



# SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE MOVIE THE GREAT INDIAN KITCHEN

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## ABSTRACT:

Film has changed history repeatedly. The best films encourage us to think about how we can improve our lives and society. Movies have always been an effective way to reflect the world around us.

A meaning cannot be communicated without language, if one cannot express it in a language that other people can understand. The existence of new views that produce new meanings, is also the result of the growth of the construction of human thought, through the representation of meaning produced and constructed. Semiotic analysis is one such method to analyze the movies. semiotic theories take signs or sign systems as their object of study; applied semiotics analyzes cultures and cultural artifacts according to the ways they construct meaning through their being signs.

This research uses qualitative methodology to semiotically analyze the movie Great Indian Kitchen using Roland Barthe's code. Using signifiers, signified, connotative sign, denotative sign, pragmatics, syntax this study analyzes the representation of men and women in the movie. The study clearly points out the differences in the way a typical pious family treats a man and woman in the family. The way the protagonist gets treated in the movie is semiotically represented at various point of time. These semiotic details when related with the dialogs in the movie delivers a subtle meaning but a strong message to the audience. The study has analyzed the intricate details represented between shots and has given evidence on the semiotic details detailed in the movie The Great Indian Kitchen.

## KEYWORDS:

The great Indian kitchen, semiotic analysis, feminism, feminism in films, Indian film, feminism in India, Barthe's five narrative code, pragmatics, syntax, semiotics.

## INTRODUCTION

A film – also called a movie, motion picture, moving picture, picture, photo play or (slang) flick – is a work of visual art that simulates experiences and otherwise communicates ideas, stories, perceptions, feelings, beauty, or atmosphere through the use of moving images. These images are generally accompanied by sound and, more rarely, other sensory stimulations. The word "cinema", short for cinematography, is often used to refer to filmmaking and the film industry, and to the art form that is the result of it. Semiotics (also called semiotic studies) is the systematic study of sign processes (semiosis) and meaning making. The semiotic tradition

explores the study of signs and symbols as a significant part of communications. Unlike linguistics, semiotics also studies non-linguistic sign systems. Semiotics includes the study of signs and sign processes, indication, designation, likeness, analogy, allegory, metonymy, metaphor, symbolism, signification, and communication.

Various theories on semiotics have been put forth by many authors around the world. One such renowned linguistic Ferdinand De Saussure proposes the study of Semiotics and has established himself as the Father of Semiotics. His studies have been used by other authors such as Pierce and Barthes to bring in more clarity to the concept of Semiotics. These concepts and ideas are still in use and are also used by directors to convey strong meaning in a subtle manner to the audience.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Films have a direct impact on society through their analysis of cultural, social, and emotional themes, making them an effective tool for education and activism. By exposing unique gestures, they allow people to better understand different cultures that are often misunderstood. Movies bring new ideas and tell the story of social issues from different angles, giving rise to various thoughts. For instance, the film Parshya overturns social norms by role-reversing between Archie and the other female protagonist, who is portrayed as the hero. The movie critiques the patriarchy of society, underlining how it not only suppresses women but also controls society through caste-based norms. This is akin to real-world issues, such as honor killings. Film semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, examines how meaning is created in films. It is often used for the interpretation of various art forms, including abstract art. Films also unintentionally instil gender biases by marginalizing women and failing to support an equal distribution of power. Women are often portrayed as victims of abuse, objects of male desire, or bullied characters, and film directors frequently label them as “whiny” or lacking self-confidence (Gamble, 2010). The connection between film and religion has been a longstanding one. As film theorist André Bazin stated, "The cinema has always been interested in God" (Bazin, 1997), religion remains a common topic in films. Additionally, the study of feminism and the representation of women's identities in Indian cinema, particularly in Malayalam films, reflects the bravery and beauty of women characters. These women confront societal stigma and stereotypes, striving to overcome them (Gupta, Hemangini, 2016). Whenever a woman seeks to escape patriarchy and make her own choices, it disrupts the system of caste, often culminating in honor killings (A. K. Divakar, 2018).

## METHODOLOGY:

The study features a descriptive qualitative approach with Saussure's semiotic theory. Semiotic theory acts as a lens of understanding and interpreting meaning. Its basic goal is that the meaning is produced by the help of acts and objects which are 'signs' in relation to other symbols. The researcher has collected various shots from the film and has analysed the semiotic elements that these shots represent and the meaning that they convey to the audience. the objective of this study was

- To compare the representation of men and women in the film THE GREAT INDIAN KITCHEN.
- To analyze semiotically the film THE GREAT INDIAN KITCHEN using Ferdinand De Saussure's Semiotic Theory.
- To analyze the religious motifs, if any, used in the film THE GREAT INDIAN KITCHEN.

Qualitative research in general can be useful for the studies, stories, behaviour, organizational functionalities, social actions, and etc. One of the purposes for the deployment of qualitative methods is to investigate the portrayal of women in the film, THE GREAT INDIAN KITCHEN.

## DATA ANALYSIS

From the beginning, the movie shows the differentiation of the roles of men and women. It is known from the past to the present that the men and women have some separate roles at home. There is some truth in it even in the 21st century women doing some chores and men participating in others at home.

**DESCRIPTION:**

On this occasion, the family is cooking a feast of marriage for the newlyweds. There is a wife who takes care of cutting the vegetables and a daughter who cleans the room.

The husband is sitting in the living room reading a newspaper and waiting for the guest.

In this case, the wife is cutting the vegetables and the daughter is cleaning the room while the husband reads the newspaper and the guest arrives. The husband then goes to welcome the guest. However, he first reads the newspaper when a visitor comes.

**SIGNIFIER:**

The women in this picture are seen cooking as well as cleaning the house and the men are seen reading the newspaper.

**SIGNIFIED:**

There is the mother cutting the vegetables with her daughter cleaning the house. Meanwhile, the father is on the couch with the newspaper connected to him that makes him feel calm. For the women, they are the ones who are only responsible for the household works the men don't want to participate in any household work so they are just relaxing.

**DESCRIPTION:**

Covers a visit by a new couple for the marriage feast, the visiting married couples, and father and son are sitting at the dining table and get ready for the lunch course that a mother serves unto them in addition to a daughter who is standing and watching.

**SIGNIFIER:**

A stuffed dining table with six people three of them are kids and a father. The girl who came to the house then called the girl to eat but the mother of the child stopped her and the lady joined the other for the meal.

In this picture, the men are the ones who are eating and sitting at their ease, even the little boy, the women are the only ones who are standing and serving, among them the little girl, therefore consuming the food served by women relates to the women's status as inferior with respect to the men in the household

**Pragmatics 1:**

Guest: join with us dear, come

Lady: she will eat with me

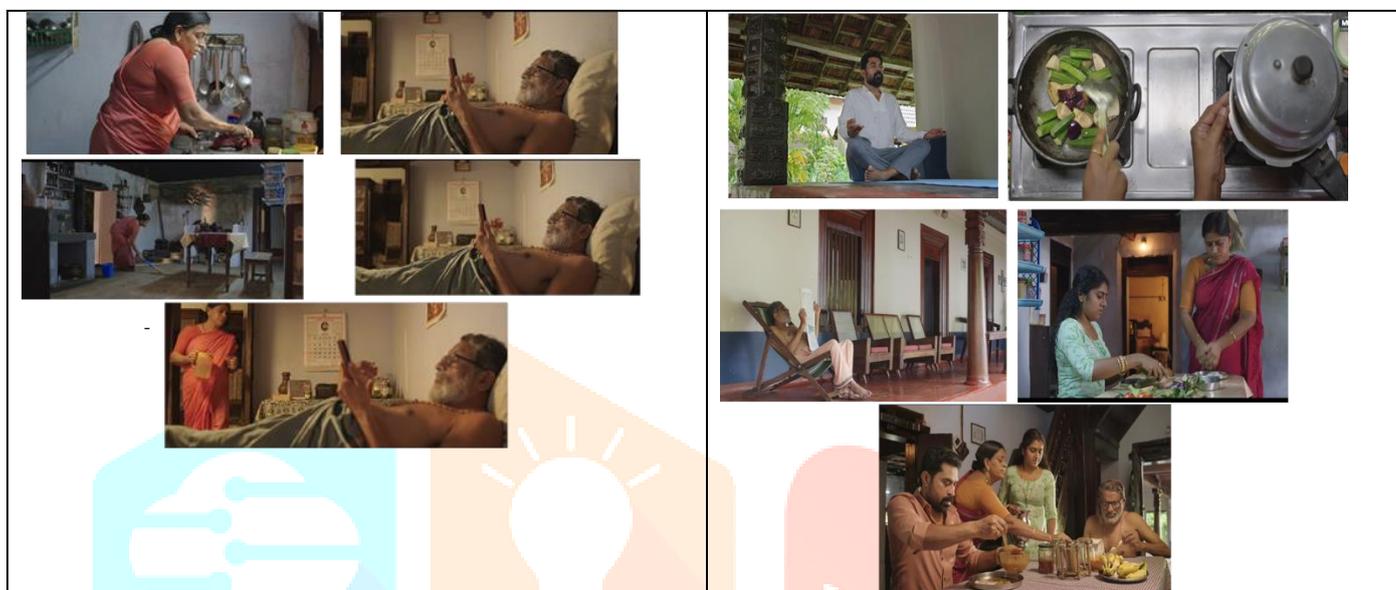
You guys eat please

**Semantic 1:**

In this scene, the visitors to the house are readying themselves for the feast and along with them, the father and son spectate and partake in eating. The guests at the party are the bride and the little girl and

"the bride tells the little girl to eat with her" after which the mother of the child is "the one who ends the conversation by saying that she will eat with me".

It can be concluded that the film strongly conveys the fact that the male gender are given privileged right from the young age which is semiotically shown throughout the film.



**DESCRIPTION:**  
 In this scene, a woman is doing housework, washing dishes and cleaning the house, while a man is on the phone most of the time.

**SIGNIFIER:**  
 This is a nighttime view of the old couple of the house. The guy is wasting all his time on the phone. The woman is occupied with cleaning the house and washing the dishes

**SIGNIFIED:**  
 Household where the man and woman have different duties. The scenario of the mother of the woman who does the household work and uses the man for an entertainment purpose while the mother who does all the housework is the wife of the man and she fetches water too.

**DESCRIPTION:**  
 In this scene, the women of the house, who are mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, cut vegetables, cook and serve food. The mother of the same house is reading the newspaper and the son is practicing yoga.

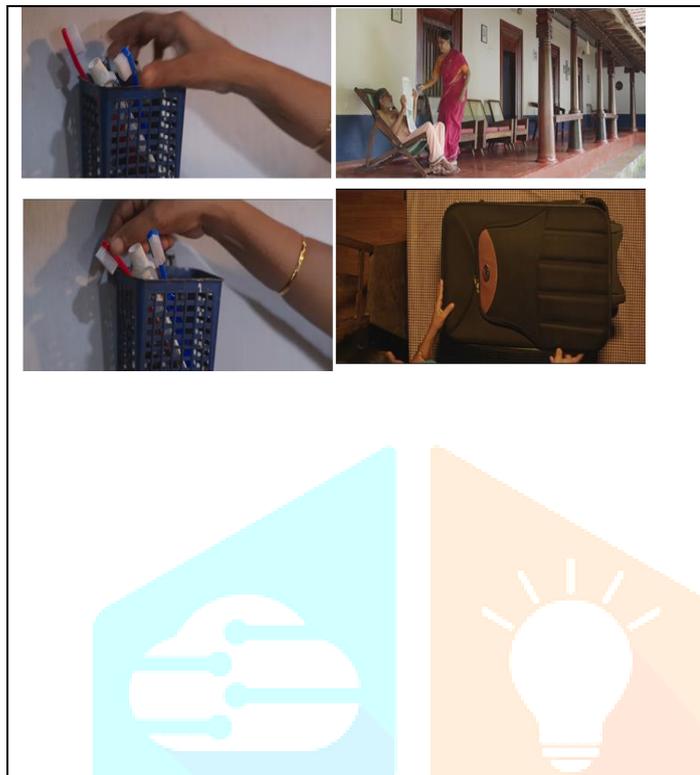
**SIGNIFIER:** This scene explains that both women are in the kitchen cutting the vegetables and preparing breakfast early in the morning. The men are one reading the newspaper and the other is doing yoga. Then the men are done eating and the women serve the food.

**SIGNIFIED:**  
 This scene is about how the women of the house spend their leisure time in the kitchen. Mostly men have no part in it. From this the characteristics of men and women are distinguished in the house. The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law do the housework together, but the men at home spend their time reading the news and doing yoga.

**PRAGMATIC:**  
 Mother-in-law.: "you sit here dear, I am here right"  
 Daughter-in-law: "No, i will eat with you mom"  
 Son: "Mom needs some company too, right"

**SYMBOLIC CODE:**  
 The film examines the inequalities between men and women and the movement of female liberation.

It portrays a family that uses culture as an excuse to oppress women.  
 An educated, rational and free-thinking daughter-in-law comes as a daughter-in-law in the family, and this film is an expression of her inner feelings.



Color has also been used in the movie to represent gender roles in the film. The left shots show the wife taking the brush to her husband which is shown as Blue color.

Another semiotic element of the movie is that these shots show that men expect women to bring even the brush to them in order for them to perform the morning chores.

**SIGNIFIER**  
 The shots show a brush holder having brushes in them, a person first touching the pink color brush and then picking the blue colour brush next. The third shot shows the wife giving the brush to her husband.

**SIGNIFIED**  
 The director has used colors as a symbolic way to represent the brush of the wife to be pink or red in shade and that of the man is blue in shade.



The montage of shots in the left are some of the religious rituals that are shown in the movie to establish a particular religion. The practices and rituals of a particular religion are shown at various points of the movie in various shots.

The images in the left are the series of shot taken throughout the movie that represent male and female roles in the film. Throughout the movie, the women are always shown as being submissive to the men. The few shots in the left establish the intricate semiotic details that the film uses to convey the gender roles.

The top two shots show that men are always seated while women are always serving them.

The middle shots show that the woman has to bring the footwear for their men to go out. The husband is



seen waiting for the wife to bring his slippers so that he can go outside.

The last two shots show that the man says “ If you want to live in this house, you’ll have to listen to us”. These words mean that the women have to be submissive to the men of the family.

### FINDINGS:

- The filmmakers here make clear distinction using the power of the image in some scenes. In this research, researcher used semiotics to find that the women's roles represented women only working household works. While portraying men, spending their time on cell phones, reading newspapers and relaxing. Mostly men don't go to the kitchen.
- Presenting only females as doing household chores, they are the ones who serve the men food, provide the toothbrushes to the men when they get ready to brush, they have to bring the slippers to men when they go out.
- With the utilization of pragmatics and syntax the dialogue was analyzed in terms of the representation of socialism and male chauvinism. Pragmatics and syntax used to explain the deep meaning from the dialogue
- The movie Great Indian Kitchen is a very important part of the representation of the culture they used in that film. The filmmakers are mainly concerned with the cultural and religious aspects of the film as they take the role for the setting and the framework of the story. Culture gives a separate meaning in films so the directors use culture as a semiotic tool to communicate to the audience.
- Semiotics in terms of sign, symbols and colors are predominantly used throughout the film The Great Indian Kitchen. The dialogs and their meaning also convey hidden semiotics that brings out the representation of gender in the film.
- Cultural elements have been used throughout the film to relate the practices and gender role inside a societal structure to establish the situation of women and men in the cultural setting.

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