DEPICTION OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS IN BOLLYWOOD FILMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON VIEWERS

Young Adults and their romantic expectations

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Abstract: Motion picture productions aim to depict society, and frequently do so. It is always our assumption as viewers that the goal is to offer mild entertainment or a brief diversion from reality. Bollywood films have been cited by the cultivation theory and social cognitive theory as a source of information that can affect people's attitudes and actions. This essay makes an effort to understand the impact Hindi films have on viewers. In order to offer a compelling analysis, the author has reviewed the literature on the subject, focusing particularly on romantic partnerships. Since romantic relationships are rarely accepted in society, films assist youth in making decisions regarding their personal lives. The Hindi film industry has Yash Chopra as its face, and films from the 1980s are recognised for popularising concepts like soulmates, melodrama, expressions of love, cultured girls, bourgeois families, and so forth. Through dialogue, music, and picturing, a romantic idea has been created. These films have a big impact and resonate with the Indian audience. It seems that romanticising a perfect partnership encourages viewers to establish unreasonable benchmarks for evaluating their own partnerships. Other concepts that seem to have grown out of these films are gender stereotyping, romanticising abuse, stalking, unrealistic sexual expectations, and stigma around being single. It provides us with an insight into the culture and values of young people regarding romantic relationships.

Index Terms - Hindi Cinema, Romantic relationships, Idealization of love, Gender stereotyping, Young adults.

INTRODUCTION

Motion film productions are intended, and often do, portray society. As spectators, we always assume that the purpose is to provide light entertainment or a little escape from reality. Movies also have the power to influence our society, beliefs, and actions. Approximately 400 films are produced annually by one of the biggest film companies in the world, Bollywood or Hindi cinema. The romantic film genre is among the most well-liked. It is a popular topic of conversation, a huge source of amusement, and a mobilizing tool in India. These films almost always have a love story as their central theme; when they don't, it becomes a subtheme. They frequently present romantic relationships in an exaggerated and dramatic way, which occasionally raises the bar too high for romance. Excessive gestures, intricate musical pieces, and deep emotions are common in these films; however they may not always correspond with actual events.

Looking at some of the philosophies of love, the Greeks distinguished between four types of love. Agape, eros, philia, and storge. We will be discussing Eros. Think of the word "erotic" to describe the kind of love that exists in romantic partnerships. Eros and relationships are intimate and passionate. "Being in love" is the finest way to express Eros in English, and it's most likely the first thing that springs to mind when you think of your partner. Although some people might erroneously lump lust and Eros together, the two are not

synonymous. Lust is the same as "wanting a woman," whereas Eros is the same as "wanting one woman in particular." Lust is not love in any sense.

However, Eros is classified into two categories of love in the old Hindu texts: Kama and Shringara. Kama, or the urge to integrate with another person, is a sexual desire that arises from physical attraction. Greek philosophy refers to this kind of love, which is centered on sensual desire without romance, as "Eros." The sages of Hinduism concur that "kama" may play a role in romantic relationships. However, there are other factors that can contribute to a person's wholeness. Sex is a means of satisfying physical wants. However, engaging in sexual activity without genuine intimacy and sharing will not bring us emotional fulfillment. Here, by concentrating on the emotional content, the Indian sages created a rich background for comprehending emotions and moods. From this, the romantic motif of "Shringara" emerged. Even "kama" might be seduced by sharing secrets, giving each other loving nicknames, taking part in interests and pastimes, and exchanging kind presents.

As per the American Psychological Association, love is an intricate emotion that encompasses intense emotions of love and tenderness towards the object of one's affection, pleasant experiences in their company, commitment to their welfare, and awareness of their responses towards oneself. According to Collins et al. (2009), a romantic relationship is characterized by particular expressions of intimacy and affection between two people who are in reciprocal, continuing, and voluntary contacts.

Romantic comedies are a great source of knowledge about how romance is portrayed. A romantic comedy, as defined by Macdonald, is a film that revolves around the cheerful and generally fruitful pursuit of love by the lead character. As they are known, rom-coms have a recognizable visual style. For instance, traditional romances are set in landscapes, but current romances take place in cities. Props such as candles, chocolates, flowers, and wedding supplies are frequently used. Besides, the greatest love stories often start with the wrong people. Romantic Bollywood films usually have the following plots: boy meets girl, falls in love with her, chases her till she falls in love too, or boy and girl meet, fall in love, and have to conquer a challenge in order to be together. (Sunya, 2015).

Romantic media presents relationships as comparatively simple and full of opportunities, which inspires hope for real-life romance, which is one reason why viewers are drawn to this. People are drawn to media that shows relationships succeeding in spite of all challenges. The teachings romantic media imparts about intimacy and love are another factor drawing viewers in. Consequently, these love stories have a great deal of influence in a nation like India where romantic relationships and love are stigmatized. Let's use social cognitive theory and cultivation to talk about the significance of media consumption and how it affects society.

Cultivation theory

A communication and media theory known as "cultivation theory" contends that constant exposure to media, especially television, "cultivates" or progressively changes a viewer's understanding of social reality. Cultivation theory, which was developed by George Gerbner and his associates in the 1960s and 1970s, asserts that people are more inclined to experience the actual world in ways that are similar to those they see on television the more time they spend watching it. According to the hypothesis, television, being the most popular type of mass media, portrays social reality in a uniform and homogenous way, which might not adequately represent the complexity and diversity of real society. Over time, viewers' views, attitudes, and perceptions about societal issues like violence, gender roles, and political ideologies are shaped by their repeated exposure to specific themes, values, and stereotypes. The idea has been extensively researched and used in a variety of settings to comprehend how media exposure affects people's beliefs and actions.

Social cognitive theory

Albert Bandura developed the social cognitive theory, commonly referred to as social learning theory, which is a psychological paradigm that highlights how cognitive processes influence how people behave, especially in social situations. Fundamentally, social cognition theory posits that people learn from both the consequences of their own acts and from watching others and the results of their behaviours. People learn new skills or behaviours by seeing others do them, whether those people are family members, friends, or fictional characters in the media. This is frequently called imitation or modelling. One of the most important factors in predicting whether behaviour will be repeated is its repercussions. While punishment lowers the likelihood of a behaviour happening again, positive reinforcement enhances it. Self-efficacy, or a person's confidence in their capacity to carry out a specific behaviour or produce a desired result, also contributes to this. While low self-efficacy can lead to avoidance or less effort, high self-efficacy promotes increased drive and tenacity in pursuing goals. The relevance of cognitive functions like memory, attention, and decision-making for learning and behaviour modification is emphasized by social cognitive theory. People actively make sense of and interpret social information, which shapes their behaviour.

Romantic movies in Hindi cinema

Mughal-e-azam, released in 1960, appears to be the first love film to spark controversy. It centers on the romance between court dancer Anarkali and Mughal Prince Salim, who later rose to become Emperor Jahangir. Emperor Akbar, Salim's father, is not fond of the relationship, which sparks a conflict between the father and son. The story is centered on tragedy and clearly portrays star-crossed lovers who attempt to overcome all obstacles. With its dialogue, songs like "Pyar kiya tho Darna kya" (why fear when you are in love), and the tragic tale of the lovers, the film seemed to evoke strong emotions in its viewers.

Left:Anarkali and Salim, Mughal-e-Azham,1960. Right: Still from Kabhie Kabhie, 1976

In the 1970s, Yash Chopra's name became synonymous with love films. His work on the social and sexual lives of India's wealthy and privileged is best shown by the films Kabhie Kabhie (1976) and Silsila (1981). His specialty, which has made him incredibly successful around the world, is romance. The dominant theme of Chopra's films, according to Dwyer (1998), is romantic love rather than sensual love. Love, or the romantic side of love, has been the subject of film studies, with a focus on melodrama or women's films. All films, no matter what genre, have romance as one of their fundamental themes. Yash Chopra's movies belonged to the social genre of feudal family romances with melodrama and realism. (Verma, 2019)

Bollywood, according to Rajadhakshya (2003), went worldwide with the release of Yash Chopra's Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge, Dil To Pagal Hai, Karan Johar's Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, and Subhash Ghai's Taal. With its plot and promotion, Sooraj Barjatya's Hum Apke Hain Kaun preceded all of them and became the biggest hit ever, paving the way for the aforementioned films. In past decades, romantic films featuring protagonists falling in love often, occasionally even more than once, and even engaged in multiple relationships. Despite this, living obediently to the bourgeois nuclear family, staying true to one's spouse, and living in the present while letting go of the past are admirable qualities in people, emphasizing the need for a considerate and understanding environment for everyone.(Verma, 2019). The 1990s saw a shift in film towards a more family friendly approach to romantic movies. The young people's love tale is supported by themes such as one true love, love at first sight, lavish gestures, and a happy family in the end. The visuals of romance films are another element that draws viewers. Dwyer (1998) explores Yash Chopra's distinct style of Romantic Cinema, characterized by a distinctive visual aesthetic that is reflected in the settings and in the way he displays his stars. Shots of misty valleys, snowcapped mountains, lakes and rivers, women in chiffon and field of flowers. Another feature of his films is melodrama, making all feelings exterior, roleplayed by chance, importance of secrets, use of non-verbal signs, especially music and visual composition. (Verma, 2019)

In the same spirit as Rajadhakshya, Mehta (2010) characterizes DDLJ as the "neo nationalist imaginary" and Bollywood as a "ideological apparatus," both of which erected themselves around the spectacle of ritual and family. The transition of Hindi cinema to Bollywood resulted in a systematic and organized approach towards different generic orientations, portraying them as neoliberal. It also led to the normalization of 'free floating nonresident Indian' as an essentialist and necessary element for our narratives. Bollywoodization also made capital-driven phenomena more widely known, such as Valentine's Day and basketball, which created a market for new cultural goods. The films that reflected this ideology also elevated local patriarchal customs like dandia and karvachauth to cultural capital status by popularizing them among pan-Indian viewers. Bollywood films from the post-global era depicted wealth emerging from globalization and India's part in it as a narrative bound symbol of national pride. She also pointed out Indian entertainment industries part in creating Indian national identity.(Mehta, 2010)

Left: DDLJ, 1995. Right: Chandni, 1989

Romantic films often feature songs with heartfelt lyrics derived from Urdu or Sufi poetry. Direct feelings like "I love you" are rarely heard in these songs, and the romantic genre heavily relies on metaphors in these lyrics.Many of these love songs will be performed in private between the couple, describe the first glimpse song at the couple's first sighting of the lover, be duets during the courtship and meeting, be performed in public and sang and danced in front of others, be traditional songs featuring folk, religious, or tribal singers performing a love song usually with poetry, or be a sad song about parting. Love songs typically consider as a method of storytelling as it conveys feelings and ideas that the characters in the movies might not have been able to articulate.(Sarazzin, 2008). Given below is an excerpt from the song "Bade Acche Lagthe hai" in the movie Balika Badhu 1976.

Hindi	English
Hum tum kitne paas hai kitne door hai chand sitaare	We're so close to each other but the moon and the stars are far from us
Sach poocho toh mann ko jhoothe lagte hai yeh saare	To tell you the truth they all look fake to me
Magar sacche lagte hai	But what seems real to me are
Yeh dharti, yeh nadiya, yeh raina ... aur ... aur tum	This earth, this river, this night ... and ... and you

Influence on the audience

According to Srinivas (2002), cinema studies have disregarded the target audience for the films and instead rely on the knowledge of affluent, middle-class, educated film analysts who are unfamiliar with popular culture. He makes the suggestion that one study the discourse between the moviegoer and the culture of spectatorship. The audience enjoys a variety of entertainment in Hindi cinema, such as consumerism, spectacle, music, dance, and dialogue. According to Banaji's (2006) ethnographic research, Indian audiences' cinematic experiences differ from those of Western audiences. The methods used were observations in the cinema hall context and in depth interviews. She came to the conclusion that different people interpret movie scenes in very different ways. For example, young viewers may watch and interpret violent or romantic scenes in Hindi films depending on how different aspects of their identities intersect; their own interpretations may also vary depending on the context in which they are watching, who they are watching with, how many times they have seen a scene, life experiences or their age. It can either bring young viewers closer to or further away from specific film narratives. She goes on to examine whether the storyline, romantic scenes, music, costumes, and songs in Hindi films are 'ideologically problematic' and whether the enjoyment that audiences deride from them is "morally dubious" due to its associations with a 'authoritarian' philosophy. Eg. Gadar and Veer Zara: films that pit an Indian hero against a Pakistani villain, nevertheless the romance is compelling to the audience and is unmatched with other movie industries. She also expands on a crucial finding by pointing out that the majority of the discussions on Hindi films followed a similar pattern: a deliberate selection of lessons about relationships and love. Positive reactions to romance were consistent, and a lengthy discussion of family dynamics was included. Teenagers talk more about adult decisions, roles, and authority. With the onscreen couple, viewers consistently displayed empathy. Romantic hopes sparked by movie scenes were

frequently well-defined. Furthermore, romantic thoughts that were framed in terms of lovers or parents were different from actual experiences. (Banaji, 2006)

According to research by Koutaniemi, R. (2011), Indian cinema not only provides entertainment but also, in one way or another, projects the norms and activities of real-life Indian society. It also does a good job of exposing the public to the culture of the nation. He maintained that romantic relationships in Indian cinema somehow support the nation's true culture, despite certain inconsistencies such as the portrayal of love marriages rather than arranged marriages, which represent the nation's true culture.

Mandavia and Limbasiya carried out studies to comprehend Indian audience behaviour. Based on their behavioural and demographic characteristics, Bollywood moviegoers' attitudes vary. The results of this study clearly show that men prefer "action films" and "war/patriot films" over females, while women choose "family films" and "love story films." Even being married has a significant influence on one's preference for certain genres; single viewers are more likely than married viewers to enjoy "war/patriot" and "love story" films. The survey also showed that the frequency of movie-viewing is related to gender and married status, with men watching more Bollywood films in theatres than women. In movie theatres, single people are more likely than married people to watch Bollywood films. A person's gender, marital status, and occupation all have a big impact on how people behave when watching the film, whether they are alone or with friends or family. More women than men watch Bollywood films with their families, whereas more men watch Bollywood films with friends than women do. Compared to employees and independent contractors, students are more likely to watch Bollywood films with friends. (Nirav Mandavia, 2019)

Shakthi Swaminathan performed a research study in order to ascertain the influence of films on the perceptions of love and relationships of 250 male and 250 female participants in the 18–23 age range. It was shown that they were typically cheery and hopeful after seeing romance flicks. In order to bolster her argument that films teach young people valuable lessons about intimacy and relationships, the majority of participants in this study stated that they get their relationship knowledge from watching films. Given that relationships and love are stigmatized in Indian society, this is an inevitable result. It appears that films are both educational and entertaining. When someone experiences a failed relationship or their parents set a poor example, they may become more prone to vulnerability and turn to films as a way to satisfy their desires. Maybe more open acceptance of romance in society would encourage young people to choose real-life role models. (Swaminathan, 2017)

Unrealistic expectations and idealizing perfect relationships

Movies often promote the concept of an ideal relationship, where individuals effortlessly find their soul mate and enjoy perfect compatibility. In Hefner (2018) she discusses the typical featuring of four ideals in romance in romantic comedies. (Hefner, 2018).

- ❖ Idealization of other: An individual is said to have idealised his or her romantic interest when they think their partner is flawless. When someone idealises their relationship, they usually opt to ignore the aspects that make their partner unique and instead concentrate entirely on their positive traits, frequently exaggerating them. When someone adopts this ideal, they usually experience extreme emotion, love, affection, and adoration for their partner. Eg. Mohabbatein- 2000, Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam- 1999.

- ❖ Soul mate/one and only: The belief that there is only one ideal love for every person is referred to as the romantic ideal theme. The concept is that true love is a one-time event that can only be shared with one person, and that fate and destiny combine to bring true lovers together. For individuals who are experiencing love, this concept is comforting since it eliminates other options and strengthens the idea that their soul mate is the only one who can truly provide them happiness. Eg. Dil To Pagal Hai - 1997, Love Aaj Kal- 2009.

- ❖ Love at first sight: The assumption that a romantic connection can develop from a single meeting is the romantic ideal construct's third main theme. As per this topic, people can fall in love with each other with just a quick look or brief chat. Consequently, colorful intensity and rapid relational movement characterize this kind of love. Individuals who adhere to this ideal feel that long-term commitment and physical intimacy can occur earlier than what is generally accepted as proper or socially typical. Eg. Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham-2001, Kabir Singh-2019

- ❖ Love conquers all: The concept that love will triumph above all obstacles is the fourth theme of the romantic ideal. This ideal disregards differences in values and interests, as well as social, economic, and geographic considerations. This ideal is based on the conviction that love will find a solution, hence relationship disagreement does not matter. The way that partners think problems are addressed is crucial to this issue, though. The idea is that a couple might eventually disregard problems and rely solely on love as the means of conquering challenges rather than working through the issues and establishing genuine answers. Eg. Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge -1995, Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi- 2008.

These ideals strongly influence or serve as unconscious indicators to experience romantic relationships. Many people hold onto the idea of having all their needs met without explicitly communicating them, especially women who might expect their partners to intuitively understand their desires. On the other hand, men often idealize a romantic partner who respects their need for freedom and space. However, these differing emotional needs and expressions frequently lead to conflicts.

According to participants in a study by Storey & McDonald (2014), some romantic films depict different stages of a relationship; as a result, people in real relationships might not allow their relationships to develop organically. If the relationship doesn't develop as romantic films have shown, one could get discouraged. As a result, it was discovered that people form their opinions about relationships based on what they have seen in romantic media, and they get dissatisfied when their relationships deviate from what the movies portray as "normal". Participants make comparisons between their personal relationships and what they see in the movies. Even though they may be happy in their relationship, this can include various things like having a certain profession, looking a certain way, or having expectations of their partner. They discovered that the participants frequently "articulate the meaning of their own experience of romantic live" by using romantic media as a language. (McDonald, 2014)

Hefner (2018) also investigated the detrimental effects of watching romantic comedies on life satisfaction, as viewers may draw comparisons between their own relationships and those of the fictional characters. He discovered that watching perfect romantic comedies resulted in a stronger romantic belief than watching a romantic comedy that included difficulties and a higher level of life satisfaction. Additionally he discovered that viewing the perfect romantic comedy leads to greater life satisfaction than watching a happy-ending movie. (Hefner, 2018)

Love stories in films are frequently portrayed as fairy tales in which the protagonist and heroine meet and instantly fall in love. But in real life, establishing and sustaining a relationship takes time and work. They might experience ups and downs and are not always flawless. People may have irrational expectations for their own relationships as a result of the unrealistic way relationships are portrayed in movies, which can cause disappointment and frustration in real life.(Dhar, 2023)

Bollywood films, according to Maclaran, Parsons, and Broderick (2010), are primarily love stories in which the characters will stop at nothing to be with each other, so it makes sense that the audience would want this for themselves. The female participants expressed a desire to discover their own romance, love, and prince in order to live out their own Bollywood fantasy and experience an abundance of love. The individuals expressed a desire to possess the allure, ardour, and butterflies depicted in Bollywood films. (Suri, 2019)

One participant said they watch romantic comedies and get depressed because their life does not turn out the way the movies do. They want someone to shower them with romantic gestures every day. They said they get their ideas of romance and love from these movies. When the participant sees how much the characters in the films love each other, they are disappointed because they haven't been able to experience this for themselves and they still think that these ideals are attainable in real life. (Suri, 2019)

The majority of the romantic clichés found in films are accepted by young people. Either they never get into problematic relationships or they switch partners a lot in the pursuit of the "ideal" mate. Depression and disappointment result from this. The belief held by many that if a partner genuinely loved the other, they would be aware of their innermost thoughts is concerning. This misconception contributes to the main reason why relationships fail: a partner's exaggerated expectation of mind-reading abilities and a lack of communication. Additionally, it appears that people hold presumptions like the need for immediate chemistry, the idea that opposites attract, or the idea that showing extravagant gestures is a must for showing true love. As evidenced by the popularity of arranged marriages in our nation, chemistry may really develop over time, and long-term relationships may not work out between total opposites. According to research, friendship and common interests are the foundations of any successful relationship. (Swaminathan, 2017)

In order to determine the connection between romantic expectancies and the intake of Bollywood media, Rishu Suri studied 26 Indo Canadian women. It was found that as the viewing of bollywood movies increased, individuals judged them to have a greater negative effect on their adult romantic relationships. Participants disagreed less strongly with the statement that Bollywood films represent their romantic relationship. The proportion of individuals who said Bollywood films mirrored their personal life also rose, as did the number who said Bollywood films portrayed true romance. (Suri, 2019)

Growing tendencies seen by other academics have provided credence for his research. Watching Bollywood content can teach viewers the typical romantic conventions and expectations that are portrayed in the movies, which will eventually lead people to believe that the movies are a reflection of their own relationships and authentic romance. As the no. of bollywood films they saw increased, partner reliance during difficult situations decreased. They are less likely to address conflict directly. Another emerging pattern noted was a decrease in participants reporting that physical attraction held less significance in romantic relationships. When individuals assess a potential romantic partner primarily on immediate feelings, like physical allure, rather than abstract considerations such as compatibility with their ideals, it may lead to reduced relationship satisfaction and shorter-term connections, such as one-time encounters. People who expect to only find mates who are physically attractive may unintentionally set themselves up to reject partners who don't live up to their ideals. On the other hand, objectifying a spouse can increase sexual satisfaction, which in turn can increase overall relationship satisfaction because physical beauty is connected with sexual desire. (Suri, 2019)

Another study found that women considerably "expected intimate romantic relationships, imagined being married and daydreamed about their weddings, and anticipated getting married and staying married more than men". Additionally, they discovered that young adults who preferred to watch romantic comedies and dramas were more likely to idealise popular sayings like "love conquers all," had higher expectations for closeness, and support the Eros love style. Long-term relationships are more likely to succeed when people idealise messages like "love conquers all" and overcome conflicts, make concessions, and share decision-making. Girls may be encouraged to start the intimacy in a relationship by having higher expectations for closeness and supporting the Eros love style. (L. Galloway, 2015)

On contrary previous studies have indicated that individuals exposed to romantic media portraying heightened romanticism tend to experience more flourishing romantic relationships. They report greater love for their current partners, higher levels of relationship satisfaction, increased commitment, and a reduced inclination toward extramarital affairs. Nevertheless, it's crucial to note that individuals who strongly embrace the belief in finding "the one and only" and only moderately support the idea of working through relationship challenges are more prone to remaining in abusive long-term partnerships and exhibiting aggressive behavior when faced with romantic rejection. (J.R. Lippman, 2014)

Jagadeeshan and Suthandiradas did an ex post facto study on youths' romantic ideas and their exposure to romantic depictions in the media. 318 of the 439 participants in the study were female. It was shown that the typical person watches 7.6 hours of romantic media a week. The study finds that, with the exception of one of its subscales, "Love at First Sight," exposure duration has no apparent effect on relationship beliefs overall. This suggests that because love is so prevalent in the world, even the least susceptible viewers of romantic mass media are likely to be swayed by the notion of "love at first sight." As was already mentioned, the main influence on relationship beliefs appears to be perceived realism. According to studies, males are more likely than women to think that realistic portrayals of sex on television exist. However, women were more inclined than men to think that television depictions of love were true to life. However, there are additional elements that influence how much a person internalizes the messages in the media, including critical thinking skills, early experiences, and previous interactions with persons of the opposite sex. Thus, a person's propensity to verify the veracity of uncensored propaganda may not be influenced by their gender. (Suthandiradas, 2018)

According to Davila et al. (2017), it's critical to encourage healthy relationships from an early age, particularly before someone starts dating or decides to be in a relationship. Before young adults start dating, they should be taught romantic competence (RC) skills. This will help them choose partners wisely and make decisions about their relationships that will benefit both of them. She also elucidates how clinicians may be able to prevent and intervene before couples run into common issues if RC skills are taught early enough.

Antle, Karam, Christensen, Barbee, and Sar (2011) discovered that having strong communication skills, good conflict resolution techniques, and effective conflict management behaviours were associated with less cases of emotional and physical abuse as well as improvements in the general quality of relationships. (Suri, 2019)

Enforcing stereotypes

It is a common theme in Bollywood films for the man to take the lead in a relationship. This could take several forms, such as striking up a discussion, asking the woman out, or even putting up a marriage proposal. This

stereotype upholds the gender norms that society imposes on males and the notion that men should be the dominant partner in a relationship. Relationships are really about equality; each partner should have the same voice and authority.

Bollywood films also frequently depict women in a stereotypical manner, frequently as dependent on males in submissive roles. Typically, the female characters are portrayed as helpless damsels in need of the male protagonist's rescue. Galloway, Engstrom, and Emmers-Sommer (2015) discovered that watching romantic films frequently reinforces gendered cultural narratives that disproportionately affect women. According to Levinson and Huffman's (1955) Traditional Family Ideology Scale, masculinity is associated with ideas like men should provide, men should be strong and ambitious, men should be leaders in the relationship, and femininity is associated with ideas like women are too emotional, women should obey men, and women should be chaste. Bollywood films have a history of using these themes. (L. Galloway, 2015).

A study on the subjects and content of romantic Bollywood films made between 1995 and 2016 was carried out by Shah & Ali et al. The study's findings investigated that in romantic relationships, men are more likely to want to meet women. On the other hand, due to familial and cultural constraints, women are not as free as men. The frequency of meetings strengthens the relationship. The study also found that men tried to impress (motivate through various means) women during meetings because men are more expressive than women in these kinds of relationships. In order to strengthen a romantic relationship, both parties must take some kind of action. While the male provided some assistance, he primarily fought for her rights, and the female supported the male in their romantic defence. It is determined that issues and conflict are a common occurrence in romantic relationships, and that males typically initiate conflicts due to cultural sensitivity or cross-cultural differences. In this way, a variety of problems resulting from differences in culture, customs, traditions, and religion led to disputes between the lovers in every movie, with the male initiating the conflicts rather than the female and the latter seems to be more sensitive than the former. Regarding romantic relationships, men shared their opinions with friends, while women shared their secrets with their parents rather than with friends or anybody else especially due to cultural appropriation. The study concluded with the findings that men are more active in romantic relationships; women are shy and have cultural constrictions to express their emotions.(Syed Zeshan Ali Shah, 2020)

According to Taylor and Segrin (2010), people who conform more closely to traditional gender roles are more likely to display an external relational locus of control, poor conflict resolution skills, and increased psychological discomfort Randles (2016) emphasizes the detrimental effects of gender stereotypes on both women and men, particularly within their relationships. He draws attention to the possibility of relationship problems resulting from gendered power dynamics, which are frequently exacerbated by current inequalities in the social, political, and economic domains. He thus emphasizes the value of teaching couples about the genders' emotional experiences being equal and how gender is not a determinant when it comes to dividing up domestic duties, childcare duties, and financial responsibilities. It is therefore crucial to discuss conventional gender norms and consider how viewers could view female characters in Bollywood films. (Suri, 2019)

Takhar, Maclaran, Parsons, and Broderick (2010) found that study participants self-referenced to Bollywood movie characters. Some participants claimed that the stereotypical portrayal of the daughter-in-law in films, who can manage the whole family and desires to be the perfect daughter-in-law herself, had an impact on them. A participant also reported feeling pressured by her family to meet these standards, which left her feeling insufficient and ultimately sparked a self-destructive cycle of social comparisons. The positions of the devoted wife and daughter-in-law carry a lot of gendered assumptions, which could have a negative effect on the audience. The males who took part in the survey also mentioned how they wanted to fall in love instantly and know that person was the one for them at that same moment. (A. Takhar, 2010)

Broccoli (2008) found a strong link between self-objectification and declining relationship satisfaction. The media's pervasive emphasis on women's bodies has a significant impact on the objectification of oneself. Self-objectification is using one's body for external purposes and obsessing over how it looks to other people instead of how one is feeling on the inside. Research by Aubrey (2006, 2007) indicates that exposure to objectifying media heightens the likelihood of both men and women objectifying themselves. Additionally, Zurbriggen, Ramsey, and Jaworski (2011) assert that partner and self-objectification are intertwined variables, leading to decreased sexual and relationship satisfaction in men who consume objectifying media. (Suri, 2019) According to Mumbai-based psychologist Dr. Harish Shetty, the abundance of sensual material in our environment has impacted boys and girls from an early age, creating a complicated situation. "Having sex is no longer associated with shame and is now seen as normal. It now feels like a chore on a treadmill. Although it can be challenging to identify the exact origins of social phenomena, it appears likely that the way sexuality

and sexual attraction have been portrayed in media has contributed to this evolution.. "Sex-related scenes in films must be sensible and compassionate. Tushali, a 19-year-old student at Lady Shri Ram College (LSR) in Delhi, stated that "it is suggested that something bad will happen to a girl if she has pre-marital sex in most films." Her perspective demonstrates how persistent the influence of films can be. In fact, one of the recurring themes in old Bollywood films is the young woman having sex before marriage and then falling into a deep and dark depression. Faridabad-based 19-year-old Prakhar, a student pursuing a chartered accountancy degree, notes that the term "sex" is rarely used in films. He thinks that a big part of how people view sexuality is because films haven't been able to depict it in a progressive way. Aditi remarked, "Movies justify men being the dominant ones in relationships; women are shown to be submissive." Although it exists in real life, films glamourize it in some way. Teenage girls may internalize subjection because of that portrayal, believing it to be the only way to obtain pleasure. (Mitul, 2015)

The shame associated with singledom is another prevalent notion. There was a significant correlation found between media exposure and the anxiety of being alone, especially for single women who were exposed to romantic media. Even if it's becoming more usual in today's culture to be single, some people still believe it to be not "normal." Given that if society and the media are telling individuals that being single are bad, then people would feel more pressure to be in a relationship. Consequently, if one is unable to locate a partner with whom to establish a relationship, anxiousness may become apparent. Individuals who are single frequently suffer from significant levels of anxiety; particularly as they age because being single has historically been viewed negatively. Therefore, the fear of being alone can be exacerbated by settling, decreasing expectations, and being in an unpleasant relationship where there is less mate selection. Additionally, mental health problems related to loneliness are frequently experienced. (E.Timmermans, 2017)

Normalizing abuse in romantic relationships

For instance, cinema critic Suparna Sharma mentioned Kabir Singh. These films attempt to pass off extremely toxic and bordering on criminally irresponsible masculine behaviour as cool, in addition to normalizing abuse, wrath, and physical and emotional violence. They attempt to market abuse and love together. In that movie, a boy walks about campus telling people that a certain girl is his, even though she has no idea who he is, let alone any voice in the matter. The issue is in the movie's attempt to glamorise abusive and objectionable behaviour while passing it off as true love. Nevertheless, a lot of people have enjoyed these flicks, including women. Even Padmaavat, directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali glorifies a retrogressive, patriarchal custom, Bhansali is glamorising johar and attempting to present the enforced violence of johar as a kind of hallowed, legendary purifying rite. A sea of ladies dressed in matrimonial red, led by the lovely and glamorous Deepika Padukone, march to their flaming doom in that epic sequence, which drags on and on and has been shot with such love and care for aesthetics. At one point, the camera pans to a pregnant woman's belly while uplifting religious chants are audible. They fail to recognise the act's unspeakable cruelty and ferocity and fail to grieve it as a tragedy. In fact, they rejoice over the women regaining the "honour" that had been lost by the men. (Eshe, 2019).

From classic films like Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge to contemporary productions like Raanjhanaa, devotees of Bollywood have subtly opted to ignore the negative actions frequently demonstrated by the male lead towards a female character. Because women are frequently depicted in the movies as enjoying their persistence and stalking, boys tend to view this as natural and even attractive. Men's approaches to women differ because young males all around the nation see their role models adhering to these stereotypes.

"*Raj, agar yeh tujhse pyaar karti hai toh yeh palat kar dekhegi*",

 Raj, if she turns and looks at you she loves you (DDLJ, 1995)

This dialogue is used as a form of consent from the women. Similar concepts are "Hasee toh phasee", if she smiles at you she loves you. It's not only that these films glorify and romanticize toxic relationships to the point where the viewer begins to accept harassment as the norm—they also promote unhealthy partnerships. One cannot argue that seeing such films is ineffective in a nation where thousands of harassment claims are filed annually. Love and consent are deeply impacted by films that romanticize obsessive love and feature heroics that refuse to accept defeat, particularly in the case of impressionable young audiences. Animal, a 2023 release by Sandeep Reddy Vanga has been an enormous hit. A self-described alpha male is shown in the film cheating on his wife, threatening to kill her, slapping his girlfriend, and instructing her to lick his shoes. When questioned about the negative reviews for the movie, Vanga stated in an interview that "If you can't slap, if you can't touch your woman wherever you want, you can't kiss, you can't use curse words I don't

see emotions there". This assertion is troubling and deceptive to the audience, particularly the younger ones.

Conclusion

The vast majority of Indians watch Bollywood films. According to social cognition theory and cultivation theory, the early release of these films has caused them to become ingrained in people's lives and have a significant impact on them. The 1980s saw the beginning of the cultural explosion of Hindi cinema, with Yash Chopra's films playing a significant part in making Indian cinema popular overseas. Romantic love stories frequently feature themes such as soulmates, idealized relationships, love at first sight, and the concept that love overcomes all obstacles. As a result, people start using them as benchmarks when assessing their own relationships. Because women watch romantic comedies more often than men, men tend to ignore these standards, which causes conflicts. It frequently generates and perpetuates preconceptions that portray women as subservient and males as dominant. Additionally, it perpetuates unachievable gender stereotypes of men and women, which put pressure on society. Additionally being spread are the stigmatized and unrealistic portrayals of sexual relationships as well as the social shame associated with single status. In cases of true love, violence—such as physical and mental abuse, stalking, and crimes against women—is frequently accepted and rebranded as affection. It's crucial that audiences approach these films with an open mind and understand the distinction between real-life relationships and cinematic narrative. Additionally, the censor board can impose rules encouraging the nation's filmmakers to take greater social responsibility. Even if all of these expectations are generated by films, understanding the affects and the theoretical underpinnings can assist comprehend them and provide a foundation for more logical analysis. In order to lessen the harm that this can do to relationships, mental health specialists and relationship counselors can be aware of these and develop intervention measures, resulting in far healthier romantic lives.

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