

Challenging Patriarchy and Capitalism: Working-Class Women's Struggle for Gender and Labor Rights in *Suffragette* (2015) and *Made in Bangladesh* (2019) through Marxist Feminist Analysis



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Dedication (optional)

I dedicate this work to my parents for their immense support.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "A. Tahsin", written over a horizontal line.

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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

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Abstract

This thesis aims to discuss how working-class women struggle for equality in gender and labor rights in the movies *Suffragette* (2015) and *Made in Bangladesh* (2019). Through the Lens of Marxist Feminism, this paper will analyze the lives and struggles of the women in the films and how they are challenged and oppressed by both the patriarchy and the capitalist system in terms of labor and gender exploitation. Also, it argues how working women's labor is always less paid than men's and is undervalued, exploited, and marginalized in society. It also examines how the female characters in the films organize and mobilize to call for better working conditions and equal rights. This also looks at how the films depict the interconnectedness of oppression and how women's fights for gender equality and the freedom to work are linked to more significant social and political struggles. All these issues can be further explored through Simon de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex*, which argues that the patriarchal structure strengthened by the capitalist society is the root cause of women's oppression, and also by Angela Davis' *Women, Race and Class*, which argues that working-class women's dual oppression because of gender and class position also their exploitation of labor under capitalism and also though challenging the media theory of Laura Mulvey's "Male Gaze," presentation of female roles from the heterosexual male point of view from her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Furthermore, the Marxist theory of alienation and surplus value is also essential to understanding the experiences of exploitation of the working-class women in the films.

Keywords: working-class women, inequality, alienation, capitalism, exploitation, gender rights, labor rights, voting rights, oppression, patriarchy, class position, male gaze.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Cinema is a powerful way to show how society is and how working-class women battle in a patriarchal society. By offering these women as real people, films show their daily struggles and how they deal with them. Cinema shows how working-class women are treated unfairly, looks at gender roles, and recognizes how their mistreatment comes from different perspectives. It illustrates how workers are exploited, resisting as a community and their desire for change. This helps people talk about social problems and the need for good change. But it is essential to look at movies with a critical eye and think about more significant gender, class, and power dynamics to get a complete picture of how things are. This study is about how patriarchy and capitalism interact and how that affects the lives of working-class women, focusing on the films *Suffragette* (2015) and *Made in Bangladesh* (2019). The standard film structure has changed in which men played the main character or carried the story. Strong women are playing the main character, and the story is about them. In today's movies, traditional gender roles are developing, changing, and questioning how stories are told. This study uses a Marxist Feminist approach to examine how the combination of gender-based oppression and economic exploitation affects the experiences and struggles of women, especially working-class women, in different social and political settings.

The movie *Suffragette* (2015) is a historical thriller written and directed by Sarah Gavron. The film is set in Britain at the beginning of the 20th century and shows the feminist movement in which women fought for the right to vote. The film tells the story of an imaginary working-class woman named Maud Watts, played by Carey Mulligan. Maud Watts got involved in the suffragette movement in London. Maud works at a laundry, where she sees women being treated badly and

experiences other injustices that make her more and more rebellious. As Maud gets more involved in the suffragette movement, she faces problems at home, harassment from the cops, and even jail time. The movie shows what women had to do and how hard it was for them to get the right to vote. Critics praised *Suffragette* for its strong acting and how it showed the suffragette movement. For what it did, the movie was nominated for and won a number of awards, including Academy Awards, British Independent Film Awards, and the Women Film Critics Circle Awards for best equality of the sexes. The critical response to the movie focused on how it showed an important part of history and how it showed the often-overlooked contributions of working-class women to the feminist movement. Even though *Suffragette* (2015) is a work of fiction, it brings attention to women's challenges and sacrifices during this critical time in the United Kingdom's fight for gender equality and the right to vote.

Rubaiyat Hossain directed the movie *Made in Bangladesh* (2019), which shows how hard it is for women to work in Bangladesh's textile industry as garment workers and how they fight for better working conditions. The movie is about a young woman named Shimu, played by Rikita Nandini Shimu, who lives in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and works in a garment factory. Shimu and her fellow workers are forced to form a union to demand better treatment because of the hard work, low pay, and lack of worker rights. Even though some of their coworkers and the people in charge of the factory are against them and have even threatened them, they keep fighting for justice and respect at work secretly. Critics praised this film for the way it told a gripping story and showed how bad things are for female garment workers in Bangladesh. Several foreign film festivals have given the movie awards. It achieved the Asia Pacific Screen Awards (APSA) 2019 for portraying cultural diversity and promoting critical social issues. The director, Rubaiyat Hossain, received acclaim at the Seattle International Film Festival 2019. These achievements show how this film

brings attention to labor rights problems that female garment workers face in the garment industry to connect the issue with a global audience. And most importantly, it shows the ongoing problem of equal worker rights and the need for better working conditions in the worldwide garment industry.

Patriarchy and capitalism are highly rooted systems that have changed how power works, the economy works, and how people interact worldwide. In patriarchal societies, women often face systemic discrimination, violence based on their gender, and limited chances and access to resources. At the same time, capitalism's goal to make as much money as possible tends to take advantage of workers, especially those in the working class. This leads to bad working conditions, low pay, and few worker rights. When these two systems meet, working-class women's lives are complicated and full of different challenges. This makes it harder for them to get gender and work rights. Roslyn L. Feldberg, in her review work on Roberta Hamilton's *The Liberation of Women: A Study of Patriarchy and Capitalism*, portrays how women have been subjected to subordination and the process changed over time. She emphasized both the Feminist and Marxist analysis of women's subordination. Where women are distinguished biologically, but it is not clear how this biological difference becomes institutionalized to make them subordinate. But from her Marxist analysis, she clears that "Changes in the mode of production are accompanied by changes in social relationships generally and in the family particularly. Together, these changes affect women's position in society and the family" (Feldberg 1251).

The history of working-class women is long and full of battles, struggles, victories, and contributions. Working-class women have always been influential in the workplace, neighborhoods, and social movements. They played crucial roles from the past till the present. During the 18th and 19th century Industrial Revolution, many women moved to cities to work in

factories and cloth mills. Working-class women, including young girls, worked hard and exploitatively in mills, mines, and other places. They were involved in the labor movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They fought for better wages, better working conditions, and worker rights. They joined unions and participated in strikes and protests to fight for their rights. Working-class women were significant in the fight for the right to vote, which was part of the suffrage movement. Working-class women in the UK joined groups like the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), led by people like Emmeline Pankhurst. These women wanted to be heard in politics. During World Wars, working-class women filled in for men on the front lines by taking on different jobs. They helped a lot with the war effort by working in industry, transportation, and other important jobs. The Women's Liberation Movement started in the 1960s and 1970s. It fought for gender equality, reproductive rights, and less abuse at work. Working-class women were vital to this movement because they pushed for more enormous social changes. The lives of working-class women in society have been affected by their race, culture, and class, all of which overlap. Women from marginalized groups had to deal with extra problems, and their opinions were often ignored in the feminist movement. Traditionally, women from the working class have been doing housework like being house-help and nannies from the past until now. Though they play the inevitable role of making others' lives easier, they are not getting the proper facilities, respect, and wage only because of belonging to the poor working class. But still, through fighting, women have come a long way in many jobs and fields. They have broken down barriers and helped the economy grow by becoming teachers, nurses, factory workers, and employees.

Working-class women still have to deal with problems like pay gaps, and discrimination at work, and balancing work and family life. Working-class women's past is tied to more significant social, political, and economic movements. This shows how strong, active, and

determined they were in the face of hardship. If we want to get closer to gender equality and social justice, we still need to pay attention to and meet working-class women's specific needs and contributions. The problems working-class women face, are closely linked to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5 and 8. SDG 5 is about gaining equality between men and women and giving women and girls more power. According to the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, “SDG 5: Gender Equality” aims to eliminate all forms of physical and mental exploitation against women in the public and private sphere by ensuring full rights and equal opportunities in all decision-making in their lives and society. It promises to give access to equal opportunity and authority in making and enjoying economic and other resources to promote gender equality. (CCSI 30- 31). While SDG 8 is about promoting decent work and economic growth. Working-class women often experience pay gaps and workplace discrimination due to gender discrimination in various societies. According to ILO (International Labor Organization), SDG 8 ensures that women, including those from marginalized backgrounds, can access full and productive employment in safe and inclusive work environments. The target of achieving decent work for all, including fair wages, safe conditions, and labor rights protection, is essential in addressing the struggles faced by working-class women. (Rai, Brown, and Ruwanpura 369-371).

From the beginning, working-class women have been understudied for research compared to the other population segments. But in the present, the interest in studying working-class women, their struggle, contributions, lives, experiences, and labor conditions are taken for granted to examine and improve their conditions. The sufferings of poor working-class women by the patriarchy and in capitalist society are mostly common in every corner of the world. So scholars have played a vital role in shedding light on their challenges and their ability to deal with complex social systems. To explore some of the discussed issues, this thesis aims to analyze two films from

the two cultures *Suffragette* from the Western part and *Made in Bangladesh* from the Eastern part. These two films are chosen because of the dynamic female protagonists and their passion for fighting against the traditional capitalist and patriarchal system by coming out of their shells of weakness. Also, another important reason is to show that no matter how different the time, space, and social order is, their sufferings and oppression on them are almost the same.

Research Objectives:

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- a. To analyze the portrayal of working-class women's struggles in *Suffragette* and *Made in Bangladesh* through a Marxist feminist lens, identifying the interconnectedness of patriarchy and capitalism in shaping their experiences.
- b. To examine the specific challenges working-class women face in pursuing gender and labor rights in the contexts depicted in the films.
- c. To explore how the experiences of these women resonate with broader patterns of gender and class struggles in different historical periods and cultural settings.

Research Significance:

This study is essential for both academic and social implications. Using a Marxist Feminist approach, it aims to help us learn more about the complicated relationships between gender and class and how they affect the struggles of working-class women. The results can give

policymakers, activists, and groups that fight for gender and worker rights helpful information that can help them come up with more inclusive and intersectional ways to deal with these problems.

Research Questions:

1. How do the films *Suffragette* (2015) and *Made in Bangladesh* (2019) portray the struggles of working-class women through the lens of Marxist Feminism?
2. What are the specific challenges working-class women face in pursuing gender and labor rights, as depicted in the two films?
3. How do the experiences of the female protagonists in the movies reflect broader patterns of gender and class struggles in different historical periods and cultural settings?
4. How do patriarchy and capitalism intersect and interact to shape the lives and experiences of working-class women in the films?
5. What insights can be drawn from analyzing these films to inform policymakers, activists, and groups advocating for gender and worker rights in a more inclusive and intersectional manner?

Scopes and Limitations

The study will focus on analyzing two films, *Suffragette* (2015) and *Made in Bangladesh* (2019), in terms of how they show the struggles of working-class women in different social and political settings. It will delve into the movies from a Marxist feminist point of view to figure out how patriarchy and capitalism affect the lives of the central female leads. It will include a look at

larger historical and cultural patterns of gender and class battles. This will help put the experiences of working-class women in the films into context. Based on the outcome of the film analysis, the research will try to come up with ideas and suggestions for policymakers, activists, and groups that fight for the rights of women and workers.

The study will only look at the points of view in the chosen films. Since the study is only about two films, where the suffragists' and garment workers' experiences will be discussed, it might not show the full range and complexity of working-class women's lives in different societies. It is possible that the scope of the study does not allow for a deep look at all of the factors that affect the struggles of working-class women and that some things may need more research and analysis than the films can cover. Even though it gives valuable insights, the Marxist feminist view may not cover all possible theoretical frameworks that could shed light on how gender and class affect each other.

Chapter 1.1

Methodology

The primary purpose of this thesis is to examine the portrayal of working-class women's pursuit of equal gender and labor rights in the selected two films from different contexts and cultures, *Suffragette* (2015) and *Made in Bangladesh* (2019). To collect the primary data this thesis will focus on analyzing both the films' plot with the help of the background historical data and others researchers' secondary resources. Moreover, focusing on the intricate events and situations presented in the films, this thesis will conduct a qualitative research by detailed observation and connections from the proposed theories of Angela Y. Davis' view of the working class women's oppression and reason from her book *Women, Race and Class*, from Simon De Beauvoir's exploration of women as the 'other' in both the patriarchal and capitalist society from her book *The Second Sex* and by challenging Laura Mulvey's 'male gaze' theory in films proposed in her seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."

Angela Y. Davis discusses working-class women's dual oppression. Her book *Women, Race, and Class* looks at how gender, race, and class intersect in the setting of the women's liberation movement in the United States. Davis says, "Proportionately, more Black women have always worked outside their homes than have their white sisters. The enormous space that work occupies in Black women's lives today follows a pattern established during the very earliest days of slavery. They were viewed as profitable labor-units; they might as well have been genderless as far as the slaveholders were concerned. In the words of one scholar, the slave woman was first a fulltime worker for her owner, and only incidentally a wife, mother and homemaker." (Davis 2). Black women were seen primarily as sources of profitable labor. Their gender and the roles

traditionally associated with it were often disregarded by slaveholders. Instead, they were valued mainly for their capacity to work and contribute to the economic interests of those who enslaved them. “Slave women were classified as “breeders” as opposed to “mothers,” their infant children could be sold away from them like calves from cows. One year after the importation of Africans was halted, a South Carolina court ruled that female slaves had no legal claims whatever on their children” (Davis 3). This perspective led to a devaluation of their roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers. So this means working-class women's lives are affected not only by their gender, but also by their race and social class. She talks about how these different identities come together to make new kinds of oppression and abuse that need to be seen in a bigger picture. Davis says, “industrial capitalism, established female inferiority more firmly than ever before. “Woman” became synonymous in the prevailing propaganda with “mother” and “housewife,” and both “mother” and “housewife” bore the fatal mark of inferiority” (Davis 6) which asserts that the rise of industrial capitalism—characterized by large-scale factory production, urbanization, and changing economic structures—solidified the idea of female inferiority to a greater extent than in earlier periods. This indicates that the economic changes brought about by industrial capitalism intersected with and further entrenched existing notions of gender inequality. She says that these parts of identity overlap and affect each other, which leads to many different kinds of abuse. Davis says that working-class women are treated unfairly because of both their gender and their class. In addition to sexism and patriarchy, economic reasons related to women's status as working-class people also play a big role in their marginalization. Davis looks at how capitalism uses the work of working-class women to make money. “As a result of women’s inferior status within marriage, they suffered inequalities in educational institutions as well as in the professions. “Profitable employments” and “all avenues to wealth and distinction” (such as medicine, law and theology)

were absolutely inaccessible to women” (Davis 28). Capitalist patriarchal society depends on using people's work to make money, and in this process working-class women are especially exploited. They often have low wages, bad working conditions, and few job prospects.

Davis also talks about how race affects the lives of working-class women. She talks about the problems that women of color face in the bigger picture of feminism and class fight. Systemic racism and racial inequality, along with gender and class differences, make it hard for women of color to get ahead. She mentions Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a prominent figure in the suffrage movement played a crucial role in advocating for women's rights but her resist of adjustment with the Black women and men- “This letter to the editor of the New York Standard, dated December 26, 1865, was authored by Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Its indisputably racist ideas indicate that Stanton’s understanding of the relationship between the battle for Black Liberation and the struggle for women’s rights was, at best, superficial. She was determined, it seems, to prevent further progress for Black people—for “Sambo” no less—if it meant that white women might not enjoy the immediate benefits of that progress” (Davis 36). Stanton's sentiments in the letter indicate a focus on securing immediate benefits for white women's suffrage, even if it meant hindering progress for Black individuals. This perspective is problematic and inconsistent with the principles of intersectional feminism that recognize the interconnectedness of different forms of oppression.

The book *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir is a key piece of feminist theory and a foundational text for modern feminist thought. The book, which came out in 1949, is an in-depth look at how women are treated unfairly and where this unfair treatment comes from in a patriarchal and capitalist society. De Beauvoir's theory is based on the idea that sexism and capitalism work together to keep women down and keep them that way.

Simon De Beauvoir disagrees with the idea that there are only biological differences between men and women. She says that gender is mostly made up by society, with standards and rules deciding what it means to be a "woman" or a "man." Because of this way of thinking about gender, women are relegated to roles like caretakers and homemakers, while men have easier access to places of power and authority- "I used to get annoyed in abstract discussions to hear men tell me: "You think such and such a thing because you're a woman."/ "And you think the contrary because you are a man," because it is understood that being a man is not a particularity; a man is in his right by virtue of being man; it is the woman who is in the wrong. Woman has ovaries and a uterus; such are the particular conditions that lock her in her subjectivity; some even say she thinks with her hormones" (Beauvoir 25). Humanity is made up of men, and a woman is not seen as a separate being because she is defined by a man in relation to himself. "Woman, the relative being," because of patriarchal norms and goals, men have always had more power than women (Beauvoir 26). This subordination is not limited to political or legal differences; it affects all parts of life, including social, cultural, and economic lives. Women have always been seen in comparison to men, as the "other" or the "second sex." This idea reinforces the idea that men are the standard and women are the ones who do not act like men. De Beauvoir says that capitalism is a way of doing things that keeps women down. She says that capitalism is inherently abusive and that it makes it easier to take advantage of women's work. Historically, women have been stuck in lower-paying jobs, often in the private sector, and haven't had the same chances to move up. Also, capitalism's focus on making money and being efficient can cause traditionally female-dominated areas to be undervalued, which can reinforce the economic and social hierarchy. In capitalist countries, the patriarchal structure is kept in place by the economic dependence of women on men. De Beauvoir says that women's inability to make their own money limits their freedom and keeps

them in a lower position. Because they depend on men for money, it can be hard for women to leave abusive situations or go after their own goals and dreams. Even though De Beauvoir's analysis is mostly about the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism, she does admit that race, class, and sexuality also play a role in how women's lives are shaped. These different identities can make injustice worse and give different groups of women their own problems.

To conclude this chapter Simone de Beauvoir's idea in *The Second Sex* is that the oppression of women has deep roots in the way patriarchy and capitalism work together. Together, these systems reinforce traditional gender roles, limit women's freedom and chances, and keep women at a disadvantage. Her work has been important in shaping the way women talk about gender, power, and social justice, and it is still important today.

Laura Mulvey discussed the feminist and film theory of the Male Gaze in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” in 1975, which explores the way media, precisely cinemas, presentation of female roles from the heterosexual male point of view. That portrays women’s passive roles, objects of men’s desire and decisions. She argues that traditional cinemas tend to place the audience in the position of patriarchal perspective to see and judge the women characters. But the focus of this research is to criticizing the Male Gaze theory to analyze the films, *Suffragette* and *Made in Bangladesh* to challenge the traditional male-centric perspective in their portrayal of female characters and their narratives. Mulvey identifies three categories of the Male Gaze. The first one is the “gaze” of the camera, which frequently takes the viewpoint of a male viewer, directing the audience's attention to the female characters' bodies and attractiveness. This gives the impression of sexual gratification and objectification. Then comes the “gaze” of the male characters in a film, who frequently focus on female characters. Female characters become conscious of this attention, which influences on their actions. This can potentially strengthen the

power dynamic between male and female characters. And finally, Mulvey argues that the audience is usually positioned as male viewers, where they are kept in the dark setting in the cinema hall, which is hard to make interaction with other viewers; this makes them to think the way the camera or the filmmakers want to see the males as the leading parts and strong characters while objectifying the female characters as meek, weak and supporting roles beside the male. This may promote traditional gender roles and ideas about how men and women should act. However, these two selected film challenges the “male gaze” and reinforces the female gaze to analyze the women as strong characters, not as the subordinate ones. The “female gaze” theory is a concept that challenges the traditional male-oriented perspective that has dominated media and art for centuries. It seeks to offer an alternative viewpoint, emphasizing the experiences, desires, and agency of female characters and addressing issues that affect women in a more nuanced and authentic way. The criticism of this male gaze theory seeks to dismantle women's objectification and empower them as active subjects rather than passive objects.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Dewi Setyaningsih, Dra. Masulahand and Ari Setyorini S.S, in their research “The Struggle of Maud to Gain Social and Political Equality for Women in *Suffragette*”, discuss the main problem of women’s political and social equality in the patriarchal society and the cause and effects on their life through the character Maud. The researcher’s aim here is to show how Maud, one of the female workers, is always the target of the patriarchal society. She does not get the proper wage or respect for her workplace or home labor. So, when she stands for voting rights and equality in labor rights for women, she and her comrades are assaulted and punished. The reason behind this is the fear of the patriarchal politicians that “If we allow women to vote, it will mean the loss of social structure. Women are well represented by their fathers, brothers, husband” (Morgan 1). The researchers also portray the difficulties and negligence that Maud received after joining the Women's Social and Political Union from the society and her husband. She is evicted both from her home and workplace. Even she lost the right over her beloved son because, as a woman, she cannot claim her child's custody to keep and raise him herself as a single mother because the society gives the right of a legal guardian only to a man. The authors highlight that women should get equal rights in every field to avoid discrimination and represent themselves, not through male representatives.

Laura E. Nym Mayhall, in her paper, “Creating the ‘Suffragette Spirit’: British Feminism and the Historical Imagination¹.” focused on the recent research on the militant suffrage movement in Britain, which reveals that the Edwardian ‘Votes for Women’ campaign fostered a sense of community among its participants. The Edwardian era, which lasted roughly from 1901

to 1910 in the United Kingdom, saw enormous social, political, and cultural changes, notably the suffrage campaign, which advocated for women's voting rights—the experiences of the suffragette hunger strike and forcible feeding established it. However, a close examination of the texts on which these analyses are based reveals a more nuanced link between suffragettes' experiences and their representations of those experiences. In the 1920s and 1930s, a few former suffragettes constructed a highly stylized account of their participation in the Edwardian suffrage fight, which connected militancy with national duty during World War I. The paper explores the emergence of the ‘Suffragette Spirit,’ a narrative created by former suffragettes in the 1920s and 1930s to present a particular image of authentic suffrage militancy. The author, Laura E. Nym Mayhall, highlights that this narrative aims to present suffragettes as strong, resolute individuals who were committed to achieving equality for women through direct and sometimes confrontational means. It seeks to celebrate their contributions and ensure that the memory of their efforts remains relevant and respected in the broader context of women's history and social progress and it has remained dominant in pre-war women's suffrage movement discussions. She argues that the Suffragette Spirit was created due to a reconfiguration of political violence caused by World War I and as an attempt to claim a portion of that reconfiguration for women in their post-war claims to citizenship (Mayhall 342).

Also it examines how suffrage activists who wrote about their participation in the Edwardian women's suffrage movement employed narrative strategies to promote this Suffragette Spirit. Constance Lytton, a central figure in this discussion, whose memoir “Prisons and Prisoners: Some Personal Experiences” significantly shaped the narrative of suffrage militancy. Lytton's account, emphasizing personal sacrifice and the experience of forcible feeding, became synonymous with the image of authentic militancy. The author addresses how this narrative was

embraced and propagated by feminists and scholars in later years, thus contributing to its enduring influence. It points out that the Suffragette Spirit has overshadowed other forms of militancy within the Edwardian suffrage movement and has had a lasting impact on historical interpretations.

Kathleen E. Macron, in her review of the book *The Militant Suffrage Movement* by Laura Nym Mayhall, explores the concept of suffrage militancy in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. It contends that the militant suffrage campaign had a firm historical foundation and received legitimacy from the language of the Constitution. The suffragettes wanted their complete rights as citizens based on the rule of law and established British liberties and values, drawing on the radicals' language of protest.

The book follows the development of the women's suffrage movement from the 1860s until the late 1890s, when suffragists started to challenge the state's legitimacy and sought to rebel. It also details how discussions of the South African War affected the suffrage movement and clashed with two competing conceptions of citizenship. In the book, Mayhall emphasizes the various tactics, pursuits, and justifications of suffragette organizations that emerged following the South African war across the chapters. It looks at how suffragettes used the law to try and justify their rallies and citizenship claims but ultimately turned to more violent tactics, including bombing and arson, to pressure the government into granting women the right to vote. It provides insight into the nonviolent militant suffragette movement, which acknowledged active resistance as a fundamental aspect of citizenship while outlining its scope and bounds. It examines how activists reexamined the connection between citizenship and resistance during the severe national crisis of

the First World War, with some changing their conflict with the British government into a chauvinistic battle with the Germans and others continuing to be involved in the peace.

Mayhall concludes that the violent demonstrations of the Women's Social and Political Union overshadowed other forms of opposition, leaving the base of suffrage militancy in constitutional and moral ideals sometimes overlooked. The book acknowledges the importance of the diverse and active fifty-year militant and nonmilitant suffrage fight in creating the legal framework that gave women the right to vote in parliament.

Md. Mehedi Hasan Sikdar, Md. Sujahangir Kabir Sarkar and Sumaiya Sadeka explore the Ready Made Garment (RMG) business in Bangladesh in their paper, “Socio-Economic Conditions of the Female Garment Workers in the Capital City of Bangladesh” published in the year 2014, which has grown to be the biggest export earner for the country. According to the paper this RMG sector began in 1976 and has grown a lot over the past 35 years. It is a vital part of the Bangladeshi economy. This industry is important for three main reasons: About 77% of the country's annual foreign exchange earnings come from RMG exports, it has been the fastest-growing business in recent years, and it employs about 3.6 million people. In the last 20 years, RMG exports have grown by more than 20%. The easy availability of labor, especially female labor, is one of the things that helped the business grow. The RMG sector has given people jobs, especially women, and is thought to be one of the main ways for women to work in Bangladesh. In this business, more than 85% of the people who work in production are women. Most of the time, these women work in this field because they do not have many other job options or better job opportunities. Employers like hiring women because they are cheaper and are thought to be easier to control.

Also, women workers are less likely to form groups or spread "anti-management propaganda." So, the authors, through deep data analysis of the RMG sector, find that as the rural areas lack the opportunity to work for women, most of them migrated from rural areas to the city areas to join in garments, another reason is that those who are illiterate can get job quite quickly and for this reason, they lack experience and also get paid less than male workers. Moreover, they are not paid enough for medical facilities and are sometimes forced to work overtime for about 11 hours but do not get paid fully. Though the RMG industry is rapidly growing in the economic sector using cheap labor, they are not properly paying rightfully, especially the women workers. As a result, their socioeconomic status is still behind the margin and poverty and other problems are always part of their lives.

Syeda Sharmin Absar, in her paper, "Health Hazards and Labor Laws in Bangladesh: A Narrative-Based Study on Women Garment Workers," discusses women's health hazards due to their labor in the Garment industry. She highlights that women's health condition impacts their working performance. However, most of the time, they are violated and assaulted mentally and sexually in the workplace by both the unhealthy workplace condition and also from male coworkers there. According to Blaxter, a scholar in the author's paper mentioned, a worker needs a complete sleep of 8 hours after working for 11 to 16 hours a day, but half of them do not get the chance because they have other household chores and have to spend time with their family. Moreover, most garment industries have no scope for recreational activities. Moreover, due to work relentlessly, they suffer from headaches, muscular pain, eye pain, ear pain and other internal infections. Also, they suffer from "genito-urinary infections and sexually transmitted diseases...life-threatening abortion or childbirth. It is estimated by Unity through Population

Services(UTPS) that around 15 percent of the women having sex with their coworkers for small gifts, hope for security and being manipulated by most of, usually unmarried adolescents...which later led some of them to prostitution (Absar 458). Furthermore, the garment factory buildings are overcrowded and have poor ventilation which causes breathing problems for inhaling toxic substances from the garment materials. " About 40 percent of workers could not get treatment because of leave benefits. The withdrawal of one worker from a production disturbs the whole chain. Though the government claims to protect all workers' right to medical and other facilities, only the high-ranking supervisors, managers and superior members can avail those facilities. The low-ranking helpers, sewers and other members get chance only during lunchtime or on holidays and sometimes they continue to work along with their sufferings. One point to be noted is that "The Gonoshasthya Kendro (GK) was the first NGO in Bangladesh to introduce health insurance for the poor. Other NGOs that followed included the Grameen Bank's health program. However, none of these NGOs cover garment workers." (Absar 466). And the most important exploration is that most doctors are not willing to work in garment factories.

Joe C. Miller in his study of women's suffrage, in the paper, "Never A Fight of Woman Against Man: What Textbooks Don't Say about Women's Suffrage" says that it is not always the men against women's suffrage but rather the struggle between "broad-minded men and women on the one side against narrow-minded men and women on the other side" (Miller 437). Miller quotes Carrie Chapman Catt, the leader of the suffragette movement, who estimated "one-third of women supported suffrage, one-third opposed it, and one-third didn't care either way" (Miller 437). Suffrage leader Abigail Scott Duniway of Oregon similarly confounded the subject of women's support, declaring that a "silent majority" of women desired suffrage while conceding that

suffragists “do not claim or even desire much numerical strength.” (Miller 437). Even many thousands of women make a petition to stop women from voting, which is their right too. In America, most women never fully supported the suffrage movement, “let alone all women” (Miller 441). In some college textbooks, the suffrage movement is sometimes misinterpreted as men vs women, a battle of sexes which is a false accusation; there were many men and male leaders who approached for women voting rights. Susan E. Marshall portrayed women in the higher class who disagreed with women's right to vote and supported patriarchy because they benefited from it and preferred themselves on top of other women by playing the traditional roles and opposed for their political rights in society.

R. S. Neale in his paper “Working-Class Women and Women's Suffrage” discusses the role of working-class women in the emancipation and women's rights movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Historians have different ideas about what started the suffrage campaign. Some say it was the economic opportunities created by the industrial revolution, while others say women trade unionists organized it. In contrast to what has been said before, this paper tries to explain how working-class women were involved in the suffrage movement and to show the problems they faced because of their subservient roles and economic problems. Working-class women had difficulty getting involved in politics because they were poor, had low wages, and had few options. Working-class groups could have done a better job of representing their needs. When people outside the working class tried to organize them for worker protection and political equality, outsiders mostly led them.

The slow growth of trade unionism among women was linked to the fight for women's right to vote. The author also uses Annie Kenney, a prominent British suffragette, as an example in his paper to show how middle-class women who fought for women's right to vote affected working-class women. Annie Kenney joined the suffrage movement even though she was initially not interested in politics. This shows how hard it is to get working-class women interested in politics. The Women's Social and Political Union (W.S.P.U.) tried to reach its goals by pushing excellence among different races and breaking down barriers between classes. But the W.S.P.U.'s single-minded focus on suffrage meant it did not pay attention to larger social changes, and its rhetoric grew more extreme over time.

The author concludes that there was no major initiative by working-class women in the suffrage campaign at that time. Instead, middle-class suffragists had more of an impact on working-class women than the other way around. The W.S.P.U.'s way of doing things was politically ignorant, and working-class women were left behind if they did not agree with its goals. Overall, the lack of effort on the part of working-class women was blamed on complicated historical and social factors, not the rise of working-class leadership.

Angela Shepherd in her paper, “De Beauvoir, Existentialism and Marx a Dialectic on Freedom” discussed the concept of freedom by Simone De Beauvoir in her paper, De Beauvoir's thought combines existentialist and Marxist ideas to talk about how women's freedom is limited and how society needs to change to give women real freedom. Simone de Beauvoir is an existentialist thinker who uses ideas similar to those of Jean-Paul Sartre and ideas from Karl Marx. She says that because men and women are different in society, one group benefits at the cost of another. Society's institutions and practices limit women's options and freedoms compared to

men's. De Beauvoir says that these things need to change to give women real freedom. Sartre's idea that people have choices that are limited by their situations is something De Beauvoir agrees with. She says that women have fewer choices because of their situations. She stresses that women are often forced to make choices that do not work out well because of the limits that are put on them. She disagrees with Sartre's point of view by saying that women are not born as free people.

Starting with "The Ethics of Ambiguity," Simon De Beauvoir's study of oppression is based on Marxist ideas. She says that the material conditions of life both make freedom possible and limit it. People's relationships are a mix of freedom and limits, and these interactions are affected by the way society is set up. She says that freedom differs from Sartre's idea of total freedom because it depends on history and society. Beauvoir says that oppression is caused by capitalism because isolated work makes it hard for everyone to be free. She says that the oppressors and the downtrodden feel differently about how quickly they need to be freed. She also applies Marxism to gender, seeing the relationship between men and women as similar to the relationship between oppressor and victim. She says that societal systems, especially patriarchal structures, limit women's freedom.

In *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir explores how society's institutions and ideas can make it hard for women to be free. She knows that production and reproduction systems must change for true freedom. She says that women are not likely to rebel against men, which makes gender-based freedom different from Marx's idea of class-based liberation. De Beauvoir thinks women can rise above their positions, no matter how hard their lives are. But for this transformation to happen, society needs to change. She recognizes that the human experience is both transcendent and immediate simultaneously. This vagueness works for both men and women. De Beauvoir says

that real freedom means accepting how these things interact. She challenges the idea that you can completely go beyond immanence.

The author Umme Al-Wazedi in the paper “Hasina’s Sisters Are Machine Women: Women’s Violated Bodies and/in Bangladeshi Garments Factories” have done a comparative analysis of Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* and Rubaiyat Hossain’s *Made in Bangladesh*, where the central protagonists, Hasina and Shimu both work in a garment shop. *Brick Lane*, Monica Ali’s first book, tells the story of Hasina’s life. *Made in Bangladesh*, a movie coming out in 2019, is about Shimu, who is the main character. Hasina and Shimu are hurt by their husbands and the men who work in the garment shop where they work. They are hurt by male hegemonic masculinity, patriarchal norms, and economic systems that favor men. Also, the idea that women who work in textile factories are sexually promiscuous makes it easier for people to hurt them. Economic abuse is also used to control and limit the bodies of women. As capitalism takes over a nation-state, their bodies become a place where they can be controlled. She quotes Carol Pateman saying that capitalism is almost exactly the same thing as sexism. But there is also opposition. Hasina says that she is not like her mother or other people who work in a garment shop. Shimu talks to a lawyer, learns about labor rules, and forms a union at her factory.

Hasina and Shimu are the ‘new women’ of Bangladesh. They are against “the invention of ‘third world women’ as a category to be ‘intervened’ upon and ‘empowered’ by Western experts and technological interventions through global development discourse and practice” (Chowdhury 302). By looking at how Hasina and Shimu’s bodies have been violated, the author shows “rebel

against the norms of multiple patriarchies with power structures like global capitalism in a society that is changing” (Al-Wazedi 1).

Chapter 3

Analyzing the Female Workers' Struggles of Patriarchal and Capitalist Exploitation in the *Suffragette*

The movie *Suffragette* in 2015, written by Abi Morgan and directed by Sara Gavron, is based on a true historical event of the suffrage movement in the United Kingdom in the early twentieth century. In her review of this film, Gavron discusses her journey of understanding the Suffragette movement for struggling to gain voting rights for women by working-class women and some feminist activists. She intended to visualize the movement's importance to the broader global audience to ensure women's portrayal as strong characters. In the paper "The Making of the Feature Film *Suffragette*" Morgan and Sarah mention that though there are documentaries and films about the movement, there was no comprehensive narrative film on the Suffrage movement and the struggles of the Suffragists. So, they desired to focus on working-class women in the movement, who had no authoritative power, struggles, sacrifices, and determination, to ensure their equal place as men in society (Gavron 986-987). Maud Watts is the movie's central character, played by Carey Mulligan. She is a composite character based on the lives of ordinary working-class women. Gavron and Morgan discuss how they did their study, which included a discussion of historians, experts, and different archives. This further helped them to recreate historical locations like steam laundries and parliament to make the movie more realistic. The movie tries to connect with current audiences by discussing gender inequality, activism, and human rights, which are still important today. The author recognizes the work of modern feminists and activists who are still fighting for women's rights. She does this by making connections between past and present battles. They hope the movie will start talks and bring attention to issues of equality and representation.

The film begins by portraying the suffocating working condition of the laundresses in a steam laundry in London in 1912, where women from early teenage to married women and mothers work effortlessly without having rest or treatment for injuries caused by the work. At the same time, the other male members in the laundress are assigned to work outside in open space. Here, Mr. Taylor, who supervises all the laundry works, is portrayed as a dominating 'self' character who mistreats all the female workers as the 'other.' "Identifying woman as "Other" early on in the introduction to *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir describes Otherness as an "original category" and alterity as a "fundamental category" of human thought" (Gines 255). The politician's speech further portrays Beauvoir's idea: "Women do not have the calmness of temperament or the balance of mind to exercise judgment in political affairs. Once the vote was given, it would be impossible to stop this. Women would then demand the right of becoming MPs, cabinet ministers, judges" (Gavron 00:01:35- 00:02:04). Passing these judgments about women to deprive them of voting rights, the patriarchal and capitalist male politicians want to suppress them so that only the male representatives remain in the dominant power and rule over the women race. The central protagonist Maud Watts is herself oppressed by the system. She realizes the importance of uplifting women in a strong position when she encounters a small girl in the steam laundry who is being tried to abuse sexually by Mr. Taylor, which reminds her of the same situation she has gone through with the same man.

The central heroic and courageous character, Maud Watts is introduced as a working-class woman who toils in a laundry under harsh conditions. Maud's life is characterized by personal hardships, including a traumatic childhood spent in a laundry where she endured abuse. Her experiences tie into the broader theme of women's oppression and the limited opportunities for women to escape their circumstances. She represents the everyday struggles of Women in

working-class jobs during the time. Her perspective shifts when she accidentally becomes involved in a suffragette demonstration, witnessing the intensity of their commitment and the brutality of the authorities' response. This event marks the beginning of her involvement in the suffrage movement. As she becomes more involved in the suffrage movement, she gains a sense of purpose and empowerment that helps her confront her past traumas. The film depicts the strains placed on her family relationships due to her activism. Maud's commitment to the suffragette movement leads to conflicts with her husband, son, and even her community. Maud's journey highlights the challenges women faced when trying to balance their societal roles as wives and mothers with their desire for equality and agency. Maud faces numerous obstacles, including arrests, physical abuse, and public humiliation, as she engages in acts of civil disobedience and participates in the suffragette movement's protests. Her determination to continue the fight despite these challenges showcases her resilience and dedication to the cause.

Throughout the film, Maud develops relationships with other suffragettes, both fictional characters and historical figures like Emily Davison and Emmeline Pankhurst. These connections emphasize the importance of unity and collective action in the struggle for women's rights. Her transformation from an apolitical working woman to a passionate suffragette activist mirrors the broader societal shift that occurred during the suffrage movement. Her story symbolizes the awakening of countless women to their own oppression and the collective determination to demand change. Though she is a fictional character, her experiences resonate with the real struggles faced by suffragettes. Her journey serves as an inspiration for present and future generations, reminding us of the progress made and the ongoing importance of advocating for gender equality.

Maud's struggle begins to attain voting rights and social equality for women in the society and political sphere because compared to men, she and other female coworkers in the laundry work

more hours every day, including overtime, than the male workers. They work harder than men but get lower payment than men. Moreover, in her testimony in the House of Common, she mentions the hazardous working condition which causes risks of different disease attacks that make them unable to work and die premature death of the women. She also mentions the frequent abuse and violence of the male workers and influential factory members, the women, which causes them to leave their jobs. She feels the importance of women's freedom in their social life to interact freely. Since only through equality will women become free and enjoy freedom, they will be able to preserve their rights and fight against violence, discrimination, and anxiety in every place and situation. The life of Maud became difficult after joining the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) by going against her husband and the patriarchal norms. She has to lose her family, is dominated in her workplace, faces violence by the ruling political system, is outcast from society, and is even tortured and force-fed brutally in jail as “She follows a campaign with other suffragettes” (Styaningsih, Masulah and Setyorini 35).

Every individual, not only women but also those who want their ideas to be accepted in the public space, should have the same rights in politics. Every citizen also has the equal right to give their opinions in public. However, at the beginning of the 19th century, women were not allowed to give their opinions to the government. In the movie *Suffragette*, women fought for their right to speak publicly. The main character in *Suffragette*, due to this condition of women not being allowed, cannot give their opinion on political matters because men think women are too stupid to make choices or judgments. “It is men who have all legal rights over our children. It is men who control our economic existence. It is men who hold the deeds to our property” (Gavron 00:08:30-00:08:38). The sentences by Alice Haughton, the MP’s wife and a feminist activist for women's rights, show that men mistreated women in politics because they were weak. Maud and other

women in her hometown felt like men did not give them enough respect because of this reason. Maud wants to show that women can be like men and have the right to be treated the same as men because of this problem.

It clarifies that women are not allowed to vote publicly. Men are the only ones who have the right to vote. If women could vote, they would want other political rights that would put them in the same row as men. During Maud's talk in the government, she said she had never thought she could vote. Her words show that women's right to vote was just a dream, but many suffragists never gave up fighting for it. Maud thinks she should be able to vote just like men because of the suffragists' fight. Her friend Violet encourages her to speak out in public. Maud chooses to testify in the House of Commons because of this, which is seen as her first attempt to get equal political rights. Mrs. Pankhurst clarifies that women can decide how their lives will turn out. As much as men do, women want a fair law for them, but their attempts to make a good law are often seen as breaking the law. Because the law does not treat women equally, Maud thinks joining other women to fight for their equal rights is exemplary.

She made her choice, and due to the women's union, she had to be separated from her son because her husband would not let her see her son. The conversation between her husband Sonny and Maud explains that when a woman and her husband break up, the law says that the children belong to the father, not the mother. After their separation, Sonny decides to give their son adoption without discussing taking any permission from Maud. Here Sonny playing the 'self' role made Maud the 'other' who is not allowed to interfere in her son's welfare. Maud feels like her rights as a woman and mother are being overlooked. It is one of the reasons why it is hard for her to get equal treatment in the law regarding the custody of her son. She would change the law if she could

not see her son. Where she says she would fight for her son's rights “If the law says I cannot see my son, I will fight to change that law.” (Gavron 1:03:08- 1:03:13)

Law is one of the causes why men and women in *Suffragette* do not have the same rights. Maud's fight for political equal rights is also about the unfair portrayal of the law, which says that women are better served by their male representatives. Men can ignore women in any field; in any area, there are no confirmed things for women. There have been many fights over equality, but most men only watch and do not do anything. From a social point of view, the law favors men and does not make them think about women. However, in real life, men and women need each other at every step to keep balance and harmony in their political, social, and private lives. This harmony can be seen in the relationship of Edith New with her husband, Ellyn Hugh, supporting his wife and other women in the suffrage movement.

History has proven one thing “If a woman discovers herself as the inessential and never turns into the essential, it is because she does not bring about this transformation herself” (De Beauvoir 28). To bring transformation in the position of women in society and ensure their equal value, the pioneers of the suffrage movement in the early 20th century have contributed a lot to make a strong women's position. Emmeline Pankhurst, the founder of WSPU in 1903, influenced women suffragists through militant tactics, bombing, and breaking windows, including arson. Because she believed that peaceful requests and protests are ineffective in grabbing government attention, rather radical and rebellious actions are needed. In the movie, the character of Pankhurst is only seen making a balcony speech to motivate the suffragettes to continue their fight, even costing their life by generating the motto "deeds, not words." This motto is further seen in many episodes. One is when the dramatic sequence while the suffragettes bomb the mailbox pillars and the empty house of Chancellor David Lloyd George. This bombing targeted more government

property and essential places rather than harming people. Another important event of deed is Emily Davison, a militant suffragette who performed a tragic act of raising the suffragette flag of "votes for women" in front of King George V's horse in the Epsom Derby to grab his attention but died as a martyr from severe injuries. Later she receives a long march on her funeral day. Also, the film shows Maud's suffering after being arrested for her activism. She and her fellow activists are tortured and force-fed on their hunger strike in prison, presented as extremely brutal and life-threatening actions toward the activists. Also, the fictional character Edith, the pharmacist in the film, is involved in the militant activities of the movement. She represents the countless women from history who committed and sacrificed their personal lives for the movement for equality.

Lastly, the movie *Suffragette* shows the difficult journey of female workers and activists and their never-ending fight against political patriarchal and capitalist abuse. Through Maud Watts and her fellow suffragettes, the movie shows how hard the suffrage movement was and what people had to give up for it. The film shows how urgently equality and justice are needed by looking at the lives of working-class women who had to deal with societal oppression and the harsh facts of being exploited at work. The filmmakers' engagement with historical truth and their work with experts and historians helped them recreate the settings and details of the time, giving the story a realistic appearance. *Suffragette* connects the past and the present by showing how gender inequality, activism, and the need for fair human rights are still happening today.

Chapter 4

Analyzing the Female Workers' Struggles of Patriarchal and Capitalist Exploitation in *Made in Bangladesh*

Rubaiyat Hossain's film *Made in Bangladesh* is a film that shows us an accurate picture of the Ready Made Garment (RMG) sector while focusing on the struggles of the poor female garment workers in Bangladesh and their efforts to improve their working conditions, labor rights and diminish the exploitation in the workplace. This movie delves into the complex dynamics between the women workers and the exploiters by highlighting how the societal system made the women workers the 'other' and the exploiters the 'self.' 'The other' refers to a group of people left out of the mainstream, marginalized, or ignored. This idea is shown by the women who work in the garment factory. Most young women from poor families are forced to work in harsh situations for low pay. These workers are seen as 'the other' because of their gender, socioeconomic status, and lack of power in society as a whole in the patriarchal society. They are taken advantage of by the factory owners and managers, who care more about making money than about the workers' well-being. The workers fight for fair wages, safer working conditions, and respect, as they do not want to be seen as 'the other.' On the other side, the garment factory owner, manager, and others in the superior power of the system who have access to provide betterment to the workers are the 'self' in the film. They dominantly prioritize only their financial interest and suppress the workers by imposing their power on them. They consider themselves as the 'self' to control the means of production and shape the working process according to their interests. They rationalize their actions by framing them as necessary for the survival of their businesses and maintaining economic stability.

The director Rubaiyat Hossain in one of her interviews with Valentina Vitali, mentions her thoughts about Moyna, the real garment worker whom she met. It caught her attention, and she became further interested in doing research and representing the real struggles of the female garment workers in Bangladesh, representing their struggle to uplift the economic sector of our country through their tremendous effortless workload but in exchange, their unimproved and struggling economic conditions to the global audience. She then describes how Moyna, an extraordinary woman, possesses a solid and spontaneous character at the age of twenty-three. The film is based on her life experience as a garment worker and the union president.

The story begins with the struggle of the central protagonist Shimu, the female garment worker who makes clothes in the garment factory. Her tale portrays both empowerment and exploitation. Before becoming a working woman, she was a simple teenage girl whose stepmother threatened to marry a middle-aged man in exchange for money in her village. Living in Dhaka's central capital, she worked first in a shoe factory and then in the current garment factory. In the film, she is a 23-year-old working woman married to a man who is still jobless and looking for a job. She starts to think about their rights and safety in the workplace after the fire breaks in the factory, and one of her friends and co-workers dies there, who taught her the necessity to form a workers' union and workers' rights. Later being approached by the union advocate, she starts forming a union by influencing the other coworkers to join her. So that they can all together fight against the garment owners, managers, and exploiters who cut their wages, misbehave in the workplace with them and impose overtime work without paying correctly, and provide an unsafe life-risking workplace. Shimu met resistance at every step while attempting to form a union of workers. The opposition is not only from the factory male employers but also from her husband

and some of her co-workers who are afraid to lose their jobs and are willing to suffer for the rest of their life by the system as their destiny.

“History has shown that men have always held all the concrete powers; from patriarchy’s earliest times, they have deemed it useful to keep a woman in a state of dependence; their codes were set up against her; she was thus concretely established as the Other. This condition served males’ economic interests” (De Beauvoir 193). The film shows how men at home and work dominate Bangladeshi culture. The factory owner, managers, and other male characters often have control over the female workers. This shows how unequal power relationships lead to exploitation and mistreatment. The patriarchal impact is also shown by male characters who do not like the idea of women trying to get more power or questioning their authority. For instance, Shimu asks the manager to pay the overtime payment by floor assistant Reza; the manager makes an excuse for not receiving money for the last month and pushes her away. “They treat us like dirt; if we do not work in the factory, a guy like Reza would not have a job, pushing us around like cattle...Did you see how he pushed me today? Tomorrow it will be you. What options do we have? Working as housemaids or begging on the streets” (Hossain 00:20:30- 00:21:35). Some male figures make fun of the women's work, reinforcing the idea that men should be in charge. In the film, when Shimu goes to take the payment after the fire incident, the male guards outside of the factory gate scold her using slang and chase her away, even knowing she is the worker there. Also, before joining the RMG sector, Shimu was beaten by the house owners, where she was engaged as a domestic helper.

Moreover, from past historical garment tragedies, the film *Made in Bangladesh* can be linked to the real fire breakout at the Tazreen Fashion Garment factory in November 2012 and the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in April 2013 in many ways. These real-life disasters were

significant in the history of Bangladesh's garment industry because they showed how bad are the workers' working conditions and safety issues were till now. Furthermore, that is depicted by the sudden death of Moyna, a co-worker of Shimu who has become the victim of a machine blast at the garment factory. This incident is the result of capitalist exploitative labor practices. Due to the unsafe, hazardous working condition, a youthful life Moyna lost her life, and after her death, neither the system was questioned nor punished. Even her mother received justice and wages from her.

Shimu says, “We’re screwed if we’re married and screwed if we are not,” (Hossain 1:08:30- 1:08:33) thus implying the sexist culture that forces men like Sohel to control her through her body. Sohel asks her to control her body by saying the local language “thik moto cholish” (Hossain 1:00:51- 1:00:54) which roughly translates to “keep yourself preserved” by maintaining purdah by physically covering the body as well as one’s mind. It is also seen that no matter how strongly Shimu plays the role of working-women, her unemployed husband always warns her to avoid unionizing and quitting the job. So, to prove herself as a good and obedient wife, she starts to put on a hijab to cover her head outside of the home and in the workplace.

Angela Y. Davis examines the utilization of the labor of women from the working class by capitalism to generate profit. In her book *Women, Race and Class* she mentions, “women comprised the undisputed majority of industrial workers. In the textile mills, scattered throughout New England, there were 38,927 women workers as compared to 18,539 men. But what was the reality of mill life? Incredibly long hours—twelve, fourteen or even sixteen hours daily; atrocious working conditions; inhumanly crowded living quarters; and So little time was allowed for meals—one half hour at noon for dinner—that the women raced from the hot, humid weaving room several blocks to their boarding houses, gulped down their main meal of the day, and ran

back to the mill in terror of being fined if they were late” (Davis 27). According to her assertion, capitalism relies on utilizing individuals' labor to generate profits, mainly exploiting working-class women. Frequently, individuals in such circumstances have remuneration levels that are comparatively low, unfavorable working conditions, and limited employment opportunities. And to lure the poor working adolescents for the sake of job security and better life in the future, many male workers in an upper position like Reza exploit innocent lives like Daliya's both sexually and mentally and later accuse the victim. “The manager catches Reza, who tells him that Daliya has been seducing her. Daliya, here, is the prototype of the sexual body—young, unmarried—that Reza dreams of having an affair with, to pass the time, and when it comes to saving himself, he throws her out as a violated sexualized body” (Al-Wazedi 6). Though Reza, the floor assistant, is the main culprit, as he sexually manipulated and used Daliya, he is not punished. Instead, Daliya is kicked out of the workplace because she is considered an ‘immoral’ woman. In a later scene, Daliya is shown wearing bright clothes, wearing much makeup, and having a cigarette. This shows that she has chosen to be a prostitute, which many Bangladeshi feminist critics do not believe is her fate. But we know that Daliya criticizes our society, which is bound by unseen rules of purity, even if we cannot say what happens to these women. Also, Daliya wanted to spend one night with Shimu because her aunt had kicked her out of the house after she lost her job. Shimu's husband treats her just as badly because he has heard that she is an ‘immoral’ woman. When Daliya tells Sohel he wants to touch her, Shimu turns on her friend and says she does not understand Sohel. In this case, the manager is the man who has to protect the other women in the workplace from Daliya, while Reza is free to do whatever he wants.

Feminist theorist Simon De Beauvoir says that men have always had more power than women because of patriarchal norms and ideals. “Man thinks himself without woman. Woman

does not think herself without man. And she is nothing other than what man decides; she is thus called “the sex,” meaning that the male sees her essentially as a sexed being; for him she is sex, so she is it in the absolute. She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other” (Beauvoir 26). This subordination is not limited to political or legal differences; it affects all parts of life, including social, cultural, and economic ones. In comparison to men, women have always been seen as the ‘Other’ or the ‘second sex.’ When one of Shimu’s colleagues, Reshma, is caught having the workers’ union pamphlets, she gets fired and later accuses Shimu of doing union work. However, Shimu, as a strong woman, made her and her co-workers’ position strong in the workplace, and to ensure all the labor rights and proper wages of their work, she managed to take the 30% of female workers’ sign in the papers to register her union in the Ministry of labor. There she also faces corruption because the labor officers are with the Garment owners in their exploitation. As a result, she receives a call from her boss to stop working against them and offers her to take a break to think and money. He gets angry and verbally abuses her, saying, “You have become a leader by reading a few pages of the labor law book?” (Hossain 1:15:45-1:15:57). He says that he has been informed by a person from the ministry that she is trying to register a union” (Al-Wazedi 6). As she rebukes the illegal offer, she gets verbally abused and threatens to take away the other female workers’ jobs. The manager also threatens her husband to keep Shimu out of this issue. Consequently, Sohel, her husband, locks her into the house so she cannot go to the Ministry office. However, Shimu does not sit idle. She fights against her husband and all others and goes to the Ministry office to get the officer's signature for registering the union. The male officer makes an excuse for not having permission to register the union. Shimu pleads before him but does not work; instead, he also, like the garment manager, verbally abuses him to

leave the place. In this very moment, Shimu plays the role of a strong 'self.' She "gets up, closes the door, and threatens the man with a recorded video of the man confessing that he had to listen to the factory owner. Shimu then orders the man to sign the form. When he tries to get the phone from her, she tells him that she will scream and will send the video to the news media" (Hossain 1:27:28- 1:29:28).

Here an important point to be noted is that the journalist Nasima and feminist activist Farzana played crucial roles in encouraging and raising awareness in Shimu and other female workers about the importance of availing their workers' rights. They introduced the laws of the Bangladesh Government of labor rights and made them realize that with the amount of work they do daily in the RMG factory, they are paid a very poor wage compared to their income. Nasima once asks, "Nasima: How many pieces of T-shirts do you work in a day? Shimu: 1650, Nasima: Think about it! Like two or three T-shirts are worth you a month's wage" (Hossain 51:32- 51:48). This incident refers to the Marxist theory of alienation and surplus value which is a central concept of his critiquing capitalism. Here Shimu and other garment workers are separated from their labor as they do not own the products they work on. It is the influential garment owners belonging to the capitalist class who sell them. Moreover, every worker is assigned to do a repetitive task, so they lack creativity or complete knowledge of the whole process, the products, and the production process. Also, all the workers are put in a situation of competing for job security. As a result, they hardly have trust and unity among all coworkers, which alienates them from the crowd. Furthermore, the vast profit-making of the owners and paying poor wages to the workers in the film refers to Marx's theory of capitalist exploitation through extracting surplus value. The moment Shimu gets to know that each of their monthly wages costs only two or three t-shirts price, she realizes how they are not receiving the amount of wage compared to their work in the factory.

They are exploited to produce surplus labor, which only benefits the owners and sellers of the industry.

Lastly, Rubaiyat Hossain's film *Made in Bangladesh* examines the struggles of female garment workers in Bangladesh's Ready Made Garment (RMG) sector. The film exposes these workers' exploitation, gender inequality, and structural injustice. Also, the complex power dynamics between underprivileged garment factory workers and their predatory owners and managers following Shimu, Moyna, and Daliya. The film shows how patriarchal conventions and society have made female workers the "other." These poor women work in unsafe conditions, receive little wages, and are mistreated. It exposes the workers' exploitation as disposable labor rather than human beings deserving of dignity. Their willingness to dispute this narrative and fight for their rights drives the story. In contrast, the film shows the "self"—factory owners, managers, and those who profit from worker exploitation—as powerful. These stats put profits before people, perpetuating exploitation. *Made in Bangladesh* explores gender inequality and women's bodies as commodities. The film shows how patriarchal traditions are upheld by masculine characters who crave power. It effectively criticizes exploitative leaders and the culture that allows them to persist. This film encourages viewers to evaluate how their garments are created and the ethical implications of their purchases. *Made in Bangladesh* forces audiences to recognize the dignity and rights of all people, regardless of gender or socioeconomic level, by humanizing these workers' suffering and highlighting their quest for justice. It is a sharp reminder that fighting for workers' rights demands solidarity and a commitment to eliminating systems of exploitation and injustice. This film challenges us to examine our responsibilities in these broader structures and advocate for a more just world through these spirited women.

Chapter 5

***Suffragette* and *Made in Bangladesh* Challenging the Traditional Heterosexual View of Women**

Cinema plays a significant role in engaging the audience with various ideologies and ongoing issues going on in society through the art of making motion pictures. *Suffragette* and *Made in Bangladesh* are cinemas that portray strong feminist themes. By focusing through a feminist film theory on these films both *Suffragette* and *Made in Bangladesh* have strong female themes. Feminist film theory focuses on how women are shown in films, what roles they play, and how gender roles are shown. In *Suffragette*, the film shows the fight for women's right to vote and the portrayal and treatment of women in a patriarchal society. In *Made in Bangladesh*, the movie deals with issues of women's labor rights and empowerment in a male-dominated industry. Both films can be seen as challenging the traditional male gaze theory proposed by Laura Mulvey, to varying degrees because they focus on weak female characters who become strong and fight for their empowerment, rights, equality, and agency against the dominant patriarchy which is represented from the 'female gaze'.

Laura Mulvey in her seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," discussed the way of making films from the male perspective, where the audience is also positioned to view the female characters and their roles from a male point of view, no matter whether the audience is male or female. Moreover, the camera gaze in capturing the scenes are also determined to show females as weak, soft-hearted, pleasure-giving, lustful, and even more which shows the passivity of women. She proposed the concept of 'scopophilia', which means deriving pleasure by looking at something in an objectifying manner. She argues most mainstream cinemas encourage the

audience specifically the males to derive pleasure by looking at women's bodies and gestures in a lustful and objectifying manner. But in response to the 'male gaze', the concept of the 'female gaze' challenges this perspective by emphasizing the importance of female creators, characters, and audiences in shaping cinematic narratives and visual aesthetics. It seeks to present stories and images that resonate with women's experiences and perspectives, rather than solely catering to the male gaze.

Sara Gavron directed the film *Suffragette* focusing on the female characters' personal lives, their struggle in the workplace, their struggle as a subordinate member in family, decision making, and their active roles in the suffrage movement. The film's poster shows the story based on women fighters Maud Watts, Emmeline Pankhurst, and Edith New, who play a major role in the movie's Suffrage movement and voting rights in the movie. Following the female gaze shows the women's experience in the movement breaking the stereotypes. From various backgrounds and personalities, such as; the suffrage activist Emmeline Pankhurst, MP's wife- Alice Haughton, laundry workers- Maud Watts, Emily Davison, Violet Miller, and pharmacist- Edith New, all of them played active agents in bringing change in their lives through voting rights. The central protagonist Maud Watts shows her courage in deciding to go against her family only to attain her rights as a female in the patriarchal political system. Moreover, the way she hit Norman Taylor, the laundry supervisor, with the heated iron portrays her strong rebelliousness against all the sexual assaults done on the other coworkers by Norman Taylor. Moreover, this film does not explore women's sexuality or their bodies which could be seen as desirable objects to the viewers. It is built without objectification and male-centric framing. It shows more of their activism's physical and emotional toll by avoiding romanticized portrayals. Also, it emphasizes the relationships

between women—friendships, mentorships, and rivalries—and how these relationships contribute to their growth and activism.

Rubaiyat Hossain directed *Made in Bangladesh* focusing on the lives of female garment workers in Bangladesh through the character of Shimu and her personal journey as a garment worker, her emotions, and the challenges that she faces as a woman in the garment factory and in her personal life. This film actually portrays what Shimu is seeing and experiencing herself. This film breaks away from stereotypes often associated with women in the workplace. It showcases the resilience, intelligence, and determination of the female characters as they navigate their roles in a male-dominated garment industry. In this film, there are also female pioneers- Nasima Apa and Farzana Apa who are working to encourage the poor and oppressed women workers to fight for their labor rights and equality in the workplace along with the male workers' mental and sexual assaults to the adolescent and young female workers. The film emphasizes Shimu's active role in seeking change and asserting her agency in a challenging environment. Moreover, this film critiques the patriarchal norms which like to exploit female laborers in the garment industry and how this exploitation benefits the garment owners economically, by showing the cycle of exploitation. Also, one of the greatest aims of the director of this film is to highlight the factory conditions and the struggles faced by female workers to the global audience to give a glimpse of the reality of their life. The film showcases how Shimu's identity and agency extend beyond her gender, highlighting her roles as a daughter, friend, and activist. This multifaceted representation would add depth to her character. The movie also shows the challenges and dilemmas of Shimu struggling to organize for better rights, demonstrating the complexities of pushing for change within a system to become the union leader.

Feminist film theory has provided a critical lens through which these movies can be analyzed. It draws attention to the representation of women in films, their roles, and the dynamics of gender portrayed. While the traditional “male gaze” theory often objectifies and sidelines women, the concept of the “female gaze” serves as a counterpoint, placing women at the center of the narrative and highlighting their agency, emotions, and relationships. *Suffragette* and *Made in Bangladesh* are both powerful examples of cinema that align with the principles of the “female gaze” theory. Through their focus on feminist themes, strong female characters, and the challenges they face, these films offer a refreshing perspective on the cinematic portrayal of women and their experiences. In essence, these films exemplify the potential of cinema to challenge existing norms and perspectives. By embracing the principles of the “female gaze,” these films create a space where women's experiences, agency, and relationships take center stage. In doing so, they contribute to a more inclusive and authentic representation of women in cinema and society at large.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The selected two films, *Suffragette* in 2015 and *Made in Bangladesh* in 2019, showcase the struggle of working women fighting for women's rights against patriarchal, societal, and political exploitation as the central theme from different historical contexts and from different parts of the world. But both of them have a similar kind of suppression against women. Both films shed light on the challenges faced by female activists and workers who strive for equality, justice, and fair treatment from the male-dominated society to strengthen their position. More specifically, the construction of the films is a criticism of the capitalist patriarchal society that is unsupportive and envious of women empowerment and uplifting of their position equally as men in the society.

In *Suffragette*, the focus is on the suffrage movement in the early 20th century in the United Kingdom. The film portrays the struggles of working-class women who fought for their right to vote and equal representation in a society dominated by patriarchal and capitalist norms. The protagonist, Maud Watts, symbolizes the everyday struggles and sacrifices made by women determined to challenge the oppressive system. The movie underscores how gender inequality, activism, and human rights issues depicted in the past still resonate today. By connecting the historical struggles to contemporary feminist movements, *Suffragette* emphasizes the ongoing importance of fighting for equality and representation.

In *Made in Bangladesh*, the film dives into the realities of the garment industry in Bangladesh and the exploitation faced by female workers. The central character, Shimu, represents the thousands of women working in the Ready Made Garment sector, where harsh conditions, low wages, and unsafe workplaces are prevalent. The film highlights the power dynamics between the

marginalized female workers, considered as the “others” and the exploitative factory owners and managers who prioritize profits over workers' well-being. *Made in Bangladesh* emphasizes the intersection of gender and economic inequality, exposing how patriarchal norms perpetuate exploitation and disregard for workers' rights.

Both films illustrate the struggles of women from different backgrounds and contexts, showcasing their resilience and determination to challenge established norms. These narratives emphasize the urgent need to address gender disparities, fight for women's rights, and eradicate exploitative practices. By portraying the strength and courage of these female protagonists, the films inspire audiences to reflect on their own roles in promoting equality and social justice.

Maud Watts from *Suffragette* and Shimu from *Made in Bangladesh* share profound similarities across their working-class backgrounds, experiences of exploitation and labor struggles, unwavering commitment to change, emergence as leaders and activists, joining unions, fighting for their legitimate rights, willingness to make personal sacrifices, and their role in bridging the gap between past and present struggles. Despite their different historical and cultural contexts, these common threads underscore the universal themes of resilience, empowerment, and the ongoing fight against systemic oppression, inspiring viewers to challenge injustice and advocate for a more equitable world.

Suffragette and *Made in Bangladesh*, show important stories about how women have struggled against unfair treatment by people who believe they're better just because they're men, and by big companies that care more about money than about treating workers fairly. These films represent that the fight for equality between men and women is not over yet. They teach us that we all need to work together, be aware of the problems, and take action to make things better.

Looking at both the past and the present, these films encourage us to question unfair systems and work towards a world where things are more fair and equal for everyone. It is also important to notice that these movies show how women have often been shown in a way that makes them seem weak or not important in other movies. However, these films challenge that idea and show that women are strong and can stand up for themselves. It is true that there are men who support women's rights and help them in their struggles, but sometimes these men don't get the recognition they deserve. Some people might call them names or think they're not strong because they're supportive. This is something we should think about and try to change in our society. In the end, *Suffragette* and *Made in Bangladesh* remind us that we have a long way to go to make things better for everyone, but by working together and standing up for what's right, we can make a difference.

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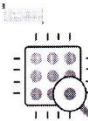
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