

Feminism and its innumerable scope in fictions and films

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ABSTRACT

Fictions and films play an indispensable role in reflecting and successfully propagating the perceptions and thoughts of any society on any matters. These media which once portrayed female sections of Indian society as passive, polite, soft, accommodating, enduring a plethora of pains and sufferings now underwent a drastic transformation and with the arrival of female film directors into the mainstream domain, the female world started to reveal their real identity and their ability to be independent. This article is all about the transformation which can be noted in the patriarchal view of the world and how it gets beautifully projected in films and fictions.

Key Words: Patriarchy, Subordination, Social stratification, Marginalization.

INTRODUCTION

Humanity had witnessed females accepting and undertaking a plethora of roles, whether backed by societal acceptance or rejection. Although she remained at focus, patriarchal world started treating her quite unpredictably, sometimes depending on her solely as a source of inspiration and sometimes exploiting her merely as a commodity. A time came when she realized her power and ability as an individual, began taking independent decisions where she started focusing on her individual progressions. This heartbreaking step from her side had a powerful jolt to the established norms of the so-called society.

Women merely had a secondary position in Indian society, where she took pride in shouldering all her duties religiously and sought satisfaction by serving others around her. But when she began nurturing her own ambitions and dreams by acknowledging and pampering herself, society could not help noticing this change. Clearly, the change had shaken the deep buried accepted norms for the conduct and place of female in the society which finally resulted in the way she has been presented and interpreted. As such, the means of entertainment, that is, the two powerful media- fiction and cinema established their credibility by pleasing the masses. They accomplished not only to capture the change but also duly reflected the shifting focus. These two media got the power to reach out to maximum people with greater force because of their individual appeal.

Fiction which enhances the imagining capacity of the readers forces them to sit and observe the change that female brought about in their status in the society. Likewise, Cinema with its visual effects got the power to satisfy the most loyal senses of all, that is eyes. So when the change in the women's position got projected through cinema, it intensely reached out to the people in all parts of the world. Significantly, the change in the portrayal of women from traditional, ethical and ideal women to an independent individual having the power to emerge free and self-sufficient, has superbly reflected in the feminist fiction and Hindi parallel cinema. Hindi parallel cinema had brought in portraying realistic pictures of females. Initially female characters were pictured as ideal wife, mother, sister, and daughter but with the rise of feminism in social, political and cultural domain, their projection had undergone a major transfiguration. Cinema being considered as an artistic enterprise covers a wide range of experience reflecting the attitude of an entire society, community, country or civilization. In short, it manifests how a civilization works.

Films also have tremendous power to influence an individual's behaviour, perceptions and positions in his society. Thus issues relating to the projection of women occupy an important place in cinema. Initially, the projection of female characters lacked diversity. They have been exhibited as the chaste loyal wife, the dutiful self-sacrificing daughter, mother or wife.



They have been depicted as suppressed sufferers. The ideal woman should be very pure, passive and subordinate individuals who should be willing to make sacrifices for others surrounding her. The mythological figures such as Sita and Savithri are shown as epitome of goodness, chastity, and purity. Thus female characters in Hindi films who don't resemble Sita mode were considered as westernized and sexually violent, accountable for leading the whole humanity towards ruin.

In films, the only destination of women is marriage which has constantly being reinforced upon them. The role of a married woman is defined unambiguously. The sufferings and the pains that she undergoes in her life are always the outcomes of her mistake and rejection of her role as a dutiful wife. If any educated, independent and bold females fail to adjust with her husband or family, they dare to move out, get divorced and begins living on their own, but this daring act has been never shown in a positive light. Qualities like quest for identity, freedom etc were not considered as positive in females.

Dress in sarees, be girl Be wife, they said. Be embroider, be cook Be a quareller with servants. Fit in Oh Belong, cried the categories (35-38) -Kamala Das in An Introduction

Nancy Arden McHugh in her "Feminist Philosophies A-Z" said, "Gender is the result of social institutions and a learned behaviour while sex is a biological category. Thus gender is a social construction and a product of nurturing while sex is a product of nature."

The societal constructions and institutions played a significant role in creating the typical picture of Indian women. A child's gender is determined by society that would set special sets of behaviour and norms for that child right from his/her birth. It is pathetic to note that women are always becoming passive victims of all forms of social divisions where gender and class negatively affects her the most. Indian women seems to be doubly marginalised- first as A woman, a female sex and second as a prey of the social stratification.

The condition of Indian women underwent a radical change for more than a thousand years. During the Vedic period, women was given a better status and a respectable position in India. For instance, women philosophers such as Apala, Gargi were given a respectable positions. During those days, marriage was not considered as a forced institutions.

Instead, they were free to choose their life partners. From Vedic past, Indian mythology and cultured retained notions that provided equal rights to men and women. Prakriti (woman) and Purusha (man) were complementary to each other.

But with the passage of time, high status conferred to the women deteriorated. During the Smrithi age, women's status fell to that of merely a slave. Manusmrithi, the ancient Hindu text emphasizes the women's dependency on her male compeer. Accordingly, a woman in her life has nothing of her own and she have no independent existence. She depends upon her father before marriage, her husband after the marriage and her son in the old age.

Theatre and movies were most striking and powerful means of communication and a great source of entertainment which reached its peak with the advancement of technology. Films reflecting women's issues and problems tried to delineate the convolutions of modernity and its influence in the lives particularly that of women. Many female directors such as Aparna Sen, Deepa Mehta have shown great interest in making films unravelling the plight and the hardships underwent by women from their own perspectives. The feminist critiques are of the view that films depicting issues of women made by unbiased and liberal male directors in India still have tendencies to use some proportion of patriarchal norms. The major themes explored in the films directed by females include questions of feminine identity in a patriarchal society, women symbolizing submission tries to overcome the barriers, trying to gain confidence, strength and self identity in an Indian patriarchal society. These films were produced in order to focus the issues such as marginalization and suppression of women because of gender segregation and discrimination. The films had created much controversies and stark naked criticism over different topics that include familial relationships, morality, family structure and significantly an attempt to transform the society. The women centric films directed by women tried to break the societal norms and conventions which resulted in major conflicts and controversies in Indian society.

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