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# Liberation Conscience in Prakash Jha's *Lipstick Under My Burka*

*Gol Man Gurung, Ph.D*\*

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## **Abstract**

*Prakash Jha's movie Lipstick Under My Burkadeals with the story of four Indian Women's search for strength and liberation in their lives. The research particularly veers around the double marginalized women in Indian society. Characters presented in the movie are exploited economically and politically on the one hand and sexually on the other. Alankrita Shrivastava-the director of the movie uses cinematography to depict the gruesome situation of the domination with the help of four female characters where some are forced to have sex whereas some are deprived of it. Rahim Aslam, husband of Shereen uses his wife as sex dolly. Barren land among husband and wife is flourishes vigorously, whenever Rahim feels sexual desire he straightforwardly moves towards Shereen in order to fulfill his libido.*

**Keywords:** *Dehumanization, domination, jihad, liberation, marginalization*

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The current society there dehumanizes females and deprives them of right to freedom, right to speak and even to live. They have to live under conditions of the patriarchal society. Patriarchal society has implemented censorship to them. They can't wear what they like, work even if they are much better than males, express their loneliness, and marry a person whom they like or even say no to an unsafe sex. Rihana Abidi is a young college girl from a Muslim family and wants to wear jeans. But, her parents are controlling her to the level of not allowing her to do so. Leela-a girl dreamt to marry the guy she loves and have a world tour with him not only as a tour. But, her mother fixes her marriage with another guy just because he is going to give her mother a house after the marriage. Girls are treated as commodities in Indian society as they are exchanged with physical property.

Extreme domination upon female characters as depicted in the movie, make them rebellious for their emancipation. The thirst of emancipation makes female characters manifest different acts against patriarchal ideology. All the four women in the movie cross cultural boundaries. Despite being dominated to such extent through phallic pressure by the male counterparts, these women manage to fool them and live their lives in their own way secretly. Rihana wears jeans without even letting her parents know it, Shereen works as a door-to-door Marketing Executive, without the permission of her husband. Bhuaji is attracted to a young swimming trainer and has verbal sex with him on phone without even letting the person involved in the course know who he is having the oral fun with. And Leela continues meeting and having sex with her lover. Their desires of wearing jeans, singing English songs, dancing, getting married to the one they love, earn and

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\* Associate Professor, Department of English, Saraswati Multiple Campus, TU, Nepal.

become self-dependent, have sex when they feel its need are the actions taken against patriarchal ideology is due to the thrust of emancipation that they have been facing since last many decades.

The research hypothesizes that the depicted society in the movie is patriarchal, therefore women are treated as second class citizen and therefore they are taken as commodity. There is no recognition of women in the society. In order to regain the lost agency and women-self Shereen, Rihanna, Usha and Leela deliberately raise the question. For that they face so many hindrances as they challenges hitherto existing social norms and values.

Although the Indian women in *Lipstick Under My Burkha* often relegate to margin of the text, they run to search for their own identity and independence in Indian society. Especially the characters are victimized by Indian patriarchal class society. Sanjay R. Mane, sees the film from the perspective of women's empowerment. He further writes:

Empowerment is reflected through women's assertion. Rebel, resistance, skills of negotiating and crisis management and abusive use of language are their tools of assertion. Empowerment is seen when protagonists' from film – 'Lipstick under My Burkha' - openly express their dreams and desires and seek freedom from social, cultural, economical and bodily clutches. Their empowerment is reflected through their rebel against society's sexual norms. These empowered women represent the image of new woman who is no longer submissive but assertive and thus tries to form new equations of equality. (100)

In these lines Mane highlights that women in Indian cultural orthodoxy are deeply rooted and compelled to bow their head in front of patriarchy. Economically, politically as well as culturally they are marginalization. The pond of agony and pain is much more traumatic which has made them equal to male slavery. Submissive and docile nature of Indian women is due to the concept of second sex.

Similarly, Shahi Jeena takes the movie from the perspective of women's reaction against patriarchal mindset where male supremacy feels violated. Prakash Jha through each character portrayal wants to establish the displacement of women by the reification of Burkha, the veil which acts as a link between the phenomenal world and the imaginary world the women cross. Jeena writes:

This cine-text probes into the complex world of female desire where women are circumscribed by the hegemonic masculinity but dreams of a double life hiding behind the veils. The social norms and sanctions curb the desire of these women to become 'the women they really are' but they tend to be accountable to the socio-sexual subjectivity which impinges on them in such a way as to stick to the notion of being the 'second sex'; making them culturally dependent and helpless. Instead of leading the lives the way they want to, they become trapped in the normative conception of being women in the patriarchal society and the veil is a reification of this. (49)

Shahi Jeena in these lines talks about the women's inferiority due to the patriarchal society's politics. Patriarchy culturally makes women dependent. Women are taken as meek and frazil in Indian society which ultimately makes them dependent. The concept of veiling system in Muslim

society is the domination upon women in the name of culture. Therefore, Indian women in the name of cultural norms and values are under control of patriarchal ideology, which, indeed makes them paralyze.

Similarly another issue regarding Indian society is foregrounded while Jim Galentine talks with Alankrita Shrivastava for the journal *Desi Talk*. According to Shrivastava, *Lipstick Under My Burkha* was censored by India's Central Board of Film Certification, because it shows the dark side of Indian cultural orthodoxy. Indian society, in the name of cultural norms and values tend to treat women as commodity. The excerpts delivered by Shrivastava while talking with Galentine worthy to quote here in terms of exhibit the social reality of India:

Although "Lip-stick Under My Burkha" was censored by the Central Board back in January, as being among other things "lady-oriented", director Shrivastava said that their decision was successfully appealed to the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal. "They have found that the decision of the Central board was wrong and have overturned it," she confirmed. [. . .] Shrivastava reiterated that even though there are constitutional guarantees of women's rights, the status of many women is still very repressed. (33)

In these lines, Indian society is dealt with the patriarchal ideology. Women's issue and their literatures are not allowed to bring into the subtle. As *Lipstick under My Burkha* raises the issue of male domination and female submissiveness, India's Central Board of Film Certification does not provide certification which is totally against constitution and female welfare although constitution guarantees of women's rights and their identity equal to male.

The research explores that in the Indian society female are victimized economically, politically and sexually. Female agency is in domination. Male characters as well as the society takes women under control and dominates them using sex, either by imposing a forceful sex or by depriving them of the basic need of sex.

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