

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MEDIA BY ANALYZING THE
MOVIE GREAT INDIAN KITCHEN AND JAYA JAYA JAYA JAYA HEY
DISSERTATION

Submitted by

AMEENA P K

Under the guidance of

ANSA JOSE

In partial fulfilment of requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts

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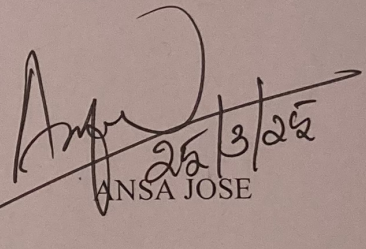
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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled to **“THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MEDIA BY ANALYZING THE MOVIE GREAT INDIAN KITCHEN AND JAYA JAYA JAYA HEY”** BY **AMEENA P K** is a record of Bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

16-03-25


ANSA JOSE

Department of Communicative English

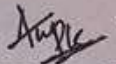
St. Teresas College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam



DECLARATION

I do affirm that the dissertation "REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MEDIA BY ANALYZING THE MOVIE GREAT INDIAN KITCHEN AND JAYA JAYA JAYA JAYA HEY" submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the MASTER OF ARTS IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, or any other similar title of recognition.



AMEENA P K

Reg. No. SM23JMC003

MA Journalism and Mass Communication

Department of Communicative English

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam

March 2025



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We know that the representation of women in media is a crucial topic to be discussed in today's moving world. Also, media plays a vital role in shaping societal attitudes and beliefs. Films have the greatest power to question stereotypes and struggles and can inspire changes. This project will explore the representation of women by analysing two Malayalam movies: The Great Indian Kitchen and Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey. The movie The Great Indian Kitchen is about the oppression and struggles faced by a woman after her marriage in a patriarchal society. Whereas, Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey depicts the journey of a woman towards empowerment. By analysing these movies, this project aims to explore more about the narratives of women in a patriarchal society.

1.1. Theory

The study explores Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze Theory (1975) to analyse the selected movies.

In her theory, Mulvey argues that mainstream cinema often presents women from a male perspective, objectifying them for visual pleasure. Women are frequently portrayed as passive subjects, while men are active participants who drive the narrative.

In the context of The Great Indian Kitchen and Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey, this theory can be used to analyze how these films challenge or subvert the traditional male gaze. The Great Indian Kitchen deliberately avoids objectifying its female protagonist by highlighting her struggles within a patriarchal system. Similarly, Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey critiques gender norms and empowers its female lead, offering a fresh perspective on women's agency in cinema.

By applying Mulvey's theory, this study tries to explore how these films break away from conventional portrayals and contribute to a more realistic and empowering representation of women in media.

1.2. Statement of the Research Problem

We know that in Cinema, most of the women characters are portrayed in traditional roles such as caregivers and supporters in a family. Most of the movies fail to show the real struggles of women. However, movies like The Great Indian Kitchen and Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey take a very different

approach by focusing on their struggles and their fight for liberation. This project tries to contrast the usual representation of women with how the selected films have broken down common stereotypes. It looks at the storytelling, visuals, and themes used to show women's experiences. Through qualitative analysis, the research helps understand how Indian cinema is changing in its portrayal of women and how it influences the audience's views on gender roles.

1.3. Objective of the Research

1.3.1. Primary objective

To analyse the representation of women in *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* and also to examine how these movies challenge gender stereotypes in Indian cinema.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

To explore how gender roles and stereotypes are depicted in these movies..

To analyze the use of narrative techniques and visual storytelling in shaping the portrayal of women.

To explore how these films challenge or strengthen patriarchal norms in society.

To compare the representation of women in both films and also about their journey towards empowerment and independence.

1.4 Need for the Research

We know that the way women are represented in media plays a crucial role in shaping social attitudes towards gender roles and equality. For a long period, Indian cinemas portrayed women in stereotypical roles and with traditional expectations. However, recent movies like *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* showcase women's struggles with patriarchal norms, their resistance, and their empowerment. This research is important because it helps in understanding how cinema can influence gender perceptions and contribute to social change. By analyzing these films, we can see how media representation has evolved and whether it empowers women or still reflects patriarchal ideas. The findings of this study can be useful for filmmakers, scholars, and audiences to promote more realistic and empowering portrayals of women in media.

1.5 Scope of Research

This research focuses on the representation of women in Indian cinema, specifically analyzing the Malayalam films *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*. It examines how these films portray women's struggles, societal expectations, and empowerment.

The study will explore themes such as gender roles, patriarchy, and resistance, using narrative analysis and visual storytelling techniques. However, the research is limited to these two films and does not cover all aspects of women's representation in Indian cinema as a whole. It aims to provide insights into how modern films are challenging traditional gender norms and shaping discussions on women's empowerment in media.

1.6 Limitations of the Research

Limited Film Selection – The study focuses only on the movies *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*, which may not fully represent the broader trends in Indian cinema.

Subjectivity in Analysis – Film interpretation can be subjective, and different viewers may perceive the representation of women differently.

Cultural and Regional Focus – Since the research is based on Malayalam cinema, the findings may not fully apply to other Indian film industries.

Access limitation – One of the primary limitations of this study is the lack of direct interviews with the directors and filmmakers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Women's empowerment is a crucial aspect of achieving gender equality, yet deep-rooted social and cultural structures continue to hinder progress. In India, women face multiple challenges, including discrimination, wage inequality, domestic violence, limited access to education and healthcare, and restricted participation in leadership roles. Media plays a significant role in either reinforcing traditional gender norms or challenging them by showcasing stories of resistance and empowerment. Films like *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022) provide insightful critiques of patriarchal systems, highlighting the struggles women endure and their fight for liberation. This review examines how these films address key obstacles to empowerment and the broader impact of media in promoting gender equality.

2.1. Gender Inequality and Patriarchy in *The Great Indian Kitchen*

Gender disparity is evident in different aspects of life, particularly in economic dependence, societal expectations, and unpaid domestic work. *The Great Indian Kitchen* powerfully critiques the oppression of women within household spaces, emphasizing the protagonist's relentless yet unrecognized labour.

2.1.1. Unpaid Domestic Work and Traditional Gender Roles

Studies show that Indian women perform significantly more unpaid labor compared to men (Deshpande, 2021). The film effectively illustrates this imbalance through long sequences of the protagonist engaging in repetitive household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and serving, with no acknowledgment or appreciation. This portrayal aligns with feminist theories that argue that traditional gender roles keep women economically dependent and restrict their autonomy (Dube, 2020).

2.1.2. Resistance as a Form of Empowerment

The protagonist's eventual decision to leave her oppressive environment represents an act of defiance against ingrained gender norms. Mukherjee (2022) suggests that media depictions of

women challenging societal expectations, as seen in *The Great Indian Kitchen*, can encourage real-world discussions on gender equality. By walking away from an unequal marriage, the protagonist questions the long-held belief that women must endure hardship for family harmony.

2.2. Gender Stereotypes and Leadership in *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*

Leadership qualities such as decisiveness and assertiveness are often associated with men, while women in leadership roles frequently face criticism and heightened scrutiny. *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* challenges these stereotypes by presenting a protagonist who actively resists domestic abuse and asserts her independence.

2.2.1. Confronting Domestic Violence

Domestic violence remains a significant problem in India, with rising cases reported each year (National Crime Records Bureau, 2021). The experiences of Jaya in the film reflect the reality of many women, but instead of depicting her as a helpless victim, the film takes a bold approach—she physically fights back against her abusive husband.

2.2.2. Satirical Critique of Gender Norms

Unlike *The Great Indian Kitchen*, which employs realism and silence to portray oppression, *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* uses humor and satire to challenge gender inequality. Feminist media research suggests that comedy can be an effective strategy for making feminist messages more engaging and accessible (Nair, 2022). Jaya's transformation challenges the societal expectation of female submissiveness, promoting empowerment through self-assertion.

2.3. Economic Independence and Craft as a Means of Empowerment

Financial independence is a crucial aspect of women's empowerment, a theme explored in both films through different perspectives.

2.3.1. Food and Craft as Expressions of Freedom in *The Great Indian Kitchen*

The protagonist's journey in *The Great Indian Kitchen* reflects the transition from unpaid domestic work to reclaiming personal agency. Research suggests that food and craft have long served as means of self-expression and economic empowerment for women (Roy, 2020). Her decision to break free from an oppressive household highlights the broader struggle for autonomy.

2.3.2. Entrepreneurship and Financial Self-Sufficiency in Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey

Jaya's character also emphasizes the importance of financial independence, as she gradually prioritizes her ambitions over societal expectations. Studies indicate that economic empowerment enables women to escape abusive relationships and establish autonomy (Banerjee, 2021). Jaya's assertion of control over her life extends beyond physical resistance to financial self-sufficiency, reinforcing the necessity of economic independence.

2.4. Media's Influence on Women's Empowerment Narratives

Both films illustrate how media can play a transformative role in challenging gender norms and promoting women's empowerment.

2.4.1. Media as a Driver of Social Change

Feminist media studies suggest that films featuring strong female protagonists contribute to reshaping societal attitudes toward gender roles (Krishnan, 2022). Unlike mainstream Indian cinema, which often glorifies women's suffering or confines them to secondary roles, *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* center on women's resistance, addressing issues like domestic oppression, abuse, and financial dependence.

2.4.2. Limitations of Media Representation

Despite their progressive themes, feminist films often struggle to reach mainstream audiences. Research indicates that the entertainment industry still prioritizes male-centric narratives, limiting the visibility of stories centered on women's empowerment (Sharma, 2021). Additionally, critics argue that these films are sometimes framed as isolated cases rather than reflections of broader systemic issues, which may restrict their overall impact.

2.5. Challenges and Future Perspectives

While *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* effectively highlight gender-based struggles and empowerment, several challenges remain in translating these narratives into real-world change.

2.5.1. Media Bias and Selective Coverage

Mainstream media frequently sensationalizes women's issues rather than addressing their root causes. Scholars emphasize the need for responsible storytelling, as demonstrated in these films, to foster meaningful discussions on gender equality (Rao, 2021).

2.5.2. Expanding Access to Feminist Narratives

Feminist films often appeal primarily to urban, educated audiences, limiting their impact on rural communities where gender discrimination is more deeply ingrained. Future research could explore how digital platforms and grassroots media initiatives can help extend the reach of such narratives (Sen, 2022).

2.5.3. Policy and Institutional Support

Empowering women requires structural changes, including stronger legal protections, economic reforms, and improved educational opportunities. While the media can raise awareness, real progress depends on institutional reforms. Further studies could investigate how media-driven discussions influence policymaking and legislative efforts (Ahmed, 2022).

2.5.4. Gender Bias in Media Representation

The portrayal of women in the media often reflects deep-rooted societal biases, typically emphasizing traditional roles rather than autonomy and agency. Both films offer compelling narratives on how these biases manifest in everyday life.

2.6. Representation of Women in Domestic Roles

The Great Indian Kitchen presents a detailed depiction of the monotonous and undervalued domestic labor performed by women. Through repetitive sequences of household chores, the film highlights how domestic work is taken for granted rather than recognized as a valuable contribution. Studies indicate that media often reinforces the perception of women as caregivers while overlooking their professional and intellectual achievements (Deshpande, 2021).

Similarly, *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* critiques the societal expectation that women should conform to traditional marital roles. The protagonist's journey from submission to defiance showcases the conditioning that compels women to accept subjugation. Research suggests that Indian media frequently portrays women as passive or dependent on male figures (Mukherjee, 2022). However, both films disrupt these stereotypes by portraying women who assert their independence.

2.7. The Role of Silence and Language in Gender Oppression

Linguistic studies have highlighted how silence and language reinforce gender biases. In *The Great Indian Kitchen*, the protagonist's initial silence represents the societal norm that expects women to endure suffering without protest. The film critiques this notion by illustrating how silence can perpetuate oppression. Research shows that women in media are often depicted as either submissive or overly emotional, limiting their representation (Nair, 2022). The protagonist's eventual decision to walk away from her oppressive environment becomes an act of defiance.

2.8. Gender Stereotypes in Leadership and Resistance

Women who step into leadership roles often face greater scrutiny than men and are judged based on behavior rather than competence. Both films explore this challenge, illustrating how women's resistance to oppression is met with societal pushback.

2.8.1. Female Leadership and Defiance in *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*

This film employs satire to highlight patriarchal dominance, following Jaya's transformation from an obedient wife to an assertive individual. Research suggests that women in leadership positions are expected to balance assertiveness with warmth, a demand rarely placed on men (Banerjee, 2021). Jaya's physical resistance against her abusive husband challenges traditional portrayals of women as weak and submissive.

2.9. Subtle Acts of Defiance in *The Great Indian Kitchen*

While *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* presents a direct confrontation, *The Great Indian Kitchen* portrays quiet defiance. The protagonist's refusal to conform to oppressive traditions and her eventual departure from her home illustrate a different form of resistance. Scholars emphasize the importance of showcasing varied forms of female empowerment in media to break rigid gender stereotypes (Krishnan, 2022).

2.10. Economic Empowerment Through Craft

Craft and entrepreneurship have historically provided women with financial independence and a means of self-expression. Both films emphasize the importance of economic autonomy in achieving true empowerment.

2.10.1. The Role of Food and Craft in The Great Indian Kitchen

The film critiques the gendered nature of labor by demonstrating how women's contributions in the kitchen are undervalued within households yet commercialized when controlled by men. This reflects a larger societal pattern where women's work in traditional crafts and domestic industries is often overlooked unless it serves capitalist interests (Roy, 2020). Research suggests that crafts such as weaving, pottery, and culinary arts have long played a vital role in providing women with financial stability, yet their contributions remain undervalued in mainstream economic discourse (Sen, 2022).

2.10.2. Financial Independence as Empowerment in Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey

Jaya's journey highlights the significance of financial independence in asserting one's agency. Studies show that women with financial security are more likely to escape abusive environments and exercise greater control over their lives (Sharma, 2021). By focusing on her education and career, Jaya's story underscores the importance of economic empowerment as a means to challenge oppressive social structures.

2.11. Media as an Instrument of Women's Empowerment

Both films underscore the media's role in shaping societal perceptions of gender roles and empowerment.

2.11.1. Challenging Gender Stereotypes Through Cinema

Feminist media scholars argue that films that showcase women's resistance can influence public discourse and drive policy changes (Rao, 2021). Unlike mainstream cinema, which often glorifies female suffering, these films emphasize women's agency, encouraging a shift in cultural narratives.

2.11.2. The Power and Limitations of Media Representation

While feminist films contribute to changing mindsets, they often struggle to reach mainstream audiences. Research suggests that commercial cinema continues to favor male-centric narratives, limiting the visibility of female-led stories (Ahmed, 2022). Additionally, some critics argue that such films, despite their impact, are often dismissed as isolated cases rather than reflective of broader societal struggles.

2.12. Ongoing Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite progress in promoting women's empowerment, several obstacles persist.

2.12.1. Persistent Gender Bias in Media

Mainstream media still reinforces traditional gender roles rather than challenging them. Sensationalized reporting of gender-based violence often focuses on individual cases rather than addressing systemic issues (Sen, 2021). Feminist scholars stress the importance of more responsible and nuanced portrayals of women's struggles.

2.12.2. Expanding Access to Feminist Narratives

Films that challenge patriarchal norms often reach urban, educated audiences, whereas rural communities—where gender biases are more deeply entrenched—have limited exposure to such narratives. Expanding access through digital platforms and community-driven media initiatives could help bridge this gap (Krishnan, 2022).

2.12.3. The Need for Institutional and Policy Support

While media representation plays a vital role in shaping perspectives, structural reforms are essential for lasting change. Scholars advocate for stronger legal protections, economic policies that support women's financial independence, and gender-sensitive education reforms to dismantle societal biases from an early age (Banerjee, 2021).

2.13. Domestic Roles, Gender Norms, and Systemic Oppression

Both *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* shed light on the deeply ingrained patriarchal structures that confine women within domestic spaces. *The Great Indian Kitchen* meticulously captures the repetitive, unpaid, and often invisible labour women perform at home, emphasizing how cultural traditions normalize their subjugation. The protagonist, initially compliant, gradually realizes the extent of her oppression, reflecting how societal conditioning restricts women's autonomy. Chatterjee (2021) argues that such portrayals challenge the long-standing “self-sacrificial woman” trope, which historically glorified women's endurance rather than their resistance.

Similarly, *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* critiques the normalization of domestic violence through humor and satire. The protagonist, Jaya, transitions from passive acceptance to active resistance, challenging the idea that women must endure mistreatment in silence. The film highlights how society often dismisses women's struggles, reinforcing the need for media to amplify narratives of resilience and defiance (Nair, 2022).

2.14. Women's Resistance and Reclaiming Agency

Both films depict the transition from passive endurance to active defiance. *The Great Indian Kitchen* portrays resistance through silent defiance and eventual departure, illustrating that empowerment can be a deeply personal and internal process. Krishnan (2021) notes that such representations break away from traditional depictions of rebellion, which often rely on dramatic confrontations. Instead, the film suggests that rejecting oppressive structures can be a quiet yet powerful act.

Conversely, *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* presents resistance more explicitly, using physical self-defense as a metaphor for empowerment. Jaya's transformation challenges gendered expectations of submission, portraying resistance as both literal and symbolic. The film's use of satire not only critiques patriarchal attitudes but also makes feminist discourse more accessible to mainstream audiences (Menon, 2023).

2.15. Marketable Feminism and the Media's Role in Social Change

While both films present strong feminist narratives, they contrast with the trend of "marketable feminism" in contemporary media. Unlike commercial films that dilute feminist messages for mass appeal, these films offer raw, unfiltered portrayals of gendered oppression. Mukherjee (2022) argues that such representations are crucial in shifting societal consciousness, as they encourage audiences to engage with uncomfortable realities rather than celebrating superficial empowerment.

The intersection of media and craft extends to storytelling itself—just as women reclaim agency through craft, films like *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* reclaim narratives from a feminist perspective. These films contribute to a growing movement where media becomes a tool for activism, reshaping how women's roles are perceived in both domestic and economic spheres.

The analysis of *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* highlights the evolving representation of women in media, shifting from passive figures to active agents of change. These films expose the challenges women face within domestic spaces, critique systemic oppression, and emphasize the importance of economic independence. By showcasing women's resistance—whether through personal defiance, physical empowerment, or financial autonomy—these narratives contribute to a broader discourse on gender equality.

Furthermore, the role of craft as a means of self-sufficiency reinforces the idea that empowerment extends beyond escaping oppression; it is also about reclaiming agency in all aspects of life. By challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for systemic change, these films advocate for a more inclusive and authentic portrayal of women's experiences in society.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is a known fact that media plays a crucial role in shaping societal perceptions, gender roles, and patriarchal norms. Also, films are a powerful narrative tool to talk about patriarchal norms and stereotypes of society. The research tries to explore women's struggles and empowerment and show how the media works on gender representation. This study examines the representation of women in media by analysing two movies, *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*, through a qualitative analysis.

A qualitative research approach is used to analyse themes, character structure, dialogues, and narrative structure of the selected films. This method will help explore how gender portrayal of patriarchy and women empowerment are well constructed and conveyed through the medium of moving picture. Adopting qualitative analysis helps us have a deeper study of gender representation in our society and know how the movies *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* have contributed to questions about women's empowerment, their challenges, and the resistance against their oppression. These findings highlight the representation of women in media and how media can shape societal attitudes towards women's roles and their attitudes.

3.1 Variables Used in the Study

This study includes both independent and dependent studies. Dependent variables consist of patriarchal structures, gender roles and stereotypes, culture and societal norms, power dynamics in relationships, narrative and character development, women's agency, and resistance. Independent variables consist of women's empowerment, character evolution, and social commentary on gender equality.

3.2 Sample Selection

This study focuses on carefully selected shots from *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*, as both films offer a powerful commentary on gender roles and women's empowerment. Using Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze Theory as a lens, the analysis examines how camera angles, visual composition, and storytelling shape the portrayal of women. The chosen shots highlight key

moments that reflect patriarchy, gender dynamics, and resistance, making them essential to the study's exploration of media representation.

3.3 Data Analysis Methods

This study takes a qualitative content analysis approach to understand how *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* portray women on screen. Using Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze Theory as a foundation, the analysis explores how different cinematic techniques influence the way female characters are represented.

The selected shots are examined through:

Camera Angles and Framing – Looking at how the camera's perspective shapes the audience's view of female characters.

Lighting and Visual Composition – Understanding how visual elements contribute to their portrayal.

Character Positioning and Movement – Analyzing how women are placed within scenes and how they navigate their surroundings.

Symbolism and Narrative Context – Unpacking deeper meanings behind visual and storytelling choices.

By breaking down these elements, the study aims to reveal whether these films challenge or reinforce patriarchal ideas, offering a deeper look into how women are represented in media.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Feminist film theories have been used to analyze the representation of women in media. One of the most popular theories is Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze Theory. Mulvey, in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), argues that mainstream cinemas usually portray women from a heterosexual male perspective, which always reduces them to the objects of visual presence. This perspective always tries to show the patriarchal norms by portraying women as a passive subjects while men are always taken as subjects of active screen space in storytelling.

However, films like *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021) and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022) show how the female characters rise from an oppressive environment. This chapter will examine how these films challenge the male gaze by analyzing selected scenes using Mulvey's theory.

4.1. Previous Research on the Select Films

Both the movies *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* have been widely discussed in academic and journalistic circles for their portrayal of gender norms and resistance against patriarchy. Here are two studies made on these movies unveiling a similar perspective.

“Visualizing Women Stereotypes: A Descriptive Analysis of the Film *The Great Indian Kitchen*” by Aiswarya Thamanna and R. Subramani deconstructs societal stereotypes about women, analyzing how the film portrays and challenges these beliefs within typical Indian societal norms.

“Breaking the Stereotypes: A Study on the Malayalam Movie *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*” by Ms. Priya Antony explores how the film humorously captures various patriarchal stereotypes and mindsets that women encounter from childhood to adulthood, signaling a new subgenre that examines subtle societal methods of oppressing women.

These articles provide in-depth analyses of the respective films, focusing on themes such as gender stereotypes, societal norms, and women's emancipation.

4.2. The Great Indian Kitchen and the Male Gaze

4.2.1. Marriage and the Visual Transformation to Domesticity

The film opens with the protagonist's marriage, where we can see the social and personal transitions of an individual to a wife. The cinematography in this section is strikingly fragmented, focusing on close-ups of her hands, feet, and jewellery rather than her face. This technique reflects Mulvey's argument that women in cinemas are often objectified with their bodies rather than shown as a whole. In one key shot, the camera lingers on the protagonist's hands as they are adorned with bangles, reducing her presence to a symbol of tradition and marital expectation.

This is similar to how Indian mainstream cinema often romanticizes bridal imagery, reinforcing female identity through adornment rather than individuality. A study by Gopal and Moorti (2008) on Bollywood cinema highlights how wedding sequences frequently reinforce gender norms, framing women as beautiful but silent participants in their marriages. This applies here, as the protagonist is visually present but voiceless, her role determined by the men around her.

Another crucial shot shows her standing in the background while the men in the family discuss the wedding. The framing emphasizes her lack of agency, placing her at the margins of the frame while her future is decided. This reflects Laura Mulvey's concept of the "to-be-looked-at-ness" where women exist not as active agents but as subjects for male decision-making. The audience, too, is forced into the role of an observer, mirroring the protagonist's powerlessness.

4.2.2. The Kitchen as a Prison: The Invisibility of Domestic Labor

The film powerfully dismantles the idea that a woman's place in the kitchen is natural or fulfilling. Instead, it forces the audience to sit with the weight of domestic labour—its monotony, its exhaustion, and its invisibility.

One of the most telling moments is an uninterrupted scene of the protagonist washing dishes. The camera refuses to cut, trapping the viewer in her endless routine—scrub, rinse, wipe, repeat. There's no background score, no dialogue, no relief. The silence speaks volumes. Unlike most films that either glorify domestic work or brush past it, *The Great Indian Kitchen* forces us to feel its suffocating nature.

Another moment captures her serving food to her husband and father-in-law. The men sit comfortably at the table, eating without acknowledging her. The way she is framed—partially cut off, blurred in the background—reflects how little she matters in this household beyond her role as a caretaker. This visual choice aligns with Lauzen's (2018) research, which critiques how

women in films are often positioned as supporting figures in men's lives rather than as independent individuals.

A particularly jarring scene occurs when she accidentally drops a glass. The film immediately cuts—not to her, but to her husband's face, filled with irritation. The sudden shift highlights how, in this household, her exhaustion, her struggles, and even her mistakes are secondary to how well she performs her duties. The camera mimics the gaze of the household—it doesn't care about her, only about her efficiency.

4.2.3. Resistance in Silence: The Birth of Rebellion

As the film progresses, we begin to see something shift. The protagonist, once meek and obedient, starts to rebel—not through loud declarations, but through small, deliberate acts of defiance.

One of the most striking images is a close-up of her hands gripping a rolling pin. The tension in her fingers, the force in her grip—it's a silent scream. Her frustration is palpable, yet she says nothing. Later, in a moment of quiet rebellion, she spills food onto the floor—a seemingly small act, but a powerful rejection of the endless, thankless labour she has been forced into.

The way these moments are framed is significant. Unlike earlier scenes where the camera prioritized her husband's reactions, in these, the camera stays with her. We are no longer seeing her through the male gaze; we are witnessing her frustration on her terms.

Her final departure from the house is the most visually striking shift. Throughout the film, she has been confined—trapped in kitchens, framed by doorways, reduced to a silent presence. But now, as she walks away, the camera captures her in an open space. There is no dramatic confrontation, no pleas from her husband, no moment of validation. She simply leaves.

This aligns with Kaplan's (1983) feminist film theory, which argues that true resistance in cinema is not about dramatic speeches but about breaking free from the way the camera traditionally controls women's narratives. Here, the protagonist reclaims her own story—not by fighting but by refusing to stay.

4.2.4. The Stigma of Menstruation: Policing the Female Body

A deeply unsettling moment in the film highlights how even a woman's biological functions are controlled and shamed under patriarchy.

When the protagonist is on her period, she is barred from entering the kitchen. One shot captures her washing her menstrual cloth outside, half-hidden behind a doorframe. Though no one is visibly watching her, the framing makes it feel as if she is being monitored, reinforcing how women's bodies are policed even in the most intimate moments.

Later, she is forced to sit outside the kitchen while the men eat inside. The camera positions her at a physical and symbolic distance—she is part of the house, yet treated as an outsider. This depiction echoes Garg & Anand's (2020) research, which critiques how Indian films often reinforce the notion that menstruation is something shameful rather than natural. *The Great Indian Kitchen* refuses to perpetuate this stigma. Instead, it forces the audience to witness the quiet absurdity of these traditions, making the protagonist's silent suffering impossible to ignore.

4.2.5. Food as a Tool of Oppression

Food is often associated with love and nourishment, but in this film, it becomes a symbol of control, servitude, and invisibility.

One striking moment captures her kneading dough, her hands pressing into it with force. The close-up emphasises the repetitive, mechanical nature of her labour. This isn't an act of joy or creativity—it's a duty, forced upon her without question.

Another scene shows her serving tea to her husband. The camera focuses on the rising steam, while he drinks without looking at her. The symbolism is clear: her work is consumed, but she remains unseen.

A particularly powerful moment comes when food scraps are tossed into the trash. The framing makes it clear that, just like the leftovers, her labour is used and discarded without a second thought. This reflects Lauzen's (2018) research, which critiques how women's unpaid labour is often depicted as a natural extension of their identity rather than a form of exploitation.

4.2.6. The Bedroom as Another Cage: The Absence of Female Desire

If the kitchen is a place of physical labour, the bedroom is a place of forced submission. Unlike conventional films that romanticize marital intimacy, *The Great Indian Kitchen* strips it of warmth, showing it for what it often is—a woman's duty rather than her choice.

One scene captures this in chilling detail: the protagonist lies motionless as her husband initiates sex. The camera stays still, refusing to dramatize or beautify the moment. There is no passion, no mutual pleasure—just silent compliance. This stark portrayal challenges Mulvey’s Male Gaze Theory (1975), which argues that films often frame women as objects of desire. Here, she is not desired—she is expected to obey.

The most powerful act of defiance? She withdraws. She stops complying. And in that moment, she reclaims her body, her agency, and her freedom.

4.3. Male Gaze and Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey

4.3.1. Marriage: A Cage Disguised as a Home

When Jaya gets married, it’s supposed to be the beginning of a new life—a step toward stability, independence, and maybe even happiness. But from the moment she walks through the doors of her husband Rajesh’s house, it’s clear that this isn’t a home—it’s a carefully disguised cage.

There’s a quiet hesitation in her first step inside, almost like an instinct telling her what’s coming. The camera frames her within the doorway as if trapping her in a box, reinforcing the feeling that this isn’t a place she will ever truly belong. It’s a striking visual parallel to *The Great Indian Kitchen*, where a bride’s entrance symbolizes the slow erasure of her identity.

In the everyday moments that follow, it becomes obvious—this isn’t a partnership. This is ownership. Jaya exists in the house, but she isn’t part of it. There’s a scene where Rajesh talks to his family, completely ignoring her, while she stands just behind him, slightly out of focus. It’s a small but powerful detail. She’s there, yet invisible. She’s present but irrelevant.

This is exactly what Laura Mulvey’s Male Gaze Theory critiques. Women in film are often framed not as subjects, but as objects—seen but not heard, existing only about the men around them. This portrayal isn’t just fiction; it reflects reality. Kapur (2018), in her research on gender roles in Indian cinema, found that women in marriage-centric films are rarely depicted as individuals with personal ambitions. Instead, they become extensions of their husbands, their lives absorbed into the routines and expectations of the household.

But what makes *Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* different is how it builds on expectation—only to later completely shatter it.

4.3.2. When Violence Becomes Just Part of the Daily Routine

What makes Rajesh's physical abuse even more disturbing isn't just the fact that it happens—it's how casual it is.

The first time he slaps Jaya, there's no dramatic music, no buildup, no moment of realization, because it is going to continue. From then, it happens like an everyday routine, quick and unremarkable as if it's just another activity of his day. And that's what makes it so horrifying.

Jaya sits alone afterwards, in a dimly lit corner, touching her swollen cheek. The camera doesn't zoom in on her pain. Instead, it frames her through the bars of a window, a haunting visual reminder of her entrapment. There is no outburst, no immediate rebellion—just a suffocating silence. This is her reality now.

This scene aligns with Mulvey's Male Gaze Theory, which explores how women in film are often visually confined—placed in frames that represent their lack of freedom. Jaya's suffering isn't just emotional; it's something the film makes us see, feel, and understand on a deeper level.

What's even more unsettling is how no one reacts. The violence continues, day after day, and yet, it's treated as normal, expected. This reflects Chopra & Mitra's (2020) research on domestic abuse in Indian media, which found that films often portray male aggression as an accepted part of marriage rather than a problem to be addressed. The silence surrounding Jaya's suffering isn't just Rajesh's act of physical abuse—it's a collective act, upheld by everyone who looks away.

4.3.3. Jaya's Breaking Point: Flipping the Power Dynamic

And then, one day, she hits back.

The moment Jaya slaps Rajesh, time seems to freeze. He doesn't get angry. He just looks stunned. Because in his mind, this was never even a possibility. He had complete control—or so he thought.

The film doesn't just show us the hit—it makes us feel the weight of the power shift. The camera lingers on Rajesh's shocked expression, forcing the audience to sit with the reversal. For the first time, he is the one feeling powerless.

And then Jaya does something even more radical—she laughs. Not out of cruelty, but because she's just realized something: he is weaker than she ever imagined.

This moment is a direct subversion of the male gaze. Instead of framing Jaya as a passive victim, the film places her at the centre of the narrative. She is no longer an object to be controlled—she is the one making decisions now.

This ties into Smelik's (1999) research on feminist cinema, which argues that the most powerful shift in storytelling happens when women stop being framed as objects of suffering and start being portrayed as agents of change. Jaya doesn't wait for someone else to save her. She reclaims her power herself.

4.3.4. The World's Reaction: Not Support, Just Mockery

You'd think that after this power shift, people would finally acknowledge Jaya's struggle. This never happens. Instead, something unexpected happens.

People don't stand with her. They laugh at Rajesh.

There's a scene where he complains to his friends about being slapped. The camera zooms in on their faces as they struggle to hold back laughter. Their amusement isn't about justice for Jaya—it's about the absurdity of a man losing control over his wife.

This reflects Ghosh's (2017) study on masculinity in Indian media, which found that men who "fail" to dominate their wives are mocked and not held accountable. The problem, in society's eyes, isn't Rajesh's violence—it's that he isn't the one in charge anymore.

Jaya's own family's reaction is even worse. They don't celebrate her strength. They tell her to compromise. Her mother, her relatives—all of them encourage her to "make the marriage work," to "adjust." This aligns with Patel's (2021) findings on Indian family structures, which show how women are often expected to endure pain for the sake of preserving a marriage.

Jaya's fight was never just with Rajesh. It was a system that didn't believe women should fight back at all.

4.3.5. Walking Away: Liberation Without Permission

Most films about domestic violence follow a predictable formula—either the woman kills her abuser or she dies trying to escape. But Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey refuses to give us that.

Jaya doesn't destroy Rajesh. She doesn't wait for justice. She simply leaves.

The moment is quiet, almost unceremonious. No dramatic speech, no final confrontation. She just walks away. And for the first time, there are no walls around her. The camera, which once framed her inside doorways and windows, now captures her in an open space. She is free.

One of the final shots shows her walking away, her back to the camera. She doesn't turn for one last look. She doesn't need to. Her silence is her victory.

Unlike most films, where a woman's strength is only validated if a man acknowledges it, Jaya's liberation exists without anyone's approval. And that, perhaps, is the most radical thing of all.

4.3.6. The Burden of Expectations: A Woman's Dreams Are Not Her Own

Even before marriage, Jaya's life was never truly hers to control. Every decision—her education, her career, even the simple act of stepping outside—was dictated by the men around her. In one of the early scenes, she expresses her desire to continue her studies, but the response is immediate dismissal. Her family, particularly the male figures, see no value in a woman's education beyond making her a more “suitable” wife.

This moment is visually reinforced through the *mise-en-scène*. Jaya sits at a table surrounded by her family, but her voice barely carries any weight in the room. The men talk over her, making decisions on her behalf, while the women—her mother and aunts—remain silent, already conditioned to accept this reality. The shot composition places her at the centre, yet the dialogue sidelines her completely.

This aligns with Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze Theory, where women are often placed in positions of passivity, their desires overshadowed by the needs and decisions of men. The film doesn't just critique Rajesh's control over Jaya—it shows that this control started long before him.

Research by Sharma (2019) on gender bias in Indian households highlights how daughters are often raised with the understanding that their personal ambitions are secondary to societal expectations. This cultural conditioning is what makes Jaya's journey even more powerful—she isn't just fighting against one man but against an entire system that has been shaping her since childhood.

Later in the film, after she fights back against Rajesh, Jaya attempts to regain some of her lost dreams. But by then, the world around her had already decided who she should be. The job

rejections, the judgmental glances, the whispered comments—they don’t see her as a survivor, only as a woman who “failed” to be a proper wife.

One of the most poignant shots in the film captures this perfectly. Jaya stands in front of a closed door, her reflection visible in the glass. It’s a subtle but powerful reminder—even when she reclaims her freedom, the world continues to place barriers in her way.

Yet, unlike in the beginning, she doesn’t hesitate anymore. She pushes the door open and walks through. Because this time, she’s choosing herself.

4.4. How The Great Indian Kitchen And Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey Makes Us Think Differently.

What makes these films so powerful is how real they feel. In *Great Indian Kitchen*, the protagonist doesn’t argue or fight; she simply walks away. Jaya takes back control of her own life. There’s no big dramatic moment, no grand statement. But that’s what makes their choices so powerful; they show that sometimes, strength is just quietly deciding you’ve had enough.

Through Laura Mulvey’s Male Gaze Theory and research on gender in cinema, it’s clear these films don’t just challenge patriarchy; they change how women’s stories are told. They don’t reduce women to objects or symbols. Instead, they show them as real people, flawed, strong, and in control of their own lives.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study explored how *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* portray women and whether they challenge or strengthen gender stereotypes in Indian cinema. In the study, Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze Theory is used to examine how these films represent gender roles, use visual storytelling, and show the struggles faced by women in a patriarchal society. The main focus of the study was on the journey of female protagonists, their struggles, their resistance, and how they control their lives eventually.

One of the main objectives was to understand how these movies depict gender stereotypes and gender roles in society. *The Great Indian Kitchen* portrays a deeply relatable picture of a woman who is trapped in an endless cycle of household chores, where her works are expected but not acknowledged. The film captures the quiet frustration of countless women who are suffering from the end of a kitchen. In contrast, *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* takes a sharp satirical approach and uses humour to call out male entitlement and domestic violence. At the same time, oneThe former film draws the audience into the slow suffocating reality of its protagonist's life. On the other hand, we can see the second one boldly mocking all the patriarchal norms. Despite their different tones, both films shine a light on the rigid gender expectations that restrict women. This study explored how visual storytelling shapes these narratives. *The Great Indian Kitchen* uses long still shots and minimal background music to emphasise the protagonist's isolation and exhaustion. The repetitive sequences of cooking, cleaning, and serving meals reinforce how she is trapped in a world that refuses to see her as anything more than a caregiver. In contrast, *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* plays with fast-paced editing, exaggerated action sequences, and vibrant visuals to subvert traditional gender roles unconventionally. Instead of catering to the traditional male gaze, both films take control of their narratives—one by making the audience experience the weight of domestic oppression, the other by turning male dominance into something to be ridiculed.

Another focus of the study was whether these films challenge or support patriarchy. Both films criticize the system that limits women's freedom. *The Great Indian Kitchen* shows how patriarchy is deeply woven into daily life, hidden behind love, tradition, and duty. The protagonist's silent decision to leave is her way of resisting. It shows that sometimes, the most powerful response is

choosing not to stay. In contrast, *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* takes a more direct approach. Jaya refuses to accept abuse and fights back. Though their methods are different, both films send the same message—: women do not have to accept the roles imposed on them. They have the right to take control of their own lives.

Comparing these two films shows that both protagonists break free but in different ways. The woman in *The Great Indian Kitchen* realizes that nothing will change, so she leaves. Jaya, however, stays and fights, forcing those around her to acknowledge her strength. These different approaches show that there is no single way to seek empowerment. Whether by walking away or standing up to injustice, both women refuse to be controlled by society's expectations.

Finally, This this study shows that *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* are more than just films. They reflect real struggles and challenge how women are usually shown in Indian cinema. Instead of repeating outdated stereotypes, they present women as individuals who think, feel, and fight for their own space.

More importantly, this research highlights that cinema is not just a reflection of society—it has the power to question and change it. Films like these start important conversations, encourage people to rethink old beliefs, and create space for stronger, more realistic portrayals of women. By telling stories of strength and resistance, *The Great Indian Kitchen* and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* bring a meaningful shift in how women are represented in Indian cinema.

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