

HINDI CINEMA-CHALLENGING THE STEREOTYPE IMAGE OF WOMEN THROUGH WOMEN ORIENTED FILMS

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Abstract: Hindi Cinema popularly known as Bollywood has recently completed 100 glorious years of extraordinary journey and established itself as an agent of change for its local and global audience community. While evaluating the history of Hindi cinema, we can witness the changes that have occurred over this long span of time in various aspects of film making. It may be storyline, Portrayal of women in films or other technical aspects concerned with film making. Pioneer Hindi films have male playing the part of female leads for longer period of time because in that era working in films is considered disgraceful for women by the society driven by patriarchal mindset. Beginning always remain tough for any new work or idea and cinema is no exception, but Bollywood against all odds survived and challenged the old believes of Indian society and paved the way for women empowerment through films and roles based on women identity and life style. Cinema is known as mirror image of society and can motivate millions of women at the same time to change ends in society.

Key Words- Hindi cinema, Women empowerment, Portrayal, identity, Patriarchal mindset.

Introduction: Indian cinema is able to portray the universal emotions, feelings, situations, relations and characters. This is the only reason that films are able to cut cross all barriers viz. caste, religion, class, gender, language and reach out every division of society at national and international level. It is said that "Cinema is mother of all arts" because it leads great influence on every aspect of human life. India is a patriarchal society, where women are considered as weaker sex in real life. Male hegemony present in India greatly influence the roles played by both gender in Hindi cinema. Women have been seen more as decorative objects in Hindi cinema for a longer time, even in films where they had important roles, they are more treated as victims and martyrs or victimizers of other women. Each era has provided its own brand of women to Hindi cinema. Rarely any film before the 21st century has presented women as strong who can raise their voice against injustice or who can rebel in their own way and make their own political statement. Our paper attempts to check the incredible journey of women in mainstream Hindi cinema (discussing only about commercial cinema not parallel cinema that came after 1980s) starting from early 19th century playing roles of Indian goddess in mythological films to brutal murderer in typical suspense movies of modern times. Since the inception Cinema, it has done great job in displaying the poor plight of Indian women by various women oriented films like Mother India(1957), Premrogi(1982), Dushman (1998), Matarbhoomi (2003), Fashion(2008), Mardaani (2014), Kahaani 2(2016), Pink(2016), etc. and Movies like Dirty picture(2011), Gulabi gang(2012), Mary Kom(2014), Neerja (2016), Dangal (2016) etc are the biopics of the great women that motivate and inspire the female

masses to work and bring laurels to not only their families but also to nation.

Literature Review: Bagchi (1996) argued that to some extent Indian women identified areas where "modern feminism" comes into contact with "traditional values" and by constructing the positive view in women in female centric movies like Mother India(1957), Mirch Masala(1989), Rudaali(1993), Mohra(1994) etc affect the discourse generated of Indian feminist movement.

According to Datta (2000) global scenario has impacted the women's image in Indian cinema by challenging the stereotype image of women i.e., from a avenging women to a revenging women and shading off its male hegemonic feature to more gender neutral Indian cinema and efforts is still going.

Agarwal (2014) described that media played an important role in modernization of societies and affected the image of women in today's modern world. Contemporary Indian films portray women as more independent, confident and career oriented. New varied characters of women influence the emerging status of women in India, as films are a reflection of society.

Role Of Women In Cinema: Cinema is regarded as social and cultural ambassador of the country. Cinema as mass medium has evolved in last 100 years regarding women and their linkage with Cinema both at local and international level. At initial stages of Hindi cinema men are forced to enact women roles because women entry to films was not socially encouraged and are regarded as disgraceful in those times. The father of Indian cinema Dada Sahib Phalke who made country first silent film Raja Harishchandra in 1913 was even forced to cast male actor for the role of Harishchandra's wife. Around 1930

the situation improved by the effort of producer-director Mohan Bhavnani who along with prominent women social activists paved way for women arrival in celluloid. Success of Raja Harishchandra also made society ponder over its decision of holding back females from acting in films and Phalke effortlessly casted two women-her own daughter Kamlabai Ghokhle and Durgabai Kamat in his next film making them first women actresses of industry other women joining the league was Durga Khote and Devika Rani who was later acted in many super hit films and became first woman actress to win prestigious Dada Sahib Phalke award for her contribution towards industry. Earlier subject matter of films like Mohini Bhasmasur(1913) and Satyavan Savitri(1914) were mythological in nature based on Hindu religious sculpture.

Films took big leap after making of first talkie movie Alam Ara(1931) by Ardeshir Irani both in Hindi and Urdu language. This film also introduced filmy music for the first time in the history of Hindi Cinema and 7 songs as famous film director Shyam Benegal said, "It was not just a talkie. It was a talking and singing film with more singing and less talking. It had a number of songs and that actually set the template for the kind of films that were made later". Actress Zubeida played the role of alam ara(Gypsy girl).

Post Independent Era Or Golden Age (1940-1960): Post independence film industry was trying to stand again with the help of its limited exposure and experience that films had with real taste of village life which focused on social issues like unemployment, exploitation by landlords in small townships and dowry became the central themes of movies in late 1940s to 1960s because of direct connection with common village residing audience of the cinema. This time frame is regarded as golden age of Hindi cinema because of several big hits of all times hails from this era Awaara(1951), Aan(1952), Shree420(1955), Pyaasa (1957), Mother India (1957), Kagaaz ke Phool (1959), Mughal-e-Azam(1960).

Most influential role was undoubtedly played in *Mother India*(1957). It shows a woman who can do anything to establish that justice can be done even while remaining within the framework of marriage and motherhood. She shoots down her own son to save the honor of a woman of the village. Geeta Bali breaks the shackles with image of a tomboy and also brought a change as far as role of women in cinema is concerned.

Acting skills of Nargis in mother India as mother killing his own son to restore the fact that truth always prevails where as in Mughal-e-Azam Madhubala(1960) brilliantly plays lead role of Anarkali who came up as an epitome of love and sacrifice. Shree 420(1955) shows innocent and pure love between Nargis and Raj Kapoor making us

believe in their chemistry. Few notable actresses of this era include Nargis, Meena Kumari, Nutan, Madhubala, Waheeda Rehman and Mala Sinha who later shook the industry with their acting talent and become living legend and inspiration for younger generation of actress with their natural expression of submissive lead to their male counterpart and portrayal of village women ready to sacrifice her happiness for the sake of their parents or husband accordingly without any hesitation or fear.

Begining Of Action And Romantic Era (1960-2000): The most important feature of this era was evolution of first superstar of Hindi cinema Rajesh Khanna who went on to become the king of romance starting from blockbuster Aradhana(1969) opposite to Sharmila Tagore where she acted as heartbroken widow and nanny of her own child then Ittefaq (1969)opposite to Nanda and went on to giving 17 record breaking hits opposite all leading and fresh heroines of that time like Mumtaz, Tanuja, Zeenat Aman, Nanda, Praveen Bobby, Shabana Azmi in movies Kora Kagaz(1974), Avtaar(1983), Agar Tum na Hote(1983), and so on. Sharmila Tagore and Sadhana were known more for their fashion and style than change in characterization. They played stereotypical roles in mainstream Hindi cinema putting big hairdos, wearing skin-tight *salwar kameezes* and did little more than romancing with hero and dancing around trees.

Women leads in this era are concentrated in just playing supportive role to Rajesh Khanna revolving around trees in white chiffon saree. Women in this time frame of cinema shown as weaker identity which needs to be protected from villain, who kidnap her, abuse and sometime rape her and taking revenge is the sole responsibility of hero.

1980s marked as beginning of new concept in Hindi cinema known as action films with emergence of Amitabh Bachchan from the movie Deewar(1975) and then he later on went to become megastar but the situation of women haven't changed a bit they still happily playing love affair with Mr Bachchan and other male costar.

1990s saw arrival of new generation of actresses Madhuri Dixit, Manisha Koirala, Raveena Tendon ,Tabu these leads come prepared for acting from acting schools and not hesitate to expose on demand of film these young guns changed the stereotype image of women who was dependent on hero for all her needs.

Having the influence of international cinema, Hindi cinema have started showing more diverse social issues and roles of women like pathetic live of dalit woman (Bandid queen 1994, Ankur 1974), sex desiring women(Fire 1996), rape victim and bold revenger (Dushman 1998) helpless unworldly widow(Premrog

1982) etc. With the passage of time, women role and women related issues got diverse in Hindi cinema. Although role of women still remain of a poor, destitute, innocent and pitiable.

Notable films of this time include Dilwale Dhulania le Jayegay (1999) regarded as one of the best love story of recent times Kajol playing the (Simran Singh) who fall in love with (Shah Rukh Khan) the twist comes when raj came to know that simran marriage has been already fixed according to wish of her father, raj comes to Punjab to marry simran and ultimately succeed in marry her with consent of all her family member. Hum Aapke Hai Koun (1994) portals character of Nisha (Madhuri) Smart and beautiful girl who ready to compromise her love for well being of her brother-in-law (Mohnish Bahel). Ajooba (1991), Raju Ban Gaya Gentelman (1992), Deewana (1992), Anjaam (1994) were similarly successful at box office. The USP of this film era was introduction of actresses as item girls or caber dancer in songs like role of Zeenat Aman in "Aap jaisa koi meri zindagi mai aaye..." of Qurbani (1980), and "Yeh mera dil pyaar ka deewana..." of Don (1978). Item numbers provided women the opportunity to gain popularity and instant fame through 5 minute song.

21st Century –Modern Cinema: In 21st century, women stand at more advantageous position in Bollywood as compared to the past. More number of female oriented movies came with the passage of time and women role got more empowered. There came an entirely new chapter in Hindi cinema with respect to roles in movies.

In fashion (2008), Priyanka Chopra and Kangana Ranaut have been shown as glamorous supermodels who very strongly persevered to be supermodels. 7 Khoon Maaf (2011) tells a story of bold femme fatale who kills her 7 husbands for the quest of true love. In movies like Maqbool (2004), Cocktail (2012), Anjana

Anjani (2010), Tanu weds Manu (2011) portrayed strong characters of women either as desperate lover or smart girl who takes responsibility of her life and takes steps accordingly. In English Vinglish (2012), Shri Devi acted as a simple housewife and caterer and how learning English helps her to rediscover herself and reassert her value is shown. Kahaani (2012) explores themes of feminism and motherhood in male dominated society.

In Mardaani (2014), Rani Mukherjee acted as a impregnable cope of Mumbai crime branch who struggled against human trafficking of adolescents girls and child prostitution. In movies Queen (2014), NH10 (2015), Pink (2016), Kahaani 2(2016) portrayed women as confident and independent women. Pink(2016), which is one of the latest movie, pictured the bold and self sufficient characters of college girls who challenged the allegations of being prostitutes in court and gave the solid message to Indian audience that consent in physical relation is a women's right. Some major biopics like Dirty Picture (2011), Mary Kom (2014), Gulabi Gang(2014), Neerja (2015), Bajirao Mastani (2015) inspired and reflected the true story of 'Real life heroines' of India.

Conclusion: From the Mother India (1957) to Pink (2016) or Kahaani 2(2016), Indian woman of cinema has travelled a long distance to claim his space in films. Over the period of time, women's role got more diversified either through women oriented movies or other movies. Women of Hindi cinema have become more expressive, self directed, promising and knowledgeable as compared to the past. Movies being the mirror of society affect the social status of women and by showing the real picture of women movies are doing well especially female oriented movies and it is hoped that this process goes on and hit the lives of crores of women of India positively.

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