

CHANGING PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN HINDI CINEMA

Harmeet Kour*

ABSTRACT

Women constitute fifty percent of the population and hence their portrayal on screen is essential in identifying the societal preconceptions that exist. The paper starts with a study of the area of feminist film criticism and how mainstream Hindi cinema has limited itself to specific representations of gender. The paper aims to analyze women's portrayal on the silver screen by applying the sociological approach which focuses on the agency. After outlining the status of women in Indian society and the evolution of Indian cinema with a special focus on the emergence of women directors and the representation of women on screen, we outlined the plot of both films, and then the description of the sub-theme is discussed. This paper attempts to give the gender representation in the mass media (Films, T.V.). It argues that women and their concerns are no longer invisible in the mass media.

Keywords: Portrayal of Women, Women, Society, Films, Indian Film, Media.

Introduction

India is the nation that generates the most movies worldwide. The Indian film industry is many different film industries with different languages, including Hindi ("Bollywood"), Tamil ("Kollywood"), Telugu, Bengali, and Kannada. Combining these different genres, over 1,000 films are produced in India each year. India-made movies are popular both domestically and internationally.

Despite the massive size of the Indian film industry, fewer than 4% of Indians regularly go to the movies due to cost, access, and safety issues.¹⁵ The cost of seeing a film in the theatre has gone up in recent decades and many families cannot afford this entertainment luxury. Additionally, viewers who live in small towns and villages often do not have access to movie theatres. India has fewer movie screens per capita than most other industrialized nations.¹⁶ For example, there are approximately 13,000 movie theatres in India compared to 40,000 theatres in the United States, a country with only one-quarter of India's population. Furthermore, there are a lot less women than men. attend the cinema in India due to safety concerns. This means the Indian film industry is losing profits because some female filmgoers do not feel safe.

Indians spend more time watching films on television than going to the cinema. Nine in ten Indians have televisions in their homes¹⁸ and most households with TV also have cable television. Films are shown on Indian television only a few months after they are released, so many people wait to view films at home. Due to rigorous national laws requiring television stations to filter out sexual scenes, speech, and excessive violence, parents prefer TV viewing to cinema viewing for their children. Indians are increasingly using Internet devices to access entertainment media. India has 243 million Internet users,¹⁹ a figure that is low for India's population of 1.2 billion, but Internet use is rapidly rising. Most Indians access the Internet exclusively through mobile devices and the average Indian spends five hours a day on social media. An increasing number of young people in India have access to cell phones and other handheld devices, but broadband makes it difficult to stream online television programs and movies.

* Research Scholar, Govind Guru Tribal University, Banswara, Rajasthan, India.

Images of women accompanying the body of politics in the media. Due to various efforts of Feminists, they are coming forward to make the issues and struggle for their freedom. Women in media: media representation of women started from the 1960s onwards when television becomes a part of society. From that period onwards women who were shown in the newspapers, in films, and on television got much importance on her. Most of the media corporations owned big MNCs as well as big businesses that were all males. So, they were not conscious about women so they started exploiting them as a weapon of attracting their audience and improving their ratings. It may also send the image which was shown in media as physical where she was not given importance and under-represented as the inferior sex.

She is being COM transformed as a symbol of sensationalism despite the fact that on the plus side, the media has a crucial role in portraying women's issues emphasizing the relevance of their deep emotional and logical counterarguments. Women are demonstrating that their job is an essential tool for leaving a lasting. Impression in the media industry; they are portrayed as news readers, commentators in print and broadcast media, anchors, comperes of radio jockeys, and in movies.

Media portrayals of Women

Nowadays, it's typical to depict women as being exploited constantly because they lack awareness of their surroundings. Why has she been depicted?

She could only be a homemaker or a mother because she is viewed as the lesser sex of men in the male dominated culture, hence the media's perspective on women is as a social ill in the community, it is unreasonable and underutilized. In order to improve working conditions in the media, she is exploited and insecure while at work. If we were to evaluate how the media portrays women, we would find that, in a body of commoditized advertising, where she is used as a means of amusement for the audience by large MNCs and major corporate corporations, she is viewed as being inferior. They don't give a thought to women at all, but in order to keep their audience engaged, they employ them as a layered firework of glamor, skimpily clad, in style, and forming the masculine gaze over them. History of women on television: Women first appeared on television in the 1960s in the countries like the U.S.A., U.K., U.S.S.R and other industrialized nations. Only after the 1960s, when Doordarshan began to play a significant role, did the Indian context emerge. Popular series like Log Bunyad drew in a wide variety of viewers.

Since the serial that was broadcast was glamorous, the notion that television was only for glamour spread. It was the beginning of women becoming commodities and being used as glamour dolls in advertising by large MNCs and powerful businessmen. When satellite and cable channels first became available in 1991, women were being utilized as commodities on major channels to draw viewers and increase ratings. catering, youth programmers, businesses were all advertised by women as commoditized girls. These themes are becoming more prevalent in today's commodity-based world. Every television network competes with one another to draw viewers in by featuring attractive women who are clothed in skimpy, attractive ways that attract men.

Women's Representation in Movies

One could argue that there would be no movie at all without women. Since the dawn of cinema, the majority of women shown in Indian movies have been portrayed as naive, callous, ruthless, and obedient. Women are frequently cast as rural girls or city dwellers. In movies about women, marriage usually comes after the pursuit of a love interest. She is the subject of every film that is aired, and she serves to provide color to the plot.

Since the 1980s, this practice has continued to portray women as fashionable, with Madhu Balla, Rani Mukherjee, Simran, Shreya, Amal, Dimple Kapadia, Aishwarya, and Katrina Kaif all being utilized as sexual objects in Indian cinema while expressing their lips and wriggling their hips in front of the camera.

A commercial movie will frequently have a lot of songs and dances, with the women dancing in tighter, skimpier outfits, sensuous moments, and exposing their breasts. Some of the filthy tunes, such as Choli Keh Peachey kya hey, Cheese bade hey musth, etc., are worthless etc. Women's bodies are considered attractive. In order to cover this, all of the films and photos taken are targeted toward sexual desire of males and the audience. Naturally to show them bright and colourful before the camera women are distorted with push-up inner garments to heavier their breasts or bullock paddling is used. The activities that are done are mimicking and sexual behaviors in order to sexualize the women's body for advantage of the man.

Women's Representation in Movies *Daman* and *Mrityudand*

After looking at the general plots of the films *Daman* and *Mrityudand*, in the following section, we examine the twin processes of Indian women having agency in representation in cinema. We will see how gender is organized by culture and interrelated within larger social relations; how Indian culture and tradition affect women and their status in society; what is the level of women's agency and submissiveness through their interaction patterns; how cultural beliefs and interactional patterns have formed women's representation in cinema; and what kind of characters are represented in the selected films specifically in the area of power and autonomy of women. The key is in how these truths are reflected in film and how women are portrayed as either angels or victims. The themes associated to agency include empowerment, decision-making, education, revolt, education, revolt and involvement.

- **Education**

The rise of feminist ideas has led to the tremendous improvement of women's condition throughout the world in recent times. Access to education has been one of the most pressing demands of these women's rights movements. Education is a potent tool in the emancipation and empowerment of women, the greatest single factor which can incredibly improve the status of women in any society. Women who have education are able to learn more about the world in general outside of their hearth and home and helps them to gain status, good self-esteem, self-confidence, necessary courage and inner strength to face challenges in life that social structure throws at them.

The hegemonic masculine worldview has oppressed women since the dawn of humanity, denying them opportunities and forcing them to endure suffering. This unjustifiable oppression resulted in a movement that campaigned for equal rights for women around the world for women. India's progress is a result of women's education, which has significantly improved the position of women. Additionally, it has been beneficial to bolster the agency of women.

In *Daman*, the director pays great attention to the topic of the education of women. When Durga's husband finds her after she has left him and wants to take their daughter with him, she talks to her husband about equal rights between men and women and the importance of women's education. She asserts that *"My friend and I were discussing marriage and studies. She was telling me how liberal her husband is. He believes in equal rights for men and women in marriage. And I told my friend that I too wanted to finish my studies but you refused. Now no one will come in my child's way. She will have every right to complete her education and choose her husband. She will not be like me"*. In this film we can see that Durga's husband wants his daughter married at an early age without completing her studies. Durga feels angry and says that *"I just want Deepa to have a bright future now. I want her to complete her education, to ensure that I am ready to do any work"*.

In the second film *Mrityudand*, the protagonist is an educated woman who gets married after receiving her college degree. She has a strong character and manages different situations of familial and public relations in her village community. Although in this film there is no direct focus on the subject of the education of women yet it is quite clear that it is Ketki, an educated woman who is the first woman to rebel against the patriarchal system and it is she who motivates the other women to join her in this fight against male domination. Thus, in both films, although women's education is not a focal issue, yet its importance is depicted.

- **Decision-Making and Participation**

In most societies, males make important decisions both in the home and in society. In the household and in society, the decision-making power is denied to the women making women voiceless, destroying their self-confidence and causing them to feel less important in the household and in society. In India too, A sizable portion of women lack the ability to make decisions. They are unable to autonomously make decisions, not even those that affect their own lives. For any issue, they must have the male members' consent. be it their education, marriage, or their children. Autonomy is the ability to obtain information and make decisions about one's own concerns. It facilitates access to material resources such as food, land, income and other forms of wealth, and social resources such as knowledge, power, and prestige within the family and community (Acharya et al., 2010). Limitations on women's physical, sexual, economic, social, and political autonomy may have an impact on how they make decisions. On the contrary, if the women attain this autonomy, it becomes a source of their empowerment and agency.

Both films have shown how once women take the first step towards decision-making autonomy, the process of their liberation begins. In *Daman* Durga, who could not take decisions regarding her own

life, becomes empowered when she decides that she would not let her daughter suffer the same fate and would ensure that her daughter gets the right to make the decisions related to her life. She says to her daughter, *"It will not happen as long as I am alive. You will have all the right to choose your life partner. You have to complete your education. You have to reach your goal. You have to achieve something and prove yourself"*.

In *Mrityudand* too, Ketki chooses the way she would lead her life as a result of the great resistance as she feels that she can recognize what is right and what is wrong for her. In a scene when she is taking her sister-in-law away from their house for recuperation after an illness, she is asked by a woman *"Why are you leaving your husband in this condition? Don't you need to look after him and his needs?"* She answers *"It will be just for a couple of days. The cook and the maid can take care of the men folk"*. This is a small step toward exerting her power of decision-making. Also, when Chandravati realizes that she is pregnant with the child of her lover, she says to her friend that *"I've broken all the rules. I have done it. I decided to. It is the first time I have used my will. How long does one follow the rules? And what rules are these that force us to tolerate endlessly? How much? And for whose sake? I don't care about the consequences."*

- **Empowerment and Rebellion**

Empowerment contains within it, the word power. So naturally, it follows that empowerment is about power and about changing the balance of power. As far as women's empowerment is concerned, it is about gaining control over one's life which includes many dimensions such as economic, social and political (Bheemarasetty, 2012). Comprehensively, Women's empowerment is a state of being that shows a certain amount of critical consciousness about external facts and a knowledge of their own internal thought formation and belief systems that shape their well-being in terms of gender justice and social justice, as well as the determination to use their physical, intellectual emotional and spiritual resources to protect their lives and sustain values that guarantee gender equity at the personal, social, economic, political and institutional level.

Recognizing For women to be empowered and thrive, it is crucial that they have equal rights and believe in their abilities. Once women realize their capabilities and potential it strengthens their self-image and fosters the confidence to take action in life. Women's empowerment is essential to upholding the fundamentals of human rights where women have not to grovel for power or look for a power structure to use power against others. On the contrary, they demand to be accepted as humans first of all.

Indian society has been marked by male chauvinism but now the society has started to realize women's importance and is slowly learning to accept women's empowerment and women as active agents, participating in and guiding their own development. Signs of this can be seen in cinematic narratives also.

In *Daman*, The director has made a point of emphasizing women's empowerment and improvement of women's achieving status through education. In a sequence, the police officer expresses his perception of women's suffrage and tells Durga that *"Be aware. Move ahead in life. Get out of this lonely existence. You can fight against the atrocities of men. You can demand for safeguarding women's rights and fight for protecting their self-respect. Only the laws of the country will not be able to protect you. You will find yourself strong and well equipped only with a weapon like education. This will cause social awareness among women"*. She replies that *"That is why I will complete Deepa's (her daughter's) education. She will have every right to live life. I will not create any obstacles in her life. Neither will I force her into marriage. She should be economically independent so that no man can treat her the way my husband did with me"*.

In *Mrityudand* also we can observe the heroine Ketki, an educated woman, is a very strong person. After her husband started to abuse her, he wants to touch her. But she tells him that *"Don't touch me. There is a limit to one's tolerance. Do you think you could drag me into bed, after just saying sorry? Would that set everything right? What do you think women are? Mere toys? Everything is finished; I've fallen in my esteem. Hitting me is not a small thing. Does this not matter much to you? Do I have no identity of my own? Do I not matter at all?"* When her husband tells her *"What about my needs? You remember your limits woman"*, she replies *"You can't define limits with violence. You are my husband, not God"*. Ketki comes across as a strong person who has the strength to defy her husband although they live in a highly patriarchal system.

Conclusion

However, is challenging to reach a consensus over how women are portrayed. Given the fact that Indian women do not form a uniform group and come from a variety of castes and religions,, classes, and socioeconomic statuses and have different kinds of ambitions and desires as a result of which they lead different lives, It is incorrect to assume that all women on Indian television and film have the same representation. Naturally, the portrayal must take into account the category to which they belong. The context in which female characters are positioned in movies must therefore be taken into consideration. For Indian women to achieve their goals, cinema must offer a unique and independent environment for them. The sole purpose of cinema should be to inspire social change through entertainment, not just to amuse. Cinema should strive to provide more progressive depictions of women as a media product that has been identified as accelerating the modernization process.. Even though there are various laws protecting women's representation in media but it has failed to incorporate it into media. The tendency of presenting women as a sexual good for satisfying men's pleasure or to glorify women's subordination to men as an attribute to womanhood or the effect of being indecent or degrading. The characters of Durga and Ketki are solid wallop on society. These films depict the rebellion of female characters against patriarchy and tyrannical establishment, and a way to bring refreshing change in society.

References

1. Acharya, Dev R, et al. "Women's Autonomy in Household Decision-Making: A Demographic Study in Nepal - Reproductive Health." *BioMed Central*, BioMed Central, 15 July 2010, reproductive-health-journal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1742-4755-7-15.
2. Adarsh, Taran. "Daman Review 1/5: Daman Movie Review: Daman 2001 Public Review: Film Review." *Bollywood Hungama*, Bollywood Hungama, 30 Apr. 001, www.bollywoodhungama.com/movie/daman-2/critic-review/daman-2-movie-review/.
3. Beasley, Chris. *Gender and Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers*. SAGE, 2005.
4. Bheemarasetty, Praveena Devi. "Women Empowerment: A Challenge." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2012, doi:10.2139/ssrn.1997087.
5. Butalia, Urvashi. "Women in Indian Cinema." *Feminist Review*, no. 17, 1984, pp. 108–110., doi:10.2307/1395025.
6. Chatterji, Shoma A. *Subject--Cinema, Object--Woman: A Study of the Portrayal of Women in Indian Cinema*. Parumita Publications, 1998.
7. Chopra, Anupama. "Movie Review: Mrityudand, Starring Shabana Azmi, Madhuri Dixit, Om Puri." *India Today*, India Today, 7 May 2013, www.indiatoday.in/magazine/society-the-arts/films/story/19970721-movie-review-mrityudand-starring-shabana-azmi-madhuri-dixit-om-puri-830408-1997-07-21.
8. Datta, Sangeeta. "Globalisation and Representations of Women in Indian Cinema." *Social Scientist*, vol. 28, no. 3/4, 2000, pp. 71–82., doi:10.2307/3518191.
9. Dines, Gail, and Jean McMahan Humez. *Gender, Race and Class in Media: Text Reader*. Sage, 2003.
10. Gokulsing, K. Moti, and Wimal Dissanayake. *Indian Popular Cinema: A Narrative of Cultural Change*. Trentham Books, 2004.
11. Jackson, Stevi, and Jackie Jones. *Contemporary Feminist Theories*. Edinburgh University Press, 1998.
12. Jackson, Stevi. *Gender: A Sociological Reader*. Routledge, 2006.
13. Jain, Jasbir, and Sudha Rai, editors. "Bindu Nair, Female Bodies and the Male Gaze: Laura Mulvey and the Cinema." *Films and Feminism: Essays in Indian Cinema*, Rawat Publications, 2002.
14. Jain, Jasbir, and Sudha Rai. *Films and Feminism: Essays in Indian Cinema*. Rawat Publications, 2002.
15. Kandiyoti, Deniz. *Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives*. I.B. Tauris, 1996.
16. The portrayal and participation of women in the women, 1983 Paris UNISCO
17. Lorber, Judith. *Paradoxes of Gender*. Yale University Press, 1995.