



Women Objectification In Movies.

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Abstract: Movies are popular for their portrayal of the different genders. The study looks at the objectification of female characters and its impact on the contemporary issue of sexual violence against women in India. The analysis and findings are based on objectification theory, male gaze theory and feminist theory. The study shows that the sexual objectification of women in the selected films is stereotypical and they are mostly portrayed as sex objects or objects of the male gaze. The study concludes that the sexual objectification of women can evoke unhealthy social and physical instincts in viewers and provoke the risk of sexual violence.

Key Words: Women, Movies, Objectification, Sexual violence, India.

1. Introduction

“Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at.”

Cinema is a powerful and influential medium of communication that reflects our culture, rituals and the current situation of society. It also represents the past history and civilization of a society. In the previous module, we read about the role of women and their importance in commercial films. We also looked at the space they are given and how they are portrayed in commercial films in the light of today's scenario.

In this research study we discuss how women are portrayed in regional films. What kind of roles do they play and how are their issues taken up by regional filmmakers? Does the portrayal of women in regional films reflect their real life circumstances? We will discuss the issues of women in the regional films of India.

Across 1,565 content creators, only 7% of directors, 13% of writers, and 20% of producers are female. This translates to 4.8 males working behind-the-scenes to every one female. Research has concluded that there does exist a “celluloid ceiling” within the Hollywood film industry. Statistics reveal that only are women significantly underrepresented behind-the-scenes as directors, cinematographers, editors, producers and writers but their chances of advancing through the industry are also far less than men's. Powerful and influential women in the arts are still a rarity. This only goes to prove the need for feminism in today's day and age where many of its aims remain largely unachieved.

In this paper, the researcher has taken two Indian produced movies, namely Puspha: The Rise and Razakar which were chartbusting movies in the year 2021 and 2024 respectively. The reasons these two movies have been selected are as follows:

1. Both these movies were touted as breaking gender stereotypes and depicting women in a strong and positive light.
2. Both these movies are family movies which cut across barriers of age and genre, as far as viewership is concerned.
3. Puspha: The Rise is an epic fiction film, whereas Razakar is based on a true story. However, what the researcher observed was that both these movies, despite claims to the contrary, cater to the male gaze and have women actors only appear in roles that are actually stereotypical.



Puspha (2021)



Razakar (2024)

The study aims to analyse the Women objectification in Movies in premier movies in Indian film industry.

2. Objectives

- To study if the portrayal of women in movies had been a gendered and stereotypical one. If yes, why so?
- To study if there are any harms that arise out of such portrayal of women in movies in the form of violence against women.

3. Research Questions

- a. What are the nuances that make depiction of women in movies problematic or contentious? How do movies influence society and its perceptions?
- b. To what extent does the portrayal of women in movies harm women as a whole?
- c. What do we understand by the “feminist film theory”? To what extent is it necessary?
- d. What is the way forward for a balanced and safe cinema?

4. Scope and Limitations

The approach is a qualitative one, which attempts to address issues underlying observable phenomenon in the world of cinema. The researcher will use only mainstream Indian cinema as source material for this paper, with two recent case studies from Bollywood and Telugu cinema. Alternative and Parallel cinema falls outside the scope of this paper as does the censorship debate.

5. Methodology

The above films have been selected since they are both recently released high-earning blockbusters created to be viewed by families. The genres are diverse- one is an epic, the other based on a contemporary true-story. A feminist approach has been taken to read these films.

6. Results

In this researcher has attempted to study the portrayal of women in Indian Cinema through the lens of two recent blockbuster movies and the omnipresent item number. It has been argued that the item number blatantly dehumanizes women and leads to violence against them in the form of trafficking and objectification. It has also been argued that feminist movies, or as they have been touted, portray women in a light that denies them agency and cater largely to the male gaze, reducing female characters to be spectators or objects to be given roles by the male characters.

An item number or item song in Indian cinema is a hot, tempestuous performance by an “item-girl” dancing to a racy song that it is often a stand-alone performance, loosely connected to the film's plot. The specific use of the term item number is attributed to a description of sensuous dance-performances, often to the accompaniment of old Bollywood songs that were popularised by MTV in the late 1990s. In Puspha movie “**Vu Antava Mava, Uhu Antava**” the item girl came to constitute a new and visible role that highlighted the gym-toned, gyrating "body beautiful" as part of a contemporary aesthetic.

Razakar is a movie inspired by the real story of Razakar moment in Telangana in Nizam era. The movie encapsulates the emotional relationship between the Telangana people and cruel nature, high taxes of Nizam emperors. In the movie, the viewers are shown how Telangana region ladies treated as slaves, labour and housemaids in Nizam era.

Puspha and Razakar Movies ladies misused or rape attempted by Villon who is having strong political and financial background, these kind of scenes are literally hurting all females and even males in cinema as well as in real life.

In Pushpa movie the moment Villon saw Srivalli her face, stares into her frightened eyes, and says something like, “You’re mine now, your mission belongs to me. Leave it to me.” The audience is led to believe that she lets him walk away with her life’s mission and duty without a fight.

In Razakar movie the moment some Razakar saw hindu lady chanting immediately they forced convert religion but she refused to change, a massive brutal rape on multiple ladies at that time. This scene itself show how bad they are portraying women characters in cinema.

7. Conclusion :

Over the course of this paper, we have seen how popular cinema is a male-dominated industry, with very few prominent female voices. As a result, what it means to be a woman is left to be construed and constructed by a dominantly patriarchal system. Femininity then becomes a construct not independent and with its own true reflection of womanhood, but a foil for masculinity, portrayed on screen by the male protagonists. The male gaze has been descriptively studied, and later applied to the reading of two popular Indian movies from the recent years.

The paper then went on to analyse two movies, Pushpa and Razakar in a feminist perspective. The researcher identified four trends of distorted relationships which can be equated to violence against women, namely:

- i. Women's dependence/ men's independence
- ii. Men's authority/ women's incompetence
- iii. Women as objects/ men as subjects
- iv. Normalizing violence against women

These four trends are to be found not merely in the studied movies, but in movies across the world and they reduce women's possibilities and impose limitations on their social and personal lives.

Finally, along the lines of the Beijing platform for action, it is concluded that the way forward lies not in censorship, which would be subjective based on culture and jurisdiction, but in greater participation of women in decision-making positions within the film industry and regulatory or professional bodies. This will hopefully lead to a more balanced, safe and gender-sensitive cinema in the future.

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