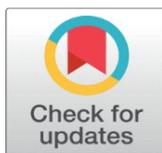
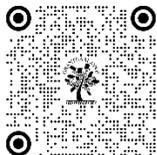


VIRTUOSITY OF RAJA RAVI VARMA AND SHYAM BENEAL'S BHUMIKA – A VISUAL RELATION

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ABSTRACT

Aside from providing amusement and beauty, art and film have always served as a reflection of society and culture. Both the arts and film have had an impact on society. The works produced in both mediums have received recognition and acclaim on a global scale. Artists draw inspiration from the world around them to produce works of art. In his classical paintings, the well-known artist Raja Ravi Varma addressed "Art" and "Life" aesthetically by blending true Indian mythological sense with European Academic Art. Indian Modern Art Movement can be traced back to the exploration in Varma's works of art. Similar to this, film directors try to depict place, time, and common practices using their actors. This analysis of *Bhumika*¹ (Role), a feature film by Benegal, aims to give a broad overview of the film's formal components as they symbolise the avant-garde ideal of balancing "Art" and "Life." The essay is an analytical attempt to look at art and life in relation to Raja Ravi Varma's artworks and the female character in the film *Bhumika*.

Keywords: Costumes, *Bhumika*, Raja Ravi Varma, Shyam Benegal

¹ The 1977 Indian movie *Bhumika* (Role) was directed by Shyam Benegal. Smita Patil, Amol Palekar, Anant Nag, Naseeruddin Shah, and Amrish Puri are the movie's stars. The movie, which centres on a person's search for identity and self-fulfillment, is apparently based on the Marathi-language memoirs, *Sangtye Aika*, of the well-known Marathi stage and screen actress of the 1940s, Hansa Wadkar, who led a flamboyant and unusual life. Two National Film Awards and the Filmfare Best Movie Award were given to the movie. It received invitations to the Carthage Film Festival in 1978, the Chicago Film Festival, where it won the Golden Plaque in 1978, and the Festival of Images in Algeria in 1986.

1. INTRODUCTION

Raja Ravi Varma the renowned Indian artist used the European academic art movement in India with real Indian mythical sensibility to address societal significance aesthetically in his classical paintings. He started the Indian Modern Art Movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century. One of the best painters in Indian art history, Ravi Varma was an Indian painter and artist who was born in Kilimnoor to an aristocratic Travancore family. He is renowned for his incredible paintings, many of which are inspired by classic Indian epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. In many ways, Indian culture, religion, and tradition are greatly influenced by the two great epics, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata. [Sengupta \(2011\)](#) contends that these epic tales are transmitted to future generations not through books but rather through the traditions and cultural milieu in which one is born. He adds that neither of the two epics is regarded as the inspired word of God. But just as the Bible and Greek mythology must historically represent Westerners, these tremendous traditions function as pure denotations for Hindus. One of the few painters, Ravi Varma, was able to successfully combine Indian culture with academic painting methods. He is regarded as one of the most well-known Indian artists in part because of this. With his flawless oleograph and lithograph methods, Varma is also credited with popularising Indian style and household posters throughout the world. His depictions of Hindu deities eventually inspired many people from lower classes to worship these deities. These people were frequently prohibited from accessing temples during that time, so they brought these reasonably priced prints of gods into their homes to worship. All people adored the beauty of South Indian women, which Varma's paintings emphasised. By portraying ladies with their emotions and wearing modest interpretations of Indian clothing, most notably the saree and its embellishments, he unmistakably caught the melancholy of Indian culture.

With around sixteen different Indian languages, including English, and across its States and Union Territories, India is the largest film producer in the world. Let's first grasp the history of cinema in India and examine the forerunners of cinema before we attempt to analyse the movie in question. Modern Indian Theatre began when a theatre was built in Belgachia, a region in north Kolkata, during the time that cinema first appeared in India, about 1825. At the time, it was under British colonial rule [Deshpandé et al. \(1993\)](#). One of the first Bengali dramas created and performed at this time was *Buro Shalikher Ghaare Roa* (1860) by Michael Madhusudan Dutt. At the same time, Girish Chandra's performance of Dinabandhu Mitra's play *Nil Darpan* (1858–1859) at the national theatre in Kolkata sparked both praise and criticism for portraying the misery and tragedy of indigo growing in rural Bengal and playing a significant role in the indigo uprising. Despite being ruthlessly put down, the indigo farmers' uprising had a profound effect on the government, which created the Indigo Commission in 1860. [Yarrow \(2001\)](#).

The Lumière brothers' short films, which had their premiere on December 28, 1895, in Paris, were a breakthrough in the use of projected images for both entertainment and communication, giving rise to a new kind of media known as cinematographic motion pictures. Though there had been earlier cinematic successes and showings, neither their calibre nor their momentum matched the Cinématographe Lumière's ascent to fame [Gokulsing and Dissanayake \(2004\)](#). Soon after, film production companies popped up all over the world. During the first ten years of the motion picture industry, film went from being a novelty to becoming a well-established mass entertainment industry. The original motion pictures had no

sound and were in black and white and lasted less than a minute [Khanna \(2003\)](#). The first professionally produced feature film, *Raja Harishchandra* was released in 1913. The film was created by Dhundiraj Govind Phalke (1870–1944), known as the "Father of Indian Cinema" [Bose \(2008\)](#). Phalke watched the English movie "Life of Christ," which inspired him to start visualising images of Indian gods and goddesses. He was obsessed by the desire to see Indian imagery on the big screen in a wholly Swadeshi endeavour.

The British government, which was dominating India at the time of World War II, used cinema as a medium to spread war propaganda for a brief period in 1939. They established a film advisory council in Mumbai and ordered a few movies, including Khwaja Ahmed Abbas' *Dharti Ke Lal* (soils of the Son) [Srivastava \(2017\)](#). *Neecha Nagar* (The Lower City) won the "Best Human Document" prize at the 1948 Cannes Film Festival, while *Doctor Kotnis ki Amar Kahani* and *Dharti Ke Lal* were also well-liked movies. The majority of Indian films made in 1947 represented hope, romance, great aspiration, values, freedom, and the victory of the liberation fight [Agarwal \(2014\)](#). New social issues were attempted in movies like *Samaj ko Badal dalo* (Change the society) by Vijay Bhatt, *Sindoor* (about widow remarriage) by Kishore Sahu, *Shaheed* (The Martyr) by Ramesh Saigal, *Hum Bhi Insaan Hai* (We are humans) by Phani Majumdar, and many others. The modern Indian cinema industry started to take shape about 1947. During this time, the movie industry had a tremendous and unprecedented development. Famous filmmakers like Satyajit Ray and Bimal Roy made movies about the daily difficulties and survival of the lower caste [Singh and Pandey \(2020\)](#). Films with social messages started to take centre stage while historical and mythological subjects started to fade away. Prostitution, dowry, polygamy, and other social problems that were prevalent at the time were topics covered in these movies. Most movies had mastered the melodrama style by this point. At this point, music was a necessary element of the typical Indian movie [Dwyer and Patel \(2002\)](#).

Characters appear in movies dressed appropriately and surrounded by the suitable environment. However, there is a clear mystery at the heart of the historical ensemble concept since it might not be possible to carefully replicate earlier styles, shapes, and textures. (2002) Street The audience's comprehension that the movie is historically accurate doesn't depend on any particular knowledge of the past; rather, it comes from recognising obvious clues and visual depictions of things that are thought to be plausible. The most shocking examples of this peculiarity are renderings of famous historical persons wearing clothes, when it is crucial to include certain crucial signals to convince the audience that it is the life and seasons of this particular character that are being shown [Edensor \(2016\)](#).

The ethos and ideologies of every civilization at any given moment have always been reflected in cinema. The personalities became the most important medium, but other elements such as clothing, music, and opulent objects were also used to emphasise this reflection. The characters' worldview, way of thinking, concerns, or prejudices were the same as those of the general public [Hayward \(2002\)](#). Through clothing elements that can serve as symbols, film costumes create their implications. As a result, the costumes seen in the movie can also be viewed in a semiotic context. The Semiotician's job in the Saussurean method is to look past the specific elements of clothing, such as tone, texture, surface, lines, and motifs. Semiotics can be used to anything that should be perceived as suggesting anything, in general, to everything that has importance within a society. In fact, one can use semiotic analysis to any dramatic art and trade, including dancing, make-up, clothing, and scene planning,

even within the context of theatrical expressions. Semiotics examines everything that denotes a distinct meaning from what we typically refer to as clothing signs. Signs in costumes can be seen as colours, symbols, graphics, fabrics, and types of clothing and adornments [Berger et al. \(1972\)](#).

The quirky or new wave-inspired films made in India in a variety of genres have received praise and recognition on a national and international level. Shyam Benegal is an Indian film director, screenwriter, and documentary filmmaker who was born in Hyderabad on December 14, 1934. He is among other notable directors. He is frequently hailed as the father of parallel cinema and is regarded as one of the greatest directors of the post-1970s era. He has won numerous honours, including a Filmfare Award, a Nandi Award, and 18 National Film Awards. He received the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, India's top honour in the art of cinema, in 2005. He received the Padma Shri, the fourth-highest civilian honour bestowed by the Indian government, in 1976, and the Padma Bhushan, the third-highest civilian honour, in 1991 for his services to the arts. In 1962, he produced *Gher Betha Ganga* (Ganges at the Doorstep), his first Gujarati documentary movie. *Ankur* (1973), *Nishant* (1975), *Manthan* (1976), and *Bhumika* (1977), Benegal's first four full-length movies, established him as a pioneer of the era's new wave film trend. The Muslim women Trilogy is made up of Benegal's films *Mammo* (1994), *Sardari Begum* (1996), and *Zubeidaa* (2001), all of which were nominated for National Film Awards for Best Feature Film. The National Film Award for Best Feature Film went to Benegal for seven times. He was also awarded the V. Shantaram Lifetime Achievement Award in 2018.

Shyam Benegal's 1977 Indian Hindi film *Bhumika* is one of his works. Smita Patil, Amol Palekar, Anant Nag, Naseeruddin Shah, and Amrish Puri are the movie's stars. While all of *Bhumika*'s formal elements, including sound, music, off-screen space, and poetic monologues, cannot be discussed in this research, two key elements—costume and non-diegetic shots—are isolated for consideration. Additionally demonstrating a similar methodology to Varma's work the intellectual underpinning of this goal, namely the reconciliation of the individual and society, is also presented in the women-focused film *Bhumika*. As a result, the term "Life" describes how non-diegetic montages act as clues and traces from a world or civilization that does not fall under the creative purview of the diegesis.

The autobiography of Marathi and Hindi film legend Hansa Wadkar from the 1940s served as the inspiration for *Bhumika*. According to author Hansa, the book's title, loosely translated as "Listen, and I'll Tell," was taken from his 1959 mega-hit musical film *Sangte Aika* [Wadkar \(2014\)](#). As stated in her biography, she began appearing in live musical productions as a young actress in order to primarily support her mother and grandmother. This scenario is transformed into a human-interest drama in the film, which follows a traditional courtesan as she struggles to understand modern mass culture and develop her own unique identity. The introductory story has Usha, the movie star, fleeing her husband and eventually finding refuge in the restrictive limits of Kale's estate's feudal landlord, first with her male co-star Rajan. Her husband and the police show up to save her from Kale. Now that she is free, she refuses the support from her husband, her now-married, adult daughter, whose modernism breaks with the matrilineal tradition, and her ex-lover Rajan, apparently in favour of the freedom that she yearned for [Vasudev \(1986\)](#).

2. UNCONVENTIONAL PROTAGONIST

Women seeking to become independent through various social relationships, failing, and then "going away" have been discussed frequently. The films of the time,

including Indian cinema, commonly included a common and well-known cliché. The feminist critic Susie Tharu's criticism of Usha's counterpart Sulabha in Jabbar Patel's *Umbartha* (The Threshold, 1981), who was also portrayed by Smita Patil, is eloquent evidence of the stereotype in Bhumika: "The film establishes her as the central character as well as the problem (the disruption, the enigma) the film will explore and resolve... it is clear that to search herself is, for a woman She will fail, but she can do so in a heroic and wonderful way in her endeavour". (Third World Women's Cinema, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, 17 May 1986).

The early modernist painter Raja Ravi Varma, on the other hand, favoured Indian men and women in his works by using a range of media. The definitions of "artist" and "Indian artist" have undergone a significant change because to Raja Ravi Varma, the first and only Indian artist from British India (1848-1906). Due to a number of creative and more fundamentally societal aspects, he is recognised as one of the greatest painters in Indian art history. First of all, his works are recognised as some of the best examples of the fusion of wholly Indian sensibilities with European technology. His paintings preserved the tradition and elegance of Indian art while incorporating the most current European academic art techniques of the era. Second, he is renowned for selling oleographs of his paintings at a fair price to the general public as approachable popular art. A near relative of the Travancore royal family in the Indian state of Kerala, Varma emerged as a synthesis of tradition and modernity, a pioneer of modernism. Eventually, this led to the creation of an entirely new genre of mythological oil paintings [Neumayer et al. \(2003\)](#).

3. BHUMIKA (THE ROLE)

In addition to being a common household idol, Ravi Varma's depiction of Gods and Goddesses also flourished in mythological film and television. His storytelling was too prevalent to be avoided even in mainstream social cinema. In films like *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* and *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, the film directors have been motivated by the Raja's legacy of the wet saris he painted on his ladies in numerous paintings. Women are personified in Raja Ravi Varma's paintings as described by Nirupama Dutt, including Meena Kumari in Guru Dutt's *Sahib, Bibi Aur Ghulam*, and the courtesan Smita in Shyam Benegal's Bhumika.

3.1. THE WIFE AND LOVER

The film Bhumika builds its enigmatic lead character with a heavy undertone of nostalgia through a series of sepia flashbacks showing Usha's upbringing in the Konkan, a western region of India. These flashbacks show Bhumika's contacts with Dalve, who will become her husband in return for helping her struggling family. This is without a doubt Bhumika's most attractive quality. Usha is depicted in the black and white photo wearing traditional Indian clothing for females, including a long skirt that reaches her ankles and a top with puffy sleeves [Jain \(2003\)](#). In other memories, her husband is portrayed as a crafty opportunist who takes over of her professional life. Amol Palekar, who plays Dalve, can be seen wearing a kurta and a topi on his head and baggy pyjamas.

Figure 1



Figure 1 a Davle's love Interest Usha. Image (right), **b** Arjuna and Subhadra (1890) 35x50cm, Oleograph, Raja Ravi Varma. Collection: Raja Ravi Varma Heritage Foundation, Bengaluru

Source <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/arjuna-subhadra-ravi-varma-press/FQE8WSwyZcs-yA?hl=en>

Arjuna travels to Dwaraka to be with Lord Krishna while he is in the middle of a self-imposed exile for breaking the terms of the agreement over spending time with Draupadi and his four siblings. Arjuna was eager to wed Subhadra when he initially fell in love with the Lord's stunning sister. Arjuna kidnaps Subhadra and then weds her after pretending to be a recluse. Subhadra is seen in the picture beaming, wearing a red sari with a gold border, and being delightfully chubby. Her nose ring sparkles seductively, and her hair is covered with beautiful diamond adornments. She is eschewing Arjun's attempts to push her into his path. Before turning attention to the background and realising what is being recounted in the background as well in stunning and deeply textured works, it is approvingly regarded to be a classic oleograph of Raja Ravi Varma.

3.2. THE COURT DANCER WITH ELEGENCE

Figure 2



Figure 2 a Usha the Court Dancer, **b** Vasantasena, Oleograph on Paper (1896) Raja Ravi Varma, Collection National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

Vasantasena is one of the most well-known characters in Indian classical theatre. This unique story of love, grief, and desire features accurate depictions of the characters from Sudraka's *Mrichchakatika*. The playwright departs from the traditional methods used by Indian dramatists. She does not fit the stereotypes of what it means to be a mother, a wife, or a daughter. She is a unique paradox. She is both a coveted commodity and a self-sufficient person who values each individual's right to self-determination. She has economic influence, which is significantly different from the traditional roles that women had at the time in theatre. Despite this, she lacks social rights because she is a courtesan. Ironically, she does not have access to the perks enjoyed by married women who lack any sense of independence, despite the fact that she is not dependent on money. However, Vasantasena is an admirable figure since she defies society without a fight.

When it comes to partnerships, Vasantasena makes the decisions and assumes the initiative. The classic Sanskrit drama *nayika* are frequently observed to be devoted to their loves or husbands to the point of religion. The person who is often regarded as the leader is the *nayaka*. Sudraka's Vasantasena can tell the difference between adoration and love. She understands the difference between true love and politeness in the workplace. She epitomises desire, wit, and every other trait that a modern city lady aspires to possess. She is a unique person with a unique personality. Not just because of her physical attraction to him, she loves Charudatta for his goodness and sincerity. She showed compassion and charity by freeing Madanika so that she might marry Sarvilaka, and bravery by persevering in the face of a formidable foe like Samsthanak. She doesn't lack maternal instincts, is disloyal, or is submissive. As a result, Vasantasena is a spherical character.

In *Bhumika*, this process of rewriting history in order to create a tragic narrative idiom is presented in black and white. Smita Patil's female lead character has the opportunity to explore the wonders of an indigenous popular culture thanks to the plot in particular. The way Usha edits the images of her partners, and her clothing beautifully conveys her suffering. As a result, the character's portrayal through the clothing helps to show how the woman's conscience compels her to respect social norms while also torturing the woman locked in the role of wife to be required to play the conventional role as required by Indian society. One of the key influences on Marathi and Gujarati theatrical costumes has been identified as Raja Ravi Varma, the well-known female impersonators of the early 20th century. During the movie's opening song, Smita Patil performs on stage while wearing a stunning sari, numerous layers of makeup, and a nose ring. The dancing performance comes to a finish, and Usha promptly changes into her everyday attire. It is highly likely that after the scene, someone will notice that the woman is an actress, the wife of a man who is far older than she is, and the mother of a teenage girl.

The scenario from 25 years earlier where an eight or ten-year-old girl is trying to save the chicken from her own mother and no one else is then flashed back in the narrative. Following that, the story keeps emphasising Usha's romantic interest in Anant Nag. Given the girl's close bond with the chicken and the mother stealing it to prepare food for the visitors, it seems like a bizarre sight. This episode makes references to Usha's constant efforts to protect herself from other people in the film. She fights with everyone who cares for them or is otherwise involved in their lives in this endeavour [Bhattacharjee and Thomas \(2013\)](#). One could say that when we were making the movie, we saw the two genres of "fringe ruralist realism" and "creating the fictions of a collective "past" as complementary methods for addressing the same issue: achieving an authentically indigenous feel for a

viewership that wouldn't want to engage with the dominant mass-entertainment modes of India's film industry. As a result of how it broadened the range of issues in New Indian Cinema and subsequently allowed for a longer interaction with the mainstream cultural vernacular itself, this is without a doubt the area where *Bhumika* has had the most impact. The ladies were prohibited from getting married since their occupation or employment was very visible, in accordance with caste customs. The musicians, dancers, and singers were locals. They had to often interact with a male audience in order to succeed at their caste job. In their circumstance, the customs of virginity, marriage, etc. were no longer applicable. Although only in brief partnerships with various men who occasionally provided them gifts, the women of this caste did indulge in sexual behaviour. Being a man's mistress was just a little part of their lives compared to their public profession of art, even though they shared their religion, belonged to a Hindu caste system, and observed several other cultural norms.

Michelle Barrett explains how representational methods are given equal weight in the process of cultural production in a clear and understandable manner. She addresses, for instance, how diverse modes of representation are impacted by genres, standards, the presence of conventional forms of communication, and other factors. We are now introduced to the disturbing and contentious "realistic" reality. Though it may be imperfect, *Bhumika*'s shape is simple to fit inside a broadly realist framework. However, despite all of this work, it is a complete failure. The most ardent advocate of realism, Lukacs, claims that genuine great realism shows society and people as a whole, rather than emphasising only one or the other of their characteristics. This standard shows how artistic movements that are either extraverted or solely introspective deteriorate and distort reality in similar ways. Thus, three-dimensionality, an all-inclusive characteristic that is endowed with diverse human interactions and characters from real life, is defined as realism.

3.3. THE BEAUTY WITH COURAGE

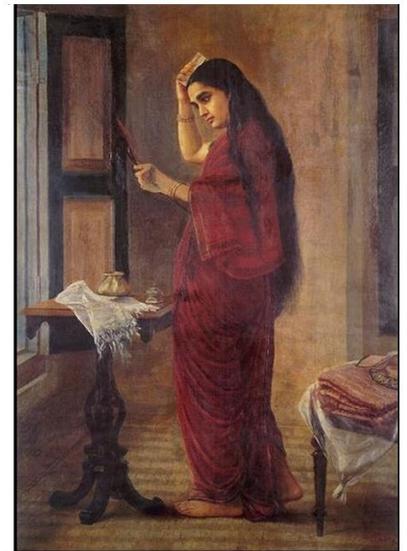


Figure 3 a Usha's Anguish, **b** The Lady with a Mirror (1894) Raja Ravi Varma

Source

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raja_Ravi_Varma,_The_Lady_with_a_Mirror_%281894%29.jpg

Despite what his critics claim, Raja Ravi Varma's female characters are challenging to woo. His art and their allure continue. From our puja rooms to the Ramlila grounds, from the large screen to the little screen, from ad labels to holiday greeting cards, they can be seen everywhere [Thakurta and Thakurta \(1986\)](#). Through the use of carefully chosen settings and costumes, shot compositions, and specialised methods utilised primarily to drive the plot, such as paintings emoting expressions of various ladies, the division between Usha's private and public lives is skilfully conveyed. The filmmaker, for instance, employs the picture of Smita scrutinising herself in the mirror precisely seven times as a tool to either reflect on her past or find inspiration for her future actions. Benegal wants to demonstrate how Smita's response and decision to leave the house after the conflict are results of her inner strength and progress, therefore the mirror look is crucial at this particular time. She is acting in such a risky way because that is who she is, and the only way she can recognise and comprehend her predicament is by staring in the mirror.

The employment of comparable visuals throughout the rest of the movie implies that it was intentional. This uses similar imagery to the artwork "Lady with the Mirror" by Raja Ravi Verma. In a flashback, Smita is back in front of the mirror after her marriage to Amol, but this time before she accuses him of using her mother and grandmother as justification for convincing her to keep making movies [Sachdeva \(2019\)](#). She leaves her home and is subsequently observed gazing at her image in a hotel room mirror. Benegal transitions to some of her movie clips from this image. Looking in the mirror has a new significance at this time as she considers her acting roles in various movies where the most orthodox traditions of the Indian social elite are venerated as the best qualities a woman can have [Dasgupta and Datta \(2018\)](#). She is reminded once more of the tension and contrast between her deeds in real life and the characters she portrays in movies after seeing a reflection of herself. Smita and co-star Rajan argue in another scene. After seeing herself, she attacks him once more in the mirror. Even when she is emotionally attached to Naseeruddin Shah and feels like killing herself, she swallows the pills while facing the mirror. Here, Benegal's choice to take the pills is amply shown to be a brave deed; as a result, her effort necessitates further thought on her side. Benegal uses this strategy once again toward the end of the film.

Smita saw Amol and the cops pulling up to the house of the landlord Amrish. She is aware that eventually she will have to depart from the family. She approaches the dressing table and pulls a chair up to the mirror. She gives herself another once-over before beginning to remove all the jewellery Amrish had given her. This deliberate act serves as a symbol of her total rejection of him. The relationship between the individual and society is distorted as a result of this deliberate usage of a specific type of imagery, which appears seven times in the movie. Benegal's mirror sequences initially appear to be an expression of self-reflection from a variety of life viewpoints [Rajadhyaksha and Willemen \(2014\)](#).

4. THE PORTRAYAL

One of the founders of modern Indian painting is Raja Ravi Verma. His works on Indian subjects were produced using western techniques, and he typically portrayed beautiful women with seductive characteristics. Since they are both creations of modern India, both artists have made significant contributions to the drive for art revival. In order to investigate the significance of gender in connection to painted space, Raja Ravi Verma's case and Shyam Benegal's portrayal of a lady in

his film Bhumika have been contrasted. The female characters played by Smita Patil, and Raja Ravi Varma are likened to Usha, who was portrayed by Smita Patil in Bhumika, in their respective places. Both the setting of the artist's painting and the character in the film adopt a gender-inclined strategy that incorporates concepts of the masculine and feminine. Some eminent art critics claim that locations' relevance is mostly reliant on theoretical perception.

Self-reflection, or the capacity to occasionally subject one's own opinions to a process of critical questioning, is a prerequisite for any critical action. Benegal, however, ignores the crucial aspect that self-reflection takes place within the confines of a social environment, a world that shrinks more and more throughout the course of the film. Benegal uses the news pieces just to move the movie's chronologically, to only provide the backdrop to the narrative in the foreground, rather than relating Hansa's experiences to the social environment and setting of the time. In many ways, Hansa's life story depends on how Smita and Amrish Puri are portrayed. Benegal seeks to criticise Amrish, a wealthy landowner who is also a brahmin, in this passage because of his caste background. Corm Kaplan presents this idea fairly powerfully in her book, *Culture and Feminism: In that envisaged society*, all other social structural connections disintegrate and disappear, leaving us with the simple drama of sexual difference as the only scenario that matters. Mass market romance frequently portrays sexual diversity as inherent and unchangeable, pairing an equally "given" universal masculinity with a constant, transhistorical femininity.

5. ANALYSIS

Ravi Varma is widely renowned for his paintings of seductively looking at the viewer, lovelorn women. His sketchbooks are filled with various examples of women in everyday circumstances, so it is clear that he experimented with the subject, but relatively few of these sketches seem to have developed into final works. Some of the paintings aren't strictly portraits because it's unknown who commissioned them, no identifiable ladies are depicted in them, and they instead show people in situations rather than just as individuals. In his academic paintings, Ravi Varma attempts to move beyond the prevailing paradigms of anthropological portraiture or studio portraits of the time in order to explore the subjective potential of the Indian woman in her own world. This characterization is explored with great empathy and sensitivity and sheds light on the idealised female self in the turn of the century [Dinkar \(2014\)](#).

Usha regularly seen dancing in Bhumika while wearing a red brocade top over a light olive-green sari with a golden border draped in Marathi style. Her hairstyle, which resembles an apsara, a celestial courtesan known for seducing Indra and his courtesans in legend, is a flower-adorned bun with heavy jewellery on the neck and waist. By observing a number of specific cues, the audience can interpret Bhumika's messages. The time of day can be deduced by Usha's arrival in several sequences clad in a white nightgown. There are references to the characters' emotional makeup, social standing, and career background in the movie's attire. Bhumika uses clothing among other things to illustrate the concepts of Usha's many stages in life. Usha is dressed in a silk sari and blouse at the height of her successful acting career, along with a mangalsutra around her neck, representing the good money she has accumulated from her profession, while they argue about Keshav's dependence on Usha's income. We can categorically establish links between attire and emotional state in the scene where Usha is shown leaving the house wearing a plain cotton sari with a floral-printed blouse and returning wearing a maroon-colored sari with a red

bindi on her forehead, representing a married woman in Hindu culture. This is taking into account the emotional forlornness and desperate attitudes of Usha.

Varma's artwork has flourished for more than a century in addition to enduring. His painting "*Bharatiya nari*" had a profound effect on theatre, film, television, and popular art, such as posters and calendars (Nirupama Dutt, *Women in Raja Ravi Verma Mould*). Another instance of an emotional state and status change that is indicated through the usage of clothing is Usha moving in with Vinayak Kale, a wealthy businessman played by Amrish Puri. She is welcomed at his home by the mother, his first wife, and the boy while wearing a fitted sleeveless blouse and a beige silk sari. Then she gave a red sari and a few accessories to wear inside the house so that she would look like a decent housewife. She is seen toward the end of the film wearing a green cotton sari and finding comfort in her alone.

Hindu society forbids non-widowed women from dressing in all-white attire, hence Usha's frequent donning of cotton saris during her relationship with Vinayak Kale further emphasises her appreciation for tradition and custom. Thus, Usha's saris from this film have come to stand for her aspirations. In her sari at the beginning of the film, Usha is not wearing any dark colours. For instance, according to Brockett, the brocade she is wearing in the opening scene's light, crisp, and slightly glossy surface expresses femininity and brittleness. As the film came to a finish, she mostly wore saris in dark hues. "Materials with thick threads...have a homespun quality associated with the working class," claims Brockett.

Usha's frequent donning of cotton saris during her engagement with Vinayak Kale also serves as a representation of her love for tradition and custom because the Hindu culture forbids a woman who is not widowed from donning plain white attire. Usha's goal is thus represented by the saris she dons in this film. At the beginning of the film, Usha is dressed in a sari of a lighter hue. For instance, she is wearing brocade in the first scene, which according to Brockett conveys brittleness and femininity due to its light, crisp, and slightly glossy surface. At the conclusion of the film, she wore mostly dark-coloured saris. It represents a fraudster taking advantage of a respectable career or pretending to work in a different field. The movie's events indicate that Usha's first husband is always poor while acting and thinking like a wealthy guy. He wears slippers, a pair of basic slacks, a long shirt with the collar buttoned up, and a cap. Each of his costumes is a contradiction bundle that depicts his character, and as the film progresses, his physique shifts from the traditional middle-class Indian garments to Western trouser suits.

Figure 4



Figure 4 a Actress Smita Patil (Usha), **b** Kerala Royal Lady, Oil on Canvas, 43x61cm (reproduction), Raja Ravi Varma



Figure 5 a Kadambari, 50x35cm, Chromolithograph, (1910) Raja Ravi Varma. Collection: Ms. Chamundeshwari PranlBhogilal, Mumbai, Maharashtra. **b** Usha Practising Along with Her Grandmother.

6. CONCLUSION

The way women are treated in patriarchal societies is exemplified by Bhumika. Relationships in this society are analysed from the perspective of men, much like Raja Ravi Varma's image with its reflections of several women. In the film Bhumika, Usha portrays a variety of characters, from the frightened wife of Davle to the romantic interest Rajan, the mistress of Sunil Verma, to the representation of a conventional Hindu wife to Vinayak Kale. His representations of Indian ladies

earned such admiration that a stunning woman was usually said to appear as though she had just emerged from a Varma painting.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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