue, "Hum budbak nhi hai, humko gharka sab kaam aata hai" (00.38.28 Laapataa Ladies) mirrors Manju Maai's assertion that, even today, many women in rural India are trained in household chores but lack basic survival skills or the ability to find their way home if they get lost. Education plays a crucial role in this context.

Manju Mai is a forthright and formidable character whose candid, sometimes harsh, remarks reveal deep insight. Her advocacy for women's empowerment is crucial in helping Phool Kumari recognize her intrinsic worth beyond traditional domestic roles. Through

Manju Mai's guidance, Phool begins to see herself as a person with emotions and potential beyond the kitchen, challenging and expanding her self-perception and societal role. The dialogue, "Ee desh me ladki logon ke saath hazaaron saalo se fraud ho raha hai, ooka naam hai bhale gharki bahu-beti." (00.37.52 *Laapataa Ladies*) (In this country, women have been deceived for thousands of years, their identity reduced to merely that of a housewife or daughter), underscores a long history of gender-based exploitation and societal devaluation of women.

In *Laapataa Ladies*, Deepak's mother delivers a poignant line that encapsulates the overlooked sacrifices of countless women: "Toh kaa ab aurat onki pasandka khaana Banega? Dikkat toh ee hai ki humko ab wohbhi yaad nah inki humko kya pasandhai." (01.21.19 *Laapataa Ladies*) This moment powerfully reflects the reality that many women lose sight of their desires and well-being in their relentless effort to cater to their families. The dialogue critiques how domestic responsibilities often lead to the erasure of self-identity and personal joy, highlighting a pervasive issue where women are compelled to forsake their own happiness for others.

Comedy has a unique power to shift perspectives, subtly coaxing us into re-thinking our views and drawing us into meaningful conversations. It can soften defenses, allowing us to broach topics that might otherwise be too challenging or controversial. Humor can articulate difficult truths in other forms, transforming it into a powerful tool for challenging patriarchal norms. The issues explored in *Laapataa Ladies* aren't new; they're familiar to audiences who have encountered them in other films or life experiences. However, humor breathes new life into these discussions, making the narrative feel fresh and engaging. *Laapataa Ladies* can be seen as a gentle yet sharp satire that uses wit to expose the absurdities of societal norms while making the audience reflect on their own beliefs.

In addition to its comedic elements, the film employs satire as a mirror, reflecting the contradictions and ironies of everyday life. Presenting these issues with a light touch invites viewers to laugh while prompting them to think critically about the realities behind the humor. This duality allows the film to entertain while delivering a poignant social commentary, making it a nuanced and thought-provoking piece. The dialogues crafted by Sneha and Divyanidhi Sharma in this film demonstrate a delicate balancing act, seamlessly

blending humor and wisdom without crossing into overt moralizing. This skillful approach ensures that it maintains a genuine and endearing tone even when the story touches on profound or complex subjects, primarily through the perspective of child characters like Bablu, Deepak's nephew.

Bablu's comparison of his friend's lost footwear at the temple to the situation of misplaced brides is a particularly poignant example. His innocent logic—that by the "founders' keeper's theory," Jaya becomes his new aunty—carries a childlike simplicity that resonates without being heavy-handed. This moment encapsulates the film's ability to address serious themes with a light touch, using the clarity and honesty of a child's view to underscore more significant societal issues. The result is a dialogue that is both impactful and refreshingly devoid of melodrama, allowing the audience to engage with the narrative naturally and unforcedly.

Initially, the character of Jaya might provoke a sense of disdain from the audience, as her actions and demeanor are crafted to challenge the viewer's perceptions and challenge the traditional male gaze. However, as the narrative unfolds and her back story is revealed, the audience's perspective shifts. This transformation in how Jaya is viewed serves as an eye-opener, inviting viewers to empathize with her struggles and understand the complexities of her situation. The film's ability to evoke such a change in perception underscores the depth of Pratibha Ranta's performance and the layered writing of her character.

The dialogue "Bina ghoonghat ke photo nahi khichwayenge, badnami hogi" (I won't have my photo taken without a veil; it would bring shame) (36.42.00 Laapataa Ladies) in *Laapataa Ladies* serves as a powerful commentary on societal expectations and the pressure on women to conform to traditional norms. This line encapsulates the deeply ingrained cultural belief that a woman's honor is tied to her modesty, represented by the ghoonghat (veil). The concern about *badnami* (shame or dishonor) highlights the fear of social judgment and the strict codes of behavior imposed on women. It reflects how women's choices are often dictated by the desire to avoid scandal or criticism rather than personal freedom or agency.

In the context of the film, this dialogue illustrates the internal and external conflicts female characters face as they navigate societal expectations. It also sets the stage for the characters' journeys towards self-empowerment and breaking free from these restrictive norms. The line subtly critiques the way traditional values are used to control and limit women, making it a significant moment in the narrative's exploration of gender roles and liberation. In *Laapataa Ladies*, Jaya uses her veil to avoid her husband and later resists being photographed without it. This act illustrates how women can cleverly leverage aspects of their oppression to their advantage, often as a means of self-protection. By the film's ending, the two main female characters metaphorically shed their veils, symbolizing their transition into a new phase of freedom and self-empowerment.

One aspect often overlooked in Bollywood films is the portrayal of female friendships. Women are frequently criticized, primarily by men and sometimes by other women, for supposedly being antagonistic towards each other. This stereotype is far from the truth, as those who have experienced deep female friendships understand their strength and value. In *Laapataa Ladies*, the relationships among the women in the household—like the grandmother, Yashoda, and Poonam—who bond with Jaya are a testament to this. A particularly heartwarming scene occurs when Yashoda praises Poonam's smile and encourages her mother-in-law to form a friendship. These moments, which depict female bonding in situations where it is often deemed unlikely, are among the film's most remarkable elements.

In *Laapataa Ladies*, the initial narrative reveals women who suppress their valid preferences, refrain from pursuing their interests, and rely entirely on men for support. However, as the story unfolds, each female character begins to embrace her authentic self. When these women start standing up for themselves, they embark on a journey towards freedom. Poonam, the sister-in-law who initially undervalues her artistic talents, later takes pride in helping Jaya find Phool. As a gesture of gratitude, she sketches a portrait of Jaya and extends her best wishes. Yashoda, the mother-in-law who initially avoids cooking meals she enjoys, later acknowledges her preferences and prepares her favorite dish for Jaya. Phool and Jaya undergo empowering transformations—through self-realization and Jaya actively pursuing her dreams. Through these arcs, the film highlights the significance of self-discovery and empowerment in each woman's journey toward independence.

In *Laapataa Ladies*, Geeta Agrawal Sharma, portraying Deepak's mother, delivers a poignant line: "Ghar ki auratein in saas, nanad, devraani, jethani sabhi ban jati hain. Saheli nahin ban paati ek doosra ki. Amma aap hum saheli ban sakte hain kya?" (01.22.1 *Laapataa Ladies*) This dialogue powerfully challenges the traditional roles assigned to women within the household. It highlights how women, who are often relegated to roles of judgment and competition—whether as insaas (mothers-in-law), nanads (sisters-in-law), devraanis (sisters-in-law), or jethanis (elder sisters-in-law)—often struggle to form genuine friendships with one another. The drive to assert dominance and seek validation frequently turns them into adversaries rather than allies. It encourages a reflection on the potential for women to transcend these limiting roles and cultivate true camaraderie among themselves. Moreover, it highlights the importance of women supporting one another, showing that uplifting each other creates a unique and powerful form of empowerment. This portrayal of solidarity among female characters adds depth to the narrative, showcasing the strength and resilience of female friendships.

Manju Maai's dialogues often focus on female power. She highlights the deplorable condition of women as well as uses language as a weapon to create awareness among them. She delivers a compelling line: "Khudka saath akele khushi se rehna bohot mushkil hai, Phool. Haan, ek baar seekh liya, koi tumhe takleef nahi pahuncha sakta." (01.01.50 *Laapataa Ladies*) This dialogue poignantly addresses the theme of loneliness and the societal tendency for women to remain in toxic, abusive relationships rather than embrace solitude. Manju Maai underscores the profound difficulty of achieving contentment alone, a struggle many women face. However, she emphasizes that mastering the art of self-contentment transforms one's resilience; once a woman learns to find happiness in herself, external threats and the pain inflicted by others lose their power. This reflection offers a critical commentary on the pressures and fears constraining women's choices while celebrating the liberating potential of self-acceptance and independence.

The statement in the film that women can farm and cook and can do every work and do not necessarily need men (*Laapataa Ladies*) highlights women's underappreciated capabilities and self-sufficiency. It suggests that women can manage essential aspects of life independently. If they recognized their strength and independence, it would disrupt

traditional power dynamics and challenge male dominance. This reflection underscores the potential threat that women's self-awareness poses to entrenched patriarchal structures.

However, as the story progresses, Phool Kumari begins to recognize the value of financial independence, understanding that it is crucial for her autonomy and sense of self-worth. Towards the film's end, Phool Kumari's growing awareness of the need for financial and emotional independence marks a turning point in her journey. This realization is crucial to her character development, highlighting a shift from dependency to self-sufficiency. The narrative suggests that financial autonomy is not just about money but about having control over one's life, decisions, and emotional balance. When Phool Kumari takes the train alone to reach her husband, it symbolizes her newfound courage and independence. This act of traveling alone, particularly in a society that often restricts women's mobility, represents her breaking away from traditional constraints. It is a literal and metaphorical journey towards self-reliance. By the film's end, when Phool Kumari takes her husband's name, it signifies more than a traditional gesture. It reflects her acceptance and ownership of her journey. She is not merely assuming her identity but affirming her growth and confidence in her abilities and decisions.

Phool Kumari's journey in the film is a nuanced portrayal of self-discovery and empowerment. As she faces challenges, she uncovers inner strengths and capabilities that drive her from dependency to independence. This process enhances her self-confidence and aligns with the film's broader themes of female empowerment and the significance of financial autonomy. Phool's evolution reflects a critical message about the importance of women asserting their identity and agency, ultimately emerging as a self-assured, independent individual. Jaya's evolution in *Laapataa Ladies* is a compelling narrative of self-discovery and transformation.

On the other hand, Jaya's journey is marked by significant self-realization. As she interacts with different characters and navigates her challenges, she begins to understand her desires, strengths, and potential beyond societal expectations. Jaya's actions and dialogues reflect a growing sense of empowerment throughout the film. She moves from a position of societal alienation to one of self-assertion, demonstrating resilience and self-worth. By the film's end, Jaya emerges more self-assured and independent. Her evolution is

complete as she integrates her newfound self-awareness into her identity, challenging conventional roles and asserting her place in a redefined personal and societal context.

However, this study exemplifies the strength that emerges when women support one another and the significance of challenging societal norms. The film emphasizes the transformative power of solidarity through the relationships formed between its female characters. For instance, Jaya unexpectedly becomes a confidante to Deepak's typically reserved sister-in-law, while Manju Mai plays a pivotal role in inspiring Phool to reassess her life. These connections highlight how female bonding can lead to profound personal growth and change, underscoring the film's message about the empowering nature of women standing together.

However, Kiran Rao's approach to language in her films is a powerful critique of patriarchal structures while empowering women to explore and express their identities in new ways. Kiran Rao's use of language by the female characters' in the film is to explore patriarchal dominance and female power in the film. By deliberately showcasing how traditional language has been used to uphold male superiority, she critiques the existing power dynamics and paves the way for alternative modes of expression. Language is not just a medium of communication but a powerful tool for liberation and self-expression, especially for women who have historically been marginalized and silenced. Though it is not clear that Rao's use of language is a feminist one or not but certainly in the film her language is rooted in women's lived experiences, desires, and perspectives, offering a new lens through which society can view gender and identity. Showalter states:

The appropriate task for feminist criticism is to concentrate on women's access to language...The problem is not that language is insufficient to express women's consciousness but that women have been denied the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism, or vagueness. (Showalter: 179)

Thus, accessing the full use of language can enable women to articulate their realities rather than being confined by the narratives imposed on them by a patriarchal society. Thus, Rao's film may not break away from conventional narratives and dialogue, but it allows her female characters to express themselves in ways that challenge societal

norms. This act of reclaiming language and describing women's problems, experiences and struggles is crucial. Using language as a tool for liberation, women can dismantle the traditional roles assigned to them and create a more equitable society.

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