

Pushing For Prestige: A Critical Study Of *Pink*



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Abstract: *Pink* is a powerful and emotional Indian film. It was directed by Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury, produced by Shoojit Sircar, and written by Ritesh Shah. The film explores important issues such as consent, the different treatment of men and women, and how people often judge others without knowing the full story. The story follows three young women living in Delhi. One of them, Minal, is assaulted at a party by a man who tries to hurt her, and she hits him in self-defence. Rather than supporting her, onlookers start blaming her, claiming she did something wrong despite her intentions to protect herself. Minal's case goes to court, where she faces many difficulties. She is subjected to harsh character judgments, and no one is there to help her. Eventually, a retired lawyer named Deepak Sehgal, played by the renowned actor Amitabh Bachchan, decides to assist her. He returns to the courtroom to fight for her and reveal the truth. The courtroom scenes are intense and moving. The film highlights how women are often unfairly treated in real life. The key message of the film is "No means no," emphasising that a woman's refusal should always be respected. *Pink* is an important film because it raises awareness about how women are wrongly blamed and encourages reflection on the treatment of women in society and why change is necessary.

Keywords: Consent, Sexual harassment, Feminism, Patriarchy, Gender inequality

Introduction

Women have long endured mistreatment, manipulation, and disregard throughout history. Numerous male and female authors have addressed this grim reality in their works. They brought attention to the patriarchal system that has repressed and oppressed women, especially when it comes to sexual assault and the legal system. These authors concentrated on important topics impacting women, including gender inequality, oppression, and the significance of women's empowerment.

Ritesh Shah, is renowned Indian screenwriter, is

best known for his Hindi film adaptations. Born on April 19, 1976, in Anantnag, Kashmir, Shah studied mass communication and English literature at Jamia Millia Islamia after attending Hindu college from 1993 to 1996. One of the most underappreciated movies that tackles the aforementioned topics is Ritesh Shah's 2016 courtroom drama *Pink*, which examines themes of consent and women's rights. He is renowned for telling powerful and poignant tales. Among his well-known pieces are *Thappad* (2020), *Madaari* (2016), *Raid* (2018), *Kahaani* (2012), and *Airlift* (2016). He is renowned for his ability to use his stories to engage with complex social

issues and create compelling dialogues. After starting his early career as a playwright with the Act One Art Group in New Delhi, he worked as a television writer. Among his many honors are the Zee Cine Award for Best Dialogue for *Pink*, the Filmfare Award, and the Star Screen Award.

The film's author emphasizes the importance of women's rights, their respect, and the power of saying "no" through impactful storytelling. The film's narrative is both powerful and accessible, helping readers to understand the importance of women's safety and consent. The movie emphasizes women's freedom to make decisions about their relationships, social activities, and attire without fear of criticism or peer pressure. The film also sheds light on the challenges women face when seeking justice, particularly when navigating a legal system that may be biased against them. This portrayal underscores the need for systemic change and support for women's rights.

How are women being suppressed in a patriarchal society? What message does the movie convey about female solidarity? How will this project help others?

Literature Review

Various writers have discussed several works, one is Harapriya Mohapatra (2015), who talks about the issues of gender inequality. She says that even though the law gives equal rights to men and women, women are not treated equally in real life. People often judge women more strictly, and they face many problems just because they are women. This theme is vividly portrayed in *Pink* movie. In the film, the three women are innocent, educated, and independent, but still, people blame them when something bad happens. Instead of receiving support, they are questioned about their behavior, clothes, and character.

Similarly, the oppression of women in patriarchal societies and gender inequality are frequent themes in Bapsi Sidhwa's artwork. Her well-known work "Cracking India" (1988), demonstrates how women can resist violence and unfair treatment while still advocating for themselves. This resonates with the theme presented in *Pink*, in which women are

mistreated but resist to obtain justice. Both narratives demonstrate the courage and strength of women navigating unjust systems.

The Worth of Women by Moderata Fonte is a groundbreaking feminist work demonstrating the author's scholarship and support of women's rights. In the book, Venetian noblewomen argue about marriage, women's value, and social conventions. Reviewers commend Fonte for her strong defence of women's equality and her daring critique of patriarchal ideals. The work opposes misogynistic ideas and promotes women's education and social participation and is regarded as a classic in feminist literature. *The Worth of Women* is a renowned and provocative examination of women's experiences because of Fonte's writing, which is distinguished by its wit, elegance, and intellectual depth.

In contrast, *Catherine MacKinnon and Feminist Jurisprudence: A Critical Appraisal* is an article by Emily Jackson and published in (1992). The article provides a critical examination of Catherine MacKinnon's work on feminist jurisprudence, particularly that her theory profoundly challenges conventional notions of consent in the context of sexual harassment and rape. She argues that true consent is often impossible under conditions of patriarchy and unequal power. She argues that the consent is often used as a defense in cases of sexual assault but that this defense can be problematic because it can be used to blame the victims for the assault. She argues that consent must be understood within the social and cultural context in which it is given.

Another influential work is *Last Days at Hot Slit: The Radical Feminism of Andrea Dworkin*, is a collection of writings by Andrea Dworkin, published in (2019). Dworkin's work is rooted in radical feminism which seeks to fundamentally challenge and change societal norms and power structures that perpetuate gender-based oppression. Her writing critiques the patriarchal society, highlighting how it dehumanizes and objectifies women.

Research Methodology and Framework

The movie *Pink* by Ritesh Shah explores the themes of women's suppression, gender

inequality and empowerment. The film focuses on how the women in the film face unfair treatment and ultimately stand up for their rights. The analysis utilises scenes and dialogues to showcase both injustice and the strength of the female character. It shows that *Pink* is not just made to entertain people but also conveys an important message about the fundamental societal problems women face.

This study employs a qualitative approach to analyze the movie *Pink*. There are two data sources: primary and secondary sources. The primary data source is the content of the movie itself, while the secondary data sources include the different articles and other sources related to this content. This study explores the content analysis of a movie as a primary way to serve the themes, mentioned above. This movie, *Pink* is analyzed through the lens of feminist literary theory. It analyzes how Ritesh Shah explores the lives of three women who challenge the patriarchal society and confront the hardships they face throughout their journey for justice.

Analysis

The movie *Pink*, written by Ritesh Shah and directed by Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury, is a powerful commentary on consent, patriarchy, suppression, women's rights, and empowerment. The film features a talented ensemble including, Amitabh Bachchan as Deepak Sehgal, Taapsee Pannu as Minal Arora, Kirti Kulhari as Falak Ali, Andrea Tariang as Andrea, Angad Bedi as Rajveer Singh, and Piyush Mishra. Minal, Falak, and Andrea are three independent women living in Delhi, who represented many women today. After attending a music concert one night, they went out for dinner with a few boys. However, the evening turns dark, when one of the boys, Rajveer the nephew of a powerful politician, misbehaves with Minal. In self-defence, she hits him with a bottle, causing a severe injury. What starts as a seemingly harmless evening quickly escalates into an attempted sexual assault.

Rajveer uses his political influence to have Minal detained, while the boys begin to threaten the girls rather than comprehending the facts. The film's most influential topic is "consent",

summed up in the powerful quote "No means No". The movie emphasizes that the consent must be clear, enthusiastic and can be revoked at any time. Deepak Sehgal, a former attorney with bipolar illness, volunteers to assist the women in their fight for justice, highlighting the importance of consent and women's rights.

Suppression

The movie *Pink* explores the themes of oppression and its impacts on the lives of the three primary female characters. The term "suppression" describes the efforts by the legal and social systems to silence women, especially those who have been sexually assaulted. The male characters and the legal system hold the women accountable for the assault, citing their attire and the way of life. It is challenging for the women to seek justice because they are threatened, including when those boys molested Minal, to silence and repress them. The judges and attorneys who make up the legal system assume certain things about the women's behavior and character.

The women in the movie experience fear and trauma due to the suppression they face, and it significantly impacts their lives. Suppression prevents the women from seeking justice and makes it difficult for them to break free from patriarchal constraints.

Deepak Sehgal, played by Amitabh Bachchan, delivers a powerful statements highlighting the importance of consent and women's autonomy. He says, "*The problem with men is that they don't take no for an answer, and the problem with women is that they take yes for an answer,*" (Pink, 2016). He also asserts, "*No*" means "*No*," (Pink, 2016), emphasizing the significance of respecting boundaries. This strong statement opposes the repression of women's voices and agency and highlights the significance of respecting consent and boundaries.

"*No is not a just word; it is a complete sentence in itself, requiring no explanation and justification,*" stated Deepak Sehgal. Pink (2016). This statement highlights how societal expectations can stifle women's stories and experiences while criticizing the victim-blaming

that frequently targets women who have experienced assault. When no one supports the girls, Deepak Sehgal, a retired lawyer, stands up for them. In court, he makes strong arguments that expose society's double standards. He boldly says: "*Girls who drink at parties... become your ancestral property.*" (Pink, 2016)

Deepak Sehgal is one of the few who fight for women, instead of silencing them or questioning their choices. Deepak Sehgal's character is a powerful advocate for women, the movie slightly diverges from the feminist idea that women should represent their voices and seek justice without fear or threats.

Patriarchy

The movie *Pink* sheds light on how women are judged, persecuted, and punished for simply trying to live their lives. Minal, Falak, and Andrea, the three women at the center of the film, are treated like criminals despite of being victims of assault. They face threats, including sexual abuse, and are blamed only for having male friends, attending concerts, imbibing, and living alone. Because these individual choices are unfairly used against them, they are labeled as "bad" or "available. The defense counsel's assertion that "*Good girls don't get assaulted*" (Pink, 2016) highlights the patriarchal mindset that perpetuates victim-blaming.

If anything occurs, society usually believes the woman must have behaved badly. Many scenes in the film *Pink* show how patriarchy exists and impacts women's life. The legal system also exhibits patriarchy as the cops give the wealthy guy Rajveer preference just because of his past and do not offer the three women sufficient help. This shows how police often protect the affluent and influential. Dramatic and courageous, the courtroom scenes are like a battlefield. During the courtroom, the defense lawyer probes the women's behavior, attire, actions on the night of the incident, sexual history, and relationships throughout the courtroom scenes in an attempt to portray them as immoral.

"*Why did you go to the pub that evening?*"

"*Girls shouldn't go out alone at night.*"

"*What were you wearing?*"

These conversations expose the victim-blaming patriarchal mindset that promotes rape culture. Throughout the trial, Minal is subjected to harsh and unfair questions, and the attorney places the blame on the women rather than the criminal. This exhibits a misogynistic mindset that absolves the offender while denouncing the victim (Pink, 2016). '*Three girls went to a bar, danced, and had a few drinks. They are defined by what transpired next*'. (Pink, 2016) The idea that a woman's behavior or actions can excuse or justify an assault is contested by this statement. The film's message is strong and unambiguous: "No" means "No." The tense courtroom scenes repeatedly emphasize this theme.

Deepak Sehgal's entire case is built on this guiding principle, emphasizing the importance of respecting women's consent and autonomy. The film also critiques the way women are labelled as "immoral" or "chaste" based on their personal choices, highlighting the additional layer of discrimination faced by Andrea. She is harassed and marginalized simply for her background from Northeast India, making her an easy and vulnerable target in society.

Empowerment

Empowerment is the process of gaining power and control over one's life. It is related to the ability of the individuals to take part in their society or community, challenge their social norms and face difficulties with bravery in their community. The film's most famous contribution to this concept by legally articulating consent: "No means no. No means no. Whether it is said by a friend, a sex worker, a woman you have just met or your wife. No means no."

This becomes a powerful tool of empowerment not only for these characters but also symbolically related to women across India. The courtroom becomes the place where their journey from struggle to prominence begins. Even they were falsely accused, the three women Minal, Falak and Andrea fight back against system to feel their criminals shame and silence them.

In a patriarchal society where women are

suppressed and face difficulties, where women are expected to silently accept the blame or compromise, their decision to take stand and take the matter to the court is another impact of empowerment. They refuse to accept or keep quiet in the face of severe police violence, police harassment, and social pressure. The tenacity and resolve of female characters like Minal, Falak, and Andrea in *Pink*, as they struggle for justice and defy social expectations, serve as examples of empowerment. “*We weren’t asking for it*,” Minal states. We were being ourselves.

It emphasizes their reluctance to be blamed or silenced. The statement, “*We should not have to bear the burden of our honor*,” is another potent moment, (*Pink*, 2016). This represents a basic kind of empowerment in a society where men predominate. The film has a profound effect and has given many women the confidence to defend themselves from harassment. Courage, resistance, and defending one’s rights are all components of empowerment. The movie demonstrates how truth, unity, and the law can help women regain their power even in the face of assault. As Indian actress Genelia notes, consent is crucial in any relationship.

“No” means “No.”

“I’m not sure” indicates “No.”

“Silence” also means “No.”

“Yes” only means “Yes.”

Sana Yousaf, a 17-year-old Pakistani social media influencer, was tragically shot and killed in her Islamabad home on June 2, 2025. The accused, 22-year-old Umar Hayat, was arrested shortly after the incident. Police reported that Hayat had persistently attempted to contact Sana Yousaf and befriend her, but she had repeatedly rejected his advances. On the day of the murder, he forcefully entered her home and attempted to persuade her to become a friend, but she constantly said “No” to him. Ultimately, he shot her at point-blank range.

This case highlights how a woman's ‘no’ is frequently disregarded, brushed aside, or violently reacted to. Victim-blaming is evident in the remarks made after her death, such as ‘she deserved it’. These responses demonstrate how

a patriarchal society tends to place the blame on the female victim rather than the male aggressor. Umar Hayat's actions were motivated by more than just love; they were also an attempt to control Sana's life and decisions, which ultimately resulted in violence. Like Minal's and many others, Sana's case calls for more extensive social and educational changes to challenge patriarchal norms and criminal justice reforms.

Conclusion

The movie *Pink* tells us that the climax of the film takes place in a courtroom, where lawyer Deepak Sehgal, played by Amitabh Bachchan, delivers a strong argument in defense of the three women Minal, Falak, and Andrea, whom influential men wrongly accuse. Ultimately, the judge releases the women from all charges, upholding the principle that harassment, attack, and coercion violate women’s fundamental rights. The film emphasizes the legal and moral principle that “No means No.” Every citizen, especially women, has the legal right to protect themselves from physical harm. Minal’s act of hitting Rajveer is portrayed as a legal act of self-defense, rather than a crime. The movie sheds light how society judges women by their lifestyle, dress, and friendships, and emphasizes the need for society to question its own biases. A woman’s choice of party, drink, or staying out late is not an invitation for attack; instead her body is her own, regardless of how she dresses, speaks, or behaves. The movie *Pink* concludes with a powerful courtroom scene where Deepak Sehgal, played by Amitabh Bachchan, delivers strong arguments emphasizing that “No means No” it is not just a word, but a complete statement, that requires no further explanation. When a girl says no, it does not require further explanation, regardless of the situation or relationship. In the end, justice is served as Minal Arora and her friends are freed, while Rajveer, Ankit, and Raunak are found guilty and face sentencing. Vishwajyoti, who had introduced the women to Rajveer, gets off with a warning. The film concludes a strong message about consent, women’s rights, and the patriarchal mindset that still prevails in society. Initially, the climax had the girls losing the case.

Minal, Falak, and Andrea are shown living independently, partying, and drinking behaviors considered “normal” for men but “shameful” for women. A woman’s friendly nature or choice to drink alcohol does not define her character. She wants to live her life independently. Unfortunately, women often face harassment and instead of receiving protection, the police initially side with the powerful men. The film emphasises that the women have the right to say no. A patriarchal society must stop blaming women. Women have the right to live their lives happily and independently. Patriarchal society controls how a woman dresses, acts, and talks. In the movie, the boys make assumptions about the women’s bodies because the women were smiling and friendly. This is a dangerous mindset shaped by patriarchal thinking. The movie is a social awakening. It helps in many powerful ways by challenging harmful mindsets, promoting awareness, and encouraging courage and change. The Indian movie *Pink* (2016) can positively impact society. It raises awareness about social issues. The movie highlights important issues like consent, women’s rights, and societal attitudes toward women. The film challenges societal norms and stereotypes, promoting a more developed and respectful attitude toward women. It encourages people to think critically about their attitudes and behaviors. *Pink* can be an educational tool to teach about social issues, consent, and women’s rights. It can help audiences understand different views and experiences, promoting empathy and compassion. In patriarchal society, women often face oppression and suppression, as seen in *Pink*. Women are often blamed in such a society. The film shows how women are judged and blamed for their actions and struggle to assert their rights. In patriarchal societies, women often face various forms of suppression, as depicted in the Hindi movie *Pink*. This suppression can have severe consequences, including limited opportunities, increased vulnerability to violence, and decreased self-esteem and confidence. This project raises awareness about the importance of standing up for oneself and promoting a more respectful and developed attitude towards women.

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