

GENDER EQUALITY

**A Step Towards
Women Empowerment**



**Ms. Meghavee Meshram
Dr. Muthmainnah**

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Gender Equality

A Step towards Women Empowerment

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EURO WORLD PUBLICATION

GENDER EQUALITY :

A Step towards Women Empowerment



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- **Publisher**
Mr. Sujit Murmade
Euro World Publication
20/21, Qarter Road, Khar West
Mumbai-55, Mob. : 8788964826
- **No. of Pages : 412**
- **Date of Publication : 15 March 2022**
- **First Edition: 2022**
- **Composing & Printing**
Sivali Graphics, Nagpur
Mob : 7721809250
- **Price: Rs. 1050/-**
- **ISBN : 978-93-94460-05-8**

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Gender Stereotypes and Sexism in the Indian Cinema- A Periodic Analysis

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Introduction:

Cricket and movies are two of the most popular forms of entertainment in India. Films are immensely popular in India and over 1,800 films are produced each year in various Indian languages. It is the world's largest film industry. It is considered that film is the addiction of the Indian populace, allowing them to escape into the realm of fantasy. Since its inception in 1930, the Indian cinema industry has been one of the most popular forms of entertainment in India, staging performances for decades.

Films influence people's impressions of social reality by presenting only a portion of it and repeating theme and imagery. Over the years, the film has played an important role in developing gender stereotypes and patriarchal cultures by producing new meaning and images through the selection of issues and views, as well as creating public opinions.

Film is a social mirror. They are a reflection of what is going on in society. At the same time, they have several positive and negative consequences on society. Films aided in the formation of social prejudices towards women.

"Film is one of society's stereotypes about women." (Blwett, 1974, P.12). In, a nearly 70-year history of Indian cinema, the protagonist takes many forms, from a sacrificial mother to a sobbing damsel in distress to a woman in control of her fate. As Indian cinema began to document the rise of women, the function of "audience gaze" became apparent, influenced by the political, socioeconomic and other social structures of the society. At that time, the characteristics of cultures changed. Sexism is a social and psychological construct that has existed for centuries, whereas sex is misapplied, stereotype, or sex is against women in general. Trends in Indian cinema are changing, but the number of clichés depicting women remains the same. The characters, events, and stories in Indian cinema are usually motivated by stereotyped expressions.

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This chapter discusses the film and the role of women in cinema concerning the cultural goals of Indian Cinema, followed by a review of stereotypes and sexism against women in main stream commercially Hit Indian cinema.

Women Stereo typical Classification in Indian Films:

India is a patriarchal society where men exercise more power and dominate responsibilities such as political leadership, moral authority, social privileges, and property ownership. While men were seen as the primary source of income in all communities, women's responsibilities were reduced to ideal housewives and worthy mothers. This confirms women in an incredibly patriarchal setting.

According to Manusmriti, which had a profound influence on normative justice in Indian society, a girl should obey her father at an early age. When she was young, she was devoted to her husband. When he died, she devoted herself to her children. Women did not become independent. Manusmriti believes that women should not distance themselves from their father, husband, and sons. She should always be happy, do the house work well, wash the utensils thoroughly, and take care of the security. She must steadfastly obey her husband and do her best to respect her husband even after his death. These rules are pervasive in the lives of traditional Indian women shown in Indian films, especially popular commercial films. To introduce the social function of Indian film in its culture, followed by an examination of the phenomena of gender stereotyping in six specific roles: Mother 2. Wife 3. Daughter 4. Daughter in Law 5. Widow 6. Other women.

From the 1940s, when India was battling for independence, to the present decade, when she is developing as a major future economy, Indian film has altered in its depiction and stereotyping of women changing the image of women in Indian cinema.

Pre-independence myths characterize female personalities. Women were represented as goddesses and daasis in ancient mythology, as well as angels or demons.

Raja Harishchandra (1913), directed and produced by Dadasaheb Phalke, is a mythological film in which all female roles are performed by males because women were not permitted to act at the time.

1930 -1940: Devika Rani, Zubeida, Mehtab, and Shobhana Samart, all entered the movie enterprise as artists during 1930's from a rich family and shortly have become well-known, and modified the face of Indian movies. During the independence era, Indian cinema was used to express and assert independence from the British colonial power. During this period, popular films were analyzed, including "Achyut Kaniya" (1936) and "Dunya

Na Mane" (1937).

The heroine in the film *Achyut Kanya* (1936) is a girl from the untouchable caste who gives her life for the hero's love. The female protagonist in the 1937 film *Duniya Na Mane* is shown as a strong lady who refuses marriage to an older guy. During this time, women were portrayed as submissive wives to their husbands and stereotypes as prostitutes for breaking social law.

1950-1970: Following independence, the film began to delve into societal concerns. During the golden period of Indian film, women were given the same roles as male's protagonists. Our rich culture, landscape, family and friendships, rituals, norms, and ethics are all depicted in the films. Poverty was also a source of concern. Women had a key part in the picture and were primarily responsible for its commercial success.

Films such as *Kagazkephool*, *Mother India*, *Pakeezah*, *Half Ticket*, and *Padason* are examples of films featuring women. Women are remembered as the center of the nation in *Mother India* and an integral part of the story and are often portrayed from a patriarchal perspective.

1970-1980: The burst of the idealistic bubble of the 1950s brought a more realistic representation of how people perceive women in real life on screen. Bollywood women at that time usually played the role of mothers or faithful wives. This maternal figure is often depicted as someone who endured abuse and tyranny in silent submission, but was ultimately saved by supernatural or male intervention.

Two films that perfectly embody this philosophy are *Jai Santoshi Maa* (1975) and *Sita Aur Gita* (with Hema Malini) (1972). In both films, the "kind" woman is portrayed as a shy, oppressed and mute woman who is psychologically abused and sometimes physically abused by her loved ones. Their silence before suffering is praised as a good quality that every woman should have. They finally have a happy ending, but they're still more enslaved than ever to a happy ending for most male audiences.

1980-1990: This is the most controversial era in Indian film, with the arrival of action heroes introducing the most troublesome themes, such as the usage of rape as a plot element. In this situation, the protagonist needed a son to spout his crowd-pleasing punch lines and fight the antagonists to elevate his character, and the reason was generally the rape (or attempted rape) of his sister, girlfriend, or any other woman in his life. The main characterization of heroin in this era was a unidimensional character whose entire existence in the film was at the mercy of antagonists, in the beginning, then her brother / boyfriend / husband, who will heroically come and save her from her troubles, for which we can take the film *Awaaz* (1984) as an example, in which Rakesh Khanna, a famous lawyer's wife Jaya Pradha was raped by antagonists, then Rakesh Khanna takes revenge on them.

The second wave of feminism, which was sweeping the Western world at the moment, was also at work here. Women began to explore leaving their homes in pursuit of their ambition. Power dynamics in the public realm are changing, particularly among the working class. The female leader of this era was emancipated well since she had a high-paying career, but she had to rely on the assistance of men to obtain what she desired. This idea is shown in Suniel Shetty's 1994 hit film *Mohra*, starring Raveena Tandon and Akshay Kumar.

2000 Onwards: Bollywood was not what it is today in the early 2000s. Traditional ideas are gradually being abandoned by millennials. The procedure was sluggish at first, but it is already yielding results. Consider Priyanka Chopra's overall performance in *Aitraaz* (2004). Sonya's desire for promotion was great enough to show her want to terminate her unanticipated pregnancy, making her the villain in her plot. Without a doubt, she is a bad character in the plot. She tried to get revenge by blaming him for raping her ex-girlfriend, but the personality traits that helped her be considered "mean" were focus and career direction. Sexual and bodily liberty is no longer related today. This is mainly due to a change in the viewer's understanding of the lack of equality in the storyline of this film. This is mostly due to a shift in the viewer's comprehension of the film's lack of equality. Women's thoughts and ideas were eventually discussed when more and more women were part of the writing process. With the advent of the Internet and increasing awareness rates, audiences were exposed to more and more examples of progressive films from all over the world, and people began to reject the idea of a single character, one-dimensional female object seen through the male perspective. It explores issues that have never been addressed before in mainstream cinema, like female sexuality in *a margarita with a straw and lipstick under my burqa*.

The strong MeToo movement is gaining traction in business, but it's too early to tell how long it will have an impact on women's opportunities and position in Bollywood. Feminism in Bollywood is far from converging, and there is still a gender imbalance, but the future looks bright.

Conclusion

"No one can stop us. We will defend our rights and make a difference with our voices. We must believe in the power and power of our words. Our words can change the world." Nobel Prize winner **Malala Yousafzai**. Tahira Kashyap Khurrana has established herself as a powerful female voice as a writer, director, and influencer, saying she has a "big problem" with women being treated differently than men. The characters in her work always challenge patriarchal norms in the most humorous way. "I totally agree that it needs to

be addressed; I have a huge problem with that, which is why all my work has always been towards women's emancipation," she notes.

In Indian society, going beyond stereotypes may be a tremendous benefit for women. For Indian women's goals to come true, the film must build a separate and autonomous arena for them. With each generation, women's freedom to live the life they want grows to levels their grandmothers never thought possible. However, this does not imply that everything is flawless or that our task is complete. Few directors, like Joe Baby, try to challenge stereotypes with movies like 'The Great Indian Kitchen', a Malayalam film. "It's a popular story. The struggle of women in the kitchen is the story of almost every woman in India," said Joe Baby, the film's director. "Men treat women like machines, to make tea, wash clothes and raise children." "Women live in prisons created by men. Men make decisions, women work and they don't get paid for it," Baby said. "Through the film, I want to tell women why they continue to suffer when they have to get out of this trap. It's a world you can enjoy".

Therefore, the film must be sensitive to the environment in which the female character is placed. Women characters should have the ability to destroy existing power systems as well as negotiate their place within them. It is time for cinema to redefine women as objects of the masculine gaze. Women's experiences and difficulties as narrative points are urgently needed (Vatika Sibal, 2018). Going beyond stereotypes can greatly benefit the cause of women in Indian culture.

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