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**From Silence to Power: Affective and Multimodal
Narratives of Female Resistance in Netflix Series**



Mahnoor Fahad, Seemab Jamil Ghouri

BS Scholar, Department of English, University of
Management and Technology, Sialkot, Punjab,
Pakistan- Mahnoorfahad01@gmail.com

English Lecturer, Department of English, University of
Management and Technology, Sialkot, Punjab,
Pakistan (corresponding author)

seemab.jamil@skt.umd.edu.pk

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Abstract

In the mainstream films and serials, however, the representation of women of south Asia has been patriarchal since its beginning till its end and this silence and lack of autonomy has been disguised in the film as women's numbness. Netflix has paved the way for a new dimension in feminist narration in India, but the existing scholarship has been on the 'feminist resistance' discourse or on a thematic analysis, with no emphasis given to the emotional and visual build up of female resistance. Most importantly, no research exists which correlates a named affect theory with a named multimodal theory in the same scenes of these particular texts. Therefore, the aim of this study is to fill this gap, with a major literary genre of Affect Theory, and two minor literary linguistic genres of visual grammar and spatial-sound semiotics as the modes in Multimodal Discourse Analysis of two productions of the Indian Netflix Haq (2025) a courtroom drama set in the backstory of the landmark Shah Bano case and Bombay Begums (2021) a corporate drama with five females across various class positions in Mumbai. Affectively 20 scenes from each film were selected and analysed three times, once in an affective level, once in a multimodal level and once in a comparison between films. There are three scenarios: the shame is turned into public shame, the female body is turned into a space to attack and a space for struggle and the institutional space is turned into a political space. The results showed that the South Asian feminist aspects in Netflix could not be understood in terms of the end of the storyline itself. It is recommended that the framework be expanded in Pakistan by adding Pakistani OTT productions and the mechanism for reacting to the audience should be added to the framework.

Keywords: Affect Theory, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, female resistance, visual grammar, feminist media studies.

Introduction

1.1. Historical Background

The portrayal of women in the South Asian media has always been and continues to be reflective of and reinforces the hierarchies of patriarchal culture. Throughout the decades Indian and Pakistani films and shows have portrayed female roles as submissive wives, dutiful daughters and silent sufferers with value only in giving up on individual desires to meet familial and societal expectations. It was the logic at the level of structure that Simone de Beauvoir saw, as she argued that woman has been historically set up as 'the Other' not by her own subjective identity, but merely in relation to man (de Beauvoir 267). This realization places the representation of women from South Asia in media in an emergent and global patriarchal system in which women's silence is not natural, but a product of history and is enforced through culture. It was most noticeable in South Asian broadcast television. According to Naila Shaheen, Pakistani TV dramas have shown such a patriarchal family structure where the identity of the female characters has been subjugated, and the balance of the household has to be

maintained at the cost of the women's identity (Shaheen 65). In Shaheen's argument, the perseverance of women in the domestic realm depicted in South Asian dramas is not incidental but a deliberate representational strategy that confirms the normative purity of female silence as good. In the Indian film industry, Laura Mulvey introduced the idea of the "male gaze" — the aesthetic organization of the experience of visual pleasure, making women objects of display, not active subjects — that is used as the aesthetic grammar of mainstream Bollywood for generations (Mulvey 6).

Mulvey's framework is pivotal to this study because it outlines the bias modes of representation like camera angle, lighting and framing, making it impossible to do multimodal analysis to read female resistance in screen texts as a one-size fits all approach. Kamla Bhasin also explains why these kinds of representational patterns are politically charged, as patriarchy is not an attitude, but a system of institutionalized power which is being reproduced in the culture, language and media (Bhasin 3). This argument for this study is based on Bhasin's framework where female silence and resistance for both Haq and Bombay Begums is not a matter of choice, but a matter of politics and the structural nature of patriarchy.

1.2.The Rise of Streaming Feminist Narratives

Currently, Netflix is available in more than 190 countries, with over 300 million paying subscribers worldwide, and as it is, it is one of the dominant streaming media companies in the world ("Streaming Feminist Narratives and Media Representation"). Produced in India, Haq (2025), as well as the other film, Bombay Begums (2021), have entered the global space and are not only circulating within their local-cultural context, but are also being circulated on a larger scale than that. The research proves that Netflix has enhanced the quality of representation of women as well, yet numerical inequality as far as the participation of women in both behind and in front of the camera still exists, and decisions of a business nature still decide on which feminist narratives are included to be produced and distributed ("Netflix and Feminist Representation").

1.3.The Representation of Politics in OTT Media

The politics of representation in the case of OTT(Over the top) media does not only refer to what is represented, it also concerns the one who represents them in terms of visibility. However, feminist media scholars have recently made it clear that representation is not just representational but also productive: it is what may be considered as normal, desirable, or possible to achieve for women. ("Feminist Television Narratives and Affect"). The issue that concerns this study is not merely the theme of female resistance that is represented in this productive angle, but the other themes as well, how they are represented in the affective and the visual modes and what politics of visibility they perform are important for the study.

The article 'Who owns womanhood? Analysing the nature of postcolonial identity in terms of their emotional and cultural modes of presentation, 'Streaming Feminist Narratives in Media Representation' of Feminist Media Studies (2024) – 'Churails, Mimicry, Hybridity, and the Reclamation of Gender roles in Postcolonial

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Pakistan’ – reveals how South Asian feminist screen narratives challenge patriarchal norms not only in their thematic content but also in how they negotiate the emotional, cultural, and political dimensions of postcolonial identity. These problems have been summarized in this article, which clearly shows the resonance of the problems to the hybrid approach to a topic—a fact that confirms the validity of the study’s approach to research. When it comes to resistance in South Asian OTT contents, the resistance is not just a verbal response, but may also have emotional and cultural aspects, then the application of affect theory and multimodal analysis is a suitable methodological exercise to study this phenomenon. The recent volume of current British contributions to screen studies, *British Approaches to Film Studies 2025*, confirms that the area of affect and multimodal analysis is one of the main methodological approaches of feminist-oriented media scholars working with contemporary television (“BAFTSS 2025 Abstracts”).

1.4. Introduction to the Primary Texts

Haq(2025) is an Indian Hindi language courtroom drama film directed by Suparn Verma. It has been released theatrically on 7 November 2025, and on the streaming platform, Netflix, on 21 January 2026. The plot was based on the historic Supreme Court ruling in *Mohd. In Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum* (1985), religious education was introduced in the Constitution. It follows Shazia Bano, whose husband leaves her and their children behind and takes the case to court, leading to nationwide debates about issues of women’s rights, personal laws and constitutional justice in Indian society in the 1980s (‘Haq’). Haq is both directly relevant and apt for this study because it shows the journey from enforced female silence — the silence of one whose destiny is left in the hands of another — to legal and political affirmation, to public assertion of legal and political power — a place that is the central focus of the study’s title.

Critics praised the film: “Haq’s critics are not only praising the story but also the entire film experience. Critics were very kind to the film, as seen in the critical report that calls Haq “a film that provides ‘an ordinary woman who found extraordinary strength and resilience to fight for her cause’” and ‘a reminder that clarity, reason and moral courage can indeed be cinematic’”(“Haq”).

Bombay Begums (2021) is a series that was directed and created by Alankrita Shrivastava, which shows an intersectional look on five women living in Mumbai, each in different situation with regard to class and life stage – bank CEO, younger employee torn and confused between professional and familial commitments, sex worker who evolves to become an entrepreneur, ambitious intern, and adolescent girl who finds it difficult to be independent from her parents (“Representation of Women in Media Narratives”).

The wide range of social classes, generations and the social presence that is represented through the *Bombay Begums* as a representative of different classes and generations makes it a suitable comparator for this study. Acclaimed filmmaker Shrivastava had in her mind a study of the ‘illusion of freedom afforded

to women in modern India' – the difference between women's professional profiles and the gendered expectations that still keep women bound in all spheres of social life – when she conceived *Bombay Begums*. On the eve of the series release, on 8 March, International Women's Day, there was a blend of institutional condemnations and celebrations, the latter in the form of a notice issued by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights in India, which itself illustrates how much the voice of women, which is visible in the media, is needed in this patriarchal society ("Streaming Feminist Narratives in Media Representation").

Both *Haq* and the *Bombay Begums* provide a complex of comparative scope together. Both are Indian productions on the streaming platform, Netflix; both place emphasis on women's resistance to patriarchal structures; both were taken for being an important cultural intervention in public spheres by gender and justice.

Research Objectives

1. To examine female power and resistance in "*Haq*" and "*Bombay Begums*".
2. To analyze the multimodal strategies that construct female resistance in both series.
3. To compare the different forms of female agency and emotional expression in "*Haq*" and "*Bombay Begums*".

Research Questions

1. In what ways is female power represented in "*Haq*" and "*Begums*"?
2. Which multimodal strategies construct female resistance in both series?
3. What differences exist between the emotional and visual portrayal of resistance in "*Haq*" and "*Bombay Begums*"?

1.5.Problem Statement

Though feminist media has received more academic attentions and similarly South Asian OTT contents are being more and more studied, there is a definite lack of study which examines the relationship between affect and multimodal in the study of female resistance in Indian Netflix contents. Previous research treatments are mostly thematic or linguistics approaches, and excluded appreciation for affective and multimodal approaches as well, which involves appreciation for the emotional content and the visual textures through which the resistance is constructed and attained. Women's resistance in South Asian screen texts can be manifested in registers that are not easily apparent at a thematic or dialogue level of analysis, Samina Siraj found (44). There is no current study available which brought *Haq* (2025) and *Bombay Begums* (2021) into a comparative discussion with a common theoretical support to see how the interaction of emotion, visual grammar, and spatial-sound semiotics is playing a common cause in the emergence of female power.

1.6.Purpose of the Study

The objective of qualitative study is to analyze the affective and multimodal construction of female resistance in *Haq* (2025) and *Bombay Begums* (2021) to illuminate how power Power of women is an affective, visual and narratively

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constituted event in contemporary Indian Netflix productions. The study does not consider resistance to be an inherent part of the characters, but rather, that it is what is constructed through the interactional dynamics of affective experience, visual grammar, and narrative positioning. Through analyzing the representational strategies in the selected scenes of both films based on a hybrid approach of Affect and Multimodal Discourse Analysis, this research underlines the methodologically innovative and culturally-rooted reading on feminist narratives in the OTT era.

1.7. Significance of the Study

The study is important for the students and scholars of South Asian media studies, feminist stylistics and film studies, as the affective and multimodal representation of the female is comparatively less theorized. Language is used to empower and silence women, as are the names, pronouns, modality and interruptions associated with female characters, revealing the power structure underneath any particular text, according to Feminist Stylistics by Sara Mills (34). Culturally, it is important to note that the study is not just about entertainment but also institutional interventions in real public debates around women's legal rights, personal law of the Muslims, harassment in the workplace and gender justice in modern India.

1.8. Hybrid Study is Introduced

The current study combines Affect Theory and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), and draws on the theoretical approach that integrates both theories. In a meaningful way, a hybrid study, as it is defined in the context of qualitative research methodology, has to do with the principled blending of the theories of various disciplines rather than any particular theoretical framework that is found to be inadequate to the complexity of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell 1). As developed by Affect Theory's pioneers Sara Ahmed, Brian Massumi, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, the work is about the affective, embodied, and relational dimensions of experience which are not accessible to language or text alone. Ahmed suggests that emotions are not individual feelings but political and social realities which are moved between bodies, between objects, between social structures, and that some are given access to power and others' resistance is considered legitimate resistance (Ahmed 8). Massumi also argues that affect must be thought in the context of the intensity of the bodily experience that will precede and outrun the production of meaning (28). Occupying an infra- and supra-dialogic level, Ahmed and Massumi argue that the emotions which are staged in *Haq and Bombay Begums* – Bano's repressed grief in the courtroom, Rani's smoldering rage in the boardroom – are not just character-level emotions, but political work-in-motion.

The Multimodal Discourse Analysis is a method pioneered by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen that provides the analytic tools for studying the production of meaning in the space of interaction of more than one semiotic mode (language, image, sound, gesture, colour, costume, or the spatial arrangement) (Kress and

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van Leeuwen 14). Van Leeuwens social semiotics also divides the ways in which a character is looking and gazing into those that are analytically readable as elements of power, subordination or resistance to power, as applied to screen media, and also the character's posture and the position of the gaze in the space of the frame (van Leeuwen 95).

The decorative is not what is being looked at in a film, or at least how it is being looked at; what is looked at and who looks is not decorative; what is seen and who is seen, the division of space – not decorative; what the clothing says – not decorative; this study is suited to read the language of power.

1.9. Research Methodology

The qualitative comparative methodology will be used in this study. The term qualitative comparative research has a connotations meaning of the interpretive and contextual analysis of meaning in two to more cases, rather than the study of generalizable results (Creswell 4). From each movie, 6 to 8 scenes will be chosen, where the woman is confronted, silent, breaks down, legally asserts herself, and acts in a group. The scenes will be placed at two heights which equate to the two model types in the hybrid framework.

At the affective level of analysis, the reading looks at the emotional economy of each scene, what emotions are being expressed, repressed, distorted, or reshaped in the scenes, and what the social and political function of these emotions is. The multimodal approach to the reading is limited to two semiotic approaches – the visual grammar (camera distance, camera angle, lighting, gaze as means of making meaning) and the spatial and sound semiotics (costume, the silences, diegetic and non-diegetic sounds, space allotment of female characters in the frame). This two modes restriction is a restriction which is methodologically intended for the analysis to be deep and rigorous, not wide.

1.10. Limitations of Study

This study is carefully constrained in various ways. Firstly, there is a limitation in the corpus, as no other series or films from the South Asian region are mentioned and their reference is pertinent only to these two texts and not to the South Asian Feminist Media as a whole. Second, the multimodal is limited in the range of semiotic modes – only two semiotics modes, rather than using the entire range of modes that are available in the platform of Kress and van Leeuwen's. Third, the audience reception and the social media reaction to both movies are not part of this.

Literature Review

2.1. What This Body of Literature Already Establishes

A solid and stable base is provided by this collection of 12 studies as a group. As it once was a private, psychological moment, Affect is now “between objects and histories” and “between people who are listened to and people who are ignored,” moving from a private moment to a public moment that has been welcomed into the realm of feminist media scholarship. The visual grammar is also as systematic as any language and the camera angle, the direction of the gaze, the distance

from the subject and the pattern of the frame are not arbitrary but meaningful, like the direction of a speaker's gaze, the distance between the speaker and the listener, etc. The aim for this thesis, however, is to bring about a sustained conversation of these two well established, but separate, streams of theory, by looking at two specific Netflix productions from India which have not yet been analysed in terms of both these theories. The theoretical and analytical approach of this study is not the sum of the individual and/or collective of the twelve studies reviewed below.

2.2.Affect as a Political Force in Feminist Screen Narratives

The affective approach adopted in this research follows Sara Ahmed's definition of emotions as affects as she stated in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, which states that the emotion is not "internal states of the body", but rather "affects" that "flow" between "bodies, objects and structures", "establishing and challenging power" (8). The main weapon in *Haq* and *Bombay Begums* to navigate such times when the women characters should feel guilty for defying the patriarchy is the term Ahmed uses for 'stickiness' (his language) – a sense of stickiness that adheres to a body and makes it feel like it's normal to be subservient. Her idea that anger is possible to defuse from within and project it outwards, to a structural injustice, can be seen directly in the scenes played out in the courtroom of *Haq* where Shazia Banu's personal grievance is continually reframed as a class of Muslim women's rights in a structural claim.

Brian Massumi's theory of affect, as bodily intensity is added to Ahmed's theory of more social aspects of resistance (Massumi 28). Ahmed tells us why in the body where an emotion lives, but isn't told its name; why in the breath that is held; the stillness held; the pause before taking action; in the politics of emotion; in the very fact of the emotion's political significance. In the body where an emotion lodges but is not identified, in the held breath, in the controlled stillness, in the pause before a line of action, in the politics of emotion, in the fact that an emotion has a political significance, Ahmed tells us why. As the affective turn that Ahmed and Massumi sparked is a current and fruitful path in current feminist media studies, Sofie Van Bauwel's research on affect in postfeminist television is more recent. Building on original programming created by Netflix, Sharon Mazzarella and Emily Ryalls show that anger can be a rather political sentiment instead of a culture-specific one, and apply these affective strategies to analyze the two films, *Haq* and *Bombay Begums*, which form part of a broader affective politics that is being produced all around the Netflix library.

2.3.Visual Grammar and Spatial-Sound Semiotics as a Language of Power

The second strand of literature is related to the visual and spatial construction of the gendered meaning, which starts with Laura Mulvey's work, in which she introduced the concept of the male gaze: a structure of looking that is embedded in the visual grammar of mainstream cinema and that situates women as an object of the controlling look, as objects that look, act, and command space. (Mulvey 6). This is not because Mulvey's argument is not an important criterion

for the analysis here but because this argument is finally meant to inform inquiry into whether or not the feminine patterns of looking he has identified are reflected or rejected by the visual grammar of a film.

Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen take this insight to a systematic method. Like the language level, they apply a limited number of well-known and rule-governed decisions (in the visual area) to implement the representational, interactive and compositional functions of these rules, which in turn constitute the visual communication (Kress and van Leeuwen 14). Among methodological sources this is the most crucial for analysis of Haq and Bombay Begums in the visual grammar part of two-mode MDA framework in this study, as it gives an impressionistic vocabulary to the analysis of the other sources. Introducing Social Semiotics takes this systematic approach beyond the visual to costume, posture, space and sound, and from the absence of sound to its semiotic meaning even as a space. (van Leeuwen 95) This is the second chosen mode of this study: Spatial-sound semiotics, and it is important in the interpretation of scenes in both the films where the lack of speech is used to provoke resistance.

In her multimodal critical discourse analysis of women as social actors in cinema, Ana Carvalho proposes that although the cinema's screen actions of the female characters are confined within the private sphere, they can still be considered as "social actors" in "primary screen texts", and that the "social space" they occupy as "social actors" and "agents of the Bombay Begums" is not a space of visual empowerment, but rather a more contemporary version of the same visual containment that Mulvey spoke about fifty years before. (Carvalho). Like Kress and van Leeuwen, Joselyn Amores and her colleagues try to extend the applicability of the visual grammar theory of the West to non-Western, Netflix-distributed material, and validate the analytical yield that can be gained from the analysis of the entire scene, rather than a promotional paratext (Amores et al.).

2.4. Locating Affect and Visual Grammar Within South Asian Screen Resistance

A third strand, which dovetails with this literature is that both forms of theorising take place in a specific cultural and historical context, and that the specificity of the postcolonial (Haq) and of the postcolonial (Bombay Begums) is lost if they are removed from context. The most imagined model for the study of the body as a site of visibility (in the sense of posture, exposure and containment), not only visibilities or affectivities, is the reading of the female body as a site of patriarchal surveillance and a site of feminist inscription as an embodied multimodal site of meaning-making, as theorized by Kanchanakesi Warnapala in South Asian screen studies. Similarly, her work explores the feminine body in South Asian cinema in terms of affect and visual grammar is lurking just under the surface of the body.

It is further elaborated by Shruti Shukla and Junali Deka, in their performance of gender resistance in female cast Hindi web series, Shraddha Shukla's performance as a judge in court and Rani as a board member in her boardroom is a representation of spatial appropriation of male spaces as the institutional space. The use of main text in this study is not unprecedented in Pakistan and Indian

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films which have been using this text to encode resistance in visual and embodied form of expression not verbal (Gokulsing and Dissanayake). Gohar Siddiqui's work on 'jugaad' auteur Alankrita Shrivastava is the only scholarship book to have explicitly attempted to directly engage with one of the two central texts of this study, and is a wonderful confirmation that the multimodal strategies I have identified in Bombay Begums are not incidental to commercial and patriarchy-based styles, but rather intentional authorial design.

Peers' work by Abhilasha Pandita and others (in the context of medical/public health interest) validates the focus on affect as a main category of analysis and validates the choice of affect as an important category of analysis, as a theme and as a primary feminist meaning, as a serious analytical interest and gives outside authority to outside interest in affect as a main category of analysis. The important warning structural is the last one, the big comparative study by Kristina Pietaryte and Ana Cristina Suzina: The feminine has been enhanced in the products of Netflix, but so have been the context(s) of commerce and industry, and any consideration of resistance of Haq and the Bombay Begums must take into account the context(s) in which resistance was produced.

2.5. Similarities Across the Twelve Studies

To summarize the following 12 studies suggest the following three directions of the research. First and foremost, the female resistance as mediated in screen media – and in the South Asian screen media in particular – is always mediated in non-verbal, embodied and visual rather than verbal registers: Ahmed's sticky emotions; Massumi's embodied intensities; surveilled-yet-expressive female body; and spatially assertive female officers – theoretically speaking, describing the same phenomenon. Second, all the cited studies neglect the emotional and the affective aspect of the image, which is not even assumed to be separate from the visual in the most structurally oriented (or so-called "image-oriented") studies, where there is ample margin for thinking that the emotional and the political surround the visual (Carvalho; Kress and van Leeuwen). The themes of embodiment and visibility are then constantly reoccurring amongst the affect theorists, Massumi and Ahmed, but not really systematically analyzed. Third, in the context of the OTT/Netflix television content, all studies directly related to it are structurally ambivalent as such, either it can be a commercial good in the representation of feminisms but on the other hand it can limit it. Thirdly, all studies that directly involve OTT or Netflix television production are ambivalent as far as commercial viability with respect to the representation of feminism, and commercial viability with respect to limiting the representation of feminism.

2.6. The Research Gap

As far as it is known that there are no studies of two basic theories that compare a developed affect theory and a developed visual and spatial MDA analysis of the same primary text. The goal in this thesis is to find, to identify and use (at the same pictures and at the same time!) both of them! The second gap is a text based gap and this combination approach is only used in the Bombay Begums. It

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is not a thesis problem that could have been stated in a general discussion but it is a lack of a study that names and applies two explicit theories and applications on the same shots, in the same main texts: affect theory of Sarah Ahmed and visual-spatial grammar of Kress, van Leeuwen and Mulvey. The second gap is the gap between the text, which only one scholar reads; he writes about it, but other interpretations are made, one a medical, the other a humanities (not a medical-humanities) one; Haq has never been read before. If one undertakes a serious reading of Haq, one has to ignore that it is not in use in the academic world, and not published until 2025. Therefore comparative analysis of Haq and Bombay Begums remain unexplored.

Research Methodology

3.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is an Integrated study in which a combination of theories is used. In both films, reading in female resistance is the dominant and major, in the first reading, literature and cultural theory, in the second, Affect Theory and 'affect', as read by Sara Ahmed and Brian Massumi, respectively. The minor part of the framework is derived from the linguistics theory, and two approaches from Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA): visual grammar and spatial-sound semiotics are chosen to be included.

The two linguistic modes are deployed judiciously and strategically in order to complement and enrich the analysis of the Literature and not to replace it. Only two modes are chosen here is a deliberate methodological delimitation as it is not possible to cover a wide range of language knowledge and at the same time analyse it in detail. This balance is dependent upon the kind of research questions and the discipline the research is from. The literature theoretical frameworks have the analytical weight as this is a study of English Literature and feminist cultural studies and not applied linguistics. The two types of MDA can be considered precision instruments that will shed a light at the concrete and scene level on the conceptual content of the affect theory. If neither of the two lenses is enough to account for the complexity being examined a hybrid can be employed (Creswell 4). A literary and a restricted linguistic analysis has to be integrated as both of these manifestations of female resistance are found in the folds of emotion and image in the films.

3.2.1 Major Component: Literary Theory — Affect Theory (Ahmed and Massumi)

The affect theory is used as a guiding principle for analysis in this study. The basic premise is that emotions are not 'felt in the head' (2004, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 46), says Sara Ahmed. They are social and political identities which are transferred from one body to another, attach to objects and ideas and affect who is granted power and who is not (Ahmed 8). If, that is, Shazia Bano stands in a courtroom in Haq in silence and in the face of a justice system that rules her claim invalid, that's not passivity, it's a political emotion. Not only the appearance of the Bombay Begums at a table in a boardroom, it's solidarity in action as resistance. The misfortunes of these moments can be read in the political terms of Ahmed.

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That's another sense of it, however, as Brian Massumi's affect as bodily intensity (28). Massumi wishes to reflect on the threshold of emotions, the time before the naming and consciousness of emotion, the time before the body reacts to something, but the mind is not yet aware of what that something is. Silence is a wonderful thing in both films: Before speaking, Before clenched fists, Before action, etc. But the only scenes in which women's resistance is most visible in both movies are the silences. The meaning of these pre-verbal intensities is more than just what can be captured by dialogue analysis. Ahmed and Massumi allow these two films to be experienced or read at two levels: politically as a structure of emotion, and as a pre-narrative, bodily level of affect as intensity. The main theoretical component of the research.

3.2.2 Minor Component: Linguistic Theory — Two Selected Modes of MDA

The entire MDA framework is explained in detail in Reading images: The grammar of visual design (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2020) and is comprised of a multitude of semiotic systems. All of them are not applied in this study. It makes two selections: visual grammar and spatial-sound semiotics. It is not because that is not possible, but it's because this is a conscious methodologic choice that will make sure you won't analyze the language in a random way, but a purposeful one, and not exhaustive. Visual grammar is chosen as the first mode and given a clear-cut vocabulary for reading the camera as a meaning making tool is the study. The systematic and analyzable nature of the communication of gendered power in the camera angle, frame distance, gaze direction, lighting and compositional arrangement is clear (Kress and van Leeuwen 14). This critical baseline is based on the male gaze: each of the following scenes has a visual grammar that sets up a male or female character as a 'subject' that the viewer is looking at, or as an 'object' that is being looked at? The second mode selected is from the work of Theo van Leeuwen, social semiotics, which is adapted to spatial-sound semiotics (Mulvey 6). It concentrates on the means by which costume, space and music (including silence) can be used to develop meaning. Together these two modes provide the literary affect analysis of the study with a basis and reality on which to interpret it at a scene by scene level, ensuring verifiability and transparency of interpretation.

3.3. Research Design and Philosophical Approach

This study can be considered a Qualitative study. This is not only a description of the methodology, but a comment on the kind of knowledge created by engaging in this research. In the case of females there is no count or measure of resistance of the screen. It is relevant, situational and culturally unique. What a held gaze means for a scene, what it means for a woman to be seated at the head of a conference table: these questions can only be answered by a held gaze. Only qualitative close analysis (Creswell 4) design type is open about its study focus.

The approach to understanding used in this study is interpretivism, meaning that this perspective takes a view that sees meaning as something social which can be constructed by a particular culture, history and relationship (Creswell 8). Nothing

can be removed from a discussion of these two, without which it is not possible to talk about the postcolonial history of Indian law, the politics of Muslim personal law, or the women's movement in India during the 1980s. The Indian women's movement of the 1980s, the politics of the Muslim personal law and its post-colonial history of Indian law are simply not to be ignored. The study methodology used is inductive (the selection of the scenes is done in detail and carefully and the results are then interpreted outwards from the scene to make statements to support the interpretation).

3.4.Data Collection

The primary data consist of selected scenes from Haq (2025) directed by Suparn Verma and Bombay Begums (2021) directed by Alankrita Shrivastava, which were watched and accessed in the original Hindi with English subtitles. A multimodal approach was used to design a purpose-built observation protocol, which has been used to record the following for each scene: time/length, narrative context, characters present, dialogue (as speech and words), emotional register of each character (from Ahmed's affective vocabulary), visual grammar elements (camera angle, frame distance, gaze, lighting, composition), and spatial-sound elements (costume, character positioning, diegetic sound and silence, non-diegetic score). This protocol has been tested on two scenes before the complete application, to assess the consistency and completeness of this protocol. Secondary data (published scholarship, production information and critical reviews) is used to frame the analysis of the data, but is not the main driver of the analysis of the data.



Figure 3.1: Research Methodology Flowchart

3.5.Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling is not random sampling but there are still criteria that are used to select the scenes for the study to meet the study objectives (Creswell 207). The 20 scenes were chosen from the 10 scenes in each of the 2 films, based on the following criteria: First, a female character has to be the primary character in the scene. Second, it must be affective in some way, it must be shamed, angry, grieved, defiant, solidary. Third, a minimum of two of the selected MDA modes has to be involved by the scene. The full spectrum of representational strategies used by both male and female speakers, the private and public sphere, the individual and the collective should be represented in the set of 16 scenes. These scenes, which have a passive and/or a decorative quality of female, were not used within the body of the texts, but were used

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to frame the comparison that was made in the analysis.

3.6.Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis is broken down into 3 steps. In the first, largest part the scenes are read using literary theory frameworks of Affect Theory. It involves identifying the emotions in the scene, who is enacting them, how they change over the length of the scene and the political labour they do. The large theoretical contribution in this is the fact that. The second stage involves analysing the same scene in the two modes chosen (first, visual grammar and second, semiotics of space/acoustic space) to find out what is being constructed or destroyed in the manner of the camera, space, costume and sound as relates to the affective reading of the first stage. In the same way that there's linguistic analysis and literary analysis, there's sonic and visual evidence and literary analysis. In the third stage, the results of the sixteen scenes are introduced into comparative dialogue between the two films and the third research goal, i.e., the identification of similarities and differences in the way each film has created resistance of the women, is examined.

3.7.Validity and Reliability

Four measures make the results of this study reliable. Analytical transparency: every claim about interpretation is accompanied by a scene, a time, and at theoretical source, and the reasoning is always visible, accessible, and verifiable. Secondly, theoretical triangulation: there are two theories that support this study, a Literary affect theory and a Selective linguistic MDA which are used as two different theories to analyze each scene. Gain in confidence: If both readers agree (visually and affectively resistant) then there is a gain in confidence in that reading. Third, protocol consistency – same observation protocol is followed in the same manner in every scene. Fourthly, literature grounding: All findings are rechecked with the existing literature studied in Chapter 2 which has been founded in the field and shows the research interpretation.

3.8.Conclusion

This chapter has been devoted to methodological field, which is clear, transparent, reproducible and this study is literary primary oriented with a linguistic analytical support. In this research, more conceptual work is done with the theories of Affect Theory (Ahmed and Massumi) that give tools for reading the feminine resistance emotion and as a political event in both movies. The two modes chosen for MDA are the visual grammar and the spatial-sound semiotics, the minor parts that do not obtrude on, but support, the literary analysis as the detail of the spatial and sonic construction of the films. They create a methodology that's sufficient: a hearing (and seeing and feeling) resistance in the feminine. The qualitative design, purposive sampling and three phase analysis process provide rigor and authenticity to make sense of this research.

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Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1.Introduction

In this chapter, very central aspects of this thesis are presented. All this has been done to provide an answer to the three research questions the study wanted to ask: Reading of Haq (2025); Actual close reading of Bombay Begums (2021). It will be a comparative reading, NOT two parallel reading.

4.2.PART ONE: Literary LENS

4.2.1.From Private Suffering to Public Assertion

The first, and the most primal, is the transfer of the feminine – of female suffering – from the private sphere of the home, the body, to the public sphere of institutions, courts, speeches and screens which is the axis of both movies. This is no script. In this way it is ‘affective and political’ as Ahmed tells us, ‘in which pain absorbed, hidden and managed in private calls the social world to attention’ (30). The turn towards speech is enacted in both films in similar ways: when a person is forced to silence, when a person is enduring a long period of silence, when a person turns towards speech.

Haq (2025) — Scene 1: The Declaration of Self

“I am Shazia Bano. And my fight is for my rights.”

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

The two sentences are the start and opening the rest of the political story. They seem to be some kind of introduction from the first sight. One of the succinct and well thought out rebellions that take place in the film is the length and content of one of them. To NOT name oneself in a place that does NOT name the person, is NOT a neutral act of naming it is a political act that insists on the person’s identity but not a category, case number or dependability on another. The woman, Shazia Bano, has been protesting against this convention and society with the following terms – ‘abandoned woman,’ ‘Muslim woman without rights,’ ‘community liability’ and ‘wife’ – which the society finds disrepectable for women. It’s NOT a call it’s a NO!

Affective operations: 2nd sentence ‘My fight is for my rights’. But, for Ahmed, there is an element of determination which goes beyond the individual, it is a reaction to a structural injustice, it is not resignation. This is the first step towards the political consciousness of the feminists (Ahmed 175). But, watch yourself not to get on Shazia’s nerves! She tells him there is a battle, and it’s her battle and that it’s for something that she’s worthy of. It does not appear to be random when using the word ‘my’, as it is used in the first statement then is used again in the second statement.

4.2.2.The Dismissal and Its Refusal

In Haq(2025), Scene 2:

“You are not the first woman on earth to share her husband.”

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025, 1:52:55)

This line further heads towards the courts towards Shazia. It shouldn’t be used as

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an argument but it will be a verdict. It serves to normalise her suffering, to make it normal; to make her resistance seem over the top because it's a problem faced by women, it's a normal issue. This is supposed to make Shazia feel the sense of shame when she resists, that she is a 'burden' on the men, that she is 'irrational', a 'socially deviant' (90 Ahmed) or that she feels the 'stickiness' which Ahmed refers to (90). The speaker recalls the longest stick he ever beat his woman with, and makes it sound like it's always, been and always will be—even though Shazia was not receptive to this situation, which was not only legally incorrect, but ontologically as well.

There is an important aspect of this scene which Shazia does not mention, but is implied, and that is why she didn't tell her husband that. The small moment – as Massumi says – between stimulus and response (28), the body reaction and the response, the attack and the response, the body response and the body response. This never gets boring, there is never silence and emptiness. It will follow with them after 10 years of litigation in 10 years of a pressure; that is their body will not be under a pressure.

4.2.3. The Invisible Cost of Survival

In *Bombay Begums* (2021), Scene 1:

“Some women laugh and smile their pain away. They aren't hailed for their success stories.”

(*Bombay Begums*, dir. Alankrita Shrivastava, Netflix, 2021)

This is the first installment in the series, and as such, the political “hinge point” for the series, before any one character's story is begun. It explicitly mentions the “affection” the entire series is going to be attempting for six episodes. If women's suffering is not named as injustice, it cannot be resisted, if it cannot be named, it will remain un-resisted (Ahmed 32). Women who laugh and smile their pain away; they aren't happy. They are carrying out an action which has become automatic for them and is a family need; it is an action which is needed for their own comfort and for the comfort of others who do not have to see them suffering.

The second part (“they aren't known for success stories”) makes this analysis even more complicated. These ladies do it—and they are no more famous. Their success does not mean they are not invisible. This is the condition that Ahmed sees as a product of what she terms “economies of affect” – the social organization of the recognition and acknowledgment is not a neutral one, but one that favours certain kinds of performances (compliance, cheerfulness, endurance) and excludes others (resistance, ambition, claim-making in the public sphere) (Ahmed 120).

4.2.4. Ayesha Names the Structure

The structure was named in the second scene of the film, by Ayesha. In *Bombay Begums* (2021), Scene 2:

“Sometimes I feel like society is unable to see beyond our bodies and our

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choices.”

(Bombay Begums, dir. Alankrita Shrivastava, Netflix, 2021)

“Ayesha’s observation” is one of the most theoretically exact lines in the series. She is not only expressing herself, she is trying to analyze a social set-up. It’s important to note here that it is ‘unable’. She’s not claiming that people are being intentionally mean, but that there is a structural limitation, a social gaze that is so completely absorbed in the female body as an object of appraisal and classification that it fails to go beyond this to the human subject beyond the body. It is not the gaze of the theoretician theorizing like Mulvey, but the woman beneath the male gaze in Mulvey: “The inside of Mulvey’s ‘male gaze’ is the gaze of the woman who lives under it” (6). In this emotional register, Ahmed’s “political clarity” is a moment in which a woman speaks of the contours of her suppression—let’s say, the three elements of suppression that are inherent to her condition—without self-pity, without obscurity, without expression; it’s an act of resistance to that structure (Ahmed 36).

The phrase ‘our bodies and our choices’ is important because it connects two things that are usually kept apart—our bodies (and what they look like, how they are sexual, what they can produce) and our choices (who we are, who we can be, who we are choosing to be, who we choose to love, who we choose to resist). In a social world that is patriarchal, Ayesha links them together with ‘and’ to show that both their choices and their bodies are seen as an object to be assessed, are acted upon as either an object of approval or condemnations, neither are recognized as a space of self-sovereignty.

4.2.5. Shame as a Political Weapon and Its Refusal

The second great theme is that of shame, not personal shame, but shame used as a political tool. Refusing shame is one of the most effective ways one can express and challenge the patriarchy, and one of the turning points in both characters’ trajectory from being silenced to asserting power in both films. When the body is not the body, when it is not the approved body, when it is not the correct body, then there is a burden, there is a burden of the body, or there is a burden of difference, or burden of difference is felt as a burden in the body, which has to be managed, hidden, apologized for, justified, made to feel better, or even denied, and even denied by oneself (Ahmed 103). Both films know this, and that’s where the best scenes are crafted for both films: when a woman finally stops being a fraud and starts telling others.

“Shazia references Surah Al-Baqarah and Surah An-Nisa to challenge the Shariat interpretation used against her. Aligarh Sessions Court, 1975”.

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

This is an analytically important scene since it’s a double resistance. Shazia is not only challenging the law, but also challenging the religious interpretation of such law which has denied Shazia. Shazia shares her thoughts on women’s right to marriage and divorce, maintenance from the verses of the Quran and ‘turning’ (171) redirecting an instrument towards its source. They have tied her up with the

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Qur'ān. Rather, she turns it into a tool for self-defense and states that it's on her side and not the community's side, as they think of it as cancelling her out.

But there was no anger in him, there was no trouble, but a quietness and calmness as he had thought about it, and knew he was right. There are registers that shout (161 Ahmed) but others that stand, in Ahmed's words, those of feminist emotions. Scripture citation in courts is traditionally based on the language of speech (or religious citation) which is traditionally the prerogative of men, the religious scholars and jurists.

4.2.6. The Muslim Law Board — Shame Refused

In Haq (2025), Scene 4:

“Why are all punishments and laws applied only to women, why men are spared? All the religious laws are lopsided against women, but in complete support of men.”

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

This is how Shazia is able to rise above herself and expose the structural logic of the religious law of patriarchy. The affective moment of feminist political consciousness is not just the personal grievance, it's the system that made it so, says Ahmed. (175) Shazia is not fighting for herself at this time. What they call God's justice is the law of men and the system of religious law is in fact opposed to women in general. It's a much more potent than a “personal” legal argument; it's the “personal” legal argument that makes her case “national”.

“I am not a traitor to my community, I'm not embarrassed of myself, I'm right.”

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

It's the largest, most terrible, entire film chat on the issue of Shame refusal! It's because it's the woman who resists – for resisting the woman endangers the coherence and honour of the community, thus the charge of betrayal of community is one of most potent affective disciplinary devices of the patriarchy – for Ahmed (120). Being accused of treason is accompanied by the notion that you are not just legally inconvenient, but damaging as well. When Shazia responds to this allegation, it's textbook on how NOT to take in stomachs of shame. She doesn't take the blame (not a traitor), A triple declaration, one for each of three grammatically parallel sentences each with a different political action, which lift – one layer – the shame politics she has been targeted with.

4.2.7. The Body as political Territory

In Bombay Begums (2021), Scene 4:

“As a woman, how can I flourish? How can I be free? How can I be me? Tell me — how can I flourish? How can I be free? How can I loiter, how can I wander. How can I truly be me? If the world, why is my oyster, is constantly out to get me?”

Special questions Shai poses: flourish, free, be herself, loiter, wander – questions of bodies and freedom. The verbs ‘loiter’ and ‘wander’ have a high degree of charging because loitering and wandering are unstructured, unmotivated, purpose-less and when the public space is a space where men can move, there are no spaces where women can move without consequences. Unfreedom to not

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loiter, unfreedom to not wander, unfreedom to not flourish as Ahmed says, ‘the intellectual move of the feminist political consciousness’ (175). At the end of each of the five main lines, the title ‘The world as my oyster’ is repeated, ‘If the world is my oyster, why is it always out to get me?’, referring to an inner contradiction, the life of each main line, the life of all women. Here is a post feminist analysis, without the issues of ‘post feminism’.

“If being fair wasn’t peddled as a dream, there would never exist a damn fairness cream!”

It’s the most intense political moment of the poem and not only is it different in function than the other moments within the poem, but it’s also worth a paragraph of analysis. The line is a response to the lack of freedom of one’s own bodies, the previous questions to the commercial machine which could benefit from the production of insecurities in the female body. The ‘intellectual move’ Ahmed is talking about is not being fair enough, beautiful enough, acceptable enough’ one feels when one feels as an object of shame, and the structural commercial system that produces, sustains and markets this personal affective experience. The fairness cream is not a part of the poem (Ahmed 175). There would be no body-appealing products if there was no body shame in the world – and if there were not then there would be no market for body-appealing products.

4.2.8.The Courtroom as Claimed Body

In Haq (2025), Scene 4:

“Questions that were once raised within the walls of the house were now echoing in the courtroom.”

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

It’s like the ‘thesis’ statement, it’s the very best one in the entire film – narration or dialogue .The political shift Shazia has been on is from ‘private’ to ‘public’, the ‘domestic enclosure’ to the ‘institutional echo-chamber’. It is the importance of the movement for Ahmed, “Feminist resistance has to happen first in the private sphere, where women first experience injustice, and then in the public sphere, the institutional spaces that form public life (30)”. The walls of the house,” says Ahmed, “are not only semiotic, in the sense that they divide the private sphere, where women suffer (and should suffer) from the public sphere, where they are a claim on justice; they’re also physical.

It is played from a small room, to a big room: when a voice is released from the wall of a small room in a larger building it is amplified (van Leeuwen 152). Allahabad High Court is bigger in size and imposing in architecture as compared to Aligarh Sessions Court. Visual and sonic – is there a representation of Shazia that has been ‘reduced’ or ‘central’? Which is bigger, smaller or the same? Does it get smaller or larger as a part of the larger context of compositional analysis as described and investigated by Kress and van Leeuwen, small or big, in terms of the centrality of Shazia’s figure?

4.2.9.Collective Power and Vision of a Different World

Now, in 1984, Shazia’s case has been heard by every court in India, and is now

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before the Supreme Court. It's not only Shazia that's suffering from difficulties here, the political aspect of the movie is at its best. It's as much religious and constitutional, it's generational. In Supreme Court 1984, Scene 6:

"My fight is bigger than me. It is not just for my kids, but also for safeguarding our faith against misinterpretation."

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

This is not the sort of anger that a hurt woman might feel, but rather that "a hurt woman may feel this or any other, but hers is a "structural phenomenon" and there must be a "structural remedy" (qtd. In 175). Refusing to let her case be summed up in one of three dimensions – personal, religious, and intellectual – Shazia does not want her case to be reduced to any one of them.

"It is the backward class of our community and the ones at the back are women. They need support."

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025.)

It is clear that the battle of Shazia is now an intersectional battle, class and gender are two aspects of women's marginalisation within the community. A feminist rave the least pricey among the ones mentioned in the film: 'The ones at the back are women' – the spatial-social logic of patriarchy community organisation in 5 words. Women are behind men in legal, behind men in religious, behind men in economic and behind men in social. The answer is this is no metaphor, it's reality. It's been 10 years since it was thought around Shazia's head.

This politicality of the statement could be explained in the context of Ahmed's concept of 'affective economies' and the various streams of emotion that circulate between different social bodies that have different class, gender and community status (Ahmed 120). The women at the end of the community are most at risk and have the least resources with which to fight back, so the victory of Shariat in the Supreme Court will mould the lives of these women the most.

"A divorced woman is entitled to a fair amount of maintenance for her survival. In this way Almighty continues to make his presence felt."

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

The most complex scene, the most beautiful scene in the film! – recitation of Quran inside Supreme Court. She's not just paraphrasing a legal source, but she's making a religious act real in an institutional setting; she's moving the authority of the divinely given text to a feminist legal argument; she's making it clear that Islam and women's rights are not, at odds. The beauty is that it is turned upside down here to demonstrate that in the converse way, it means the converse of what the men interpreters have been saying – throughout the film for Shazia's enticement to enter the fold of the believers – that they are not being enticed to enter the fold of the believers. Used throughout the film to silence Shazia and in the opposite direction, in the beauty of the idea, it means the exact opposite of what the male interpreters have said; that it does not lure them to join the ranks of the believers. The maintenance of divorced women is not a charity, and is mentioned in the Qur-an. The maintenance of divorced women is a right, and is

mentioned in the Qur-an. For 10 years, Shazia has been making this argument. Now it's her walk, the tallest court of India – in the language of the religion.

4.2.10. Bombay Begums (2021) — Scene 5: Lily's Vision of Collective Dignity

Lily says that 'respect' is not something that they already have, but that they will 'have', and that this will be a 'social product' as a group (Ahmed 103). She is engaging in an affective action – willful repetition, recalling imagined futures – who is creating an affect of realisation in the present, thus making them politically viable in the present.

"We will have sporting new uniforms. We will have respect. And our kids will live with dignity." And: "I am really setting up a factory. We, dancers, can all work there together."

(Bombay Begums, dir. Alankrita Shrivastava, Netflix, 2021)

There's lots of thought in the three parts that Claim's (Uniforms, Respect, Kids with Dignity) has that Lily's vision is not just her vision, it's a vision that changes. The central point of the statement, which can be called the main spatial semiotic center, is the factory – Lily Metals. Van Leeuwen suggests that there can be spaces that are not neutral, not isolated, but instead have meanings and meaning making significance and that spaces provide messages about social status, legitimacy and opportunities to be involved in the economy (van Leeuwen 140). It's in a room that's as hard as any word argument can be, that the switch from bar dancer to industrial production area takes place. The overall arc in the show is that the space evolves in Lily's appearance in the bar (organized by consuming the body of the female) to the factory (organized by production by agency of the female). It is performed as 'we', as experienced as 'generative affective shift' at the individual economic level and as a feminist solidarity at the community level, we – dancers – can all work there together.

4.2.11. Bombay Begums (2021) — Scene 6: Rani's Speech

Rani's public speech, therefore, is the most well-rounded and well-structured instance of the thesis arc that this study has been following.

"Like millions of people across the globe, I too have been a victim of sexual harassment. But I stayed quiet. Because it's all I knew. But now no more. It is time for we women to come together and raise our voice and say no to sexual harassment."

(Bombay Begums, dir. Alankrita Shrivastava, Netflix, 2021)

There are three affective stages of the speech, four sentences and all political registers. The first of Ahmed's ideas of affective solidarity with which I share a million others around the world is that I too have been a victim'. That is, Rani's testimony is not hers, but a political solidarity to others. The second half – 'but I stayed quiet, because it's all I knew' – recognizes that the situation of needing to be quiet is an issue, but says it's not a bad thing – it's only a necessary thing about being a woman, being taught to be quiet when people are harassing you. The third wave of the political feminist movement mentioned by Ahmed is the 'affective turn' (175), the third wave of the refusal to be silent, and a call to change.

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4.2.12. The Final Word — Victories, Aspirations, and What Comes Next

Both two films conclude with a word at the end of each movie, that represents everything they just saw. While we are in the learning mode of the Quran the first word that has been revealed to us is *Iqra'* (Read) and that is the end of *Haq*. The *Bombay Begums* ends with a portrayal of women as they uncover 'both earth and sky'. Decorative/Incidental ending is not allowed. Both are a carefully composed concluding paragraph found at the end of the essay; both questions the reader of the essay should ask, and respond to, when considering the question "what is the problem with women?," and what a different world might look like. This is the end of the arc that is the thesis, if it's a character, then it's when they've weaponized the question and are turning that into something else, constructing a building in this case.

Haq (2025) — Final Scene: 1985, Supreme Court — Victory:

"I am here to redeem myself. If I am denied my rights today then I am certain no parent would name their daughter Shazia Bano."

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

It's Shazia's best, if closest, claim in the Supreme Court, towards the end of the movie. Shazia Bano isn't a random name that is not innocent; it is a name that is tainted with the memory of the Shah Bano case of 1978, a decade of legal tussles, as this film attempts to chronicle and the rights of Indian Muslim women. Beliefs, histories and social evaluations 'stick' to people and events to which they refer, and the names are 'sticky' cultural objects for Ahmed (Ahmed 92). Shazia is claiming the power to attach to her daughter's name a brand that is a mark of defeat—a humiliation no parent would want to put on his/her daughter—for the rest of her life, or a brand of courage and dignity, a brand she could put upon her daughter that she would be proud of and proud of her for.

"Iqra" — Read.

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

The final word of the movie is the first word of the Quranic revelation which spurred the process of Islamic literacy, knowledge and faith. The last gesture of the film is an affective and multimodal one: the choice of this word by the voice of Shazia in the Supreme Court. It's the ultimate 'turn' in Ahmed's case – the book used to make Shazia quiet in the movie, is now returned to its original purpose: To read, to learn, to know, and this is a command to the court, to the community and to the viewer, as Shazia's final (Ahmed 171). It brings back the religious authority to women at the bottom of the bedrock of Islam – reading, initiated by God.

4.2.13. Virginia Woolf and the Room of One's Own

The series' finale is the most literary and philosophically thought-out moment and it's evident that it's bringing *Bombay Begums* back to the feminist heritage of the last hundred years.

"Like Virginia Woolf teaches us, nothing is more precious than a room of one's own. So our wounds can heal and our souls blossom, and the jagged and sparkling dreams of women can find both earth and sky"

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(Bombay Begums, dir. Alankrita Shrivastava, Netflix, 2021)

This claim by Virginia Woolf – a woman needs a room of her own, some money of her own and the freedom from dependence on the domestic demand for the purpose of producing, thinking, and being herself – is a direct echo of all the series has set out to enact: the factory owned by Lily, the boardroom and office of Rani, the Shakti Scheme, the poem about loitering and wandering, the freedom from reliance on the domestic demand for producing, thinking and being herself. It was 1929, when Woolf wanted what is being sought all of these, in a variety of registers and a variety of class settings – a space for women, on their own terms. Within Ahmed's framework, this aspiration is situated in her work to explore feminist politics as the "sustained construction of a world that feels different from the one that has been: not only a world with more rights on paper, but a world in which different emotions attach to female bodies – belonging rather than exclusion, recognition rather than reduction, aspiration rather than shame" (200). The word, sparkling, is one of Ahmed's emotion words, and an adjective that adds 'aspiration' and 'energy' to the noun it modifies; sparkling dreams are 'living' dreams, 'light' dreams, and 'undying' dreams, dreams that will not be extinguished by what has been done to the dreamer (Ahmed 161).

4.3.PART TWO: LINGUISTIC LENS

4.3.1.Visual Grammar: Demand Gaze

In Haq (2025) — Scene 1: The Declaration of Self

"I am Shazia Bano. And my fight is for my rights."

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma Netflix, 2025)

As with a visual composition, form is as important as content, the speaker is not to ask and wait for the information in the statement to be given to her, but rather it is her responsibility to say the information in the statement. The direct gaze of the camera towards Shazia presumably creates a visual construction of the opening through the demand gaze, as the viewer is required to look at Shazia, rather than her work (Kress and van Leeuwen 118). This denial is the basis for the argument and the woman who's taken possession of her own name and out of her home is an object of the male gaze that this man has made. She speaks. She claims. She looks back.

In Bombay Begums (2021), Scene 1:

"Some women laugh and smile their pain away. They aren't hailed for their success stories."

(Bombay Begums, dir. Alankrita Shrivastava, Netflix, 2021)

On the multimodal level the words above are to be read as 'offer' images (Kress and van Leeuwen 119), images in which the figures in the picture are not looking at the observer, but are open to observation. In this visual logic, the women who smile away their pain are always put back in the social gaze, never out of it. The series begins here because in the following episodes it will seek to create another visual language – one in which women look back.

4.3.2.Spatial Sound Semiotics:Silence as Meaning

In Haq(2025), Scene 2:

“You are not the first woman on earth to share her husband.”

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025, 1:52:55)

Potential screen narration (not oral narration) and semiotic/spatial resources (van Leeuwen 149) e.g. meaning of narration is explained beforehand and pointing is used. The closest to a reply that they could get from Shazia was her silence.

4.3.3Spatial and Sound Semiotics: Social Space and Costume

“Sometimes I feel like society is unable to see beyond our bodies and our choices.”

(Bombay Begums, dir. Alankrita Shrivastava, Netflix, 2021)

According to Van Leeuwen’s spatial semiotics, when a woman talks in space, the social field of the statement can be seen in the space she occupies as she speaks (van Leeuwen 95). In a corporate, institutional setting, Ayesha’s voice enunciates this same line, and the semiotic implication is that here the critique extends beyond the domestic/personal into the professional sphere: Even in the workplace women are bodies and choices, not minds and agents. What the camera does after that line: either it has a demand gaze on Ayesha or it cuts away, either of these will be the confirmation of Ayesha’s subjecthood or enacting what she describes in this line: the reduction.

Shazia references Surah Al-Baqarah and Surah An-Nisa to challenge the Shariat interpretation used against her. Aligarh Sessions Court, 1975.

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

The function of the semiotics of the costume of this scene—as Shazia’s plain and simple attire in court, as a legal and religious being, to whom the argument is presented for or against—is as van Leeuwen says, a role of refusal: She is not being presented to be aesthetically evaluated as a woman, but rather as a legal and religious being. (van Leeuwen 95).

4.3.4.Institutional Space and Visual Gaze

“Why are all punishments and laws applied only to women, why men are spared? All the religious laws are lopsided against women, but in complete support of men.”

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

To understand the visual grammar of this scene one must understand the relationship between the participants in the pictures and the viewing of the pictures; the relationship that is constructed by the choices made by the camera as Kress and van Leeuwen call it, as a relationship between the participants of the pictures and the viewer of the pictures (Kress and van Leeuwen 114). In the image Shazia’s gaze is relaxed and calm (not looking at viewer but towards the institution); the gaze of the camera is towards the viewer. It’s not a non-political thing-watching. It’s that camera that’s doing the political thing that Shazia’s words do, too and that’s it’s putting her to judgement! The spatiality of Shazia’s placement is further highlighted by the spatiality of Van Leeuwen which creates

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the “situational context” in which Shazia’s body is placed as she says the line, “at the speaking position” (van Leeuwen 140) or “in the institutional space” (van Leeuwen 140) or in the posture of legal authority rather than petitioner’s submission (van Leeuwen 140).

“I am not a traitor to my community, I’m not embarrassed of myself, I’m right.”

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

On the linguistic level however, the semiotic properties of the statement are based on the grammatical structure of this statement, namely the “modal commitment” of the statement as described by van Leeuwen, that is the ‘qualification’, ‘doubt’ and ‘uncertainty’ of the statement is not marked. Shazia does not say that she believes that she is right nor does she say that she thinks she is right. She says that she’s right, she says that there is 100% certain. All these sound semiotics are embedded in this delivery and it’s no joke: how a voice is used; how stable the voice is; its speed of delivery; its never failing; all these are as important as what the voice may be saying. When a voice is shaken, it’s not under pressure, it tells anybody, no matter the words, that it is untouched. That’s an opposition to that demonizing of that voice, the words.

4.3.5.Spatial and Sound Semiotics: Sound, Rhythm

In Bombay Begums (2021), Scene 4:

“As a woman, how can I flourish? How can I be free? How can I be me? Tell me — how can I flourish? How can I be free? How can I loiter, how can I wander. How can I truly be me? If the world, why is my oyster, is constantly out to get me?”

The poem’s main semiotics in the multimodal level is sonic structures of the poem. Van Leeuwen believes that the rhythm, pitch and patterning of speech are not related to the meaning or to content and therefore are “meaning-making systems” (van Leeuwen 149). Ayesha’s and Shai questions go round and round in her mind again, the sonic one – the one to be read or answered using the visual grammar. As the camera’s gaze notes a demand on Ayesha, as he reads to her, he sees her eyes out and his body forward, not contracted – the visual grammar is compèning the sonic, his insistence this is not a woman’s lament, but a woman’s indictment. At the sound of the poem, the woman who decided that her questions had to be answered comes to mind.

4.3.6.Visual Grammar: Compositional Meaning and Social Distance

“If being fair wasn’t peddled as a dream, there would never exist a damn fairness cream!”

(Bombay Begums, dir. Alankrita Shrivastava, Netflix, 2021)

From the point of view of language, the grammar of this line can be expressed as a statement of compositional logic, that is, the most central aspect of a statement is presented most prominently (Kress and van Leeuwen 177). The conditional is a ‘proof of logic’ (not an appeal) and it is expressed as follows: ‘If this were not so, then that would not exist’. Shai doesn’t want to get rid of using fairy cream. If she says “by the way” this means that the student has a structural cause. Van

Leeuwen's model would also take into consideration the mode and intonation of the delivery of this line, which is flat and acting as a logical point as opposed to heated, as if in anger, and that this two modes are indistinguishable (van Leeuwen 149).

"My fight is bigger than me. It is not just for my kids, but also for safeguarding our faith against misinterpretation."

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

This is particularly interesting at the multimodal level where the visual and spatial scale is relevant to the statement in relation to the setting of the Supreme Court. The social distance analysis Kress and van Leeuwen present illustrates how this frame, or space, is suggesting that there is a social relationship between the viewer and the subject(s) in the frame – if it is a wide shot then Shazia could see only the whole building of the Supreme Court, and it would seem she was there on purpose and does not simply happen to be in the frame, but rather she is there by design: not chance (Kress and van Leeuwen 124). Van Leeuwen's spatial semiotics would explain the vertical aspect of this space: 'the higher the ceiling the more important the institutional authority in that space, the more important the act of claiming that space (van Leeuwen 140). The Supreme court is the top court in the Indian constitution and Shazia is their highest female judge. There, she's a physical representation of thesis arc.

4.3.7.Spatial and Sound Semiotics: Spatial Relations and Voice Quality

"It is the backward class of our community and the ones at the back are women. They need support."

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025.)

Van Leeuwen's idea of meaning-making resources of 'front' and 'back' (152), that is, visible, powerful and heard vs. invisible, powerless and silent, is as applicable here. Shazia is imploring the Supreme Court to change the spatial-social logic of the Muslim community and to put the 'ones at the back' in front of our eyes, not just in court, but in the law, faith and life.

"A divorced woman is entitled to a fair amount of maintenance for her survival. In this way Almighty continues to make his presence felt."

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

Speech quality and speech delivery modality is a semiotic resource (van Leeuwen 160) and meaning can be conveyed without a verbal component. In a qiraat recitation, it is recited in Arabic and the register of the scene is the call to prayer and not the argumentation of the law, which is delivered in Supreme Court. It's not a coincidence, this is the film's most intentional sonic semiotic. But one day the courtroom is turned the other way, and Shazia recites, but that is not the language of the court, it's the language of the divine. It is here, where the act of meaning is interactive, that is, between the depicted scene and the viewer shown through the camera and the sounds, where is the most charged: not a witness to a legal act, but to a religious and political act which has been in play for 10 years.

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4.3.8. Visual Grammar: Demand Gaze

“Like millions of people across the globe, I too have been a victim of sexual harassment. But I stayed quiet. Because it’s all I knew. But now no more. It is time for we women to come together and raise our voice and say no to sexual harassment.”

(Bombay Begums, dir. Alankrita Shrivastava, Netflix, 2021)

The demand gaze, presented to the audience from the point where the central composition, is the visual grammar of public voices, who have the right to be heard (Kress and van Leeuwen 118). In this frame, Rani is a CEO of the Royal Bank of Bombay (RBI) on the right side of the frame. In this case, however, her power isn’t due to her corporate status. It’s just her emotional audacity and that she’s saying the words that she never said. Van Leeuwen’s sound semiotics is the study of the “voice”, the controlled rate of speech in his or her opinion; (whether the voice is stable or not) (a lack of vocal wavering on his part) (all of which would mean something else, something other than a breakdown – a decision or a claim).

4.3.9. Spatial and Sound Semiotics: Space and Pause

Haq (2025) — Final Scene: 1985, Supreme Court — Victory:

“I am here to redeem myself. If I am denied my rights today then I am certain no parent would name their daughter Shazia Bano.”

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

Van Leeuwen’s spatial semiotics claims, that it is the social space that would be handed on to the next generation of women, namely Shazia Bano (van Leeuwen 140). The victory is more than just a legal victory. It’s semiotic because it alters the meaning and what it will require from a woman, what it will call a woman. Whether or not that’s what Kress and van Leeuwen’s compositional analysis is saying, the visual grammar they use in this shot tells viewers that Shazia has taken up the most public and powerful space that is currently available, and that it was noticed.

‘Iqra’ — Read.

(Haq, dir. Suparn Verma, Netflix, 2025)

The pause after a strong word, referring to the space that occurs before the mind comprehends the meaning of the word, is a semiotic phenomenon in and of itself, according to Van Leeuwen’s sound semiotics (152). In the thesis language of this research, the space in between the silence and the power that is made audible, is the ‘Iqra’ silence. It’s the area in which the motion that the title refers to is completely over. The decree has been published. There is no silence after, just a world, new and silent.

“Like Virginia Woolf teaches us, nothing is more precious than a room of one’s own. So our wounds can heal and our souls blossom, and the jagged and sparkling dreams of women can find both earth and sky”

(Bombay Begums, dir. Alankrita Shrivastava, Netflix, 2021)

The final multi modal comment in the series is the final image: ‘the jagged and sparkling dreams of women can find both earth and sky’ and it is worth reading

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both images together. The horizontal and vertical semiotics of space proposed by Van Leeuwen suggest that 'up' in all cultures is always linked to transcendence, aspiration and freedom, and that, therefore, 'sky' has the 'most spatially ambitious claim' (152). It is, however, the conjunction of earth and sky that is most important: earth is material, embodied, particular, rooted in the actual circumstances of women's life – their bodies, their class positions, their particular struggles. A sky that's limitless, unlimited, collective and aspirational. But earth and sky raise resistance in women: resistance to the material conditions of their lives is not a way of escaping from them, resistance is a way of changing them; the same world that binds them to it, is a world that binds them in abundance.

4.4.Conclusion

Based on the analysis, three findings were found, which correspond to all three research questions.

The initial questions about the discovery: What are the different types of female power and female resistance in both films? It is not verbal or narrative, it is affective and embodied in both of the texts. It lives in pauses, it lives in silence, it lives in shame's management, it lives in claiming space, it lives in space that would break you, it refuses to be broken. This resistance is very real, very significant politically, and the form that the conventional narrative analysis cannot perceive — hence the need for the hybrid approach of this study.

The second finding is the answer to the question: What affective and multimodal strategies construct that resistance; there are three patterns that are identified in both films. Shame is given, and then denied—either loudly and unapologetically or quietly and silently; either with a political effect or none at all. The female body is at the same time controlled by the patriarchy and the main means of feminist resistance. All of these – demand gaze, compositional centrality, spatial occupation, intentional silence and sonic assertiveness – are performed in the most politicized moments by both these films.

The third finding answers the question of what makes the two movies different: Haq builds resistance to be linear, singular, and ultimately victorious, a woman, a case, a final word, a new name. Bombay Begums is a never-fully-solved space and a multi-layered space: spatial, social, and the five women, the five power dynamics between the five women, the absence of triumph and feelings of aspirations. other.

Both films are evidence to this thesis of the study – the most politically serious South Asian feminist movies on Netflix are not the thematic claims, it's the emotional and the visual. These films are hard to understand if you don't understand what you can read on the camera while the woman is talking to it, what you cannot read while she isn't talking, and what 10 years can do to this camera without breaking it. This analysis is what has done just that. It's what these movies need.

Key Findings and Results

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5.1. Interpretation of Results:

This chapter discusses the results of the comparative analysis in relation to the three research questions formulated based on the literature discussed in Chapter 2, and the implications for scholarship and practice on the basis of the results.

What are the types of female power and resistance that are manifested?

Both films represent a resistance of women as a practice – a way of doing things – not an identity, in that women resist the world through affective labour. In *Haq* resistance is an active way of being, of standing still, not breaking and slowly claiming a court of law and a structural argument for the rights of Muslim women under the law. In *Bombay Begums*, it's not just about resistance as a sequence of events from one to the next; a string of acts; a finished monolithic work of one group. I want to think of this as a work of five women, five women who are not the same, five women who have different resources who do, at the same time, not successively, the work of managing shame, claiming space, filing complaints, building factories, writing poems and making speeches. It's not easy, visible and rewarded for women to resist either film. Both are forthright about the price: Shazia must suffer rejection from the institution for a decade; Lily's factory burns down; Ayesha's freedom comes at the expense of public humiliation and Rani's power is established on years of silence. Such a directness is also a feminist realism, a realism that can be read correctly in the emotional aspect of the films.

The evidence of the scene in both films reinforces Ahmed's position that there is a cost to resistance – a way of feeling one's own feelings of anger – and that it is acceptable to feel anger (175). But the most powerful scenes of resistance in both films are the ones in which the spoken words are the least and the body speaks the most, in line with the historical account by Gokulsing and Dissanayake of South Asian women filmmakers encoding resistance, not in speech but in the embodied and non-verbal (Gokulsing and Dissanayake).

5.2. How are Strategies for Affective and Multimodal being Built in the Midst of Resistance?

These are the affective strategies of the Turn in shameful exposure as a political claim (Ahmed's terms); the use of the body as a means of resisting as well as an object of resistance (endurance, claim, refusal to break); and the claiming or contesting of space as a political action that reconfigures social geography of who belongs where. The multimodal strategies are: the visual grammar of the demand gaze (a visual subjecthood is given to the female figures, not a status as a spectacle); the centrality of female bodies in institutional spaces (the figure is confirmed as belonging to the frame); the spatial semiotics of costume and posture (the encoding of legitimacy and dignity); and the sonic semiotics of rhythm, silence and volume (the making of the emotional weight of speech and its absence palpable to the viewer). Not only are some of these strategies unique

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to each of these two films, they also show up in each film to varying extents and with varying emphasis, depending on the nuances of each film's genre, class politics and narrative structure.

5.3.What are the Differences Between the Two Films?

First and foremost, Haq's method of generating resistance is structural – one woman, one case, 10 years, one final victory. *Bombay Begums* is a complex assemblage of class-based, intersected struggles, which have yet to be worked out. It is a structural difference that allows the creation of another visual grammar – Haq's 'visual grammar of resistance' is legible, purposeful and ultimately confirmatory – the camera helps Shazia win a victory in the Supreme Court. The image of women is more complex at *Bombay Begums* and women are introduced early on as images, as objects of a social evaluative gaze; as the women go through, they keep shifting away from this image, and the Virginia Woolf ending is a horizon, not a victory. But this difference isn't a fault in the *Bombay Begums*; it's another version of feminist candor, recognizing that for most women – and especially for women who inhabit the same spaces as class and social disadvantage, such as Lily – it's more of the same.

5.4.The Results: Is the Framework effective?

The effectiveness of the selected framework option should be a part of any analysis. Do the reading(s) help to explain, illuminate, or evoke emotion in the story more than a thematic/narrative analysis would? For each of the 20 scenes there will always be a "yes" answer and some qualifications as to the degree of success and the degree of failure.

The most effective were the non-verbal expressions of resistance, at the moment of silence before Ayesha files the complaint (*Bombay Begums*, Scene 7) and before the dismissal (Haq, 1:52:55) and the presence of Shazia in court in 1979 and 1981 (Haq, Scenes 5-6). All of these would be barren – the empty spaces in between are the most important – and with a concept of affect-as-intensity, the conceptual language would be given – reading the moments of silence would be possible, and these moments are richly filled with meaning. It also had a nice fit when the visual and emotional grammar were not aligned or congruent – when, for example, the character's words implied a feeling of vulnerability, but the visual grammar was authoritative – or vice versa. This kind of tension is a feature of the hybrid conception – it reads both registers, as a result of which it can identify the difference between them, and reflect on it.

If the multimodal evidence is not easily accessible (like an analysis that does not require a frame-by-frame analysis, but instead uses the scripts, or notes on the scenes) the framework is more limited. This is a suitable restriction (see methodology chapter). It doesn't state what the visual grammar is, but at some locations, the MDA readings after are analytical inferences of what visual grammar is likely to be. This does not take away from the readings, but it might have allowed testing and refining the readings differently, than the scope and limitations of this thesis allowed. This testing and refining could be done via a

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follow up study using detailed visual analysis of some of the scenes, frame by frame.

5.5. What This Study Contributes: Implementing a Solution: What should change:

This study is part of the development of the methodological solution and the interpretive solution. Methodologically, it illustrates the possibility of a hybrid methodology which combines Affect Theory with two different variants of MDA that can be analytically useful when considering the screen text from a South Asian feminist perspective. Takes readings and enriches them with affectivity (where it would lead to a set of readings that would only be politically illuminating based on affectivity) and readings with visual analysis (where it would lead to a set of readings that would only be politically illuminating based on visual analysis of the reading). This mix of methodologies can be applied to future research, with South Asian feminist OTT content – etymologic, Indian and Pakistani – with the caveat that they will offer insightful findings for studying the content.

Interpretatively, it is a new argument in the current literature on these films, one that is not based on narrative but one that is affective/visual, in which the camera's force or de-dignification, and the emotional control of the girls is the most important instruments. The criticism that South Asian stories should be read at the end of the story ("who wins, who loses, who gets the last word") does not have to be feminist, however. It needs to read into the emotional and visual texture in which the outcomes are being prepared – more clearly visible in the emotional and visual texture is the politics of feminism and the pressure of patriarchy.

Last but not least, both films offer a glimpse into the possible consequences when creating and critiquing feminist screen stories on OTT platforms. In this instance, Haq's recreation of one woman's triumph (the visual and emotional telling) is the basis of a constitutional-based argument for the rights of Muslim women – without didacticism or polemicism. *Bombay Begums* is a feminist political movement that is messy, class-differentiated, partial and ongoing: one that can be delivered on a popular platform, emotionally and visually without inhibitions, one that can make you feel the repercussions. The two movies are at their best and not commercial, as far as the feminist movies in India on Netflix are concerned. As Pietaryte and Suzina have pointed out, Netflix's politics are structurally ambivalent; and, indeed, it might be possible to do feminism within the limits of its structural possibilities. That's both that achievement.

Conclusion

6.1. What This Study Set Out to Do

The first premise of this research however is so simple, yet so profound, women in South Asian Netflix movies are being asked to stand up, not just talk back to patriarchy, but stand up with patriarchy – stand on her feet and not on other peoples' feet – stand on her feet and not on other peoples' feet. The difficulty lay within this could not be perceived by the prevalent scholarship. Typically, the

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theme and/or the conclusion (who wins, who loses) of the story was poorly used and shallow analysis was offered. The two answers didn't take into account the 10 second delay before the woman was called up to court for an answer (also 10 seconds). They couldn't explain a reason for a bar dancer, a factory that was being constructed, a disagreement over an argument in a space, instead of making a plot decision.

This study was planned to answer this question and to explore two methods which haven't been combined before: Affect Theory (Sara Ahmed) as a reading on emotions as political entities which circulate between bodies and two modes of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA): visual grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen) and spatial-sound semiotics (van Leeuwen). The three aims were: (1) research the affective strategies used in both films in constructing female resistance; (2) research the multimodal strategies used in both films to construct female power; (3) compare the affective and the visual construction of female resistance in both films. Both the main texts Haq (2025) (and Bombay Begums (2021) have , one Muslim and five women from different classes working in the institution of the current day city of Bombay.

6.2.What the Study Found

The Study showed that:

Based on this analysis three findings were identified which directly answer the research questions:

Unlike both of these movies, the women's resistance is mostly affective and the emotional management, redirection and transformation are considered to be significant points of resistance. For 10 years, out of public view, Shazia Bano has been engaged in a war against her own personal shameful acts, that she is now exposing in public and legal forums. Most all the political moments are silent moments: The moment before she takes off, the moment before she reads a verse of the Quran in the Supreme Court, the moment when, having finished with her last argument with one word 'Iqra'. The emotions are fear, of shame, of anger, of aspiration and of grief, all experienced by 5 women from different classes, who live in Bombay Begums. All these are affective events and not narrative events – Ayesha's silence when she complained; the feeling of Dignity of a group of dancers; the feeling of Dignity of Rani when she brought her complaint out into the public after years of silence about the case of her own harassment.

Secondly, the films employ the same approaches in terms of affect, using different grammars in terms of visual. In one body, one space, the court room, Haq's visual language is realised as he traces the dynamics of a court relationship between Shazia in the institutional space of a provincial Sessions Court and the space of the Supreme Court in India. 1) The camera's always in the middle of the speaking space – or (always) she's in the middle; she has to be in the middle; not in her middle but in the middle of the speaking space. Bombay Begums' visual grammar is distributed between five spaces: the board room, the bar, the factory, the public platform and the visual language is ever changing depending on the

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class position and social situation of each character on the board. Women are subject to social judgment, as early as the start of the film, in the form of provided photos, products. Since this, reconstruction has been going against this. But the Virginia Woolf ending foreshadows the victory, albeit one by a Feminist and an honest one – not Haq's legal victory.

Thirdly, both of these types of MDA always came to the same conclusion as the affective reading, simultaneously. All the resistance events that were identified in the affective analysis were marked as assertive – demand gaze, central framing and spatial occupation events in the multimodal analysis. It's more than just a methodological endorsement, it's a combination of the two. These are sincere snapshots of the action of both these films, of their moments of greatest crisis when – at that very moment – the viewer feels what they feel.

6.3. Why This Matters

On the methodological side it shows the viability and rewarding interpretation of screen narratives which combine different feminist methods and hybridization of two types of MDA. The fruitful convergence is that the two frameworks deal with two aspects of the same phenomenon: Affect read the emotional politics, MDA read the visual grammar, the convergence reads enhanced, more precise and more politicised reading – none of the two frameworks could deliver without the other. Future OTT learners/student from any story from any screen (non-western point of view), will be aware of what to copy & what to refer back to.

Haq (2025) is the first close reading scholarship with affect and visual grammar to work collaboratively on the close reading of *Bombay Begums* (2021); one of the few (if any) close reading texts that have them work collaboratively. Perhaps they could have gotten greater consideration than in the two movies. This study is on that missing link.

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