

SELF-IDENTITY, MALE GAZE AND GENDER RELATIONS IN KIM-KI-DUK'S FILMS

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Abstract:

In the last decade there has been a significant rise in the popularity of South Korean cinema both in the country and on a global scale. This dissertation focuses on one of the directors - Kim Ki-duk - who became a well known name internationally and later in his native country. He is one of the most innovative and controversial directors to rise from the new wave of South Korean directors. This work will focus upon the representations of the gender relations portrayed by Kim-Ki-Duk, in the late modernity as conceptualized by Anthony Giddens. The research tries to study the handling of male gaze of the male characters and the self-identity of the female characters as portrayed by Kim-Ki-Duk in his films *3 Iron* and *Samaritan Girl*.

keyword: Self-Identity, Korean Films, Kim-Ki-Duk, Male Gaze and gender Relations

INTRODUCTION

The art of film making has been in existence for more than a hundred years and today the film industry has spread to all parts of the world. It has developed a stylish technology, and has become a major industry, providing the most popular form of entertainment to audience in urban areas throughout the world and attracting the attention of entrepreneurs, artists, scientists and politicians. Apart from being entertaining, the film medium is useful for education, propaganda, and scientific research. There has been a major development in film industry worldwide from its early beginnings to the modern days. Earlier, it was only Hollywood cinema that took a centre stage in “world cinema”, but now there are many major film cultures around the globe that provide interesting alternatives and challenges to the dominant Hollywood modes of production. “Eastern Cinema” (Chaudhuri, 2005) is gaining equal popularity to that of its western counterpart.

East Asian Cinema

Asian Cinema is referred as “eastern cinema”, more commonly however, it is used to refer to the cinema of Eastern, Southeastern and Southern Asia. West Asian cinema is sometimes classified as part of Middle Eastern cinema rather than Asian cinema, though Iran and Afghanistan are often included. Central Asia is also usually grouped with the Middle East. North Asia is dominated by Siberian Russia, and is thus considered European cinema.

East Asian cinema is classified as the cinema of Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea. The cinema of Cambodia, Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries fall under Southeast Asian cinema. The cinema of Central Asia and the southern Caucasus is typified by Iranian cinema and that of Tajikistan. West Asian cinema is typified by Turkish cinema and the cinema of Israel. Finally, South Asian cinema is typified by the cinema of India, including the acclaimed Bengali cinema and the popular Bollywood industry.

South Korean Cinema

Among the classifications of Asian Cinema, South Korean Cinema has emerged as a trend setter today. Over the past decade, the Korean film industry has witnessed an explosive growth, which is evident in both Korea and abroad. (Smith, 1997). Kim-Ki-Duk has been the most elusive film maker in South Korea. He is known for his violent portrayal of women in his films. General Korean audience has been indifferent to his films and none of his films have been commercially successful in South Korea, except *Bad Guy* (2001).

Kim-Ki-Duk in South Korean Cinema

This paper aims to analyse the gender relations in late modernity and the working of voyeuristic gaze of the male characters and the struggle for identity of the female characters in Kim Ki- Duk’s films *3 Iron* and *Samaritan Girl*. Kim Ki Duk’s brutal portrayal of his women protagonists in his films has earned him criticism from various organizations for women in Korea. The cruel reality which he shows evoked dislike among the women audience of Korea. Even though Kim Ki-Duk has had a great

welcome among the world audience, the film audiences of his own country have not encouraged his films. All of his women characters are shown as victims rather than heroines. This he does not show to depict men in a stronger light but Kim Ki-Duk has filmed aggressive scenes to put forth the unkind reality in the society. This research focuses on the portrayal of the lead women characters in Kim Ki-Duk's films and analyses their depiction as women who search for self-identity. The research also looks into how Kim Ki-Duk has brought out the depth of man-woman relationship in his films.

Among the many films Kim Ki-Duk has made, two films *3 Irons* and *Samaritan Girl* are taken as samples to be analyzed in particular. Each of these films has women centered plots, specifically containing women characters that have been shown as victims of societal cruelty. In *Samaritan Girl*, Kim Ki-Duk shows about teenage prostitution in Korea while "the film is also a chronicle of spiritual dilemma, intrinsic to the sentiment of wishing to bear another person's burden" (*Acquarello, Senses of Cinema*). *3 Irons* explains the complicated relationship of man and woman and gives a picture of the depth of it. Kim Ki-Duk tries to make use of limited dialogues and more signs to convey his thoughts to the audience. Kim Ki-Duk tries to organize the images into a narrative and give it to the audience.

Objective

The research aims at a textual analysis on the working of voyeuristic gaze of the male characters in creating the self-identity of the women characters in Kim-Ki-Duk's *3 Iron* and *Samaritan Girl*. The main objective of the study is:

- To explore the gender relationship using the feminist perspective of gaze in the age of late modernity as conceptualized by Anthony Giddens
- To analyze the use of male gaze conceptualized by Laura Mulvey in Kim-Ki-Duk's films.
- To bring out the working of voyeuristic gaze of male characters and the struggle for self-identity of the female characters in Kim-Ki-Duk's *3 Iron* and *Samaritan Girl*.

Justification

Kim-Ki-Duk's characters are always elusive and eccentric. His female characters especially are the victims of male brutality and lost identities. Kim-Ki-Duk is a director who has garnered accolades and moderate box office successes overseas while failing time and again to appeal to local critics and audiences. His predicament is, in the manner of palimpsest, indicative of the ways in which Kim-Ki-Duk structures his cinematic spaces. Evocative imagery and impeccably structured mise-en-scenes are Kim-Ki-Duk's unique cinematic trademarks. Kim Ki-Duk's films have been understood through the conventional conceptual tools of narrative, symbolization, representation, and signification. He uses minimal dialogues and more of visual elements in his films. Hence the research aims to analyse Kim-Ki-Duk's *3 Iron* and *Samaritan Girl* in order to bring out the application of male gaze and self-identity.

Brief outline of Korean Cinematography

South Korea is one of the countries in the world to have experienced the fierceness of war and colonialism. A country developed from the scars of civil war has vast spectrum of artistic outburst based on the traumatic collective past. The history of Korean cinema does not have a smooth development. As the political powers understood the intensity of visual representations, the content was heavily monitored by the colonial Japanese government. The situation was no better post independence as the civil war had taken over the peninsula. The governments were very much keen on using cinema as a tool for propagation of nationalism and disseminating anti-communist ideas. By enlarging the initial South Korean films produced were abided by the Motion Picture Law of 1962, that had rigorous censorship policies. The Syngman Rhee Government had strict censorship laws that curbed the artistic freedom. There was a point when domestic cinema faced a drastic downfall. The encroachment of Hollywood films made it difficult for local cinema to thrive. With the government's effort to revive the state of domestic cinema, South Korean films slowly started to attract the local and global audience.

Korean cinema succeeded in attracting domestic audiences by recounting their memories, experiences and stories. It might seem that there is nothing remarkable that Korean films tell Korean stories to Korean audiences. Korean film industry also offers a truly full range of filmmaking, not only in terms of diverse genres but also in terms of diverse modes of filmmaking such as documentary, animation, experimental film and commercial film. Korean cinema includes mainstream feature films, an active documentary movement, art cinema, animation, film festivals, and an archive with an active screening program, many film schools, and so forth.

Since the late eighties, a great variety of new and talented directors have entered the film industry. While the Korean New Wave directors were inclined towards realism, later generations preferred hybrid genre films with their own distinctive styles to the traditional genre films. (*Chi-Yun & Stringer, 2005*)

The entry of Kim-Ki-Duk in Korean film Industry

Kim-Ki-Duk is one of the critically acclaimed Korean New Wave Directors. Kim Ki-duk made his debut in 1996 between the two generations. From *Crocodile* (1996) to *Dream* (2008), the prolific director Kim Ki-duk has made fifteen films so far. As one of the most well-known contemporary Korean directors outside of Korea, his films have been routinely invited to prestigious international film festivals and have received numerous awards, including the Silver Bear Best Director's Award from the Berlin

International Film Festival (2004) for his tenth film *Samaritan Girl* (2004), the FIPRESCI (Fédération Internationale de la Presse Cinématographique: International Federation of Film Critics) prize and the Special Director's award at the Venice Film Festival (2004) for his eleventh film *3-Iron* (2004). He is best known to US audiences for his ninth film *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* (2003), which has been successfully released in the US.

While Kim Ki-Duk is considered one of the most talented and important directors currently working in South Korea by the international film communities, Kim Ki-Duk's reputation in his own country has been, at best, mixed – composed of a few enthusiastic supporters and many disgruntled detractors. He is praised for his uninhibited and painterly images, yet many film critics have been displeased by his shocking, bizarre, voyeuristic, gruesome, and violent images, as well as his politically suspicious characters and stories. General Korean audiences have been equally unsympathetic to his films and none of his films have been commercially successful in South Korea, except *Bad Guy* (2001). (Volker Hummel)

Kim-Ki-Duk's films have evocative imagery and impeccably constructed mise-en-scenes that are his unique cinematic approaches. His minimal use of dialogues and the depiction of the marginalized as the main characters are the traits of his style of film making. The research aims to study how Kim-Ki-Duk has structured his lead characters to bring out the gender relationship in the late modern society. Since the research follows a textual analysis with a feminist perspective, the Structuralist Film Theory and the Feminist Film theory are relevant to the study.

As Kim-Ki-Duk's films are to be analysed with a feminist perspective, the Feminist Film Theory will be significant to the study. In the article '*Feminist Film Theory*' by Anneke Smelik, the author talks about the feminist movement and its importance in films. The author gives details about the development of feminist film theory which was influenced by second wave feminism and the development of women's studies within the academy. Feminism is a social movement which has had an enormous impact on film theory and criticism.

Laura Mulvey's classic essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (Mulvey, 1975), was the feminist claim that men and women are differentially positioned by cinema: men as subjects identifying with agents who drive the film's narrative forward, women as objects for masculine desire and fetishistic gazing. Mulvey's essay is heavily invested in theory.

Laura Mulvey points out that, **feminists need a variety of methods** with which to understand the unseen workings of the male dominant system which oppresses women. Mulvey is concerned to argue that psychoanalysis is an important tool while identifying the need for many others. Mulvey argues that **pleasure needs to be destroyed and that this destruction is an essential weapon**. Cinema, mainly Hollywood cinema, which is primarily structured upon bringing pleasure raises questions about how the unconscious structures our ways of seeing and understanding of the world and also why we gain pleasure from looking.

Mulvey says that in a world controlled by sexual imbalance, the gaze is been divided into two the active male and passive female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In this article Mulvey calls woman as image and man as bearer of the look where she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. The woman displayed has functioned on two levels as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen. A woman performs within the narrative, the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude. For a moment the sexual impact of the performing woman takes the film into a no-man's-land outside its own time and space. The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense; as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralize the extra-diegetic tendencies represented by woman as a spectacle.

Laura Mulvey uses psychoanalysis in her path breaking article 'Visual Pleasure and narrative Cinema', to explain the scopophilia, the desire to see, which is a fundamental drive according to Freud. Laura Mulvey says that classical cinema stimulates the desire to look by integrating structures of voyeurism and narcissism into the story and the image. She talks about voyeurism and narcissism into the story and image. Mulvey has analyzed scopophilia in classical cinema as a structure that functions on the axis of activity and passivity. This binary opposition is gendered. The narrative structure of traditional cinema establishes the male character as active and powerful, he is the agent around whom the dramatic action unfolds and the look gets organized. The female character is passive and powerless: she is the object of desire for the male character(s). Within the narrative of the film, male characters direct their gaze towards female characters. The spectator in the theatre is made to identify with the male look, because the camera films from the optical, as well as libidinal, point of view of the male character. There are thus three levels of the cinematic gaze (camera, character and spectator) that objectify the female character and make her into a spectacle.

Since the beginning of the recent women's movement, American feminists have been exploring the representation of female sexuality in the arts—in literature, painting, film, and television. As we struggle towards meaningful theory, it is important to note that feminist criticism, as a new way of reading texts, emerged from the daily, ongoing concerns of women re-evaluating the culture in which they had been socialized and educated. The book '*Is the gaze male? Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*' by E. Ann Kaplan talks about feminist filmmakers starting the task of analyzing patriarchal discourses, including cinematic representation, with a view to finding ways to break through them.

This research focuses on Kim-Ki-Duk's visualization of his characters in the late modernity. Late modernity is a term for the concept that some present highly developed societies are continuing developments of modernity. A number of social theorists (Beck 1992, Giddens 1991, Lash 1990) critique the idea that some contemporary societies have moved into a new stage of development or post modernity. On technological and social changes since the 1960s, the concept of "late modernity" proposes that contemporary societies are a clear continuation of modern institutional transitions and cultural developments.

Anthony Giddens doesn't dispute that important changes have occurred, but he argues that we have not truly abandoned modernity. Rather, the modernity of contemporary society is a developed, radicalized, 'late' modernity - but still modernity, not postmodernity. Anthony Giddens is a British sociologist who is renowned for his theory of structuration and his holistic view of modern societies.

He says that in the modern society the intimacy of the relationship has undergone transformation according to the self and identity of the individuals.

Anthony Giddens in his book "Modernity and Self- Identity Giddens says that in the post-traditional order, self-identity is not inherited or static; rather, it becomes a reflexive project – an endeavour that we continuously work and reflect on. It is not a set of observable characteristics of a moment, but becomes an account of a person's life. Giddens writes that:

"A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor - important though this is - in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self."

Methodology:

The methodology to be used in this research is a qualitative research method using textual analysis of the male and female characters of Kim-Ki-Duk's *3 Iron* and *Samaritan Girl*. Through textual analysis, the depiction of man-woman relationship in the age of late modernity brought out by Kim-Ki-Duk is to be studied and use of cinematic gaze and self-identity of the female characters with the use of the elements that create a meaning such as acting, directing and mise-en-scene are to be analysed.

Films are texts to be read and reading them requires our initiation into the specific conventions and ideological biases of cinematic discourse. Films, like paintings, are like a two-dimensional art which create the illusion of a third dimension. (Mayne, 1993) The research is a 'Textual analysis' of Kim-Ki-Duk's movies *3 Iron* and *Samritan Girl*. Textual analysis of film requires observing and questioning all the elements that create meaning within the section, such as acting, directing, lighting, cinematography, mise-en scene, etc. Besides noticing the individual elements that create a film's meaning, textual analysis also involves understanding how the film fits into the larger context of its social, historical, cultural and political environment. In this context, the use of male gaze and the self-identity in Kim-Ki-Duk's films are to be analysed. The visual imagery of the director in bringing out the concept of voyeuristic gaze of the male characters and the self-identity of the female characters and the depiction of man-woman relationship in the age of late modernity are to be studied.

The aim of this textual analysis is to research how Kim-Ki-Duk has used his lead characters to bring out the man-woman relationship, the transformation of the intimacy in today's society, working of the cinematic gaze of the male characters and the attempt of survival of the female characters.

The research would follow a certain frame work to meet the objectives of the study. The aim of the study is to bring out how the female characters try to find their self-identity or struggle to revive their identity? how the male gaze has an influence on the man-woman relationship? how the voyeuristic gaze of the male characters influence the self-identity of the female characters?

Kim-Ki-Duk tries to address a social issue through individual relationships in his films. Even though all his films fall into this category, *3 Iron* and *Samaritan Girl* contain characters which portray individual relationships more clearly and intimately. The two films have more scope than the other films of Kim-Ki-Duk, to analyse the man-woman relationship in late modernity. The films are also well received by the world film audience and have won many awards in International Film festivals.

Frame work

To achieve the objectives of the research the films *3 Iron* and *Samaritan Girl* are to be analysed applying a framework. The major topics in this frame work are:

- *The search of self-identity of the woman*
- *Depiction of the man-woman relationship*
- *The working of voyeuristic gaze of men and self-identity of women*

Based on this methodology and frame work Kim-Ki-Duk's *3 Iron* and *Samaritan girl* is to be analysed in the following chapter. The visual imagery of the director will be studied to show how the concepts are dealt in the films.

Findings & Analysis:

The two films of Kim-Ki-Duk (*3 Irons* and *Samaritan Girl*) are to be analysed based on the concept of portrayal of gender relationship in the age of late modernity and the conflict between the voyeuristic gaze of the male characters and the struggle for identity of the female characters.

Kim-Ki-Duk has been called as misogynistic by numerous critics for his films. His films have been sometimes dubbed eccentric, amateurish, and crude. His films have women characters that are either shown as victims of male cruelty, who struggle for a survival, or as prostitutes, for example the out cast in *Address Unknown* and the teenage girls in *Samaritan Girl*. While his female characters are the victims, his male characters posses the shades of brutality. This is where Kim-Ki-Duk handles the cinematic gaze with a difference. This can be seen in the films *3 Irons* and *Samaritan Girl*.

In both the films the female characters fight the male voyeurism of the male characters and try to establish their identity as an individual. Kim-Ki-Duk has used the cinematic gaze of his male characters to show them as brutal and aggressive rather than generating visual pleasure among the audience, while his female characters constantly try to escape the voyeurism or try to establish their identity bearing the male gaze.

The male gaze as explained by Laura Mulvey, is the desire to see, which is a fundamental drive according to Freud. Mulvey has analyzed scopophilia in classical cinema as a structure that functions on the axis of activity and passivity. This binary opposition is gendered. The narrative structure of traditional cinema establishes the male character as active and powerful: he is the agent around whom the dramatic action unfolds and the look gets organized. The female character is passive and powerless: she is the object of desire for the male characters. Within the narrative of the film male characters direct their gaze towards female characters. The spectator in the theatre is made to identify with the male look, because the camera films from the optical, as well as

libidinal, point of view of the male character. Mulvey puts forth the three levels of the cinematic gaze: camera, character and spectator that objectify the female character and make her into a spectacle.

Kim-Ki-Duk shows his female protagonist as victims of voyeuristic gaze of the male characters. His female characters are always in search of a self-identity (for example Chang-guk's Mom in 'Address Unknown' who keeps writing to her husband who had abandoned her, Yeon in 'Breath' who tries to revive her identity, Sun-hua who suffers from being deprived of her identity and Jae-Young and Yeo-jin creating a false identity as Vasumithra). Self-Identity is based on an account of a person's life, actions and influences which sense to them and which can be explained to other people without much difficulty. It explains the past and is oriented towards an anticipated future (Giddens, 1991). Kim-Ki-Duk's female characters also identify themselves with the influences and incidents happening in their life. In *3 Iron* Sun-hua is confused with her own identity due to her husband's influence in her life, while in *Samaritan Girl*, Jae young creates her own identity due to the loss of her friend.

Both *3 Iron* and *Samaritan Girl* have female characters who either search for their identity in or create an own identity by bearing the voyeuristic gaze of the male characters.

In *Samaritan Girl* Kim-Ki-duk shows two teenage girls involving in sex trade identifying themselves with an Indian prostitute named 'Vasumithra'. They consider that by having sex with their clients, they free those men from the sin's they have done. Here Kim-Ki-Duk makes the characters of the girls, as women who willingly take up the gaze of the male characters (clients of the girls) to create an identity for themselves. Here the male characters that are voyeuristic are shown as sinners.

3 Iron

Tae-suk (Hee Jae), has no circumpolar means of support, nor does he have a family or circle of friends and wanders among empty apartments or houses. He's a burglar who never steals anything. Tae-suk targets different neighborhoods, seemingly at random, by leaving flyers and brochures at each residence. When he returns, hours later, if the menu hasn't been removed or discarded, he breaks into the apartment or house, and makes himself at home. He eats from the refrigerator, watches television, bathes, and otherwise adopts the role of the apartment renter or homeowner. As a form of repayment, he washes the owner's clothes or repairs broken electronic equipment. Tae-suk's behavior, of course, carries with it certain risks, most importantly the risk of being discovered by the renter or homeowner.

On Tae-suk's one such break-in, he meets Sun-hwa (Seung-yeon Lee), a distraught, battered housewife. Tae-suk enters her house, under the assumption that its occupants are on vacation or away on business. As Tae-suk settles into eccentric domesticity, Sun-hwa watches him from a distance, avoiding him while she weighs and judges his intentions. Soothed by his non-threatening behavior, she announces his presence as he sleeps in her bed. Startled, Tae-suk prepares to leave, but not before the phone rings. Sun-hwa's husband, a serial abuser, calls, promising to return. He does, allowing Tae-suk to witness another assault. Roused from indifference, Tae-suk uses the 3-Iron of the title (a generally little-used golf-club) in response. Rather than use of the golf club as a weapon, Tae-suk uses golf balls, speed on to their destination by Tae-suk's drives. Sun-hwa and Tae-suk leave together.

Sun-hwa joins Tae-suk as he searches for and breaks into unoccupied apartments and houses. What follows is an idiosyncratic courtship, as Sun-hwa begins to participate in the Tae-suk's role-playing. Their courtship, like the scenes that precede it, develops *wordlessly*. Over the course of the first half of the film, neither character talks (Sun-hwa screams, once); the only dialogue the audience hears comes from third sources like television, stereos, answering machines, and other characters, most notably Sun-hwa's abusive husband. Sun-hwa and Tae-suk's eccentric behavior eventually draws the attention of the police, which sends *3-Iron* into a different direction, from wistful, understated, romantic drama into crime, revenge drama.

Analysis of 3 Irons

In *3 Iron* Kim-Ki-Duk shows the female protagonist (Sun-Hua) as a victim of her husband Min-gyu's brutality. Sun-Hua is shown as just another 'object' in her husband's luxurious bungalow.

The establishing shot of the film shows Min-gyu playing golf in his backyard, where he hits a marble statue of a woman with a golf ball rhythmically at continuous intervals. The shot brings out Min-gyu's (Sun-hwa's husband) character as violent and vicious. Sun-hwa's nude photographs hung in the bungalow shows that Min-gyu considers his wife not more than 'object' for sexual desire. He fails to identify her as an individual or as his wife.

Sun-hwa's need to be identified as a person and not an object strains the relationship of the husband and wife. When Sun-hwa's constant effort to escape the voyeuristic clutches of her husband fail, she tries to survive bearing it yet finding her identity by deceiving him.

The search for self-identity of the woman

Sun-hwa is introduced as a lonely house wife in her husband's bungalow by the director. When Tae-Suk enters a big bungalow for his stay he fails to notice a beaten up woman (Sun-hwa) sitting in the dark in her room. Until the entry of Tae-suk, it is understood that Sun-hwa is left alone and locked up (as Tae-suk breaks in houses that are only locked from outside) by her husband in the huge house which is empty except for the objects in it. Sun-hwa's nude photographs are hung on the wall by Min-gyu, which brings out his voyeuristic gaze upon his wife. The display of nude pictures of his wife shows that he considers Sun-hwa as nothing more than an object of sexual desire.

Sun-hwa's search for her identity can be seen by her disinterest towards the incidents happening around her. When Tae-suk breaks inside the bungalow she does not react to it, rather becomes a silent observer of the trespasser (Fig.2). She becomes yet

another object in the empty house. Sun-hwa's silence to her husband displays her apathy towards the present and future. She neither protests when she gets beaten up nor reciprocates Min-gyu's love and sexual desire.

She disfigures her picture hung at the photographer's house (when she breaks in with Tae-suk) which proves that her life is meaningless to her and she lacks a self-identity. In the photographer's apartment Sun-hwa appears as ornament in cases beautifully framed and lit. Her bruised face and bloodied, cracked lip indicate spousal abuse. The battered woman is thus exiled within her home like a ghost and emotionally depleted.

In the process to find a self-identity, Sun-hwa adapts the life style of Tae-suk. She joins Tae-suk in invading the spaces of anonymous people and adapting herself to his life style. Sun-hwa breaks free from her husband's voyeuristic gaze which objectifies her and breaks free into the outside world trying to find a meaning to her life.

When Sun-hwa returns to her husband, she no longer accepts to be objectified by him. She seems to be a changed woman, her husband's domineering ways no longer affect her. She reacts to his brutality, attacks back when he hits her. She no longer stays passive. She tries to maintain the identity she created for herself when she gets back to her husband. Kim-Ki-Duk keeps the character of Sun-Hwa silent through out the film, highlighting her emotions only through her actions. She decides not to speak when she struggles to get out of Min-Gyu's sexual gaze, but speaks out when she decides to live her life along with it. When she understands that escaping Min-gyu's clutches is unattainable, Sun-hwa develops an enduring to her husband's desire while she finds an emotional security with Tae-suk.

Kim-Ki-Duk characterises Sun-hwa as a victim of male brutality who tries to rather accept her victimisation in order to sustain her identity. Self-identity becomes an inescapable issue.

'What to do, how to act and who to be are the focal question of individuals living in circumstances of late modernity' (Giddens, 1991). She creates a double identity for herself, one as the objectified wife of Min-gyu till he leaves the bungalow that maintains her societal status as the wife of a wealthy man. The second identity is which she attained for herself by replicating Tae-suk's identity, searching for an emotional security (Giddens, 1991). Till Min-gyu leaves the bungalow she accepts to be one among the objects at home, and as soon as he leaves she breaks the image and she joins Tae-suk accepting the ghost like lifestyle, haunting the empty spaces. Sun-hwa's situation and her disturbed relationship affect her self and identity. Kim-Ki-Duk

The working of voyeuristic gaze of men and self-identity of women

It has always been argued that women want love and men want sex.(Giddens, 1991). Men wanting sex can be characteristic of their masculinity and women's desire for love would override their sexual desire. Kim-Ki-Duk shows his male character to have a cinematic gaze that inturn reflects in the formation of an identity in the female characters. In *3 Iron* Sun-hwa's husband Min-gyu deprives her of the love she needs but harasses her with his brutality and voyeurism. Sun-hwa's emotional depletion makes her confused of her identity. Her confinement in the bungalow makes her feel more like a ghost haunting an empty space. Sun-hwa is aware that Min-gyu can never give the emotional support she needs. She is passive when she is considered as an object of sexual pleasure by him. Min-gyu keeps her in a well furnished bungalow like a precious 'possession' kept in a case beautifully framed and lit.

Even Tae-suk is sexually aroused by looking at Sun-hwa in the beginning, he also posses a voyeuristic gaze towards her. His attraction towards her images forms the basis for their relationship. Tae-suk is embarrassed to see the girl in front of him, whose nude pictures had aroused him. When he witnesses her frustration and bitterness his voyeurism is gradually combined with sympathy.

Sun-hwa's experience of the emotional security with Tae-suk (which was never given by her husband) makes her adapt his life style and replicate his identity. She moulds herself to fit into Tae-suk's kind of living which invades empty spaces of anonymous people. She tries to create a meaning to her life rather than be beaten and confined in a bungalow. Min-gyu considers her to be a possession of his which makes Sun-hwa drop her identity (her identity as a wife of a wealthy businessman) in the society and flee to sustain her individuality.

Until Sun-hwa flees with Tae-suk, she is submissive to her husband's brutality. After her return she becomes provocative as she has found an identity for herself which she can relate to the happenings of her life and find a meaning for it. Sun-hwa replicates Tae-suk's identity as she gains an emotional support from him. Earlier Min-gyu's aggression and voyeurism is showed in the establishing shot when he hits the marble statue of a woman with a golf ball using a 3 iron stick. Through out the film, Kim-Ki-Duk uses the golf balls as a metaphor for aggression and voyeurism. Tae-suk also uses a golf ball to silently communicate with Sun-hwa. Even Tae-suk expresses his aggression by playing golf. Sun-hwa tries to control his aggression by stopping him from playing golf. This might be due to her insecure feeling that Tae-suk might also become like Min-gyu. It is only when the golf ball hit by Tae-suk kills a woman, he let goes of it.

Min-Gyu's actions reveal only his sexual desire towards Sun-hwa, he neither caresses her nor considers as an individual. This leads to Sun-hwa's frustration.

Depiction of the gender relationship

In *3 Iron*, Kim-Ki-Duk shows the insecure feeling of a woman when is considered as an object by the man. Kim-Ki-Duk shows two types of man woman relationship in this movie. One is the strained relationship of Sun-hwa and Min-gyu while the other is the mute love of Tae-suk and Sun-hwa.

Sun-Hwa's relationship with Min-gyu deprives her of emotional security and makes her feel lost. Sun-Hwa is unable to identify her existence as apart of a wider social context or provide meaning to her life as she is dispossessed of the emotional security from her husband. This can be explained in terms of the 'ontological security' put forth by Giddens (1991) who refers to ontological security as a sense of order and continuity in regard to an individual's experiences. He argues that this is reliant on people's ability to give meaning to their lives. Meaning is found in experiencing positive and stable emotions, and by avoiding chaos and anxiety. If an event occurs that is not consistent with the meaning of an individual's life, this will threaten that individual's ontological security. Ontological security also involves having a positive view of self, the world and the future. Kim-ki-Duk portrays Sun-hwa as an individual whose emotional security is threatened by her husband's desires which makes her have a negative view towards her self, the world and the future.

Kim Ki-Duk uses the camera editing to tell the relationship formation of Tae-suk and Sun-hwa expertly, where the camera intercuts between shots of Tae-Suk making himself at home in Sun-Hwa's house, and shots of Sun-Hwa looking upon him silently without prior knowledge. The initial encounters between Tae-Suk and Sun-Hwa in Sun-Hwa's mansion-house consists of a series of mimicry, where each tries mirroring the other. Tae-Suk weighs himself on the weighing scale that he repairs; Sun-Hwa then follows Tae-Suk surreptitiously and weighs herself to verify the scale's accuracy after he walks away from it, without him knowing she is around. Tae-Suk throws a golf ball onto the floor to Sun-Hwa's side, unseen to her (although she is aware of his presence), and she throws back the golf ball as a recognition of his 'presence', which again gets thrown back in a series of rebounds to and fro.

The silence between the two protagonists, Tae-Suk and Sun-Hwa throughout the film paradoxically speaks about the breaching of emotional spaces which constitutes the experience of falling in love. Tae-suk invades the personal space of Sun-hwa. Sun-hwa's observation of Tae-suk helps her to know his character. If falling in love is a meeting of two individuals' personal spaces, this is achieved in the film via the fixing of the human subject's voyeuristic gaze upon its object of interest.

The love between Tae-suk and Sun-hwa is portrayed with silence, whereas Min-gyu continuously keeps talking to Sun-hwa trying to convince her how much he loves her. Their silence symbolizes their respect, awe, and fear of the power that a human can exert. The majority of other characters appear like animals or children wielding their power purposefully but unknowing of its extent and effect of power. Sun-hwa's husband embodies the over masculine male: practicing with his golf clubs in the backyard (masturbation), his obvious wealthy standing (another symbol of his ability to wield power and control excessively), and his inability to handle anything without using too much force (trying to tell his wife he is sorry and ending up hitting her). Min-gyu tries to use her for his sexual desire (which Sun-hwa is least interested in reciprocating) by convincing her of his love. Min-gyu's this harassment lead Sun-hwa to escape with Tae-suk adapting his way of ghostly living.

Tracking Tae-suk's point of view, handheld shots are framed to convey the sense that viewers are participating in his circumnavigation. Individuals sense his presence but cannot see him, as he exists first and foremost on a mystical plane but also retains the capability to take a physical form at will. Sun-hwa is the only one who can see Tae-suk. When they are reunited, Sun-hwa finds Tae-suk in a mirror that reflects the image of Sun-hwa reaching out her hands to touch Tae-suk.

The final image of Tae-suk and Sun-hwa standing on a scale that reads "0" offers the possibility that Tae-suk may have bestowed his abilities on Sun-hwa and she is joining his ghostly state of being.

Samaritan Girl

The Samaritan Girl focuses on the relationship between two teenagers, Jae-young (Seo Min-jeong) and Yeo-jin (Kwak Ji-min), who are prostituting themselves in order to raise enough money to travel to Europe. Or more specifically, Jae-young is prostituting herself and Yeo-jin is organizing her rendezvous; paradoxically Jae-young (who compares herself to a Buddhist saint) is the happiest of the two, whereas Yeo-jin feels increasing pangs of guilt and despises their clients. When Jae-young meets a tragic fate, Yeo-jin decides to recontact all of their clients and sacrifice her own chastity as penance, an act that threatens to destroy her Christian father's sanity and ignite his quest for revenge.

The film is divided into three parts. In part one, "Vasumitra," best friends Yeo-jin (Gwak Ji-min) and Jae-yeong (Seo Min-jung) work together in a prostitution scandal in order to save money for a trip. Jae-young is fatally injured and Yeo-jin carries out her final dying wishes. In part two, "Samaria," Yeo-jin finds all of her friend's old clients, sleeps with them, and returns their money. Then her police officer father, Yeong-gi, finds out what she's doing. In part three, "Sonata," Yeong-gi attempts to confront his daughter about her actions.

Analysis of Samaritan Girl: The search for self-identity of the woman

Jae- Yeong identifies herself with an Indian prostitute 'Vasumithra' and considers herself to give enlightenment to her clients. Jae-yeong lives in a quest for her connection and material gain. After the fatal accident of Jae-yeong, Yeo-jin passes through the same in order to compensate her own feelings of guilt. Here both the girls try to replicate the identity of a third person. According to Giddens, the self identity is based on an account of a person's life, actions and influence which makes sense to themselves. Jae-yeong's activities and her death tend to create the identity of Yeo-jin here.

The recurring images of cleansing between Jae-yeong and Yeo-jin (Fig. 8) are intimate, supportive, and even purgative (*Aquarello*). Yeo-jin serves as a passive and enabling protector of Jae-yeong in her seemingly voluntary exploitation of herself. In contrast, the image of Yeo-jin's shower after leaving the hospital – later recalled in a similar shot of Yeong-ki – is devastating, isolated and bereft. In essence, while Yeo-jin and Yeong-ki can see past the failings and imperfections of others, they cannot forgive themselves.

Yeo-jin initially considers herself as a protector of Jae-yeong, later she considers herself as Jae-yeong to come out of her guilty feeling. In every stage of the film, Yeo-jin's identity keeps changing. After she relises her mistake she regains her identity as a daughter to her father.

The working of voyeuristic gaze of men and self-identity of women

In the film, Kim-Ki-Duk shows the clients of Jae-yeong and Yeo-jin as men who are voyeuristic. Both the girls volunteer to be considered as objects by their clients. Here Kim-Ki-Duk handles the gaze to show his male characters as sinners. Kim-Ki-Duk shows the male characters having sex with the girls, yet being respectable in the society and tries to bring out the irony.

Depiction of the gender relationship

Kim-Ki-Duk portrays two kinds of man woman relationship in this film. One is the relationship between the prostitute and her client and the other is the father daughter relationship.

Yeo-jin and Jae-yeong consider their clients attain spiritual enlightenment after having sexual relationship with them. The girls enjoy the sexual pleasure rather than feel victimised. As Giddens denotes there is a transformation in the intimacy that has allowed women to express their feeling in more productive way. Jae-yeong expresses her desires to her clients and tries to establish a relationship with them (later Yeo-jin also does the same). After Yeo-jin takes the place of Jae-yeong, she tries to make her clients give them the pleasure as well as make them realize their mistake.

The second type of man-woman relationship is the father daughter relationship. The film is an account of spiritual dilemma, intrinsic to the sentiment of wishing to bear another person's burden that motivates the actions of both the prodigal daughter, Yeo-jin, and, subsequently, her father Yeong-ki. According to Yeong-Ki, his daughter is a school going innocent teenager. When he comes to know that his daughter is being used as an object of sex by other men, he kills those men for their sins.

Yeong-ki is unable to show his anger towards his daughter, rather shows his rage on the men who are her clients. Kim-Ki-Duk tries to show that Yeong-ki shows his rage on the society for making his daughter indulge in prostitution. Kim-Ki-Duk tries to bring out that every prostitute is a daughter to a father and tries to make the audience realize the consequences of teenage prostitution. Kim-Ki-Duk has taken up a burning social issue in South Korea and portrayed it through individual relationship to appeal to the senses of the audience.

Findings

Kim-Ki-Duk is one of new wave South Korean film maker, who tries to convey his message to the audience by using the cinematic space aesthetically. The emotions of the characters are skillfully shown through the expert use of the cinematic elements like lighting, camera, music and set.

Both in *3 Iron* and *Samaritan girl*, Kim-Ki-Duk uses natural lighting or the available light to bring out the real feel to the audience. This can also be seen in his use of camera movements. Kim-Ki-Duk uses static camera to show his characters. A Static camera mounted on a tripod that does not tilt, pan, zoom or in any way move is assumed to be the most scientific technique and one that is less distorting and more truthful in recording the natural behaviour than other camera movements (Jay Ruby, 2000). Kim-Ki-Duk presents each image like a portrait to give the audience the natural feel of the characters and ambience.

In *3 Iron* Kim-Ki-Duk uses static camera through out the film, except for the scenes in which Sun-hwa follows Tae-suk and Tae-suk practicing circumnavigation. Tae-suk's point of view, handheld shots are framed to convey the sense that viewers are participating in his circumnavigation.

In *Samaritan Girl* also Kim-Ki-Duk uses the same kind of techniques. He gives a gloomy lighting to this film to bring out the sober mood and expresses the grey shades of the human character. Kim-Ki-Duk tries to set the mood of the audience in consistency of the emotions of his characters on screen. Hence he uses the cinematic elements to show the real situation.

Kim-Ki-Duk constantly uses metaphors to portray the concepts. For example in *3 Iron*, the golf balls are a metaphor to the over masculinity of the male characters. The framed nude pictures of the female character are a symbol of voyeurism of the male character. The house (or home) metaphor used throughout *3 Iron* is a powerful motif which suffuses the film with its sense of identity politics. If the house is where one makes one's abode regardless of its temporary or permanent status, the characters-actors' ease (or uneasiness) of movement within the house shows their degree of possession of personal space (*Jia Jun*). In *Samaritan Girl* Yeo-jin's volunteering act to bear the sins of her friend has more of a religious significance.

Kim-Ki-Duk tries to bring out the transformation of relationship of man and woman in the late modern society. Social Changes have had an impact on the intimacy, sexuality, love and eroticism, which is brought out by Kim-Ki-Duk in his films. He shows the victimisation of women by the aggressive sex desires of the men. The male characters in Kim-Ki-Duk's films are the executors of the violence towards women. His male characters show voyeurism objectifying the female. Only his male characters possess the voyeuristic gaze, but Kim-Ki-Duk does not transfer the gaze to the audience, the camera position used in his films is designed to make the audience feel uncomfortable with what is being displayed on screen rather than a simplistic voyeuristic pleasure.

Kim-Ki-Duk is criticized for poor representation of women in his films, but from *3 Irons* and *Samaritan Girl* it can be seen that it is the men who are portrayed in poor light. His male characters shamble between being righteous and hopeless, they are shown as victims of empathy, the male characters are self-centered and ruthless. Is it that men are badly represented in Kim-Ki-Duk's films rather than women? Kim's films might seem misogynistic and simply objectify women but perhaps Kim-Ki-Duk's films can be interpreted as antiheroic travesty, criticizing the societal positioning of the marginalised women. Kim-Ki-Duk is only reflecting the past and present state of women in Korean society, he claims that he thinks of women as being on a higher level than men. This is evident in his work as his main protagonists are usually women and the films revolve around the issues that these women face in Korean society.

This visual style has given Kim international acclaim; his images would show more depth than simple dialogue. On that note, the sex, nudity and violence in his films may be non-rational but it is never exploitative. Kim reveals his characters through those scenes with vivid visual elements that we get to realize who they are or what they truly are, how they act, and what they do thus bringing out Anthony Giddens' focal questions for every one living in the circumstances of late modernity.

The aim of this research was to show how Kim-Ki-Duk has portrayed the gender relationship in late modernity, based on male gaze of the men and self-identity of the women. Using a close textual analysis of his two films *3 Iron* and *Samaritan Girl* the concepts were studied.

The first chapter gave an overview of the Korean Film industry, Kim-Ki-Duk's role in it, and the aims and objectives of the research. The literature review gives detail, of the history of Korean Cinema and previous studies relevant to the research accompanied by the theories that support the study. The chapter on methodology explains the method and frame work used to analyse the films.

The previous chapter discusses the concepts in detail with reference to the films. Kim-Ki-Duk's technique of using the cinematic elements and his characterization of the protagonists is studied.

Kim-Ki-Duk is called as misogynistic by his critics. This is due to his portrayal of women as being treated violently by the men. It is argued that he objectifies women in his films. When observed closely, Kim-Ki-Duk shows only his male characters to objectify the female characters, which represents men as brutal and violent. Since he tries to bring out the real situation in the Korean society, his images are violent and sadistic. Kim-Ki-Duk shows social issues in his films (prevalence teenage prostitution in South Korea in *Samaritan Girl*) by showing them in personal relations and gender conflicts, which is why many critics believe that the representations of women are misogynistic. A majority of Kim-Ki-Duk's films at their centre have a female as their main protagonists, who are victims of male brutality.

This paper tries to illustrate Kim-Ki-Duk as one among the Korean directors who attempt to portray social issues in late modern societies by portraying them in intimate relationships and gender conflict.

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