

Movie Review

When Two Roads Converged: A Review of the Movies *Parched* and *Pink*

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<i>PARCHED</i> (2016)	<i>PINK</i> (2016)
Directed by- Leena Yadav	Directed by- Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury
Cast- Tannishtha Chatterjee, Radhika Apte, Surveen Chawla, Adil Hussain, Lehar Khan	Cast- Amitabh Bachchan, Taapsee Pannu, Kirti Kulhari, Andrea Tariang

Cinema plays a quintessential role in the daily life of an ordinary human being. Film as a multi dimensional medium, with great potential to inform and educate has extensive power to play with a man's psychology. Being the cultural artifact of human life, it has carved a niche of its own by depicting the eternal verities which are universal in nature. It has become the rich heritage of man and we see the recordation of the heart- beats of the entire human race in celluloid form. Sometimes it takes a new environment; sometimes it takes a piece of literature or a film to propel people to ponder over more deeply about things of real flesh and blood. The movies *Parched* and *Pink* will throw light on the commonalties and disparities in depicting the fair cum weaker sex of the society. The movies can be looked at not as an individual story but a piece of story expounding the extreme sorry state of multitudes of women. Both the movies won accolades, acclaim and applause across the globe for realistic rendition of the phases cum faces in a woman's life.

Parched revolves around three friends in a Rajasthan village. Rani has been a widow for years now. When he was alive, her husband used to beat her mercilessly. Now she has an old mother-in-law to take care of and a wayward son Gulab who she is anxious to marry off. Lajjo is childless, chatty and married to a sadistic alcoholic. She is a childless woman in an abusive marriage. Bijli is a local dancer who gets farmed out for money by her handler. The women of the village have begun earning

money through their handicraft skills, a development that causes insecurity and anxiety among the men. The story is set in a remote, ultra-conservative desert village in Rajasthan where women are treated and traded as chattels or a child bearing machine. These women are bound by centuries of rigid tradition. Here, girls are married at the age of 14. They even hold the notion that 'girls who read make bad wives'. A girl married into the neighbouring village returns home but is forced by the elders to go back to her in-laws. All the men in the house don't miss an opportunity to molest her including her father in law. Woman is considered as a matter of mere sex, child producing machine and a culinary apparatus. Lajjo's husband beats her mercilessly because she can't bear children. Rani is a 32-year-old widow steeped in debt and unable to handle her headstrong, arrogant son. Each day brings fresh misery but these feisty women manage to steal moments of happiness. They find slivers of joy and cheer with each other. Rani is a widow all set to marry off her young son to a reluctant girl from the neighbouring village. These women live a parched life of hope and hopelessness. *Parched* is the story of three women in particular — Bijli, Lajo and Rani — who live in a patriarchal village of Rajasthan that thrives on masochism. While Bijli is a dancer and also a prostitute, Rani is a widow raising her son on her own and Lajjo is a wife trapped in a violent marriage and accused of being barren (banjh).

Rani and Lajjo are proud women, who are economically fairly independent, but their fates are locked by their circumstances — one is a widow, the other a banjh. Bijli, at the outpost, is seemingly free. She sits, for a while at least, at the top of the food chain. Her body, her sex appeal, her performances on stage and bed bring in the money that keeps several men in business. *Parched* pulls us into intimacy with these lovely women. Their

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relationships with men are all transactional, and we see how they are treated as private properties. We also sit next to them in their moments of solitude, crying out their fury and frustration, wondering if there's more to life than this. *Parched* shows the real fight of women in our country where financial independence is not enough for respect, because money can't buy a change of mindset. For all the equality debates in metros, our villages are still stuck with men establishing their ascendancy by thrashing women, who exist as sexual objects or child-bearing machines. Life is not just about money and sex. The movie underlines this certitude along with a strong message to the male hegemony that "don't hurry to be a man, learn to be a human first".

The three young working women Minal Arora, Falak Ali and Andrea Tairang, who stay away from their homes, in the Capital city of India and work for some companies, believe in having fun during the weekends become the focal point of the movie *Pink*. They wear the clothes they are comfortable with and party during their leisure, to relieve their stress. These independent girls living together in an apartment in Delhi experience the horrors of harassment and undue judgment from society after an incident of molestation involving few rich politically well connected brats at a resort at the outskirts of the city. The story unveils the trauma that three free-spirited women face when they go out for drinks with a group of boys. A retired autistic lawyer portrayed by Amitabh Bachchan represents the girls in the court. The movie creates an aura of modern era, demonstrating the harsh truth that our society still is prejudiced. Amitabh Bachchan as lawyer Deepak Seghal very patiently and dexterously, questions the misogynistic narrow mindset and stands by the side of girls, till they get justice.

The very name of the movie *Parched* connotes thirst. All women in the movie are thirsty for their liberty. They are craving for a role, an identity, a space and a room of their own in the society. They earnestly believe "life can't be that unfair. We too will find our share of happiness". The movie culminates with an optimistic note where the three women undertake a journey in search of fresh woods and pastures new. *Parched* acknowledges a woman's liberty to make her choices. From marriage to career, love to sex and ultimately, her right over her body. The adage conferred to the movie deserves mentions here as it really turned out to be a 'universal tale of women, by women and for women'. The coinage 'pink' alludes to utmost or

limit. Here it is the zenith of injustice and molestation done to the so called weaker sex.

The movies *Parched* and *Pink* hint on the dire reality that women should never be downgraded as the "weaker" or "fair" sex. Trying to manage a home is not a child play at all. Their life is not just about sex, money and a female vending machine capable of producing volume of babies so as to fill a nation. These movies echo the tragic plight of millions of women who crave for an individuality and stature of their own in the society. Hence posterity will not willingly let these women personas die. Both the movies render a glimpse of the pertinent issues and experience of unhappiness faced by the women folk that have even influenced their physical, mental and emotional psyche.

Society has rules for a reason. Despite all the scientific and technological advancements, we survive in such a society where the needle of the watch decides the character and morality of a female. The women who mix and mingle freely with men, going for dinner and a glass of drinks are evaluated with a typical male binocular vision of immorality. Men have a misconception that these women are taken for granted and they can go to any extent so as to devour their male instincts of sexual euphoria. Only the men drink? Only men come late nights to homes? Terms and conditions differ as per the dichotomy in gender.

As normal and ordinary human beings, it is quite natural for the woman folk having a desire to materialize their whims and fancies. Likewise they wish to soar in their imaginary sky with their viewless wings of a butterfly. The Flight of these butterflies are clipped and curtailed by the society in the name of morality, status, etiquette, decorum and what not. These fetters in reality restrain the light of a woman's sustenance.

Pink and *Parched* reproduce a strong sense of sisterhood. All the women characters etched with great sense of affection and compassion remain together in all the calms as well as storms of life. Their sisterhood has a profundity and gratification that doesn't crack, not even when Rani's son approaches Bijli with a bundle of notes. There are moments of genuine intimacy between the women. Their bond and love is authentic albeit they are defiantly strong and desperately sad. The female bonding is deep and sometimes while nursing the other's wounds. Empathy can give a hint of lesbianism as it does when Rani quietly puts balm on Lajjo after she's been beaten black and blue again. Rani has her own yearnings after

an abusive marriage ended 15 years ago with the death of her husband.

The titles of the movies also bear some striking resemblance apart from their delineation of women. Both the titles beginning with the letter 'p' focus on the atrocities of Patriarchy. Through the mouthpiece of powerful women characters, the movies raise their voice against the hardships encountered by the fairer sex in a misogynistic or male chauvinistic society.

The movie *Pink* delivers a stentorian message via lawyer Deepak Seghal, whose role was given enduring life by the charismatic Big B Amitabh Bachchan.

"No" is not only a word... it's a sentence by itself... it doesn't need any explanation or interpretation...no simply means no... 'No means no and when someone says No, you stop'. NO means NO, even if it's a stranger, your girl friend, a sex worker or your wife. And my client said NO."

Our society is too harsh on women especially if she breaks stereotypes. Deepak Seghal, the retired brooding ace lawyer through courtroom scene stresses some facts those are obligatory in every "How to Treat a Women Hand Book!" He destroys every prejudice revolving around the morality of an independent woman in our society. He opines "Till Today we all have given our efforts in the wrong direction. We should save our boys, not our girls. If we save our boys, our girls will be safe".

Pink is a slap on face to a large section of society, who is judgmental about the character of a woman based on the 'handle of a clock' and some pre-conceived notions. *Pink* shows the hideous, sombre and dark side of our society of which unfortunately we are a part of. The movie on rape issue and courtroom justifications verbally rapes every loathsome stigma concerning an Indian woman. The character Andrea Tairang from Arunachal Pradesh expresses her own predicament "I feel, as a North-east girl, I am being harassed more than any average Indian girl on this city". And this is something that the movie manages to pull off. And with the clever casting of a Khasi character in the mix (a rare in Indian cinema), the movie manages to

be more inclusive of today's cosmopolitan society while also dealing with issues regarding regionalism, especially for people from the North East. Albeit the story is set under the aegis of our national capital Delhi of 'nirbhaya', this is a tale of every street, every nook and cranny of the country.

A girl doesn't feel safe anywhere out of her house and nowadays inside her house too. Almost every day, she crosses through eyes looking at her with lecherousness, piercing her dignity. Even if a girl is highly educated working as an event manager, gritty enough to live miles away from her homeland to be independent, comes late at night; her neighbors come to know about it. They also fathom instantly that she must have a questionable character. And if she is in trouble that involves a male, she definitely went somewhere wrong and invoked the guy to do the wrong. She cannot be completely veracious while telling about her miseries she encountered because there might be some loose points where her character could be questioned. Almost all girls make peace with these rules and boundaries but there is grit in some women who don't accord with this nature. Until there is this grit and boldness in voice even if in dearth, there will be a hope for a better world, rather a normal world! A man can be flirtatious with a woman. When a woman exhibits similar behavior, she is branded as a whore. She is considered as a slut too. Terms, rules and condition differ for men and women in our nation. They are flexible according to the powerful men with wealth, wine and women ready to dance to their tunes.

The movies *Pink* and *Parched* focus on a multitude of topics such as feminism, government corruption, regionalism, domestic violence, marital rape, child marriage, male entitlement etc. The movies shed light on a variety of topics and as a result, the overall impact felt somewhat dimmed. Truth is always stranger than fiction and bright also though it is not always clear to the human eyes. Both films are about the physical dangers, prejudice and discrimination women face in contemporary society, and the consequences of rebellion. Hence no age and custom can stale the infinite variety made immortal by the celluloid medium for a message highlighting a clarion call in the humanity.