



## **Women and Identity: Study of Vikas Bahl's Hindi Film**

### **“Queen”(2014)**

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#### ***Abstract***

*This paper deals with a feminist approach to the character Rani in the Hindi film “Queen” (2014) directed by Vikas Bahl. The purpose of my study is to examine how the female protagonist Rani, a vulnerable and shy girl, finds her voice and create an identity of her own. When Rani being rejected by her fiancé, draws up all courage and decides to go for her honeymoon to Paris all by herself. Through the journey she discovers the joy of ‘crossing the borders’, and living on her own terms. She gains the spirit of independence when she is exposed to the new world. Her experiences and interactions with different people in Paris shape her new attitude to her life. Unlike other stereotype female protagonists of Hindi films, Rani makes a difference. She is more of an emergent woman who finds a meaning in her life and in fact becomes ‘Queen’ of her life itself.*

**Keywords:** *Identity, Emergent Woman, Confidence, Freedom*

**Introduction:**

Women have been at the bottom of every social hierarchy created by men. It has been traditional that the man is the head of the family. Women were seen as incapable, dependent and incomplete. Women are treated as subalterns. The cause of subalternity is the female body. Women are sexually colonised. In terms of subaltern, female body is inscribed with oppression. The colonised's body is a site for colonizer's oppression. In order to get rid of this notion, women have to empower themselves. Women have to decolonise their body to empower themselves.

There is a general conception that women are incapable of undertaking hard tasks and they cannot withstand precarious situations in life. Hence they are often relegated to a secondary status in society, confining them to domestic roles. But women are highly endowed with intelligence, wisdom, foresight, dignity and thoughtfulness to face difficult situations in their life. It is a reality that a majority of women is ignorant of their talents and potentialities and so they keep a low esteem of themselves to the social constraints fearing to break their manacle: their domestic roles often preclude them from emerging out of their homes.

Identity is a form of self expression or it is a form of self. Articulation is necessary for the construction of an identity. From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century itself, even though the traditional concept of femininity and institution of marriage prevails, we can find a changing tendency of attitude among women. Women became more aware of their own importance in the institution of marriage and equality in man-woman relationship. They are no longer ready to internalise the age old concept of femininity. They strive for their freedom and rights.

Journey from internalised oppression to the free mind is the main aim of an emergent woman, so that creating independent self-definitions became essential. They have stressed the importance of self-definitions as part of the journey from victimization to a free mind. The journey towards self definitions offers a powerful challenge to the externally defined, controlling images of women. Self-definition speaks to the power dynamics involved in rejecting externally defined, controlling images of womanhood. And this progression of emergent women actually threatens the existing power arrangements.

Visual media is patriarchal in nature. It misrepresents women through stereotyping. They are often objectified and commodified. And the language used in media is phallogocentric in nature. But here in this film “Queen,” we can see a changed attitude towards women.

The film, “Queen” starts with a typical Panjabi pre-wedding ceremony. Every arrangement for the marriage of Rani and Vijay has been done. One day before the marriage, Vijay, Rani’s fiancé rejected Rani claiming that Rani is no more a perfect match for him. Vijay was posted in London, but when he returns to Delhi for the marriage, he is a changed man. For a girl like Rani, this is not something which she can bear with. She is totally collapsed.

The whole day she shut in her room. But next day she wakes up with a determination that she should go for her planned honeymoon to Paris all by herself. Here starts a new phase of her life. Till then, wherever she goes she was always accompanied by her brother. Her parents never want her to be alone when she goes out. Her decision to go for her honeymoon trip really has changed her life. This is the first

time that she is out of her “comfort zone” as she was always under the protection of her parents. Even though she is very nervous about her trip, her decision to go for the trip all by herself deserves appreciation. This shows her hidden potential to face life when life gives her pain and trouble.

It was her dream to go for honeymoon to Paris. When she reached Paris, she felt like suffocated with the memories of Vijay. But rather than shut in her room, she decides to roam around the city with confidence. Even though she has been in trouble many times, she manages to come over it. In between she befriends Vijaylakshmi, the hotel staff who is a half Indian and half Spanish. Vijaylakshmi gives Rani full metal support and confidence. She showed Rani every nook and corner of the city. They roam around the city and enjoyed the night riding and all. It is the first time that Rani feels like a free bird and learned a lot from Vijaylakshmi. She learned how to be happy in life from Vijaylakshmi. She even goes to pub and dances hard in the stage with the music of a Bollywood song. She recalls an event when Vijay scolded Rani for dancing in a party. This makes her dance harder in the stage. For the first time she drinks and this is a sort of breaking off the bonds. She enjoyed Vijaylakshmi’s company and started enjoying freedom. Rani is no more living with the painful memories and starts showing life her hidden potential to face life.

Rani appears to be an emergent woman. There are many incidents which shows Rani’s hidden courage and power. There is a scene in the first half of the film where a thief tries to grab her bag in Paris. But she does not let it go. She puts the strength of her entire body in holding on to the bag. One day unknowingly Rani sends one of her photo with modern outfit to Vijay. Vijay gets surprised with the new look of Rani and this made him to go in search of Rani. In Amsterdam, Rani has to share her

room with three men which is very hard for her in the beginning but soon they four becomes very close friends. It is with them she roams around the city and makes fun.

Rani never missed a chance to express herself and that is why she said yes without any hesitation when she got a chance to cook there in a food exhibition in Paris. Everyone was impressed and appreciated her and it adds to her confidence. And more surprisingly one day after a party she bravely drives her friends to home when they were totally drunk. Her exposure to new world, new people and new life situations makes her more confident of her abilities and it helps Rani to create an identity of her own.

Towards the end, Vijay comes in search for Rani in Paris as he is impressed by her new looks and style. He even then questioned Rani for sharing room with three boys keeping friendship with them. But Rani is no more feared and bothered about Vijay and his words and she refused to talk with him. When Rani comes to India after her trip, she goes straight to Vijay's home and she hand over the engagement ring to Vijay without any pain or feeling of hurt. It is then only she feels like she is fully free and strong. The last seen itself shows the changed, courageous and strong Rani who is capable of taking decisions in life, creates an identity of her own.

Through the journey, Rani discovers the joy of breaking free, cherishing life and living on her own terms. Her experiences direct her to inner reserves of strength and will-power that she didn't know existed. She proves to be an emergent woman who is more aware of her rights than her duties. In her quest for identity, Rani moves from despair to hope, from self negation to self-assertion. Rani's story is in fact a story of a girl coming of age. Her struggle throughout is to attain wholeness, completeness

and an authentic selfhood. The same spirit of female characters can be seen in the recent Hindi films like “English Vinglish,” “Highway” and in the Malayalam film “How Old are You.” This new trend in the films surely gives an inspiration to women to come up in their life.

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