



GENDER AND POPULAR VISUAL CULTURE IN INDIA

**'BENEVOLENT' SEXISM AND
DISGUISED DISCRIMINATION**

Edited by
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Introduction

Changing Gender Equations and Discriminatory Practices

Francis Philip Barclay and Kaifia Ancer Laskar

Perhaps, male-mindedness seems to have adapted to changing-contemporary circumstances to become more covert and conspiratorial. Sexist suggestions—through objectification and substantiated subordination—for instance, may have been explicit in Indian media a decade earlier. But in the contemporary times of online social media and vociferous feminism, such openness of unfairness against women in the media will, more often than not, be met with strife and unpalatable backlash—fearing which blatant prejudice is prudently steered clear of. It is, hence, understandable that patriarchy, to sustain itself as a culture, has adapted to become more benevolent in an increasingly hostile environment.

To identify such sly and stealthy sexism embedded in media content, one may need a reconfigured grasp of contemporary feminist issues and an altered nuance for isolation and identification of discriminatory depictions. Some of the sexist suggestions are not merely cloaked but also misrepresented as feminist operatives.

Popular and visual cultures are radically inalienable (Campos et al., 2014; Dikovitskaya, 2005) in this “imagery” world where mediated images—both still and moving—dominate the visual time and experience of people. In this book, popular visual culture is viewed as a mass-mediated one. On the socio-cultural influence of mass media, Berger (2016) writes:

Pop culture, the media, and advertising, among other things, play an important role in providing role models, gender models, and lifestyle models for people to imitate. The narratives found in pop culture or mass-mediated culture help shape the sensibilities of those exposed to these narratives, as they are found in texts such as jokes, commercials, comic books, films, television shows, and popular fiction. (p. 39)

Popular visual culture appertains to images, symbols, texts, discourses and cultural artefacts that are widespread and consumed through mass media and other forms of popular culture. This includes agencies and instruments such as television shows, movies, advertisements, magazines, comic books, music videos, video games and social media. In a way, popular visual culture shapes our understanding of the world around us and reflects the values, beliefs and attitudes of society